“She called me a Mexican!”: a study of ethnic identity

Simona Florentina Boroianu

University of Northern Iowa

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"SHE CALLED ME A MEXICAN!"

A STUDY OF ETHNIC IDENTITY

A Dissertation

Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirement for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Approved:

Dr. Robert Boody, Chair

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University of Northern Iowa

December 2007
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Approved:

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December 2007
ABSTRACT

Ethnic identity is a dynamic construct whose conceptualization has raised ongoing controversy among researchers. It has been suggested that ethnic identity includes several components that can be examined individually or in combination.

The purpose of this paper is to study ethnic identity in Mexican-origin children, as one of the multifaceted aspects of the adaptation process that immigrant children experience in their transition to becoming a part of the United States’ mainstream culture.

No formal assessment of ethnic identity in Mexican-origin children in Iowa has been conducted yet, therefore this study is meant to fill a gap and bring in knowledge of Mexican-origin children’s ethnic identity perceptions.

This paper will study ethnic identity in a sample of 20 elementary students, ages 6 through 10, of Mexican descent. Two components of ethnic identity are specially examined: ethnic identification and ethnic preference, as well as the way the two components evolve over time.

The instrument employed to assess ethnic identification and ethnic preference consists of a set of pictures that the children are asked to select and evaluate. The task is presented through a Choice Questionnaire that consists of 12 items. A series of open-ended questions will also be used to elicit more in depth information and to provide a vivid description of subjects’ life experiences.

The researcher will score and interpret the subjects’ responses to determine the level of identification with either culture, as well as their preference for the Mexican or American culture.
Implications for further research will be discussed, as well as the relevance of the results for improving teaching and the curriculum in order to better meet the learning needs of Mexican-origin students.

The current study intends to examine two of the five components that the ethnic identity model suggested by Bernal et al. (1990) comprises: ethnic identification and ethnic preferences. We chose to analyze only two of the components due to several factors: the time constraints that an academic year sets, the limited availability of a bilingual interviewer, a small pool of subjects that met the Mexican ancestry criteria (yet, one of the largest in the context of the Waterloo schools) that may limit the generalization of the findings, and a great degree of mobility among the Mexican-descent population that affected children's attendance to this particular school. However, we believe that this study could stir interest in the Mexican school-age children in Iowa and could be the beginning of a series of more comprehensive studies in respect to this population. Moreover, as past research indicated, geographical location of subjects was recognized as a factor that can highly influence behaviors and attitudes (Brand, Ruiz & Padilla, 1974). Without trying to make any predictions about the outcome of this study, one can speculate however, that the unique immigration make-up of the state of Iowa may yield different results than those past and current research reported. Apart from that, as it is designed, the study will offer insights into the culture of a school that stands apart in the district due to its diverse student ethnicity (Table C2), and can help educators better understand, teach and address the needs of their minority group students.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

An increasing number of both legal and undocumented people from Mexico come every year to the United States for better education for their children, and, subsequently, better living conditions and better jobs for their children, due to the limited opportunities in Mexico. In the recent years Iowa has become home for an increasing number of Hispanic/Latino immigrants. The low unemployment rates, the expansion of the food processing plants and the outmigration of young adults prompted in the recent years an influx of Hispanic/Latino population in this area (Ravuri, 2004). Grey (2006) states that there has been a shift in the ethnic makeup of the state of Iowa between 1990 and 2005. Whereas in 1990 most of the newcomers came from Asia (42%) and very few from Latin America (13.9%), in 2005, 41% of the immigrant population were from Latin America, out of which the majority (31%) came from Mexico.

The Iowa Center for Immigrant Leadership and Integration (ICILI), based at the University of Northern Iowa, estimated in 2006 a total of 125,000 documented and undocumented Latino immigrants in Iowa (M. Grey, personal communication, July 10, 2007). “Latinos are now the state’s largest minority population, outnumbering African Americans by more than 40,000” (Grey, 2006).

Black Hawk County reflects the same rapid growth that the state of Iowa faces. There was an increase in Latino population between 1990 and 2000 from 912 to 1,800 documented Latino immigrants (Race and Hispanic, 1990; Census 2000 Data, 2000), of
which 71% are from Mexico (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2000). Black Hawk’s projected Latino population in 2010 will be 4,000 (2007 State Profile Iowa, 2007).

Mexican immigration to the United States has occurred for several generations, but the permanent settling of Mexican immigrants in Iowa is a recent phenomenon, and the state is making efforts to accommodate this demographic growth.

Second Generation Mexican Children: A Split Ethnic Identity

Of all the issues related to the adaptation process Mexican immigrants go through when coming to the United States, the case of the second generation immigrant children is the focus of this study. Speaking Spanish and living as a “Mexican” at home and also speaking English and being “American” at school creates a duality that may be confusing, frustrating, and stressful. “Who am I?” is a question that may be disturbing for some of these children, as well as hard or impossible to answer.

Juan Manuel Garcia, at the time a 5th grader of Mexican descent, expressed his anguish in his “Between Two Languages” poem (Carden & Cappellini, 1997):

I am proud that I can speak both English and Spanish.  
But I feel like a jelly in a sandwich  
or a river between two mountains.  
I feel my head is filled with words.  
(...)  
I'm proud of my two languages,  
but sometimes I feel as if  
the Spanish speakers are on one mountain,  
the English speakers on the other,  
and I wish I could push them into the river  
so we could all be together. (p.6)

At the age of eight, Lorena Lozada describes the emotional struggles of a “divided heart,” torn between two worlds (Carden & Cappellini, 1997):
I feel my heart beating
It gives me a life
full of feelings.
I think I am two people inside.
I speak another language,
and I imagine my father’s country.
I know I am from there.
I dream that my grandmother
carries me in her heart.
There...here, always in my soul,
my family is with me,
and I love them.
I want to be there,
but I like it better here.
I feel my heart is divided. (p.4)

These poems, written with genuine emotion, reveal that second generation immigrant children experience a stressful process of adaptation to a life split between two cultures, an adaptation that may be just as lengthy and challenging to their ethnic identity as it is to that of their foreign-born parents.

Lopez and Stanton-Salazar (2001) contend that second generation Mexicans display an “ambivalent ethnic identity,” as “race is for them a source of confusion and ambivalence.” The authors consider that that these children

(…) feel caught between, on the one hand, the demands of their parents who are struggling to build new lives in the United States, and, on the other hand, their own struggles to combat what they perceive as a hostile environment and their need to construct a new identity that will allow them to face that environment with confidence (Lopez & Stanton-Salazar, 2001, p.57).

These observations are noteworthy in the context of a growing Latino population who, “are the state’s fastest growing population” (Grey, 2006). The landscape of the communities in Iowa has already been transformed by the latest waves of Mexican immigrants: public celebrations of Mexican traditions, ethnic stores and restaurants,
bilingual services, piñatas and radio programs in Spanish are only part of the new and diverse makeup of Iowa.

As a member of the Iowan community, being culturally informed and educated would not only facilitate reaching out to the newcomer families, but would also bring an awareness of their adjustment struggle. Mexican immigrants are engaged in crafting new identities and bring along a “dual frame of reference” that “acts like a perceptual filter by which the newcomers process their new experiences” (Orozco & Orozco, 2001). This study provides information and insights into this process, with a view to enlighten and educate. Professionals in education, health and social services whose work impacts Latino families need to learn about Mexicans’ sense of identity and way of life to better service and address their needs. By the same token, community members would only gain from learning who the Mexicans living next door are and how they live.

Undoubtedly, the adjustment process must have a two way connection in that both cultures interchange each other’s perspectives and lives. It is the host culture’s experience, however, the one whose adjustment is not nearly as dramatic as the one experienced by the immigrant families. Consequently, the effort to acknowledge, understand and accommodate is instrumental in creating harmonious communities.

Orozco and Orozco (2001) assert that “immigration is worth the sacrifice” for many immigrants, but that “the gains of immigration come at a considerable cost” (p.6). An important part of this cost is immigrants’ fear of losing their children to the new culture, which weakens parental authority and the family structure, contend the same authors (p.6). Second generation children construct their new ethnic identities socially, as
a reflection of how they are viewed and received by the dominant culture, and that is why "vital importance to the children’s social adaptation are the parents’ ability to maintain respect for family and the child’s connection to the culture of origin" (Orozco & Orozco, 2001, p.7).

The lives of these immigrants are shaped by the swing between the traditional Mexican family on the one hand, and the American societal stereotypes on the other. The current study explores the reflection of these two variables in the making of new ethnic identities with the intent to inform and to serve both those working with Mexican families, as well as children of Mexican origin in their pursuit of a successful adaptation.

This exploratory study addressed the issue of ethnic identity in Mexican-origin children as one of the multifaceted aspects of the adaptation process that immigrant children experience in their transition to becoming a part of the United States’ mainstream culture. Previous research has had different views, often controversial, on the conceptualization and measurement of ethnic identity. In the past decades it has been suggested that ethnic identity is a complex concept which includes several different components that have been investigated individually or in combination. The present study specifically assesses the following two components: (a) ethnic self-identification, considered an essential starting point in investigating ethnic identity (Phinney, 1990), and (b) ethnic feelings and preferences in elementary children of Mexican descent in an elementary school in a small mid-western city. The study further examines possible age differences in ethnic identification and preferences.
Ethnic identification refers to the sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group. “Ethnic self-identification: Children’s categorization of themselves as members of their ethnic group. This categorization requires that the children have an own-ethnic group category, with its appropriate label and distinguishing cues” (Bernal, Knight, Ocampo, Garza, & Cota, 1993, p.33).

Ethnic feelings and preferences indicate positive feelings and attributes that one ascribes to the members of one’s ethnic group: “Ethnic feelings and preferences: Children’s feelings about their own ethnic group membership and their preferences for ethnic members, behaviors, values, traditions, and language” (Bernal et al. 1993, p.33).

All participating subjects are children of Mexican descent, which means that one or both parents were born in Mexico and immigrated to the United States where they currently reside.

Importance of the Study

I teach in a school with a number of students of Mexican origin. As a teacher, I felt an interest to get to know their origin better. The fact that one of them cried her heart out because she was called “Mexican” by one of her white peers, or that another one wanted to have her hair blond, or that a boy who believed that his brown skin would someday be white, or that two little girls liked to speak Spanish during recess so that “the others” could not understand them, were intriguing and concerning to me. The issues relate to ethnic self-perceptions, feelings and preferences, which are important cultural adjustment dimensions. How well do teachers in Iowa know their students of Mexican origin?
Grey (2000) considers common knowledge the fact that often these children fall behind grade level and their American peers, as a result of a number of challenges. “These children present a number of challenges to school districts. The most obvious challenge is associated with language ability” (p. 20).

Language barriers are the main reason educators blame their Mexican-origin students for their failure and misbehavior. Whereas research has found that a total lack, or insufficient command, of the English language and its implications slow down the process of acculturation (Arriagada, 2005), it is also very important to recognize the psychological factors as important variables to increase adaptability (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 1992).

Efforts in the direction of defining ethnic identity are present in a growing number of research studies, yet the results and the ethnic identity models proposed (Table C1) do not yet represent a consensus (Aboud, 1987; Arce, 1981; Bernal et al. 1993; Bernal, Knight, Garza, Ocampo & Cota, 1990; Clark & Clark, 1947; Garcia, 1982; Partida, 1996; Phinney & Rotheram, 1987; Quintana, 1999; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990; Trueba, 1999). Most of the studies have focused on areas of the U.S. where the percentage of Mexican-origin population is far higher than in Iowa, such as California, Texas, New York, Arizona, and Colorado. Also, despite the fact that some rather old research was conducted with large samples of population (Arce, 1997) there have been no useful findings applicable to Mexican origin people in Iowa.

In addition, more research attention has been given to adolescents and adults’ ethnic identity than to children’s ethnic identity. Children’s ethnic identity has begun
with the works of Horowitz and Horowitz (1938) and Clark and Clark (1947) who researched the area of the development of ethnic awareness and preferences in Black children. Despite the echo of the findings and the replications of these early studies later on, in the past decades researchers' interest in ethnic identity development was geared less toward elementary school children and more towards adolescent and adult years. The present study will constitute an attempt to fill a gap in this direction and bring more information about the formation of ethnic identity in childhood.

A third reason for the importance of this study is found in Sandra Sanchez's comment as Immigrants Voice Project Director in Des Moines, Iowa. She considers it is amazing how little most Americans know about immigration and immigrants in general. Although there have been positive aspects in the way the state of Iowa received immigrants in the past years, there is still a need for a culturally appropriate training. Understanding diversity would enable the locals to reach out to the community of immigrants who has the same potential for success as anyone else (S. Sanchez, personal communication, March 23, 2007). This statement is applicable to the school system as well, although there is genuine effort and desire from the part of teachers and administrators to move towards accommodating cultural differences and promoting ethnic awareness.

Under the circumstances of a growing Mexican population, insufficient knowledge about these immigrants' culture, and the lack of research on ethnic identity issues linked to children of Mexican descent in Iowa, there is reason and need to investigate this aspect.
This study could stir interest in the Mexican-origin school-age children in Iowa and could be the beginning of a series of more comprehensive studies in respect to this population. Moreover, as past research has indicated, geographical location of subjects was recognized as a factor that can highly influence behaviors and attitudes (Brand, Ruiz & Padilla, 1974). In that respect one can speculate that the unique immigration make-up of the state of Iowa may yield different results than other research reported.

Apart from that, as it is designed, the study will offer insights into the culture of a school that stands apart in the district due to its diverse student ethnicity (Table C1), and can help educators better understand, teach and address the needs of their minority group students.

Organization of the Dissertation

The rest of the dissertation consists of four chapters. The second chapter provides a review of the literature on two main topics: (a) ethnic identity in Mexican children, and (b) challenges faced by immigrants in general and by Latino immigrants in particular, with regard to acculturation. The third chapter describes the design of the study. Chapter 4 presents the data collected and a statistical analysis. Finally, Chapter 5 presents an interpretation of the results, including its implications.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Challenges in the Process of Acculturation

To study the ethnic identity of second generation immigrants, we reviewed the literature on acculturation, definitions and interpretations of ethnic identity and models of ethnic identity. The studies reviewed lay the foundation for exploring Mexican-American children’s sense of ethnic identity.

What is Acculturation?

Known also as “cultural contact” or “assimilation,” acculturation is a process that occurs when two or more cultures come in contact with one another through trade, immigration, or conquest, so that they affect one another.

The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology’s (Johnson, 2000) definition follows the traditional ones in which acculturation is described as a full internalization of a dominant, elite culture by another culture: “a dominant group imposes its culture on subordinate groups so effectively that these become virtually indistinguishable from the dominant culture” (p. 70). This definition implicitly refers to change, but favors the term conform with the indication of a “lesser form of assimilation” when “newcomers to a society conform outwardly to values and norms as a way to adapt to their situation” (p. 70).

Berry et al. (1992) make an important distinction between group-level acculturation which involve “changes in social structure, economic base, and political organization,” and psychological acculturation which entails “changes…in such
phenomena as identity, values and attitudes" (p. 272). What these researchers refer to as psychological acculturation, is a term coined by T.D. Graves (1967, as cited in Berry et al., 1992, p. 271) and explained by the authors as “the changes that an individual experiences as a result of being in contact with other cultures and as a result of participating in the process of acculturation that his cultural or ethnic group is undergoing” (p. 272). This finding is of particular interest to the current study and will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Americans in the Making

Making sense of a new reality that contrasts with your own is the challenging process at the core of reconstructing a new identity. In Polish immigrant Eva Hoffman’s novel “Lost in Translation” (1990), she humorously speaks about her inability to understand the American mainstream cultural conventions:

At night, in our dormitory, groups of eager-eyed, fresh-skinned girls gather in their nighties in the common room area, and, to the strumming of someone’s guitar, earnestly sing “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” and “Kumbaya,” and “Five Hundred Miles,” songs that move some of them nearly to tears, but that seem to me, at first, oddly flat and unemotional; it takes awhile before I become attuned to their foursquare, dignified melodies (p. 172).

There are some other phenomena that I cannot fit on any grid....The campus eccentrics gravitate toward me, perhaps because they sense in me a fellow outsider who will not judge them by the mainstream standards. People compliment me on being a “good listener,” but they are wrong. I’m more like a naturalist trying to orient myself in an uncharted landscape, and eyeing the flora and fauna around me with a combination of curiosity and detachment. They might be upset if they knew to which extent I view them as puzzling species, but instead, they see a sort of egalitarian attentiveness. Since I don’t know what’s normal and what’s weird here, I listen with an equally impartial and polite interest to whoever approaches me ... (p.173).
Hoffman’s (1990) vivid description implies that among the challenges of immigration, the sense of belonging is affected and results in an estranged ethnic identity. Identification with the mainstream culture is difficult because perceptions are filtered through a different frame of reference:

The human mean is located in a different place here, and qualities like adventurousness, or cleverness, or shyness are measured along with a different scale and mapped within a different diagram. You can’t transport human meanings whole from one culture to another more than you can transliterate a text (p. 175).

Consequently, a new ethnic identity is almost forced to emerge, but the process is more often than not alienating.

Similar thoughts to Hoffman’s view were expressed by a Mexican woman now living in a small mid-western city. During a casual conversation, when asked about the challenges of her new life, she told this researcher: “If you come to the United States it is like you are born again, you have no past; your past is in your heart.” Thus, the immigrant “is suspended, often in a state of personal and social conflict, between two cultures” (Berry et al., 1992, p. 281), and becomes what Park (1950) calls a “hybrid on the margin of two worlds;” Stonequist (1937) defines this concept as follows: “The individual who through migration, education, marriage, or some other influence leaves one social group or culture without making a satisfactory adjustment to another finds himself on the margin of each but a member of neither. He is a ‘marginal’ man” (p. 3).

So the marginal man...is one who is poised in psychological uncertainty between two (or more) social worlds; reflecting in his soul the discords and harmonies, repulsions and attractions of these worlds, one of which is often “dominant” over the other; within which membership is implicitly if not explicitly based upon birth or ancestry (race or nationality); and where exclusion removes the individual from a system or group relations (p. 9).
Research shows evidence that trading one tradition for a new one comes at a price that impacts one’s sense of ethnic identity (Zelinsky, 2001). For instance, Zelinsky maintains that the process of attaining a new identity is challenging because it has to do less with any tradition and more to bureaucracy, standards, classifications and categorizations. While official designations are arbitrary, they definitely implicate the behaviors of a community’s members: “If you are officially informed that you belong to a given group, you may begin to believe it” (Zelinsky, 2001, p.178). The implication is that once an immigrant is labeled, officially or unofficially, in a certain way, for example with the pejorative use of the term “mojado” (“wet back”), the understanding of one’s affiliation to a particular ethnic community is distorted by negative stereotyping and becomes confusing. Drawing from Turner’s (1982) theory on group behavior, this researcher can imply that host culture’s stereotypical perception of an ethnic group would affect its behavior toward that particular group, to the point where the group’s members “become perceptually interchangeable because they are perceived in terms of their shared category characteristics and not their personal idiosyncratic nature” (Turner, 1982, in Tajfel, 1982, p.28). As a result, one’s ethnic identity becomes a source of humiliation, and an ambiguous element of individual’s whole self: “If one must ask oneself ... who am I?-how trustworthy is the response?”(Zelinsky, 2001, p. 80).

The ambiguousness of the answer to an immigrant’s identity is even greater when the referent itself, i.e., the American ethnic make-up, has a split identity: “Being American means that you feel like you’re the norm, one of my friends tells me” (Hoffman, 1990, p. 202). “...In a splintered society, what does one assimilate to? Perhaps
the very splintering itself" (Hoffman, 1990, p. 197). "...I want to figure out ... where I belong in this America that's made up of so many subAmericas" (Hoffman, 1990, p. 202).

The case of the Mexican-Americans particularly illustrates this approach of labeling and stereotyping, and the effect they have on immigrants' identity. Mexican-Americans differ from other immigrant groups in the United States due to "... racial ambiguity and the persistent negative stereotypes attached to being Mexican in America: By official statistics Mexicans and other Latinos are white, black, Asian or Native American, but in practice Latino and especially Mexican serve as quasi-racial terms" (Lopez & Stanton-Salazar, 2001, p. 59-60).

Because of labeling and negative stereotyping, Mexican immigrants experience a high degree of uncertainty, fear, loss of identity, and partial isolation which reinforces their alienation:

... the tragic reality for many Mexican immigrant families is that the entire process of assimilation (one which often lasts throughout a lifetime) is defined by strained family relations, isolation, misunderstandings, poor communication and the clashing of values, morals, cultures and ideals (Partida, 1996, p. 244).

The lack of control under the new rules, the lack of power and status in the American society, and the inability to manage the new roles assigned by the dominant group -- in other words, the feeling of isolation and insecurity -- increase the chances that Mexican-Americans will lose their sense of being, and more importantly, their sense of ethnic identity.

Portes and Rumbaut (1996) describe a family of immigrants from Guadalajara who came to the US in 1979. They did well financially, but they wanted to go back
because they believed that the dominant group ("the gringos") would always view them as inferior. Communication between the host culture and the immigrant community is, therefore, resented and marked by inadequate understanding and a growth of stereotypes and negative expectations.

Research blames "Anglo racism" for refuting "the Mexican-American of his ethnicity, making him ashamed of being Mexican" (Moore, as cited in Rodriguez & DeBlassie, 1983). Consequently, second generation Mexican-Americans react to the pressure of prejudice and discrimination by adopting American society's stereotyped expectations of what the Mexican-American's lifestyle and living standards should be. The fissure in the interplay of first and later generation immigrants creates in-group tension and poses further acculturation challenges.

Campo-Flores' article "Brown against Brown" (2000) discusses the reality of pressure and prejudice as in-group issues between Mexicans and Chicano-Mexican Americans. At a Midwestern meat packing plant where both groups work, Mexicans do not mix with Chicanos, because Chicanos think "they're more gringo than Mexican," and Chicanos do not mix with Mexicans because "'They don't have the respect we had back then. They don't have morals.'" The context reveals a conflicted ethnic identity and a convulsed relationship between the whites, the Chicanos and the Mexicans. The Mexican-Americans are resented because they are seemingly "running" the town, schools are "overcrowded," crime is "rising," and whites feel like they are the "minority." Yet Chicanos, people of the same ancestry as the newcomers, are perceived differently by the white community. Whites, as the article reports, see Chicanos as "'the best people you
ever seen.'" Chicanos have reached harmony with whites by intentionally giving up their language and traditions, in an effort to blend in. The arrival of the Mexicans is challenging this harmony. Chicanos are sometimes mistaken for Mexicans by the community because of their similar appearance and that "'does kind of tick you off,'" says a Chicano.

The Latino identity is split into two sides now, Campo-Flores writes, and people feel "'caught between two worlds.'" The clash occurs at the economic, cultural and psychological level. Mexicans are disliked by the Chicanos for "not doing a little better, for reminding them of the poverty of their ancestors." Chicanos, on the other hand, may be Mexicans' "raza (race)," but not their "gente (people), "because "Their [Chicanos'] heritage has been perverted by the more vulgar features of American culture—the lack of respect, the breakdown of family." Yet, Chicanos are proud of their ethnic identity, and "many say that the fresh infusion of Hispanic culture brought by immigrants has revitalized their identity as Latinos." Chicanos’ effort to acculturate was not driven by feelings of shame; they only wanted to get rid of the stigma associated with the Mexican ancestry. Therefore, they navigated consciously toward Campo-Flores, 2000, p. 49).

In light of this article, assimilation appears to be a stressful experience that requires "strong coping abilities" to "maintain Mexican-American values" (Kuvlesky & Pattela, as cited in Rodriguez & DeBlassie, 1983). First generation immigrants struggle to live the American experience while maintaining their Mexican ways at home "'... in part because traditions and cultural behaviors provide both internalized standards of behavior
and a soothing sense of social safety. Culture provides us with models for understanding experience and for sorting out meanings” (Orozco & Orozco, 2001, p.90).

Nonetheless, the traditional Mexican parents’ role as models and guides for their children is destabilized through the intricate pathways of acculturation. Partida (2001) shows that choosing to identify with the traditions of a Mexican family may be perceived by children as “means to be ‘kept down’,” serving “as a constant reminder that the individual has been unable to fit, thus, has failed” (p. 247). Instead, “children may choose to become as Americanized as possible (assimilate) so as to blend in and forget about the shame of humiliation often experienced throughout the immigration process.” Children often resent their families and ethnic origin, regarding those elements as “a source of shame and humiliation” (Partida, 1996, p. 247).

Language and appearance are examples of children’s need to quickly change their immigrant status:

Children quickly acquire new language skills and often become reluctant to speak their original language in public. They desperately want to wear clothes that will let them be “cool” or, at the very least, do not draw attention to themselves as “different.” Children of immigrants become acutely aware of nuances of behaviors that although “normal” at home, will set them apart as “strange” and “foreign” in public (Orozco & Orozco, 2001, p.88).

However, the new ethnic identity created by first and later generations of Mexican-Americans comes at a price:

This understanding that what is Mexican is often a synonym for what is inferior, often becomes enlarged to include not only traditions, but language and culture. Anything that is American is thought of as superior to anything that is traditional, old and ‘more Mexican’ (Partida, 1996, p. 251).
Consequently, this negative perception of ingroup identity, inflicted in the Mexican ethnic group by means of outgroup stereotyping, implies that “members will be motivated to either leave that group physically or dissociate themselves from it psychologically and aspire to membership of a higher status group (...)” (Turner, 1982, in Tajfel, 1982, p.34).

Ethnic Identity: A Dynamic Construct

*No, ...the real American has not yet arrived. He is only in the Crucible, I tell you—he will be the fusion of all races, the coming superman.* (Zangwill,1911).

Theoretical Approaches Used in Ethnic Identity Research

As a consequence of the confusion and lack of consensus as to what ethnic identity is or how it should be measured (Roberts, Phinney, Masse, Chen, Roberts, & Romero, 1999), researchers in various disciplines (sociology, psychology, anthropology) differ in their conceptualizations and break down of ethnic identity components. Such studies on ethnic identity begin by exploring a number of different ways of thinking about the concept and evolve into complex categorizations that refine and clarify earlier findings and lend validity and reliability to the measurement of ethnic identity. The importance of these early studies lies not in their findings, but in pointing out the limitations of the studies, and consequently, the need to more rigorously operationalize and conceptualize ethnic identity.

Ethnic identity has been recognized in research and in literature, as the quote above shows, as a salient aspect of the acculturation process. However, the constructs of ethnic identity and acculturation are somewhat vague (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001), and used interchangeably (Nguyen, Messe, & Stollak, 1999, as cited in
Phinney, et al., 2001). This has led to conceptual confusion and controversy among researchers. Some believe that ethnic identity can be studied and understood using the theoretical framework applied to the study of acculturation (Phinney et al., 2001). In this respect, to these researchers, the model of acculturation formulated by Berry et al., (1992) constitutes a valid theoretical framework for understanding ethnic identity (Phinney et al., 2001). Berry’s contribution to the concept of psychological acculturation has at its core psychological and behavioral changes an individual experiences in the process of interaction with members of other cultural groups (Berry et al., 1992). This finding has been highly regarded, and researchers on ethnic identity built upon it, even if “attitudes toward other groups are not part of ethnic identity, but they may interact with it as a factor in one’s social identity in the larger society” (Phinney, 1992, p. 161). Berry et al. (1992) illustrate this implication as follows:

On immigration to the new country, there can be some dramatic and sometimes overwhelming contact experiences followed by psychological reactions: differences in climate, language, work, habit, religion, and dress are examples of challenges for the immigrant to which response is required. These cultural differences may be accepted, interpreted, or denied, and the individual may ride with them or be overrun by them (p.272).

Despite the soundness of this acculturation model, and of the body of research on ethnic identity that incorporated it, other scholars argue that the variable of acculturation has been mistakenly categorized as identity research (Pizzaro & Vera, 2001).

Roberts et al. (1999) construct their research using two different theoretical frameworks: social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982), and identity development theory (Erikson, 1968). Social identity theory has at its core a socially constructed concept of self, defined by Turner (1982) as follows: “Social identification can refer to the process
of locating oneself, or another person, within a system of social categorization, or, as a noun, to any social categorization used by a person to define him- or herself and others” (Turner, in Tajfel, 1982, p. 18). Turner states that the concept of social identity is “descended from Tajfel’s definition of it as ‘the individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of the group membership (1982, p. 31)” (Tajfel as cited in Turner, 1982, p. 18). In light of social identity theory, ethnic identity is regarded by some researchers (Roberts et al., 1999), as “one type of group identity that is central to the self-concept of members of ethnic minority groups,” and therefore expected to include “attitudes and a sense of group belonging” (p.303).

A second approach to understanding and defining ethnic identity has resulted from Erikson’s (1968) theory of identity development. As maintained by Erikson, a sense of identity begins to be felt at the end of childhood. The individual is most aware of its identity when he is “about to gain it” or when he is “just about to enter a crisis and feel the encroachment of identity confusion” (p.165). The adolescent years represent the time when the individual experiments, explores and transits from the insecurity of “the double prongs of vital inner need and inexorable outer demand” (p.165) to this identity awareness, optimally experienced as “a sense of psychological well-being” and as “a feeling of being at home in one’s body” (p.165). Phinney’s (1993) study of ethnic identity development in adolescents suggests a model of ethnic identity that is analogous to Erikson’s. Her three-stage model describes a process that begins with a “lack of exploration of ethnicity” (Phinney, in Bernal & Knight, 1993, p.66), continues with an
identity crisis that triggers ethnic identity examination and ends with an achieved identity as the ideal outcome (p.71). The study suggests that from a developmental point of view, younger adolescents display a less comprehensible sense of their ethnic identity than older adolescents. The model will be discussed in more detail in the next section of this present study.

The research presented only illustrates a variety of attempts to define ethnic identity by using acculturation, social identity theory and the theory of identity development, without suggesting however that consensus on the conceptualization of ethnic identity has been reached.

Apart from an unclear theoretical framework, another common criticism of the early literature on ethnic identity involves terminology and methodology inconsistencies. These are: (a) the confusion between the terms “race” and “ethnicity” (Bernal et al., 1990; Pizzaro & Vera, 2001), and (b) measures for preferences and attitudes that have mistakenly been interpreted as indicators of self-concept and self-identification (Aboud, 1987; Bernal et al., 1990).

Bernal et al. (1990) suggest that using the terms race and ethnicity interchangeably may have produced inaccurate results in research. For instance, even if past studies revealed that White and Black children develop racial awareness and the ability to identify the members of their group at the age of 3-5 years old, this may not be the case of the Mexican-American group. Due to the various racial mixtures, and, consequently, to a variety of physical appearances in Mexican-Americans (i.e., darker skin types, more indigenous looking, or lighter skin individuals, resembling European
features), this group's racial awareness may develop later than 3-5 years of age.

Furthermore, Bernal et al. (1990) state: "Perhaps racial awareness develops earlier than ethnic awareness because ethnic awareness may require attention to complex cues such as behaviors, custom beliefs, and values rather than the perception of often obvious physical characteristics" (p. 4).

A second criticism involves critical assessments of the measures employed in the past studies that disclose an erroneous relationship between a positive or negative attitude toward a group and the identification with that particular group. For example, Clark and Clark's study to determine racial preference (1947), the researchers interpret the preference (or positive attitude) for the White doll as a reflection of the child's identification with the White group. Based on this interpretation, Aboud (1987) asserts that: "The measurement of a favorable attitude toward a group is often taken as an index of identification with that group. However, the two are conceptually different and require separate measures" (Aboud, 1987 in Phinney & Rotheram, p. 51).

Phinney et al. (2001) broadly define ethnic identity by summing up various research perspectives:

Broadly, ethnic identity refers to an individual's sense of self in terms of membership in a particular ethnic group (Liebkind, 1992, 2001; Phinney, 1990). Although the term is sometimes used to refer simply to one's self-label or group affiliation (Rumbaut, 1994), ethnic identity is generally seen as embracing various aspects, including self-identification, feelings of belongingness and commitment to a group, a sense of shared values, and attitudes toward one's ethnic group (p.496).

Regardless of the controversial conceptual frameworks and differences in the definitions and components of ethnic identity, the majority of the studies examining the
concept agree that ethnic identity is a dynamic construct that has evolved and changed as a result of contextual and developmental factors (Phinney et al., 2001).

The following sections will follow this evolution of the construct of ethnic identity by providing an overview of the changes in understanding over time and the various techniques used to investigate ethnic identity. Also, several ethnic identity development models that emerged from the use of these techniques are presented. The review does not intend to offer a comprehensive coverage of the literature on ethnicity, but rather a critical summary of “landmark” studies that furthered the refinement of research on the topic.

**Ethnic/Racial Identification and Preference in Children: Techniques and Measurements**

Most early studies on ethnic identity used the doll or picture technique that required children to select the one they thought looked most like themselves. Using the same techniques, additional questionnaires were created to assess children’s preferences. The results were interpreted as measures for ethnic/racial self-identification and preferences.

Clark and Clark (1947) used the doll technique to investigate the racial identification and preferences in Black children. Four unclothed dolls, except for white diapers, were presented to children ages 3-7 years. Two of the dolls were brown with black hair and the other two were white with blond hair. Children were asked to choose one doll over the other upon the researcher’s request while responding to a series of eight questions.
The first four questions were designed to reveal ethnic preferences (e.g. "Give me the doll that is a nice doll."); the following three questions determined children’s knowledge of racial differences (e.g. "Give me the doll that looks like a colored child."); and the last question was designed to measure racial self-identification (e.g. "Give me the doll that looks like you."). Their findings demonstrated that Black children showed a definite preference for the white dolls over the brown ones, with an implied concomitant negative attitude towards the brown doll ("looks bad"). Clark and Clark (1947) noted that this preference decreased gradually from 4-7 years of age. They concluded that ages 4-5 are determinant in the beginning of the formation and development of racial attitudes and patterns. Results also indicated awareness of racial knowledge and differences in children from the age of 3-7 that develops from year to year and reaches stability at age 7. Most of the children identified themselves correctly by choosing the corresponding color of doll; however, Clark and Clark found that the lighter the skin, the less likely the children were to identify themselves with the brown doll. Their interpretation of the study pointed out that the correct self-identification with the brown doll was heavily influenced by the color of children’s skin, but was not necessarily correlated with their understanding of the child’s concepts of “white” and “colored.” (It was determined that the concept of “Negro” was not so well developed.)

The choice and preference of Black children for the white doll has been interpreted as a reflection of poor self-concept perceptions. These interpretations, as well as the Clark and Clark methodology, were criticized as being rather speculative (Bernal et al. 1990). In addition, Aboud (1987), for instance, considers that the self-identification
question ("Give me the doll that looks like you.") does not necessarily imply an accurate ethnic self-identification, although he admits that "the advantages of this measure are that pictorial stimuli are good elicitors of self-identification and that similarity is one way to tap the perceptions of common attributes" (p. 33). Aboud (1987) further suggests that conceptual clarity in obtaining an accurate self-identification can be acquired by deploying other measures based on more cognitive processes, such as: labeling, categorization and matched self-descriptions (p. 34).

Rohrer (1977) believes that the use of dolls has cognitive limitations because children find it difficult to perceive the more subtle details of ethnic differences, such as: skin tone, facial features, or hair texture. Instead, Rohrer suggests using a photo technique that employs color photos of real children, in order to eliminate some of the methodological problems and increase the possibility of an accurate ethnic identification of the subjects: "Through the use of color photographs of actual children, many of these problems can be eliminated and the possibility that the subject will identify with the material is increased" (p. 25).

Hraba and Grant (1970) replicated Clark and Clark's study after two decades. They followed Clark and Clark's procedure very closely. The same questions were asked and the four dolls, two black and two white, were used. Plus, their study added a new dimension to the previous findings - the subjects were asked to name and indicate the race of their best friends in an effort to analyze the consequences of their preferences and self-identification. Unlike Clark and Clark, Hraba and Grant found that Black children at all ages (3-8) included in the study preferred the doll of their own race, that choice
increased with age, and that the tone of their skin color made no difference in their preference for the black doll. The light-skinned children were as strong in their preference for the black doll as the darker skinned children. Furthermore, a larger percentage of Hraba and Grant's respondents correctly identified the doll that "looks like a Negro child" than Clark and Clark's subjects (86% as compared to 72%). A majority of the children were able to correctly identify the "colored" doll and the white ones. However, it is not clear in Hraba and Grant's study if the responses to item 8 ("Give me the doll that looks like you.") revealed correct identification. However, such misidentification is discussed in indirect relationship with age, just like in Clark and Clark. That is, the younger the group of subjects, the greater the percentage of those who misidentified themselves regardless of their skin tones. No relationship between doll preference and race and friends was found.

These findings led Hraba and Grant (1970) to conclude that unlike Clark and Clark's results, their study indicates that Black children are not white oriented, and that their choices pointed out that "Black is beautiful." The interpretation of these results was linked to the impact of the 1960s Black Pride Movement on communities.

An important finding of the early studies is the realization that unlike Black children's choices that denoted inconsistencies over time (Clark & Clark, 1947; Hraba & Grant, 1970), white children's preference for their own race was more constant (Horowitz & Horowitz, 1938). As a result, further studies and research on ethnic identity considered race preferences an indicator of children's knowledge of racial prejudice (Newman, Liss, & Sherman, 1983; Nesdale, 2001), that emerge as early as 3 years of age (Rohrer, 1977).
To validate any findings, researchers continued to focus their efforts on refining the methodology that had dominated the field. Although the use of Clark and Clark’s (1947) same basic procedures can be a “mixed blessing” to some scholars (Corenblum, 1996) because the use of similar methods yielded results that can be easier generalized, it was still unclear if the results were due to the specific methodology applied. Hence, it was suggested that certain factors, such as examiner’s ethnicity and sex, geographical residence of the target population, proportion of each ethnic group in the target sample, length and quality of contact, subjects’ socioeconomic level, subject’s age, sex of ethnic stimuli employed in instrumentation, subjects’ sex, and intensity of skin color, might have affected and altered children’s choices in the past studies (Brand, Ruiz, & Padilla, 1974). Also, Rohrer (1977) supported the inclusion of a third ethnic group with the goal of “more precise research” (p. 24), as opposed to the two traditional selections of subjects from the Black and White ethnic groups. A few years later, Newman et al. (1983) also discussed the techniques used to measure ethnic awareness and theorized that the variables measured (preferences, identification, and playmate choices) may not be indicative of the same aspect. Rather, they may indicate different aspects in the development of ethnic identity (p. 105).

Despite the controversy among researchers and the methodological differences, alternate suggested methods provided similar results as those involving dolls and pictures. For instance, the addition of the third ethnic group in the study of ethnic identity, the Mexican-Americans, along with a variety of techniques such as trait assignments, structured interviews, behavior observations, questionnaires, sociograms,
and projective tests as summarized by Brand et al. (1974) and Nesdale (2001), matched the Clarks’ findings on Black children.

The following section will provide a synopsis of the research on the Mexican-American group. Studies assessed ethnic identity in Mexican-Americans, starting with the mid 1970s when the group was “in the midst of a social transition in self-awareness” (Rice, Ruiz, & Padilla, 1974). This transition became a central point for the researchers at that time.

**Ethnic Identity of the Mexican-American Group**

**Mexican-Americans and Ethnic Labeling.**

This section will focus on ethnic identity studies of Mexican-American children and the factors identified that influenced their ethnic identity formation. For a better understanding of the literature reviewed, it is necessary to first describe and define the terminology associations assigned to people of Mexican descent.

To avoid any confusion, we note that different terminology designating the groups of people of Mexican descent (Hispanics, Latinos, Chicanos, Mexican-Americans) was used in the studies reviewed based according the subjects’ known ethnic origin, subjects’ own designation, researchers’ purposes, political approaches, or the popularity of one label over another at the time. An explanation for these various ethnic designations lies in (a) political reasons (Calderon 1992; Gimenez, 1989; Hayes-Bautista & Chapa, 1987), and (b) conceptions of ethnic identity (Calderon 1992; Miller, as cited in Rodriguez & DeBlassie, 1983).

The Mexican-descent population is spread across two nations, Mexico and the United States. Within the geographical boundaries of contemporary Mexico, the
word *Mexicano* defines the preferred ethnic identity of the overwhelming majority of the Mestizo people of that nation. Within the United States, however, there exists a wide variety of kindred labels that describe the ethnic identity of the Mexican descent population of this country. The glaring disparity between a single ethnic label in Mexico and a multitude of labels in the United States is the result of historical circumstances having to do with Euro-American prejudice and discrimination against Native American and Mestizo peoples (Buriel, 1987, p. 135).

Hayes-Bautista and Chapa (1987) show that “Hispanic” and “Latino” both refer to persons of Mexican origin, but each has a different denotation. “Hispanic” entails a combination of nationality and culture, making it confusing, contend the researchers, while the term “Latino,” derived from “Latin America,” is a “preferred term of reference.” It respects “the diverse national origins and the waves of population movement from Latin America,” and thus “preserves the flavor of national origin and political relationship between the U.S. and Latin America…” (p. 65).

Other researchers’ views, summed up by Calderon (1992), suggest that the term “Hispanic,” developed as a new ethnic category in 1970, “seems to have arisen from external forces, including the use of the term by the media, the U.S. Census Bureau and other government agencies, and politicians on the federal level, rather than from any cohesion of the groups themselves” (Gimenez, 1989; Moore & Pachon, 1985; Munoz, 1990; Vigil, 1987; as cited in Calderon, 1992), and therefore, these researchers also favor the term “Latino.”

“Chicano” was a label initially used to identify a group of people who were inhabitants of the United States as a result of the United States’ occupation of the Southwest and the invasion of Mexico. The term was also attached to immigrants to the United States since 1910, as well as to the descendants of both these groups (Keefe &
Padilla as cited in Calderon, 1992). In the 1960s, influenced by the Chicano movement, militant Americans of Mexican descent adopted “Chicano” as a representation of freewill and ethnic pride. Research suggests that all labels are “linked to conceptions of ethnic identity” (Miller as cited in Rodriguez & DeBlassie, 1983) and were adopted and preferred among Latino groups as a response to their ethnic interests (Calderon, 1992).

Although research on ethnic labeling also voiced that “any standardized terminology is unavoidably flawed and conducive to the development of racist or, at best, trivial stereotypical analysis of the data thus produced” (Gimenez, 1989, p. 557), researchers have come to a concurrent view. The term “Latino” is considered as “race-neutral,” unlike “Hispanic,” which “does not identify an ethnic group or a minority group, but a heterogeneous population whose characteristics and behavior cannot be understood without necessarily falling into stereotyping” (Gimenez, 1989).

Nevertheless, newer resources use the terms “Latino” and “Hispanic” interchangeably, and identify persons of Spanish origin from Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America or the Iberian Peninsula, as well as persons whose ancestors came from these areas (Cashmore, 1996, p. 202). “The Latino ‘umbrella’ comprises distinct national origin groups ...” (p. 203) that identifies its members by nationality subgrouping, i.e., Mexican-Americans, Cuban-Americans etc. (The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 2005, p. 192).

Grey prefers to distinguish between the two terms “Hispanic” and “Latino.” He utilizes the term “Latino” as a denominator for persons from Mexico and South America,
while the name "Hispanic" refers to persons of Spanish origin, i.e., from the Iberian Peninsula (M. Grey, personal communication, July 10, 2007).

In this present study the researcher uses the ethnonym Mexican-American as the usual term of self-description for people with strong ties to both the United States and Mexico.

An ethnonym (>Gk. *ethnos*, 'tribe', + *onoma*, 'name') is the name of an ethnic group, whether that name has been assigned by another group, or self-assigned. The label Mexican-American describes United States citizens of Mexican ancestry (Wikipedia, n.d.).

The New Encyclopedia Britannica (2005) defines Mexican-Americans as persons of Mexican origin who are part of the Hispanics/Latino group, the majority of which "nearly three fifths, are of Mexican origin-some descended from settlers in portions of the United States that were once part of Mexico (Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and California), other legal and illegal immigrants from across the loosely guarded Mexico-U.S. border" (p.192).

The Case of Ethnic Identity of Second Generation Mexican-Americans

The second generation Mexican-America group in the past decades has been at the center of researchers’ interest because they display "much the same complex pattern of partial acculturation and ambivalent ethnic identity that is typical of other new second generation-youth" (Lopez & Stanton-Salazar, 2001).

They are socially defined as nonwhite, though race is for them a source of confusion and ambivalence. They feel caught between, on the one hand, the demands of their parents, who are struggling to build new lives in the United States, and, on the other hand, their own struggles to combat what they perceive
as a hostile environment and their need to construct and new identity that will allow them to face the environment with confidence (p. 57).

Further, Lopez and Stanton-Salazar consider that compared to other immigrant groups, the Mexican-Americans stand apart. Figures regarding school success and job outlook indicate that they are a generation at risk, which is one reason for scholars' interest. Unlike other newcomers who demonstrated the opposite, the Mexican-Americans lack the resources to succeed. Lopez and Stanton-Salazar believe that the contributing factors to this situation are their insufficient knowledge of the English language, lack of training in urban jobs, and little education which prevent parents from helping their children achieve. Other researchers paid closer attention to the correlation between second generation Mexican-American's dual ethnic identity and success (Bautista de Domanico, Crawford, & De Wolfe, 1994; Partida, 1996; Phinney et al., 2001), and they stressed the culturally ambiguous circumstances for the Mexican-American group as a possible negative cause. The concerns facing the Mexican-American community made understanding their ethnic identity a topic of in-depth research.

To assess the ethnic and racial awareness, self-identification, and ethnic group preference among Anglo, Black and Chicano preschool and third-grade children, Rice, Ruiz, and Padilla (1974) used a photograph technique. They found that at the preschool level, Anglo children showed a strong preference for their own race, while neither the Black nor the Chicano group showed a significant preference for their own ethnic group. It was further reported that the third-grade group did demonstrate awareness of both ethnic and racial differences. The authors inferred that the preferences and correct
identification of the three ethnic and racial groups by a significant percentage of the third-grade subjects may be due to the school experience, construed as one of the variables that contribute to the ability to discern racial from ethnic groups. Consequently, the fact that the group of Chicano preschoolers showed no significant preference for their own group meant that their preferences and attitudes were not yet formed, and this fact was interpreted as a possible linkage to their developmental stage. By the same token, the preschoolers’ lack of distinction between Anglo and Chicano might have also been determined by the age factor that limits the understanding of the term “Chicano.” Of marked interest were the third-grade subjects’ responses to the questions indicating their preference for one of the ethnic groups. Whereas Black and Anglo subjects’ preferences were not same-ethnicity oriented, Chicanos showed a significant preference for their own group.

The conclusions of this study indicate children’s overall weak ability to make clear distinctions between ethnic groups or to identify with one’s own ethnic group. This makes generalizations difficult. Furthermore, the choice of pictures (all adult males) may have influenced the preferences and self-identification of subjects who might have related differently or not at all to either the age or the gender of the persons in the photos.

In contrast to Rice et al. (1974), Teplin (1976) completed a similar study, but used pictures of children (males and females). She found that Black and Anglo children selected same race pictures, while the Latino children chose the ones representing Anglos. The discrepancies between previous findings and the ones in Teplin’s study regarding Black children were attributed to both sociopsychological changes and
children's increased familiarity to representations of Black people in the media who, in addition, may have influenced children's viewing and identifying themselves with unknown people (the pictures used as stimuli).

Teplin (1976) found it more difficult to explain Latinos' preference for photos of Anglos. One explanation she offered was that past research overlooked the importance of positive role models in the community in respect to children's self-perceptions, and that this factor, attached to a deficient methodology led to distorted findings. The observation held a particular importance at the time, considering that representations of Latinos were less common in the media in the 1970s than, perhaps, those of Whites or Blacks. It was also suggested that Latino subjects could not identify with photos of Latino children because the photos were seen as more different than the Latinos the subjects interacted with in real life. Teplin (1976) inferred that in the photos she used the background was different than the neighborhoods known to the children, which may have actually influenced the subjects' choices.

Consistent findings specifically related to Mexican-American children were reported by Rohrer (1977). Her study on racial and ethnic identification and preference in young children (4 and 5 year olds) incorporated Mexican-American subjects along with White and Black ones. The author indicated that the more refined technique using colored pictures of boys and girls to represent the three ethnic groups and the introduction of a third choice (the Mexican-Americans) were the sources for more accurate self-identification. Mexican-American subjects' as well as the Black sample made less correct self-identifications than the White subjects. The results were interpreted as being less
associated with the age of the subjects and more with societal issues, such as the marginality of the Mexican-American group in the society, or the prejudiced white-oriented thinking of the public. As far as the preferences were concerned, the Mexican-American group proved to be the most ethnocentric. One possible explanation the author found was the Chicano Movement in Southern California where the study was conducted, thus emphasizing once again the role the community plays in children’s self-identification and ethnic preferences.

Later studies (Newman et al., 1983) that included the same three ethnic/racial groups found that, although not significant as in Rice et al.’s study (1974), children showed an increased tendency with age toward choosing their own ethnic group. Yet, the consistency of responses in Anglo children, as well as the inconsistencies of Black and Hispanic children, reflected in the past and current studies was construed as “indicative of perceptions of social factors.”

Proposed Models of Ethnic Identity

The studies reviewed suggested that the various aspects of the ethnic identity and the factors related to ethnic identity formation should be further explored. Ethnic identity emerged as an extremely complex multidimensional construct with components that instruments or measures cannot quantify. However, despite the lack of conceptual clarity, these studies also showed that ethnic identification and preferences are frequently incorporated as aspects of ethnic identity. To better understand and investigate the ethnic identity concept, more recent research focused on a definition and operationalization of the concept of ethnicity.
Of great importance to researchers was the 1979 National Chicano Survey (Arce, 1997). Pizzaro and Vera (2001) noted that:

The National Chicano Survey was the first major study that specifically addressed the issue of Chicana/o ethnic identity... Abandoning past approaches that emphasized the difficulties Mexican Americans had in adopting U.S. social and cultural practices, the National Chicano Survey attempted to understand how Chicana/os defined their own identities (p. 95).

Nine hundred and ninety-one interviews were collected from people of Mexican ancestry living in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Texas, and Chicago, Illinois with the purpose of compiling empirical information about the social, economic, and psychological status of Chicanos (Arce, 1997). His conclusions on the mental health implications for ethnic identification, identity and consciousness of the Mexican heritage research advanced the efforts toward the conceptual development of the psychological dimensions of ethnicity in Mexican-Americans.

Garcia (1982) set the foundation for further research when he analyzed the data from the National Chicano Survey to study and measure the psychological multidimensionality of the Chicano ethnicity. His research suggested that ethnic identity is a part of the larger construct of ethnicity. Garcia (1982) proposed a model with three components: ethnic identification, identity, and consciousness. He defined ethnic identification as awareness of the same physical appearance as persons of Mexican origin. He measured ethnic identification by having the subjects select from a list of social categories the ones they felt they belonged to. Ethnic identity was classified as the cognitive product of identification by labeling oneself in ethnic terms. The third component, ethnic consciousness, was conceptualized as including two subcomponents:
cultural consciousness (i.e., cultural preferences and attitudes), and associational preferences (i.e., the degree of preference or contact with people of Mexican origin, Anglos or others of non-Mexican origin). However, Saenz and Aguirre (1991) argue that Garcia treated ethnic identity as a static attribute, and overlooked the social nature of the identity.

Yet, Garcia’s work undoubtedly had a great impact on ethnic identity research and the importance of his findings can be considered two-fold: (a) he discussed the interrelatedness between the components of the model proposed, as well as their relationship with levels of political consciousness, and (b) he called for a more refined conceptualization of ethnicity, within a multidimensional perspective.

Rotheram and Phinney in Phinney and Rotheram, 1987 summarize several developmental models of ethnic identity that apply to various ethnic groups and were generated by the cognitive developmental orientation in research (Table C1). This orientation proposes stage models in order to shed light on the attainment of ethnic identity and attitudes in children. The assumption was that all stages are age-related and that there is a progression with age in the capacity of perceiving, distinguishing and reacting to ethnic or racial stimuli.

These studies, presented in a comparative manner, underline the idea that there is an increased tendency of researchers to distinguish among awareness, identification, preferences, attitudes, and feelings as components of ethnic identity. Rotheram and Phinney (1987) concluded that the models demonstrated that:

[...] children initially learn from others what group they belong to: however, as they get older, they become aware of options in the extent to which they behave
as and consider themselves to be members of an ethnic group. Some Mexican American adolescents stop speaking Spanish, associate mainly with Anglo Americans, and think of themselves as White, and others retain the language and the customs of their parents and consider themselves Hispanic (p.15).

The authors contended that the nature and salience of ethnic identity changes with age, but also in specific contexts. That is, it becomes more salient in particular social settings and situations than in others. For example, the status as a minority or majority group member and the degree of exposure to consistent ethnic homogeneity or heterogeneity can impact a child’s ethnic perceptions. The study documents the dynamic nature of ethnic identity and its changes in various social contexts.

Vaughan in Phinney and Rotheram, 1987 further distinguished one important aspect related to changes and differences in minority children’s ethnic identity: the status and power relationship between a minority group and a majority group is one possible reason why “… the way in which ethnic identity develops in a minority group child may be quite different from that for a child from a majority” (p.74). From this contention, Vaughan offers a path for understanding and explaining ethnic identity through a social psychological model. Vaughan’s model, along with others’ that are consistent with this social psychological approach (Aboud, 1987, in Phinney & Rotheram, 1987), addresses both the issue of cognitive and affective processes that influence ethnic identity and social structures that surround the child. This model emphasizes the role of social categorization, which means that children have the tendency to group people into categories on the basis of seemingly common traits. This important observation leads to the explanation of why behaviors change with time. As Vaughan contends, social categories are imposed by the society, within whose structures the child is born.
Furthermore, social structures are not stagnant, and therefore any change in behaviors is consistent with social changes. This aspect of continuing social changes and their impact on one's perception of self, may explain some divergent findings in research at various periods of time.

A model that greatly advanced the conceptualization and clarification of ethnic identity in Mexican-American children was developed by Bernal et al. (1990). According to these researchers, their study was intended to assess their newly-developed instrument for measuring children's identity and to evaluate the developmental changes in ethnic identity. The model they proposed emphasized the relationship of ethnic identity with the self-concept. Earlier criticism of studies that interchangeably used the terms race and ethnicity finds support from Bernal et al. In their finding, the two terms were differentiated and it was revealed that, in fact, racial awareness develops earlier than ethnic awareness. It appears to be easier for children to identify race by the inherited physical characteristics particular to an ethnic group than to determine more complex cues such as behaviors, customs, and beliefs linked to a group’s ethnicity. The subjects of this research were 46 children of Mexican-American origin, ages 6-10. The hypothesis of an increasing ethnic identity with age was examined. Bernal et al.'s conceptualization of ethnic identity led to the inclusion of five components: ethnic self-identification (children’s categorization of themselves as members of their ethnic group), ethnic constancy (children’s knowledge that the characteristic indications of their ethnic group do not change across time), ethnic role behaviors (children’s engagement in behaviors that reflect their ethnic group’s culture), ethnic knowledge (children’s understanding of
the relevance to the group of certain aspects of their culture), and ethnic feelings and preferences (concerning one’s own membership and members of their ethnic group; Bernal et al., 1990). These researchers later expanded their study of the five components of ethnic identity (1993) and provide a comparative scheme of shifts in the components of ethnic identity with age (Table C1).

In Bernal et al.'s 1990 study, an Ethnic Identity Questionnaire was created to assess and describe ethnic identity development among Mexican-American children. Each of the five components of ethnic identity was measured with a specific instrument as follows: Ethnic self-identification was measured using an “ethnic label” task and an “ethnic grouping task,” while ethnic constancy, ethnic role behaviors, ethnic knowledge and ethnic preferences were measured using a scale with a set of questions for each component targeted. It is this researcher's observation that the ethnic preference scale employed has some weak points. Not only does the research question designed to measure this component ask the children to make a preference choice that can be misleading for the child and interpreted as an identification task (“Which boy is most like you?”), but it also asks the subjects to indicate the strength of their choice (“a little like you” or “a lot like you”). Field observations and direct interactions with children 6-7 years old lead the researcher in this present study to believe that the concepts “a little” and “a lot” have a high degree of subjectivity at least at those ages and sometimes even later. Therefore, a scale based on these variables would not provide a reliable measure.

Using their research scale in interviews with 46 subjects, Bernal et al. (1990) found that ethnic identification and awareness develop between ages 7-10, whereas ethnic
constancy arises between the ages 8-10. Overall, on all the variables, children of 8-10 years had higher ethnic identity scores than the 6-8 year olds. The examination of these findings revealed that the components of ethnic identity increased with age and that they are, at least in part, a function of children’s cognitive ability, although there was no independent measurement for this variable. In addition, the authors indicated that the use of Spanish language at home was related to the scores for self-identification, use of ethnic role behaviors, and ethnic knowledge and preferences. On the same line of thinking, Alba (1990) discusses the role of language in reaffirming ethnic identity and contends that the use of the mother tongue “almost certainly precedes and conditions a person’s evaluation of the importance of ethnicity” (p. 101). Bernal et al. (1993) further suggest that the study of the function of language in relation to the development of ethnic identity in Mexican-American children deserves attention and a close examination. As a result, a later study developed by Knight, Bernal, Cota, Garza & Ocampo (1993) reveals that children who speak Spanish at home due to parents’ choice of language use “identify with the culture, know about the culture, engage in other Mexican behaviors such as eating Mexican food, watching Spanish television, and having a piñata at their birthday party, and prefer Mexican activities” (p. 123). The correlation between the use of native language and ethnic identity awareness ties into the family socialization model Knight, et al. (1993) propose, which states that children’s ethnic identity is linked to what parents teach them about the Mexican culture (p. 127).

Building on Knight et al.’s (1993) suggested model, Quintana and Vera (1999) validate the findings of the comprehensive model and broaden the factors with which
ethnic identity development in Mexican-American children is associated. Quintana and
Vera contend that their study is the first to demonstrate the linkage and interrelationship
between indicators of ethnic identity formation and ethnic prejudice that children may
face. It also clarifies the connections between ethnic prejudice and different forms of
ethnic identity.

The concept of ethnic identity in Mexican-American children is far from being
fully explored and understood. Research has shown that much attention has been directed
towards the aspects of the majority attitudes towards minority ethnic groups. However, it
is of equal importance to analyze in more depth and be aware of the way the minority
group members handle the implications of their belonging to a disadvantaged group, at
least numerically, and perhaps being subjected to discrimination and rejection (Phinney,
1990).
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN

This study was based on the photo technique, defined here as a series of photographs presented to participants in order to elicit responses regarding ethnic preferences, feelings, beliefs, and ethnic identifications. A set of eight pictures was presented to the participants in pairs, that is, two pictures simultaneously, of which the participant is asked to compare, contrast or evaluate. Additional open-ended questions followed with a view to obtaining more in-depth explanations for their choices. Each participant was interviewed separately for a period of approximately 35 minutes.

Participants

The sample used for this study consisted of 20 students, who all attended the same elementary school in a small mid-western city. The selection criteria were (a) age and (b) ethnicity (non-White Latino of Mexican ancestry). Mexican ethnicity was determined using the information included in children’s school records. All the participant students were second generation Mexican-American children, born in the United States, with one or both parents born in Mexico. The sample was divided equally by gender. Each grade from Kindergarten through 5th grade was represented in the sample, for the purpose of exploring developmental aspects.

Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2003-2004) revealed that the school’s ethnic composition during the academic year 2003-2004 was 10% Hispanic (all of Mexican descent), 36% Black (non-Hispanic), 53% White European descent, and less than 1% Native American (Table C2). With more than 72% of students
qualifying for either free or reduced price lunches, it is apparent that many children came from relatively low socio-economic status families.

Parents were contacted in writing, and letters of informed consent in both English and Spanish were sent home with the children. All the forms were signed and returned.

**Materials**

Four sets of color pictures, 4 by 6 inches, were developed. They were organized in pairs containing images of men, women, boys and girls’ faces that appear to be of either Latino (non-White) or White European descent. The paired photos (White European and Latino non-White) represent persons that display similar non-ethnic appearances (smile, hair cut, and no jewelry or ethnic paraphernalia).

The pictures were presented on a white background in an attempt to eliminate possible extraneous factors that may influence children’s choices. The White Europeans had a light complexion, light-colored hair, and light-colored eyes. The non-White Latinas/Latinos were pictured with darker (brown) skin, dark-colored eyes, and dark-colored hair. The pictures were organized in the following four sets:

**Adult**

1st set: One pair of adult males (Latino non-White and White European)

2nd set: One pair of adult females (Latina non-White and White European)

**Child**

3rd set: Two pairs of young boys (Latino non-White and White European)

4th set: Two pairs of young girls (Latina non-White and White European)
Each set of pictures had a number assigned (1 through 4) and one letter combination (i.e., Aa, Ac, Ba, and Bc,) on the back of it, that allows the researcher to code the responses of the participants. The letters Aa and Ac are assigned to pictures representing the following descriptors of the adult and children sets: fair complexion and light eyes and hair. Letters Ba and Bc are used to code the following descriptors of the adult and children sets: darker complexion and dark eyes and hair. Thus, picture sets are coded as follows:

**Adult**

- Latino non-White adult male picture code: 1Ba
- White European adult male picture code: 1Aa
- Latina non-White adult female picture code: 2Ba
- White European adult female picture code: 2Aa

**Child**

- Latino non-White boy picture code: 3Bc
- White European boy picture code: 3Ac
- Latina non-White girl picture code: 4Bc
- White European girl picture code: 4Ac

The Choice Questionnaire was developed jointly by the researcher and Dr. Roberto Clemente. It consisted of a set of twelve questions. The questions were divided into two categories: (a) ethnic identification, and (b) ethnic feelings and preferences. For each question, one or more sets of pictures were used.
Choice Questionnaire Directions

The researcher says: “I will show you a series of pictures that have different faces, and you will have to look carefully at each of them. Then, I will ask you some questions about the faces that you see in the pictures. There is no right or wrong answer, just your opinion is important. After you make a choice, I would like you to tell me why you made that choice.”

Ethnic Self-Identification Questions

1. Which one looks like you? (¿Cuál niño/a se parece a ti?) Why? (¿Porqué?) (Sets 3 and 4.)

Directions: Show the picture of the girls to the girls and the picture of the boys to the boys.

2. Which one looks more like your dad/mom? (¿Cuál se parece más a tu papá/mamá?) Why? (¿Porqué?)

(Sets 1 and 2.)

Ethnic Feelings and Preferences Questions

3. Which person would you like to look like when you grow up? (¿Cuando seas grande, a cuál persona te gustaría parecerte?) (Sets 1 and 2.) Why? (¿Porqué?)

4. Which one is prettier/better looking? (¿Cuál es más bonita?) (Sets 1, 2, 3 and 4.) Why? (¿Porqué?)

5. Which do you like better? (¿Cuál te gusta más?) (Sets 1, 2, 3 and 4.) Why? (¿Porqué?)

6. Let’s pretend that these two persons are teachers, which one would you prefer as your teacher? (Vamos a imaginar que estas dos personas son maestros, ¿Cuál preferirías como tu maestro?) (Sets 1 and 2.) Why? (¿Porqué?)
7. Which child would you like to play with? (¿Con cuál niño/a te gustaría jugar?) (Sets 3 and 4.) Why? (¿Porqué?)

Directions: Ask the kids whether or not it would make a difference who they play with in different settings: school vs. home. Mark this second answer as follows: S and H)

8. Which person do you think is smarter? (¿Cuál persona crees que es más inteligente?) (Sets 1, 2, 3, and 4.) Why? (¿Porqué?)

9. Which person is happier? (¿Quién es más feliz?) (Sets 1, 2, 3 and 4.) Why? (¿Porqué?)

10. Which one is more liked by their classmates? (¿Quién crees que es más aceptado por sus compañeros de clase?) (Set 3 and 4.) Why? (¿Porqué?)

11. Which one of these two do you think is a better person? (¿Cuál de estos dos crees que es mejor persona?) (Sets 1, 2, 3 and 4.) Why? (¿Porqué?)

12. Which one has more money? (¿Cuál tiene más dinero?) (Set 1, 2, 3 and 4.) Why? (¿Porqué?)

Procedure

Each student was interviewed individually and privately in a classroom by a female bilingual interviewer that the children were familiar with. A level of comfort was thus ensured, since the rapport between the interviewer and the children had been previously established due to the nature of her work with the Mexican-descent families in the school. No other students or adults were in the room at any time during the interview.
Students' names were kept confidential. A number was assigned to each
interviewee for coding purposes. The identity or names of the participants cannot be
recognized or tracked down by utilizing this codification system.

The answers children gave to the questions were recorded on a report sheet
(Appendix A), and also on a tape recorder in order to preserve the depth and candor of
children's comments during the interview session. The report sheet also included
demographic information such as grade, age, and gender. In addition to the Choice-
Questionnaire responses that children were required to formulate, a series of open-ended
questions followed after each question of the Choice Questionnaire, or at the end of it, as
the interviewer determined appropriate during the interview, with the purpose of offering
the children the opportunity of a greater freedom of expression. The open-ended
questions also used the photos presented in pairs as conversation prompts. These answers
were tape recorded as well. The amount of time needed for the completion of each
interview was about 35 minutes.

The bilingual interpreter recruited the participants, interviewed them, and assisted
the researcher with those students who had limited English proficiency, by interviewing
them in Spanish, as well as translating their responses into English. The code-switching
from English to Spanish undoubtedly created a more relaxed and casual speech register.

**Variables**

**Ethnic Self-Identification**

Children's answers given to Question 1 ("Which one looks like you?")
indicates ethnic self-identification, and Question 2 ("Which one looks more like your
dad/mom?”), indicating parent ethnic identification, constituted the measure for this variable. The researcher counted the number of correct identification responses and compared to the number of incorrect identification responses to determine which one is greater.

**Ethnic Feelings and Preferences**

Ethnic preferences for either Latino non-White (choices B) or White European (choices A) were also calculated by adding up the number of choices children made from each category. The interpretation of data considered a greater number of choices in either one of the two categories (Latino non-White or White European) as an indicator of preference for one ethnicity over the other one.

Support of the existence of positive or negative ethnic feelings, knowledge or beliefs towards one group or the other were gathered not only from the tape recorded interviews and the subsequent transcripts, but they were also inferred from a compilation of additional information: children’s incidental comments during the interview, informal conversations at the end of the questionnaire, either spontaneous or prompted by the open-ended questions, gestures or attitudes observed and recorded by the researcher in the form of field notes during recess, lunch time or parent-teacher conferences, prior to the beginning of the study and parents’ volunteer comments recorded during conferences.

Also, during casual conversations with some participants in the study, particular attention was paid by the researcher to children’s ethnic self-labeling as well as to their use of ethnic labels statements addressed to their peers (i.e., “the Mexican boy,” “the White girl,” etc.)
The observations and notes added were used in an attempt to capture the depth and the hidden inferences that convey cultural meaning, enabling the researcher to make alternate interpretations.

Additionally, a few months after the completion of the interviews and initial data analysis, 12 of the participants in the study, ages 9-12, were contacted again by the interviewer, and engaged in a series of follow-up discussions on the study’s findings. A sense of mutual interest was established by explaining to the children that their contribution was important and that their input would help the researcher understand both the results of the study and the children in the school. Before the follow-up interviews began, extensive conversations between the interviewer and the participants had been carried on the importance and the positive impact the study might have upon Mexican-American children in that particular elementary school. Children were asked to answer a series of open-ended questions with the view to obtaining depth and details on the study’s conclusions. The length of time each of the subjects was engaged in discussions was between 35 minutes and an hour. The photos used in the study were utilized as conversation prompts, and the previously collected data was presented and explained to the participants. The interviewer recorded children’s opinions, feelings and knowledge on the topic. The information elicited in this manner was used to deepen the understanding of the ethnic views of the children represented in the study.

A series of poems on ethnic identity written by some of the children interviewed in this study were also incorporated into the interpretation section of the findings.
(Appendix B). Children’s candid thoughts on self were deemed an important addition to the data reflecting their deeper insights into the issue of ethnic identity.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

The data collected were grouped into two categories as follows: (a) identification questions results, and (b) ethnic preferences and beliefs questions results. For both categories the percent of ethnic choices as well as the percent of children who chose their own ethnicity were computed and the results are shown in the accompanying tables (Table C3). Each table corresponds to a question. The distribution of results by respondents’ age and gender is meant to illustrate the differences in responses, according to these two variables.

The tables display the same symbols used to code the photos: Aa (adult, male or female, with fair complexion), Ac (child, male or female, with fair complexion), Ba (adult, male or female, with dark complexion), Bc (child, male or female, with dark complexion). In addition, letters M and F are utilized for the gender of the persons in the pictures.

Ethnic Self-Identification Questions Results

Question 1: “Which one looks like you?”

The results obtained from the answers to the first identification question indicate that the percentage of total number of boys who made correct self identifications is 90.9%. The percentage of girls who identified themselves correctly is of 100% for all three age groups.

The percentage of total number of dark complexion choices made by both boys and girls ages 5 through 10 is of 95.2%.
The group of males between the ages of 5 and 6 identified themselves correctly in proportion of 83.3%. Thus, the percentage of boys who correctly identified themselves is of 100% for only two of the age groups: ages 7-8 and 9-10.

Despite the gap between the older boys (ages 7-10) and the younger ones (ages 5-6), the percentage of children who made correct identifications indicates that the vast majority of them are able to distinguish the physical characteristics of their own ethnicity.

Question 2: “Which one looks more like your dad/mom?”

The percentage of children throughout all three age groups who made correct identifications was of 54.5% boys and 90% girls. It appears that the majority of girls are aware of adult physical features attributed to the Mexican ethnicity, whereas only a little more than half of the boys were able to identify adults, males and females with the physical cues in the photographs. The total number of dark complexion choices made by both boys and girls ages 5 through 10 was 85.7%.

The youngest age group, 5-6 years old boys, was able to identify the resemblance to their parents correctly in proportion of 58.3%. There is a higher correct identification indicator for the father among the boys in this age group: 66.6% correct father identification as opposed to only 50% correct mother identification. The 7-8 years old and 9-10 years old boys identified both their parents in proportion of 100% correctly.

Girls ages 5-6 made correct identification in proportion of 83.3%. The case of the girls from this age group revealed 100% correct mother identification as opposed to only 66.6% correct father identification.
The 7-8 years old and 9-10 years old girls identified both their parents in proportion of 100% correctly.

A summary of these results indicate that boys made 75% correct ethnic identifications while girls made correct ethnic identifications 98% of the time. A total of 91% correct ethnic identifications were made.

**Ethnic Feelings and Preferences Results**

In this section, in order to determine the preference for one ethnic group or another, the numbers of own-ethnicity choices that each of the subjects made was taken into account. If the choices favored both ethnic groups equally, that specific situation was excluded as counting towards preference for a particular ethnic group. Only subjects who showed preference for more than half of possible ethnic group choices were accounted for the total number of children who prefer their own ethnic group.

**Question 3: “Which one would you like to look like when you grow up?”**

This question recorded subjects’ responses to the pictures displaying adults of the same gender as the subject, i.e., boys were shown pictures of adult males and girls were shown pictures of adult females.

Unlike all the other preference questions, and with the exception of the youngest age group males, all the choices made by the subjects across all three age groups show a strong preference for the adults that display same physical features as themselves. The total of dark skin choices was 63.6%. Boys age 5-6 were the only ones who showed a definite preference for the white males (100%). Boys in the 7-8 years old category foresaw themselves as dark adult males in proportion of 100%. Girls in the 5-6 years old
age group chose the dark skinned female in proportion of 100%, while the girls in the 7-8 years old category prefer the adult Latina female in proportion of 66.6%.

The oldest age group, boys and girls 9-10 years old stands apart again, by showing a 100% interest in looking like Latino adults in the future. A total of 45.5 % boys and 90% girls prefer to have dark skin, dark eyes and dark hair as grownups.

**Question 4: “Which one is prettier/better looking?”**

This question was followed by another one, similar in content, and apparently redundant: “Which do you like better?” The researcher found from informal conversations with the children, classroom interactions and observations that what is considered “prettier,” for various reasons, may not necessarily be the preferred as the favorite. The results yielded different percentages for each of the two questions.

The figures indicate a relatively similar pattern of preference among the groups of boys ages 5-6 and 7-8, which is interpreted as no particular interest in any of the two ethnic groups presented to the subjects. The results show a slightly higher preference for their own ethnicity among the youngest group of males, ages 5-6: 54.1%, as opposed to no definite preference of the boys ages 7-8: 50%. The oldest group of boys demonstrates a definite preference for their own ethnic group, the proportion of same group choices being significantly higher than the other two groups: 75%.

By comparison, girls from all three age groups, 5-6, 7-8 and 9-10, showed a linear and steady preference for the Caucasian group, the proportion of own ethnic choices being as low as 25%.
The distribution of ethnic choices by gender indicates that a total of 54% ethnic choices were made by boys across all three age groups and only 30% of own ethnic choices were made by girls from all three age groups. Dark skin choices were made in proportion of 42.8 by both boys and girls. Less than half of the boys (45.4%) demonstrated preference for their own ethnic physical features and no girls showed preference for their own ethnic group.

**Question 5: “Which do you like better?”**

This follow-up question to Question 4 yielded similar results in that the choices overall favored the Caucasian group except for the fact that the percentages indicating preference for the Mexican group are considerably lower than the ones addressing the previous question (“Which one is prettier/better looking?”).

The boys in the 5-6 years old group maintained their slightly higher preference for their own ethnicity (45.8%) than the boys in the 7-8 years old group (41.6%), whereas the oldest group, 9-10 years old is consistent in showing a definite preference for their own ethnic group (62.5%). The girls demonstrate no interest in their own ethnic group, scoring as follows: 25% dark complexion choices among girls ages 5-6; a very low 8.3% among girls ages 7-8 and a significantly higher percentage, although still not in favor of same group, of 31.2% among the oldest group of girls, ages 9-10.

Both boys and girls preferences for the dark skin individuals total 35.7%. A total of 36.3 % of all the boys from all three age groups selected their own ethnic group, and none of the girls’ choices could account for a definite preference for their own ethnicity.
Question 6: “Let’s pretend that these two persons are teachers, which one would you prefer as your teacher?”

The question illustrated an interesting pattern, common to both boys and girls, of some degree of interest and preference in the dark teacher among the younger participants, and a decreased interest among the older children: 41.6% choices made by boys ages 4-5, and a drastic decrease of it among the boys group of 7-8 years old: 0%. Also, girls ages 5-6 prefer the dark teacher in proportion of 66.6%, but the older girls, ages 7-8 show much less interest in this choice and score a low total of 33.3% choices made by girls of this age group.

The oldest group of boys, ages 8-10 breaks this pattern by showing an increased interest in the dark teacher: 50% own ethnic group choices made by boys, yet not a percentage high enough to account for a definite preference for either one of the teachers, Caucasian or Mexican. Girls in the same age group accounted for 12% of the choices for the dark teacher. A total of 33.3% choices made by both boys and girls account for the dark looking preference. A very low total of 9.09% boys and 10% girls across all three age groups demonstrated interest in the teacher associated with the Mexican ethnic group.

Question 7: “Which child would you like to play with?”

The responses to this question point to a random distribution of own ethnic choices by both age and gender as follows: the group of 5-6 years old boys chose the dark complexion children as playmates in proportion of 50%. The group of 7-8 years old boys chose 83.3% dark skin choices. An increase in the own ethnic group choices is
demonstrated by the oldest group of children, ages 9-10. The boys in this category selected a proportion of 75% choices of dark skinned playmates.

Girls' 5-6 years old choices accounted for only 33.3% dark complexion choices and the girls from the 7-8 years old group chose the dark complexion in proportion of only 16.6%. The oldest group of girls, ages 9-10, reported a 50% own ethnic group choices. The total percentage of boys who preferred to play with children of Mexican descent is of 45.4%, and of 10% girls who would select their own ethnic group on the playground.

Question 8: “Which person do you think is smarter?”

Whereas we observe an increase of the percentages of dark choices with age in case of boys, there is no such pattern observable in case of girls. Even if boys' choices yielded higher percentages than those obtained from the girls' responses, these percentages are still low enough to be interpreted as split between the two options: Boys responses can be classified as midway between the light-skinned and the dark-skinned choices: 54.1%, 58.3% and 62.5% account for the dark choices selected by the boys in the 5-6, 7-8 and respectively 9-10 years old groups. Girls ages 5-6 and 9-10 believe that the light skinned people are smarter. This exception is represented by the girls from the 7-8 years old group, who believe that both light and dark people are smart and score a total of 50%. The total percentage of dark choices made by boys is 56.8% and 42.5% dark choices selected by girls. Accordingly, a higher percentage of boys (45.4%) displayed the belief that the dark people are smarter, and only 30% of the girls shared this belief.
Question 9: “Which person is happier?”

The youngest male participants, ages 5-6 think that the light-skinned people are happier, and score 33.3% dark choices. Only the older groups of boys, ages 7-8 and 9-10 demonstrate that they share the belief that dark individuals are happy. All groups of girls believe the opposite: 41.6%, 33.3%, and 31.25% account for the choices made by girls ages 5-6, 7-8 and 9-10 years olds, respectively.

The percentages of dark choices distribution by gender indicates similar beliefs among boys and girls ages 5-6, but strongly contrasting differences between boys and girls ages 7-8 and 9-10. A total of 47.7% dark choices were made by boys and 35% dark selections were elected by girls. The total percentage of boys who believe that dark complexion individuals are happy is of 36.3%, and of only 10% girls.

Question 10: “Which one is more liked by their classmates?”

The results to this question showed that only boys in the 7-8 age group believe that the dark children are liked by their classmates (83.3%). The other two groups, 5-6 and 9-10 years old boys demonstrate a shared belief that both ethnicities are equally liked (50%). Girls in all three groups demonstrate the opposite belief, yet, the girls in the younger age groups, 5-6 and 7-8 years old, appeared a little more likely to choose own ethnic group members (33.3% ) than the girls in the oldest group, ages 9-10 (12.5%). As expected, the distribution of ethnic choices by gender shows a higher percentage of these options accounting for boys’ choices (59.9%), and a much lower percentage for the girls’ choices (25%). The total percentage of boys selecting own ethnicity is 45.4% and 0% for the girls.
Question 11: “Which one of these two do you think is a better person?”

The overall results that indicate a clear belief that own ethnicity holds better moral qualities. Boys in the youngest age group, 6-7 demonstrate a 50% confidence in the integrity of their own group, an increased 58.3% percentage is recorded by boys ages 7-8, and a 100% percentage is represented by 9-10 year old boys. Girls’ choices in the 5-6 age group reflect an increase in this belief: 66.6%, compared to the ones of the girls in the 7-8 age group: 53.3%. The highest percentage, 81.25% represents the choices made by the oldest group of girls, ages 9-10. The total of own ethnic choices selected by all boys is of 61.3%, and the selections made by girls amount to 70%.

A total of 45.4% boys and 70% girls think that dark looking people are better. The low overall percentage of boys is due to the fact that boys whose choices oscillated between the two options in proportion of 50% were not counted toward the total number of children who manifested distinct preference for the dark-skinned people.

Question 12: “Which one has more money?”

Percentages obtained for this question do not indicate the evidence that the subjects believe dark people have money. The 50% of dark choices obtained from two of the younger groups of boys, ages 5-6 and 7-8 indicate equal oscillation between the two given choices. The older group of boys, ages 9-10, opted for the light skinned group, and scored 37.5% in favor of their own ethnic group. The only group of girls who was determined that they believe dark people have money was the youngest, ages 5-6 (66.6%). However, this belief is considerably weaker among girls ages 7-8 (33.3%), and oscillatory at ages 9-10 (50%). The total of dark choices made by boys are 47.7% and a
little higher percentage, yet statistically insignificant, 50% of dark choices were selected by girls. Only 18.1% boys and 20% girls believe that dark people have money.

Averaging the answers to questions 3 to 12, it was found that a total of 48% of the responses, out of which 52% of boys’ choices and 44% of girls’ answers, reflected preference for their own ethnicity.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

We find it necessary to briefly describe some of the commonly shared background characteristics of the sample interviewed, in order to bring more insights into children’s perspective on ethnic identity. The sample interviewed consists of second generation Mexican-American students, with similar family background. Most of their parents work for a local meat-packing company and know little or no English at all. The majority of their families have at least one other child attending the same school. Very common also is the fact that many of the children live with just one parent or have a step-parent. Those who live with only one parent or with a step-parent apparently know little or not at all about their biological parent absent from their household. Among the reasons for leaving their native country and coming to the United States, poverty is listed most frequently by many of the parents in conversations during parent-teacher conferences. Parents stated that they came to the United States for a better life and for better education opportunities for their children. Interestingly, although some of the parents do not speak English, do not have a job, or they have a low paid one, they do not own a car or have a driver’s license, and generally struggle socially and psychologically, their outlook on life is one of calm and acceptance. As it appeared during conversations at parent-led conferences time, stress is not a fully understood concept by the Mexican families, or, at least, it is not perceived as a lack of coping ability with the demands of the world around. Parents admittedly did not understand it even when the concept of stress was explained to them in Spanish. Stress does not seem to be a major concern for the Mexican families, but rather
an ordinary aspect of life. One of the parents summed this idea up by stating: “I do not know what that means, yes we have worries and we cry, but such is life, we take it as it comes at us.”

Respect for education, for school and for teachers appear to be one of the values parents teach their kids and reinforce at home. Usually mothers are those who come more often to school and communicate with teachers, but the important events held at school are attended by children’s extended families who more often than not dress up for these events, as a mark of their respect and appreciation. During the same events, there is a distinct difference between Mexican parents’ attitude toward their children and the one displayed by the native born American families. While the American children enjoy a little more of a laid back approach to behavior from their parents, the Mexican-American children are more often scolded for what it is believed to be unacceptable behavior (running on the hallways, talking too loud, etc.). While these examples do not make up a complete picture of the familial background of the children in the sample, they do offer a glimpse into the family values and principles of the Mexican-American children in this particular school.

Along with these characteristics, a more traditional approach to education which involves respect for schooling and the related, and closer parental monitoring of the academic performances is also reflected in children’s comments and choices made during the study.

However, the lenses through which these children viewed their ethnicity, ethnic preferences and ethnic beliefs suggest not only a reflection of strong influence of family
standards, but also respect and appreciation for the American mannerism, traditions, and values. Many of the children in the study expressed in different words this same idea, stated more articulately by one of them: "I feel like I am Mexican, but I feel I am white, too (...) because we are here, in America instead of Mexico. Here, in America, there's more traditions and stuff. But you still celebrate the Mexican traditions, I know I do." This duality will be explained in each of the subchapters that follow.

Ethnic Self-Identification Questions

1. Which one looks like you? (¿Cuál niño/a se parece a ti?) Why? (¿Porqué?)

The high proportion of children able to identify with their own ethnic group is not surprising. All students who participated in the study are included in a regular classroom setting, although most of them, at different points in time, were pulled out of the regular classroom for one period daily to participate in the district’s English Language program. However, from the children’s point of view, being pulled out for a class did not mean anything other than participation in another school activity, a practice with which they are used to. Therefore, we can consider this school’s environment as an inclusive one, a positive aspect as past research found, which encourages minority children’s motivation to identify with their own group (Rohrer, 1977).

The ability that the majority of children showed to discern different physical features and attribute them to a particular ethnic group, as well as the ability to identify with that group on the same grounds of physical cues resemblances has been suggested as normal for early childhood, by several studies on children’s ethnic identity (Aboud, 1987; Ocampo, Knight, & Bernal, 1997; Clark & Clark, 1947; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams,
Quintana talks about a “physicalistic perspective” characteristic to the children ages 6-7 that involves a physically constructed perception of ethnicity due to which children are able to identify with an ethnic group (Quintana, 1999). I found that to be true, as the “brown eyes, brown skin and black hair” were the reasons cited for their choice by most of the participant children in the current study.

Past research has found both that preschool level children do not understand the permanency of their ethnic features, a component of ethnic identity which was called “ethnic constancy,” and also that the realization that the ethnic appearance stays the same across time is present in early school level children (Bernal, Cota, Garza, Knight, & Ocampo, 1993, in Bernal & Knight, 1993). In the present study we found grounds to doubt that early school level children display an understanding of the ethnic constancy. We found that despite their awareness of the correlation between the physical features and the Mexican ancestry, the youngest age group children in this study, ages 5-6, mostly the boys, display an apparent lack of understanding that the physical characteristics are permanent, which may explain the lower percentage of correct identification among the boys from this age group. For instance, some of the younger children advance the idea that sometimes in the near future they will become white instead of staying brown. This thought, associated with comments such as “I look like him,” (points to a Mexican descent boy), but I’d like to look like him” (points to a Caucasian boy), or “I’d like to have red or blond hair because it looks cool,” and “white children look better,” along with another comment that followed a correct identification “I am white, but a little
darker, ” form grounds for the assumption that they display wishful thinking, which may signal early development of the ethnic prejudice that to be white is better.

The older groups’ correct identifications suggest that with age and learning different other components come to add to their notion of ethnic identity. Quintana (1999) determined that what he calls a “literal perspective” on ethnicity is a superior dimension to the “physical perspective,” and it is almost a literal, dictionary-like definition of ethnicity, which children ages 6-12 are able to construct based on a raised awareness of ethnic practices (Quintana, 1999). Most of the older children (ages 7-10) in the present study were able to describe ethnic foods, traditions (i.e., Piñata), the family connection to the country of Mexico, and the advantage of functioning in two different languages, whereas children ages 6-7, while indicating some knowledge of the ethnic foods, traditions, and the Spanish language, were unable to explain what they were, or if they were “Mexican” or “American.” Most of the younger subjects, for instance, thought that tacos and Piñatas are “both” “Mexican “and “American.” It has been noted that knowledge about own ethnicity and belonging to an ethnic group “is acquired through social learning experiences provided by their families and communities, as well as by the dominant society” (Bernal et al., 1993, p. 34). Therefore, the longer they are exposed to these social interactions and actively participate in them, the clearer the concept of belonging to a particular ethnic group.

The resulting percentages indicate that the vast majority of children are able to identify themselves correctly, predominantly on the basis of resembling physical appearances. Most of the subjects participating in the follow-up interview also pointed
out that physical cues are obvious indicators of belonging to the same group, and that children are capable of making such observations:

"-Kinda brown (...) ."

However, when asked how they thought children gained this knowledge, the follow-up group’s answers were split between: “they just know they are Mexican” and “their parents told them so.” Some of the children mentioned conversations that often take place at home where parents talk positively about Mexico, the life there, the customs, places and people in general, relatives left behind, and share their memories and stories with their children. A sense of belonging is taught and instilled at home, along with a feeling of pride: “They told me I was Mexican and I’m kinda thankful I’m gonna grow up to look like a Mexican."

We can conclude that ethnic identification, the understanding of it, and the capacity to discern the more subtle features of ethnicity increase with age and with experiences that the children are exposed to in school and at home.

Differences between genders did not reach statistical significance within the group of subjects; therefore we cannot imply that there are any factors in children’s perceived ethnic identity that could impact genders differently.

2. Which one looks more like your dad/mom? (¿Cuál se parece más a tu papá/mamá?) Why? (¿Porqué?)

The number of choices that children selected to indicate their parents’ belonging to an ethnic group, and the percentage of children who made these choices do show a statistical significance between boys and girls, overall. However, if we look at the results
broken down by age groups, it is clear that the differences come only from the choices made by the youngest group of children, ages 5-6. Therefore, it is safe to say that in this case, too, age plays an important role in children’s perception of ethnicity. However, the same age group children, ages 5-6, demonstrated a higher ability in identifying themselves with own ethnic group than in identifying their parents. A possible explanation could be the fact that adult features may not be as easily “readable” for children at this age as the ones of their peers with whom they also spend more time and they compare to. Another explanation lays in the reality of the many single parent homes these children live in, and the number of step-fathers or mothers that children may experience and who may not necessarily be of Mexican descent. The girls’ higher percentage of correct father identifications may be interpreted as wishful, due to lack of paternal involvement. In Mexican families, the father has a prominent role. Despite the long history of the negative connotation for “machismo” (aggressive, controlling, arrogant etc.), Taylor and Behnke (2005) find it exaggerated and suggests that positive attributes such as provider for the family are also associated with the term “machismo” and contribute to a contemporary redefinition of the term (Taylor & Behnke, 2005). The absence of the father as a role model in the family leads to the situation where the mother can and has to assume all the responsibilities, but cannot replace the father. In this context, girls who were raised in the environment of a whole traditional family and whose father left the family may need to construct an imaginary alternative that fills the void created by the absence of a father.
By the same token, boys’ higher percentage of correct identifications for the mother and lower percentage of correct identifications for the father may translate into a subconscious drive to support the mother’s efforts to substitute the father, and, at the same time a dismissal of the father from the group to which, in children’s views, only the mother and her children belong. Some of the children in the study had the traumatic experiences of being the object of revenge between two parents who not only frequently claimed the children from one another, but also transplanted them to different states and different school environments as a result of their battles. Thus, it is not a stretch to assume that the negative perception upon an absent or irresponsible father may have possibly led the children to choose an alternate made up father from another ethnic group, potentially able to fulfill children’s expectations.

The follow-up group explained that children’s correct ethnic identification is due to 1): the perceived similarity of physical traits “Because they have the same color and most Mexican people look the same (...) kind of tannish skin,” or “Because they are Mexican and they look Mexican because of their dark hair and dark eyes and skin color,” and 2): the permanency of these ethnic traits, or “ethnic constancy” (Bernal et al. 1993): “Because that’s what they are, a Mexican girl.”

Ethnic Feelings and Preferences Questions

3. Which person would you like to look like when you grow up? (¿Cuando seas grande, a cuál persona te gustaría parecerse?) Why? (¿Porqué?)

The answers to this question come to confirm and reinforce the findings of the ethnic identification section.
The large proportion of children who indicate that they would like to look like the Mexican-descent adult in the picture is represented primarily by the older groups (7 to 10 years old) and not of so many of the younger children. Partly, this outcome has to do with the fact that the older children are aware both of their own ethnic features and of the immutability of their ethnic physical features, whereas the younger children are not:

"Mexican people have brown skin, some people have white skin, but brown people are always born in Mexico; they have nice brown eyes, like my mom, and I will like that when I grow up." "(...) because I like the brown color, and she has a brown color, and so do I." "I want to look like her. She kinda looks like me and I'll probably look like her when I grow up." "I will look like him, he has black hair. I have black hair." "I will look like her. She has the same hair color as me and kind of the same eyes."

Some may want to look white in the future, but accept that "if I had a different mom, then I could look like that," and that "my skin is not that light now, so I will look dark like her when I grow up." "I would like to look like this one because his skin is perfect, his teeth look really nice and I like his hair, but I cannot look like that when I grow up, my skin is not that light." The only group that is an exception in this case is the male one, ages 5-6, which, due to the fact they expressed the belief that their skin can change in the future, were expected to not prefer to display dark features as adults. Therefore, this group is the only one who selected solely the "white" option.

Apart from this aspect, some of the boys in the youngest age group made comments that were unrelated to skin color, but more directed to the moral characteristics associated with it:
"Which person would like to look like when you grow up?

This one because he is white, but I am brown now.

So you do not want to look brown when you grow up?

No, because brown people lie," or "I would like to look like him[Caucasian] because he looks like he is always going to work and he has more money."

It is evident that children match certain physical traits with observed moral attributes, and unconsciously begin evaluating people stereotypically.

The follow-up group finds it natural for everyone to want to look "Mexican" when they grow up because: "If you are Mexican you want to grow up Mexican.", but they think that those children who do not want to look "Mexican" when they grow up maybe because: "They might want to be American," and "(...) they probably don't like how they look. They probably don't like what color they are and what they look like, and (...) some people might tease them." Teasing seems to be a bitter experience shared by several children in the follow-up group, who see it as a good reason for not wanting to be brown any longer as an adult: "(...) they start making fun of their color and they say some bad things." The implication of such comments is that wishful thinking, i.e., the desire to grow up white-skinned, is not only a result of an early developmental stage, but also the materialization of personal experiences where discrimination shapes such perceptions.
4. Which one is prettier/better looking? (¿Cuál es más bonita?) Why? (¿Porqué?)

5. Which do you like better? (¿Cuál te gusta más?) (Sets 1, 2, 3 and 4.) Why? (¿Porqué?)

It has been interesting to observe that what some of the children found pretty was not necessarily the picture they selected as the person they liked most. Yet, children selected as an alternate choice as the one person whom they like most, making necessary for us to ask these children two apparently similar questions in order to best conclude on their preferences: “Which one is prettier?” and “Which one do you like?” Some of the subjects indicated for instance that the Caucasian individual is more beautiful, but that they still like and prefer the Mexican looking person. However, the majority of children’s responses to the two questions overlapped and led to the conclusion that Caucasian features are considered more beautiful and are also liked and preferred over the Mexican looking ones. Despite an apparent strong family influence on children’s beliefs, it is evident that there are other factors that shaped children’s perceptions. Several children mentioned that “my mom (or dad) really like very dark hair, and I think it is pretty, too,” yet they chose the white complexion individual as the one they considered more beautiful and also they liked most. For instance, they appreciated the Caucasian person as the most beautiful, because they have blue eyes, and blue eyes are “shiny and nice.” “Spiderman has blue eyes.” It is evident here media’s influence who popularizes and standardizes certain typologies of heroes whose physical attributes become superior in the eyes of children because of their association with the moral qualities.

Most of the children indirectly demonstrated a desire to look differently than they do: “I like blond hair and I hate brown,” “I like the light-colored hair and I want to paint
Now and have it blond, but when I grow up, mom says I only can do that when I grow up,” “this one is prettier because she has blue eyes and I like blue eyes better,” “I like her because her skin is...um...white...I like blond hair better, I would like to have blond hair...when I’ll grow up, I’ll dye my hair because I think is more beautiful,” “I like the color of his face and hair, I don’t like dark colors,” “This one is pretty, this one isn’t ‘cause she has darker skin,” “I like her because she has yellow hair, and my mom’s hair is really yellow” (note: the interviewer reported on this subject that her mother does not have blond hair, she is a dark-haired, dark-eyed, dark-skinned Mexican-descent woman). Most of the comments associated with a choice and preference, even if those of the older subjects in the group relate to the same incipient level of physical referents as indicators for ethnicity. Therefore, the age factor does not seem to be relevant in this case. Yet, some of the children in the 7-8 years old category also made comments with a social connotation which, although there is not enough evidence to constitute a pattern, this may indicate a higher level of ethnic maturation due to contextual familial experiences: “I like this one because he looks like he brushes his hair; brown people do not brush their hair because they have to go places,” or “I like him because he looks white and clean.” These comments are indicators of a higher order thinking that allows the child to make associations between color, ethnic groups and their occupations that have direct consequences in their lifestyles. Although sporadic and not a pattern of responses as we mentioned before, this aspect brings support to the ethnic identity development as a result of social learning. Quintana (1999) defines this stage under which possibly children ages 8-12 may fall, as the “social perspective.” He considers that “children at this level are
keenly aware of the social reality of their ethnic status” and that ethnicity is a “feature of
themselves that has implications for their mundane or every day social interactions”
(Quintana, 1999). Although only few of the responses in this category obtained during
the present study can be categorized as a drawn from a “social perspective,” the negation
of their own ethnicity on the basis of implied social reasons may very well constitute the
preliminary stage of such a more developed social perspective upon ethnicity.

It is of particular relevance to note that although the total percentage indicated a
general preference for the Caucasian stimuli, when broken down by gender, there is a
significant difference between the two genders’ choices. The majority of boys show
either equal preference for both ethnicities in same cases, or a definite preference for the
dark complexion features, unlike the girls who display little or no interest in their own
ethnic group. It may be inferred that to the girls, physical features appear to be more
important than to the boys, and that the girls are more interested in looks and beauty than
the boys, which made their reaction more obviously unambiguous in the direction of
physical features preferred. Even if media endorses diversity and TV commercials are
abundantly filled with individuals belonging to various ethnic groups represented in the
United States, the stereotypical Latina would still be pictured in lighter shades of brown
with her hair dyed in a lighter color (sometimes with blond streaks) than the average
Latina woman. Also, the soap operas (telenovelas) that most of the girls admittedly watch
at home on the Spanish channels, favor actors and actresses that despite their Hispanic
origin, look Caucasian. Children often accompany their parents on the sometimes
extended trips back and forth from Mexico, and therefore they are exposed not only to the
American media, but also to the Mexican one. Conversations with children and parents about their home country also revealed that the Mexican television promotes a stereotypical image of beauty. Individuals that are known TV anchors, artists, and people in the commercials, they all match the characteristics of the Caucasian individuals. It is correct then to assume that children learn via these social channels that what is beautiful equates white, and not dark.

A different take on cross racial preferences claims two divergent points of view. While some studies view cross racial choices as an indicative of low self-esteem manifested in the desire to symbolically “leaving” their own group and joining the one perceived as holding more positive traits (Corenblum, 1996), others see this aspect as positive. Beale Spencer and Markstrom-Adams (1990) consider that Caucasian-oriented preferences do not suggest misidentification or self-rejection, but rather as an aspiration to identify with the (perceived) positive attributes ascribed to the white stimuli which, in fact, findings show that it does not at all impact self-esteem negatively (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). Although we did not use any measure for self-esteem, the observation of a positive school culture, apparently unperturbed by pro-white bias, and hosting one of the most diverse student populations in the district, as well as the positive interracial interactions between children, we are inclined to support the second view. The follow-up group of children distinguished between male perceptions versus female perception on beauty, explained that girls’ choices would be more pronounced in one direction or another, but that “boys probably don’t care, they’re in between, they don’t care what they look like when they are older.” Other children in the same group implied
that favoring the Caucasian features may not be necessarily due as much to reasons of perceived beauty as it is for its association with personality traits ("English people are nice."), being more open about their personal life and making interpersonal connections easier: "(...) my teacher sometimes, she’s nice for bringing her baby so you can see her. Because they bring their babies when they are born. Mexican people don’t do it that much."

Also, Mexican families punish their children for lack of obedience more often than the Caucasian families: "My friend, her mom punishes her. English people are nicer than Spanish people." The same group made a point by explaining that since boys regard both ethnicities as good looking, it is indeed expected that they would not favor either one and that they would be split between choosing either ethnicity based on personal experiences. For example, having good friends in either group, or simply getting along with both ethnicities. Other children in the follow-up group suggested that the subjects who indicated a preference for the Caucasian physical features simply displayed a learned behavior of being "politically correct" and of being polite and appreciative towards members of a different ethnic group, "(...) so they don’t hurt their feelings or anything."

They also added their own perspective upon this non-discriminatory view on races: "Some people, Mexicans, they have good personalities and some people Americans have good personalities, so, I don’t think people should judge the differences by that. Because I like all the same races the same, just because I’m Mexican, doesn’t mean I’m going to like the Mexicans better, or if I’m American it doesn’t mean I’m going to like the Americans better. I’m going to like, no matter what race they are, I’m going to like them the same."
The reason why girls would favor the Caucasian group may have to do with their more pronounced interest in looks, and in being popular, as a result of the stereotypical images TV supports: "I know some movies, they have all these popular girls that are white, but most of them aren't Mexican (...)." They also have the desire of being liked, or to identify with the majority culture for fear of discrimination. In support of their argumentation, children in the follow-up group shared their own experiences: "My sister has lighter skin and everybody likes her," or "White people are from here and [Mexican] kids want to fit in," or "When I first came to Iowa people said that I look different and they think I don't know that much English, but I do, and they said I was not that pretty as a white person, and that hurt me." One older child suggested that the preference for the Caucasian features is a prejudiced one because "they [Mexican children] think that white people are better than them." When asked why would someone think that someone else is better he answered: "Because there's more white people than Mexicans," suggesting that group pressure impacts the formation of stereotyping and prejudiced perceptions. Other children explained that it may have not been the eye color or hair that the Mexican girls found attractive about the Caucasian race, but rather the accomplishments of people who look like that: "they make more money," or "they have nicer clothes." It appears that for these children the racial differences are not perceived in terms of physical differences, but in their social aspect. If, in fact, these perceived social differences were erased, racism would be to these children a truly color blind concept: "(...)my sister has a friend that's American, and she always wants our mom to buy stuff like she has, the American girl (...), my sister thinks she'll look pretty if she gets the same clothes."
6. Let's pretend that these two persons are teachers, which one would you prefer as your teacher? (Vamos a imaginar que estas dos personas son maestros, ¿Cuál preferirías como tu maestro?) Why? (¿Porqué?)

Unlike the student body at this school, faculty members do not belong to such a diverse ethnic background and are predominantly of Caucasian descent. This offers as possible explanation as to why children preferred the white complexion teacher over the dark complexion one. The actuality of having white teachers is not questioned, nor is it seen negatively. It is accepted as is, perhaps for not having any other referent for comparison.

The reasons children gave for the teacher choices can be grouped in two categories: (a) reasons based on ethnic preferences and (b) reasons that are color-blind.

The first category of reasons includes very simple answers, based solely on a judgment of ethnic physical features and feelings towards a particular ethnic group:

“I prefer this one because he has a nice face.” “It is more clear” (meaning white complexion), or “I like to have this one as a teacher because he's kinda light. This one is not pretty because she has darker skin.” More complex explanations brought in an ethnic comparison as a reason for the selected stimuli, such as: “I would like to have this person as a teacher because it matches to me, her eyes and hair.” Other reasons involved a greater understanding of the implications of ethnicity: “I prefer him, because if I don't understand something, he could tell me in Spanish, I think he speaks Spanish.” “I want her because she could talk in English and Spanish and when we're saying something she
knows what we’re talking about. And when we’re talking in English, she’ll still know
what we are talking about.”

The second category of reasons, the color-blind explanations demonstrate that
children did not make their choices based on the color of the skin, but rather on familiar
situations that the subjects enjoyed, such as: “He kinda reminds me of Mr. X (he names
his teacher). Because Mr. X is really nice and he likes to do stuff with us a lot. And most
of the teachers don’t do that. Well, I’m not sure, but Mr. X does lots of stuff with us like
the activities and he helps us if we get stuck,” or “She looks like one of my teachers and
she seems like she would do lots of nice things for us. And she would too, but
...like...more,” and “I prefer him because he looks just like my teacher in the other
school.” Other reasons from this same color-blind category give a picture of the ideal
type of teacher the subjects appreciate and want in class: “He looks good, I like his eyes,”
or “I prefer her because she looks more like she can understand more what other kids
need,” or “I prefer him because he might be fun...and the other one could be grumpy.”

Except for the various degrees of articulation manifested in the formulating of the
comments and that reflect various stages of cognitive development and English language
proficiency, no age or gender differences in the responses were noted.

It is important to note that students who made more complex explanation why the
dark teacher is preferred have experienced different school environments located in
predominantly Hispanic communities in other states than Iowa. These subjects who were
able to describe the benefits of having a bilingual teacher (which the Mexican looking
individual would supposedly be able to), also confessed that at home parents do not allow them to speak English, because English is "the language to be spoken at school only."

Given the fact that the color seemed to have made little difference for the majority of the subjects who answered this question, two different conclusions can be drawn. First, there is no evidence in this particular case that the age and gender influence children's ethnic preferences, and second, the school climate seemed to have erased the issue of color and leveled instead children's perceptions on race and ethnicity. We cannot even consider the issue of ethnicity in this situation, as long as the choices made demonstrated children's need for psychological comfort of any nature (familiar looks, good looking, understanding, funny, energetic, able to speak two languages) without associating it with any particular ethnicity. It appears that an environment where children feel safe and can enjoy themselves being color-blind is not necessarily a loss of ethnic self, but rather a motivational and bonding factor.

Indeed, it can be inferred that if the overwhelming majority of children attached the positive attributes to the Caucasian individuals as of being more fit teachers, the Mexican looking ones are not. This is not necessarily true. As mentioned before, the fact that for the majority of the subjects, the only teachers they have ever knew and they currently have are Caucasian, impacted their choices. The absence of the other ethnicity than Caucasian teachers in their familiar environment means only that the children were not able to construct a schema on the potential teaching qualities a Mexican person may have. As one of the children in the follow-up group noticed, children favored a Caucasian looking person as a teacher "Because they're used to a white teacher."
Yet, the follow-up group responses gravitate overwhelmingly around the concept of knowledge, i.e., “White is more knowledgeable, interpretation that suggests the existence of prejudiced thinking that to be White is better.” “*Some Mexicans know less than white people do,*” “[Mexican] *kids can learn a different language*” and “*stuff they did not know,*” because “(...) *maybe a white teacher knows more.*” Language was an important aspect to most of the children in this group who stated: “(...) *the white teacher would speak English,*” “*they know how to speak English more*” and Mexican children want to know English because “*That way they can know what other people are telling them,*” which is “*important.*” However, children find that being knowledgeable is due to the educational opportunity available to the Caucasian ethnicity and not as a biological predisposition of this ethnic group: “*Because they think Americans are smarter because some Mexican people don’t go to school because they can’t afford it, my mom didn’t go to school because their family was in Mexico and probably that’s why the white people get more education.*” They think that given equal educational opportunities, both teachers would be equally good, as the following two dialogues between the students and the interviewer show:

Student X:

“*-Why do these kids want to have the white person as a teacher, and not the brown one?*

*-To teach them more English than Spanish.*

*-What if the brown teacher knows English already? Is the white teacher still better...?*

*-No, they are both the same.*”
Student Y:

"What if they have a Mexican teacher who knows English very well?"

"That teacher would be a good teacher, too, because that way, if you do not understand something, the teacher can help you."

7. Which child would you like to play with? (Con cuál niño/a te gustaría jugar?) Why? (Porqué?)

The choice of playmates indicates a strong preference among boys to mingle with same-ethnicity children, unlike the girls who were more inclined to play with the "English" girls. There is not an age pattern that indicates the choices either increase or decrease with age. Responses show that preference is based on the resemblance and the common language spoken, factors that give a sense of comfort and belonging according to the children interviewed: "I like to play with people who have black hair," "I like to play with him because he looks better, I like dark people," "I like to play with this one because she is the same color as me," "...he probably speaks Spanish and he would understand me more," "...him because he looks kinda like me, I would feel more comfortable with him." Some of the comments are assertive and although rare, reflect to a certain extent the views imposed by the majority Caucasian population: "Mexicans like Mexicans, they don't like Americans. Americans don't like Mexicans...Americans like English people," states a 6 year old boy. "Brown people play with brown people" says one girl, while one of the boys remembers he was teased for what he thought it was his non-White appearances and he chooses to stand up for the new Mexican-looking girl in school and play with her because, he says "maybe her new friends tease her, too."
A possible explanation for the differences in responses by gender is the fact that the larger number of Spanish-speaking boys in the school than that of the Spanish-speaking girls makes possible for these boys to congregate. Another probable justification for the boys’ choices is the reflection of the influence of cultural beliefs, mainly concerning gender roles. Boys justified why they wanted to play with the dark boys in the pictures by stating reasons such as “Spanish boys can play rough.” One other boy refuses to choose any girl as a potential playmate saying that “I don’t play with girls.” These comments bring in some nuances that the construct of “machismo” involves.

Certain gender expectations such as the one of being what the culture believes to be a real man are often negatively connoted and translate into being able to fight, to be “tough,” or to associate with males only. Fighting is frequently associated with masculinity, which partially explains the preference of the Mexican-descent boys to play with same-ethnicity children. This is not necessarily associated with fights on the playground, although episodically these do occur. Soccer, a sport preferred by the members of the Mexican-descent group, would be more likely to be a strong reason for Mexican-descent boys to seek same-ethnicity children that are acquainted with the rules and the “toughness” of the game.

Girls’ comments on their choices not only indicate a differently geared interest on the playground for more nonviolent behaviors, but also the beliefs that the Caucasian children “look like they are going to share,” “smile more often, while us, Spanish people do not smile that often,” “may have new games because they have more money,” “are more fun,” and “talk in English.” Girls, too, seem to function up to the gender
expectations of the culture by doing what is considered to be the right thing to do for a
girl, by showing interest in learning (i.e., the English language). Also, the smaller
number of Mexican-descent children in general, and particularly the smaller number of
Mexican-descent girls makes it reasonable to assume that their choices for White
playmates are circumstantial, to a certain extent. Girls confessed that: “I have more
English-speaking friends just because there are not enough Mexican people around, but I
would like to have more Mexican friend,” or “I have more English friends than Spanish
because of the way the school and the neighborhood are. I would like to have more
friends that are Spanish. Right now I only have my family that is Spanish and it feels
kinda lonely.”

The interpretations of the majority children in the follow-up group indicated that
physical appearances and language may constitute a bullying issue that the Mexican-
descent boys find difficult to cope. For example, this group suggested that “how they talk
and how they look” is a strong reason to feel rejected by the Caucasian friends and
therefore, to have a more definite preference for same ethnicity playmates. Boys seek
same ethnicity friends because “they do not know how to speak English” and their
Mexican-descent friends will talk to them “not in a different language, but the same
language they speak.” Language is a strong bonding element that makes boys, especially,
feel they are not alone: “If I did not speak English at all and I came to a school that
everybody spoke English, and I was the only one that spoke Spanish, and then I would
feel left out and sad,” therefore “I want to play with Mexican boys because I can talk to
them in my language,” and “I am more comfortable with Mexican people.” It was also
pointed out that boys like to have their own ways, another expression of the traditional male-female role in the Mexican culture, where males are in control most of the time:

“When you play with Mexicans, they have something [in common, i.e., soccer] they want to play, but if you play with someone white, they want to play something else,” unlike girls, who should be able to make friends more easily because “they talk more,” “they make more friends,” or, simply, “because there’s more American people.”

8. Which person do you think is smarter? (¿Cuál persona crees que es más inteligente?) Why? (¿Porquéd)
9. Which person is happier? (¿Quién es más feliz?) (Why? (¿Porqué?)
10. Which one is more liked by their classmates? (¿Quién crees que es más aceptado por sus compañeros de clase?) Why? (¿Porqué?)

We chose to discuss the answers to these three questions altogether for the similarities in children’s argumentation to all three of them, and also for the manner in which children associate these qualities and beliefs (smart, happy, liked).

It is debatable whether or not the choices children made have an ethnic foundation. Of all the arguments, the skin color was not the first to be mentioned by the children as grounds for their choices. Since pictures presented as stimuli did not include clothing, background or any other factors that could have potentially influenced the responses, this aspect did not pose questions in interpreting children’s selections. The only obvious differences between the two stimuli were the ethnic physical traits. Regardless of the apparent physical differences, some of the children looked at the pictures with a seemingly color-blind perception, as we noted in the discussion about teacher preferences. Thus, what is smart, happy, or liked did not come across as
conscious ethnic choices, but rather as a result of children’s social interactions, learned experiences and familiar situations. Apparently it made more sense for these children to look at the facial expressions of the individuals in the pictures and infer potential qualities attached to those expressions, or to make associations with people they have interacted with, classmates, friends or family members, or to simply make up their own story about an individual, also an obvious reflection of knowledge and experiences acquired in school, family or community.

"She seems like she would be a nicer person that would help other people. Because of her eyes. You know how people sometimes look into other people's eyes and feel like a feeling inside them...? It's kinda like that." Examples like these are numerous with no observed frequency from a particular age group or gender. The answers demonstrate the fact that the subjects were aware of the physical ethnic traits, and also that these qualities were not a determining factor in children’s choices. However, it was also noted that other subjects referred to the color of the eyes, hair or skin as their reason to believe a person is happy, smart, liked or not. "People with brown eyes are always nice." With a view to percentages split almost in half between favoring either one of the ethnic groups, and children’s racial comments, it is not very clear that at this age their ethnic beliefs are an expression of negative racial stereotyping or not. Infrequently, negative ethnic stereotyping is inferred in comments like: "Brown people are bad because they are liars and steal dollars," or "Some dark people are bad 'cause...some of them...they...fight other people or they fight with their wives," but the relative isolation and a lack of consistency in these types of responses or of a pattern across ages or gender
makes us assume that at the elementary level, these commentaries are a result of individual personal histories rather than feelings of marginalization or oppression commonly shared by the entire group of children. Undeniably, personal experiences do lead to the crystallization of negative stereotyping, but we did not find enough evidence to conclude that this is the case for all the subjects in the study. Relevant in this respect is the story told by a 10 year old Mexican-descent girl, according to which, her illegal parents had to sneak back and forth through the borders between the two countries by passing an underground tunnel, together with their U.S.-born children, every single time they wanted to visit their extended family in Mexico. The mother could not find employment in the United States other than illegally and that only after a while, and so to be able to feed her children she would cruise grocery stores and steal food. The younger child of the family would process such information and conclude that “brown people are liars and steal.”

Another boy finds the light skinned woman bad because she may be like his teacher who “does not let us speak Spanish in class because she thinks we talk about her, but we really don’t.” The same boy further confesses that he believes the blond boy is more liked, because “his teacher may like his hair more.” Very subtle inferences of the felt effects of power exerted by the dominant culture through the use of the English language are expressed by only one subject: “He is smarter because English people understand more, more words. He is also a better person because sometimes I think that the English people help a little more, they help you if you don’t understand something.” The implication that such a comment would negatively impact self-esteem, by assuming
that to be Mexican is therefore inferior, would be in this case, presumptuous, because the same child maintains that: "It is good to be half-half because you speak two languages. My answers come first in English," which in our view is more of a perceived accomplishment rather than a stressor.

More of children's answers regarding their views on being good/bad will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

The follow-up group revealed that the perception that both ethnicities are equally smart was because "they're both people." Even if "Mexican people might know different things than the white people" and vice versa, as children commented, being smart is only a matter of learning that both ethnicities are equally capable of with hard work: "Well, some English people know more, but if some Mexican people get a chance, they can start to learn and then they'll know as much as English people," "It depends if you study or not." "Both can become famous and both can get good jobs" if they "work hard."

Happiness, however, has a strong social and racial connotation for these children, consistent with that of the subjects initially interviewed. There is the awareness among them that the reason why Caucasian people are believed to be happier has to do with the material or spiritual possessions that the Mexican people do not have access to. For instance, they are happy "because they have a job," "they have a bigger world than the Mexicans, and they can go everywhere, they are happy because they can buy more clothes, and in Mexico there aren't that many stores, so they can't," "they live in a better country" and "they are happy with where they live." These responses partially reflect adults' views expressed in conversations at home or shared with teachers at school and
that the children witnessed. There is however a feeling of estrangement that these children experienced because of being of two places in a sense, a feeling that has neither been taught, nor explicitly discussed with their parents, but only barely expressed when circumstances were created in class. For instance, comments such as:

"Maybe is because if you're born here and most of your family are in Mexico, your relatives, but your mom and dad are here, maybe they're lonely, that's why they're not happy. So if you are all white and all your family is here you'd feel happier," or "Because Mexican people almost don't know much English and they're just here so they're like beginners," are backed up by similar thoughts expressed in a poetical form as part of a school assignment:

Student X:
I like how I was born.
I like how I am.
I'm proud for myself.
I like speaking English and Spanish.
But I miss my other family in Mexico.
I felt sad when people made fun of me.
They kept bugging me and saying that I did my homework wrong because I did not speak English very well.

Student Y:
I'm proud of who I am.
And where I am.
But I still miss my family and friends in Mexico.
My life has changed because of how I live in the U.S.
In Mexico we speak a different language than here.
When I first came to America
It was difficult for me to speak English.

Student Z:
I feel bad about my mom and dad because they don't speak English.
But I tell my mom and dad some words in English.
Now my dad knows a tiny bit of English and so does my mom.
At times I think about my grandpa
Because he is in Mexico and I miss him.
There is some of my family in Ohio and Mexico
So that is why I wish I were with them in Ohio and Mexico.
I miss them, too.
Sometimes people make fun of me because I am Mexican
But I just ignore them and just go where I am going.

Student Q:
A lot of my family is in the U.S.A,
But I still want to be in Mexico, because if
My parents had never left Mexico
My grandma would have been alive.
My mom told me
She died of sadness
Because we were all gone.

This assignment they completed during the English class brought up a factor that otherwise may go overlooked by parents, educators and perhaps even by the children themselves. Hence, both the first group of children interviewed and the follow-up group suggested that the Caucasian children are liked more at school, appears as a natural consequence of these feelings of isolation and sadness. One girl indicated that her Caucasian peers do not take the time to get to know a Mexican student, and that even after the Mexican child had been in school for a year, he is still subjected to stereotypical perceptions, and they steered away from him because “they might not know me yet, so they might think I might steal stuff when I don’t.” What this child would like his peers to know about him and does not know how to convey is “that I don’t steal stuff, because I don’t.” They feel that the majority of Caucasian kids would stick to their own ethnicity is because “there’s more white kids,” “they have more in common,” and “the teacher is white and they’re mostly white kids so they stick together and the Spanish people are left out.”
11. Which one of these two do you think is a better person? (¿Cuál de estos dos crees que es mejor persona?) Why? (¿Porqué?)

The view that the brown-looking individuals are better people, expressed by a large number of children indicate pride in their ethnicity based on a combination between a “physicalistic perspective” (Quintana, 1999), which is the understanding that there is a connection between some physical features (e.g., skin color) and ethnic or racial group designation, and the “literal” perspective upon ethnicity, which involves awareness of a “link between physical features and internal ethnic characteristics”: “People with brown [black] hair are good,” “He is better because of his hair, eyes and skin, his skin is dark, mine is dark, and his hair is black, he looks like me.” This seemingly syllogistic reasoning (brown-looking people are good, I am brown-looking, he looks like me, therefore he is a good person) is a common interpretation among the students interviewed, and it denotes a high self-esteem level (even if this was not a targeted component in this study): “she is a better person because she looks like she speaks both languages [like I do],” “he looks like me, and he looks like he will share all kinds of stuff, his things, toys(...),” “she is better because she almost looks like me,” “he looks like my brother.” The referent is not only own self, but also familiar experiences: “she is, she looks like a girl I know and she is good,” “him, because I had a [Mexican-descent] teacher who looked just like that and he was really nice to me,” “him, because I have a friend who looks like him,” “this friend ... had a sister who looked just like that and she was very nice to me.” These judgments may also be a reflection of the family values, as
pointed by the students in the follow-up group: “Yes, Mexican people are nicer and I agree with that because my family gets along with that.”

A “social” perspective (Quintana, 1999) is also present in some children’s responses. These children appear to be able to include “more subtle” and “social differences associated with ethnicity” (p.5). For instance, parenting style and family rules and mentality are mentioned as one important reason why Mexicans are better people: “[Mexican people are better] because they stay more in their house than going out,” which is a “waste of time and money.” Also, the laid back attitude in raising children is perceived as careless and pointed out as a bad practice; therefore, Caucasian people are the “bad” people: “sometimes English people, when they are eight, they let them go wherever they want with their bikes. I’m nine now and my parents don’t let me go with my bike around, just around the block, because I’m still little, and they want to take care of me.”

Mundane instances that they observe shaped children’s perceptions in the direction of bias and stereotyping: “White people get the easy jobs, and Mexicans get all the hard stuff, so that’s saying white people prefer the easier jobs than the hard jobs,” which, in this child’s view makes Mexican people better individuals for being able to perform more difficult jobs and are not afraid of accepting these types of occupations.

On the opposite side, there are the color-blind responses. The large number of own ethnicity choices did not necessarily have an explicit ethnic-related reason behind it. Mexican people are better simply because “their hair looks brushed,” they appear “cleaner,” or “funny” because “their hair looks messed up.” A couple of children
commented that they could not tell anything about a person just by looking at a picture, because “what matters is inside, not outside,” or simply because “I do not know any of them.”

12. Which one has more money? (¿Cuál tiene más dinero?) Why? (¿Porqué?)

The questions of who has more money revealed that in Quintana’s terms, children’s views upon wealth are constructed socially. Children ages 8-12 are conscious of social differences connected with ethnicity (Quintana, 1999). The responses of the subjects in the present study suggested that at least as far as the issue of finances is concerned, even children ages 5-6 have a more developed awareness of the ethnic differences than they show evidence of in other areas. A little more than half of the children indicated the Caucasian individuals as the wealthier ones: “People that talk English have big houses” and explained it in a way that demonstrated awareness of ethnic discrimination: “Because... like... Spanish people have more problems getting jobs.” Lack of education and/or sufficient income are the determining factors in triggering even more financial stress. Children made reference to these familial experiences when explaining why Caucasian people “can go to work,” and therefore make money, but Mexican people can’t, because “they have to be with the baby.”

Without extrapolating this finding to other aspects of ethnicity, we can only assume that the increased ethnic awareness some of the children demonstrated in this case can be attributed mostly to the weight the Mexican families place on money. Immigrants not by choice, but by the utter necessity of survival, a Mexican family unit evolves around solving this problem, more so when they are undocumented. Despite the
adversities, Mexican adults, male in special, take pride in being good providers and not complaining about the difficulties they may encounter in fulfilling this task. Children may not be aware of their parents’ struggle for two reasons: (1) they have their basic needs met and (2) money issues are one part of the adult world that they do not participate in. They certainly observe and compare, but as the follow-up group suggested, as long as “some Mexicans are poor and some are not poor,” it makes sense for the choices to this question to be split, and not significantly favoring one ethnicity or the other. It is important to note, however, that the majority of Mexican-American children attending this school belong to a low-income category. Apart from the already discussed reasons why children do not seem to be aware of this reality, there may be personal reasons only the older may be able to articulate clearly: “Who likes to say they are poor, even if they are?” Latino culture particularly displays what may be interpreted as attention-seeking behaviors when it comes to material possessions. Regardless of their income, many Mexican families would strive to acquire and flaunt nice clothing, big-shiny trucks, gold jewelry, and brand-name sporting goods. This image, even if at times is artificially created and maintained, translates into symbols of wealth in the eyes of children, which explains their mixed ethnic choices.

Summary

In spite of the sometimes divergent ethnic views reflected in their choices and comments, ten common themes were identified.

1. I know who I am. All the children in the study demonstrated that they are aware of their ethnic traits and of their Mexican origin. They are able, with no exception, to
describe their phenotype, label themselves either as Mexicans or Mexican-Americans and are also able to explain why: "I speak Spanish," "I am brown and I have dark hair," "My mom and dad came from Mexico and they tell me I am Mexican," "I am the two things: Mexican and American because I speak Spanish and English." However, some of the children in the youngest age group held the belief that their physical attributes can change overtime and that they can be blond or lighter skinned sometime in the future. It was observed that the older the subject, the more complex the explanations attached to the self-identification labels were. Also, older children could state firmly that they are and they will always be Mexican, with the attached physical features: "I am a Mexican now, so I will grow up to be a Mexican." Consistent with this finding, Bernal et al.'s (1993) research on Mexican-American children ethnic identity suggests that whereas young children (pre-school and early school level) are capable of self-identification as members of an ethnic group, only the older ones are able to understand the permanency of their ethnic traits (p.35).

These researchers found a developmental pattern that "parallels the literature on gender identity where gender self-identification and constancy increase with age," due to the development of more complex cognitive processes (p. 42).

2. Bicultural identities. Phinney et al. (2001) consider that integration in a new culture varies greatly among different ethnic groups, depending on their particularities and the setting. For instance, Phinney et al. (2001) show that the Mexicans living in Southern California form the majority of the population and that their culture influenced the entire area. "Therefore, it is easier for them to feel that they are part of both their own culture
and the larger society” (p. 498). The Mexican-origin group in Iowa does not hold either the numeric or the cultural power. However, a similar perception with that of a more numerous group such as the Mexicans in California was observed. The subjects’ level of comfort with their ethnic identity was noted throughout the study. All second generation Mexican-Americans, the participant children do not seem split between two different identities, but rather navigate between the coordinates of two different cultures seemingly willing to blend them into a new one. They are capable at this age to still “want to be white and pretty and stuff; but they want to grow up as Mexicans, because they are having to, like, they’re seeing two things.” The two things implied, the mainstream culture and the Mexican one, play their role in defining ethnic identity, and apply various degrees of pressure on the children; yet, children take this difficult task upon themselves and make the defining of their ethnic identity a conscious process that evolves in their own terms: “It’s not really your parents’ decision or someone else’s if you want to be more American, you can be more, and more Mexican if you want to.” Family pressure on the one hand and the predominantly White environment on the other, are seemingly perceived positively by the children in this study. Both ways, Phinney et al. (2001) suggest that strong ethnic identity is likely to occur either when “immigrants have a strong desire to retain their identities,” and also when “there is a strong, supportive ethnic community” (p.494). Pressure to assimilate predicts a positive outcome when “immigrants are willing to adapt to the new culture.” The subjects interviewed fit in the middle category of the adaptation process described by Orozco and Orozco (2001). They are between those individuals who either distance themselves from the co-ethnics, or
resist the norms and expectations, and they “struggle to actively forge links between their ethnic group and the majority population” (p.118), thus “crafting bicultural identities” (p.113).

3. Language barrier and bilingualism. Most children in the study indicated that language becomes an important issue when choosing their teachers, playmates, and friends, how well they do in class, how smart they see others or themselves, and how successful they project themselves to be in the future. Although felt like a handicap at some point in their lives, language has transitioned in these children’s experiences from a stressor to a predictor of success for themselves and for their families: “My sister’s daughter, she’s maybe two months, her dad is Bosnian, and the mom is Mexican. And when she grows up she can speak three languages if she chooses to. If they want her to speak all three languages, she will be able to get a good job, and paid well. She’ll be able to have a nice house, nice cars, because she’s bilingual, she can speak more than one language. You can be an interpreter, you can be lots of things, like at [concealed name] Company, they hire there, they start you off at twelve dollars an hour. When she speaks three languages, she’s probably going to make more than that. Like my mom, she’s bilingual, and she’s an interpreter and a nurse and she speaks Spanish and English, she gets like fifteen dollars an hour (...).”

Zhou (1997) cites past studies that link bilingualism to academic achievement:

“Matute-Bianchi (1986) found in an ethnographic study of Mexican-American children that advanced bilingual skills were related to a strong Mexican identity and that fully bilingual young Mexican-Americans tended to perform better in school than those who lacked proficient bilingual skills. She concluded that proficiency in the native language allows young people to gain greater access to the emotional and normative supports of the ethnic group” (p.88).
Zhou (1997) considers that "the ethnic language is intrinsic to ethnicity" and that "it allows immigrant children to gain access to some kind of social capital generated from a distinctive ethnic identity, such as support and control from bilingual or non-English-speaking parents and ethnic communities" (p. 89). There is evidence that immigrant families support every value and behavior regarding education, and, sometimes, even in a more manifest manner than their Caucasian native-born counterpart (Fuligni, 1998; Steele, 1997; Stevenson, Chen, & Uttal, 1990). Therefore, proficiency in the ethnic language is essential for access to this type of community support (Zhou, 1997).

Similarly, the current study found that many of the subjects in the study are balanced bilinguals and successful academically, therefore displaying a linguistic and psychological comfort while swinging between two languages.

4. Stereotyping. None of the children ages 5-8 display awareness of negative racial stereotyping, with the exception of one boy who says: "Some kids laugh at me because I am brown." This observation leads us to conclude that while at this age ethnic identity formation includes social factors, to be Mexican is still viewed as a "given" by the majority of children, having little or no impact upon their self-image and social interactions. When they were told the incident with the girl from the same school as the subjects who cried because she was called "Mexican" by a Caucasian peer, all children responded that they would not cry, and that she was wrong to do so. They all mentioned, even the one boy who noticed his skin color was laughed at, that the label "Mexican" per se does not trigger negative feelings, and that they actually like being called "Mexican," unless it is perceived as an insult (not fully understood): "Sometimes people call you
Mexican in a disrespectful way. I feel fine when they call me simply Mexican, but when they say it in a bad way I am mad."

5. Prejudice. A more salient understanding of ethnicity and perception of ethnic differences, along with their social consequences were observed among the oldest group of children interviewed. Their responses denote that at ages 9-10 the existence of social stratification and cultural collision is evident to them and that fact adds a deeper dimension to their concept of ethnicity. At this age, children can see themselves through the lenses of others, identify themselves as target of ethnic prejudice, and observe that "color matters." This finding is consistent with Quintana and Vera (1999) observations that the greater the ethnic knowledge of ethnic differences between the two cultures (Mexican-American and Caucasian), the more likely children are to display ethnic prejudice. "It is the white people in the States who call us like that [names]. And they say it about the Mexicans, they make fun of them, and not about people from other countries, but there are more Mexicans...sometimes they say that about blacks, because they are different from them[Caucasian]."

6. Ethnic labeling. Rumbaut (1994) finds that the place of birth is linked to ethnic identity and ethnic labeling. He maintains that for a second generation individual, parents’ birthplace is a strong determinative of one’s self-ethnic labeling. For instance, although being born in the United States is a major predictor of opting for a hyphenated-American label, having both parents born in the same country significantly increases the chances that children will identify with parents’ nationality and also self-label bi-nationally as hyphenated-Americans (Mexican-American).
Consistent with these results, the children in this study labeled themselves either as "Mexicans," or as hyphenated-Americans (Mexican-Americans).

"My mom tells me she is born in Mexico and I am born here, so I am Mexican-American."

"I speak Spanish like my mom and dad, but I speak English, too. So, I guess I am Mexican, like my parents and a little bit American, too."

"I am Mexican because my parents came from Mexico."

"I am born here. I am maybe both, Mexican and American, because I am half from here and half from there, and my heart is half here and half there."

7. Racism and discrimination. Older children, ages 9-10, are "able to generalize across discrete experiences and across individuals," and can generalize "across isolated examples of ethnic prejudice or bias and describe the cumulative effects of experiences related to ethnicity" (Quintana, 1999, p. 6). They are capable of expressing their feelings of sadness or anger in relation to episodic displays of discrimination at school: "They [American schoolmates] judge people based on their skin color, not on their personality (...). They don't really say anything, it's just the way they look at them [Mexican kids], like...because there's some girl in the other class in this grade, she's always asking me: why do you hang out with them? Because she is American, and I just say because I'm not judging people by their skin color, the way they look...(...) 'cause she's American, she thinks that it's not right to hang out with black people or different races. So, if I am that person, would you say something about me? She said no, and I said, well, it's because
you know me, but you do not know them, so you can’t judge them. You don’t know them, so you don’t talk to them. It’s wrong to judge them.”

8. Teasing and rejection. It is suggested in literature that a strict socialization monitoring of their children by Latino families may be connected to Latino children’s perception of peer rejection (Jambunathan & Burts, 2003). The explanation is that Latino families are rather disinclined to allow their children to interact with outgroup individuals, and to not “encourage independent peer interaction and autonomous behavior” (Jambunathan & Burts, p. 658). However, in this study we found that peer rejection within the school is episodic and minimal, and that “ethnic teasing” is not a common practice.

9. Pressure to fit in. From the unrealistic wish to have their skin color or hair lighter, expressed by some of the younger children, ages 5-6, to articulate more thoughts on being a minority reported by the older students in the study, it is obvious that being in a place “where there is more American people” can be stressful. Many children indicate a direct or indirect desire to be no different, whatever the means involved, than the majority of people around them. Either for non-ethnic related issues reasons, such as popularity at school, or for avoiding more traumatic experiences, such as ethnic bullying, some of the students pointed out that all they want is to be “regular.” No negative feelings toward their co-ethnics were reported, therefore there is unlikely that these children feel estranged from the family and own ethnic group (Partida, 1996), or experience the isolation and separatism that come along with what Banks (1988) defines as “ethnic psychological captivity,” or with the “ethnic encapsulation” stages of ethnicity (Banks, 1988, p. 50). Children in the study do not feel trapped between the coordinates of the two
cultures. The pressure to assimilate is willingly assumed.

10. Pride. Neither one of the labels triggers negative feelings; to the contrary, the labels (Mexican or Mexican-American) infuse a deep sense of pride. Children’s ethnic pride appears to be a summation of factors such as: positive ethnic reinforcement from the family and other members of their ethnic group, a sense of self-confidence conferred by their ability to function in two languages and, in many cases, academic success. The following comment sums-up well the perspective upon ethnic labeling and pride: “I am Mexican-American because of my parents are from Mexico and I am born in the U.S., but I am more Mexican at heart. I speak Spanish only to help others, like my dad, get around. I am not ashamed that my parents don’t speak English, and I am proud I am Mexican. Classmates sometimes call me: Shut up, Mexican boy! And I tell them yes, I am a Mexican, but I am no different than the others. I don’t care if they call me like that, because I AM Mexican. Sometimes my Mexican friends ask me why I hang out with THAT white kid. But he is Mexican, too, jut that he has whiter skin. Besides, so what? We are not different, other than the skin, eyes and hair. And that does not make a difference to who you are inside. I don’t care who I hang out with, as long as I have friends, Mexican or White. But some people are mean, and they do not like my culture, and I do not understand why. Maybe because of the illegal immigrants? But I do not care, because yes, this is what I am, a Mexican.”

Many of the comments and the choices all children made reflected appreciation and respect for their own heritage and ethnic group. Children demonstrated that despite all the acculturation issues they may have encountered, they are not only capable of
displaying ethnic pride, but to also disapprove with the ethnic group members who may not: “People sometimes lie about their race, this one person I heard lied about her race, she said she was American when she wasn’t, and I was at her house and they spoke Spanish and her family spoke Spanish, and she was Mexican. I told her I was Mexican, because I’m proud of being a Mexican, no matter if people talk bad about them. Maybe she thinks that Mexicans are bad or do bad things, or do things wrong, they don’t know English all the way right. There are other people that don’t know English either, even some Americans don’t.”

Although such studies as the present one place an expectation on finding that things are either/or, the slightly above or slightly below the median figures we obtained may seem to mean neither/nor, and therefore null, meaningless. However, we believe that such expectations are a mere reflection of stereotyping and prejudice that maintain an artificially oppressive dichotomy. The either/or definitions “fall back on simplistic notions of culture as static and fixed and are thus flawed and untrue to reality” (Nieto, 2002, p. 109). The reality of our study suggests a process of redefining an ethnic identity that calls for a curriculum in motion and in tune with a diversity that “struggles to develop identities that retain important insights and values while also challenging the limitations that both our native and adopted cultures may impose on us” (Nieto, 2002, p. 112).

One very important thing that we, as educators and teachers in this district, should always keep in mind is that these Mexican-American children, our students, “are seeing two things.”
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

CHOICE QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 1:

Which one looks like you? (¿Cuál niño/a se parece a ti?) (Set 3 and 4) Why?
(¿Porqué?)

Directions: Show the picture of the girl to the girls and the picture of the boy to the boys.

Interviewee #: ___ Grade: ___ Age: ___ Gender: ___ Ethnicity: ___

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set #</th>
<th>CHOICE Aa</th>
<th>CHOICE Ba</th>
<th>CHOICE Ac</th>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
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</table>
Question 2:

Which one looks more like your dad/mom? (¿Cuál se parece más a tu papá/mamá?)

(Set 1 and 2) Why? (¿Porqué?)

Interviewee #: ___  Grade: ___  Age: ___  Gender: ___  Ethnicity: ___

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set #</th>
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</table>
Question 3:

Which person would you like to look like when you grow up? (¿Cuando seas grande, a cuál persona te gustaría parecerte?) (Set 1 and 2) Why? (¿Porqué?)

Directions: Show the picture of the woman to the girls and the picture of the man to the boys.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee #:</th>
<th>Grade:</th>
<th>Age:</th>
<th>Gender:</th>
<th>Ethnicity:</th>
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Question 4:

Which one is prettier/better looking? (¿Cuál es más bonita?) (Set 1, 2, 3 and 4)

Why? (¿Porqué?)

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</table>

Interviewee #:  
Grade:  
Age:  
Gender:  
Ethnicity:  
Question 5

Which do you like better? (¿Cuál te gusta más?) (Set 1, 2, 3 and 4) Why? (¿Porqué?)

Interviewee #:  
Grade:  
Age:  
Gender:  
Ethnicity:  

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<th>Set #</th>
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</table>
Question 6:

Let’s pretend that these two persons are teachers, which one would you prefer as your teacher? (Vamos a imaginar que estas dos personas son maestros, ¿Cuál preferirías como tu maestro?) (Set 1 and 2) Why? (¿Porqué?)

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</table>

Interviewee #: ____  Grade: ____  Age: ____  Gender: ____  Ethnicity: ____
Question 7:

Which child would you like to play with? (¿Con cuál niño/a te gustaría jugar?) (Set 3 and 4) Why? (¿Porqué?)

Interviewee #: _____ Grade: _____ Age: _____ Gender: _____ Ethnicity: _____

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</table>
Question 8:  
Which person do you think is smarter? (¿Cuál persona crees que es más inteligente?) (Set 1, 2, 3 and 4) Why? (¿Porqué?)

Interviewee #: Grade: Age: Gender: Ethnicity: 

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Question 9:

Which person is happier? (¿Quién es más feliz?) (Set 1, 2, 3 and 4) Why? (¿Porqué?)

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<thead>
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<th>Interviewee #:</th>
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Question 10:

Which one is more liked by their classmates? (¿Quién crees que es más aceptado por sus compañeros de clase?) (Set 3 and 4) Why? (¿Porqué?)

Interviewee #:_____ Grade:_____ Age:_____ Gender:_____ Ethnicity:_____

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Question 11:

Which one of these two do you think is a better person? (¿Cuál de estos dos crees que es mejor persona?) (Set 1, 2, 3 and 4) Why? (¿Porqué?)

Interviewee #: _____  Grade: _____  Age: _____  Gender: _____  Ethnicity: _____

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Question 12:

Which one has more money? (¿Cuál crees que tiene más dinero?) (Set 1, 2, 3 and 4)

Why? (¿Porqué?)

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APPENDIX B

POEMS

Poems created by some of the elementary students interviewed in this study:

Who I Am

I like how I was born.
I like how I am.
I'm proud for myself.
I like speaking English and Spanish.
But I miss my other family in Mexico.
I felt sad when people made fun of me.
They kept bugging me and saying that I did my homework wrong
because I did not speak English very well.
Now I am better at school and people do not make fun of me anymore.
I like my life here.

I Have Two Languages

I have two languages: English and Spanish.
I feel proud because I teach my grandpa English.
Now he says English words.
And I also teach my grandma English.
And I teach my little brother.
So that makes me proud of myself.

My Life Has Changed

I'm proud of who I am.
And where I am.
But I still miss my family and friends in Mexico.
My life has changed because of how I live in the U.S.
In Mexico we speak a different language than here.
When I first came to America
It was difficult for me to speak English.
But then I got to know people better and made friends.
And now I know how to speak English.
That's why my life has changed
And I am proud of myself.
My Feelings About Being Mexican

I feel bad about my mom and dad because they don’t speak English. But I tell my mom and dad some words in English. Now my dad knows a tiny bit of English and so does my mom. At times I think about my grandpa Because he is in Mexico and I miss him. There is some of my family in Ohio and Mexico So that is why I wish I were with them in Ohio and Mexico. I miss them, too. Sometimes people make fun of me because I am Mexican But I just ignore them and just go where I am going.

My Life

I was born in California. My parents are from Mexico. Sometimes I think how my life Could be if I lived in Mexico. Sometimes I ask my parents How they lived in Mexico, If it was a good life or a bad life. They said it was an OK life, But they did not have enough money back there. I feel good in the U.S.A, I feel like it is a good life here In the U.S. A lot of my family is in the U.S.A, But I still want to be In Mexico, because if My parents had never left Mexico My grandma would have been alive. My mom told me She died of sadness Because we were all gone.
APPENDIX C

TABLE C1

ETHNIC IDENTITY MODELS

(a) Stages in the Development of Ethnic or racial Concepts and Attitudes
children's ethnic socialization. In J.S. Phinney, & M.J. Rotheram (Eds.). Children's ethnic

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Awareness (3-4)</td>
<td>Awareness of color differences (3)</td>
<td>Formation of rudimentary concepts (1-4)</td>
<td>Unawareness of ethnic affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conceptual differentiation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incipient racial attitudes (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness of groups leading to social comparison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recognition of the irrevocability of cues</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnic Orientation (4-8)</td>
<td>Strong social preferences with reasons (5)</td>
<td>Consolidating of group concepts (5-7)</td>
<td>Awareness of group affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Perceptual elaboration</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cognitive elaboration</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude crystallization (8-10)</td>
<td>Attitude crystallization (8-10)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Curiosity about the others</td>
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</table>
(b) Descriptive Shifts in Components of Ethnic Identity with age

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Ethnic Identity Components</th>
<th>Preschool Level</th>
<th>Early School Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnics Self-identification</td>
<td>Empty labels “I’m Mexican because my mother said so.”</td>
<td>Meaningful labels. “I’m Mexican because my parents come from Mexico”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic constancy</td>
<td>Don’t understand</td>
<td>Understand permanence of their ethnicity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic role behaviors</td>
<td>Engage in and describe behaviors, may not know why behaviors are ethnic.</td>
<td>Engage in more role behaviors, know more about their ethnic relevance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic knowledge</td>
<td>Simple, global knowledge.</td>
<td>More complex and specific knowledge, including cultural traits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic feelings and preferences</td>
<td>Undeveloped; do as their families do.</td>
<td>Have feelings and preferences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE C2

*STUDENT ETHNICITY IN X ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN A SMALL MID-WESTERN CITY*

Source: National Center for Education (http://www.greatschools.net)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>This School</th>
<th>State Average</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White, not Hispanic</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, not Hispanic</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>&lt; 1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Question 1: Which one looks more like you?  
Boys look at Be (M)  
Girls look at Be (F)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>5-6 years (k-1*)</th>
<th>7-8 years (2nd-3rd)</th>
<th>9-10 years (4th-5th)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aa</td>
<td>Ac</td>
<td>Ba</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>83.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>5-6 years (k-1*)</th>
<th>7-8 years (1st-2nd)</th>
<th>9-10 years (3rd-4th)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>100</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total Percentage of Ethnic &quot;B&quot; Choices</th>
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<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>90.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage of Children Who Prefer Their Own Ethnicity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>90.9</td>
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<td>Girls</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Question 2: Which one looks like your mom/dad?

### PERCENTAGE OF BOTH ETHNIC CHOICES BY GENDER AND AGE GROUP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>5-6 years (k-1*)</th>
<th>7-8 years (2nd-3rd)</th>
<th>9-10 years (4th-5th)</th>
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<td>M F</td>
<td>M F</td>
<td>M F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>50 33.3</td>
<td>50 66.6</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>0 33.3</td>
<td>100 66.6</td>
<td>0 0</td>
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### PERCENTAGE OF ETHNIC “B” CHOICES DISTRIBUTION BY AGE AND GENDER

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<th>Gender</th>
<th>5-6 years (k-1*)</th>
<th>7-8 years (1st-2nd)</th>
<th>9-10 years (4th-5th)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
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</table>

### TOTAL PERCENTAGE OF ETHNIC “B” CHOICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
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<tbody>
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| TOTAL PERCENTAGE OF ETHNIC “B” CHOICES | 85.7 |

### PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WHO IDENTIFIED WITH THEIR OWN ETHNICITY

<table>
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Question 3: Which person would you like to look like when you grow up?

**PERCENTAGE OF BOTH ETHNIC CHOICES BY GENDER AND AGE GROUP**

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>7-8 years (2nd-3rd)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Ac</td>
<td>Ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
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**PERCENTAGE OF ETHNIC “B” CHOICES DISTRIBUTION BY AGE AND GENDER**

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<td>Girls</td>
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**PERCENTAGE OF ETHNIC “B” CHOICES BY GENDER**

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**TOTAL PERCENTAGE OF ETHNIC “B” CHOICES**

66.6

**PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WHO PREFER THEIR OWN ETHNICITY**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45.45</td>
<td>90</td>
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</table>
**Question 4: Which one is prettier/better looking?**

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<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
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<th>Girls</th>
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<th>Girls</th>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ac F</td>
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</tr>
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<td><strong>7-8 years (2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;-3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ba M</td>
<td>66.6</td>
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<td></td>
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**Percentage of ethnic “B” choices distribution by age and gender**

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<th>7-8 years (1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;-2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;)</th>
<th>9-10 years (4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;-5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Percentage of ethnic “B” choices by gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>54.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
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</table>

**Total percentage of ethnic “B” choices**

| Boys | 45.4 |
| Girls| 30   |
Question 5: Which one do you like better?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>5-6 years (k-1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;)</th>
<th>7-8 years (2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;-3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;)</th>
<th>9-10 years (4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;-5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Ac M/F</td>
<td>Ba M/F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>66.6 16.6 50 83.3 33.3 83.3 50 33.3</td>
<td>66.6 33.3 66.6 33.3</td>
<td>66.6 33.3 66.6 33.3</td>
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<td>Girls</td>
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<th>7-8 years (1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;-2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;)</th>
<th>9-10 years (4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;-5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
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<td>Girls</td>
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<td>31.25</td>
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<th>Girls</th>
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<td>Girls</td>
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TOTAL PERCENTAGE OF ETHNIC "B" CHOICES: 35.7

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<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
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</table>
Question 6: Which one would you prefer as your teacher?

<table>
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<th>7-8 years (2\textsuperscript{nd}-3\textsuperscript{rd})</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Ac</td>
<td>Ba</td>
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<td>Boys</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>16.6</td>
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<td>Girls</td>
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<td>Girls</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Question 7: Which child would you like to play with?

### PERCENTAGE OF BOTH ETHNIC CHOICES BY GENDER AND AGE GROUP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>5-6 years (k-1*)</th>
<th>7-8 years (2nd-3rd)</th>
<th>9-10 years (4th-5th)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<td>Ac</td>
<td>Bc</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>66.6</td>
<td>66.6</td>
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### PERCENTAGE OF ETHNIC "B" CHOICES DISTRIBUTION BY AGE AND GENDER

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### PERCENTAGE OF ETHNIC "B" CHOICES BY GENDER

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### TOTAL PERCENTAGE OF ETHNIC "B" CHOICES

<table>
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<tr>
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### PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WHO PREFER THEIR OWN ETHNICITY

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45.4</td>
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</table>
Question 8: Which person do you think is smarter?

<table>
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<td>Ba</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
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<th>9-10 years (4th-5th)</th>
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</table>
**Question 9: Which one is happier?**

**PERCENTAGE OF BOTH ETHNIC CHOICES BY GENDER AND AGE GROUP**

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<th>5-6 years (k-1st)</th>
<th>7-8 years (2nd-3rd)</th>
<th>9-10 years (4th-5th)</th>
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<td>Girls</td>
<td>Boys</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Ba</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
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<td>Girls</td>
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**PERCENTAGE OF ETHNIC “B” CHOICES DISTRIBUTION BY AGE AND GENDER**

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<th>7-8 years (1st-2nd)</th>
<th>9-10 years (4th-5th)</th>
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**PERCENTAGE OF ETHNIC “B” CHOICES BY GENDER**

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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>35</td>
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**TOTAL PERCENTAGE OF ETHNIC “B” CHOICES**

|        | 41.6 |

**PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WHO FAVOR THEIR OWN ETHNICITY**

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>
Question 10: Which one is more liked by their classmates?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF BOTH ETHNIC CHOICES BY GENDER AND AGE GROUP</th>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>5-6 years (k-1*)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>50</td>
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<td>Girls</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF ETHNIC “B” CHOICES DISTRIBUTION BY AGE AND GENDER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5-6 years (k-1*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF ETHNIC “B” CHOICES BY GENDER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>59.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>25</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL PERCENTAGE OF ETHNIC “B” CHOICES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42.8</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WHO FAVOR THEIR OWN ETHNICITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*3 children favor 50% their own ethnicity and 50% the white ethnicity; the remainder (3) prefer the white ethnicity.

**Just 5 children prefer 50% their own ethnicity and 50% the white ethnicity; the rest of 15 prefer the white ethnicity.
Question 11: Which one of these two do you think is a better person?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>5-6 years (k-1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;)</th>
<th>7-8 years (2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;-3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;)</th>
<th>9-10 years (4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;-5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aa</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>5-6 years (k-1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;)</th>
<th>7-8 years (1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;-2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;)</th>
<th>9-10 years (4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;-5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>81.25</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage of Ethnic “B” Choices by Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total Percentage of Ethnic “B” Choices</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage of Children Who Favor Their Own Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>70</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Question 12: Which one has more money?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>5-6 years (k-1*)</th>
<th>7-8 years (2nd-3rd)</th>
<th>9-10 years (4th-5th)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aa</td>
<td>Ac</td>
<td>Ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>66.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>66.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>5-6 years (k-1*)</th>
<th>7-8 years (1st-2nd)</th>
<th>9-10 years (4th-5th)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>TOTAL PERCENTAGE OF ETHNIC &quot;B&quot; CHOICES</th>
<th>48.8</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WHO PREFER THEIR OWN ETHNICITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>18.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>20</td>
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</tbody>
</table>