YOUNG CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES REGARDING ETHNICITY AND DISABILITY

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Laura T. Zionts, B.A., M.A.
Denton, Texas
December, 1996
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The purpose of this study was to examine the social perceptions of young children with disabilities and young children of color. Further, an attempt was made to determine whether differential rates of acceptance were experienced by either group, or by the group of children who were of color and also had a disability within integrated classrooms.

Young children (age 5.0 through 6.11) were studied in intact groups (N=120) from child care centers in the Texas counties of Denton and Dallas. Three measures of social perceptions were implemented: (a) a forced choice (multiple alternative) technique using dolls of a variety of ethnicities and ability statuses in which children must select dolls they feel represent a list of positive and negative attributes; (b) social distance theory as measured by children’s artwork; (c) a sociometric rating. The results of this study showed significant areas (p<.05) of stereotype and bias in the perceptions of young children toward ethnicity, disability and gender. Implications for further research into the efficacy of multicultural and anti-bias education programs is recommended.
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Finally, I would like to dedicate this work in memory of Senor Francisco y Senora Philomena Sanchez. Their love, respect and commitment taught me the true depth breadth of becoming “una persona educado” in its fullest sense.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Rationale for the Study

Social interaction can be a vital shaping influence in a child's development. It provides children with opportunities to build communication skills and to assign meaning to their world. Theorists have hypothesized that children benefit from social interaction with peers in many respects. Vygotsky (1978) hypothesized that learning occurs through a social interactive process in which children scaffold higher levels of knowledge formation for each other. Piaget (1928, 1951) believed peers to be important to the development of decentration. Through decentration, children move from an egocentric perspective of the world to a more universal cognizance that represents variations in perception and understanding. Skinner (1952) asserted that peer interactions served to reinforce and shape behaviors in children over which adults have had little impact within a daily environment. The role of peer socialization is controversial. However, it is included in divergent theoretical explanations of human growth and learning processes. This fact serves as testimony to its universal import. Efforts to explore the nature and roles of socialization have indicated the complexity of this area of development.
significant contributors toward social well-adjustment and maladjustment. Successful peer socialization has been linked to positive feelings of self-esteem and self-worth in groups, higher levels of academic achievement and more positive attitudes toward school (Ladd, 1990). In fact, positive social interactions among peers have even been documented to replace the instinctive adult-infant attachment bond without producing negative social-emotional adjustment even into adulthood (Freud, 1951). Conversely, negative social relations with peers during early childhood have been tied to social isolationism (Rubin, 1977), increased or excessive aggression and social deviancy (Roff, Sells, Golden, 1972; Roff, 1972), and juvenile delinquency (Cronin, 1973). Children who experienced early peer rejections were likely to have less favorable attitudes toward school, demonstrate more school avoidance, and achieve at lower academic levels (Ladd, 1990).

Approximately 10% of all children do not experience successful peer socialization (Asher, 1990). For example, young children of color are well known to have difficulty gaining peer social acceptance in school environments dominated by middle-class, European American children (Cross, 1964; Goodman, 1964; Gutierrez; 1982; Milner, 1983). In addition, young children with disabilities experience difficulty with social integration in the early childhood classroom (Hartup, 1977; Odom, McConnell, & McEvoy, 1992; Strain, Guralnick, & Walker, 1986). Positive social interaction among young children with disabilities and their non-disabled peers without structured adult intervention has been unlikely (Lamorey & Bricker, 1993). It is important to explore inequalities in the interactions among a diverse spectrum of young children since
"Experiences with peers are not superficial luxuries to be enjoyed by some and not by others. Student-student relationships are an absolute necessity for healthy cognitive and social development and socialization." (Johnson, 1980, p.125).

Extensive research on social interaction has been conducted within three disciplines (early childhood education/child development, special education/children with disabilities, and multicultural education/children of color). Each discipline of study has examined from its own perspective the: (a) social interactions, (b) friendships, and (c) elements of peer rejection, bias, stereotyping that occur within early childhood environments. Each discipline has made significant contributions to the study of the social perceptions and subsequent interactions of young children (see Hughes, 1995, for child development; Odom, McConnell, & McEvoy, 1992, for children with special needs; and Holmes, 1995, for children of color). There has been little attempt to merge the information obtained to create a comprehensive picture of this dynamic and multifaceted task. The true complexity of social interaction during early childhood has been documented through ethnographic research in recent years (Corsaro, 1981, 1985, 1986; Fromberg, 1992; Hatch, 1987, 1995; Holmes, 1995). Unfortunately, due to the magnitude of these issues, ethnographic studies have not yet addressed issues of diversity in their entirety. Disability has not been addressed in the existing ethnographies of young children (e.g., Corsaro, 1986; Heath, 1983; Holmes, 1995). Perceptions of children of color have not been specifically addressed in certain ethnographies of young children (e.g., Corsaro, 1986).
Unfortunately, due to the extensive time, expense, and training required to adequately undertake ethnographic research (Borg & Gall, 1989; Lancy, 1993), it is not a feasible nor practical methodology in many situations. Therefore, researchers have been left to struggle with the question of how to best measure this construct. The methodological designs of well-intentioned researchers have been flawed, at best. Inherent bias of instruments, validity of results, reliability of results, definition of terminology, and control of included variables have plagued prior studies (see Buysse & Bailey, 1993; and Foster & Martinez, 1995, for comprehensive discussions).

Purpose of the Study

Culturally diverse and special education students are targets of ethnocentrism and share the challenges of the social problems associated with it (Gollnick & Chinn, 1990). Ethnocentrism is defined as a system of beliefs and behaviors that maintains the values of one ethnicity, in this case, European American, above that of any other. The purpose of this study is to investigate the social perceptions of young children with disabilities in integrated settings and the possible impact of racial or cultural difference on their peer acceptance levels.

This study is intended to serve as an initial probe of a previously unexplored topic (the impact of the intersection of ethnicity and disability on social perception). The findings may indicate future directions for inquiry. Evidence has not yet been provided to attests to the notion that a more pronounced problem may exist in the peer perceptions of children of color who have disabilities (beyond the peer-related challenges faced by
typically developing children of color or European American children with disabilities). Therefore, specific interventions to amend the situation cannot be formulated nor tested for efficacy. Additionally, in as much as this study is descriptive in nature, rather than intervention-based, the following facets of this topic will not be addressed: (a) the impacts of teacher and parental influence on the development of child bias and stereotyping, (b) the effects of diversity-focused curricula or social intervention programs; (c) the differences in social acceptance based on levels of exposure to diverse students. The reason for the omission of these areas is that they attempt to gather supporting information regarding the origin or degree of a problem. These topics would be more prudently studied in follow up investigations, should the results of this study prove to be significant (i.e., if the results indicate there is reason to explore degree, origin or intervention).

In a pure research situation, the young children’s attitudes regarding ethnicity and disability would be systematically studied by limiting the subjects’ exposure to types of disability and specific ethnic origins. In reality, however, classrooms are comprised of many diverse students who exhibit difference in many ways. Rarely would one expect to find a class whose members were one ethnicity and whose children with disabilities were of same type as well. Rather, it is to be expected that within naturally occurring inclusive environments for young children (e.g., integrated child care classrooms), inhabitants will exhibit difference in many ways. A need exists for research to explore the multifaceted
construct of social interaction among young children within naturally occurring contexts (Browning & Hatch, 1995; Graue & Walsh, 1995).

Statement of the Problem

This study intends to provide preliminary information about possibly significant differences in the levels of social acceptance experienced by European American children with disabilities compared to children of color who have disabilities. In other words, most young children with disabilities have difficulty gaining peer acceptance in integrated classrooms. Further, many children of color also have difficulty gaining peer acceptance in integrated settings. Consequently, do children of color who have disabilities face additional challenges in gaining social acceptance by their peers?

Significance

This study is significant in that social acceptance of children with disabilities who are of color has not been addressed directly in the social acceptance research on early childhood special education. Previous studies have addressed disability without regard for variables apart from the child’s disability that might impact social acceptance by peers. Influential variables cited in social acceptance research for typically developing young children include socioeconomic status, ethnicity and culture, gender, and physical appearance (see Bardell, Cochran, & Walker, 1986; Dion, 1973; Graham, 1992; Smith, 1985; Strain, 1985). Special education research in social acceptance has failed to systematically address the impact of each factor. Consequently, this study will explore the impact of ethnicity on social acceptance of young children with disabilities.
Definition of Terms

6. Ethnicity: Refers to one's ethnic group. Values, beliefs and certain practices are based exposure to a common culture, creating an ethnic group (Ocampo, Bernal, & Knight, 1993).

7. Race: Generally defined as "a grouping based on shared genetic inheritance and/or physical characteristics" (Foster & Martinez, 1995, p. 214). It should be noted that both race and culture are American terms of social classification that are unstable, contested and contingent (Chock, 1995; Foster & Martinez, 1995). Classification using these labels can also mask considerable within-group heterogeneity. Foster and Martinez further contend that "one source of variability lies in the extent to which individuals hold the beliefs and follow the practices associated with their own ethnic group [referred to as one's "ethnic identity"], which some believe to be more important than ethnicity per se." (p. 215).

8. Culture: "...a shared set of learning experiences, situations, beliefs, and behavioral norms... as well as shared physical [objects] unique to the group (e.g., tools, art, and buildings). Common exposure to particular cultural elements is the defining feature of ethnic-group membership" (Foster & Martinez, p. 215).

9. Disability: Any loss of function due to mental, physical, or emotional impairment (Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1995). In young children (birth to age 5) disabilities may exist in one or more of the following categories: (a) cognitive development, (b)
physical development, (e) social-emotional development, (d) communication/language
development, or (e) adaptive behavior (Bowe, 1995).

10. Social interaction: Two or more students manipulating or sharing the same object; one
student talking to another student, using another student's name, responding to
another student, or acknowledgment of another student (verbally or through physical
movement). Includes the following categories: initiates (the student begins an
interaction with another child), receives (another student or adult initiates an
interaction to the focal student, and on going (an interaction is occurring with another
student or adult at the start of the observed interval) (Storey, Smith, Danko, Strain, &
Yan, 1995). Behaviors are built around the following actions: getting a person's
attention, sharing, share requests, play organizers, and compliments (Storey, et al.,
1995).

11. Of color: A term commonly used to refer collectively to persons of ethnicity or
culture other than European American (i.e., persons who are African-American,
Hispanic American, Asian-American, etc.). According to Poplin & Weeres (1992),
"...In our nation's schools, people of color are not minorities. People of color in our
report our refer to Mexican-American, Native American, Central American, South
American, African-American, Cambodian American, Vietnamese-American, Chinese
American. ...participants of color [in this study] more frequently preferred the use of
this term than any other to refer to themselves collectively" (p. 13).
12. European American: A term commonly used to refer to Caucasian persons of European ethnicity or those otherwise recognized as “white” skinned by the United States (Harry, p. 5).

13. Prejudice: “...Negative feelings and beliefs about a racial or ethnic group (or handicapped individuals) and its members ... characterized by preconceived opinions, judgments, or feelings that lack any foundation or substance” (Pine & Hilliard, 1990, p. 594, parentheses in original).

14. Discrimination: When prejudice is combined with discrimination, it can be defined as, "unjustifiable negative behavior toward a racial or ethnic group (or handicapped individuals) and its members" (Pine & Hilliard, 1990, p. 596, parentheses in original).

15. Friends: Young children regard friends as playmates and so assume that if people are together and sharing activities, then they are friends (Selman, 1981).

16. Bias: a favoring or dislike of something without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge (Webster, 1978).

17. Attitude: “A mental position or feeling regarding a fact or state.” (Webster, p. 34).

18. Social Integration: “Refers to the degree to which children with disabilities are active participants within a social group containing typically developing peers (e.g., a classroom or childcare center)” (Odom & Brown, p. 41).

19. Racial integration: Refers to the degree to which children of differing races are active participants within one social group.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Peer interaction has been viewed as a crucial factor in the development of all young children. The goal of "inclusion" of young children with disabilities in the community has placed a renewed emphasis upon the study of social interactions among young children with and without disabilities in particular. Peer social acceptance of young children with disabilities and the added variable of race/ethnicity has yet to be examined.

In order to adequately address the multifaceted issue of the interaction of ethnicity, disability, and social interaction among young children, the areas of social interactions of young children without disabilities, social interactions of young children who have disabilities, and the formation of bias and racism in young children will need to be addressed. There is a plenitude of information in the first two areas, while the third (bias and racism) has examined broader societal influences rather than child-child interactions.

Peer social interactions have been examined from the perspectives of many disciplines, such as social anthropology, sociology, psychology, early childhood, special education and child development. Some overlap exists among the topics addressed by the existing literature within the various disciplines. Common issues have been identified across disciplines. Concern for long-term effects of failure to gain peer acceptance is one
such issue. Another issue is the identification of typical interaction patterns among children. A third issue is the exploration of cognitive and social-emotional developments and their impact on interaction patterns. A final set of concerns among the three disciplines is the development of adequate measures of attitudes in young children, and design of interventions to alleviate social selectivity and exclusion among young children. However, each discipline studies social interaction with an individual agenda as it hopes to illuminate the facets most directly affecting its own domain. Studies in peer social interaction can be most easily discussed within the categories listed above (i.e., among children without disabilities, children with disabilities, and within the context of race/bias development).

The following review will examine the social interactions of young children, of young children of color, and of young children with disabilities. Limitations of the existing research will be detailed at the conclusion of each section.

Social Interactions of Young Children

Social acceptance in young children with and without disabilities must be examined within the context of child development and early childhood education. This section will detail social interaction in young children, a construct that has been described as a complex and multifaceted task (Corsaro, 1981, 1986; Rubin & Hayvren, 1981; Hatch, 1987). Friends appear to be an important source of companionship and emotional support in the classroom (see Berdt & Perry, 1986; Corsaro, 1985). Children's social position in the peer group may affect other aspects of their school experience, including achievement
access to play opportunities and partners (Ladd, Price, & Hart, 1991), feelings of loneliness (Asher et al., 1984; Asher & Wheeler, 1985), and perceptions of interpersonal competence (Bukowski & Hoza, 1989).

The most common measure of social interaction and peer acceptance in children is the sociometric rating (Salend, 1994). Researchers have interpreted the value of sociometric scores differently. An interesting use of sociometric scores has been the attempt to examine social acceptance by studying the stability of children's ratings over time. Boivin and Begin (1989) reported that 36% of the socially rejected children in their sample maintained their rejected status from kindergarten through grades 1, 2, and 3. Generally less than half of the rejected students maintained their status from one year to the next, regardless of the period of schooling examined or the classification method used (e.g., positive/negative peer nominations, social preference, or impact scores) (Vitaro, Gagnon, & Tremblay, 1990).

Negative outcomes are associated with a child who receives rejected ratings over a two year period, but not necessarily over a single year (Vitaro, Gagnon, & Tremblay, 1990). An area for future study is whether changes or fluctuations noted from one year to the next in children's sociometric status reflect changes in the children's behavioral profile (Vitaro, Gagnon, & Tremblay, 1990). The answer to this question has relevant implications for intervention. For example, according to Rogosch and Newcomb (1989), peers' opinions at older ages are more stable and distinct than at younger ages. Despite favorable changes in the rejected child's behavioral repertoire, older children's perceptions
may prove more difficult to overcome. One’s rejection status, if stable, may create another obstacle for successful social integration, in addition to the existing challenges associated with assisting a child to acquire appropriate social behaviors.

It seems that children's behaviors would influence their peers' attraction to them. However, correlation between measures of acceptance and any single social or cognitive behavior are rarely high. Behaviors considered “desirable” depend on the age of the child, the setting, and the history of the group (Dodge, 1983; Hartup, 1983; Putallaz & Gottman, 1983). A child's acceptance may also be influenced by nonbehavioral characteristics, such as the child's physical attractiveness (Langlois & Stephen, 1981; Strain, 1985). Therefore, findings from one rating may not generalize to a different child or different measure (Parker & Asher, 1987).

By 40 months of age, most (80%) children have established at least one strong peer preference (Hartup, 1989). Treblay, Strain, Hendrickson, and Shores (1981) identified positive social interactions that children used frequently to engage peers. Those behaviors having the greatest probability of reciprocation included: sharing, play organization (like suggesting a play activity or make-believe idea), affection, assistance, and rough and tumble play. Other social behaviors have been studied across age levels (Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990). They include behaviors likely to gain social acceptance for the child, such as: helpfulness, conforming to rules, friendliness, and prosocial interaction. Children who received low sociometric ratings have been observed to engage in more frequent aggressive behavior and inappropriate interaction.
In an ethnographic study of friendship in a kindergarten classroom, Holmes (1995) found that the terms *friendship* and *friendly* were not easily explained by the children. She reported only one child who was able to explain their meanings. The young children defined friends as playmates (see also Corsaro, 1985; Selman, 1990). Gesell and Ilg (1946) presented the idea that young children define things in terms of their use. Holmes illustrated this idea through her example of how young children defined friends (i.e., through their use), "You play with them, you go over to his house, you could sleep over. That's what friends are for." (p. 66). To the other children in Holmes' study, children were a valuable resource (for their play value). They were described as a necessity, otherwise children would have to play alone (while a few children chose to play alone, most preferred to play in conjunction with others).

These kindergartners defined a world without friends as sad (Holmes, 1995). By virtue of their definition, nearly any child could be a friend. Kindergartners did not differentiate between playmates and friends. However, they did show preferences for certain "friends" over others. These were measured in terms of availability for play and preferential accompaniment during play time. Voluntary friends were selected partly on the basis of similarity to the child, which is the same operating principle as adults employ (e.g., Argyle & Henderson, 1984; Deegan, 1991). Thus friends were compared and classified on the basis of being the same or different than the child's self conception. Holmes (1995) cited the following example:
Sharon found cause to remark on Chas' (an African-American boy) arrival to class: 'Now Oliver (also an African-American boy) can have a best friend his same color.' At this point Oliver had already established best friend relations in his class with European American children, so race was not an issue. Instead, Sharon's astute observations suggested that the children's focal image of a best friend was one similar to how they perceive themselves. (p. 68).

In Holmes' (1995) study, young children selected friends with a primary emphasis on similarity of interests. Children also considered the variables of gender, race or ethnicity, age, locale, and physical attributes (anatomic attributes or even clothing color) in friendship selection. Results obtained by Deegan's (1991, 1993) studies of older children's friendships seem to support a similarity-based friendship notion. Holmes conducted "best friend" interviews at several points in the year. Her results confirmed the notion that young children's friendships often remain stable throughout the year (see also Berndt & Hoyle, 1985).

Young children appear to naturally rank order their friends (e.g., this is my friend/my really friend/my best, best friend) (Corsaro, 1985; Holmes, 1995). Children's ranking systems can be measured by sociometric ratings. Ranking seems to serve the purpose of identifying a degree of friendship. It also separates the children to whom a child felt closest from other children who might also be called "friend" (in the definitional sense of having shared play experiences with the child). The term "best friend" seems to denote several behaviors (Corsaro, 1985; Deegan, 1991; Holmes, 1995): (a) sharing; (b)
playing with each other; (c) showing a genuine concern for each other, (d) the acceptable use of friendship as a bartering strategy for personal gain (e.g., Schwartzman, 1978); and (e) the dissolution of a friendship because of a child's greediness, stinginess, or meanness.

Young children mediate their friendship formations carefully. Voluntary friendship formation appears to be based on the presence of factors which increase the interpersonal attraction between particular children. These factors include cooperative behavior (LaGaipa, 1977; Leary, Rogers, Canfield, & Coe, 1986); propinquity (Hays, 1985); favorable or pleasant experiences with another child (Cook, 1985; Sigelman & Welch, 1993); and personality factors.

In summary, research seems to suggest that significant numbers of socially rejected children in preschool maintain their status at least through grade 3. The older the students, the less likely the attitudes of peers will change regarding them. In addition, many ‘rejected’ children do not possess the qualities that would have them nominated by others as preferable friends. Children will nominate other children with similar interests for friendships.

Limitations Of Research On Social Interactions Of Young Children

This section will detail the problems that seem to pervade much of the research on the social interactions of young children. The major limitations of the research lie in their insufficient generalizability, small sample sizes, and lack of a multicultural perspective.

The use of qualitative research techniques has become more apparent in the recent literature on the social interactions of young children (Budwig, Strage, & Bamberg, 1986;
Corsaro, 1985; Heath, 1983; Philipsen & Agnew, 1995). While very illuminating, this approach intrinsically limits generalizability of information from one setting to others (Silverman, 1993). By the same measure, researchers within the field of early childhood have cited the use of laboratory settings for social research as a limitation of their earlier research base (Browning & Hatch, 1995; Fromberg, 1992; Graue & Walsh, 1995). They call for increased research to be conducted in the naturally occurring environment.

Most research investigations have typically involved small sample sizes (Fromberg, 1992). This seems to be due to the types of methodologies employed in the research investigation (e.g., qualitative studies).

Finally, studies have been conducted using an ethnocentric perspective from European American culture. As recently acknowledged by early childhood educators, they have failed to acknowledge and adequately address diversity issues within the primary population of children served (Bredekamp, 1993). Investigations nearly exclusively dealt with only middle class children who were European American (Graham, 1992). Research has been conducted from a biased perception of diversity in American young children. Namely, children who are not middle class and European American are not the "real" population intended to be served by early childhood educators, except within the context of a "disadvantaged" model of intervention (Baratz & Baratz, 1970). Widely referenced social theories [e.g., Parten's (1932) theory of social play, Smilansky's (1968) theory of cognitive play] and implications for cognitive development (Deutsch, 1981; Emmerich, Cocking, & Segal, 1979) have emerged from within this biased perspective. Attempts to
study cultural differences in social interaction have been limited to the international study of "American" (more aptly described as European American) culture (Luschen, 1970; Sutton-Smith & Roberts, 1981). Legitimate cultural variations within the United States populations have been studied from the negatively associated cultural melting pot framework, which sees differences as something to be alleviated. Cultural pluralism, which sees difference as a strength to be built upon, has been virtually ignored in social research on young children.

In summary, there have been many assumptions engendered from the literature on the social interactions of young children. Lack of generalizability, poor sample sizes and narrow cultural perspectives are all factors that limit the ability to adequately make these assumptions.

Research on the Social Interactions of Young Children of Color

This section will examine research regarding the social integration of children of color in school environments. Apparently, young children of color do not easily achieve integration in school environments, especially in schools that are dominated by European American, middle class children (Cross, 1964; Goodman, 1964; Gutierrez, 1982; Milner, 1983). Research reviewed will explore: (a) the age children begin to perceive differences among people, (b) when bias and stereotyping, even prejudice, appear to begin, and (c) the effects of ethnic identity on oneself and peers. There seems a proliferation of interventions published and implemented to combat a topic about which we have little knowledge (see Derman-Sparks, 1987; King, 1990; King, 1994; Seng, 1994 for examples
of planned intervention curricula). A parallel can be drawn between this situation and that found within the social intervention programs from special education.

Children begin to recognize one race from another about the age of 4-5 years (Derman-Sparks, Higa, & Derman-Sparks, 1980; Katz, 1983; Williams & Moorland, 1976). An understanding of how young children perceive race and ethnicity and to what extent it influences their social interactions is as yet, unclear. Pang (1991) asserts that young children may hold stereotypic views, due to their environmental influences, when they first arrive at school. Hirschfield (1995), suggests that even three year old children suspect race is derived from family background, and that it is immutable (while other personal characteristics, such as body build are not). By four years of age, children believe that race is fixed by birth, and "they demonstrate a biologically grounded theory of race" (Hirschfeld, 1995, p. 240).

There is reason to believe that information about groups is cognitively stored independent of information about individual group members, particularly regarding traits associated with an individual (Wyer and Martin, 1986). Hirschfeld (1995) asserts that the construction of a social oncology may in fact be a central task for the young child, and one that involves mental processes far removed from those typically associated with social cognitive development.... Acquiring knowledge of racial difference means acquiring knowledge of the sorts of people there are. But there is no reason to assume that in discovering the sorts of people there are the child treats all groupings in the same way (p. 240).
Researchers have determined that race and gender are the earliest common social properties children rely on when sorting people (Davey, 1983; Katz, 1982; Ramsey, 1987). Preschool children learn easily to sort people by the racial categories of the adults in their environment (Katz, 1982). Leahy (1981) argued that young children have difficulty coordinating simultaneous similarities and differences. They are more likely to see two groups as dichotomous, particularly after they have sorted them into distinct classes. Scant information about ethical considerations has been considered by researchers about the various methodologies they employ (Carrington & Short, 1993; Foster & Martinez, 1995).

The topic of bias and stereotyping in young children has been studied from a number of perspectives. Liss (1981) argued that preference may be a function of exposure to different racial groups. When given access to white and black character television programs, children's preferences were for same-race actors. Pang (1991) suggested young children possess an ability to recognize general differences in culture, despite a lack of specific knowledge about unfamiliar cultures. Young children were asked to complete missing information describing another culture (for example, where certain people might be expected live and other aspects of their lives). Children were overwhelmingly likely to provide stereotypical information about cultures other than their own.

Kleinke and Nicholson (1979) conducted a study highlighting young children's awareness of differences between races, despite a lack of racial integration. African-American children from a lower socioeconomic neighborhood and European American children from a middle socioeconomic neighborhood in grades 1, 2 and 3 were studied.
Children were asked to express their opinions as to the likelihood of four events occurring in their neighborhood: (a) a mixed race couple getting married, (b) an opposite race man would join their church, (c) an opposite race family would move into a house in their neighborhood, and (d) an opposite race woman would become their father's boss. Nearly all of the children expressed opinions that these events would be highly unlikely to occur in their neighborhood. Female students and younger students were less convinced of their opinions, while European American boys were reported as being most convinced of their opinions.

Methodology has been a topic of great debate within this category of literature (see Foster & Martinez, 1995 for a summary of concerns). Newman, Liss, and Sherman (1983) concluded after a study of the ethnic preferences and attitudes of young children that no single measure of ethnic awareness was sufficient to estimate children's attitudes and perceptions. Children's ethnic awareness was not only highly complex, but a function of stimulus material, question format, and locale. These investigators proposed that children perceive the questions differently and respond accordingly. They contended that ethnocentrism and ethnic awareness were not unidimensional concepts.

It is not unusual for a study in multicultural issues to produce contradicting findings or to be refuted by another study. Perhaps contradictions stem from poor reliability or validity that directly result from conflicting and flawed methodologies, or perhaps from the abstract social and cognitive concepts the discipline attempts to measure. LeVine and Ruiz (1978) employed a photograph selection technique to indicate children's
same-race preferences. Their results showed that African-American children were most likely to demonstrate same-race preference, Hispanic-American children were next most likely, and European American children were least likely to demonstrate this preference. The researchers attempted to gather sociometric data to support their evidence, but they were unsuccessful in doing so. Children did not show the same levels of same-race preference within peer groups.

Various explanations of prejudice and bias in young children have been examined in the literature. An alternative theory makes the assertion that young children simply categorize people in various manners, without explicit value judgments necessarily imposed. Hirschfeld (1995) notes that one categorization young children use for sorting people is by what they “do,” often corresponding to their occupation. Ramsey (1990) studied a categorical approach to stereotyping and differentiation in young children. Ramsey (1990) found that regardless of social class or age, preschool children were able to sort and describe photos of people as "wealthy" or "poor." The extent to which young children are aware of social class has not been determined. Their concepts related to money are vague at young ages, and they may be less aware of social class because it is a fairly stable characteristic of a young child’s environment (Eisenberg & Pasternack, 1983). For example, children who attend the same childcare are typically from neighborhoods that are the same or similar in socioeconomic status. Child care centers are most often one of two types: federally-funded or tuition-based. Since children do not frequently interact across social strata at younger ages, they do not have stimuli to compare and contrast
differences between and within groups (Rosenberg, 1979). If this were correct, it would support the previously described theory that a child's familiarity with a type of difference influences his/her acceptance of it. Clearly, this could have important considerations for the study of social interactions among diverse young children.

Other theories have asserted that bias and stereotyping in young children is derived from parental bias. Bardell, Cochran, and Walker (1986) studied the relationship of parental education, race and gender to sex role stereotyping. They found that European American children responded with significantly more stereotypical responses than African-American children. European American children also gave more stereotypical responses as the educational level of their parents increased. African-American children did not show this pattern. Finally, they found that children whose parents were in middle and higher educational levels gave more stereotypical responses than did children whose parents had lower levels of educational.

Further, Steinberg, Dornbusch, and Brown (1992) found that the degree to which parents and peers influence children differs according to ethnicity of the child. Their research on adolescents found that parents of European American and Hispanic-American children were more influential on their children's academic plans than parents Asian-American and African-American children. Children of color were found to be more influenced by peers than European American children. These authors caution interpretation of their findings, however, as they did not control for socioeconomic influences among their participants. Regardless of its origin, it is important to consider that
bias exists in demonstrable form among very heterogeneous groupings of children with respect to race, gender, and parental level of education.

Conflicting data has been presented as to whether any one ethnic group of children shows a greater level of bias toward out-of-group individuals or in-group individuals. For example, LeVine and Ruiz (1978) found that among 139 children from a lower socioeconomic neighborhood, African-American second grade and fifth grade children showed higher in-group preferences than Hispanic-American and European American children. Using open-ended interviews with 82 kindergartners from a lower-middle class socioeconomic neighborhood, Lerner and Schroeder (1975) found that no significant degree of stereotyping existed in any of their subjects. Newman, Liss, and Sherman (1983) concluded from their 120 participants that European American kindergarten and second grade children from a lower-middle class socioeconomic neighborhood showed higher levels of same-group preference than Hispanic-American and African-American children. Holmes (1995) studied 61 five year old African-American and European American children, and found that European American children showed greater degrees of bias against out of group members than African-American children. Clearly, the jury is still deliberating on this issue; again methodological issues are highly suspect in accounting for these discrepancies.

Personal Distance Theory was originated by Hall, (1959, 1966) to interpret a person's level of social comfort with others. Social distance is a form of nonverbal communication between two people during an interaction that signals an amount of
distance between them which is comfortable for both parties. Personal Distance Theory has also been referred to in the literature as "interpersonal space" (Forsyth, 1983; Holmes, 1995; Patterson, 1975). According to Holmes (1992, 1995a, 1995b), the application of this theory can be derived from children’s artwork. Other studies have utilized similar methodology (Iwawaki, Lerner, & Chiara, 1977; Lerner, 1973; Lerner, Karabenick, & Meisels, 1975). Iwawaki, Lerner, and Chiara (1977) had children place a felt board person next to a figure of themselves to measure a child’s levels of interpersonal comfort in interactions with chubby children. An individual’s “zone of interpersonal comfort” has been derived from previous studies as somewhere in the range of space between touching and four feet (Forsyth, 1983). Specifically, an “intimate range” has been identified as touching to 18 inches, while “personal space” has been identified as 18 inches to four feet (Forsyth, 1983). When studying adults, interpersonal space is defined by observing the distance at which people are observed as communicating with nonverbal ease. Additional research supports Hall’s theory that norms of social distance are culture-dependent (Baxter, 1970; Little, 1968; McAllister & Moore, 1991; Netting, 1991; Sell, 1990).

Holmes (1995b) studied 61 kindergartners drawings of themselves standing next to a white person and themselves standing next to a brown person. Next, she used personal distance theory to interpret their pictures. Personal Distance Theory was used in a study by Iwawaki, Lerner, & Chiara (1977) to study social distance theory through the placement of felt board figures in proximity of each other.
By using an ANOVA design, she found significant differences in the amount of distance between same race and other race persons in young children's drawings. Holmes draws upon literature supporting the use of art work to study children's knowledge of a topic as they may have difficulty articulating, because of age or language differences. Holmes describes artwork as an advantageous medium because children are not asked to respond to a set of contrived questions nor are they observed in artificial situations. This rationale is shared by professionals who use art therapy and the psychological principles that emerge in children's artwork to interpret children's emotional development.

Children begin to recognize at very young ages the concept of ethnic identity (Hirschfeld, 1995). Four and five year old children seem to understand to some degree that skin color is an immutable feature of birth that defines one as a member of a particular group (Corsaro, 1984; Derman-Sparks, 1989; Hirschfeld, 1995, Holmes, 1995). According to Hirschfeld (1995) even three year old children expect some physical features, such as race, are part of personal identity. Hirschfeld found that very young children base classification of people more on the color of a person's skin than on other attributes such as body build. He concludes, however, that young children's racial categories are initially derived more from verbal information than from visual information (more from conceptual information than from perceptual information).

In Holmes' (1995) study, five year old children of color were asked to draw self-portraits. While drawing self-portraits, the investigator interviewed the children regarding their race and other races. Children of color often discussed the color of their skin before
describing other aspects of themselves. Previous studies have asserted that skin color helps children to form a sense of personal and group identity (Cross, 1985; Hirschfeld, 1995; Spenser, 1982, 1985). Studies of young African American children have asserted that the attribute of skin color in self-portraits may be more important to their sense of self than discussing personal experiences (Cross, 1985; Harter, 1983; Spenser, 1988). European American children in the same study by Holmes defined themselves rarely by skin color and more frequently by personal experiences.

Doyle and Aboud (1995) studied the racial perceptions of 96 children aged kindergarten and third grade. In their study young children were given the opportunity to describe same race and outgroup members (members of other races than oneself) using positive and negative evaluations. Younger children assigned more negative descriptions of outgroup members and more positive descriptions of same group members. Older children were more likely to recognize positive attributes in outgroup members and similarly to possess opinions which included negative evaluations of same group members. Therefore, the researchers concluded that “although ethnocentric bias does not decrease with age, children acquire additional attitudes which run counter to prejudice (e.g., they think black people possess some good qualities and white people possess some bad qualities). [p. 223]” There is some evidence of a relationship between age and perception of difference.

Non-race related issues of bias and stereotype development in young children.
Studies that have examined non-race related issues of bias and stereotyping in young children seem particularly relevant to this discussion. One such study was conducted by Hymel, Wagner, and Butler (1990) who reported that in their study of young children, many factors influenced peer acceptance. Both nonbehavioral characteristics such as physical appearance and people's names as well as group-related properties such as gender bias, stereotyping, and ethnic bias, seem to influence peer acceptance and rejection. Children have also been shown to be socially influenced by physical attractiveness (Smith, 1985). Preschool girls who were more attractive received fewer aggressive acts by peers and more prosocial acts than less attractive girls. There was no relationship evidenced for the impact of boys' attractiveness on social interactions. Dion (1973) found that attractive children are more likely to be chosen as potential friends. Cavallaro and Porter (1980) found that children with and children without physical disabilities tend to direct their gaze toward peers in the group without disabilities.

On a related note, Odom and Watts (1991) asked children to explain why they did not like to play with students whom they rated low in a sociometric measure. The children cited physical appearance as the primary reason more often than social skills of the child. This could have interesting implications for studies of young children with disabilities as well as studies employing sociometric ratings in general.

Damon (1980) argued that preschool children are beginning to develop a sense of fairness and to notice inequalities, although their motives are still primarily self-serving. Damon's study could warrant further investigation as a potential point of intervention in
regard to young children of many types of diversity should it prove to be a stable finding. Thus far, it has not been adequately addressed to make such assertions.

Another interesting aspect of stereotype development in young children was detailed in a study by Leichtman and Ceci (1995). Their study investigated the effects of adult suggestion and stereotyping on young children's interpretation of people and events. In this investigation, an adult unknown to the students visited eight kindergarten classrooms for a two minute time period. While in the room, first, he simply walked around the perimeter of the room while the children in each class were engaged in teacher-led story reading. Then he greeted the teacher and was introduced by the teacher to the children. He commented on the story they were reading, "Oh, I love that story" (p.570). At that point he exited the room. The authors studied 176 three to six year old children who were divided into four groups: one control group, one group in which children were given a stereotype of the visitor prior to his visit; one group that was given suggestions about the visitor and the actions he undertook during interviews after the visit, and the last group was given both suggestions and a stereotype about the visitor.

In subsequent interviews, Leichtman and Ceci (1995) found that the control participants reported accurate descriptions of the visit and visitor (less than 10% of the children reported 1 or 2 errors). Among the children in the group that received prior stereotypes about the visitor but no suggestions about him, 40% of 3 and 4 year old children reported up to two errors about the visit, and 20% of the five and six year old children reported up to two errors. In the group of children who were given stereotypes
and suggestions, 72% of three and four year old children reported errors and 21% of them maintained the errors after mildly challenged by the interview as to whether or not their errors were correct (these errors included the suggestions that the visitor had done something bad/wrong during his visit); 40% of the five and six year old children reported errors, including that the visitor had done some misdeed, and over 10% remained convinced of their correctness about the visitor after mildly challenged.

Implications regarding the results of this study are alarming. Young children are clearly easily influenced by the attitudes and suggestions of others around them. This appears to have application to all types of diversity children might encounter in their social worlds. Another aspect to note from the perspective of adult interactions with young children, is that videotapes of children's interviews were shown to child experts (such as psychiatrists, social workers, researchers and clinicians). The child reporting the most errors (but in great detail and with sincerity) was judged to be telling the truth about the visitor and the events of his visit. Meanwhile the child most accurately describing the visitor and his actions was judged to be reporting the greatest numbers of errors. Existing bias' within children or adults in the class can lead to stigmatization of a child who is different without just cause (e.g., “Who took the milk money?”). This type of stigmatization could impact a child's level of social acceptance and friendship making opportunities among peers.

Limitations Of Research In Development Of Bias And Prejudice In Young Children
The section will discuss the limitations of research regarding the social interactions of children of color. Methodology involving forced choice (single alternative) responses, lack of understanding the ability of young children’s cognitive development and vocabulary, lack of a multicultural perspective, inappropriate references outside of the child’s social context, little appropriate use of triangulation of measures and lack of consistency in reporting socioeconomic status all significantly limit discussion of research findings.

First, research investigations have frequently relied on forced choice responses in measurement tools, which decreases the validity of the results (e.g., Clark & Clark, 1947; Morland, 1962; Taylor, 1966; Williams & Roberson, 1967). The structure of subjects' attitudes toward racial stimuli must appear as a dichotomized, exceptionless stereotype when a fixed choice (single alternative) technique is used.

Another limitation of the research is the lack of clear understanding of children's cognitive development and vocabulary. For example, Rice, Ruiz, and Padilla (1974) used a photograph technique and found preschool children had strong same-race preferences. However, their results indicated that children did not have clear discrimination abilities regarding the concept of ethnicity. Lerner and Schroeder (1975) attempted an open-ended structured interview to discern whether children's active vocabulary about racial stimuli corresponds to the vocabulary imposed upon them in both forced choice single alternative and forced choice multi-alternative techniques. In the interview format, young children made no depreciating comments about black dolls as opposed to white dolls, whereas in
the fixed choice response formats responses showed trends toward traditional responses of black/dirty, white/clean associations.

This study provided an interesting format and one that yielded evidence of the type of problems that exist in the methodology for this research base. However, even this structured interview study lacked understanding of the cognitive development levels of its subjects. Very young children were shown a black or white doll as a stimulus. Open ended questions used in the interview included, "What does it mean to be a person like this?", "Tell me what you think this person is like?", "Is it good or bad to be a person like this?", "Why?" Most adults would not know how to answer the first question much better than the children did.

Also, most studies have not attempted to address other ethnicities than African-American, European American, and Hispanic-American. Given the many ethnic and cultural differences among children in our communities, more research could be conducted to assess differences in attitudes among these groups.

Many studies have attempted to use stimuli removed from the child's realm of socialization (e.g. pictures or photographs of adult males, sketches of men and women in professional attire, and for asking children from a monistic school environment to rate the qualities of a person of unfamiliar ethnic origin). Some studies have failed to place stimuli within the realm of the child's typical social interactions (e.g., peers) (i.e., Rice, Ruiz, & Padilla, 1974). They may have employed language that could bias' results as children
attempt to give the morally correct answer to the question ("Would you be friends with a handicapped child?" Odom & Favazza, 1993).

Further, studies have measured racial attitudes using triangulating measures that have not been validated to measure the same construct. The result at times has been attitude measurements (such as play preferences, identification, and social position/esteem) that may not be of the same dimension. Rather, each measure taps a portion of what has been called "ethnic development" (Newman, Liss, & Sherman, 1983). For example, Brand (1974) used photographs to conduct same-race matching. He found that same-race matching was the highest among African-Americans followed by Hispanic-American children, followed by European American children. However, when LeVine and Ruiz (1978) corroborated Brand's technique with sociometric data, they failed to find supporting evidence of these preferences.

Finally, ethnic differences are confounded in many studies by socioeconomic status (SES) (Foster & Martinez, 1995). For example, studies by Graham (1992) and Ponterotto (1988) reported that fewer than 35% of the articles studying ethnicity reported measures of socioeconomic status.

In summary, caution must be applied before making any sweeping generalizations from the research involving the social interactions of young children of color. Problems involving instrumentation, lack of understanding of child development, narrow definitions of ethnicity, design of appropriate questions, the measurement of global concepts, and lack
of socioeconomic status data on the vast majority of the studies hinder their value to the reader.

Social Interactions of Young Children with Disabilities

The purpose of this section is to examine the how young children with disabilities interact with peers who do not have disabilities. Studies conducted during the seventies and eighties attempted to define and intervene in social interactions of young children in integrated and segregated settings (for reviews of the literature see Appoloni & Cook, 1978; Buysse & Bailey, 1993; Lamorey & Bricker, 1993; Odom & McEvoy, 1988). Research from the nineties has examined social interactions within the framework of the Inclusion movement (e.g., Buysse, Bailey, Smith, Simeonsson, 1994; Cole, Dale, Mills, & Jenkins, 1993). The purpose of this review (and investigation) is to describe social acceptance as it occurs within typical integrated environments. Intervention research will not be addressed in this literature review because it is beyond the scope of this study (e.g., it has not as yet been empirically determined that any problem area exists on which to intervene).

Young children with disabilities are not easily accepted into integrated early childhood classrooms (Hartup, 1977; Odom, McConnell, & McEvoy, 1992; Strain, Guralnick, & Walker, 1986). One important correlate to young children's social behavior in classrooms is the presence and level of disability among peers (Strain, Guralnick, & Walker, 1986). However the ratio of typical preschool children to children with disabilities seems less important. It seems that typically developing children tend to interact more
frequently with peers who are also typically developing or are mildly disabled than with peers who have moderate or severe disabilities (See Odom & McEvoy, 1988; Strain et al., 1986). Guralnick and Paul-Brown (1984) found that social interactions between typically developing preschool children and those who had disabilities in integrated settings may be directive or tutorial in nature, rather than mutually responsive or entertaining.

Tremblay, Strain, Hendrickson, and Shores (1981) identified positive social initiations that peers used frequently. Those that had the greatest probability of eliciting a positive response from a peer were: sharing, play organization (like suggesting a play idea), affection, assistance, and rough and tumble play. Strain (1983) found that children with disabilities who used these initiations received higher sociometric status ratings from their nondisabled peers than those who did not engage in these behaviors.

Social interaction among peers has been more likely to occur during less structured activities and less likely to occur during more structured activities (Kohl & Beckman, 1984; Odom, Peterson, McConnell, & Ostrosky, 1990). Following that directive, Sainato and Carta (1992) found that some activities are more naturally inclined toward encouraging social interaction among young children, among the most notable of these is free play. Those play activities in which teachers provided a structure through setting roles, establishing a theme, or assigning parts fostered the greatest amount of social interaction among young children (DeKlyen & Odom 1989). Twenty-five different play activities were categorized by their amount of structure. Structure was defined as the degree to which the teacher arranged the activity to facilitate successful peer interactions.
(e.g., Play dough & water tables were given low ratings, bowling was assigned a high rating). Children with and without disabilities were more likely to interact with peers in highly teacher structured activities. However, they were not more likely to interact with teachers during more highly structured activities. Therefore, highly structured activities that promoted peer interaction were arranged by teachers before hand, but once they had begun, teachers were no more involved in these activities than they were in less structured activities.

By structuring activities in such a way as to promote interaction, social acceptance would be facilitated. The type of activity orchestrated within the classroom cannot be considered alone, however. Guralnick (1981) reported that preschool children with low developmental level scores engaged in more unoccupied activity, and less on-looker activity, associative play, and cooperative play than did children with lesser delays or children without disabilities. Therefore, it would seem to indicate that children with more intense disabilities are less likely to become engaged with peers, despite more structured activities in the classroom. Buysse, Bailey, Smith, and Simeonsson (1994) explored other factors that might predict successful placement of children with disabilities in integrated settings. Children with special needs enrolled in integrated programs were found to be more mildly disabled and higher functioning than their counterparts in segregated settings. This set of determinants accounted for 75% predictability of placement based on the child’s abilities. This study did not collect data regarding which variables accounted for the remaining one-quarter of the placement decisions.
Children with disabilities have the greatest likelihood of gaining social acceptance when they are cognitively higher functioning and capable of participating in higher levels of socially engaged play. Interestingly, among preschool children such nonsocial characteristics as physical attractiveness, toy play skills, classroom disruption level, and athletic skills were as important as social skills in predicting peer ratings of a child (Strain, 1985). Even a higher functioning child with reasonable social skills may still find him or her self "on the outside looking in" at school.

Children's attitudes toward peers with disabilities have been considered using older subjects as well. This information has been included to report levels of bias and prejudice that exist within the realms of children's social hierarchy that have not yet been examined among young children. For example, the attitudes of regular education students toward children with disabilities have been shown influential in determining the success of a child in an inclusive setting (Plumb & Brown, 1990; Westervelt & McKinney, 1980). Salend (1994) contended that the attitude of general education peers may significantly impact their ability and desire to be supportive of classmates who have disabilities. Consequently, negative acceptance by peers can have a negative impact on school achievement and goals (Glick, 1969; Ide, Parkerson, Haertel, & Walberg, 1981), social-emotional adjustment (Hansell, 1983), and attitudes toward self and school (Horne, 1985). Further, students have a negative attitude toward students with disabilities (Horne, 1981). Children who have disabilities are less well-liked and experience rejection by peers more frequently than typically developing children (Gerber, 1977; Goodman, Gottlieb, & Harrison, 1977).
In general, Simpson (1980) found that younger children were more accepting of children with disabilities than were older children. That evidence would lead one to believe that early social intervention would be more indicative of better social acceptance levels through the school experience. Social acceptance of children with disabilities have also been evidenced by the following scenarios: (a) elementary level girls were more supportive of children with disabilities than were elementary level boys (Sandberg, 1982; Voeltz, 1980); (b) students with disabilities who were from a higher socioeconomic status were better accepted socially by their peers without disabilities than children from lower socioeconomic levels (Monroe & Howe, 1971); and (c) male students with learning disabilities were more likely to be socially accepted than females with learning disabilities (Bryan, 1974; Stanton & Ryman, 1979).

In summary, research regarding students with disabilities suggests that they are not well accepted by their peers without disabilities. Students with disabilities who possessed positive social attributes were better accepted by students. When social acceptance does exist, children with disabilities demonstrated greater ability to achieve successful integration in the public schools.

Limitations of Research on Social Interactions Of Young Children With Disabilities

This section will analyze the limitations of the research on social interaction of young children with disabilities. Special education researchers have examined child development literature regarding friendship formation and social interaction patterns of children without disabilities. It would seem that the plethora of empirical research in this
area would make it easier to draw conclusions about how to increase social acceptance of children with disabilities. However this assumption may be incorrect (Buysse & Bailey, 1993; Hughes, 1995) because of the following limitations: poor research design, lack of attention to important programmatic variables that have been linked to success, lack of attention to developmental theory, generalization of the concept of disability, and the ignoring of other factors that may impact the acceptance of young children by others.

Many of the investigations reported are characterized by the poor quality of their research designs (Buysse & Bailey, 1993; Quinn & Rubin, 1984). Buysse & Bailey (1993) evaluated 22 recent studies of the effects of integrated and segregated settings on young children's social and cognitive development. Studies were evaluated based on how well they addressed threats to external and internal validity delineated by Campbell and Stanley (1966). Only five studies demonstrated no internal threats to validity. Studies received weak or questionable ratings in the areas of regression, instrumentation, and selection. No study addressed the areas of reactive arrangement, multiple treatment interference or interaction of selection and treatment.

Another limitation in the research is the lack of attention paid to previous findings. For example, Guralnick (1981) identified 13 programmatic variables contributing to the success of early intervention programs. Many studies failed to address or consider these variables within their design or report. These include variables such as quality of the classroom environment, bias of the teacher, and developmental levels and severity of disability among participating children.
Also, Developmental theory has received little attention in this body of research (Hughes, 1995). It has been hypothesized that this is due to the wide variety of professions who study this topic (e.g., medicine, psychology, special educators). Additionally, the issue of coherency of theoretical foundation must be addressed when evaluating this research base. Many studies are simply lacking in theoretical basis. Rather, a research study is formulated around a single question in isolation, anchored to no broader contextual understanding. For example, Parish, Ohlsen, and Parish (1978) studied children's attitudes toward children with disabilities with no references made to child development or social interaction theory. Their review of the literature consisted of a review of the legislation that mandates children be mainstreamed when appropriate and a slight reference made to the problems associated with "mainstreaming" from the perspective of the teacher.

Another shortcoming of the research reported is that investigators have conducted a large portion of social integration and interaction studies from the working assumption that all children with disabilities are in some way equivalent. Homogeneity of the sample group has been a consistent problem in special education research (Appoloni & Cook, 1978; Lamorey & Bricker, 1993; Odom & McEvoy, 1988. Studies normally contain a sample group of typically developing peers and generically "disabled" children without respect to the type of disability nor its particular implications for social-emotional development nor social acceptability among peers.
Finally, studies have failed to address ethnicity and social class in their descriptive data about the participants. When addressed, nondisabled subjects have been identified as middle class and European American. Students with disabilities are not described with respect to either (e.g., Cole, Mills, Dale, & Jenkins, 1991; Guralnick & Groom, 1987; Guralnick & Weinhouse, 1984).

In summary, the current body of research on the social interactions of young children with disabilities has some problems that limits its utility. These problems include their poor research design, lack of attention to important programmatic variables that have been linked to success, lack of attention to a theoretical perspective, generalization of the concept of disability, and a narrow focus on "disability".

General Limitations of Existing Research

Limitations within the existing research must be observed within the three categories of information outlined above, due to the complexity and isolatory nature of each discipline of study. The primary limitation within the research from all three disciplines however, has been the fluid interchangability of the terms "research" and "literature" within publications. There have been considerably more publications recommending intervention and prevention strategies from a theoretical stance than from an empirical stance particularly in the category of bias and discrimination (as it pertains to children of color as well as children with disabilities). The "literature" is defined as publications based on conjecture and theory. While these publications have gained great popularity, and may or may not be effective, there has been little empirical evidence to
support their impact or validity. References cited within existing literature pertain more frequently to other literature than empirical study of the topic. "Research" is defined as publications that are based on empirical study of this topic. Far fewer studies exist under the category of research than literature. Those that do exist exhibit poor research design and conflicting methodologies.

Conclusions and Summary of Existing Literature

Several issues about peer friendships during early childhood arise from the literature. A most disappointing reality, however, is the lack of generalizability across cultures/ethnicities, ability levels, and socioeconomic status due to flaws in methodologies across disciplines. Another factor that has interfered with merging information from related inquiries is the separate agendas each discipline has advocated in previous research. It is acknowledged that a separation of variables is necessary in some studies in order to better understand the effects of each variable. However, each discipline has acknowledged that the most salient information has been retrieved from studies conducted in naturalistic settings using intact groups of young children. Each discipline has attempted to describe the many confounding variables that collectively create social constructs, such as “social acceptance” or “prejudice.”

Despite the limitations of the existing research, it is important to extract what information seems to emerge among each facet of social interaction in order to create as complete a picture as possible. The more salient features across the literature seem to include the following:
1. Failure to achieve social acceptance in early childhood environments is believed to result in negative effects on the child's self-esteem, school achievement, feelings of depression or loneliness, and future friendship-making potentials (due to stigmatization).

2. Friendship is an important aspect of childhood. It is important in terms of socialization and self-esteem.

3. Friendships are determined in early childhood by perceived similarities between children in appearance, interests, and abilities.

4. Social acceptance fails to occur based on more than the perceived social abilities of a child. It also includes attributes such as name, physical appearance, and reputation (e.g., troublemaker, smart kid, dumb kid).

5. Children's' labels are not static, but are somewhat predictable. Children change from best friend status to friend and back again within relatively short periods of time in some cases, although children are capable of maintaining a friendship over the course of a school year. Negative peer acceptance can change with considerable ease within about a year's time, but lasting negative effects result after longer periods of time.

6. Friends are closely associated with playmates. Therefore, one's ability to play cooperatively and at a similar cognitive level is important. Opportunities for young children to engage in social interactions that explore similarities and differences is important in forming friendships.

In terms of methodology, it appears to be important to: (a) clearly define the concept to be investigated, (b) select instrumentation that measures the concept to be
studied, (c) study in-tact groups in naturalistic settings, (d) determine that all
instrumentation is developmentally appropriate, bias free and does not lead the question,
(e) considers cross-discipline research and theory, and (f) addresses in design or
limitations, confounding variables that could effect the observed outcomes of the study.

Research Questions

As demonstrated in current research literature, the issue of whether race and ethnicity impact the social acceptability of young children with disabilities in the integrated kindergarten class has not been previously addressed. This study will be conducted to investigate at what level to further study may be warranted on this topic. It will be guided by the following research questions:

1. Are there differences in the levels of social acceptance experienced by young children with disabilities (regardless of ethnicity or culture) and young children without disabilities (regardless of ethnicity or culture) in the integrated kindergarten classroom as measured by classwide sociometric ratings, children’s’ artistic drawings, and a forced choice (multiple alternative) measure of stereotype and bias in young children?

2. Are there differences in the levels of social acceptance experienced by young children of color and European American young children in the integrated kindergarten classroom as measured by classwide sociometric ratings, children’s’ artistic drawings, and a forced choice (multiple alternative) measure of stereotype and bias in young children?

3. If significant differences in #1 and #2 are found, then are there differences in the levels of social acceptance experienced by young children with disabilities (regardless of
ethnicity or culture) and young children of color with disabilities in the integrated kindergarten classroom as measured by classwide sociometric ratings, children’s’ artistic drawings, and a forced choice (multiple alternative) measure of stereotype and bias in young children?
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This study was conducted in order to examine young children’s perceptions and biases regarding ethnicity and disability. This section will present information related to the methodology and procedures used in this study. The organization is as follows: (a) research questions, (b) subject selection, (c) instrumentation, and (d) data collection.

Subject Selection

Children selected for this study were five and six year old children enrolled six child care centers in the Texas counties of Dallas and Denton. The six centers were part of a nationwide child care corporation. A total of 120 children were studied. Twenty percent (n=24) of the children labeled as having mild to moderate disabilities (speech and language delays, hearing loss, mild mental retardation, developmental disabilities, and behavior disorders). Fifteen percent (n= 18) of the children were diagnosed by a physician according to DSM IV as having with ADHD. Only 11.4% (n=14) were receiving medication or intervention services at the time of the study.

Ethnicity was determined through parental report. Parental report has been recommended as the most valid and reliable method for obtaining ethnicity data (Foster & Martínez, Jr., 1995). Children of color comprised 38.3% (n=46) of the sample group.
Within the category "of color," 10.8% (n=13) of the subjects of the study were reported as African American, 14.2% (n=17) were reported as Hispanic American, 1.7% (n=2) were reported as Asian American, 5% (n=6) were reported as Native American, and 6.7% (n=8) were reported as "Other." Within the category of "other" parents identified ethnicities such as British, African (immigrated from Africa), and Jamaican, and Indonesian. The families of these children had recently immigrated to the United States (within a one year period). Children were not assigned to one of the existing categories because they were not likely to have yet become acculturated into American culture. This study attempted to examine attitudes of American children, therefore these recent immigrants were determined to be "outliers."

Children included in the study were between the ages of five years, no months through six years, eleven months. The ages of children were categorized as follows: 5.0 through 5.5 years (29.2% of the sample group, n=35), 5.6 through 6.5 years (55% of the sample group, n=66), and 6.5 through 6.11 years (15.8% of the sample group, n=19). The sample was divided into three age groups for further examination by age. Those groups were: 5.0 through 5.5, 5.6 through 6.5, and 6.6 through 6.11. These categories were used in order to examine the potential effects of formal school experiences on children’s perceptions. The youngest group of children (5.0 through 5.5 years of age) had not attended a formal kindergarten program, the middle group (aged 5.6 through 6.5) had attended kindergarten, and the oldest group (aged 6.6 through 6.11) had attended kindergarten and first grade.
The majority of children (90%, n=107) in the sample were monolingual, English-speaking. Ten percent (n=12; no response, n=1) of the sample group were bilingual children, speaking English and a second language which was reported by parents as Spanish, Hindi, or Jamaican.

Instrumentation

A triangulated survey methodology was used in this study to measure social acceptance on the basis of three survey instruments: (1) a forced-choice (multiple alternative) technique using the attributes ascribed to various dolls to determine bias and stereotyping in young children, (2) Social Distance Theory as applied to children's artwork (Holmes, 1994), and (3) peer social ratings (Asher, Singleton, Tinsley, & Hymel, 1979). The triangulated methodology was selected due to its increased likelihood to measure one construct: children's perceptions of diverse students (those with disabilities and those of color). Only instruments measuring children's attitudes have been selected.

Dolls

The third instrument was a forced-choice (multiple alternative) method for measuring perceived levels of bias and stereotyping in young children evaluated by Lerner and Schroeder (1975). Using this instrument, children were assessed by an interviewer in a quiet and separate room from the classroom to avoid distraction. In this activity children were required to choose dolls based on twelve different attributes. Children were given training sessions using innocuous colors and objects (e.g., red cars and green cars) before attempting the activity. Children were shown the dolls prior to beginning the activity. The
child was encouraged to hold and examine the dolls of their choice to increase familiarity with the dolls. Children were also asked to identify dolls by ethnicity in order to ensure comprehension of the ethnicities represented. Finally, children were shown the dolls with disabilities and each doll's adaptive equipment was explained to the child to help alleviate the possible selection of the doll based on novelty. Children were asked whether they knew anyone who used similar equipment.

To index attitudes regarding ethnicity/race and disability, 12 questions were presented in random order. These include six positive evaluative attributes (nice, good looking, kind, clean, smart, good), and six negative evaluative attributes (gets in trouble, ugly, mean, stupid, bad). These terms have been identified at the children's age level by earlier studies (Lerner & Korn, 1971; McMurtry & Williams, 1972). A representative question is, "Some of these people are nice. They do nice things. Which ones do you think are nice?" Subjects responded by selecting any number of 12 dolls (two of each ethnicity: European-American, African-American, Hispanic-American, and Asian-American; and one male doll of each ethnicity with a disability). The dolls with disabilities included: one doll sitting in a wheelchair, two dolls standing with a walker (one doll also wore eyeglasses), and one doll who wore eyeglasses and two hearing aides. The dolls were placed in random order on the table. Children were retested one to three days later.

Social distance theory (artwork)

The second procedure applies Social Distance Theory to the analysis of children's artwork. This technique was developed to measure young children's levels of comfort with
differences in children (Cole, 1964; Iwawaki, Lerner, & Chihara, 1977; Holmes, 1992, 1994, 1995; Lerner, 1973; Lerner, Karabenick, & Meisels, 1975). The methodology used in this study was developed by Holmes (1994). Rather than responding to a contrived list of questions, or situations, artwork provides a medium through which children can convey their knowledge of a topic that might be difficult for them to articulate. The goal of this methodology was to measure interracial attitudes and consequently, inter-group perceptions.

For this study, two conditions were established in order to measure the child's perception of acceptable personal distances between children of same and different racial groups. For the purposes of this measure, children were simply defined as “white” or “brown.” In the first task, the child was asked to draw a picture of him/herself with a "white" person. In the second task, the child was asked to draw a picture of him/herself with a "brown" person.

The term “brown” person was derived from extensive interviews with young children during an ethnographic study, which yielded information on their social cognition. Holmes’ (1995) findings through her interviews and her review of the literature were that young children organize their worlds according to a principle of dualism, in which social, biological and physical realms are seen in pairs of complimentary opposition. All members of the category “brown people” shared the common attribute of brown skin. Likewise, members of the category “white people” shared the common attribute of white skin. Skin tone was seen as varying by degree within the two categories.
Children completed their drawings in independently. Children were given the following selection of drawing/writing instruments: eight multicultural markers (markers which are eight varying shades of browns and tans to designed to match darker skin tones), eight standard color crayons, and colored chalk (brown, white, yellow). They were given one sheet of manila colored paper per task on which to draw.

Data were analyzed through the following procedure: a line was drawn from the midpoint of the bodies of each figure to connect them. If the figures were identical in height, a horizontal line was drawn between them and this distance was recorded in centimeters. Drawings which contain figures of different heights however were measured by first by drawing a diagonal line from the midpoint of one figure to the midpoint of the other figure. Next, two vertical and two horizontal lines were drawn to form a rectangle incorporating the diagonal line. The upper horizontal line serves as the recorded distance between the figures. This method of measurement controls for height differences by producing the distance that would have existed between figures had they been equal in size. Height is controlled for on the hypothesis of Social Distance Theory, which studies the perceived physical distance between two people rather than the other features such as height, color choices, or intensity of drawing) which have been studied by other theories.

Rating scales

Rating scales have been used frequently in research investigating peer relations (see Asher & Hymel, 1981; Hymel & Rubin, 1985). For children without disabilities, there is ample evidence that peer ratings are relatively reliable and stable for four and five year
old children (Howes, 1988; Poteet, Ironsmith, & Bullock, 1986). For preschool children with disabilities, peer ratings have been shown to be somewhat reliable and stable (Fewell, 1986). The instrument used in this study was created by Asher, Singleton, Tinsley, & Hymel, (1979). It consisted of a peer rating procedure in which children were shown a picture of each classmate and asked to give a Likert-type rating according to how much they like to play with the person: a happy face, a sad face, and a neutral face (see Appendix A). This instrument produces three scores for each child: (a) the number of positive nominations received from all classmates, (b) the number of negative nominations received from all classmates, and (c) the average play rating received from all classmates (happy face = 3, neutral face = 2, sad face = 1).

Rating scales have certain advantages over peer nomination techniques (in which the child is asked to name his/her three best friends/ three children he/she does not like to play with) when used with young children (Parker & Asher, 1987). The rating scale provides an indication of the child's attitude toward every individual in the class rather than only those nominated. Consequently, an individual child's status is calculated using a larger number of data points than received through a nomination procedure. Also, rating scales for young children have demonstrated better test-retest reliability than the peer nomination technique (Parker & Asher, 1987).

The rating scale used had a reported test-retest correlation of .81 (Asher, Singleton, Tinsley, & Hymel, 1979). The reported test-retest correlation is based on a time interval of ten days. Further, the rating scale was found by the authors to be significantly
more reliable than positive or negative nominations procedures when used with young children (both at p<.05). This instrument has been validated for use with children of color (Farver, Kim, & Lee, 1995) as well as for use with children who have disabilities (Guralnick & Groom, 1987).

Statistical Analysis

All statistical analyses included in this study were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (Nousis, 1988). For the forced choice (multiple alternative) technique using multicultural dolls and dolls with disabilities, the total responses given by children were cross tabulated. A chi square was run using the factors of ethnicity, disability/ADHD status, age, and gender of the child by gender, ethnicity and disability/ADHD status of the dolls. Response reliability was determined by correlating the number of European-American dolls chosen on the test item with the number chosen on the retest. The same procedure was followed for each of the five categories. In the original analysis by Lerner and Schroeder (1975) the correlation across ethnicity of the dolls was .58 (p<.01). The multiple choice opportunity has been demonstrated by those authors to produce significantly more variation in responses than the single alternative technique.

For the social distance theory artwork methodology, the distance data for each student was analyzed using a 2 (race) x 2 (disability status) x 2 (gender) analysis of variance (ANOVA). The distance data was developed as discussed previously.

For the peer rating scales, the average play preference rating received from all classmates was calculated (happy face=3, neutral face =2, sad face=1). Data were
analyzed by calculating the mean score for each child within classwide ratings. Children were then rank ordered by mean rating scores. Children with the highest mean scores were considered the most well-accepted children in the class on the basis that they were rated most frequently preferred play partners. Children receiving the lowest mean scores were considered the least well-accepted children in the class on the basis that they were rated least acceptable as play partners by their peers. The subjects were examined within the context of their intact group by first examining the class members who had the highest mean scores (determined as the top 25%), then by the middle level class members (determined by the next 50%), finally by the lowest mean scores (the last 25%).

Demographic information was examined within the top 25% of the class and the lowest 25% of the class with regard to ethnicity, gender, bilingual or monolingual in English, the presence of a disability or ADHD, and socioeconomic level using a chi square test.

Data Collection

Data were collected over a three month period in 1996. Data collection required completion of a parent consent form, descriptive data questionnaire, and assisting the children to perform each of the three activities. Parental consent and descriptive data questionnaire forms were collected for approximately seven to ten working days prior to the beginning of any child activities. The average length of time in one center to complete all child activities was two weeks. Assessment activities were conducted around the center’s schedule of activities, subsequently, these activities were completed at many times
of day. Children were always given the choice whether to participate in an activity (no child declined the opportunity). Subjects were coded to maintain each child’s anonymity.

Assessment activities were conducted by the investigator and two research assistants. One research assistant had completed her Master’s degree in Social Work and one had completed a Master’s degree in Early Childhood Special Education. Parental consent forms were collected at three centers by graduate students in early childhood special education. Training for each child activity was conducted with the two research assistants prior to beginning data collection. Directly prior to beginning child interaction, research assistants observed the investigator conduct each activity. The investigator initially observed each research assistant perform the activities with six children and provided feedback for consistency in implementation.

One problem was encountered with accurate parental reports of special education needs (that is, parents did not accurately report the disability/ADHD status of their child). Children were reported by parents to not have any form of diagnosed disability or ADHD when in fact the child was reported by the center director to be currently receiving prescription medication for hyperactivity or seizure conditions, or to be receiving specialized services such as physical therapy or being enrolled in a kindergarten class for children who are “developmentally delayed” (a category considered by the field of early childhood intervention, under PL 99-457 and IDEA, Part H as in need of special education services). Directors had documentation of each child’s status in these areas and as such were used as secondary sources of information for these two items of information.
CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of the study are presented as follows: (a) description of the subjects, (b) findings of significance within each methodology, (c) summary of overall findings.

Description of Subjects

The subjects for the study (N=120) included children with normal developmental histories, children with established disabilities including speech and language disorders, hearing loss, learning disabilities, mild mental retardation, behavior disorders, generalized developmental disorders, and medically diagnosed Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. The age range for all subjects was 5.0 years through 6.11 years. To the maximum extent possible, subjects were studied within intact, naturally occurring classes from six child care centers.

Demographic information for the sample group was collected through parental report and reviewed for accuracy by each child’s center director. Age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability status, presence of ADHD, and bilingualism are reported in Table 1. Since one purpose of the study was to examine the social acceptance levels of children from intact formal groups, no attempt was made to match numbers within the sample groups on the basis of demographic categories such as type of disability or
percentage from particular ethnicities. Child care center classrooms were selected based on the following criteria: children in the class had to be between the ages of 5.0 and 6.11 years of age, a minimum of 25% children of color, and a minimum of 10% children with disabilities.

Findings of Significance Within Each Methodology

A complete evaluation of the data collected on the 120 subjects was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (Nousis, 1988).

**Forced Choice (Multiple Alternative) Technique: Doll Activity**

The doll activity was analyzed using cross tabulation of responses to questions posed to the children regarding positive and negative attributes of the dolls. Chi Square tests were employed in order to determine statistical significance in comparing the factors of ethnicity, gender, disability status, and age of the child to the ethnicity, gender and disability status of the dolls. A separate description of significant (p< .05) findings for each Chi Square test follows. Results for this method are reported in the same order of doll characteristics for each separate factor (listed above) (a) doll ethnicity, (b) doll gender, and (c) doll disability.

**Differences by doll characteristics (within the total sample group).**

When looking at the responses within the total sample group, as shown in Table A2, doll ethnicity was a significant (p< .05) factor for two characteristics: *good looking* and *ugly*. European American dolls were identified significantly more often as *good looking* and Asian dolls were identified significantly less often as *good looking* by all
subjects. Likewise, Asian dolls were described significantly more often as ugly, and European American dolls were least likely to be described as ugly.

When examining responses from the total sample group, the factor of doll gender (regardless of ethnicity) was a significant (p<.05) factor in determining whether a doll was considered: good looking, mean, and good. With regard to the descriptor good looking, more female dolls and fewer male dolls than expected were described as good looking. Relating to the descriptor mean, more male dolls and fewer female dolls than expected were identified as mean. Finally, with regard to the characteristic good, more female dolls and fewer male dolls than expected were identified as good.

When examining the total sample group responses, doll disability (regardless of ethnicity) was not a significant (p<.05) factor in determining whether a doll was assigned specific characteristics.

Differences by child gender.

When examining the responses from the total sample group, as shown in Table A3, within the category of doll ethnicity, the gender of the child was a significant (p<.05) factor in determining whether a doll was considered: good looking, ugly, and mean. Addressing the characteristic good looking, female children (regardless of the ethnicity) described European American dolls more often than expected as good looking. Female children (regardless of the ethnicity) also described Asian dolls less often than expected as good looking. With regard to the characteristic of ugly, male children (regardless of the ethnicity) described Asian and African American dolls more often than expected as ugly.
On a related note, male children (regardless of the ethnicity) described European American dolls less often than expected as *ugly*. With regard to the characteristic of *mean*, male children (regardless of the ethnicity) described African American dolls as *mean* more frequently than expected. Male children (regardless of the ethnicity) were less likely than expected to describe European American dolls as *mean*.

Within the category of doll gender (regardless of doll ethnicity), the gender of the child was a significant ($p<.05$) factor in determining whether a doll was considered: *nice*, *good looking*, *gets in trouble*, *ugly*, *clean*, *kind*, *mean*, *good*, and *smart*. With regard to the descriptor *nice*, female children (regardless of the ethnicity) were more likely than expected to describe female dolls (regardless of the ethnicity) as *nice*. Female children were less likely than expected to describe male dolls (regardless of the ethnicity) as *nice*.

When examining responses to the characteristic *good looking*, female children (regardless of the ethnicity) were more likely than expected to describe female dolls (regardless of the ethnicity) as *good looking*. Female children (regardless of the ethnicity) were less likely than expected to describe male dolls (regardless of the ethnicity) as *good looking*. Examining children’s responses to the characteristic *gets in trouble*, female children (regardless of the ethnicity) were less likely to describe female dolls and more likely than expected to describe male dolls as dolls who *get in trouble*. With regard to the descriptor of *ugly*, female children were less likely to describe female dolls and more likely to describe male dolls as *ugly*. 
Examining responses to the descriptor *clean*, female children were more like than expected to describe female dolls (regardless of the ethnicity) and less likely than expected to describe male dolls (regardless of the ethnicity) as *clean*. Male children were less likely than expected to describe male dolls and more likely to describe female dolls as *clean*. Female children were less likely than expected to describe female dolls and more likely than expected to describe male dolls as *mean*. Female children were more likely than expected to describe female dolls and less likely than expected to describe male dolls as *kind*. Female children were more likely to describe female dolls and less likely than expected to describe male dolls as *good*. Female children were more likely than expected to describe female dolls and less likely than expected to describe male dolls as *smart*. Male children were less likely than expected to describe female dolls as *smart*. Male children were more likely than expected to describe male dolls and less likely than expected to describe female dolls as *smart*.

Within the category of doll disability (regardless of ethnicity or gender), the gender of the child was a significant (*p*< .05) factor in determining whether a doll was considered: *“good looking, kind, good, and smart.* Female children were more likely than expected to select dolls without disabilities as *good looking*. Similarly, they were less likely to select dolls with disabilities as *good looking*. Female children were less likely than expected to describe dolls with disabilities as *good*.

Male children were more likely to describe dolls with disabilities as *kind*. Male children were more likely than expected to describe dolls with disabilities as *smart*. 
Differences by child ethnicity.

The categories European American, African American, and Hispanic and Other were used to configure the statistical analysis in the first part of this section. There were not a sufficient number of children from Asian and Native American ethnicities to run a separate analysis using the later two categories. For the purposes of this analysis only, Asian and Native American children were subsumed within the category of “Other.”

Within the category of doll ethnicity, as shown in Table A4, the ethnicity of the child was found to be significant (p<.05) in determining whether a doll was: good looking, gets in trouble, ugly, and dirty. European American children were more likely than expected to describe European American dolls as good looking. European American children were less likely than expected to describe Asian dolls as good looking.

African American children were significantly less likely than expected (6.8% compared to the expected 25%) to describe European American dolls as dolls who get in trouble. African American children were more likely than expected to describe African American dolls as dolls who get in trouble. African American children were more likely than expected to describe Asian dolls as dolls who get in trouble.

Hispanic children were significantly less likely (12.8% as compared to 25% expected) to describe European American children as ugly. Hispanic children were significantly more likely than expected (38.3% as compared to 25% expected) to describe Asian dolls as ugly.
Hispanic children were significantly less likely than expected (9.8% compared to 25% expected) to describe European American dolls as dirty. Hispanic dolls were significantly more likely than expected (37.3% as compared to 25% expected) to describe Hispanic dolls as dirty.

Within the category of doll gender (regardless of ethnicity), the ethnicity of the child was found to be significant ($p < .05$) in determining whether a doll was: good looking, get in trouble, good, and smart. European American children were more likely to describe female dolls (regardless of doll ethnicity) as good looking and less likely to describe male dolls as good looking. Hispanic children were more likely than expected to describe male dolls as dolls who get in trouble and less likely to see female dolls (regardless of ethnicity) as dolls who get in trouble.

European American, African American, and Hispanic children were each (by ethnic group) more likely than expected to describe female dolls as good regardless of doll ethnicity. European American, African American and Hispanic children were each (by ethnic group) less likely than expected to describe male dolls as good (regardless of doll ethnicity). Hispanic children were more likely to describe female dolls and less likely than expected to describe male dolls as smart.

Within the category of doll disability, the ethnicity of the child was found to be significant ($p < .05$) in determining whether a doll was nice and smart. Children of color were significantly more likely to attribute niceness to dolls. Both European American children and children of color found nondisabled dolls to be nicer than dolls with
disabilities. Children of color were significantly more likely to describe dolls as possessing 
smartness than were European American children. Both groups of children attributed 
smartness more significantly to nondisabled dolls than to dolls with disabilities.

**Differences by child’s disability/ADHD status.**

Within the category of doll ethnicity, as shown in Table A5, the presence of a 
disability or ADHD in the child was found to be significant (p<.05) in determining whether 
a doll was good looking, ugly, and good. Children without disabilities were more likely 
than expected to describe dolls using the term, good looking to describe European 
American dolls, and were less likely than expected to use the term good looking to 
describe Asian dolls. Children without disabilities were more likely than expected to 
describe European American dolls as good, and less likely to describe Asian dolls as good. 
Children who had a disability or ADHD were more likely than expected to describe Asian 
children as ugly, and were less likely than expected to describe Hispanic dolls as ugly.

Within the category of doll gender, the presence of a disability or ADHD in the 
child was found to be significant (p<.05) in determining whether a doll was good looking, 
ugly, and good. Children without disabilities or ADHD were more likely than expected to 
describe female dolls using the term, good looking, and were less likely than expected to 
describe male dolls as good looking. Children without disabilities were less likely than 
expected to describe female dolls as ugly, and were more likely than expected to describe 
male dolls as ugly. Children without disabilities were more likely to describe female dolls 
and less likely than expected to describe male dolls as good.
Within the category of doll disability, the presence of a disability or ADHD in the child was found to be significant (p<.05) in determining whether a doll was dirty. Children without disabilities or ADHD were more likely to describe dolls without disabilities and less likely than expected to describe dolls with disabilities as dirty.

**Differences by age.**

The sample was divided into three age groups for further examination by age. Those groups were: 5.0 through 5.5, 5.6 through 6.5, and 6.6 through 6.11. These categories were used in order to examine the potential effects of formal school experiences on children’s perceptions. The youngest group of children (5.0 through 5.5 years of age) had not attended a formal kindergarten program, the middle group (aged 5.6 through 6.5) had attended kindergarten, and the oldest group (aged 6.6 through 6.11) had attended kindergarten and first grade. Upon examining the data by child age, as shown in Appendix A-6, response patterns were determined to be significantly (p<.05) influenced by the age of the child responding in two of the three age groups. (a) the youngest children in the sample (age 5.0 through 5.5) described dolls more frequently as ugly, gets in trouble, and dirty; (b) middle aged children in the sample group (age 5.6-6.5) were more likely than expected to use the descriptors good looking, mean, and good. There were no significant differences for the oldest group (aged 6.6-6.11).

The younger children (aged 5.0 through 5.5) in the study were most likely to describe Asian dolls as ugly and least likely to describe European American dolls as ugly. Younger children were less likely to describe dolls with disabilities as getting in trouble or
Middle aged children (aged 5.6 through 6.5 years) were more likely to describe female dolls as *good looking* and *good*. Middle aged children were more likely to describe male dolls as *mean*.

**Social Distance Theory: Artwork**

A three way (race x gender x disability) ANOVA was employed to analyze this methodology. Significant (p<.05) differences in personal distance between the artist and the other person in his/her picture were noted for the following situations:

Pairing of ethnicities of people in drawings. This result was significant at the .000 level using a three way (color x gender x disability) ANOVA. A Turkey HSD was then used to examine which of the factors accounted for the significant difference. This analysis determined that children of color drew themselves significantly farther away from white children than white children drew themselves from other white children. (B-W vs. W-W drawings). Table A7 reports the result of this analysis.

With regard to this analysis, it was also determined that children of color drew themselves almost the same distance from a white person as from another brown person (B-W vs. B-B). White children drew themselves nearly the same distance from a person of color as children of color drew themselves from a white person (W-B vs. B-W). The mean distance between a child of color and another child of color was equivalent to the mean distance between a white child and another white child (B-B vs. W-W).

Disability was significant (p<.05). Figure A1 shows the results of this analysis. Children of color who had disabilities drew themselves significantly farther from other
children of color than European American children with disabilities drew themselves to
other European American children. Children of color who had disabilities also drew
themselves farther from European American children than did European American
children with disabilities. It is possible that this result was a statistical artifact rather than a
true significant level of difference among group responses. There were only 20% of the
sample group who were children with disabilities, and of those, only 5 were children of
color.

**Sociometric Rating**

Sociometric data was collected through peer nominations on a 1, 2, 3 score scale
(1=yes, I would like to play with this child, 2=sometimes I like to play with this child and
sometimes I do not like to play with this child, and 3=no, I do not like to play with this
child). Data were analyzed by calculating the mean scores for all subjects within class
wide ratings. Children were then rank ordered by mean nomination scores. The children
with the highest mean scores were considered to be most well accepted on the basis that
they were nominated as most frequently enjoyed playmates by their peers. The children
with the lowest mean scores were considered least well accepted on the basis that they
were nominated as least preferred playmates by their peers.

The subjects were examined within the context of their intact group by first
examining the class members who had the highest mean scores (top 25%), then by the
middle level class members (determined by the next 50%), finally by the lowest mean
scores (the last 25%). These divisions were made to determine whether the “most” or
“least” well-accepted children varied by demographic descriptors such as ethnicity or disability. Demographic information was examined within the top 25% of the class and the lowest 25% of the class with regard to ethnicity, gender, bilingual or monolingual in English, the presence of a disability or ADHD, and socioeconomic level using a chi square. There were no significant (p<0.05) differences found between the most and the least well accepted children. The demographics from the top 25% and lowest 25% of the children were also compared to the demographics for the sample group also using chi squares. There were no significant (p<0.05) differences found.

Summary of Findings

In the initial analysis, children were asked to complete three measures of perceptions of ethnicity and disability. Initial results of the first methodology (doll activity) derived from cross tabulation of responses and chi square analyses revealed significant (p<0.05) results in children’s perceptions of ethnicity and disability on the basis of the child’s ethnicity, gender, age and ability or “ableness.” There were also significant (p<0.05) results on the basis of the doll’s ethnicity and gender.

On the social distance measure significant (p<0.05) results were revealed through a three way ANOVA on the basis of ethnicity of the child, the ability or “ableness” of the child, and the gender of the child. A Tukey HSD post hoc analysis determined that the significant (p<0.05) differences by ethnicity lie within the mean brown-white distances.

No significant (p<0.05) differences were found with regard to sociometric data. Data were analyzed by gender, disability, language, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine if young children exhibited differential attitudes or perceptions toward young children of color, young children with disabilities, or young children of color who have disabilities. Three measures were used to probe young children's perceptions and attitudes toward ethnicity and disability in young children: (a) attribution of personality characteristics to dolls representing disability and nondisability status and varied ethnicities; (b) Personal Distance Theory studied through the medium of young children's artwork; and (c) the sociometric rating of peers within intact class groups. Study participants (N=120) were selected from six affiliate centers from a national child care center company. All centers were located in the counties of Dallas and Denton, Texas. Participants were between the ages of 5.0 and 6.11 years.

Research in the area of social interactions of young children has indicated a great deal of confusion and contradiction regarding young children of color and young children who have disabilities. Further, it has failed to empirically address the issue of young children of color who have disabilities and their peers. In light of recent educational policy toward placing children in the most socially "typical" environment for their age, the issues surrounding the attitudes of young children with regard to ethnicity and disability take on
great importance. This study was conducted in an effort to further explore unresolved questions regarding those perceptions and attitudes. This chapter will be organized into three sections: (a) the results and interpretations of each methodology, (b) limitations of this study, and (c) conclusions and recommendations for further research.

Results of the Study

Significant results were found in two of the three methodologies employed in this study. This section will summarize the results by methodology. The results from the forced choice (multiple alternative) technique, the doll activity, are multifaceted and can be organized in many manners for reporting. Results from this methodology will be discussed in terms of positive and negative attributes, by child ethnicity, and by center accreditation status in order to help make trends in children's perceptions more apparent. The results from Social Distance Theory (artwork measure) will be discussed in the second portion of this chapter. The sociometric measure, which had no significant results, will be addressed third.

Forced Choice (Multiple Alternative) Technique [Doll Activity]

In this section, the results of the doll activity will be discussed. This activity required children to examine a collection of twelve dolls (three dolls of four ethnicities, one doll of each gender and one doll who has a disability within each ethnicity). Children were then asked to select which of the dolls possess particular attributes (a total of twelve attributes: six positive, such as good looking or nice, and six negative, such as ugly or
stupid). Their selections were recorded by the investigator. The results of this method were described by positive and negative attributes.

It is important to recall that although the attributes can be paired in positive/negative relationships (e.g., good/bad, good looking/ugly, kind/mean, smart/stupid, nice/gets in trouble, clean/dirty) the children were presented each attribute separately (in a random order) and were allowed to select as many or as few dolls as they felt were appropriate for each attribute. Therefore, a child's response about any doll's attribute was in no way linked to his/her response for the opposite attribute (e.g., if a child answered that a doll was “good looking,” the same doll could have also been rated by the same child as “ugly” later in the activity).

Children did not produce conflicting results on any pair of opposite attributes. In fact, in some instances results showed a natural pairing of opposite attributes (e.g., in all analyses by doll ethnicity, European American dolls were most “good looking,” followed by Hispanic dolls then African American dolls, and Asian dolls were least “good looking.” Asian dolls were most “ugly,” followed by African American dolls then Hispanic dolls, and European American dolls were least “ugly.”) This indicates that children seemed aware of the oppositeness of these attributes and answered in accordance with them. Their answers were not consistent on the basis of default (e.g., if one doll is “dirty” then it is automatically not “clean”), but rather on the basis that children perhaps understood that there was a contradiction involved.
Positive and negative attributes.

By examining positive and negative attributes that children are likely to assign within general patterns, one gleans important information from the results of this study. With regard to positive attributes, all six descriptors showed statistically significant results. Only four of the negative attributes showed significance however (with the exception of "stupid" and "bad"). A general discussion of the results will first be presented, followed by an explanation of supporting data.

Generally, children most frequently discriminated their use of a positive attribute based on gender associations (n=9), next by disability associations not related to ethnicity of the doll (n=6), then by ethnicity (n=7), and finally regarding the combination of ethnicity and disability (n=5). When examining children's attitudes with regard to dolls who had disabilities the two categories containing data about disabilities were collapsed into one (disability and disability with ethnicity). The total number of results of positive characteristics for discrimination on the basis of disability would then have been attributed to 11 of the 27 significant results (41%) of the positive characteristics. Using the same logic, ethnicity was a significant factor for positive attributes in 12 of the 27 significant (44%) results.

Because many significant differences existed in the assignment of positive attributes, one might be tempted to assume that children were likely to describe dolls by gender, disability, ethnicity, or combined disability and ethnicity in a positive light. However, many times young children discriminated their use of a positive attribute in
terms of who did not possess the positive attribute (e.g., the Asian dolls were found to be significantly less likely to be described as “good looking.”)

“Good looking” was found to be significant in thirteen instances. Those situations that created a significant difference included: females describing gender associations, females describing ethnicity associations, females describing disability associations, European Americans describing gender issues, European Americans describing ethnicity associations, and the total sample group describing dolls of color with disabilities.

“Good” was found to be significant in nine instances. Three were related to the same chi square test: European American, African American, and Hispanic children were each (by ethnic group) more likely to describe female dolls as “good.” Females accounted for two of the three remaining significant differences with regard to disability and gender associations. The final differences were seen in results for all participants, reflecting overall gender issues when using the descriptor “good.” Within the total sample group children were discriminating in their use of the descriptor “good” with dolls of color with disabilities (using it with more or less likelihood depending on the type of disability).

“Smart” was found to be assigned in significantly different ways in eight instances: by females regarding gender associations, by males regarding gender associations and also disability associations, by Hispanic children regarding gender associations, by children of color as compared to European American children in total numbers of responses, and finally, by the total sample group regarding disability associations and disability combined with ethnicity associations.
“Nice” was significant in seven instances. Females used this descriptor with
discrimination when identifying gender associations, children of color used the descriptor
more often when describing any of the dolls and dolls with disabilities in particular, and the
total sample group used it in significantly different ways when describing dolls of color
with disabilities.

“Kind” was used in significantly differentiating ways in only three instances: by
females to describe gender associations, by males to describe disability associations, and
by the total sample group to describe dolls of color who have disabilities. Similarly,
“clean” was used in only two instances: by females to describe gender associations and by
males to describe gender associations.

When examining the patterns in children’s discriminations regarding the use of
negative attributes, there were a total of only 19 significant results for negative attributes
(as opposed to 27 for positive attributes). Among these, gender associations accounted for
only four significant results, ethnicity associations were responsible for 5, disability
(regardless of ethnicity) accounted for none of the significant results, and the combined
factors of ethnicity and disability accounted for 3 significant results. Therefore, the issue of
disability (by examining both the categories of disability and ethnicity with disability)
would account for 3 of the significant results using negative attributes. The issue of
ethnicity (again, collapsing ethnicity and ethnicity with disability into one category)
accounted for 42% of the significant differences pertaining to negative characteristics.
Ethnicity and ethnicity combined with disability again seem to be important factors by which young children discriminately assigned attributes.

Negative descriptors were less frequently statistically significant in their patterns of use. As previously mentioned, the terms “stupid” and “bad” did not produce significance. This point in itself seems to warrant comment or speculation. In terms of the use of the descriptor “stupid,” this term was quite controversial for the children. While only anecdotal evidence exists to support this claim, younger children appeared to understand the word “stupid” as a “bad word” or insult as opposed to a negative indicator of intellectual ability. Middle and older children, who perhaps not coincidentally had attended a formal kindergarten (i.e. academic setting), seemed to associate the word “stupid” with intellect.

The investigator and research assistants received feedback from children during the activities indicating their level of relative discomfort with the use of the term “stupid,” such as, “I told my mom you said that word” and “you aren’t ever supposed to say that word” in addition to nonverbal feedback such as giggles and squirms. A finding of interest given the children’s “off-the-record” responses to the word however, is that one would have perhaps predicted, given the negative comments, a significant response of nonuse across categories of dolls. That was not the case. They simply used the word with no more or less likelihood for any category.

The descriptor “ugly” produced significant results in six instances. Those instances included: by females in relation to gender associations, by males in relation ethnicity
associations, and by the total sample group regarding ethnicity associations and ethnicity with disability associations.

"Gets in trouble" was a characteristic attributed to particular groups of dolls in five instances. African American children used the descriptor significantly different with regard to ethnicity. Females and Hispanic children used the term with significant discrimination when describing gender associations.

"Mean" was used significantly in five instances. Males discriminated their use of the term when describing ethnicity associations. Females used the term differently when addressing gender associations. Male dolls were more frequently described as "mean" by the total sample group. And, the total sample group was less likely to describe dolls of color with disabilities as "mean."

The final negative descriptor used with significance in this study was "dirty."

"Dirty" was used with significance by Hispanic children to describe associations of ethnicity (including their own). It was also used with significance regarding the combined disability/ethnicity associations.

Interpretation by child ethnicity.

Another facet of data interpretation for this study was to examine the attributes specifically by children's ethnicities. Children of different ethnicities seemed to interpret the attributes in unique ways and, at other times, in similar ways. Of twelve attributes, European American children only described with significance the terms "good looking" and "good." The term "good looking" was used to describe European American dolls and
female dolls. European American children were the only ethnic group to produce a significant finding for "good looking" by the doll's ethnicity.

This finding could be interpreted in several ways. One may be to suggest from a critical pedagogy perspective, that European American children continue to be raised from very young ages with an ethnocentric perspective focusing on physical attractiveness (as defined by white skin). European American children have likewise continued to be strongly indoctrinated from young ages to believe that the most important attributes defining what it means to be female are physical attractiveness and "being good." While the term was not specifically defined for or by the children within this study, it would be logical to assume that to young children the term "good" has connotations of obedience and submission as well as giving of oneself in order to please others.

Female dolls were, in fact, described as "good" by European American, African American, and Hispanic children. This seems to indicate a consistent level of gender bias among children, regardless of ethnicity. A note of interest was that African American children indicated only this one significant difference by gender.

African American children produced significant results based on other factors than gender. For example, African American children had one significant result by doll ethnicity. When measured by doll ethnicity, African American children indicated that of all dolls described as likely to "get in trouble," African American dolls comprised 36.4% of those selected, while European American dolls comprised a meager 6.8% of the dolls selected. Again, from a critical pedagogy interpretation, this could indicate that at the
onset of formal schooling, young children have already been socialized that society will not treat all children equally: African American children will be far more likely to get in trouble. And European American children will rarely get in trouble.

Another interpretation could be that the young African American child has learned before (s)he enters school what stereotypes exist of him/her within the educational system, which is predominantly white. Finally, a third interpretation could be from a knowledge first revealed in the landmark book *Ways With Words* (Heath, 1983), that children in organized child care settings have to some extent already experienced the complicated mismatch between the predominantly white expectations and communication styles in place in the classroom and those of the African American community.

An equally troubling finding was that Hispanic children produced only two significant findings by doll ethnicity: the first was that European American children were least likely to be described as “ugly,” the other was that Hispanic dolls are most likely to be described as “dirty.” Again this finding can be interpreted from a variety of positions, most of them sociopolitical. These data suggest that before the onset of formal education young Hispanic children are already aware of the stereotypes that society holds of them.

This finding is further illustrated through anecdotal data from the study. When first introduced to the doll activity, children were asked to identify the dolls by ethnicity and were asked if they knew any one personally who shared the ethnicity. One Hispanic little girl seemed to be embarrassed to admit that she was Hispanic until she felt some assurance that her ethnicity would be accepted. When asked if she knew anyone who was “Spanish”
or “Mexican,” she looked to the floor, looked at the investigator, looked back to the floor and said with a frown and hesitation in her voice, “Yes, my--my grandma.” The investigator smiled and replied to the child, “So is my grandma!” To which the young girl immediately made eye contact, smiled shyly and said, “--And me too.”

The results of the African American children and the Hispanic children on these two attributes were most unsettling. Equally disturbing was the fact that European American children also produced only one significant result (previously described at top of this section), in which they saw their ethnicity as representing “good looking-ness.”

Hispanic children produced the most significant results based on doll gender. From the perspective of the Hispanic children, males were seen as more likely to “get in trouble” and to be “mean”, while females were described as “good” and “smart.” The assignment of these characteristics by gender is stereotypical and is also traditional within the Hispanic culture (Harry, 1992; Lynch & Hansen, 1992). Finally, Hispanic children did not produce any significant findings based on the dolls’ disabilities. This too would be typical of Hispanic culture. Hispanic people are likely to view mild disability as a disadvantage rather than a true disability. According to Harry (1992), they often believe social competence can be achieved by means other than that of academic achievement (e.g., respect, honor, diligent labor, responsibility to one’s family).

African American children produced several significant results based on the dolls’ disabilities. Dolls with disabilities were seen by African American children as less likely to “get in trouble”, less likely to be “dirty”, and more likely to be “kind.” These findings
could be interpreted in a positive light in that, although stereotypical, they were complimentary to disability status. It would seem then, that young African American children would not initially be opposed to including children with disabilities within their classrooms. However, it would seem equally apparent that issues of stereotyping, and disability awareness would need to be actively addressed by the classroom teachers and school administrators.

**Interpretation by doll ethnicity and doll disability.**

The total subject group (N=120) rated the Asian dolls in a consistently negative light. Asian dolls received the most negative descriptors, excepting the Asian doll with a disability (wheelchair), who received the most positive descriptors among dolls with disabilities. Addressing the first finding, that Asian dolls were viewed negatively more often than other ethnicities, Frisby (1996) found that social cognitions are derived from a multiplicity of overlapping factors, including whether persons are from countries foreign to the perceiver. In this study only two subjects were from Asian ethnicities. When queried, while observing the Asian dolls, most children stated that they did not know anyone who was “Asian/Chinese/Filipino.” It is acknowledged that vocabulary could have partly responsible for this response, as there are many varied ethnicities within the broad category of “Asian.” Nonetheless, children expressed a lack of familiarity with the Asian dolls and responded consistently according to recent literature.

When examining the dolls with disabilities by ethnicity, one must remember that there were only four dolls with disabilities and each was of a different ethnicity as well as a
different type of disability. The results of this analysis are therefore more conditional than other analyses. It is less clear whether a child was swayed by the ethnicity, type of disability or the combination of the two factors. The ethnicity and type of disability paired were: an Asian child who used a wheelchair, a Hispanic child who used eyeglasses and hearing aides, a European American who used a walker, and an African American child who used a walker. These were randomly assigned.

Significant results were as follows. Two dolls of color who had disabilities produced significant differences with regard to the attribute “nice.” One was the Hispanic doll who wore eye glasses and hearing aides, who was described as “nice” less often than would have been expected. The other significant difference was generated for the Asian doll who used a wheelchair, who was described more likely than expected as “nice.” It would seem plausible that these responses could have resulted from a sympathetic reaction to a person with a more severe disability (the wheel chair), likewise a less sympathetic response for one with a perceived “milder” disability (the eyeglasses and hearing aides).

Significant differences were detected for dolls of color with regard to the attribute “nice.” Interestingly, the severity of the disability seemed to make a difference in how the children determined which dolls were “nice.” For example, the Hispanic doll who wore hearing aides and eye glasses (a milder form of disability than the others) was considered “nice” less often than nondisabled Hispanic dolls. However, the Asian doll, who sat in a wheelchair (the most severe form of disability) was rated more often as “nice” than Asian dolls without disabilities.
It is likely that the level of disability was the determining factor for children’s perceptions, rather than ethnicity. Disabled dolls were seen differently than nondisabled dolls of the same ethnicity. Asian dolls without disabilities were perceived less frequently than expected as “nice,” rather than more, which was the case for the doll in the wheelchair. Likewise, the Hispanic dolls without disabilities were more likely to be considered “nice” than the doll with a disability.

There were significant results for the disabled dolls of color with regard to the attribute “good looking.” The Asian doll using the wheelchair was described as “good looking” more often than the nondisabled dolls. The African American doll who used a walker was also considered “good looking” more often when disabled than when not. Interestingly, the European American doll who used a walker identical to the one used by the African American doll was rated as “good looking” less often than expected. European American dolls without disabilities were rated as “good looking” more often than expected. The European American doll with a disability seemed to be the only doll for whom his disability did not improve his social standing.

The European American doll with a disability and dolls of color who had disabilities had significantly different results with regard to the descriptor “ugly.” The European American doll with a disability was significantly more likely to be described as “ugly” than European American dolls who were able bodied. It is possible that young children judged harsher the European American doll with a disability because it violated the American ideal of perfection. This same principle has been applied to dolls of color by
some children as well as toy manufacturers (Honigsberg, 1995). The Hispanic doll was significantly less likely to be considered “ugly” than Hispanic dolls without disabilities. Asian dolls with disabilities were less likely to be described as “ugly” than expected (note that this was the only analysis in which Asian dolls were not regarded as significantly more often “ugly”).

With regard to the attribute, “mean,” the Asian doll using a wheelchair was less likely than Asian dolls with no disabilities to be considered “mean.” The Asian doll sitting in the wheelchair was also less likely to be described as “dirty” than Asian dolls without disabilities. In keeping with the perhaps sympathetic responses to the doll in the wheelchair, he was more likely than other Asian dolls to be described as “smart,” “good,” and “kind.” In contrast, European American and Hispanic dolls with disabilities were again less likely than their nondisabled peers of shared ethnicity) to be described as “good.”

It is interesting to note that while the Asian dolls consistently received the most negative labels from the children participating in this study, when placed in a wheelchair, the doll of the same ethnicity suddenly became more preferable than nondisabled peers. However, the European American doll was severely penalized for having a disability as compared to nondisabled peers from his shared ethnicity. A further note of curiosity was that the African American doll (who shared the same disability accommodation, a walker, as the European American doll and in addition wore eye glasses) produced no significant results for any of the attributes.
In summary, this examination of the data provided a more complete picture of what stereotypes and perceptions are held by young children. It is clear that young children of European American, Hispanic, and African American ethnicities hold their own perception of themselves and those around them.

**Social Distance Theory**

Social distance theory was employed through the medium of children’s artwork. Significant results were found for the mean distances drawn in pictures by child ethnicity. For this method, children were simply grouped into two categories: white and brown. Brown children (children of color) drew themselves significantly farther from white children (European American children) than white children drew themselves from each other. The other significant finding was that children with disabilities drew themselves significantly closer to others in their pictures (regardless of the other person’s ethnicity) than nondisabled children drew themselves from others.

The finding that children of color drew themselves farther from white children than white children drew themselves from other white children is consistent with earlier findings using this methodology (Holmes, 1995). It could possibly indicate a lower level of comfort of children of color with white children than vice versa.

Given the perceptions discovered in the previous methodology (the doll activity), these results would seem to consistently indicate troubling response patterns for children of color. Children of color may feel less comfortable with European American children as a result of the perceived social perceptions of children of color by the larger society.
(dominated by European Americans). Earlier research employing children’s self portraits has shown that skin color is an issue for young children of color, who acquire cultural knowledge of their unchangeable membership in a cultural group based on skin color or ethnic heritage (Cross, 1985; Harter, 1983; Holmes, 1995; Spencer, 1988). Also, children of color learn to recognize their characteristics maintained by American society in classifying its members (Damon & Hart, 1988; Levine & White, 1986).

**Sociometric Ratings**

The sociometric measure required class members to rate each child participating in the study by indicating on a three point scale “willingness to play with” measure equivalent to “yes,” “no” and “sometimes.” This measure yielded no significant results with regard to the subjects’ level of social acceptance based on descriptive the characteristics of ethnicity, disability status, gender, or languages spoken (bilinguality).

It may have been predicted through the results of the first two measures that children would apply to their peers their biases and perceptions of ethnicity, gender and disability status. However the fact that these children did not demonstrate bias is telling. It has been documented in the literature that children will often make generalizations about groups of people outside their racial and ethnic groups that do not hold true for individual children they know (Holmes, 1995; Sigelman & Welch, 1993; Spenser, 1988). Asian children may be described in general as “ugly” but a young Asian child who is a friend may be described as “pretty” or “handsome.” This has been attributed to Piaget’s theory
that young children are not yet able to engage in deductive thinking (Hirshfeld, 1995; Holmes, 1995).

These findings replicate the findings of Holmes (1995) in her study of how young children perceive race. Holmes found that children made broad generalizations regarding outgroup members while describing only positive, friendly portrayals of individual friends who were members of the outgroup. (Holmes defines “outgroup” as a person who is not from one’s shared ethnic or cultural group.)

In her review of the literature, Holmes found that this contradiction regarding children’s perceptions of outgroup members was consistent for preadolescents as well as for young children. She concluded that “young and older children can distinguish their positive feelings about individual outgroup members from stereotypical notions that emerge when they are asked to make generalizations about an entire group of people...” (p.61).

Holmes also concluded from her review of the literature that young children operate on a cognitive principle of homogeneity within classificatory systems (such as race). This allows them to hold separate perceptions of the group from of an individual within the group with whom the child has had positive experiences. Holmes notes that these outgroup biases can be transcended through descriptions of individuals and positive interpersonal experiences with outgroup members.

Doyle and Aboud (1995) concluded that developmental changes in young children’s perceptions of race must be attributed not simply to growth in cognitive
domains but in socio-cognitive skills. Again attributing their findings to Piagetian theory, Doyle and Aboud described young children's differential perceptions of ingroup and outgroup members as a result of exposure to individuals of other races. In order to be capable of altering negative bias after personal exposure to individuals of color, certain cognitive abilities must be in place. They stated that a child must be capable of perspective-taking and able to recognize positive attributes in other races (which took place in their study at second grade level but not at the kindergarten level).

Discussion

This investigation suggests that young children do hold differential perceptions of young children with disabilities, young children of color, and young children of color who have disabilities. These differential opinions are formed by young children in positive as well as negative directions toward members of other groups (such as ethnicity and disability). Differential perceptions seem to be overridden by individual experiences with outgroup members. Hence, there is some evidence of a relationship between age and perception of difference. Ethnicity-related perceptions mirrored the views and biases of our larger society.

The results of the analysis indicated a clear need to delve into the issue of efficacy studies for multicultural and anti-bias curricula. There are a plethora of programs available for children, and many preservice programs require prospective teachers to take one course in multicultural education. However, more serious effort must be expended studying what works and what doesn't. Without further study into which components
work well and which are superfluous, educators could be “spinning their wheels” with multicultural education. It appears that the lack of clear outcomes from these type of curricula could already be adversely effecting their likelihood in the educational system. A survey in 1995 of 713 school districts (each with an enrollment of over 10,000) reported that only 46.1% had a multicultural curriculum in place. This is a significant change (p<.01) downward from the results from 1975, at which point 55.1% of the 720 school districts surveyed had multicultural programs (Washburn, 1996).

Clearly the field of multicultural education has been given “its moment” in education. While its messages are no less needed today, as witnessed by the results of this study, the time has come for multicultural education to become integrated into the institution that is our educational system as opposed to a highlight or weekly “feel-good” feature. The results of this study have shown that while negative and stereotypical attitudes exist in young children toward diversity in ethnicity and disability, the children are willing and able to adapt to differences through shared meaningful experiences. Perhaps if multicultural education programs do not prove effective, then simply establishing an environment of collaborative teamwork and acceptance of difference sans the food tasting and holiday celebrating would be more effective.

Limitations of the Study

Threats to validity are a concern for all researchers (Kerlinger, 1986; Pedhazur, 1982). With this particular study four areas of concern are addressed.
The first threat to validity involves the aforementioned problems associated with determining exactly what construct one is measuring in perception studies (Foster & Martinez, 1995). While every effort has been made to ensure that these three methodologies measure facets of the same construct, there can be no guarantees made that this claim is justified.

A second limitation of this study was within the sociometric method. The original design required that all members of an intact class be measured and rate each other in order to produce an accurate reading of within class social acceptance patterns. However, for many reasons [such as an ongoing lice epidemic in one class, and mixed age grouping in another (which placed five and six year old children in a class with seven and eight year old children), and occasionally a parent's refusal to grant permission for a child in the class to participate] the study participants did not include every member of the class. In this event, directors gave permission for non-participating children to provide ratings for the subjects after it was determined by the directors that parental permission was needed only for the photograph of the child to be taken, not for the child to rate other children who had been given permission to participate in this study. This change to the original procedure should not but could possibly have altered our results. Test-retest reliability in this study equaled that of the original study, however, at r = .81.

A third limitation of this study was that the children were not formally asked to self-identify their skin color nor that of their classmates. Without this information, although significant results were produced through employment of US Office of Civil Rights (OCR)
and US Bureau of Census classification systems, there is room left for doubt as to whether
the children in the study were intending the same children as the investigator when
discussing "white" children and "brown" children. This limitation is particularly relevant to
the social distance theory (artwork) method. The children were asked to "draw yourself
with a brown person" and then to "draw yourself with a white person." Without self
identification of color, it cannot be certain that the child perceived him/herself the same
color as the Office of Civil Rights and the Bureau of Census did.

Therefore, it would be difficult to state with certainty that the results for measuring
distances between same race and different race figures would have been the same (e.g., if
an Asian child identifies herself as "white" rather than "brown" then decisions about
which picture was considered by researchers to be the "same race" and which of her
pictures was "other race" would have been backwards). Additionally, of those children
queried, many children seemed, anecdotally, to consider themselves "pinkish-tan," "gray,"
or "peach" rather than "white."

A fourth limitation to the doll activity and the artwork measure was the absence of
multicultural art supplies and toys in the child care centers. The doll activity utilized dolls
of various ethnicities and disabilities and many children had not previously encountered
such toys in their play environments. In the art activity many of the children had not been
exposed to multicultural markers prior to this study. As a result of these points, the
novelty of the materials used in the activities could have impacted child responses.
For example, within the set of multicultural markers, there are no lighter skin toned markers. One marker appears on the outside to be a shade of pink/tan but when applied to paper the color is much more brown than it appears. European American children were able to select from white chalk, yellow chalk, peach chalk, a set of multicolor bold crayons, and the set of markers mentioned above. As is typical of young children given their selection of many art supplies, most wanted to color with a marker. They were frustrated to find none were the color of their skin (a point of subtle irony) and it often appeared to distract them during this activity.

The children of color also seems intrigued by the novelty of the markers and tended to draw both white people and people of color using the multicultural markers. Investigators marked the page to be colored on as the directions were given and measurements were derived from the direction given, not necessarily the color of the figures drawn (some figures were “white” and “brown” while others were red and blue).

A fifth limitation of this study was that only four dolls were used to represent dolls of color with disabilities. One doll of each ethnicity was used; each had a different disability. It was difficult to discern to what extent attributes assigned to these four dolls reflected the child’s consideration of the doll’s ethnicity as opposed to its disability.

Recommendations

At this point a recommendation could be made for continued probing of children’s perceptions of ethnicity and disability and further study into the efficacy of multicultural and anti-bias curriculum. The results of this study were intended only to act as a probe
into children's attitudes in order to determine whether further study would be warranted. Indeed it would appear that there is considerable room for definition of children's attitudes within the areas of ethnicity and disability.

While participating in many of the measures students frequently volunteered interesting insights into their decision-making process. Consequently, it is recommended that further research into children's perceptions be conducted through qualitative methodologies. These would allow for further exploration of young children's cognitions and levels of understanding.

It is recommended that future replications of this study include more dolls of color who have disabilities. Further probing the combined factors of ethnicity and disability is necessary to discern how these issues are understood by young children. It is also recommended that future replication studies utilize only one type of drawing utensil (e.g., only crayons or only markers) to circumvent the confusion with regard to children's drawing utensil preferences. A final piece of useful information that could be incorporated in a future study would be an exploration of Social Distance Theory to determine whether children demonstrate the same distance differences physically as they do in their artwork.
APPENDIX A

TABLES
### Table A1
Descriptive Data for Sample Group

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<th>Factors</th>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
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<tr>
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Table A2
Significant Results for Total Dolls Data

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<th>Value</th>
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<td>Doll Ethnicity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good Looking</td>
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<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ugly</td>
<td>13.173</td>
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<td>0.004</td>
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<td>Doll Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good looking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good</td>
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Table A3  
Significant Results for Doll Gender

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<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>By Doll Ethnicity</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good looking</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>9.873</td>
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<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
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| **By Doll Gender**  |       |    |                      |
| good looking        |       |    |                      |
| ecse-yes           | 0.327 | 1  | 0.567                |
| ecse-no            | 5.373 | 1  | 0.02                 |
| good               |       |    |                      |
| ecse-yes           | 0.027 | 1  | 0.87                 |
| ecse-no            | 14.176| 1  | 0.000                |

| **By Doll Disability** |       |    |                      |
| dirty               |       |    |                      |
| ecse-yes           | 0.418 | 1  | 0.518                |
| ecse-no            | 3.978 | 1  | 0.046                |
Table A6
Significant Differences for Child Age

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Table A7
Significant Results for Artwork ANOVAS (Personal Distance Theory)
General Linear Model

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

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a. Computed using alpha = .05
b. R Squared = .121 (Adjusted R Squared = .062)

**Estimated Marginal Means**

**pair**

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**ecse**

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Table A7 continued
Post hoc Tests for Artwork Significant Differences

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: subjcolor
Tukey HSD

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<td>bb</td>
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<td>.866</td>
<td>.920</td>
<td>(-1.6721, 2.7775)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bw</td>
<td>wb</td>
<td>1.6696</td>
<td>.774</td>
<td>.135</td>
<td>(-3.3176, 3.6568)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Homogeneous Subsets

Tukey HSDab

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pair</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Subset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ww</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>6.7743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wb</td>
<td>75</td>
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<td>bb</td>
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<td>bw</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>9.0283</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>.126</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.
Based on Type III Sum of Squares

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 56.49
b. Alpha = .05.
Figure 1
Social Distance Theory (Artwork)
Interaction for Mean Distances for Ethnicities and Children with Disabilities

Paired ethnicities

Notes:
*ww=white child drawing white child
*wb=white child drawing brown child
*bb=brown child drawing brown child
*bw=brown child drawing white child

*Distances measured in centimeters
REFERENCES


Psychology, 51, 968-975.


