

SOCIAL INTERACTION AMONG MEXICAN AMERICAN
CHILDREN ENROLLED IN DAY CARE

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Holcomb, near Garden City, site of the sugar beet fields in western Kansas, was the location for a day care center for Mexican-American children. In the summer of 1961 the concern of the community was such that a half-day program was begun for the children and Friday night parties were planned for the adults. The local council of churches under the direction of the Kansas Council of Churches administered both the half-day program and the Friday night program. The purpose of the half-day program was day care for the children while the Friday night programs were for entertainment and education for the parents in areas such as general health and good food habits for the family.

The State Board of Health became interested in the people and conducted a health survey in the area. The following year, the State Board of Health, in an effort to expand medical care for the migrant people in one community, contracted with Kansas State University to operate a day care program for the younger children which allowed the local community to make plans for a full-day program geared to the needs of the older children. This program was

carried out in the summers of 1962 and 1963. In 1963, it was the privilege of the investigator to work in this program with the children from ages three to six. Director of the Kansas State University nursery school was director of the project, and community volunteers completed the needed staff.

Total day-care facilities, were available for all children. The younger children, from three to six years old, met in the Holcomb Consolidated Public School building, while the older children, seven years and over, met in the Holcomb Community Church. The kindergarten, three elementary rooms, dining room, kitchen, gymnasium, showers and a well-equipped playground were available for use by the younger children in the day care center.

The program for the older children included use of the Community Church facilities in addition to kitchen, dining room, playground and three upper grade class rooms of the Holcomb School. In the morning, the older children had Bible study, crafts, and recreation at the church; at noon they went to the school for lunch. In the afternoon, certified teachers held formal classes for remedial help in academic subjects. This part of the program was under the direction of the Kansas Council of Churches and the local council, while the program for the younger group was under the direction of the Department of Family and Child Development of Kansas State University.

Monday through Friday, school buses picked up the children in front of their homes and then in the afternoon took them home. Children arrived at the day care center at 8:30 A.M. and left at 4:10 P.M.

The total enrollment for the five-week period of day care was forty-four children ranging in age from three years to six years. The enrollment fluctuated a great deal from day to day, partly because of illness and holidays and partly because of family mobility. One family left the second week of school, another the third week of school, and one family moved into the community during the last week of school. Also, it seemed that families tested the day care situation by sending only one child from the family. Upon hearing his report, the family decided whether or not to send the other children. The highest daily attendance was thirty-six while the average daily attendance was twenty-eight children. The total group consisted of twenty boys and twenty-four girls of whom eleven were three years old; ten, four years old; fourteen, five years old; eight, six years old; and one, seven years old.

It was possible to actually observe and record initial reactions of the children to each other, to various materials, and to different activities. Also, the children were observed for a minimum of seven hours a day and on occasion, longer. Information concerning Mexican-American

migrants was gathered and added to a small but increasing amount of the information now available.

The purpose of the study was to learn more about the social activities of migrant children. Therefore, procedures and forms were used which were not hampered by language difficulties. The study was conducted to obtain information concerning the contacts children made with adults, siblings, and other children, and also the types of behavior and levels of play in which the children engaged.

The following hypotheses were tested.

- (1) There is no relationship between age and
 - a. frequency of contact with adults.
 - b. frequency of contact with siblings or relatives.
 - c. frequency of contact with other children.
- (2) There is no relationship between sex and
 - a. frequency of contact with adults.
 - b. frequency of contact with siblings or relatives.
 - c. frequency of contact with other children.
- (3) There is no relationship between age and type of behavior.
- (4) There is no relationship between age and levels of play.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A minority group is defined as a group excluded from full participation in the life of the society because of social, cultural, or physical characteristics. In 1957, of the principal minorities in the United States, Mexican-Americans composed the second largest group of two and a half million, the majority of these people being migrants. Kurth (1960) and Burma (1960) stated that from 300,000 to 500,000 children under eighteen years of age in migratory families were in the three major migratory streams. Stenger (1945) stated that migratory labor was the backbone of the truck farms of Texas and California, the long-staple cotton of Arizona, the sugar beet industry from Colorado and Montana to Ohio and Michigan. The Mexican-American migrant stream which originates in Southern Texas is the largest and goes as far as the Mountain, Great Plains, and Lake states (Kurth, 1960; Padgett, 1953).

A domestic agriculture migrant worker is an American farmworker who performs short-term farmwork, moving from one job to another across county and state lines. Migrants are migrants by necessity rather than by choice. The size

of the family is associated with the need to migrate. When the family becomes too large for the earnings of one worker to support them all, he looks for work in which other members can contribute to the family income (Metzler and Largent, 1960).

Minority group membership subjects the individual to low-income and marginal employment. Economically, the migrant farm worker occupies the lowest level of any major group in the American economy. The extremely low income earned annually by most migratory farm workers puts great pressure upon them to keep their children at work as long as possible. Most Federal social and labor legislation contains specific exemptions for farm labor and most state and county social, labor and welfare laws provide either that "non-residents shall be ineligible" or, like the Federal laws, exempt agricultural workers.

The child soon learns, and is affected by, the relationships which he encounters outside the home (Douglas, 1960). Minority and low social status hinders the development and growth of the minority group of children. This was borne out by Hess's (1964) study concerning lower-class children, although not dealing directly with Mexican-American migrants.

Hess (1964) made a study comparing lower and middle class mothers and their children. He observed the interaction between the mother and child and found that the

verbal communication that emerges within the family as a central part of interaction affects the cognitive development of the young child. The communication and interaction modes employed by the lower class mothers reflected not only cultural and educational deprivation but also the family's social status.

Migrants are not only robbed of normal home and community life, but are universally handicapped by too early employment and by lack of educational opportunities. The lack of educational achievement among the migrant parents and children contributes to their many disadvantages. Migrant agricultural workers are often described as America's forgotten people and their children are referred to as the most educationally deprived group of children in the nation. (Wyckoff, 1963). This is one of the most distressing aspects of the migrants' condition. Children who are unable to obtain a basic elementary education will probably never be able to rise above their present circumstances to enjoy a better life (Wyckoff, 1963). Day care centers for preschool children might alleviate some of the disadvantaged condition.

Duplication and poor organization characterize the little research which has been done concerning migrant families.

There is a particular need for improved statistical base for research (Jones, 1948). Although there has been

some improvement, Rodman (1960) indicated that the lower-class family, for the most part, is unstudied by social scientists. One reason is the difficulty which social scientists from the middle-class experience in trying to feel at ease working with individuals of lower-class background. Another is the inability to develop rapport with these people. Jones (1948) also discussed the lack of research which has been carried out.

Although little work has been done concerning migrants, particularly Mexican-Americans, there has been some research in the area of socialization. Work on social interaction, a large part of it on child-adult contacts has been reported.

Parten (1932) studied social participation among forty-two preschool children. Social participation categories in her study were as follows: unoccupied - child did not seem to be playing at all; onlooker - child spent most of the time watching; alone - child played independently of other children; parallel - child played beside rather than with other children; associative - group play with members following a common activity; cooperative - child played in a group that was organized for a purpose. She found that positive social participation (parallel, associative cooperative categories) increased over three to twenty observation periods while negative participation (unoccupied, onlooker, alone categories) decreased for the

group as a whole. She also found that older children were more likely than younger children to engage in associative and cooperative play. Younger children, on the other hand, were likely to be more often engaged in solitary or parallel play.

Preston and Rabson (1958) in a study of fifty-nine three- to eight-year-old children found that the quality of social compliance or conformity changed with age and that the degree of compliance of older children is more generalized and consistent across situations.

Dahms, Pearce, and Walter (1957) found in their study of sixty-five males and fifty-five females that three- to five-year-old children were more verbally than physically affectionate. Also, aggression tended to increase with age from two to four years, with boys being more aggressive than girls. At all age levels children were more affectionate than aggressive in response to others and more frequently employed affection than aggression in initiating contacts.

Dunnington (1957) reported differences between most chosen and most rejected children in the group in terms of their aggressive and verbal behavior in experimental play situations. In their study, Jersild and Markey (1935) found that boys were more openly aggressive than girls; and as the boys' age increased aggressiveness increased.

McCandless (1961) hypothesized that emotional dependency, seeking comfort, affection and support, would interfere with the child's popularity. Support for the hypothesis was found in his study of twenty-six Caucasian and fifty-six non-white children, three to five years of age, in Hawaii. The fifty-six non-white children were predominantly of Oriental ethnic origin.

In their study of sixty-five preschool children concerning dependency and helpfulness, Stith and Connor (1962) found that as age increased dependent contacts with adults decreased in both frequency and proportion. Helpful contacts with both adults and children increased significantly with age.

In the studies previously described the areas of socialization which were studied were aggression and affection; dependency and social participation; social compliance and age; chosen and rejected children and dependency and helpfulness. Although a number of factors in the socialization process were studied, one factor must be pointed out. All the subjects of the studies were preschool children from lower-middle, upper-middle, or lower-upper social classes. There were no lower-class children represented. Also, the subjects were of the Caucasian race with the exception of the McCandless study (1961). His study was concerned mainly with non-whites of Oriental ethnic origin. Studies of the socialization of lower class minorities of

other ethnic groups would be of value. A study of socialization of Mexican-American children could add to the information now available from completed studies. It was for this purpose the present study was undertaken.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Subjects

The subjects in this investigation were forty-four Mexican-American migrant preschool children who attended a day care center program in the summer of 1963. The group consisted of twenty boys and twenty-four girls of whom eleven were three years old, ten were four years old, fourteen were five years old, and eight were six years old.

Average size of the Mexican-American families was 8.2. The largest family group in the center consisted of five siblings and three first cousins. Only four children had no relatives in the group; two had siblings in the Bible study group; one was an only child; the other was the daughter of the Spanish-speaking interpreter who was an employee of the Kansas Council of Churches and a permanent resident of Garden City.

Migrant families were housed in small three-room concrete houses. Crowded conditions were prevalent because two or three families often lived in one house. Toilet facilities were poor. Water could be found at a few outdoor faucets or, for some families, from the irrigation pump.

In one small settlement there were seven houses and ten families. There was one out-door faucet for water in the settlement.

Houses rented from the farm employers were located in the beet fields far from the site of the center. This created the need for two school buses. Houses faced the section roads and were surrounded by sugar beet fields.

The many disadvantages and handicaps under which migrants generally exist were prevalent for these Mexican-Americans. Housing and sanitation were poor. However, the county nurse was trying to help in every possible way. She administered shots and followed through on treatment recommended during physical examinations. She was familiar with home conditions. Also, she helped arrange day care for some of the children under three years of age. The educational aspiration for these migrants was low, but seemed to be gaining in importance as evidenced by the fact that a few families left their school age children in Texas to finish the school year.

The hand labor, hoeing sugar beets, was called "stoop labor." Pay was poor. This short-term labor necessitated frequent moves thus making few community services available because of non-residency.

Observations

By direct observation, using a time sampling technique and predetermined categories, information was obtained in the following areas:

- (1) number of contacts: with siblings or relatives; with other children; with adults.
- (2) types of behavior exhibited: caretaking, physical contact, talking, aggression.
- (3) levels of play activity: alone, isolated, watching, parallel, cooperative.

It was possible to categorize behavior in which more than one child was involved both by type and person contacted. In addition, all behavior was categorized according to level of play in which the child was engaged.

For this study contact was defined as any active or passive involvement between two or more individuals.

Recording was done at four times during free play periods both indoors and outdoors, at lunch, and during morning snack. These times were periods when the child had a free choice of companions. Data were recorded during each free play period twenty minutes after all the children had an opportunity to become involved. Two of the free play observations were made outdoors, one in the morning, the other in the afternoon. The third observation was made in the morning during inside play. Observations were completed within five minutes.

Each child wore a number. Recording was done by number and symbol in order to facilitate rapid, accurate recording. The forms for recording allowed the investigator to show the children in their relation to each other and also to adults. Each child who was in the room or on the playground at the time of the observation was observed. However, during almost every observation at least one child was missing. Sometimes he had gone to the other area, at other times he was in the bathroom or getting a drink of water in the hall.

Children's activities were recorded according to the following original categories:

Alone: the child not engaged in any particular activity. This designation was used when a child seemed to be "between activities." Example: "one" was between the swings and the merry-go-round; there were no children near him.

Isolated: child playing by himself with equipment which differed from that used by the children closest to him. Example: "six" was the only child playing on the teeter-totter while a large group of children were playing on the merry-go-round.

Watching: the child not engaged in any activity himself but watching the others and their activities. Example: "twenty" was standing between the swings and teeter-totter watching "eighteen" as she was swinging.

Parallel: two or more children playing with the same type of equipment but not engaged in working together; each interested in his own activity. Example: "seven" and "seventeen" were seated next to each other playing with the clay but each was engrossed in his own work and seemed unaware of the presence of the other.

Cooperative: two or more children involved in one activity, helping each other and working together. Example: "twenty-eight," "twenty-four," and "twenty-three" were building a highway with wooden blocks, then using trucks and cars on the road.

Caretaking: one child taking care of another; comforting, encouraging, helping to satisfy various wants of the individual. Example: "twenty-seven" and "eight" were standing by the fence; "eight" was crying and "twenty-seven" was comforting her by talking to her and patting her.

Physical Contact: a child touching another in some way. There was actual physical contact between two or more children, which could not be defined as either caretaking or aggression. Example: "nineteen" and "two" were walking toward the slide holding hands; "twenty-five" and "thirteen," both on tricycles, were reaching out touching each other.

Talking: two or more children talking, one to the other; or more than one child in the group talking. No talking concerned with caretaking or aggression was included.

Example: "thirty-one" and "thirty-three" were standing by the slide talking to each other.

Aggression: two or more children engaged in a quarrel with physical attack. An activity defined as aggression was never coded as physical contact or talking. Example: "twenty-four" and "twenty-eight" were hitting each other and fighting about possession of a tricycle.

To facilitate analysis, original categories were re-grouped.

Types of Behavior

All behavior which involved more than one individual was defined according to one of the following types.

Caretaking: one child taking care of another; for example, comforting, encouraging, helping to satisfy others' wants, aiding a child at the drinking fountain. Any behavior defined in this manner was not included in any other behavior category.

Physical Contact: children in physical contact unless such contact could be defined as caretaking or aggression, which were listed independently. No distinction was made as to whether the children were talking or not.

Non-physical Contact: children in contact with others by means other than physical contact. Behavior coded as talking made up this category.

Aggression: two or more children engaged in a physical attack such as hitting one another.

Levels of Play

Isolated: included were the original categories of watching; isolated; alone. Child playing by himself either with or without equipment, or moving from one area or group to another.

Parallel: two or more children playing with the same type of equipment but not working together.

Associative: child in contact with others in a manner not defined in any of the other levels of play, such as touching each other or holding hands. Also included were any children in the bathroom with one or more other children. No play defined as cooperative was included in this category.

Cooperative: children actually cooperatively engaged in playing with other children; taking roles, sharing equipment, carrying out group plans.

Analysis

Analysis was made by use of the median and the chi square tests. The regrouping of the original categories into types of behavior and levels of play facilitated more suitable means of analysis.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Children's behavior was recorded during three activity periods: inside play, outside play and lunch. All behavior was coded according to level of play (isolated, parallel, associative, cooperative). All contact behavior was coded according to type (caretaking, physical contact, non-physical, aggression), and with whom contacts were made (adults, siblings, other children). These were then examined in relation to age and sex. Statistical analyses of the data were made by use of the median and the chi square tests.

Relationship Between Age and Person Contacted

The first hypothesis tested was the relationship between age and frequency of contact with specific groups during the three activity periods: inside play, outside play and lunch. (See Table 1) The first hypothesis was as follows: there is no relationship between age and (a) frequency of contact with adults; (b) frequency of choice of siblings or relatives as companions; (c) frequency of choice of other children as companions.

TABLE 1
 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGE AND AVERAGE DAILY
 FREQUENCY OF CONTACTS WITH ADULTS,
 WITH SIBLINGS AND WITH OTHER CHILDREN

OUTSIDE PLAY				
Average Daily Contacts				
Groups	Total	Younger (3-4)	Older (5-6)	χ^2
Adults	.14	.09	.15	3.44
Siblings	.70	.82	.65	.09
Others	1.04	1.0	1.45	3.54

INSIDE PLAY				
Average Daily Contacts				
Groups	Total	Younger (3-4)	Older (5-6)	χ^2
Adults	.10	.09	.11	.16
Siblings	.41	.41	.39	.37
Others	.55	.51	.65	6.8**

LUNCH				
Average Daily Contacts				
Groups	Total	Younger (3-4)	Older (5-6)	χ^2
Adults	.69	.64	.71	.11
Siblings	1.10	.82	.91	.04
Others	2.04	1.80	2.04	.22

**Significant at the .01 level

The analysis indicated a tendency for older children to have more contacts than younger children with adults and with children other than siblings and relatives during outside play time. During the inside play period there was a significant difference between older and younger children in the frequency with which children other than siblings and relatives were contacted. Older children made more such

contacts than younger children. There were no significant differences between the older and younger children in the person whom they contacted during the lunch hour.

Each group, younger and older, was examined as to most frequently chosen contacts. (See Table 2.) Each group, younger children and older children, made significantly more contacts with siblings and other children than with adults.

TABLE 2

CHOICES OF CONTACT AMONG YOUNGER CHILDREN; OLDER CHILDREN

Average Daily Contacts					
Groups	Total	Adults	Siblings	Others	χ^2
Younger	1.01	.19	1.11	1.43	25.26**
Older	1.15	.245	1.0	2.1	13.38**

**Significant at the .01 level

Other investigators (Stith and Connor, 1962) found that in groups of middle-class children, younger children made more contact with adults than with other children. Among older children, there was increased contact with other children.

Among Mexican-Americans the investigator found that older children had increased contact with other children. However, in the present study older children contacted adults more frequently than did younger children.

To find possible reasons to help explain the tendency found for older migrant children, more than younger children, to choose adults, the group itself was reexamined. The older children more often spoke English, as did the teachers, while many of the younger children spoke only Spanish or in some cases baby talk. A few of the older children had been to kindergarten and were, therefore, familiar with a teacher-pupil relationship and also with the actual physical set-up of the day care center. Also the older children likely had had more contacts outside the home situation. An influencing factor may have been that the proportion of siblings per child was much smaller than other children per child.

The investigator expected to find a greater number of contacts between the younger children and those who were related to them. This was not borne out by the research. One reason was probably the group itself for the proportion of siblings per child was a great deal smaller than the number of "other children" per child. In addition, even among the "other children" there was a great deal of in-group feeling. The Mexican-American families were isolated from the communities in which they worked and so formed an interdependent group among themselves. Therefore, children who were not actually related to the child might have been very well known to him and could have been considered in the same light as a sibling or a relative.

At lunch, a factor which may have influenced the result of the choice of contacts was the manner in which the data were recorded. Contacts counted were those children on either side of the individual child; therefore, siblings and relatives might have been sitting at the same table but not side by side. This separation may be attributed to various factors: (1) the child may have arrived late in the lunch room and had very little or no choice and thus sat as close as possible to a sibling, (2) for some reason the child may have left his seat and it was occupied by another child.

Relationship Between Sex and Persons Contacted

The second hypothesis concerned the relationship between sex and frequency of contacts with adults, siblings, and other children. (See Table 3.) Specifically stated the hypothesis was: there is no relationship between sex and (a) frequency of contacts with adults, (b) frequency of contacts with siblings or relatives, (c) frequency of contacts with other children.

During outside play girls made significantly more contacts with other children and siblings than boys. There was no significant difference between boys and girls in the frequency of contact with adults.

TABLE 3

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEX AND AVERAGE DAILY FREQUENCY
OF CONTACTS WITH ADULTS, WITH SIBLINGS
AND WITH OTHER CHILDREN

OUTSIDE PLAY				
Average Daily Contacts				
Groups	Total	Boys	Girls	χ^2
Adults	.14	.14	.09	.011
Siblings	.70	.38	.70	9.1**
Others	1.04	.92	1.56	5.82*

INSIDE PLAY				
Average Daily Contacts				
Groups	Total	Boys	Girls	χ^2
Adults	.10	.12	.09	2.41
Siblings	.41	.39	.41	.0037
Others	.55	.48	.65	5.09*

LUNCH				
Average Daily Contacts				
Groups	Total	Boys	Girls	χ^2
Adults	.69	.65	.69	.0003
Siblings	1.1	1.2	1.13	.009
Others	2.04	2.0	2.0	.11

* Significant at the .05 level

**Significant at the .01 level

Girls made significantly more contacts with other children than boys did during inside play. There was no significant difference between boys and girls in the frequency of contact with adults or with siblings.

During the lunch period there was no significant difference between boys and girls in the frequency with which particular groups were contacted.

An analysis of the contacts of each group was made. (See Table 4.) In each group, boys and girls, there were significantly fewer contacts with adults than with other children and siblings.

TABLE 4
CHOICE OF CONTACT GROUPS AMONG GIRLS; BOYS

Average Daily Contacts					
Groups	Total	Adults	Siblings	Others	χ^2
Girls	3.30	.20	1.1	2.24	30.0**
Boys	2.55	.25	.95	1.13	22.8**

**Significant at the .01 level

The small number of total contacts with adults may be due in part to language difficulty between teachers and children and also to almost complete lack of contacts the children had with adults outside their own rather restricted community. The school situation was new and unfamiliar for all but a few children. Also, the children knew each other from traveling together and because their parents worked in approximately the same areas.

The children seemed to gain support from other children they knew rather than from adults they did not know. Also the environment was almost totally new and unfamiliar. Middle class children could be expected to be familiar with some of the procedures and equipment presented

in the situation such as books, blocks, paints and brushes.

Relationship Between Age and Types of Behavior

The third hypothesis concerned the relationship between age and type of behavior. (See Table 5.) The hypothesis stated that there was no relationship between the type of behavior and the age of the children. Four analyses were made concerning the relation between types of behavior and age.

TABLE 5
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGE AND TYPES OF BEHAVIOR

Average Daily Contacts				
Type of Behavior	Total	Younger (3-4)	Older (5-6)	χ^2
Caretaking	.06	.05	.09	.36
Physical Contact	.27	.30	.21	.44
Non-Physical Contact	2.04	1.97	2.05	4.41*
Aggression	.04	.05	.04	1.33

*Significant at the .05 level

In three types of behavior: caretaking, physical contact, and aggression, no differences were found between older and younger children. However, a significant difference was found between older and younger children in the behavior categorized as non-physical contacts. The older group engaged in more such contacts than the younger group of children.

An analysis was made of the types of behavior engaged in by older and younger children. (See Table 6.) Both older and younger children made significantly greater numbers of contacts categorized as non-physical than contacts categorized as physical or caretaking.

TABLE 6
TYPES OF BEHAVIOR ENGAGED IN BY
YOUNGER CHILDREN; OLDER CHILDREN

Average Daily Contacts					
Groups	Total	Caretaking	Physical	Non-Physical	χ^2
Younger	2.49	.05	.30	1.97	32.4 ^{**}
Older	2.40	.09	.21	2.05	30.6 ^{**}

^{**}Significant at the .01 level

Other studies (Jersild and Markey, 1935) have suggested that as preschool children increase in age they become more aggressive. However, the results of this study showed no significant difference between younger and older children in aggressive acts. The investigator's definition of aggression as actual physical attack such as hitting may have affected the results. Had the definition been broadened to include such things as verbal threats some significant difference may have been found.

Although younger children engaged in slightly more physical contacts than older children, as might have been expected, the difference was not significant. However, older

children made significantly more non-physical contacts than other contacts. Older children were in greater command of language and, therefore, used language more effectively than younger children.

In addition, all of these children lived in close contact with each other and so evidently were comfortable in using verbal means of communication with each other. The small amount of aggressive activity and the small use of physical communication may be due to the fact that there were a great many new things for the children to do. Therefore, as the children moved from one play area to another there was less need for this kind of contact with people.

Among both younger and older children more of the total contacts were categorized as non-physical than in any other manner. Both older and younger children seemed to feel responsible for each other. This was illustrated by several of the children. Brothers "two" and "twelve" had cots beside each other at rest time; at the end of this period when "twelve" would awaken he would lie waiting for "two" to awaken before going outside to play. Another example of this was number "seven" and "fourteen," her year older sister. In most areas they played together. When "seven" got tired or cried for some reason, "fourteen" would go to her, comfort her then try to carry "seven" away from the area.

Three analyses were made concerning the relation between types of behavior and sex of children. (See Table 7.) No significant relationships were found between sex and any of the types of behavior: caretaking, physical contact or non-physical contact.

TABLE 7
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEX AND TYPES OF BEHAVIOR

Average Daily Contacts				
Type of Behavior	Total	Boys	Girls	χ^2
Caretaking	.06	.06	.07	.19
Physical Contact	.27	.27	.27	.001
Non-Physical Contact	2.04	2.0	2.04	1.90

An investigation was made of the type of behavior engaged in by boys and by girls. (See Table 8.) Both boys and girls made significantly more non-physical than caretaking or physical contacts.

TABLE 8
TYPES OF BEHAVIOR ENGAGED IN BY GIRLS; BY BOYS

Average Daily Contacts					
Group	Total	Caretaking	Physical	Non-Physical	χ^2
Girls	2.49	.07	.27	2.04	38.0**
Boys	2.28	.06	.27	2.0	30.2**

**Significant at the .01 level

It was expected from other research (McCarthy, 1953) that boys would be less verbal than girls and engage in more physical contact than girls. That such was not the case might be accounted for again by the fact that all children were subjected to much the same socialization process within the family and the migrant group. The whole family lived in small quarters and so in close proximity. In addition, in these families, the father was the person with the last word on issues. He was the verbal decision-maker. With such an example, these boys may have learned to be as verbal as their sisters.

Relationship Between Age and Level of Play

The fourth hypothesis tested the relationship between age and levels of play. (See Table 9.) The fourth hypothesis was as follows: there is no relationship between age and levels of play. Analysis showed a significant difference between older and younger children in the incidence of isolated play. Younger children were involved in isolated play more frequently than older children. No differences were found between older and younger children in incidence of associative, parallel or cooperative play.

An analysis of the levels of play engaged in by younger and by older children was made. (See Table 10.) Both older children and younger children were significantly more often engaged in parallel than isolated, associative or cooperative play.

TABLE 9
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGE AND LEVEL OF PLAY

Average Daily Contacts				
Level of Play	Total	Younger (3-4)	Older (5-6)	χ^2
Isolated	.30	.37	.21	4.01*
Parallel	1.13	1.17	1.08	1.56
Associative	.5	.45	.55	.23
Cooperative	.37	.35	.43	1.04

*Significant at the .05 level

TABLE 10
LEVELS OF PLAY OF YOUNGER CHILDREN; OLDER CHILDREN

Average Daily Contacts						
Groups	Total	Isolated	Parallel	Associative	Cooperative	χ^2
Younger	2.26	.37	1.17	.45	.35	28.8**
Older	2.48	.21	1.08	.55	.43	27.7**

**Significant at the .01 level

Each age has its appropriate play tasks; however, as the child progresses from one age to another these play tasks change. (Gesell and Ilg, 1943). Parten (1932) categorized stages of play as follows: unoccupied, solitary play, onlooker, parallel play, associative play, and organized cooperative play. She reported that older children were more likely than younger children to engage in associative and cooperative play. Younger children, on

the other hand, were likely to be more often engaged in solitary or parallel play.

Examination of the group of children shows possible reasons for the results found. Only a small number of the six-year-olds had had experience with schools or with the kinds of equipment present in the day care center. Most of the children found the equipment and situation a new experience. Children who had had more experience with the situation and equipment would probably be able to play in a different fashion. The lack of experience with the equipment seems the predominate factor rather than the age of the children. Also length of time for this experience was relatively short.

This group of children had not yet progressed to the more advanced level of play. While younger children were significantly more often engaged in isolated play than were older children, the reverse was not true. It was true that the total behavior of older children more often fell in the top play level categories than did that of younger children, but the difference was not significant. In both groups parallel play predominated.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the study was to determine among a selected group of migrant children the relationship between age and social contacts, types of behavior, and levels of play; and the relationship between sex and social contact, types of behavior, and levels of play.

Forty-four Mexican-American children, ages three to seven, who attended a five-week day care center at Holcomb, Kansas, were the subjects for the study. The children were members of the migrant families who did "stoop" labor in the sugar beet fields.

The data were collected when the children had a free choice of companions at inside and outside free play and snack and lunch time. Identification numbers were worn by the children to facilitate recording by the investigator of pre-coded categories of behavior.

Behavior was coded and categorized in order to show types of behavior, levels of play, and with whom contacts were made. This behavior was then examined in relation to age and sex. The statistical analyses of the data were made by use of the median and chi square tests.

All behavior was categorized according to level of play (isolated, parallel, associative, cooperative). Behavior involving two or more children was categorized both by the type of behavior (caretaking, physical, non-physical, aggression) and with whom the child was in contact (adult, sibling, other). Contact was defined as any active or passive involvement between two or more individuals.

The first hypothesis stated that there was no relationship between age and (a) frequency of contacts with adults; (b) frequency of contacts with siblings or relatives; (c) frequency of contacts with other children. However, a tendency was found. During the outside period the older children had more contacts with adults and other children than did younger children. During inside play a significant difference was found. Older children had more contacts with adults and other children than did younger children. Lunch period showed no significant difference between older and younger children in the contacts which were made. Both older and younger children made significantly more contacts with children other than siblings than with either of the other two groups.

Hypothesis two which stated there was no relationship between sex and (a) frequency of contacts with adults; (b) frequency of contacts with siblings or relatives; (c) frequency of contacts with other children was also rejected. Girls made significantly more contacts with

siblings and other children than did boys during outside play periods and with others during inside play periods. No significant difference was found during the lunch period. However, both boys and girls made significantly fewer contacts with adults than with the other two groups.

The third hypothesis investigated the relationship between age and type of behavior. A significant difference was found between older and younger children in one area: non-physical contact. The older children made significantly more non-physical contacts than the younger group of children. Again, however, in both older and younger children and in both boys and girls more contacts were coded as non-physical than in any other category. This too, was significant.

The last hypothesis tested the relationship between age and levels of play. A significant difference was found in one category: isolated. Younger children more often engaged in isolated play than older children did. When total behavior was considered, both younger and older children as well as boys and girls were involved in parallel play more than isolated, associative or cooperative play.

The Mexican migrant children tended to contact other children rather than adults or siblings; were involved in more parallel play than isolated, associative or cooperative. Non-physical activity was the type of behavior in which the children were most often engaged. The children

reacted more as a whole than a group of individuals divided into parts by sex and age. The new situation seemed to equalize the behavior and level of play of the boys and girls; and the younger and older children.

This study was exploratory in nature and was restricted because of time and space. In future studies techniques could be improved. A second observer could have helped to check the authenticity of the results. Also the actual time periods for recording should be more specific and more rigidly defined. Admittedly loose definitions of behavior were used, but this was an attempt to see how these children interacted with each other.

There is a great need for future research and work in the area of not only Mexican-Americans themselves but also how they are affected by and affect other groups in society. Longitudinal studies would be helpful to understand these people. Also the use of another comparison group which differed culturally would be valuable. More information about the children could be gained by studying such areas as: children's response to different play materials as puzzles, paint, dolls and house equipment, blocks; children's response to routines during the day as rest, washing hands after toileting, lunch.

The results of the study tend to show that the children from the lower socioeconomic class did not react and respond in the same manner as children in a different

socioeconomic class. It is important for people who are working with these children to realize that they react in a unique manner. In this way goals and expectations for the children will be reasonable and attainable. The creation of attainable goals could result in growth and progress not only for the children but for the families. As children take new experiences and integrate them into their lives they will show them to their parents.

Another important aspect of having a preview or some knowledge of what to expect relates to the fact that effective methods can be created to attain the fulfillment of the desired goals. Because of the understanding of these children and what they have already attained, selecting new experiences and learning situations can be begun at the right level for the children.

One more important group who could benefit from information such as that presented in this study are the people who are teacher trainers for either professional or lay people who are going to work with migrants. Information of the type found in this study gains new significance with the emphasis on poverty and helping disadvantaged families and children overcome some of the disadvantages with which they live.

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SOCIAL INTERACTION AMONG MEXICAN-AMERICAN
CHILDREN ENROLLED IN DAY CARE

by

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A day care center for younger Mexican-American children was operated during the summer of 1963, at Holcomb, Kansas near Garden City, Kansas. Two employed teachers along with community volunteers made up the staff.

Total day care facilities were available for all children. The younger children met in the Holcomb Consolidated School building. The children arrived at the day care center at 8:30 A.M. and left at 4:10 P.M.

The total enrollment for the five-week period of day care was forty-four children. The group consisted of twenty boys and twenty-four girls of whom eleven were three years old, ten were four years old, fourteen were five years old, eight were six years old. The enrollment fluctuated a great deal from day to day, partly because of illness and holidays, and partly because of family mobility. The highest daily attendance was thirty-six. The average daily attendance was twenty-eight.

It was possible to actually observe and record initial reactions of the children to each other, to various materials, and to different activities. Direct observation and a time sampling technique was used.

All behavior was categorized under level of play (isolated, parallel, associative, cooperative). Behavior which involved two or more children was categorized both by the type of behavior (caretaking, physical, non-physical, aggression) and with whom the child was in contact (adult,

sibling, other). Contact was defined as any active or passive involvement between two or more individuals.

The purpose of the study was to determine among a selected group of migrant children the relationship between age and social contacts, types of behavior, and level of play; and the relationship between sex and social contacts, types of behavior, and level of play.

Investigation of the relationship between sex and age and average daily frequency of contacts with adults, siblings, and other children showed that during outside play there was a tendency for older more than younger children to contact adults and other children. During inside play older children made significantly more contacts with other children than did younger children. Both younger and older children made fewer contacts with adults than with other children or siblings. This was also true for both boys and girls. Girls contacted siblings and other children more than the boys did. During lunch, however, there were no significant differences.

In examining the relationship between age and sex and type of behavior it was found that older children exhibited more non-physical behavior than did younger children. However, among both the younger and older children more non-physical behavior was recorded than the other two categories: caretaking or physical contact. No significant relationship was found between sex and the

types of behavior; however, among both boys and girls a significant number of non-physical contacts were recorded.

When relationships between levels of play and age were investigated it was found that younger children were more frequently involved in isolated play than were older children. Boys and girls were both found more frequently in parallel than isolated, associative or cooperative play. Also both younger and older children were found more frequently at parallel rather than isolated, associative or cooperative play.