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Title:	Young Stellar Clusters in the Ulirg IRAS 17208-0014
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Abstract

High resolution studies reveal that luminous young stellar clusters and their associations are ubiquitous within 1 kpc of ULIRGs and could be the precursors to globular clusters. We have undertaken a study of the ages masses extinction and dust properties of the clusters found in the brightest ULIRG in the extended IRAS BGS Sample IRAS17208-0014 using it as a unique system in which to study the formation and evolution of clusters in gas-rich mergers. Using NICMOS JHK and WFPC2 I-band images we have compared the near-IR colors of the clusters with those expected from a Bruzual & Charlot model. There are a few clusters whose colors can be explained by moderate values of extinction (1-3 mag) but others require some contribution from hot (400-1000K) dust. We derive ages of 1-few tens of Myr and masses of 10^6 to 10^7 M_{sun}. These clusters may be supermassive in comparison to globular clusters or could be unresolved associations of clusters. We have submitted a Cycle 12 ACS proposal to image IRAS17208-0014 in an effort to resolve the clusters on a scale comparable to the largest globular clusters and obtain BVI imaging to break the degeneracy between extinction and hot dust emission.

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