

Perceived Racial Expectations of Children

Jessica R. Roesslein⁷

Racism is an ever-evolving aspect of our society. Although the overt racism of the past may be behind us, indirect discrimination still prevails today. The proposed study aims to reevaluate race in today's youth so as to fill the gap of current, relevant research, especially in children. Racism can cause a host of detrimental mental and physical health effects ranging from cardiovascular disease in adults to ADHD in children. It is not only overt acts of racism that cause these effects, but ambiguous acts of racism as well. Therefore, my proposed study aims to identify prejudices in children through the use of a picture containing ambiguous scenes of children at play. Participants will identify if the scene is prosocial or conflict and identify if the child instigating the act is black or white. If prejudices in children can be identified, it can begin to make parents, students, and educators more aware of their underlying prejudices, as well as bring interest to discovering ways to prevent it.

This proposed study aims to provide insight into what type of situations prejudice occurs in children and when. In the United States it is considered unacceptable to participate in acts of outright discrimination, but in ambiguous racist acts, this solid norm can be blurred (Marino, Negy, Hammons, McKinney, & Asberg, 2007). Few members of society show full blown racism by committing hate crimes and showing overt discrimination but unintentional racist tendencies like avoiding walking past a large group of minorities are still prevalent in our society (Buhin & Vera, 2008).

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Findings show that discrimination in our society has not been eliminated. Within a lifetime, African American adults believed that they were victims of racism 100% of the time. 99.4 percent of those surveyed reported that racism was a source of stress in their lives (Kessler, 1999). In a survey of children ages 8 to 13, 88 % reported experiencing at least one act of racial discrimination against them. These acts occurred in both school and community settings, with both peers and adults as the discriminating party (Pachter, Bernstien, Szalacha & Coll, 2010). In another study of fifth grade students, 15 % experienced perceived racism, with 80 % of the discrimination occurring at school (Coker, et al., 2009). Another study also noted that that the majority of racial incidents occurred within the school system (Flanagan, Syvertsen, Gill, Gallay, & Cumsille, 2009). These studies show the significance of how early in life discrimination occurs, and how widespread it is on our society, especially within schools.

Not only is discrimination common but it also has detrimental effects on health. Perceiving prejudicial experiences is positively correlated to instances of negative mental health effects in adulthood. It is not just overt acts of racism that cause harm, but more often than not things like exclusion and rejection cause the most harm (Broudy, et al., 2006). Since they occur more frequently than overt acts, they can then become a common part of one's life, causing chronic stress. Interpretations of acts of discrimination begin to change as these encounters continue to occur. Continuing discrimination causes intensification of negative feelings during future acts of discrimination (Broudy, et al., 2006). Since the negative feelings continue to be heightened, coping strategies begin to become depleted causing an increase in the risk of cardiovascular disease, and other stress related diseases (Broudy, et al., 2006).

In children, individuals who reported an experience with racism were more likely to exhibit symptoms of four mental health disorders; attention deficit hyperactivity disorder,

depression, conduct disorder, and oppositional defiant disorder (Coker, et al., 2009). Therefore, catching discrimination early on is vital to helping reduce stress and improve physical and mental health among children and adults, within the school system and society at large.

Once racism is detected, prevention programs may be put in place to help combat racism. Buhin and Vera (2008) offer five recommendations for such a program; (a) to create opportunity for meaningful interactions between those of different races, (b) have school staff and parents model positive interracial interactions (c) discuss facts about different racial groups and discuss stereotyping and oppression of different racial groups (d) have skilled staff available to discuss emotional trauma of discrimination, which creates a safe discussion environment (e) group discussion on common human experiences. Although these are only suggestions, they are useful in starting to combat racism in our society.

Prejudice is a well studied subject but research has revealed contradictory results. The study by Clark and Clark (1947) is probably the most noted research pertaining to prejudice in children. Of the many different aspects Clark and Clark tested, they found that all children, regardless of race, preferred the doll with white skin over the doll with black skin (Clark & Clark, 1947). Although Clark and Clark found that all children preferred the white doll, a later study by Habra and Grant (1969) found that children of both races preferred the doll associated with their own race. Another interesting note is that the preference for their race continued to increase with age (Hraba & Grant, 1969). The United States has had a fluctuating history in regards to the race related social climate, and the climate during each if these studies is no exception. Habra and Grant (1969) suggested that ethnic pride at the time could have contributed to the difference of results. They noted that in the years before the study a black pride campaign had been in place, possibly enhancing positive associations with the black doll.

Overt discrimination of the past may no longer exist, but smaller prejudices live on, even today. In a more recent study by Jordan and Hernandez-Reif (2009), computer generated drawings took the place of dolls. In addition to this, two other skin tones were added creating a total of four different skin tones in which the child could choose from. When choosing from all four, children showed no preference for a specific skin tone, but when the choice was narrowed to only black and white skin tones, the results changed (Jordan & Hernandez-Reif, 2009). Caucasian children choosing from the white or black drawing preferred their own race; African American children, on the other hand, were split in their decision and varied in whether they preferred the white or black drawing (Jordan & Hernandez-Reif, 2009). Within the literature reviewed, all yielded varying results. These dissimilarities are a result of the ever changing racial climate in which we live, highlighting the need for continuing research. Since racism can be detrimental to both mind and body, using research to examine racism, especially in children is a worthwhile venture.

Surprisingly, overt racism can often be much easier to cope with than ambiguous acts of discrimination (Bennett, Merritt, Edwards, & Sollers, 2004). For this reason, ambiguous situations can be more detrimental to one's health, both physically and mentally. Consequently, the proposed study will focus on the ambiguous prejudices of children.

Children ages 5-12 years were eligible for this study for several reasons. First, Habra and Grant (1969) found that children in their study (ages 3-7 years) preferred their own race more frequently as their age increased. This upward trend was expected to continue and therefore a higher median age was utilized as to hopefully yield more pertinent results. In addition, Jordan and Hernandez-Reif (2009) also used children ages 3-7 years which could have contributed to

the variation in African American preference for race. Both of these studies are more recent, and therefore more relevant to the participants in this study.

Yet another reason to use a slightly older sample of participants is the stages of prejudice in which individuals go through. Nesdale (1999) suggested four different stages of prejudice. It was in the ages from 7 on that prejudices become concrete in the child's mind and begin to surface. The children in the current study are contained mostly in this stage, which will increase the likelihood of tangible results.

In the proposed study, prejudice in children will be examined through the use of a drawing that represents three focus areas containing ambiguous situations of children at play. Each will contain one African American child and one Caucasian child. The child will be asked to describe what is happening in the drawing and the results will be coded as either prosocial or conflict and it will be noted of which race the action is attributed to. Based on the outcomes of the reviewed literature, the proposed hypothesis is that participants will show an inclination towards their own race by interpreting the children in each focus area in a way that is more favorable to their own race.

Method

Participants

Participants for the proposed study will be recruited from the area public school system, through an afterschool program. This will keep students from missing classroom time. Only African American and Caucasian children will be eligible to participate in the study, since they are the only races represented in the drawing they will be shown. Children must also be between the ages of 5 and 12. The students who meet these requirements will be required to obtain written

parental consent, as well as verbally assent to the study themselves. Participants' race and age will be presented as percentages, therefore providing a composition of the sample.

Materials

The proposed study will be conducted at the location of recruitment (i.e. the school in which the student is currently attending). Interviews will take place in a private area away from other students and free from distractions. This area should be well lit and contain at least one table and two chairs. Two drawings (drawings A and B) (see Appendices A and B) will be utilized for this study, although the participant will only be presented with one during the interview. Each drawing will contain the same three focus areas that could be determined as either prosocial or conflict. (1) Children sharing candy/children stealing candy (2) Children playing tag/ children pushing one another (3) Children helping pick up books/ children knocking books out of the others hands. Drawing A and B differ only on the side of which the races are presented. The participants' responses to the drawing will be recorded with pen and paper and will later be coded by the researcher. A blind judge will help ensure the consistency of the researcher's coded results.

Procedure

Prior to the start of the study a packet of information will be emailed to the school district for approval to utilize their students in the study. This packet will include; a letter of intent (see Appendix C), the parental consent form (see Appendix D), a letter to the principal and principal consent (see Appendix E), Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board disposition letter (see Appendix F), Copy of the researcher's background check (see Appendix G), copy of the researcher's ethics training certificate (see Appendix H), and both drawings to be used (see Appendices A and B). Parents will receive a permission form to be filled out (see Appendix D),

as will the principal or administrator (see Appendix E). The packet of information for the school district will be emailed to a director for review and upon his consent a meeting will be set up to introduce the study to the director of the afterschool program. The research will be presented at this meeting and if approved, the afterschool director will sign the principle or administrator consent form (see Appendix D). The afterschool director will indicate which students are eligible (African American and Caucasian students age 5-12) and a parental consent form will be sent home with those students. Those students who return the signed parental consent form will be asked to verbally assent to participate in the study in front of an adult witness (i.e. teacher or administrator).

After these procedures have been completed each participant will be individually called into the interview area. At this time the participant will be reminded that they may leave the study at anytime without prejudice or penalty. Once this is done the child will be seated next to the researcher and will be presented randomly with either Drawing A or B (see Appendices A and B). The child will be asked "What do you think is happening in this picture?" As the participant describes each area they will be asked which child is instigating the action they described. If the participant does not comment on one or more of the focus areas they will be further prompted, "And what are these children doing?" If the participant still does not respond they will not be asked any further questions regarding the area. All of the participants' responses will be recorded with pen and paper. At the completion of the interview the children will be asked if they have had any prior knowledge of the study, they will be debriefed, and then return to their classroom. The next child will then be interviewed. This will continue until all eligible participants have been interviewed. At the completion of all interviews parent feedback letters

(see Appendix I) will be sent home with participants and the afterschool director will also receive a feedback letter (see Appendix J).

Analysis

For the demographic data collected, nominal data (gender and ethnicity) will be collected and reported as percentages. Equal interval data (age) will be computed and reported as means and standard deviations.

Results of the interview will be coded as either prosocial or conflict, and it will be noted which race has instigated what action. The relationship between the races of participants and the race (Caucasian or African American) and action interpreted (conflict or prosocial act) in the drawing will be examined. Results will be assessed, first by the researcher (white female undergraduate student) and then by a blind judge.

Discussion

In conclusion, this proposed study will examine possible ambiguous prejudices of children in the present day, adding to data in the ever-changing climate of race. By studying race in children we can get insight into the prejudice of children and begin to answer questions on how to prevent racism.

Possible limitations of the proposed study should be mentioned. First, the sample of children will be taken from few schools all within the same suburban area, while this represents the area in which the data was taken, one should be cautious when generalizing the data. Another limitation is that utilizing a cartoon drawing may not seem as realistic, and therefore may not represent how the child would react to real life situations.

Despite the limitations of the study, the implications could prove far-reaching. The proposed study fills the gap of knowledge on current relevant data regarding children. Past research has

focused on objects such as dolls to get data on prejudice. By taking it a step further, using real life situations depicted in a drawing, this could produce a more accurate depiction of childhood prejudice. If the results of the study reveal prejudice in children, it could open the door on future research to help prevent it. By catching discrimination early on and preventing it, it in turn could lead to the decrease in health effects related to racism. These health effects include cardiovascular disease and other stress related health concerns in adults, as well as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and conduct disorder in children.

By bringing to light racism in children; parents, students, and educators can be made more aware of underlying prejudices. This awareness will hopefully breed reform in schools. Since the school system has a very controlled curriculum and strives to provide its students with a stress free learning environment, knowledge of racism can begin a process of removing it, creating an environment more conducive to learning.

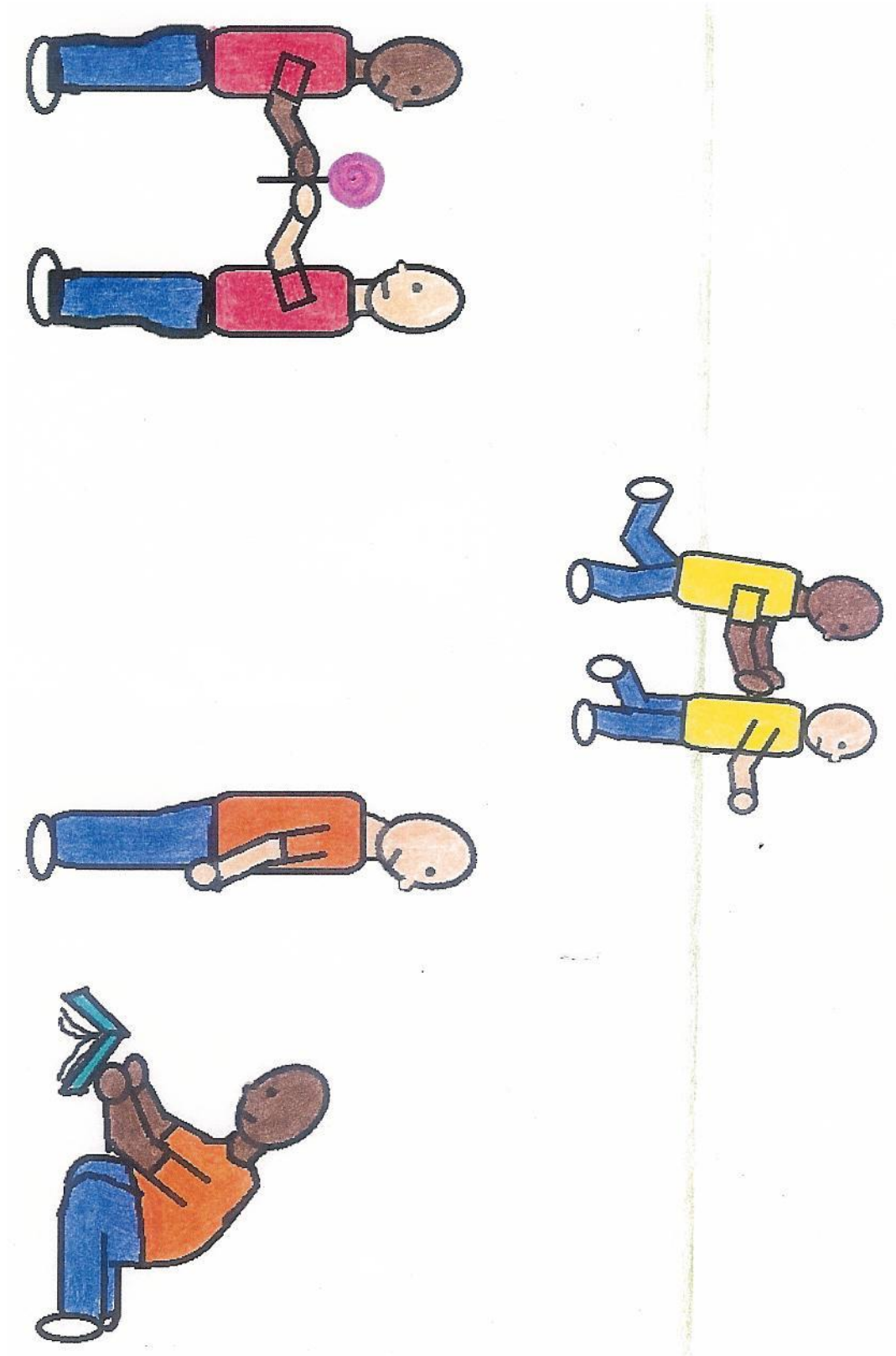
Mere participation in the study could open up discussion of race in the home and help people to reevaluate their thoughts on the current state of race in America.

References

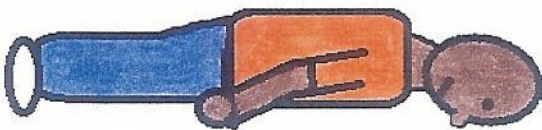
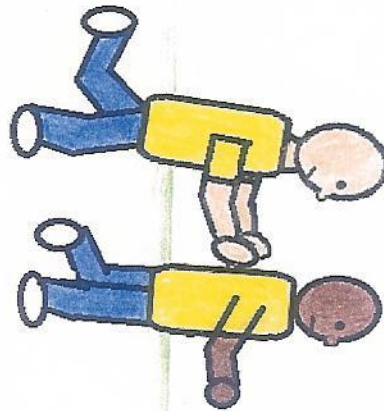
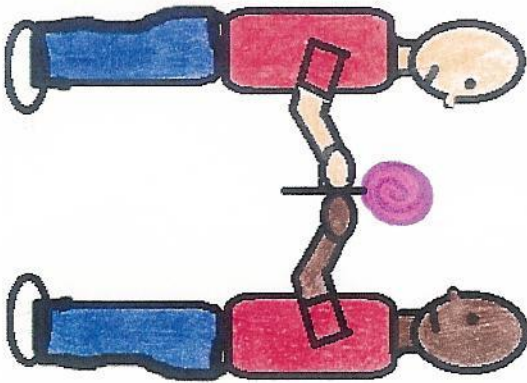
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Appendix A



Appendix B



Appendix C
Jessica Roesslein
6 Beaufort Ct.
Saint Charles, MO 63301
Jrr626@lindenwood.lionmail.edu

September 14, 2010

XXX
Superintendent
XXX School District
Address

Dear XXX,

I am contacting you in regards to recruiting elementary school students from the XXX School District for participation in my study entitled, "Perceived Racial Expectations of Children." The purpose of this study is to identify any slight preferences and biases that children may have toward children with a different skin color.

I am an undergraduate student at Lindenwood University and currently conducting an undergraduate research under the supervision of Dr. Michiko Nohara- LeClair. I have completed two courses in research design, which stress the importance of ethical research. I also have completed the online human ethics training from the National Institutes of Health (certificate number: 505784) and have cleared a background check (8/24/2010). In addition, I am currently enrolled in two education courses and am set to begin my classroom observations within the Francis Howell School District starting DATE (use same format as date up above).

Enclosed you will find several documents;

- A detailed description of the study to be conducted
- A copy of the parental consent form
- A letter to the principal and consent form
- The Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board disposition letter
- A copy of my background check
- A copy of my online ethics training certificate
- A copy of both drawings to be used in the study

Thank you so much for taking the time to review my study and consider allowing it to take place at your institution. If you have any questions regarding my study please feel free to contact me via email at jrr626@lionmail.lindenwood.edu or contact my research supervisor at mnohara-leclair@lindenwood.edu.

Sincerely,
Jessica Roesslein

Appendix D

Invitation to Participate in a Study of Perceived Racial Expectations of Children

Description of the Study:

Your child is being invited to participate in a study about racial expectations they may have involving everyday situations. The goal of this study is to learn what slight preferences children might have with respect to different races in the context of everyday life. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before you agree to your child being in the study.

If you decide to let your child take part in this study he/she will be asked to look at a scene with various children of different races at play with one another. In this picture there will be ambiguous situations such as a child passing candy to one another. Your child will be asked to tell the researcher what is happening in the picture and your child's responses will be recorded with paper and pencil. This will take about 15 minutes.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Though there does not appear to be any risks or discomforts to your child the researcher will let the child know that he/she may withdraw for the study at anytime without any penalties.

Your child may benefit from the curiosity of the experiment process and the feeling of being involved.

Confidentiality:

I will protect your child's confidentiality by coding his/her information with a number so no one can trace the answers to his/her name. All the findings will be combined and no identifying information will be used. All the information from the study will be kept confidential and shredded after 1 year.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your decision to allow your child to take part in the study is voluntary. Your child is free to choose not to take part in the study or to stop taking part at any time without any penalty.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions or concerns you may contact the researcher or Faculty Supervisor at the contact information listed below.

Researcher:

Jessica Roesslein

(314)-712-1069

Jrr626@lionmail.lindenwood.edu

Supervisor:

Dr. Michiko Nohara-LeClair

(636)-949-4371

mnohara-leclair@lindenwood.edu

Statement of Consent:

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree allow my child _____ to participate in this study.

Print your child's name

Print Parent/Guardian Name

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Date

Name of Director/Principal

Name of School

Address of School

My name is Jessica Roesslein and I am currently conducting undergraduate research through Lindenwood University under the supervision of Dr. Michiko Nohara-LeClair. I am writing this letter to obtain permission to recruit children from Becky David Elementary School for participation in my study.

This study has already been approved by the Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board in February, 2010 (LU IRB # 10-57, see disposition form attached) and an application for renewal is currently being reviewed. In addition to IRB approval, I have also taken other measures to ensure the safety and ethical treatment of your students. I have completed two courses in research design at Lindenwood University, which stress the importance of ethical research. I have also completed the online human ethics training from the National Institutes of Health (9/4/2010, Certification Number: 505784) and have cleared a background check which has been filed with the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services Family Care Safety Registry (see attached copy). I have also completed a pilot study with children from another area school this spring.

The goal of this study is to learn whether children demonstrate subtle preferences towards one race or another in the context of everyday life. The participants will be tested individually and be asked to look at a scene with children of different skin color at play with one another. In this picture there will be ambiguous situations such as a child passing candy to one another. The participant will then be asked to tell me what is happening in the picture. The participants response will be coded as containing a prosocial behavior (such as one child sharing his candy with the other) or a conflict (the children are bickering over whose candy it is). A follow-up question will be asked to determine which child in the picture is perceived as being responsible for the behavior (for example, who is the one sharing with whom). The participant's responses will be recorded by paper and pencil and no audio or video recordings will be used to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

The entire session with each participant will take about 15 minutes. The participants who choose to participate must turn in a signed parental consent form that I will supply and express assent to being included in the study by verbally assenting to participation in front of an adult witness, such as a teacher. If at anytime they choose not to continue they can stop and return to class without prejudice or penalty. Although I do not anticipate any major risks to the participants, if they appear uncomfortable at anytime during the study I will reassure them that they do not have to participate. If you have questions or concerns you may contact the researcher or Faculty Supervisor at the contact information listed below. Thank you so much for your time!

Principle Investigator

Jessica Roesslein

(314)-712-1069

Jrr626@lionmail.lindenwood.edu

Faculty Supervisor:

Michiko Nohara-LeClair, Ph.D.

Professor of Psychology

Lindenwood University

209 S. Kingshighway

Saint Charles, MO 63301

(636)-949-4371
Mnohara-leclair@lindenwood.edu

Please fill in the following if you consent to having Jessica Roesslein work at Becky-David Elementry School.

Statement of Consent:

I _____ (print name) understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree allow this study to take place at my facility, Becky-David Elementry School on XXX

Signature

Date: _____

Appendix F

11-25

IRB Project Number

**Lindenwood University
Institutional Review Board Disposition Report**

To: Ms. Jessica Roesslein

CC: Dr. Nohara-LeClair

The IRB has reviewed your abbreviated application for the continuation of your research and it has been approved.

Ricardo Delgado
9/29/2010

Institutional Review Board Chair

Date

Appendix G



Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

P.O. Box 570, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0570 Phone: 573-751-6400 FAX: 573-751-6010
 RELAY MISSOURI for Hearing and Speech Impaired 1-800-735-2966 VOICE 1-800-735-2466



Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon
 Governor

8/24/2010

FAMILY CARE SAFETY REGISTRY

Background Screening Result

Registrant ROESSLEIN, JESSICA ROSEANNE

Registrant No. 62925531

JESSICA ROESSLEIN
 ATTN - JESSICA ROESSLEIN
 6 BEAUFORT CT
 ST CHARLES MO 63301

The Family Care Safety Registry (FCSR) received your request on 08/24/2010 for a background screening. The background screening 1971103009 performed on 08/24/2010 indicated the following:

No finding reported in the background screening.

The FCSR background screening accesses information from the following agencies:

- Criminal history information on file with the MO State Highway Patrol
- Sex Offender Registry information on file with the MO State Highway Patrol
- Child abuse/neglect information on file with the MO Dept. of Social Services
- Foster parent license denial, revocation or suspension information on file with the MO Dept. of Social Services
- Employee Disqualification List information on file with the MO Dept. of Health and Senior Services
- Employee Disqualification Registry information on file with the MO Dept. of Mental Health
- Child Care license revocations on file with the MO Dept. of Health and Senior Services

A copy of this background screening has been provided to the individual. If results were indicated, you may obtain specific information about these results by contacting the FCSR toll-free, 1-866-422-6872, or by submitting your request in writing to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Family Care Safety Registry, P.O. Box 570, Jefferson City, MO 65102. The request must include your name, address, telephone number and the reason for requesting the information and must include registrant's full name, social security number and background screening number shown above.

The FCSR provides background screening information for employment purposes only. Anyone misusing information provided by the FCSR is guilty of a class B misdemeanor. The FCSR bases criminal history identification on the name, social security number and date of birth you provided, not the use of fingerprints. Please be advised that you need to contact your licensing representative or other agency contact to determine whether this background screening meets the requirements for licensure, certification or registration by state agencies.

If you have any questions or need assistance you may contact the FCSR toll free at 866-422-6872.



www.dhss.state.mo.us

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services protects and promotes quality of life and health for all Missourians by developing and implementing programs and systems that provide: information and education, effective regulation and oversight, quality services, and surveillance of diseases and conditions.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER: Services provided on a nondiscriminatory basis.

Appendix H



Appendix I

Parents:

Thank you for allowing your child to participate in the study “Perceived Racial Expectations of Children”. The purpose of this study was to identify if any racial prejudices exist in children. If prejudice is identified, this will open the door to future research on how to prevent it. Keep in mind that all of the information in this study was combined and that no identifying information will be used.

If you are interested in the aggregate of this study it will be made available for you to look at after the completion of the study upon your request. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at the information listed below.

Thank you!

Jessica Roesslein

(314)-712-1069

Jrr626@lionmail.lindenwood.edu

Appendix J

Dear _____ :

Thank you for allowing me to take time out of your schedule to invite willing students with parent permission to take part in my study. Your students are being asked to participate in a study about racial expectations they may have involving everyday situations. The goal of this study is to learn what slight preferences children might have to their own race or other races in the context of everyday life.

Your students will be pulled out of class individually for about 15 minutes each and be asked to look at a scene with various children of different races at play with one another. In this picture there will be ambiguous situations such as a child passing candy to one another. Your students will be asked to tell me what is happening in the picture and his/her responses will be recorded with paper and pencil.

If you are interested in the aggregate of this study it will be made available for you to look at after the completion of the study upon your request. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at the information listed below.

Thank you!

Jessica Roesslein

(314)-712-1069

Jrr626@lionmail.lindenwood.edu