

How stable is children's affective orientation toward different ethnic groups? A longitudinal study of in-group and out-group attitudes among preschoolers

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Título: ¿Es estable la orientación afectiva de los niños hacia los diferentes grupos étnicos? Un estudio longitudinal de las actitudes intragrupo y exogrupo en niños de Escuela Infantil.

Resumen: La mayoría de las investigaciones sobre la conciencia étnica y el prejuicio en niños se ha basado en estudios transversales, por lo que tenemos poca información sobre los cambios intraindividuales que ocurren en esta área de desarrollo. ¿Hay una secuencia de desarrollo estable de los diferentes componentes de la conciencia étnica? ¿La preferencia por el endogrupo precede al rechazo del exogrupo, como sugieren los estudios transversales? ¿Y mantienen los niños la misma orientación afectiva hacia diferentes exogrupos? En este artículo se presenta un estudio longitudinal con 50 niños españoles de 4 a 5 años (primera medida) y de 5 a 6 años (segunda medida) en el que se evaluaron varios aspectos de su conciencia étnica y de sus actitudes hacia cuatro grupos (españoles, latinoamericanos, africanos y asiáticos), en un contexto de juego de ordenador. Los resultados mostraron una significativa positividad hacia el endogrupo, pero ausencia de negatividad hacia los exogrupos, tanto en el primer tiempo de medida como en el segundo. De hecho, no hubo diferencias en las atribuciones negativas de los niños al endogrupo y a los exogrupos. Por otra parte, los análisis longitudinales mostraron que la mayoría de los niños no cambió la intensidad de su orientación afectiva hacia cada grupo étnico, un tema que ha recibido poca atención en estudios previos.

Palabras clave: Preescolares; actitudes; etnia; raza; endogrupo; exogrupo.

Abstract: Most previous research on children's ethnic awareness and prejudice has been based on cross-sectional studies; hence we have little information on the intra-individual changes that occur in this area of development. Is there a stable developmental sequence of the different components of ethnic awareness? Does ingroup preference precede outgroup rejection, as cross-sectional studies do suggest? And do children maintain the same affective orientation toward different out-groups? We conducted a longitudinal study with 50 Spanish children aged 4 to 5 years (first measure) and 5 to 6 years (second measure). We assessed several aspects of their ethnic awareness and attitudes toward four groups (Spaniards, Latin Americans, Africans and Asians), within a computer-game context. Results showed a significant ingroup positivity but a lack of outgroup negativity, both at time 1 and 2. In fact, children's negative attributions to the ingroup and to the out-groups did not differ. On the other hand, the longitudinal analyses revealed that most children did not change the intensity of their affective orientation to each group, an issue that has received little attention in previous studies.

Key words: Preschool children; attitudes; ethnicity; race; ingroup; out-group.

Introduction

Cognitions about social groups emerge in the early years of childhood as children become aware of -and focus on- social categories that are relevant in their cultural environment. Over the years, the dominant perspective on the development of intergroup attitudes was based on the idea that children have an implicit lay theory in terms of "what is similar to me is good, and what is different from me is bad" (Aboud, 1988, p. 24; Milner, 1984; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; see Cameron, Alvarez, Ruble & Fuligni, 2001 for a review). According to this, as soon as children use ethnicity or race to categorize people and to self-identify with one group, they tend to favour the ingroup *against* the outgroup. Thus, for children belonging to majority or dominant groups, positive ingroup attitudes are expected to raise from 3 to 6-7 years of age, and outgroup rejection to appear around 5 years, increasing in the following few years.

However, the research in the last decades has shown a more complex panorama of young children's attitudes. Several findings from studies that have independently measured attitudes toward the ingroup and outgroup reveal that young children typically show a positive bias toward their ingroup

and are simply less positive or neutral but not necessarily negative to the outgroup (Kowalski, 2003).

Since many studies do not find that ingroup positivity and outgroup negativity develop as the two sides of a coin, the alternative lay theory that may well underlie young children's attitudes could be just "what is similar to me is good" or, in a different view, "what is familiar to me is good". Whatever is the lay theory underlying children's attitudes, at present most developmental and social researchers do emphasize that positive ingroup bias is not the same as prejudice (Brewer, 1999) and that young children's attitudes are essentially different from older children's prejudices (Bigler & Liben, 2006; Cameron, et al., 2001; Doyle & Aboud, 1995). As stated by Cameron et al. (2001, p. 126), under the age of 7, children's views of groups are likely to be *simplistic, perceptually based, and transitory. Hence, their preferences, ranging from what appear to be ingroup favoritism to prejudice, are fundamentally different from those of older children and adults.*

Most studies on children's ethnic awareness and prejudice have been based on cross-sectional designs, comparing children of different ages. Hence we have little information about the individual changes that occur in this area of development. Several authors have emphasized the need of longitudinal studies to shed light on aspects that remain unclear and are under discussion for years (Aboud, 1988, Bigler y Liben, 2006; Doyle & Aboud, 1995, Katz, 1987, Nesdale, 2002; Ramsey, 1991). Is there a stable

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developmental sequence of the different aspects of ethnic awareness and attitudes? Are preferences related to positive attributions, and rejections to negative attributions? Does ingroup preference precede outgroup rejection, as many cross-sectional studies do suggest? And, do children maintain the same affective orientation toward different out-groups? Indeed, longitudinal research provides some answers to these questions.

Doyle & Aboud's longitudinal research conducted in Canada (1995) with white children between ages 5 and 9 found an interesting pattern of attitudes toward whites, blacks and Native Indians. Both at 5-6 years of age and three years later (8-9 years), children showed a remarkable and similar positivity to the ingroup; also children showed a negative orientation to the outgroup, particularly the blacks, that decreased to some extent from time 1 (preschoolers, 85%) to time 2 (3rd graders, 52%). However, the major developmental change was found in the counter-bias attitudes, which augmented considerably with age. That is, children increased their favorable view of the outgroup as well as their unfavorable view of the ingroup.

Longitudinal and follow-up studies (over two to five year period, from age 4-5 years) with minority black children in the US (e.g. Branch and Newcombe, 1986; McAdoo, 1977, cit. in Branch and Newcombe, 1986) have shown that children become more ingroup (pro-black) and outgroup (anti-white) biased as they grow older.

The aim of this study was to answer some of the previous questions by a longitudinal research with 4 years-old children. Particularly, we wanted to analyze the developmental pattern of ingroup positivity and outgroup negativity, and their relative stability from 4 to 5 years of age. Another objective was to assess whether ethnic self-identification is related with the early affective orientation of the child, as has been suggested by some authors (Tajfel y Turner, 1979) although not always with empirical support (Aboud, 2003).

According to previous research (Aboud, 1988; Bigler & Liben, 2006; Mulvey, Hitti & Killen, 2010; in Spain: Guerrero & Enesco, 2008; Guerrero, Enesco, Lago & Rodríguez, 2010), we expected that: 1) children's positive orientation to the ingroup will be present at 4 years of age and will increase one year later; 2) children's negative orientation to different ethnic groups will be still ill-defined at 4 years of age but will become more outgroup biased one year later. It was expected 3) a significant relation between ethnic identity and ingroup positivity. We do not make any specific hypothesis about how stable is children's orientation toward different outgroups from 4 to 5 years of age. Nevertheless, since our participants had an extended contact with Latin-American peers while a limited experience with peers from other ethnicities (Africans, Asians) we expected some differences in children's orientation to the most and the least familiar targets (Latin-Americans vs. Africans, Asians).

To contrast our hypothesis, we studied preschool children's performance in several tasks related to ethnic

awareness and attitudes: self-identification, preferences and rejections, positive and negative traits attribution. As explained in the method section, the procedure made the preferences, rejections and positive and negative trait dimensions explicitly independent. This is important because, as well known, ingroup positivity and outgroup negativity do not necessarily develop concurrently. Regarding this, in the last decades, developmental researchers have been especially cautious about taking independent measures of ingroup bias and outgroup rejection (Augoustinos & Rosewarne, 2001; Bennett, Barrett, Lyons, & Sani, 1998; Enesco, Lago, Rodríguez & Guerrero, 2011; Enesco, Navarro, Paradela, & Guerrero, 2005; Kinket & Verkuyten, 1999; Nesdale, 2004; Rutland, 1999; Verkuyten, 2003). As stated by Aboud (2003), if in-group and out-group attitudes are independent, there will exist many different attitude combinations ranging from positive ingroup–negative outgroup to positive ingroup–neutral outgroup and positive ingroup–positive outgroup. In consequence, all these combinations would be equally frequent if in-group and out-group attitudes are not related. Moreover, if the hypothesis of a primacy of in-group attachment-favoritism over outgroup derogation is true (Brewer, 1999, Cameron et al., 2001), the ingroup positive orientation will precede and develop more strongly than outgroup prejudice. On the basis of Brewer's (1999) assumptions, in-group favoritism should reach significant levels among 4- and 5-year-old children and should show larger age differences than out-group prejudice.

As explained below in the method section, the participants were assessed in all tasks, in two successive years: when they were 4-5 years (in 2008), and 12 months later (in 2009). The use of such longitudinal design allowed us to contrast the predictions in a genuine developmental context. On the other hand, since the present study was carried out with children living in Spain, a country with a recent but fast increasing rate of immigration, the comparison of our results with those obtained in countries with a long multiethnic tradition will be a valuable source of information about the role of contextual factors.

Method

Participants

Fifty children aged 4-5 ($M = 63$, $SD = 6.47$) years, (52% boys) participated in the study. Children were first tested in 2008, and one year after (11 to 12 months between the two measures), and only one participant left the study in the second year.

The participants were from the Spanish ethnic majority group (Whites), and belonged to a low-middle socioeconomic status. They attended a heterogeneous ethnic school in Madrid, with a 74% of White Spaniards, 21% of Latin-American children, 2% of Far East Asians, 2% of Black children from Sub-Saharan Africa and 1% of Northern Africa children. The proportion of these minorities at the

school was approximately the same in the two consecutive years.

Procedure

We designed a computer program to present all the tasks on screen and to develop them as games. The program automatically recorded the children's responses. The participants were individually interviewed in three sessions, with an interval of two weeks between them, each session lasting no more than 15 minutes. The children's attention was maintained reasonably well across all the sessions and only a few of the younger children displayed signs of fatigue at some point. In these cases, the interviewer allowed the child to get up and, after a short break, they continued the *game*.

Children had to make certain decisions about various targets that appeared successively in different contexts. The targets were photographs of schoolchildren of four ethnic-racial groups: Spaniards, Latin Americans (Andean prototype, from now on: Latinos), Southern Africans (from now on: Africans), and Far East-Asians (from now on: Asians), aged 7 years. In all the situations, the gender of the targets corresponded to that of the participants. Along the sessions lexical markers or ethnic-racial labels were never used to design the target groups. We decided to use photographs instead of drawings because of the results of a previous study with preschool children in which we proved their higher efficacy to call the children's attention to the ethnic-racial traits (for a detailed analysis of the selection process of the photos, see Guerrero, Enesco, Lago, & Rodríguez, 2010).

The participants faced two sets of tasks to assess: 1) Attitudes: a) Preferences and Rejections, b) Positive and Negative adjective allocation; and 2) Racial Self-identification.

Attitudes tasks

In these tasks, the material consisted of 16 photographs: 8 boys (2 Spaniards, 2 Latinos, 2 Africans and 2 Asians) and 8 girls (same ethnic distribution). From this series, four combinations of the four ethnic targets were made up for the male participants, and four for the female participants. The 16 photos were selected from a larger series of photos, after carrying out a pilot study in which the tasks and diverse materials were tested with children of similar ages. To control for possible selection biases, spatial order was randomized (from left to right) by the computer program when presenting each series of photos on the screen.

a. Preferences and Rejections. These tasks included three trials for Preferences and three trials for Rejections, which were applied in two different sessions in order to avoid reiterative responses. A playground with a swing was shown on the computer screen and, in the foreground, four photographs of children's faces from the four ethnic groups, but joined to drawings of identical bodies. To evaluate preferences, the children were asked: "Of these children, who would you like to play with?" As in all the tasks, they were asked to justify

their choice. The chosen target with whom to play was placed on the swing. The same procedure was followed in the next trials with different series of photos of children from all four ethnic groups. To evaluate rejections, the same procedure was followed. The children were asked: "With whom would you not like to play?". In this occasion, the chosen target was placed on the bench. The procedure was repeated with three different series of photos of children from all four ethnic groups. Therefore, a Preference Score and a Rejection Score was calculated for each ethnic group target. Thus, the range for each ethnic group was from 0 to 3, 3 indicating a maximum preference or maximum rejection. Preferences and Rejections tasks were administrated, coded and analyzed independently.

b. Allocation of Positive and Negative Adjectives. These tasks were also presented on screen but in a story-telling context. In this case, a teacher character, voice off, told the participants six different stories (which were randomly presented and interspersed with other socio-cognitive tasks that are not described in the present study), three for the positive adjectives (smart, good, and kind/generous) and three for the negative ones (dump, bad, and selfish). Each story was illustrated by a comic-strip drawing that represented the situation in the story. At the end of each story, the interviewer made sure that the child had understood the narration by asking some probe questions. Then, four photographs of children of the four ethnic groups were presented and participants had to say which one was the protagonist of the story. For example, a summary of one of the stories is as follows: "A child has made this very difficult puzzle. He was very smart to be able to do it. Look at these four children: who was the smart child who made this puzzle?" The comic-strip drawing consisted of a puzzle of many pieces, before and after having been put together. Another story was about a child who always lent and shared her toys, or of a child who took care of a sick kitten, always illustrating the story with drawings. The negative correlates were stories of a similar structure but with the opposite adjectives and behaviors. A Positive Adjective Score was calculated for each target. Therefore, the range for each ethnic group target was from 0 to 3, 3 indicating the higher score of positive attitude. The same procedure was followed for calculating a Negative Adjective Score. Again, the range for each ethnic group was from 0 to 3, [3 indicating the higher score of negative attitude.] Allocation of positive and negative adjectives tasks were administrated coded and analyzed independently.

Self-identification

In this task, eight photos of children were presented on the screen, framed and hung on a wall: two Whites, two Blacks, two Asians, and two Latin Americans, which coincided with the participant's gender. After an introduction to the *similarity game*, we asked: "Which one of these children looks the most like you?" They were asked to only choose one of the targets and none of the children had any trouble

with this. Responses in which the children chose an ingroup member as “looks the most like me” were considered *correct* (coded as 1). Responses in which the children chose an outgroup member as “looks the most like me” were considered *erroneous* responses (coded as 0).

Results

In order to examine ingroup and outgroup attitudes, four dependent variables were considered: preferences, rejections, positive adjectives allocation, and negative adjectives allocation. As explained before, a score was calculated for each target group in each of these variables. Additionally, we also considered self-identification ability as another dependent variable. Preliminary analysis showed that performance in the different tasks did not vary by gender. Therefore, the scores were collapsed across this variable.

The results are presented in three sections. In the first and second ones, the analyses focuses on differences between ingroup and outgroup scores in preferences-rejections and in adjective allocation; differences between time 1 and 2 as well as the stability of these measures are discussed. The third section includes data about self-identification and regression analyses in which this variable is examined as a predictor variable over ingroup-preference.

Differences between ingroup and outgroup attitudes

Preferences

Figure 1 (upper-left) illustrates the mean preferences scores toward each target by time. Inspection of this figure shows that children selected as preferred the Spaniard target more than the Asian, Latino or African targets. This difference emerged at both times of measure. To check this conclusion, preferences toward the four racial groups measured in time 1 and 2 were analyzed with a two-way ANOVA of Time (2) x Target (4). This produced only main effects of target, $F(3, 144) = 62.47, p < .001$. Overall, the participants preferred Spaniard targets both in time 1 ($M = 1.74, SD = 1.02$) and 2 ($M = 2.06, SD = 1.01$) as compared to the rest of the outgroups, (African, time 1) ($M = .61, SD = .73$, Asian, time 1) ($M = .31, SD = .55$, Latino, time 1), ($M = .24, SD = .56$, African, time 2) ($M = .51, SD = .87$, Asian, time 2) ($M = .18, SD = .57$, Latino, time 2), $F(3, 46) = 21.45, p < .001$ in time 1, $F(3, 46) = 37.11, p < .001$ in time 2)

Rejections

Inspection of Figure 1 (upper-right) shows that the participants' rejections were not directed against a particular

group over the rest. Rejections toward the four racial groups measured in time 1 and 2 were analyzed with a two-way ANOVA of Time (2) x Target (4). This analysis produced only main effects of target, $F(3, 144) = 3.33, p < .05$. Overall, the participants rejected the Spaniards ($M = .40, SD = .64$, time 1), ($M = .53, SD = .79$, time 2) less than the other groups ($M = .92, SD = .79$, African, time 1) ($M = .92, SD = .83$, Asian, time 1) ($M = .76, SD = .85$, Latino, time 1), ($M = .71, SD = .82$, African, time 2) ($M = .96, SD = .96$, Asian, time 2) ($M = .80, SD = .93$, Latino, time 2). However, this difference was significant in time 1, $F(3, 46) = 4.74, p < .01$, but not in time 2, $F(3, 46) = 1.55, p = n.s$. Regarding the rejections toward the three outgroups, the analyses revealed that there were no significant differences between them, neither in time 1 or time 2.

Allocation of positive adjectives

Figure 1 (down-left) illustrates the mean positive adjective scores toward each target by time. Inspection of this graph reveals that children allocated more positive adjectives to the Spaniards than to the outgroup targets. This difference emerged at both times of measure. To check this conclusion, positive adjective score toward the four racial groups measured in time 1 and 2 were analyzed with a two-way ANOVA of Time (2) x Target (4). This produced only main effects of target, $F(3, 144) = 49.95, p < .001$. Overall, the participants preferred the Spaniard targets both in time 1 ($M = 1.55, SD = .96$), and 2 ($M = .45, SD = .68$) as compared to the Africans (time 1: $M = .45, SD = .68$, time 2: $M = .31, SD = .55$), Asians (time 1: $M = .57, SD = .68$, time 2: $M = .41, SD = .73$), and Latinos (time 1: $M = .43, SD = .74$, time 2: $M = .45, SD = .58$), $F(3, 46) = 11.02, p < .001$ in time 1; $F(3, 46) = 24.06, p < .001$ in time 2. Comparing the outgroup targets, there were no significant differences in the distribution of positive adjectives among Africans, Latinos and Asians, neither in time 1 or 2.

Allocation of negative adjectives

Figure 1 (down-right) depicts the mean negative adjective scores toward each target by time. Inspection of this graph shows that children were not biased to any particular target when allocating negative adjectives ($M = .67, SD = .85$, Spaniard, time 1), ($M = .67, SD = .74$, African, time 1) ($M = .94, SD = .80$, Asian, time 1) ($M = .71, SD = .82$, Latino, time 1), ($M = .78, SD = .74$, Spaniard, time 2) ($M = .51, SD = .77$, African, time 2) ($M = .76, SD = .80$, Asian, time 2) ($M = .96, SD = .73$, Latino, time 2). To check this conclusion negative adjective score toward the four racial groups measured in time 1 and 2 were analyzed with a two-way ANOVA of Time (2) x Target (4), and no main effects were found.

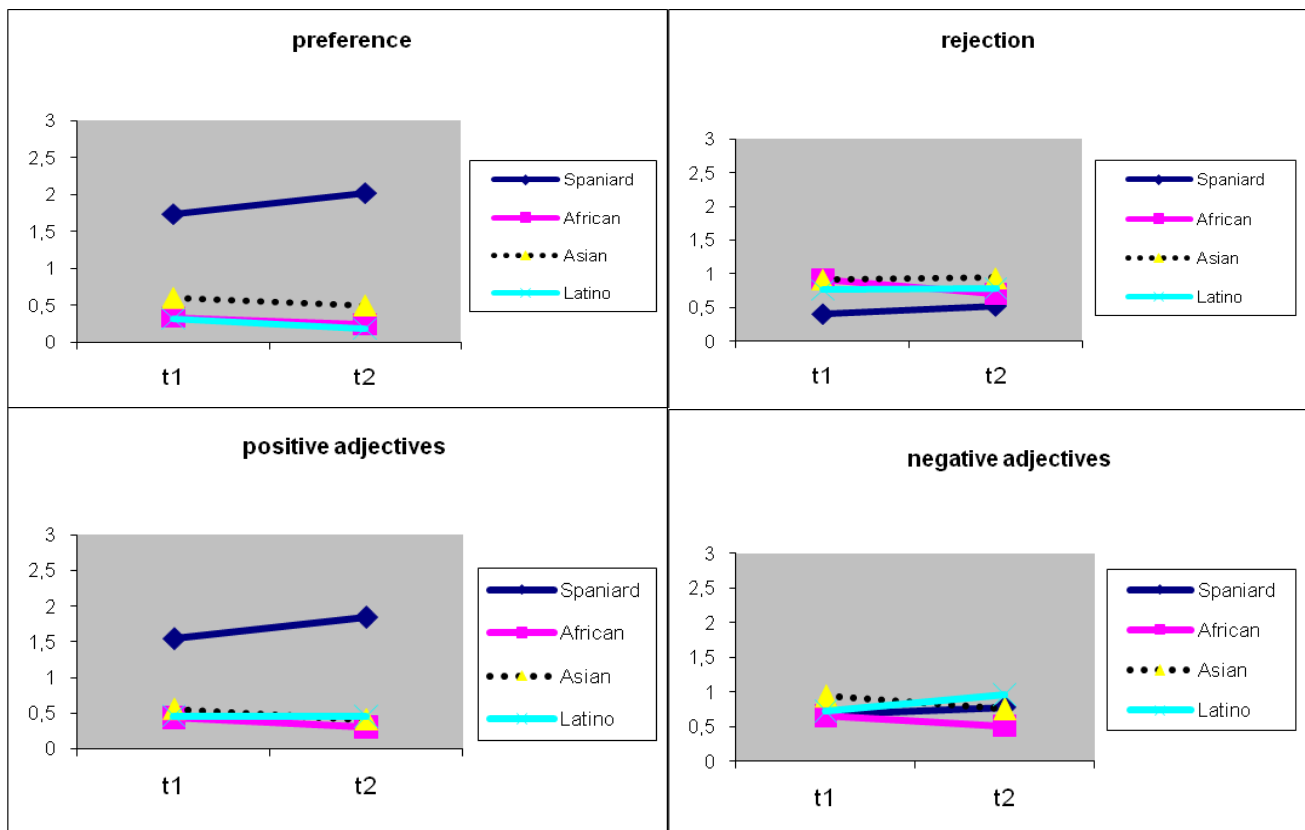


Figure 1: Means of Preferences, Rejections, and Positive and Negative Adjectives toward each group.

Stability of attitudes

To address our second objective, examination of the stability of attitudes toward each target group, a series of bivariate correlations were computed using the scores obtained for each target in preferences, rejection, and adjective allocation at times 1 and 2.

With respect to ingroup attitudes, it was found a positive correlation between preference for the Spaniards at time 1 and at time 2, $r = .29, p < .05$, but no correlations regarding rejection or adjective allocation measures. That is, from age 4 to 5 children tended to keep on choosing the Spaniard as the preferred target, but they were unstable in the rest of tasks.

The analyses of outgroup attitudes showed only two significant relations: on the one hand, a positive correlation between children's preference for the Asians at time 1 and at time 2, $r = .28, p < .05$; on the other hand, a positive correlation between children's rejection toward the African at times 1 and 2, $r = .35, p < .05$. Recall, however, that although children remained stable in their preference for the Asian and their rejection of the African, all scores regarding outgroup preference and rejection were rather low (the means ranging from .18 to .61 for outgroup preferences; and from .40 to .93 for outgroup rejections, range 0 to 3). Finally, as observed with respect to the ingroup, children were unstable in the adjective allocation tasks regarding the outgroups.

The correlational analyses give us a sketchy perspective of the relations between children's attitudes at time 1 and 2, but do not capture the details of children's ingroup and outgroup biases over time, nor the distribution of the participants according to the relative stability of their attitudes. Do children retain the same intensity bias to each target as they grow older? Is there a common pattern of stability or change for ingroup and outgroup attitudes?

In order to face these issues, we carried out an additional analysis to check the stability over time of children's attitudes according to a new criterion: *bias intensity*. Thus, children's preferences, rejections, positive and negative adjective attributions, were recoded as high or low bias intensity. Since all measures had a range of 0 to 3 for each target, we coded as high bias to a particular group the scores ranging 2 to 3, and as low bias the scores ranging 0 to 1. For example, let us suppose that a child distributed their preferences this way: she selected the Spaniard two times and the Latino once; so, the Asian and the African receiving a score of 0. This child would score in this particular task as "high bias" for the Spaniard and as "low bias" for the Latino, the African, and the Asian. Alternatively, a child selecting each time a different target (i.e. once the Spaniard, once the African, and once the Latino) would score as "low bias" in every four targets. These measures allowed us to estimate, for each target and task, how many children maintained the same (high or low)

intensity bias from age 4 to 5, and how many children changed from a high to a low intensity bias, or vice versa. Table 1 includes this information.

The results showed that, on the whole, the attitudes remained more stable with respect to the outgroups than to the ingroup. Thus, the majority of children showed and maintained low-intensity biases to the Latino, African and Asian targets, both in positive and negative valence tasks. Inspection of table 1 shows that virtually no children had and retained, from 4 to 5 years, a high positivity to any of the outgroups, and hardly anyone moved from low to high positivity. Also, with respect to outgroup derogation, few children retained a high negativity to a particular outgroup and few moved from a low to a high negativity (from 4 to 5 years).

In contrast, the bias intensity toward the Spaniard target differed according to the task valence: Inspection of table 1 shows that nearly half of the children showed a high ingroup preference at 4 years and maintained it at 5 years; and around 31% moved from a low ingroup preference at 4 years of age to a high ingroup preference at 5 years. In contrast, the low intensity of ingroup rejection was fairly stable from 4 to 5 years (approximately 84%).

In sum, it could be said that children's positive and negative attitudes toward the three outgroups were and remained tepid over time, while those regarding the ingroup tended to increase in positivity.

These data suggest that positive valence tasks (preferences, attribution of positive adjectives) lead children to discriminate between ingroup and outgroup targets, favouring the own ethnic group, whereas negative valence tasks (rejections, negative adjectives) do not induce intergroup discrimination.

Relationship between ingroup preference and self-identification

Most children succeeded in the ethnic self-identification task. At time 1, 82% of children selected a Spaniard figure as the most similar to them, and at time 2, 84% did it so. To address our third objective, a regression analysis was conducted with the preferences toward Spaniard scores, using self-identification as the predictor. Significant results were obtained both at time 1 and at time 2: Children's correct self-identification significantly predicted preference for the ingroup at time 1, $\beta = .88$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .11$, and one year later, $\beta = 1.42$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .28$. There was no other relationship between ethnic self-identification and the rest of attitudinal tasks.

Discussion

Our general aim was to analyze the development of ingroup positivity and outgroup negativity among children from age 4 to 5, that were assessed in two consecutive years. We expected that children's positive orientation to the ingroup

would be defined at 4 years of age and would increase one year later whereas children's negative orientation to the outgroups would be still ill-defined at 4 years but more definite one year later. Our findings have partially confirmed these expectations. On the one hand, children indeed showed a positive ingroup bias from 4 years of age but this favoritism increased only moderately over time. On the other hand, as expected, we did not find outgroup negativism at 4 years, but unexpectedly, neither one year later. Actually, when children had to allocate negative traits among the four ethnic groups (Spaniards, Latinos, Africans and Asians), they did not show a particular bias to any of them. In sum, instead of derogating the outgroups, children seemed to *preserve* the Spaniards from rejection but not from attributing them negative traits.

Table 1: Number (and percentage) of children who maintained the same bias intensity or changed from time 1 to time 2, toward each group and task.

		Bias Stability From Time 1 to Time 2			
		High-High	Low-Low	High-Low	Low-High
Spaniard	Preference	23 (46.9)	6 (12.2)	5 (10.2)	15 (30.6)
	Rejection	1 (2)	41 (83.7)	3 (6.1)	4 (8.2)
	Positive adj.	19 (38.8)	10 (20.4)	8 (16.3)	12 (24.5)
	Negative adj.	2 (4.1)	32 (65.3)	8 (16.3)	7 (14.3)
Latino	Preference	0	45 (91.8)	2 (4.1)	2 (4.1)
	Rejection	4 (8.2)	31 (63.3)	7 (14.3)	7 (14.3)
	Positive adj.	0	44 (89.8)	3 (6.1)	2 (4.1)
	Negative adj.	2 (4.1)	34 (69.4)	3 (6.1)	10 (20.4)
African	Preference	0	44 (89.8)	4 (8.2)	1 (2)
	Rejection	3 (6.1)	32 (65.3)	8 (16.3)	6 (12.2)
	Positive adj.	1 (2)	43 (87.8)	4 (8.2)	1 (2)
	Negative adj.	1 (2)	39 (76.9)	6 (12.2)	3 (6.1)
Asian	Preference	1 (2)	37 (75.5)	6 (12.2)	5 (10.2)
	Rejection	8 (16.3)	29 (59.2)	5 (10.2)	7 (14.3)
	Positive adj.	0	41 (83.7)	5 (10.2)	3 (6.1)
	Negative adj.	4 (8.2)	30 (61.2)	10 (20.4)	5 (10.2)

The findings concerning the stability over time of children's attitudes confirmed this general pattern. On the whole, from age 4 to 5 the vast majority of children retained a low-bias orientation to the outgroups --in terms of both a low favoritism and a low negativism toward them-- and around 50% of children maintained a high positivism toward the ingroup of Spaniards.

These low levels of outgroup negativity do not coincide with previous findings with majority group children of similar ages and cultural background (in Italy, Castelli et al., 2007; in Spain, Guerrero, Enesco & Lam, same volume). In these studies, children's attitudes were assessed in a dichotomous group comparisons -White and Black targets-, and most preschoolers rejected the outgroup when they had to choose between these two targets. In the present research, children had to compare four ethnic groups and this methodological difference could be responsible for the virtual absence of outgroup derogation. Previous research suggests that a dichotomous context tends to exacerbate the "us-them" difference while multiple group comparisons are

less likely to invoke discriminatory judgments or intergroup bias (Rutland, Brown, Cameron, Ahmavaara, & Samson, 2007, p 173; see also Bennett, Barrett, Karakozov, Kipiani, Lyons, Pavlenko, & Riazanova, 2004; Hartstone & Augoustinos, 1995). Even so, studies using multiple group comparisons do not always find such a low outgroup negativity. In a research carried out in London, Rutland, Cameron, Bennett and Ferrell (2005) assessed the attitudes towards four racial groups among preschool children belonging to the White majority-group. They found that children displayed negative outgroup biases, remarkably towards the Blacks (described as African Caribbean-British), a small minority in Britain as compared to the two other groups used in this study (Asian-Indian and Far-East Asians).

In the present research, although we did not make specific predictions regarding children's attitudes towards each of the three outgroup targets, we expected that the Latinos could have a *special* status in children's minds since they represent the largest minority within the school. However, as we have seen, neither the Latinos nor the Asians or the Africans -which represent a perceptually salient outgroup and the prototype of a minority in Spain- were targets of derogation. Overall, none of the three outgroups drew more attention to children, either to favor or to derogate them.

These results confirm that young children's preference and positivity toward their own group do not necessarily involve negative outgroup attitudes. The data also suggest that children's attitudes toward the ingroup develop somewhat separately from their attitudes toward specific outgroups, a finding consistent with previous research (Aboud, 2003; Brewer, 1999; Cameron et al., 2001; Kowalski, 2003; Morland y Hwang, 1981).

Our last objective was to assess the ethnic self-identification and to study whether it is related to the early affective orientation of the child. As expected, a significant relation between ethnic identity and ingroup positivity -but not outgroup negativity- was found both at 4 and at 5 years of age. This suggests that knowledge of their own group

membership plays a significant role in children's ingroup positivity but not in outgroup attitudes. As stated by Aboud (2003, p. 49), "the step from categorization and self-identification to attachment is thought to require a cognitively simple process of generalization from the self to similar others, whereas the step to out-group prejudice may require a more difficult social comparison in which the degree of difference is noted and translated into an evaluation".

As we pointed out in the introduction, longitudinal studies in the field of ethnic-racial attitudes are still extremely scarce despite the unanimous agreement of researchers that, in the last term, developmental predictions need to be contrasted by this type of strategy (Aboud & Amato, 2001; Fishbein, 2002; Katz, 1987). Having worked with this design enables us to state with some confidence that the ethnic attitudes of our participants have not yet crystallized beyond the basic ingroup preference. Indeed, the fact that children did not attribute derogatory stereotypes to the members of outgroups, which constitutes the core of prejudice, suggests that the salience of ethnicity and the group boundaries remain weak for our participants. Although we did not explicitly assess contextual variables such as the actual integration of minority children in the classroom and the peer relationships in the playground, the informal reports of the teachers suggest that the school's atmosphere favoured interdependence and common goals within a common group identity (Gaertner, Dovidio, Guerra et al., 2008 en Levy y Killen). Further research is needed to throw light upon the role of these contextual variables in children's developing attitudes.

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