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Perceptions of stereotypes in Hispanic children's literature

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PERCEPTIONS OF STEREOTYPES IN HISPANIC CHILDREN’S LITERATURE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

by

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May 2003
DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my dearest daughter
Sandra Vanessa
Who has always been my light to continue
One day we were mom and daughter
Today and forever I hope we shall be friends
And, I shall always be there to help her

To my parents, family and friends whose encouragement has always been with me.

A silent prayer to God and my Guardian Angels in Heaven:
my parents and my daughter Elizabeth Alejandra.
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ABSTRACT

This study attempted to determine the accurateness of the representation of the Hispanic culture in children’s books. I interviewed ten people, five non-Hispanic and five Hispanic, and I found that the Hispanic people do not seem to pay as much attention to physical features as non-Hispanic people do. However, they were concerned about the portrayal of the Hispanic culture in traditional ways: the traditional roles of women, the traditional dress, the architecture of the houses and the portrayal of the Hispanic people living in rural areas and being extremely poor. It appears from the timeline covered by the books, from the 1930’s until the present time that the more recent the publication, the more accurate the portrayal of the Hispanic culture becomes. In recent years, we see more books in the literature that portray characters from the Hispanic culture as middle class citizens living in cities rather than poor peasants living in rural areas and doing agriculture-based jobs.

The results from this study confirm my own perceptions of the portrayal of the Hispanic culture in children’s books. To support this statement I refer to Hamel (1993), who explains the notion called initial theory. This means that the researcher has an initial idea of the perceived social issue or phenomenon. In my specific case, this has come from the years studying and working as a librarian, where I have had a wide exposure to books and people from diverse origins. As the participants were going through the books, they were distinguishing more details and becoming more aware of their own perceptions and the details in the books that supported their perceptions. They became more aware of the stereotypes and more aware of the way the culture was represented. An important aspect to point out is that the authors of more recent books like “Too Many Tamales,”
“Abuela,” or “Chato and the Party Animals” are authors who have lived in the United States for a long time, so they are setting their stories in this country. This aspect can be absolutely helpful if we consider that these books have been created for use in the United States. Therefore, children and readers in the United States will identify more with the characters and settings.

Consequently, they will feel pride and may wish to continue their traditions. At the same time, children will be able to establish comparisons and differences with other ethnic groups; and other children can learn about the Hispanic culture.
CHAPTER 1
OVERVIEW OF PERCEPTIONS OF HISPANIC CHILDREN’S LITERATURE

Introduction

Our world has become increasingly interdependent. The growth of technology, communications and the globalization of economy have contributed to this fast change in the level of interdependency over the past few decades. Nowadays, people can access information regarding what is going on around the world at the same time events are happening, and become the immediate witnesses of these events. At the same time, this dependency has allowed people to relate to each other in a more prompt and effective way.

Despite all these advances, literature is still a valuable vehicle to represent the different aspects or values of any culture. Literature, which can be found in print or on a website, has the strength to portray different meanings and interpretations. It is still one of the first encounters, along with television and school teachers, that a child will have with the world outside once he begins to realize its existence through readings by his parents or siblings. Therefore, the use of multicultural literature is an invaluable tool that allows children to understand each other. It is more important now than ever to promote understanding among the different segments of the population, given that the demographic and cultural makeup of the United States has dramatically changed over the last twenty years and will continue to change throughout the new millennium. According to Waggoner (1988), the United States is one of the most multilingual and multicultural countries in the world. Renewed immigration and the recent influx of refugees continue to make the United States society more heterogeneous. Unlike previous generations, in this present age each individual is required to interrelate or interact with people from outside their ethnic group or across the
ethnic mixes. In order to continuously and effectively achieve this, intercultural skills are needed. Educators at all levels must be aware that one of the most transcendental responsibilities is to prepare professionals who are sufficiently knowledgeable and sensitive to the cultural diversities of the world. Davidman and Davidman (2001) state:

Teachers in the United States, and other nations on our ever shrinking planet, will have to be insightful practitioners of multicultural education if they are to meet the multiple challenges that confront citizens in the fast-paced, fluid, highly unequal societies of the information era, an era characterized by what may be called advanced global capitalism. (p. 2)

For example, new teachers must be ready to face and work in multicultural classrooms, wherever they go. This means they must be knowledgeable of not only cultural traditions like food, fun and festivals, but also of the interpersonal relations, systems of communications and the social construction of meanings—the way cultures are portrayed—behind the contents and messages of the numerous multicultural children’s books. By including children’s books from outside the traditional or streamlined racial, social and economical status archetypes into the core curriculum, we can encourage a better understanding of each ethnic and social group among the children. Then children will be aware of other cultures and the similarities and differences that exist among them.

Promoting the concept of a global village is vital to the understanding and acceptance of all peoples. With this new conceptualization of the world as a global village, children will better understand that people can have individual differences, but that each of us is equal. By utilizing books to expose children to different cultures, children are more likely to develop the necessary associations and parallels, differences and similarities, interconnections to other cultures and transculturalizations with other cultures. This will help create the crucial framework to move to a multiethnic society in the 21st century. From the realm of
international business to the intimacy of family life, there is a need to deal effectively and appropriately with diversity, whether ethnic, racial, social, sexual, religious or cultural, based on skills and capacities. With this consideration, teachers and librarians should become more cognizant of the relationship between the cultural and social environment of the real world and of the world in the stories presented in books such as those to be analyzed by the participants and the researcher. In this way, once children get to read the books, which is the ultimate motivation, teachers and/or librarians will be quite knowledgeable of the type of information presented to the children and how it can be used to the best extent to introduce them to culture.

Demographic Information

1990 Census

According to the 1990 census, the cultural and ethnic composition of the United States is becoming increasingly diverse. Based on figures given by the census, the number of Hispanics living in the United States now totals more than 22 million, and they make up the second largest minority group in the country. A high rate of immigration and a high rate of birth have combined to make Hispanic Americans one of the fastest growing minority groups in the United States. Between 1980 and 1990, the Hispanic population of the US increased five times faster than the total population. Referring to the information provided by Bondurant-Utz (2002), as of 1997, 30% of the population of the United States was of non-Anglo European ancestry. This percentage is expected to increase. This projected increase is based on the higher birth rate among non-white, non-Anglo women, the greater numbers of women of childbearing age within these groups, and the increased immigration
of non-Europeans (Hanson, 1998). Hispanic Americans represent about 9% of the total US population. Since the 1970’s, however, efforts to unite Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, and other groups have gained increasing support. Such efforts often emphasize cultural similarities that date back hundreds of years. Although many people consider them a single group, Hispanic Americans, for instance, represent a rich variety of cultures. A single, common Hispanic culture does not exist, but it should be added that studies conducted in Anthropology, Sociology and other areas belonging to the Social Sciences have demonstrated the similar idiosyncrasy shared by the common people of Hispanic origin. There are, however, important similarities among Hispanic groups, who together strongly influence one another and the culture in the United States. These groups before were called minorities are now emerging majorities, i.e. their number is growing day after day; they have a strong presence in the working force and in the educational area. The number of people age 5 and older who speak a language other than English in their homes increased between 1979 and 1989 by more than 40% (Waggoner, January 1992). Within this increase in people of non-English language background, there are important shifts in the language groups within this not-only English population (Cloud, 1993). The numbers of speakers of Arabic, Cambodian, Chinese, Creole, Asian Indian, Korean, and Filipino languages are increasing substantially, whereas the number of speakers of European languages is declining, the same way as the European population is decreasing (Cloud, 1993).
2000 Census

Hispanic Americans represent about 9% of the total population of the United States. The term Hispanics in the United States encompasses Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, and people from Central America, South America and Spain. The various Hispanic groups in the United States have tended to maintain their separate identities over the years. Children and families who are culturally and linguistically diverse need services that are comprehensive, flexible and family-focused. Simultaneously, according to information provided by Pieterse (2001), in the United States, demographers speak of a silent explosion in the number of mixed-race people. Between 1960 and 1990, the number of interracial married couples went from 150,000 to more than 1.1 million, and the number of interracial children leaps accordingly. Scholars have proposed that in addition to the choice of 16 racial categories, that the Bureau of the Census offers Americans a new “multiracial” category. They argue this category, and a category “multiethnic” origin, which some Americans might wish to check, would help soften the racial and ethnic divisions that now run through American society. For the first time and amid much controversy, the 2000 US Census offered Americans the option of multiple identification.

Following the statistics provided by the Bureau of the Census, and pointed out by Skeele and Schall (1994), the year 2000 is considered to be the turning point from the ethnic backgrounds and racial point of view—the determining period to provoke changes in the educational, social and economic areas. New terms, such as multiracial or multiethnic, already mentioned above, will be included in the taxonomies used by the Bureau of the Census to classify the whole spectrum. As stated by Bondurant-Utz (2002), there are two powerful forces that have increased professional awareness of the importance of cross-
cultural sensitivity. The first force is the change of the population demographics of the United States, and the second force is the federal legislation which began with the Education of the Handicapped Act of 1986. The first force refers to the increasing number of children in the early childhood programs who come from culturally and linguistically diverse families.

Predictions

It is estimated that 41% of the nation’s children will be Latino and children of color by the year 2030 (Hanson, Lynch, and Wayman, 1990). Many experts predict that Hispanics will be the nation’s largest minority group by the mid 2020’s. An important way to devote more attention to this cross-cultural and multicultural awareness is to study their corresponding bodies of literature, the development and evolution of literature throughout the years and how literature has portrayed the shifting roles and responsibilities of the characters and themes.

Following with the statistical information, Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans and Hispanics will comprise the largest segment of this diverse population. Public schools, which are the base of the educational system, are beginning to pay attention to these shifting demographics.

The Growth of Multiculturalism in Classrooms

The growing trend to address multiculturalism in the classroom has influenced the growth of multicultural literature and bibliographic resources from the publishing industry. Consequently, more multicultural literature is being published than ever before, but this is still not enough according to the needs of the population. So for both writers and publishers, in a responsible way, these publications should be at the highest quality level of literature, if possible. The growing interest in publications is based on the facts that the Hispanic
population in the United States is increasing. This fact suggests a need to educate this existing population, within the North American framework towards integrating it to the American culture, besides the need to educate the rest of the population of the United States on the Hispanic culture. So there will be a mutual and comprehensive knowledge using the vehicle of literature as a viable channel. There is also a need to provide information about this cultural movement to teachers and librarians. Teachers and librarians need to incorporate this knowledge through core courses in their curriculum. It should also be mentioned that there is both an increased audience for the printed literature as well as new technology to publish. This facilitates the business enterprise in this sector. It is necessary to point out that the so-called Small Press, in this business area, has become more interested and aware of these essential political and social changes in the literary trends. It is hoped that this trend will be recognized within the United States as a potential source of creating and bonding better human relationships among the diverse Hispanic community and the non-Hispanic population.

Statement of the Problem

The personal narrative that goes at the end of this section and the comments included about some of the Hispanic books for children shed light on how important appearances can be: they can give the right message or they can be misleading. They can present biased viewpoints or stereotypical representations of Hispanic culture. And these appearances lead the way to stereotypes that can be assigned to human beings and their portraits or representations. This representation can be any element pertaining to the corresponding culture, and if this is incorrect or not wholly explanatory, it can result in a false interpretation or assumption of the entire culture. This misleading depiction is what has been perceived in
many of the books portraying the Hispanic culture. There are a number of images and symbols that do not correspond to the reality of the Hispanic culture or that present it in a biased way or through an interpretation coming from just one side and not accurate or well-informed. Stereotyped images and how they can affect the interpretation of Hispanic reality have led me to the research questions, and is the basis of this study.

After many years of studying, I have come to have a deeper understanding of the different cultural groups with whom I have lived or encountered. Both my concern as a professional and my Hispanic origin have led me to want to know how books portray this multicultural world to Spanish-speaking and English-speaking children so that they can learn to visualize and comprehend the distinctive meanings behind the images, contents and words.

In a general context, how we tell stories and how we listen to or read them influences our interpretations, which depend a great deal upon our cultural perspectives. Before television, families used to gather together and tell stories, following the oral tradition; with the constantly growing printed publication enterprise, society now has more and more access to books that transmit cultural diversity from all the world. There are stories of creation, stories to teach how to make one’s way through life, fun stories to entertain and thoughtful stories to make people think and examine the immediate and the most distant environment. The reading process can come alive through vivid descriptions and interesting characters and places. The readers, above all, can be provided with rich details from the different and diverse cultural backgrounds.

But our responsibility as professionals is to address both situations that educators face to obtain multicultural materials and how these educators can better use them in the classroom or in any possible teaching/learning environment, including the home. As stated
by Khazzaka (1997), “Teachers and administrators not only mold the environment in which they work, but are in turn molded by the cultural climate of the school.”

For example, when we examine demographic information, we learn that the largest states in the union such as California and Texas have the largest number of immigrants and the largest number of interracial children (Bureau of the Census, 1999). The Hispanic population is the fastest growing ethnic/cultural group in the United States and the largest of the non-European populations. In 2000 the Hispanic population surpassed the African Americans as the largest minority group in the United States. Hispanics in the United States presently represent 12%; this means 32.8 million people of the total population. Therefore, educators and families have to be prompt to help children in those large communities get acquainted with the Hispanic culture, in this specific example, through the use of multicultural literature for children.

Currently some educators and librarians believe that it is important to see the power with which multicultural books demonstrate the different cultural portrayals to children, teaching and guiding them to live in a more understanding society. As Hoffman (1996) has pointed out so clearly, following precepts taught by the Zen Master, Suzuki Shunryn, “In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert’s, there are a few.” This suggests that children are genuine explorers who can be transformed and can also transform their surroundings. There is a “tabula rasa” in their minds that can be molded or shaped according to the child’s environment. Therefore, the books they have in their hands may be their first multidimensional encounter with other cultures. As a result, the one important question is whether or not a particular book containing right images, words, contents and
messages if it is interpreted in an appropriate way will help prepare the child for a multicultural world.

My own experience has demonstrated how images and physical appearances can be misleading. These same experiences have motivated me to think in an introspective way about the role as professionals in this multicultural world: how decisively important it is to prepare professionals and leaders for today’s and tomorrow’s world, giving them not only the factual knowledge, but also the behavioral and symbolic knowledge to have a better comprehension and apprehension of all the cultural, values and beliefs around us.

To exemplify how stereotypes can be wrong and misleading, I share this personal story to allow readers an insight into the insidious way prejudice and lack of understanding can insert themselves into our lives.

I was working as a Reference Librarian and Program Coordinator for the Young Adults and Adult Programs at a Public Library in a city in Southwestern Louisiana. One morning, I was working at the Reference Desk, when a middle-aged man, with a successful business appearance, came to the desk to ask for help. I was professionally dressed, and I smiled, ready to help. As usual, I was wearing a badge with my name, Ms. Gomez. At that moment, I was standing up, as I had just moved around to return a book to its regular shelving. He looked at me from top to bottom and then looked at my name on the badge. With an inquisitive and demanding voice, after I had greeted him with the regular “Good morning” he asked me directly “Do you speak English?” Immediately, I felt the burden of discrimination that has been carried along for so many centuries for so many people, and I felt angry. Looking at him, straightforward in his eyes, I just answered directly: “Sir, if I didn’t know how to speak English, I could not be working here. I have two professional
degrees as a librarian, besides being a teacher of English.” He only looked at me and said, “Oh, because of your name, I thought you did not.” At that moment, one of the other librarians decided to intervene and offer her help. So, they continued working together. Later on, this event was related to the supervisor. She “instructed” me that the patron is always right, and we have to please him or her in the best possible way. I did not accept this statement, because I thought and still feel that this was a discriminatory comment based on my physical appearance and my name.

Trends in Multicultural Literature

Connected with some trends in multicultural literature, Reimer (1992) reported some figures at the end of the 80’s to indicate the ethnic representation in the current multicultural literature, mainly in illustration books. These are reported as follows: African-American, 10%; Asian American, 4%; Hispanic, 3%; Native American, 5%; and White, 80%.

It seems that there has not been much improvement after a little more than thirty years when Larrick (1965) published her leading article in the Saturday Review entitled “The All-White World of Children’s Books.” Larrick documented in this seminal article that of 5,200 children’s books published from 1962 to 1964, only 349 (6.7%) included an African-American in the text or illustrations. This under-representation of African American--or racial minorities--becomes even more evident when we look for Hispanic, Asian American and Native American portrayed characters.

To extend this information, very few books portrayed African Americans or other racial minorities until the 1950’s and 1960’s. When they did depict them, it was usually stereotypically. For example, the mother is usually wearing an apron and always in the kitchen or has dark, long or kinky hair. By the mid 1960’s, a few books showed African
American characters in the illustrations, but failed to mention their race in the text. In the mid 1970’s, two African American authors won the Newbery Medals, Virginia Hamilton and Mildred D. Taylor. Finally, books by and about African Americans had at last received recognition. According to *Children’s Literature in the Elementary School* (1997) even today the number of African American authors is small when compared to the African American populations of this country. “Every new publication by an African American author is automatically considered. In 1985 only 18 books were eligible, and in 1990 the award committee for the Council on Interracial Books for Children could pick from only 38 titles out of the well over 4,000 books published in 1989.” This Council has been constantly encouraging minority authors to write about their own cultures. Some positive changes have begun. An active acknowledgement about the changing demographics of the school population and renewed demand by schools and libraries for multicultural books have led to more active recruitment of authors from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and to better recognition of high quality titles. Small presses such as Carolrhoda or Children’s Book Press, with a commitment to multicultural publishing, have begun to make some impact, particularly in the realm of picture storybooks.

In addition, few of these books representing the multicultural world of the United States have received awards, especially books written for Hispanic children. For the purpose of this study, the book *Connecting Cultures* (1996) has been used to examine the status of multicultural books in receiving recognition through awards. The Newbery Award, for example, was established in 1922. It is presented annually to an author of a children’s book that is considered a distinguished contribution to American Literature. This prestigious award has been given to only four Hispanic books since the beginning. Similarly, the Caldecott
Award was established in 1938. It is presented annually to the illustrator of the most distinguished American picture book for children, published in the United States in the preceding year. This prestigious award, like the Newbery Award, has been given to only four Hispanic books.

For both awards, the recipient must be a citizen or a resident of the United States. The winner is announced at the ALA (American Library Association) Midwinter Meeting (January or February), and the award is presented at the ALA (American Library Association) Summer Conference.

The Boston Globe / Horn Book Award was established in 1967. It is presented annually in the fall. Through 1975, two different awards were given for outstanding text and for outstanding illustration. In 1976, the award categories were changed to Fiction or Poetry, Nonfiction, and Illustration. In 1988, the Illustration category was changed to Picture Book. It is important to point out that over the years a number of the African American children’s book writers and illustrators have been the recipients of these awards; however, it has been presented to only one Hispanic book.

It is essential to mention that in the year 1996, the Pura Belpre Award was created to honor Hispanic writers and illustrators. The award is given every two years by the Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC) and the National Association to Promote Library Services to the Spanish Speaking (REFORMA) and is presented to illustrators and writers. It has been a way to recognize the writers, either inside or outside writers and illustrators, who create literary works to represent the emerging Hispanic population. It also honored the former writer and librarian Pura Belpre, who was working for the New York Public Library for a number of years and helped create the Children’s Section.
To support this point, I believe it is important to have these awards for Hispanic writers because of the increase of the population of Hispanic descent. From some statistical information, it is already known that this portion of the population has grown to become the first minority and the largest labor force. This population should not only be economically supported, but it should also be motivated to continue improving their educational levels. At the same time, it is essential to point out that the rest of the diverse population in the United States needs to be more educated and knowledgeable about the Hispanic population. In the same way, all of us should learn as much as possible about the other so-called minorities. This is the way we can bridge the gap among the diverse populations. If we transmit this knowledge from the childhood with the help of children’s books, this task will be easier and more enjoyable. The more we know about each other, the better and the earlier we start learning.

The negative point I observe is that if they continue giving away different prize categories according to the different ethnicities in the country, the division or classification into different ethnic groups is prolonged and people continue to be categorized into separate portions. Every portion of the population will try to struggle for themselves and their own representation. People will not access universal ideals or beliefs of real unification. On the other hand, many times when one opens a book with a few words in a foreign language, the person gets frightened that he/she will not understand anything and may not continue. I have observed the same fear when adults are trying to learn a foreign language. They start in an enthusiastic way and are highly motivated, but as soon as they realize they have to study, do homework and commit themselves, they abandon this new task. The individual might be afraid to challenge his/her own intellect or take chances because he/she is afraid of the
unknown language and cultural implications. This leads us to request for addition of foreign languages to the school curricula beginning with the kindergarten level, as it happens in other countries around the world.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the portrayal of the Hispanic culture, from the 1930’s to the present, as represented in illustrated books for children published in the United States. Many of the books selected for this study have received awards, such as Newbery, Caldecott or the Pura Belpre. The books illustrate the way the world has evolved during this period. These changes reflect the portrayals of the traditions, customs, myths and use of the language in the past 70 years. Changes in the themes, content and illustrations reflect the shifts in the society and the message the authors want to convey. In general terms, these books have turned to be more culturally sensitive and more focused on real life situations.

The Hispanic population has experienced rapid growth in the United States. Unfortunately, the available literature that can help children maintain the pride in their own culture and simultaneously help bridge the gap of understanding with the rest of the population does not accurately reflect all the changes. This study examines the changes in terms of content and message in the studied books over this period, and it examines whether readers still perceive the Hispanic population in the same way it was perceived in the 1930’s.

This study will also examine the perceptions that both groups of the population--meaning, representatives of both non-Hispanic and Hispanic cultures--have about these changes in Hispanic children’s literature. More specifically, it investigates how these individuals perceive the Hispanic culture depicted in the selected children’s books, which are the objects of this study. This study also examines the growth in the number of awarded
books. Holding a positive attitude, this study also wants to address some of the objections to the term multiculturalism in the social or political arena. The same situation has taken place along the years when detractors have criticized the terms melting pot or diversity. A positive way to start addressing these criticisms is making this realm of knowledge available for all educators and talk about this in an open way. As a final goal, I believe that it is fundamental to supply books for all children about all kinds of minorities and to choose a variety of topics, not only to reflect the minority population, but all students that a specific school serves. Books help develop children’s appreciation for our ever-changing pluralistic society.

Overview of the Methodology

I developed a rubric that I used for the pilot study. This pilot study was a learning experience. This rubric was used to assess the participants’ perceptions of the Hispanic culture using these particular books. After completing the rubric, I found that it was complicated and difficult to use and assess. This pilot study did not produce the results I expected. It made me feel I would never be able to complete the necessary research. At the same time, it provided more information than was necessary and some of this information was not pertinent to this type of study. So, I decided not to use it. This rubric helped me check whether the questionnaire was covering all the themes I wanted to cover. This pilot study took place in Lafayette, Louisiana, in 2000. The participants involved in this pilot study were Katherine, Leslie and Gregory. The three of them have degrees in Graduate Studies (in Anthropology, Literature, and International Agricultural Development respectively).

Each one of them read the three following books:

NEWBERY HONOR BOOK 1968.


CALDECOTT HONOR BOOKS 1983.


After I did my own analysis, I realized this instrument had to be changed. Some members of my dissertation Committee suggested that I change it because it was not easy to manage and assess the information. It was too long and there was no way to judge its validity or reliability. A copy of the discarded rubric can be found in Appendix A.

To get the information I needed for the current study I had to develop a questionnaire to interview my participants. So, I began the search for a new type of instrument. It took some time to get to the final decision on the books to be studied, how to get to the selection, the amount of books to use and the reason why they were chosen. The list of these books (the objects of study) is in Appendix B, along with a short summary for each of the books.

This study was based on the analysis of ten books selected first by decade and their literary recognition, either by prestige or award. It was decided not to limit the choice to only Hispanic writers or illustrators as it is believed that many writers from other nationalities are able to understand and relate to the culture appropriately. All the books are originals--they have not been translated from other languages. It is important to mention that these books are still available to readers, either in bookstores or libraries, even though some of them were published 70 years ago, and today they are considered classics of this type of literature.

The participants were ten individuals with college education, five non-Hispanics and five Hispanics, all English speakers. The impact their ages and levels of education had on the
study was essential because these individuals had a broader range of experiences and they were able to describe stereotypes and all the discussed characteristics contained in the books in a full way. Their purpose was to capture the differences during this period in content, language and messages embedded in each of the stories. They were guided by a questionnaire devised by the researcher. Each participant had one week to examine the books. After that week, both the researcher and each participant converse, and reveal their perceptions following a series of questions based on the book “Guidelines for Selecting Bias-Free Textbooks and Storybooks” (1979). I used this article and the rubric prepared for the pilot study to develop my own questionnaire, which can be found in Appendix C. Each conversation was recorded. The most important aspects of these conversations were all transcribed for further analysis by the researcher. Also, the researcher attempted to capture how these books can be substantially used to transmit a positive Hispanic cultural portrayal and promote a better understanding, sharing of information and an attitude of globalization. At the same time, in a simple way, these books helped demonstrate that the uniqueness of every individual makes it difficult to imagine returning to a world of ethnic and cultural uniformity. More information about the methodology of this study is provided in Chapter 3.

Significance of the Study

The researcher hopes to contribute to the increasing interest on Multicultural Education as a plausible example to be used to better prepare professionals and new generations. Students can see what happens in the simple portrayals of the Hispanic culture and how misleading or how positive these depictions can be. In addition, the intention is to examine the pride children should have in their culture and the portrayals of that culture, and if these portrayals are inaccurate. If representations are false, they can become a source of
frustration rather than a representation of their pride. The findings from this study should assist teachers, parents and librarians in selecting more appropriate books to be used to represent the Hispanic community.

Research Questions

The research will be guided by the following questions:

1. What characteristics are present in children’s books to help readers become aware and respectful of other cultures and to increase the readers’ awareness of similarities and differences between cultures?

2. What are the readers’ perceptions of the accurateness of the culture portrayed in the selected books?

3. How do the perceptions and beliefs of non-Hispanics and Hispanics differ in the interpretation of the cultures portrayed in the selected books?

Definition of Terms

In order to sustain this study, the etymological information for some basic concepts indicates the brief existence of these terms, and consequently, the general awareness of these contextual situations. Terms that are so commonly used nowadays and of general knowledge, such as “Hispanic”, “Latino”, “Chicano” or “multicultural” were only incorporated to the general use in the latest decades. These definitions were taken from The Oxford English Dictionary (2002).

Hispanic referring to “Spanish-speaking”, especially applied to someone of Latin-American descent living in the United States, began to be used in 1974 in the Economy & Social Statistics for Spanish-Speaking Americans. The pamphlet by the U.S. Congress, House Committee, Post Office & Civil Service states that “For statistical or policy purposes
Hispanic Americans do not presently exist in most agencies of the government.” According to Jones and Fuller (2003):

Hispanics can be of any race and may include white, black and people of mixed races. They are generally identified according to national origin. Hispanic is an umbrella term, representing people whose history and original language have been influenced by Spain as well as indigenous Indian cultures, so under this umbrella term there are Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Central and South Americans, Cubans and other Hispanics. (p. 166)

Latino, meaning “a Latin-American inhabitant of the United States,” was first used in 1946 by Peyton in the San Antonio Daily Newspaper, xxi, 232 and states, “The first program on the University’s list is an exchange of students with Latin America. That, in itself would be a fresh intellectual experience for Texas, where Latinos are usually looked on as sinister specimens of an inferior race.” Today Latino is used because it is more identified with Latin America.

Chicano means “a person of Mexican birth or descent resident in the United States (particularly in those areas annexed in 1848), especially one who is proud of his Mexican origins and concerned about improving the position of Mexicans in the United States. Chicano is a term adopted by young political activists in the 50’s and 60’s.

Mexican-American was first encountered in 1947 in The Arizona Quarterly, Summer 12 saying, “From the center of downtown Tucson the ground slopes…to the banks of the Santa Cruz river. Here lies the sprawling section of the city known as El Hoyo… Its inhabitants are Chicanos who raise hell on Saturday night.”

Multicultural, meaning of or pertaining to a society consisting of varied cultural groups, was first used in 1941 in N.Y. Herald-Tribune Books, 27 July 3: “A fervent sermon against nationalism, national prejudice and behavior in favor of a multicultural way of life.”
Summary

In Chapter 1, Overview of Perceptions of Hispanic Children’s Literature, there is a validation of the use of literature to transmit and promote the values of the different cultures in the global world. This is supported by demographic information that gives information on the changes in population in the later decades. Tied up with these demographic changes, there is a growth of multiculturalism in the classrooms and a wider comprehension of how important it is to pay attention to literature as a way to improve the understanding. The statement of the problem for the whole study is presented, to continue with trends in multicultural literature and how they have changed and evolved along the times covered by the study. After that, this chapter covers the purpose of the study, the overview of methodology, the significance of the study, the research questions and the definition of terms.
Defining Multicultural Education

Pieterse (2001) reiterates that multiculturalism has been present in the history, heritage and philosophy of mankind. According to Pieterse, cultural difference is a historical concept. He also reaffirms that cultural differences are an inspiration, a source of beauty and pleasure, and mentions that migration and multiculturalism are part of a much wider global politics of difference, recognition and struggle.

In more exact words, Pieterse (2001) argues:

One aim of the reworking of relations of power on a global plane is to bring history back into the discussion of multiculturalism. History is steeped in intercultural mingling and unimaginable without it. Social life has been multicultural all along, particularly in recent history (‘we are here because you were there’); the main difference is geographies: in many places, once distant differences have become neighborhood affairs. The other aim has been to highlight diversity within multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is as diverse as the spectrum of political economies and capitalisms, of states and institutional and legal provisions. The meaning of cultural difference, in fact, is as diverse as the meaning of difference itself. (p. 405)

At the same time, we must remain cognizant of the growing technological world day after day. This means that we have more and more access to information and different ways to transmit culture and all its different expressions. A good example for this is the ALA’s (American Library Association) motto “Global Reach, Local Touch,” this motto conveys a clear and conscious idea of establishing fast communications all around the world, and demonstrates that what can be done locally, can also be done everywhere else in the world.
Therefore, there must be a solid educational foundation from which to teach from, understand and expand this diversity and the consequent multiculturalism.

Today, as Skeele and Schall (1994) perceptively suggest, most of the world’s population is non-white, female, non-Christian, and impoverished. The world’s population in 2025 will be less than 9% Caucasian and Western. Consequently, an education that addresses white, European, Christian, middle-class values exclusively will handicap American students of the next century and the forthcoming generations. It is expressed that successful individuals, the pacesetters of the 21st century, will speak more than one language, remain free of ethnic and racial bias, and adapt comfortably to diverse cultural settings. So, the educational system has a great responsibility to prepare these new generations in the best possible way to make positive use of this broad spectrum of possibilities.

Multiculturalism is a concept and as an endeavor allows educators to recognize diversity in their classrooms. The current curriculum must incorporate issues of race, gender, ethnicity, class, age, regional origin, educational level, and sexual orientation. Culturally responsive teachers must support an inclusive curriculum that gives students an accurate representation of the world. Teachers and librarians must be aware of cultural differences and be able to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of all of their students.

According to Waggoner (1988), in principle, the United States is a monolingual country where English is indisputably the language of all major institutions. But in reality it is a multilingual, multicultural country where one person in seven speaks a non-English language at home or lives with family members who do. Therefore, a basic concern is how to
carry out the task of educating children for a multicultural world, not only in this hemisphere, but everywhere in the global community.

As a starting point, a common definition of multiculturalism has to be established. Multiculturalism usually refers to diversity within the society with the focus on ethnic minority populations and other population groups who have been marginalized or denied access to power, goods and opportunities because of their identification within a specific population. This definition has a negative connotation, as it deals with multiculturalism as a handicap or a diminishing feature.

Revising current literature, Davidman and Davidman (2001) indicate that in attempting to clarify the meaning of multiculturalism and multicultural education, Bullivant (1993) broke the word multicultural down into its constituent parts: multi and cultural. Because the meaning of multi-or many is obvious, his primary analytical work was to determine, in the context of multicultural education, the best meaning for the term culture. After examining several alternative meanings, Bullivant defined culture “as a social group’s design for survival in and adaptation to its environment” (p.6). He adds that one aim of multicultural education is “to teach about the many social groups and their different designs for living in a pluralist society.” As Banks (1992) and others have pointed out, the educational movement now called multicultural education was initially a set of individual and group responses to economic inequality, racism and sexism in American culture. These responses were primarily, but not exclusively, located in the twentieth-century African American community. However, in retrospect, it is now evident that all the individuals and groups struggling for greater equality and opportunity for members of politically
disenfranchised and economically exploited groups, in the twentieth century and before, were laying the groundwork for the educational reform movement that in the United States would later be called multicultural education.

Davidman and Davidman (2001) conclude that the term multicultural in multicultural education refers to various social, cultural and ethnic groups that exist within the macroculture (total culture) of the United States, and a major concern for advocates of multicultural education is equity (and excellence) for all members of these groups.

According to Banks and Banks (1989), multicultural education is at least three things: an idea or concept, an educational reform movement, and a process. Multicultural education incorporates the idea that all students--regardless of their gender and social class, and their ethnic, racial or cultural characteristics--should have an equal opportunity to learn in school. For example, some students who come from a bilingual environment have a better chance to learn in schools than students who belong to monolingual environments or have different cultural characteristics. A constant discussion about the positive or negative effects of being bilingual has been tackled for several years. No definite answer has been given, although different theoretical frameworks have been used, such as sociological, linguistic, philosophical and psychological. The existence of the situation is undeniable, so the positive side must be supported on the assumption that there is a double vision of the reality.

Multicultural education is also a process whose goals will never be fully realized. Educational equality, like liberty and justice, are ideals towards which human beings work, but never fully accomplish. Racism, sexism and bias towards disabled people will exist to some extent no matter how hard we work to eliminate these problems. Because the goals of
multicultural education can never be fully attained, work to increase educational equality for all students should continue. As understanding of multiculturalism advances, many people become overwhelmed by the simultaneous movement in the world towards more globalization in economics and politics, by means of testing the boundaries of nations, accompanied by the need for ethnic and other culturally based populations to maintain group identities and support networks. As a consequence, an effort must be made not to use the rhetoric of the societal melting pot (as it is an old fashioned and not absolutely real term) and to recognize the efforts of each group, old and new, to stake a claim in society and stretch out the respective efforts to achieve what is important to them. Based on the information gathered on this topic, we can assume that challenged societies will be able to reflect both national interests and the interests of specific groups. In the 1980’s and 1990’s the definition of multicultural education has generally been broadened in such a way that our special concerns are racial, ethnic, and social class groups, but we must also reflect the interests of other segments of the population, like disabled people, gays and lesbians, women as a separate segment, and people of various age groups, including the very young and the elderly--in short, any person whose lifestyle, enforced or otherwise, distinguishes him/her as an identifiable member of a group other than the “mainstream.”

According to De Anda (1997) and the contributors to her volume “Controversial Issues in Multiculturalism” agreed upon a common understanding of multiculturalism as a referential to diversity within the society with the focus on ethnic minority populations and other population groups who have been marginalized or have been denied access to power, goods, and opportunity because of their identification as a specific population. They have
been labeled as members of a certain color-race or particular interest or inclination, and not members of the mainstream group.

Bennett and Bennett’s (1996) developmental model of intercultural sensitivity postulates that intercultural educators move from a position of ethnocentrism— in which one’s own culture is the prism through which all other cultures are judged— to ethnorelativity— in which one is able to see other cultures on their own terms. In this way, they become more able to accept the existence of alternative patterns for the organization of reality, and integrate these alternatives into a flexible repertoire of intercultural communication options. This frees the individual from the ethnocentric need to deny, defend against, or minimize the difference of others.

As we can observe, the definitions and understandings of multiculturalism are stated in such a way to sustain that in their deep structure there is a strong political, social and ideological content. Hooks (1994) notes that acknowledging the polyphonic voices in the classroom, as well as the text of a course, is a key to any successful discussion in any multicultural classroom.

Portraying Diverse Cultures

Any definition of multicultural education must demonstrate awareness of the changes in the way of thinking that has taken place in the United States. Such definition must include respect for the diversity that characterizes the American multiculture and it must touch every individual. To achieve these ends, a multicultural curriculum that covers science, history, mathematics, language arts, and the fine arts must be designed and drawn on a sound knowledge base. Tiedt and Tiedt (2002) provide the following definition, “Multicultural
education is an inclusive teaching/learning process that engages all students in (1) developing a strong sense of self-esteem, (2) discovering empathy for persons of diverse cultural backgrounds, and (3) experiencing equitable opportunities to achieve to their fullest potential” (p. 17).

One of the important points to tackle is why educators consider it is important to choose books that accurately portray diverse cultures. As it was mentioned by Barry (1998), for several decades, educators have discussed the necessity of seeing oneself – one’s history, culture and experiences – in the books one reads. Harris (1992), for example says. “I became convinced that the literacy achievement of African-American children would improve if they could see themselves … in the books they read. I still hold firmly to that belief”(p. 47). On a less personal note, Fisher (1974) described a twofold importance of multiethnic literature. First, he explains that multiethnic literature increases minority children’s self-esteem. Secondly, he argues that it encourages the development of respect across cultures, and as Dudley-Marling (1997) adds across classes:

Literature written by and for people from marginalized groups can provide to students from more privileged backgrounds a sense of the lived experience of people who suffer the effects of poverty and discrimination. Literature offers all students an opportunity to consider how to challenge practices that diminish the lives of our fellow citizens. (p. 632)

Through multiethnic literature, minority children can discover the valuable contributions their culture has provided to the United States and the world. In this literature, they can also see again and again that while there are differences, the similarities between cultures are pervasive. For example, children can observe and relate to physical and emotional changes and relationships as experienced by other teens around the world.
Following my own experience and knowledge, I can say Hispanics in the US, and many other cultural and ethnic groups belonging to the mirror of diverse cultures living in this country, share many of the traditional values sustained by most American people. They place high value on their families and on success through hard work. They are also proud of their Latin American heritage. Many Hispanic Americans feel that they should not lose contact with their cultures or their language. Instead, they seek to be bilingual and bilingual. Many of them hope that all their cultural wealth will some day be part of the big quilt of the American culture. On these grounds, children’s literature holds a great responsibility, as it is often the first contact that children have with different cultures. Therefore, if children are given a positive and truthful image through this literature, they will learn to receive a positive image of this cultural group, and hopefully, this will lead to have an attitude of respect for the different culture and wish to learn more.

As a contrary example, we can mention that as much in adult books as in children’s books, the conventional American depiction of the Mexican American in the last and present centuries has invariably emphasized its alleged backwardness and remoteness, an image of sleepy villages, both isolated from and indifferent to significant cultural activities. It is also stated that they come from poverty, so they are accustomed to life in poor conditions; they wear traditional dress and do not get assimilated to the Western clothing style; they accept menial jobs for any minimum salary; and in general terms, they are lazy because they are used to having a siesta everyday.

Following Fuchs’s (1987) enumeration of the chief aspects of ethnicity to be considered when there is a positive portrayal of Hispanic culture, the following can be stated:
• Physical features: The way people look is largely dependent on heredity. People tend to inherit eye color, hair color, physique, and many other physical features.

• Names: Each person has several names - a family name which puts one into a definite group and a given name (first or Christian name) which usually is a meaningful one.

• Language: Language is a most important part of ethnicity as it shapes one’s very thoughts. As Rodriguez (1982) points out in his book “Hunger of Memory”, there is a difference between a home language and a school language. At home he spoke Spanish, and it symbolized all the love and warmth of his family. At school he spoke English, and it was a cold, formal language.

• History: All people have a history, a background, and origin. This history consists of the stories and legends the people tell.

• Food: Food cannot be overlooked as an aspect of ethnicity. Originally the kinds of food any people choose to eat depend upon geography – what it is possible to grow in their climate and in that soil, or what comes from the sea. Through the centuries they learn what food does for them – which kinds of food seem to help when one is ill, for example. What one learns about food in childhood is never forgotten, as one grows older. Immigrants do not change their tastes for eating, but have the opportunity to explore and develop new approaches to food. They learn how to combine their own traditional cooking with the recently acquired in the new home country.

• Religion: What people believe and how they structure their lives, following their religious beliefs, is of greatest significance as part of ethnicity, because they follow
the cultural and national traditions or status quo for the respective country. This has been deeply consolidated in the history of the country and even in its educational system.

- **Family**: Family relations, another important aspect of ethnicity, concerns how members of the family relate to another, the position of father and mother, and the way children relate to their parents and to each other.

- **Customs**: These are closely related to the family because it is in the family that customs are practiced. Customs grow out of religious practices, superstitions, beliefs, experiences in the family history. Included here are ways in which birth, death, coming of age, marriage, and other life experiences are handled (p.848-854).

From my own experience and knowledge, I agree with the author Fuchs (1987) and I would like to add the following information to her classification:

- **Physical features**: Many diverse physical features, ranging from hair color to light or dark skin complexions, or a combination of both, can be attributed to Hispanics. This is all due to the specific geographical region in the continent to the different waves of immigrants that arrived into the region and their mingling with the indigenous people.

- **Names**: One is named after a favorite family member or a famous person or a saint, for instance, Maria or Jose. As Smith is a common last name in the English language, Sanchez and Soto are common last names in Spanish. Some names of indigenous origin are mostly connected with nature. Names also connect people with a corresponding social class, and this has a potential load for discrimination in some
countries in Latin America, because they typically represent the group with the economic power.

- **Language:** Both languages, i.e. Spanish and English can be read along the texts in many of the modern books; so careful attention must be given to the particular uses. Many times, words in indigenous languages will be read because it has been impossible until the present to find the correct word to denote an object and give it the right connotation. Therefore, attention must be paid when there is code-switching in a text because values and feelings are intimately connected with those different uses and changes of languages.

- **History:** The stories may be stories of one’s own ancestors, but they include folktales, myths and legends passed on through generations. They could have belonged to the realm of oral history that is being recovered by researchers like anthropologists or linguists. They deserve special attention, as they can be portrayals based on real life and real history.

- **Food:** It is a strong representation of the history and development of a social group. Food is associated with many things in people’s lives--celebrations and fasting, joy and sorrow, sickness and health. At present, media has contributed to the popularization of Hispanic food, including various components of fruit and vegetables, according to the regions they represent.

- **Religion:** For the most part, the Catholic religion is one of the sources of group unity. It usually gives rise to gatherings where members of the group reinforce one another.
Further, religion is frequently the source of customs, celebrations and nurturing activities.

- **Family:** The family may be nuclear or extended. In the Hispanic world, valid importance and recognition is given to the extended family and to the friends of the family. It is a convoluted circle that goes around and around, always growing and growing, even in this fast paced world. No social institution is ever more important than the family.

- **Customs:** Every ethnic group has specific activities, customs and traditions, which are considered appropriate for every occasion. One of the most important sources to know about Hispanic customs is through readings, which gives a solid foundation to all this study.

  What is more important, however, is how the teacher handles the stories in the corresponding class and how this teacher transmits them to the students. The stories offer great opportunities for increasing students’ knowledge and awareness of the life and ethnicity of various groups of Hispanics, and optimistically, of their own life and origins.

  Fisher (1974) emphasizes the function of informational picture books or nonfiction books for children. This can also be applied to books used in multicultural settings. She points out that the authors of this kind of literature should strive to communicate facts and ideas, as a teacher would lead young readers. In this way the authors can foster in them both the will and the mental ability to assess facts and ideas. These books can also move young readers towards a carefully planned and prudent independence of thought and action. The books can also expose the readers to exceptions, doubts and complexities, and not to get
tempted by vocabulary control or oversimplification. In other words, let imagination fly and not to reduce students to read abridged versions or texts limited to a number of words. For this purpose, any images can be of great help to facilitate understanding of the text.

There is a question regarding the sorts of compromises, linguistically, stylistically and thematically that will be demanded of Hispanic writers in the United States, considering the fast growing Hispanic population in the country, and the educational responsibility towards future generations. Hispanic writers and “outside” writers (or the knowledge of a participant/observer) writing about the diverse communities, have the major task of maintaining the cultural distinctiveness while reaching out to other communities, interacting and, inevitably, blending with one another on the basis of discovering common values and experiences among an array of differences.

According to Morris (1971), transformation is the process of changing the “nature, function, or condition” of a phenomenon. When teaching is transformed, the content of the curriculum, pedagogy and the ways in which students learn are substantially modified. Research performed by Goodlad (1984) and others, on classrooms and curriculum indicates that teaching at the upper and high school grades in most academic subjects is characterized largely by teacher talk, the mastery of low-level facts by students, and passive student learning. Transformative teaching and learning are characterized around powerful ideas, highly interactive teaching strategies, active student involvement, and activities that require students to participate in personal, social, and civic action to make their classrooms, schools and communities more democratic and just. Nowadays, there is also a concern to demonstrate the relationship between the student and the environment to see if there is an
ecological balance. This brings us to the point that it is necessary to demonstrate the relationship between the cultural and social environment and the selected multicultural stories to determine if there is a connection between these stories and the reality outside; whether these changes have occurred through a constant or a continuum along the years or not. Maybe, at this point in time, it is easier for children to understand the diversity of cultures.

During the last two decades, multicultural education has emerged as a vehicle to facilitate the transformation of the nation’s educational institutions and the structural inclusion of the nation’s diverse groups into U.S. society. Multicultural education tries to create equal educational opportunities for all students by changing the total school environment so that it will reflect the diverse groups that exist in the society of the United States and in the nation’s schools and classrooms. The teaching of multiculturalism must be coupled with the attempt to create or expand the space and time in the classroom to discuss race, class, gender, and sexuality with attention to what it is that structures these social markers.

**Goals of Multicultural Education**

Following Banks (2003), the first major goal of multicultural education is to increase the academic achievement of all students and transform the total school environment by making it more consistent with the diverse students’ cultures, behaviors and learning styles. This means that major changes should be made in the ways that educational programs are conceptualized, organized and taught.
Another important goal of multicultural education is to help all students develop more positive attitudes toward different cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious groups. Different researchers have documented the negative attitudes, beliefs and stereotypes that students have about various groups. Students acquire these negative attitudes about various groups from the people with whom they are socialized and from the media images of the majority culture. If the school does not help to develop more positive attitudes about diverse groups, students will become more negative as they grow older. Consequently, the school should take steps to help students develop healthy perspectives. When students are able to view the world from the different perspectives of different groups, their views of reality are broadened and they gain important insights into their own behavior.

Principles for Multicultural Education

If the multicultural education approach involves a provocative, challenging curriculum, teachers need to be guided by certain instructional principles that are directly connected to the nature and purpose of the multicultural curriculum. Following Rodgers’ (1975) principles, enumerated below, the instructional program should be theoretically and structurally tied to the curriculum and the way in which it is implemented, and the materials and resources play a pivotal role in the implementation. These instructional principles reflect what a school should provide, and they are a composite from different ideas and learning experiences. Some of the principles of multicultural education are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The first principle is that the student is an innately curious individual, capable of learning complex material and performing at a high skill level. This principle respects and
considers the natural intelligence of any individual, without considering any distinctive feature of race or ethnic origin, just the basic principle that we are equals. This principle is sustained by the Constitution of the United States and is the foundation for many other Constitutions all around the world.

A second principle is that each student has his or her own unique learning style, and teachers should not only build on this when teaching, but also help students discover their own particular style of learning so that they can learn more effectively and efficiently. This is a principle that is essential to creating self-esteem and proper self-confidence.

A third principle is that teachers should draw on and make use of the conceptual scheme (the schemata) that students bring to school. According to Hollins (1982), rather than replacing these conceptual schemes with new ones, the teacher should use and build on the students’ own schemata. And, since conceptual schemes are channeled through language, utilizing the students’ native language helps develop the conceptual schemes that the children bring with them to school. Teachers must regard their students as developing minds and be concerned that students are able to offer justifications for the cultural identities they bring to the classroom, and in this way, allow their self-pride to be developed. Cognitive science has been a great support to develop these studies.

A fourth principle, closely connected with the previous one, is to have high and realistic expectations for all students. Equal education is the goal. Educators must promote high expectations in a positive and equitable manner, providing students and the society around them with a multiple variety of resources, either in print or non-print materials to
satisfy the needs and arouse the students’ curiosity to continue with the educational process throughout their lifetime.

Fostering cooperation is a fifth principle. A great emphasis must be given to the kind of instruction that teaches students to work cooperatively with others. Several studies have mentioned the positive effects that small-group cooperative learning can have on the attitudes of students who come from different backgrounds. Not only is academic achievement improved, but also the students’ interpersonal relationships are improved and enhanced. Once the students are able to learn this in the school environment, they will be able to project it onto the rest of their lives.

A sixth principle of multicultural instruction is to treat boys and girls equally and not allow sexism to enter the classroom, whether this is consciously or unconsciously. The importance of this principle is found in a comment by Stockard, Schmuck, Kempner, Williams, Edson, and Smith (1980), who argue that observational studies of classroom interaction show that teachers tend to give boys both more negative and more positive feedback about their action than they give to girls. Teachers do this unconsciously, and it provides boys with more opportunity to learn than girls.

A seventh principle is the development and fostering of a positive self-concept. This principle summarizes some of the above mentioned, but it must stand by itself as a principle to be carried along in every instance of life, i.e. at home, at school, and in every aspect or situation students are involved in.

There are many other principles that could be included; however the principles mentioned above are central to the approach of multicultural education and are also essential
to any educational approach. Consequently, educators must leave behind the position that sees one universal culture in which the school’s role is to enculturate young people into that culture and socialize them with the skills needed for success in that particular culture. As Banks (1979) suggests multiethnic educators must move to a reconciliation which sees a universal culture with ethnic subgroups and subcultures. The emphasis on ideology, understandable in an era of separationism should be deemphasized and deconstructed; and we must be able to create globalizing ideologies that can be easily transmitted, shared, discussed and spread in this world of faster communications.

Criteria for Selecting Fiction Picture Books

On the whole, according to Rochman (1993), the following criteria should be used in the selection process of the materials, and this list can be applicable to different environments: accuracy in historical depiction; ethnic qualities of characters (in a balanced way); cultural viewpoints; authenticity in illustrations; variety of regional locations; accomplished authors; positive renditions of language and dialect; gender equity; representation of diverse lifestyles, abilities, classes and customs; avoidance of cliches, stereotypes, superficial portrayals; and demeaning differentiation or comparisons.

Rochman (1993) also states that “one book” does not carry the whole ethnic group experience, and even more, one writer is not the only one representative of an entire ethnic group; which is perhaps why she also indicates that as the arguments about political correctness reach a crescendo, she finds herself agreeing and disagreeing with everyone. With the high volume of information to be accessed, is more and more difficult to know who can be closer to rightness and/or reality. It is known that the brain is like unfolding layers
which are opened one after the other, and more and more links can be established among those layers. The real concern, as Rochman (1993) indicates, is to decide which book, which author to use to show the specific, the most authentic, the most accurate ethnic story to the reader who many times does the reading forced by circumstances or just to get a passing grade.

Another important factor to consider, mentioned by Bishop (1991), is that African-American children’s literature deals with the notion of pride and identity today. It is strongly believed by educators and researchers that all ethnic writers should promote these notions. There must be an improved self-esteem for those who previously did not see themselves represented in the multicultural mirror, and also, an important enlightenment for those who, for too long, have only watched at themselves on that mirror.

Consequently, when it is substantially important to select a passage, a reading selection, or a whole text to teach culture to any student at any age, I believe that as educators we must look for either or both the visual and the language markers of culture. Under the visual markers of culture--expressed by illustrations--there are visible indicators such as the clothing, food, artifacts, tools and activities, or the setting through the landscapes or famous landmarks. We also have implied cultural indicators represented by colors, designs, typical objects and characters or cultural attitudes portrayed through postures, values, social conventions and gender indicators. Under the language markers of culture--expressed by the language itself, so as in the surface structure as in the deep structure of the text--we have the language patterns, such as specific names, specific expressions and dialogue patterns. We also have the narrative patterns, like the traditional opening phrase, the story type, the story
structure, and the traditional conclusion.

As a result, it might be surmised a book for the young (or any learner young “at heart”) should be compelling in content, style and format. Written and visual elements should be accurate as well, keeping in mind the characteristics of the developmental stage of the reader for whom the book is primarily intended. Books must appeal to the natural openness of children or learners to new ideas, images, and experiences; to their natural attitude of being a “sponge” to absorb everything around them, whether positive or negative.

Below are a number of questions adapted from Jobe’s (1993) “Cultural Connections.” They should be considered when teachers, librarians, media specialists and parents are selecting materials for children located in different environments, i.e. at school, in the library, at home, or at the club, or anywhere else. In part, these questions have been the foundation for the purpose of this study.

1. What universal constants among culture are portrayed in children’s books?
2. In what ways are children’s books a reflection of the society in which they were written?
3. What benefits do children gain when they read cross-cultural literature?
4. What is the importance of children being able to recognize themselves in cross-cultural literature?
5. How can the authenticity of a culture portrayed in literature for children be assessed?
6. Do countries have literary mosaics? What is the image of the United States (or any country/ culture) in children’s books? Which books could help recent immigrants learn about the United States/ or the specific culture and its people?
7. Why is it important for educators to go beyond the traditional “F” approach to multiculturalism (food, festivals, folklore and fun) and how can literature enrich multicultural understanding and experience?

Revising current literature, we encountered some interesting criteria for selecting informational and fiction picture books, provided by Cianciolo (2000). The first point to consider is that the writer of such a book, either for children or adults must have in mind that facts, concepts or theories of whatever kind- be they scientific, historical, biographical, sociological- exist primarily to support the elements of the story. She sets out to help the reader acquire knowledge, depict particular aspects of the human experiences or a straight perception of the world around, and the techniques the writer uses are subordinate to that end: either to teach or to inform.

Cianciolo (2000) lists some standards and criteria to evaluate picture books. Some of these are directly applicable to multicultural books as part of the whole bulk of available literature for children.

1. The facts or concepts included should be explained accurately and should be current and complete.

2. The writer should assume that the book would be a starter rather than a stopper. In other words, the book will be a motivator to continue reading and it will not be a disappointment.

3. The scope of the coverage and the perspective of the content should appeal to a wide age range.
4. Books on topics of special interest to a small percentage of the student population as well as those of interest to a large percentage of the students should be included in the collection.

5. Stereotypes must not be presented. The writer should alert the reader to what in the book is fact and what is fiction, to what is conjecture, opinion or an educated guess, and to which of each is held by a majority or a minority.

6. The information should be presented and explained clearly in the text and illustrations; both of these aspects should be unique and imaginative, interesting and stimulating.

7. Whether it is logically or psychologically developed, the organization of the information or the story-line should be clear, interrelationships should be indicated, and patterns should be provided. Ideally, it should be clear from the outset what aspects of a topic the book covers and the depth in which they will be examined.

8. The format of the book should be attractive and readable.

It is interesting to add some information collected from Beilke and Sciara (1986) that refers to meeting needs of cultural minorities, establishing immediately that these necessities are still demanded today. In 1983, the report of the Task Force on Library and Information Services to Cultural Minorities was published by the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. Several broad and general concepts regarding libraries and a multicultural society governed the work of the task force:

- Concepts of a multilingual and multicultural society are desirable and should be affirmed.
• Libraries are essential to all segments of society, providing basic information to support education and the democratic process, and preserving the record of our heritage and culture.

• Responsibility for library services is tripartite obligation of local, state, and federal levels of government.

• Libraries play an important and unique role in the integration of cultural differences within the community.

• Public libraries as community institutions have a unique role in the dissemination of information to all persons in society without fees.

• All libraries can assist cultural minorities, the fastest growing segments of the population, to become equal participants in society through access to information. These same authors point out that teachers, school and public librarians can serve children and young people through:

  • Display of appropriate behavior in talking with other persons as individuals, not as stereotyped representatives of a sex, race, class or ethnic group;

  • Promotion of open discussion of practices or language which hurt others or limit opportunities for their development; and

  • Planning of programs which can lead to less stereotyped thinking; and selection of materials which are not stereotyped.
Checklist

This leads us to refer to a seminal article for this research that will be the guidance line for the interviews conducted with our participants. It was published by the Council on Interracial Books for Children (1980) and indicates ten quick ways to analyze children’s books for sexism and racism. These are as follows:

1. Check the illustrations;

Look for stereotypes;

Look for tokenism;

Who’s doing what?

2. Check the story line;

Standard for success;

Resolution of problems;

Role of women.

3. Look at the lifestyles.

4. Weigh the relationships between people.

5. Note the heroes.

6. Consider the effects on a child’s self-image.

7. Consider the author’s or illustrator’s background.

8. Consider the author’s perspective.

9. Watch for loaded words.

10. Pay attention to the copyright date.
Summary

In this review of literature, research related to multiculturalism, multicultural education and multicultural literature has been considered. As a foundation for the review, the vital importance of multiculturalism in this current state of the arts has been considered. The review included the following issues: defining multicultural education, portraying diverse cultures, mapping the goals of multicultural education, communicating the principles for multicultural education, selecting criteria for fiction picture books, and checklists.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Octavio Paz, the notable Mexican writer, thinks it is limiting to accept only one view of a culture. He has stated in his work *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1961) that, “the idea of a single civilization for everyone, implicit in the cult of progress and technique, impoverishes and mutilates us” (As cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 260).

Paz is suggesting that the idea of a sole interpretation is limiting and limited. Therefore, the concept of a diversity of interpretations has been one of the most outstanding reasons to decide on a qualitative methodology for this specific study; and more exactly on applying the technique of case studies to this research. This study attempts to determine how closely the selected children’s books portray the culture these books represent. In this way, different viewpoints will be used to interpret behind the message and the content of each of the selected books. Each opinion will open a realm of possibilities. In this world of constant changes, many people still believe that the individual’s existence is contingent upon relationships with others. In this study, the relationship with the ecological, the environmental and the social worlds reflected in the Hispanic mirror through children’s literature is quite substantial.

Qualitative research methodology was selected because it was important to capture the in-depth interpretation of the participants as they responded to the author’s representation of the culture being portrayed in the book. It is hoped that the descriptions of these interpretations will create a “thick description” and from this, the findings will help teachers and librarians make more informed decisions when choosing or selecting children’s books.
Qualitative research is characterized by a concern for the quality of human elements in a study. “Constructionist” is another term to designate qualitative research when people’s construction of social life and institutions, or even personal life and everything that has exerted some influence in it, is emphasized (Hammadou, 1993). The term “naturalistic” stresses the fact that such a study takes place in a natural setting. Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the human and physical environments, which suggests that qualitative researchers study “objects” in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena based on the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative research strives to take into account all relevant variables and how they are intertwined.

Qualitative methodology intersects disciplines, fields and subject matters, which is why qualitative research is so rich and attractive; it is a never-ending task. There is always something else to be said or much better in this case, to be researched. There is a complex and interconnected family of terms, concepts and assumptions that surround the term and the idea of qualitative research.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) define qualitative research as:

a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive practices that make reality visible. These practices transform the whole surrounding environment through a series of representations, which may include field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. (p. 2)

Researchers like Reichardt and Cook (1979) have pointed out that to be more precise, qualitative researchers should specifically locate the object of study in the most natural possible context, within its own reality. In other words, we have to discover the cultural meanings throughout the language, which is shared socially. These meanings are part of the
daily life and they will provide the common sense that must be incorporated to our registry of observations. Considering the object of study as the starting point, we may be able to discover the cultural meanings, which will be always inserted in a cultural context.

Therefore, this study employs qualitative research to understand the perceptions and changes each participant noted in his/her lifetime, and even more essential, if these changes in the contents and messages of the books reflect the changes in the society. These changes in society can be observed in the contents and messages of the books. For instance, society has perceived how rich these books are to show the reality, how the books have left behind the typical images of animals or mythological life as main characters and these characters are human beings, and how the plots and themes have become more involved with real life. The questionnaire will reveal the participants’ interpretation of the literature and its relatedness to Hispanic society and culture.

Stake (1995) points out, case studies have become one of the most common ways to do qualitative inquiry. Case study is not a methodological choice but a change along the study by whatever methods researchers choose, and might be studied analytically or holistically, by repeated measures or hermeneutically, organically or culturally, and by mixed methods. In simpler terms, case study is defined by interest in individual cases, not by the methods of inquiry used. The driving question, then is: What can be learned from a single case? The answer provided by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) is to optimize understanding of the case rather than generalization beyond.

To indicate how to select the ideal case to get to understand the object of study Hamel (1993) has conducted studies pertaining to this area. He points out that the methodological strategy results from “an initial theory.” This refers to the initial idea that a researcher had
perceived about the social issue or phenomenon. Therefore, the perception and knowledge of
the researcher is crucial to establishing a positive attitude during the course of study and to
get the expected results. When the researcher defines the object of study in a clear way, the
first big step in this initial theory has been given. The design of the study will lead the reader
to understand what is important about the case within its own environment, which often
varies from that of the researchers or theorists. The designs will develop what is perceived to
be the case’s own issues, contexts and interpretations, and its thick description. According to
Spiro, Vispoel, Schmitz, Samarapungavan, and Boerger, (1987), qualitative case study is
characterized by researchers spending extended time on site, in contact with the activities and
operations of the case and reflecting on what is going on.

Purpose

There was an initial selection of three books to be analyzed by three subjects in a pilot
study. These interviews were recorded and transcribed. They were based on an elaborated
rubric created by the researcher that followed the most important elements contained in any
narrative. They were: SETTING, LOCATION, CHARACTERS, ILLUSTRATIONS,
LANGUAGE and RESOLUTION. This initial rubric is in Appendix A.

After applying this rubric, the researcher was able to understand that the books were
providing too much information and most of the provided information, was based on the
facts presented by this rubric. It had become unmanageable and too long to draw any
conclusions.

The purpose of the study is to examine books that portray the Hispanic culture since
the 1930’s to determine changes in the reader’s perception and authenticity of culture as
represented in the texts. To conduct this study, the researcher identified representative books
from 1930 to 2000 – one book from each decade. The selection was primarily limited to books that had received the Caldecott, Horn or Pura Belpre Awards. In recent years, many Hispanic books have been published and nominated for awards. Therefore, the researcher chose those books that seemed to offer the most accurate representation of the culture.

The next step was to decide on the books to be studied. The first decision was to choose books written in the 1930’s. This decision was based on the Caldecott Award, which was established in that decade. It was important to include books from that period, as just after the Great Depression (1929) there was a big influx of immigrants, so there was a high interest to see how these Hispanic immigrants were taken into consideration. The books were selected following two important criteria:

a) representatives of one decade in study, and

b) portrayals of social change

The last selected book was published in the year 2000. Clearly, the books have evolved in content and the messages they disseminate. There is even an innovation in the printing process translated into attractive techniques used in the illustrations of recently published books, which has eased the depiction of a real cultural content, rich in social and geographical portrayals.

The research questions that have guided this study are as follows:

1. What characteristics are present in children’s books to help readers become aware and respectful of other cultures and to increase the readers’ awareness of similarities and differences between cultures?

2. What are the readers’ perceptions of the accurateness of the culture portrayed in the selected books?
3. How do the perceptions and beliefs of non-Hispanic and Hispanic participants differ in the interpretation of the cultures portrayed in the selected books?

Participants in the Case Study

There were a total of 10 participants in this case study. Five of them are of Hispanic origin with educational/work experience in the United States. In this way, they are knowledgeable of the American perceptions of the Hispanic culture, and are able to establish parallels or comparisons with the portrayal of this culture in children’s books. The other five participants are North American/English (non-Hispanic) speakers who are not immersed in the Hispanic culture. Therefore, they do not have a predisposition or a previous perception of what and how aspects should be considered in order to give a positive and complete depiction of the culture.

Both groups of participants have college education. A short biography of each Participant has been included in the final version of the dissertation.

NON-HISPANIC: Lori / Peter / Dominique / Charles / Mary
HISPANIC: Norma / Claudia / Eva / Marjorie / Ericka

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection started on February 27, 2002 and ended on July 23, 2002. The participants received the set of ten books, listed in Appendix B. With the list of books is a short summary for each book, located in Appendix B. An appointment was set up for the following week, when the researcher would meet with the participant for an open-ended interview with her/him. At this point, the conversation would be recorded for analysis. There was a guided questionnaire (Appendix C), devised by the researcher, based on the book *Guidelines for Selecting Bias-Free Textbooks and Storybooks* (1979) and the material
obtained from the rubric used for the pilot study. Other questions to evaluate the social and geographical context were added along the context of the case studies and they became part of the emerging questions and themes.

The interview procedure was used. This procedure was selected because it provokes an interaction between the participants and the interviewer that often leads to spontaneous and emotional statements about the topics being discussed that might enrich the data analysis. A potential advantage that can arise is the establishment of an easier rapport between the participants and myself as the researcher, who is of Hispanic origin. There can be a facilitation to open the channels of communication to answer questions as thoroughly as possible. I initially believed the process would take 12 weeks.

But finally, this interview process took longer. It was nearly five months because as soon as I started with Participant # 1, she got all the books for one week, but she could not read them due to many other personal commitments. Then, I became concerned that this way to proceed would not prove beneficial, as all my participants are professionals who have a busy working and personal life. Though they wanted to help in this project, and showed a high level of enthusiasm, I realized they did not have time to commit to read these books on their own time. So, I decided to devise a new strategy to speed up the process and at the same time, make the experience agreeable and relaxing for the participant. In this way, I could assure myself that she/he would be reading the book and would have the best attitude to answer the entire questionnaire and any possible emerging questions. Therefore, I decided to respect the petitions for the time and place for the interviews. In different opportunities and as a way to thank the participant for her/his collaboration, I invited her/him for dinner. In that way, she/he could feel more relaxed and willing to participate. The participant read the book
and I immediately conducted the interview and collected all the possible data. The participant usually took about twenty minutes to browse and read each book. At the end, this proved to be of a great advantage because this eliminated the recall factor and provided richer data. In total, each interviewee took around five or six hours to complete the ten books, divided into different days. These sessions took around two hours each. There is total of 17 audiocassettes that contain all the information provided. Six of them are 60 minutes long and 11 of them are 90 minutes long. There is a total of 22.50 hours of recorded material. This gives an average of 2.5 hours of recorded information from each participant. To this amount of time, it is necessary to add the time used by every participant to read the books.

Data Analysis

The data analysis started in the middle of July until the middle of October. It consisted on the literal transcription of the 17 collected audiocassettes. This was handwritten and later on, this information was transformed into the narrative writing style we have in Chapters 4 and 5.

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that have accumulated to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others.

As this study was based on interviews of the participants, after they had read the selected books, there are a number of recommendations provided by Bogdan and Biklen (1998) to consider. These suggestions make analysis an ongoing part of data collection, save time and allow the researcher to do the final analysis. They are as follows:

1. Force yourself to make decisions that narrow the study.
2. Force yourself to make decisions concerning the type of study you want to accomplish.

3. Develop analytic questions.

4. Plan data-collection sessions in light of what you find in previous observations.

5. Write many observers’ comments about ideas you generate.

6. Write memos to yourself about what you are learning.

7. Try out ideas and themes on subjects.

8. Begin exploring the literature while you are in the field.

9. Play with metaphors, analogies and concepts.

10. Use visual devices.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed a coding system as the basis for the comparative method and its impact on grounded theory. This system was refined when researchers suggested listing families of codes such as “setting codes, strategy codes, relationship codes, and other pre-assigned codes.”

Miles and Huberman (1984) simplified data coding and analysis by suggesting that “analysis consists of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing verification.”

After data was collected from the interviews, it was coded following the categories initially given by the Checklist (end of Chapter 2). All possible emerging categories were incorporated into this coding system. Every coded area was assigned a number. With these numbers, it was possible to create tables to show similarities, repetitions or differences in the perceptions held between the two groups of participants. In this way, it was possible to
discover systematic patterns and interrelationships. The conclusions allowed making comparative case studies that led to generalizations.

Triangulation

Following Bogdan and Biklen (1998) in general terms, it is understood that triangulation comes from the application of trigonometry for navigation and surveying. One cannot locate one’s precise position on a map by taking one’s bearing on only one object in the distance because that only locates one on a line. A person needs a second point of reference as well. Then, one can locate oneself at the intersection of the two points or bearings. One’s location plus the other two points can be treated as the points of a triangle by which, if the person has the distance of one side, one can calculate the length of the other sides.

In more simple terms, these authors point out that triangulation conveys the idea that to establish a fact researchers need more than one source of information. They strictly recommend then, that if the researchers collect data from many subjects about the same topic, simply include all the necessary information to demonstrate it.

Richardson (1994) rejects the idea of using a rigid, two-dimensional triangle as a central image for validation of modern texts, because it contains a fixed point or object that can be triangulated. He states, “rather the central image is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities and angles of approach” (p. 522).

Crystallization by means of postmodern mixed-genre texts provides a deepened, complex and partial understanding of the topic. The multiple questions and the participants’
statements about the objects of study may be seen as crystallizations that open to continual transformations of the messages contained in the books.

The researcher must always keep in mind that qualitative research does not pretend to suppress the subjectivity. Empathy will be practiced throughout the research process. We are dealing with human beings sharing their internal world, so we are dealing with a complex situation. Although I understand the concept of triangulation, I realize that in this particular study the data was not triangulated because I only interviewed ten people from two groups, people who were of Hispanic descent and people who were of non-Hispanic descent. In the future, I hope to do this same study with children and add all this information to what I have already collected, and then the data will be triangulated.

Trustworthiness

It is the ethical responsibility of the researcher to report knowledge that is as secured and verified as possible. For this purpose, the corresponding transcriptions were printed as exact and complete as possible and tapes will be secured. The narrative method was used to report the interviews as accurately as possible.

In order to do this study trustworthy, I have had a peer debriefer who is a person who read the presentation of case studies, the case analysis and the conclusion sections to make sure the information was precisely recorded and that I gave an accurate portrayal of the obtained information. This person is quite knowledgeable of the Hispanic culture and literature and was well aware of the study and purpose of this study. He read the entire document to make sure that the statements I am making and the conclusions were accurate and objective.
Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a vital component in this case study. Private data identifying the subjects will not be reported. All participants will remain anonymous and they will sign a consent form (Appendix D).

Summary

In Chapter 3, there is an overview of qualitative research as a method of study and the use of case studies to be able to understand the different perceptions the participants have of the changes and stereotypes contained in the studied books. The purpose, the description of the participants, the data collection procedures, the data analysis, the triangulation, the trustworthiness and the confidentiality are explained in this chapter.
CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF CASE STUDIES: NON-HISPANIC

This chapter presents five case studies of five non-Hispanic participants. A description of their background is presented at the beginning of their individual case studies. The table below gives a summary of the pertinent information as to the background of the non-Hispanic participants.

Table 1. Non-Hispanic Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Contact with foreigners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lori</td>
<td>B.S.</td>
<td>Horticulture</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Daily at work and home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>B.S.</td>
<td>Psychology and Business</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Traveled worldwide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominique</td>
<td>MPA and B.A.</td>
<td>Public Administration and Economy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Daily at work and home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>M.A. Geography and B.A. Psychology</td>
<td>Computer Mapping</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Daily at work and at University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>MLIS and B.A.</td>
<td>Library Science and Arts</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Daily at work and at home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A list of the books used in this study follows:

Book # 1 – Perez and Martina, A Portorican Folk Tale

Book # 2 – The Tiger and the Rabbit and other tales

Book # 3 – Nine Days to Christmas

Book # 4 – Dance of the Animals: A Puerto Rican Folk Tale

Book # 5 – Uncle Nacho’s Hat: El Sombrero del Tío Nacho
Participant # 1: Lori

Description

Lori was born in Alabama, USA and she has lived all her life in Louisiana. She is married to Ramon, who is from Chile, and they have one daughter. She holds a B. S. in Horticulture. She has worked for 19 years as a Research Associate in the department of Plant Pathology at Louisiana State University. She has traveled abroad a number of times for personal and cultural interest, besides keeping in daily contact with foreigners at work and home.

Elements

The first pattern to be considered is the confirmation of the presence of the useful elements to recognize in a Hispanic story. For Book # 1 Lori--the first participant--indicates the dress of Martina, the style of the houses, the roof, and all the bright colors. She points out “Even though it is such an old book the colors are gorgeous.” She mentions clothes as important elements as well. When commenting on Book # 2, she mentions the clothes and a typical ‘burro’ that make her think of Mexico. With Book # 3 she points out the presence of many different elements, for example, all the pictures with the piñatas, the physical aspects of some of people and their clothes. She states “You see all those signs for a ‘Tortillería’--the place where they make tortillas.” Lori also refers to the bright colors used to enhance the
Hispanic elements on top of the gray backgrounds. Clothes, the piñatas and the flowers are all brightly colored and that’s a typical characteristic of Mexico. And finally with this book, she indicates the way people look with their dark skin and dark hair. With Book # 4 she says that there is nothing that really makes the reader think that these elements are from Latin America. They could be from some tropical place, not necessarily part of the Hispanic environment. Lions are the main characters, and they wouldn’t be directly associated with the Hispanic reality. For Book # 5, she mentions the bright colors, the depiction of a Central American theme, the clothes and the dark haired people. The colors make her think of Central America. She points out it is translated into the two languages, “but there isn’t much Spanish language thrown out there in the English version . . . just the names of the people—Nacho, Ambrosia, Chabela.” Associated with Book # 6, she refers to the architectonic style of the houses, the names of the people, the rhymes that you connect with the Hispanic culture, the Spanish words, and division of classes. We know in Latin America there is marked social class stratification: you are born within a social class and until today there must be a whole personal struggle to move around from there. She points out that she knows that “this is big deal in the Hispanic culture.” Often times this is different in Brazil where there is more equality and not such a blunt division as there is mainly in Central America. The dominant classes use the land, peasants work for them, and even though these peasants have been born there they are mistreated and they don’t have many rights over the piece of land. She also mentions the military presence. She would not know how to associate this with the Hispanic culture per se as she does not know very much about this in the Hispanic culture. She understands that in a number of Latin American countries there is this stronger military presence like there is in this book, but she was not only thinking specifically on the
Hispanic countries as others worldwide have also had a strong military presence.

Commenting on Book #7, she says that it is hard to say that this book is really Hispanic. It has the name ‘Abuela’, but it is not exclusively a Hispanic story but after a deeper look, it does say about the shipment of fruit from where the main character in the book, the grandmother used to live. This book is about part of the Hispanic culture in North America—in other words how part of this culture is transferred to the United States and life goes on for the Latin American people following the same patterns and traditions. There is a process of assimilation of the new culture and at the same time, a process of enculturation. In the most recent books it can be observed that diversity means acceptance. She guesses all the story develops in New York. It is about a grandma who used to live in some tropical Latin country and then her family has integrated into the American society. They have a little shop and they sell foods and crafts from Latin America. So it is not a typical Hispanic story according to our participant as this book could be depicting any immigrant in any big city. For Book # 8, she mentions that it is about ‘Tamales’ and that making tamales is a well-known activity associated with certain Hispanic celebrations. Pointing out the elements in Book # 9, she says that the title is a Spanish word and looking at the pictures, it is pretty obvious it is a Hispanic story. There is the presence of the colors and the idea of the open-air market. In Book # 10, she explains the illustrations are clearly depicting a social group that is part of big city like Los Angeles, CA. The story apparently develops in this area of the country due to the high number of Latin American immigrants coming into this area. They look to be pretty wild and out of the status quo. There are some Spanish words interspersed along the story. The clothing looks partially Hispanic because the characters are wearing bandanas. Lori says, “all this reminds me of the Hispanic gang members and all that stuff in Los Angeles, California.”
Stereotypes

The second pattern to distinguish concerns stereotypes. Lori in Book # 1 mentions the pretty stereotypical idea of what Hispanic people might wear and how clearly this is shown here. Also, she indicates this is not a real common story for children as they are talking about getting married. She expressed her opinion, “Getting married becomes the theme of the book and this is not a common theme in children’s books today.” With Book # 2 she refers to the animals that belong to a universal conception . . . birds, oxen and rabbits can belong to anywhere in the world. This book illustrates Hispanic stories through the use of Hispanic words throughout the book; however the animal stories wouldn’t be necessarily Hispanic, as these stories on animals have always been a central universal theme. For Book # 3 Lori points out “the dark skin and the dark hair, which is a stereotypical image we have of Mexican people,” even though she knows Mexican people who are not dark skinned. Book # 4 she says is a more universal portrait, so there are not specific stereotypes. When discussing Book # 5, she mentions again the characterization of people with dark skin and dark hair. “Our regular tendency is to think of them as Hispanics.” In Book # 6, she refers to the color of the hair and skin and the presence of the social classes depicted very clearly in the illustrations. Lori points out the presence of the rich landowner dressed in a very Westernized way with his blonde girl friend. Book # 7 indicates the way the girl and the grandmother are dressed. Lori thought they are not North American people because of the colorful dresses and the little girl wearing something in her hair, as it usually happens among Latin American people. They regularly wear long hair with colorful ribbons, besides the regular stereotype of dark hair and dark skin. There is also a man with a little moustache
looking like a Mexican man who usually has moustaches. These characteristics are often associated with the Hispanic culture. Therefore, there is something about all the characters in this book that make them definitely Hispanic, for example, their physical aspect, their clothing, their smiles and their attitudes, according to Lori. In Book # 8, nothing really jumps at you except that all people have dark hair. The story could be from any other culture or ethnic group with the exception of the tamales--a common traditional food associated with the Hispanic. With Book # 9, Lori’s opinion is based on the dark hair, the architecture of the houses, the tiled roofs and the streets. For Book # 10, she mentions the bandanas, which are often connected with Hispanic gang members.

Development and End of the Stories

The next emerging theme is the development of the story line and the different expectations for the conclusion of the stories. Lori commenting on Book # 1 says that this story is not a real common one as it refers to getting married and to how this decision used to mean life or death for a Latin American woman. Lori specifically indicates that the end is absolutely unexpected because Martina finally gets the man of her dreams and he dies. “This makes it quite different as most of the children’s stories have a happy ending.” Book # 2 is said to follow a common and universal story line. This means there is a problem to solve, a climax moment and a resolution to the problem. These tales in general have a kind of pretty violent ending. So, they are not the prettiest stories for bedtime, as violent endings are not expected in children’s stories today. The story in Book # 3 tells the readers that it is common for a little girl to get excited about Christmas. Simultaneously, this excitement for Christmas is a universal feeling; for example, this story line can be transformed into a Russian story or an African story in the sense of showing the traditions, the activities people do for Christmas.
This book is a good example of what multicultural stories can do for children and adults. So, Lori can see it has a great value as a multicultural story or instrument. It can be brought to America and transformed into a Native American story or into a portrait of any of the multicultural groups present in the country. It has a little surprising ending with a star up in the sky that takes away the piñata and from the distance the star continues taking care of the little girl. Connected with Book # 4, Lori says that there is a common story line, a bigger animal taking advantage of smaller animals, the same as people do. She indicates that the end is practically expected. She says “a number of these stories have the oppressor exposed by the oppressed because the oppressor uses the whip more often, so you can quickly understand who wants to be the dominant figure in a figurative way.” In Book # 5, referring to the story line, she points out that this book belongs to a completely new period in the historical development of this type of books (1989). If this story were transformed into an American story, you would have around the same situation with the uncle and his stubbornness. The end is unusual as the child is the one who helps being wise when it is usually the other way around. It is the children who should be learning from adults. As it happens in the story, this is what frequently happens in more difficult worlds, in difficult situations when children have to grow older, to grow faster to become adults and acquire responsibilities at a younger age. They cannot continue being children for a long period of time. Maybe this is part of the story behind this book, considering where this story comes from--Nicaragua--a country that had to suffer a long and exhausting civil war. For Book # 6, Lori agrees that the story follows a common story line because the underdog is victorious in his battle against the oppression. The underdog is the big guy and his belief in Nature comes to rescue him. This strong belief in nature is a common belief all over Latin America that leads people to respect it and
worship it. At the end of the story, Lori was not sure what the soldiers that represent the oppression were going to do or how it was going to happen . . . “but I knew it was going to happen and all together the underdog, the peasants, the workers were going to be free and happy.” Lori says that the story line in Book # 7 is a little unusual as the main characters are flying around here and there. Abuela and her grand daughter want to perceive the world from the height. Lori explains the end is rather unexpected because the characters don’t really know where they are going until it happens. For Book # 8, she indicates it follows an expected story line and it has an expected end. In Book # 9, the characters have a few numbers of difficulties and they try to solve them in a creative way. Lori did not expect the end, but she knew they had to get their problem solved one way or another. With Book # 10, Lori points out that it does not follow the common story line as it is about gang members and that is not really what you expect to see in children’s books. And the end is also unexpected as it has a happy ending, which demonstrates that happy situations also happen in these difficult worlds.

Roles, Lifestyles and Relationships

With Book # 1 Lori indicates that there are no children and no senior citizens. The female character Martina has an outstanding role. The man’s role is less important because Martina is the one who is choosing among all her suitors. Lori says “she makes choices in the end to marry. You have to have a man to marry, so you have to have the character there.” Lifestyles in the book are different than in the United States, as here women do not sit around waiting for men to come ask them to marry. Even though the male character is passive, he makes all the possible efforts to come to Martina. But, she is the one who makes the choices. “We also have to consider the copyright date (1932) and how times have changed.” When
Lori refers to the similar lifestyles in Latin America, she indicates that it is not like that nowadays, as Martina would be freer to make her choices. Lori says “probably she was more restricted by her social class at that time,” meaning that you had to marry somebody belonging to your same social status. It is difficult to speak about relationships according to Participant #1 because this is a story based on animals and then, in just one day Martina has ten marriage proposals, which is not realistic at all. For Book #2 Lori mentions the most important role is given to animals. This tells us about the lack of books to portray the Hispanic culture at that time. In that decade there were practically no illustrated books to represent the Hispanic population, even though this segment of the population had already started to grow. Many of the stories only show the lifestyle in Mexico, so it is a very restricted view of the reality in Latin America. The relationships are also difficult to see as these stories are based on animals. But Lori indicates that “as a mom I think a well-written story with people in it can be as interesting as a story with animals.” According to Lori, there are certain stories like Peter Rabbit that are great when the animals talk and establish relationships like people do. These animals live in a hole under the ground. The settings are definitely for animals, and that adds charm to the book. . . . when you think on living in a hole: that can be great. It is a good way to spark the child’s imagination, as you could not talk about these adventures if the story were about people. Even today there are a lot stories with animals where the characters are just like people, they live in houses, they are mom and dad, and the baby is in the crib. Indeed, these stories capture the children’s interest. Children don’t see the animals as threatening anymore: they kind of attach with animals. With Book #3 Lori indicates that children have an outstanding role. Women have a major role, and the girl’s father has a secondary role. There is no participation of senior citizens. There is a whole
excitement for Christmas time around the story and around the United States. “We also dress
the Christmas tree and all that is a typical experience.” So, it is possible to establish a
similarity between the Christmas carols and the posadas in the sense that there is a sharing
with the community. Lori thinks that there is a clear portrait of what happens in Latin
America for Christmas with this book. Relationships among people in this book are similar to
what you can observe in the United States. For Book # 4 Lori shares that the smaller animals
are the minorities. The animals’ characteristics could be extrapolated to the human beings’
characteristics. These animals are living quite real human situations and they could become
more attractive and easier to be understood by children. Concerning lifestyles, this is not a
typical scenario in Latin America even for people. “I think it is a fable made to teach us the
lesson, not realistic at all.” About relationships, Lori says that there are similar stories in the
United States but they are not realistic either: that these big guys are always taking advantage
of the smaller guys . . . “I do not think this is a true depiction.” Lori points out that in Book
# 5 children definitely have the main roles together with the senior citizens. The only woman
appearing in the story has an interesting, but small role. Lifestyles are similar to those in the
United States from the family relationship perspective, more exactly when the characters
refer to the next of kin. Lori says “I mean as far as family relationships go, I’d say they are
similar, but as far as somebody going out and just giving a hat to a poor person, I am not
even sure it would happen today.” In Book # 6, when referring to roles, Lori says that these
characters represent a collective group of people. It is more about the society and how people
work around there, everything collectively not individually. Lifestyles in contrast with North
America are different because the society in the book is predominantly agricultural. In Latin
America “it is what I would expect to see in a rural small town: the relationship of the people
in the village, of the peasants and the landowner, the peasants and the soldiers. I don’t think you see something similar here.” All the characters are trying to empower themselves. In the story you have young people who work on the farms, they are not tied to the farms, for them it is just a job. This is a contrast with the past generations whose life was based on their life in the farms. Referring to Book # 7, Lori indicates that all three of them, meaning children, women and senior citizens, sustain outstanding roles. Lifestyles in North America and in Latin America are quite similar, the same as the relationships presented in the story. With Book # 8, the key characters are the children: their role is essential to the story as they weave the central theme. Lifestyles in the United States are very similar to the ones depicted in the book: the family getting together for Christmas and all the previous excitement. The relationships inside the families are also parallel to the way people deal with each other in the United States. For Book # 9, the roles are equally distributed . . .“they all have key roles, they are all in different categories.” Lifestyles compared with the United States are different as in the story the characters are bartering, for instance, plantains for something else considered edible. In some smaller rural areas this can still happen in Latin America, but it is not anymore the unique way to establish transactions. The relationships among people are quite similar; everything runs around the family. In Book # 10 for Participant # 1 the main roles are upon all the young men, all young gang members. Connected with the lifestyles in America as a way to compare, Lori indicates “if you take it out of the gang context, it’s just about friends; it’s a pretty similar environment.” In Latin America, friends are also important. The characters talk about them saying, “you guys are my family” referring to the regular friends or the gang members. Relationships are very close among the different gang
members, but more difficult to carry on out of the gang context. This observation can be extended to Latin America and to the United States.

**Heroes**

Talking about heroes and the way the English speaking participants view them, Participant # 1, referring to Book # 1, indicates that she is not really certain if the suitor or the main male character is going to marry is the hero or not. Lori would rather say that Martina--the main female character--is the heroine as she waits for the man of her dreams and then he dies. Lori mentions it is similar to the culture of some North American writings for the tragic sense. In Books # 2, # 3, # 4 and # 5 Lori points out that heroes act in a similar way to the heroes we know in the American writings, meaning animals personifying people or people themselves trying to perform extraordinary acts of courage to become heroes. In Book # 6 the real heroes are the volcanoes . . . “they represent mythical images that are also present in the children’s literature here.” For Book # 7 Lori guesses the grandmother is the hero. This grandma represents a common character in daily life but because she dares to carry on extraordinary activities for her age and her world, she becomes a hero. So senior citizens are shown as amazing human beings able to do whatever they want to or dream of. In Book # 8, heroes act similarly to the heroes in the American literature. In Book # 9, grandparents again are the heroes. They are trying to teach the simple and beautiful ways of life to the little girl. Lori mentions “there are a lot of stories about them…regular people doing simple things to make somebody happy.” The heroes in Book # 10 are the members of the gang trying to demonstrate the importance of friendship. Lori indicates that it is a kind of strange book for children . . . “all the references to gangs is just over their heads. It is a book about friends.”
Reaffirmation of Hispanic Pride

Book #1 should not be used to instill pride in a Hispanic child, according to our Participant #1, because this book is too old and most of its elements are out of the current reality. As Book #2 is so animal oriented Lori indicates that “probably the child would not feel so much connected with the story.” This leads us to see how this situation of paying attention to animals has changed nowadays. It helps us to see there are books that portray reality as exactly as it is today. With Book #3 children will positively reaffirm the pride for being Hispanic, in contrast to Book #4, about which Lori says, “I do not think we can not make any correlation between this book and being Hispanic.” For Book #5 Lori is not absolutely certain if the kind of relationship in the story can be considered as part of the Hispanic culture. She believes these relationships are universal. Concerning Book #6, Lori refers to the colors, one of the richest elements in the story, to show how people live. Of course, it is not everything happy but it helps to tell them about that mixture or integration they have with nature. Together with animals and plants, the colors are intertwined one with the other. Maybe a child will not pick up on this immediately, but there is a very good depiction and the reader can point out all this. “Definitely this is such an interesting story that it will help him reaffirm his pride.” In Book #7, Lori indicates positively that the whole book is uplifting. The grandmother is proud of who she is, even though she is a foreigner. This fact is not depicted as being bad. Somehow the family ties are quite well portrayed and basically the grandmother and the granddaughter have fun. In Book #8, the reaffirmation is very positive. For Book #9, Lori also replies affirmatively in the sense that this is a nice story about love between grandparents and their granddaughter and all the elements can be used in one way or another to uplift the child’s pride. About Book #10, Lori indicates that it is a
difficult one. “It depends on the age of the child and what you emphasize, i.e. you can make a big deal that the story is about gangs or it is just a story about friends who are very concerned about making a party and making their friend happy.”

Authors’ Origins and the Projection of Their Knowledge

Referring to Book # 1 Lori indicates that it is important to know the origins of the author because he or she can project certain knowledge through the different elements. For example, through illustrations, some specific use of Spanish words, generally commonly used words, the little talk, all the little things the main character does, the walking around the balcony . . . all these situations are typical from Latin America. In Book # 2 Lori says, “I think it is important to know the origins of the author because any book I find a little unusual, I try to read a little about the author.” The author projects his knowledge through the use of Spanish words and illustrations. In Book # 3 Lori indicates there is a lot of knowledge behind the colorful images from Mexico that makes the author’s origins quite obvious. Besides, this author very well portrays the whole story about the posada and all the customs surrounding that tradition. For Book # 4 it is not important to refer to the author’s origins, according to Lori, as this is a more universal story with more universal characters. They do use some ‘Señora’ or ‘Señor’ to address the main characters throughout the book, but these are the only indicators. In Book # 5 the author’s presence is demonstrated through the vivid colors. Books # 6, # 7 and # 9 are stated to be widely awarded books, so “ . . . it does not really matter to know more about the author, just out of curiosity.” The whole scenario and the Spanish words project an adequate knowledge of the Hispanic culture. In Book # 7 it is obvious that the author has some knowledge about living in a foreign country and being an immigrant. For Book # 8, Lori indicates that the most important aspect is that the story is about honesty and
telling the truth. The elements are noticeably Latin American as the author describes the making of tamales and also, dad is helping in the kitchen, which demonstrates knowledge of the modern culture in the Latin American world and how this social context has evolved. In Book # 10 Lori says “it is a very realistic book. I understand he has lived in this area, so he thinks everybody accuses Latinos and Blacks of belonging to the gangs, but you can see in this story there are good people with good qualities who worry about the rest.” This author demonstrates that even among the gangs there are good values. He shows a ‘cool’ realistic world. He does not glorify the gangs. Readers can guess there is a certain need for this way to tell these stories, as there is no showing of violence at all, not even in a subtle way. The author is making efforts to make people understand gang members and their world. But Lori sometimes is not quite certain if children should be exposed to this reality. The general belief is that children are exposed to all this through the media, the graffiti and all the surroundings, so it is better to be exposed and helped to understand this reality by an educator or parent than simply by just the reality without any guidance.

**Use of Negative Words, Concepts or Illustrations**

For Books # 1, # 2, # 3, #4, # 5, # 7, and # 8 Lori points out that there is nothing that could make you think badly of Hispanics. In Book # 6 Lori indicates that the rich landowners are definitely portrayed as bad guys, so in a sense “ . . . we can get on the side track if you are rich, are you a bad guy?” This book would make you tend to follow that way of thinking. In Book # 9, Lori mentions that the only characteristic that can be construed as negative is that these people are poor because they mention this directly. But then the characters are able to handle the problem using the bartering system and all becomes a positive situation with a
happy ending. In Book # 10 Lori indicates that this is a world she would not like to dwell in, but this story handles it in a positive way.

Copyright Date

In Book # 1 Lori indicates that all what happens in the book would not happen today, except in the countryside. “I don’t think it makes it easier to understand the story knowing it was written in the 30’s because this was probably not happening at that time, either. This type of situation was more possible to happen in the 1800’s for my understanding.” This book shows the class situation in a firm way. For instance, the way Martina acts, she sweeps and then she is the lady of the house and her attitude changes completely. Books # 2, # 3, #4, #5, # 6, #7 and #9 are extemporary, timeless stories that any generation can relate to. So the copyright dates are not significant. For Book # 8, Lori says, “it is more about teaching a virtue than trying to understand the Latin culture, so it can be used across different cultures.” With Book # 10 she mentions the fact that it contains a lot of slang and things people in general are not well familiarized with. Slang is tied up to certain socio-historical period, so it helps to know about the copyright date and to learn it is a quite new book.

Participant # 2: Peter

Description

Peter was born in Philadelphia, PA. He has lived for 6 years in Louisiana. He is the father of one son. He holds a B.S. in Psychology and Business. At this moment, he is a substitute teacher and tutor for levels K-12. Previously, he was a Communication Manager in LA Armed Forces in the State Office of Emergency Preparedness. He has traveled worldwide through the Military Service and for personal interest.
**Elements**

Describing Book # 1 Peter, Participant # 2 says, “it is like a signature of the Spanish culture.” The elements that he observed to structure this story are the illustrations, the values they talk about and the titles given to the main characters. For Book # 2 Peter mentions the names of the characters, the writing style and the use of the animals to portray human characteristics. “This is a positive aspect as it does not get into the situation of different ethnicities. Everything is stated with the use of animals.” With Book # 3 Peter refers to the *posadas* and the piñatas all set in a Hispanic setting full of colors. In contrast, Peter points out that Book # 4 does not have a clear presence of Hispanic elements, and the illustrations are rather stereotyped, i.e. the typical sombrero, the peasant’s clothing and the cacti all around. Book # 5 is easy to identify with the Hispanic culture because of the illustrations, the bright colors, and the physical features of the people: dark eyes, dark hair and dark skin. For Book # 6, Peter points out the landscape and vivid colors in the illustrations; the title of the book and “the use of the word magic that can be connected with that magical realistic world of the Latin American people almost immediately.” In Books # 7, # 8, # 9, Peter observes the use of the Spanish words, the artwork with all the energetic colors and the rhythm of the stories and how it flows so easily. For Book # 10 Peter refers to the rhythm of the story, “the way the book is written,” and the Spanish words in the vocabulary. “Even the glossary at the beginning will be beneficial to portray the Hispanic culture.”

**Stereotypes**

For Book # 1 Peter indicates the formalities the characters use to address each other, their formal way of dressing (even when doing housework), and the typical roles of males and females. In Books # 2, # 3, # 4, # 5, # 6, #7, # 8, and #9 Peter did not observe any
stereotypical negative images, “just traditional scenes connected with the nature full of colors.” He also refers to one of the fingerprints of the Hispanic representations, that is the physical features and the dark, olive skin colors. Only in Book # 6 Peter observes that rich people are portrayed in a different way: they are blonde, dressed up and they look arrogant, “…but the Hispanic spirit is present at any moment anywhere.” For Book # 10 Peter mentions “if it can be picked up as negative, I just want to mention the level of informality around everywhere in the story.” Besides he refers to the way they talk based on slang.

**Development and End of the Stories**

For Book # 1 Peter indicates that the story line reminds him of the American mainstream in literature as well as of the Aesop’s Fables, meaning what you should do and what you should not do. The end seemed unexpected because “nobody expects the suitor to die.” For Books # 2, # 3, # 4, # 5, #7, # 8, and # 9, Peter says that they follow a common story line. There is a situation that happens and then at the end there is a moral that explains why something happened. It would explain human nature or it would explain what is not understood. Referring to the end of these books, Peter says that it is unexpected “only in the sense that maybe the explanation why something happened is unexpected.” With Books # 3, # 4, # 5, # 7, # 8, and # 9, the end is expected, “the stories have nice endings: if you give, you receive something much bigger. It fits well with the stories and everybody learns from the experience.” With Book # 6 Participant # 2 says this book does not follow the common story line. “It is not a common story to see in the North American folklore. It shows somebody who is taught to respect nature and the land. Then he will learn how to work with it, to get around with it, to apply the resources that are provided and you will be better in the long run in the Hispanic culture.” The story is full of surprises, the end is unexpected and it teaches a
lesson that will last forever. In Book # 10 Peter indicates that the story line is not a common one. It follows an orthodox approach in children’s books with bounces back and forth. “For older children the book is a try for their imagination and the development of their critical thinking.” The end is unexpected because everything turns out well, and the rhythm of the prose is fast paced and vibrant.

Roles, Lifestyles and Relationships

Commenting on Book # 1 Peter refers to the role of minorities--the Hispanic characters --and how this book portrays accurate and positive role models, as far as the extended family is involved. Concerning lifestyles Peter says, “it is not important to notice the time but the nurturing among the different characters. You do not see much of that in the forefront in today’s mainstream literature.” According to Peter, this book should be used as a historical reference as it was written in 1932: to show children the now and then, how it was in the past and how it is now. It was hard to read and understand, but definitely just different. It shows it is similar to Latin American lifestyles in some ways because of the strong family ties. Relationships are similar “as that time there was a big immigration, the different ethnic groups brought strong family values, and life was family oriented, but we can assume these were and these are universal values.” There is a common thread between the North American and the Latin American culture for describing relationships. With Book # 2 Peter perceives again the important role of the families and their ties. The stories are similar to many North American stories as they are also depicting rural settings and the universal theme of animals. The Hispanic relationships and lifestyles are also clearly shown and well depicted. Peter says, “I believe in the Hispanic culture because there is so much interaction and lifestyles are so rich in the every day life.” In Book # 3 Peter indicates that women get into crucial roles in
this story. “They guide the little girl, they help her along when she gets into trouble. They reassure her, they are patient and nurturing.” So the relationships are shown as very similar to the Latin American and the North American realities; there is a mother to the child, an aunt to the niece connection. Parents and adults are the teaching guidance to children anywhere around. Simultaneously, the book shows the different concept of personal space for the two cultures. “In the United States people try to keep their own space, while in Latin America people are closer, there is more interaction.” Associated with Book # 4, Peter mentions that the outstanding role is focused on the community and the shared life inside it, either for good or bad intentions. In this book, animals’ lifestyles are very similar to people’s lifestyles and the way they interact among them “… the different types of people, their different shapes, sizes and they way they communicate among them.” It is important to indicate that this is a universal story and to make it Hispanic they use names in Spanish. All the rest can be considered as part of a universal context. In Books # 5, # 6, and # 9, women, senior citizens and children are important parts of the interaction in the community and have a determining role in the way these stories take place. This interaction is very strong as it is in reality in Latin America. This connection is not only among the people but also with nature and the surroundings. “You can see more of the meaning of a strong community in these books.” For Book # 6 lifestyles are definitely centered in a rural setting and on the folklore to explain how things are happening. “You can see common, everyday people and how they interact with nature. And then, how nature helps the common guy and not the rich guy.” For Book # 7 children and senior citizens have a major role. “It was interesting to see how the girl asked the grandma a number of questions, how she was guided and taught by her grandma.” Connected with lifestyles in this book there is a typical situation that happens to many
immigrants to this country when they try to associate everything around them with what they have in their countries. It can be interpreted as a wish to continue with the cultural traditions and to transmit them to the new generations. “Relationships in Latin America are different in a way, as there is a constant rapport between children and the elderly: how children respect the elderly people and look up to them to get advice.” Comparing with the United States, Peter indicates, “Still I do not think that there is so much involvement between the elderly and children here.” For Book # 8, Participant # 2 says, “Everyone has an outstanding role here, all the children and all the adults. Everyone gets involved in the story and they have a rich interaction with the adults.” Lifestyles are similar in both cases, i.e. in Latin America and in the United States—the surroundings and the traditions. In this case the traditional values are mounted on an urban setting, in a middle class situation, not anymore only in the countryside. Concerning Book # 10 all of the characters have interesting roles. For example, when they are trying different food like cats eating dogs’ biscuits and dogs eating cheese, “I just can see the metaphor used there and it is quite interesting because they did not stick to the typical stereotypes, dogs eating bones and cats eating cheese. All of this is great to express tolerance, change and acceptance.” Lifestyles as portrayed in this book are similar to what happens in the inner city, in the barrio in New York or Los Angeles, and Peter says, “I also believe it is what happens in a big urban area in Latin America.” Relationships are similar because in an urban setting you see all types of transactions or interactions among people of different backgrounds. “All these animals represent the different ethnic groups in this contemporary world.
Heroes

In general terms, Peter affirms that there is a difference between the heroes in the North American writings and the heroes in the Hispanic writings. More exactly, he says that the heroes depicted in the North American writings get notorious, they get famous, and they are everywhere in the media. The American hero is always looking for recognition and fame. Readers or viewers look for them among the outstanding people, like famous artists or famous sportsmen, different and distant from the own reality. This makes them difficult to emulate. In the Hispanic writings the hero becomes heroic through spontaneous action, for the effect they have on some people, what they do for somebody else and they don’t expect any reward or big recognition. As they are usually among the members of the family or friends, they are more touchable or attainable. They can be reached and imitated. So, in practical terms Martina is the hero in Book # 1 as she does her best in the search for happiness, but at the end she stays by herself. In Book # 2 heroes have an ongoing role. After one hero has done something, he is expected to continue. It is a reasonable expectation. “In that way he seems to be wise and guiding people. American heroes do not seem to have that role. They come and go.” For Books # 3, # 7, # 8, and # 9, Peter recognizes the family members as heroes. So he follows the Latin American tradition of looking up to them as positive role models. “You look for heroes within your family circle. You do not go much outside of that.” They do great and simple things on a consistent base, such as parents or teachers. In Books # 4 and # 6 Peter observes more portrayals of heroes. They are closer to the type of heroes in the American writings. They are presented as common people, but they are part of the folklore and the universal characterizations. Concerning Book # 5 Participant # 2 indicates that heroes are people whose kids look up to regularly, not just for an
extraordinary event. “They are common people, in common places acting in a common way and they are just there in the family circle acting or interacting with them on a regular, consistent basis.” Again in Book # 10 Peter points out that “you see a hero as far as the little guy coming through, not doing anything extraordinary. He acts just like himself, he is a little observant, and he rises for the occasion.” The hero is a common person out of the daily, ordinary life.

Reaffirmation of Hispanic Pride

For Book # 1 Peter says that it is a positive story as it shows positive values around the family, positive customs, images, courtesies that “…this culture should not be ashamed of, that they should believe in to make better families and a better society.” This book helps to confront the negative, stereotyped images in the media day after day. Books # 2, # 3, # 6, # 7, # 8, and # 9, are seen as clear examples to reaffirm the pride in the child because if the books are presented in a way that the story is consistent with his values and his culture, the child can see all the positive elements: the daily interaction, the strong family ties, the way cooking is done, the entertainment, the heritage, the traditions and the common thread with nature. Book # 4, on the contrary, is not seen as a strong possibility to uplift the pride of the child’s community. There are no specific Hispanic elements that will leave a strong impression on the child. When discussing Book # 5 Peter calls attention to the illustrations. “The child will be able to see his resemblance, so he can endure strong bonds between the community and the family.” For Book # 10 Peter points out its positive asset to help a child feel pride of his ancestry; for instance, in the way characters are depicted using plain language. There is no misunderstanding; everything is clear-cut communication, “ . . . and, I understand that in the Hispanic culture there is a strong practicality, they perform their
practices, there is a purpose not so much on the superficial value to what they do.” Living in this inner city scenario cannot be labeled as negative, so it is important to show this book to children.

Authors’ Origins and the Projection of Their Knowledge

For Book # 1 Peter indicates it is not important to know the origins of the author while this author is able to direct a good, positive image to the audience and in this case, projecting the Hispanic culture. “Someone from another culture can do it, but he has to do a lot of research to give an accurate description, a valid cultural representation and the real values of the Hispanic culture.” For Books # 2, # 3, #4, # 5, # 6, # 8, # 9, and # 10 this participant [Peter] says it is important to know about the authors, not so much for the children but for the adult reader to be certain that these authors have instilled the right and positive message. The projection is seen because the corresponding author follows a writing style and he even includes some of the personal experiences as a child and a reader can feel them as they are detailed and they have a personal touch. “A close interaction with nature is also perceived: how the wind blows, how certain elements of the nature would change everything in strange ways.” At the end Peter indicates it can be important for children to know if the author or illustrator is of Hispanic origin because they can feel the positive projection and the pride, to know why or how stories are written, to reinforce the Hispanic cultural identity. A sense of solidarity can be built up with the characters and the problem solving situations they have to face. With Book # 7 all the above mentioned is perfectly applicable. It is necessary to add “the switching of languages within the book is so authentic and it gives a sense of perfect immersion in that magical world.” This helps to better
understand that real world through which immigrants have to go through when they face a language barrier.

**Use of Negative Words, Concepts or Illustrations**

For all of the books, Peter indicates that he does not see any negative images, concepts or illustrations. All the elements are equally introduced, kept in the system and presented together at the end. Peter states that you cannot accept as an obvious fact that if you see a “bad Hispanic character” all the Hispanics characters will be alike. Readers have to pay attention to the flaw of the story and the characters. Exactly Peter says, “as far as the story talks about a character and it does not talk about ethnicity or race problems, it is all right.” Even the use of Spanish is observed in a positive way as it can help the child to have a first encounter with a foreign language and the perception of a different culture. Even some of the nicknames should be taken with care, and one should not try to go over the limit looking for non-existent meanings, as when they have been overused by the media, as ‘Nacho’.

**Copyright Date**

For Books # 1 and # 6 Peter states that it is important to remember how to establish the clear difference between what was happening before and what happens today, how the circumstances have changed, and how much can not be applied today. As a valuable teaching lesson, these books can be used at any time and in any context. Books # 2 and # 4 can also be told anytime, anywhere. “They cross the line of classic stories. They are like fables.” Book # 3, # 7, # 8, and # 9 follow the same previous classification. “This is what the family does with children whether it is at the beginning of the 20th century or not. Children need to be nurtured and these are the same steps in the process.” With Book # 5, no attention has to be
paid to the copyright date from the children’s perspective, just probably from the educators’ points of view, as at that time there was a special sensitivity for bilingualism. Concerning Book # 10, Participant # 2 says, “I do not think the date would have anything to do with the comprehension of the story and the points the author wants to get across.”

Participant # 3: Dominique

**Description**

Dominique was born in Chicago, IL and she has lived for seven years in Louisiana. She is married to Hamady from Mauritania and they have two daughters. She holds a Master in Public Administration and a B.A. in Economics. Currently, she is pursuing her Ph.D. in Geography. She has traveled abroad to Europe, Africa and Latin America for pleasure, education and business. She has a daily contact with foreigners at home and at the university.

**Elements**

As the most important elements that portray the Hispanic culture in Book # 1 Dominique indicates the names of the characters, the way they dress, the way Martina takes care of the house and the way she interacts with the male characters. For example, Martina will not let them in her house and she will not talk to two of them at the same time. For Book # 2 she does not see many elements: just animals that can be anywhere in the world and some people who have sombreros. In contrast, in Book # 3 “there are elements to show the Hispanic culture in every kind of way, in clothes, hairstyles, scenes on the streets, the types of trees around, the way the house is painted, the social structure, that is to say, the roles of men and women, the way the girl relates with the piñata, the rituals and all the cultural atmosphere.” With Book # 4, Dominique mentions the use of Spanish language, some of the decorations, some customs and some of the dancing involved. Concerning Book # 5, mostly
for the bilingual version, i.e. the whole story is in both languages and the colorful
illustrations. In Book # 6, “we understand for the location of the story, the word *cadejos* and
the explanation for the legend behind it”. For Books # 7 and # 9, the use of Spanish words,
the clothes, the types of buildings and the colorfulness show the presence of the Hispanic
culture. They are cooking tamales that is a typical Latin American dish and they are inviting
all the family over in Book # 8. Also, it is important how this book shows physical
differences among the characters: they do not all look alike. “Authors have realized that not
all Latin American are exactly the same or they have not portrayed white people with only
darker skin.” In Book # 10 she points out the use of slang, buildings or stores with their
names in Spanish in a Hispanic neighborhood in the United States, in the barrio. At the same
time, paganism mingled with Christian religion can be observed along the story. There are
drawings of little angels and little devils flying and coexisting to support or distort the plot.

**Stereotypes**

For Book # 1 Dominique refers to the clothes worn by Martina, the shawl, the
Spanish comb in her hair and the extremely clean house. In some of the illustrations in Books
# 2 and # 5 there are a number of poor people barefooted, not only children but also adults.
Then, the level of poverty can lead to stereotyped images. Other illustrations show the smart
rabbit wearing clothes and in contrast, the tiger does not have clothes. So, “I thought this was
kind of strange: here is the civilized person wearing clothes, while the untamed is not. It
would be along the same line that poor people wear less clothes, so are they less civilized?”
Clothes are perceived as a mark for stereotypes in Book # 3. Boys are playing outside and
they always look to be independent, while girls are always around their moms and at home.
“If this can be interpreted as stereotyped, I would mention it as there is a continuation of the
traditional roles for men and women that start from the childhood.” No stereotypes are encountered in Books # 4 and # 6. Books # 7 and # 8 portray positive images. There are different groups of people mingling together, in addition to veneration for the elderly people. With Book # 9, it is possible to observe the more active role that women have in the home place and in the market place, as well as the more difficult physical activities that men perform in the work place. For Book # 10 the fact of wearing bandanas and the gang aspects of their characters can be misunderstood.

Development and End of the Stories

Book # 1, according to Dominique, does not follow the common story line because all the characters are counting to marry Martina and this is not a common plot in children’s books. “It is not a real topic for children, it is out of their sphere.” The end could be expected after so many tricks and indecision “… but it is a little morbid and sad because you usually have a good ending and the suitor does not end up in a pot.” For Book # 2 the story lines follow the regular path, as they are a collection of legends and fairy tales, which regularly have happy endings. Books # 3, # 4, # 6, # 8, # 9, and # 10 have a standard story line and end. There is a problem to be solved, they solve it, there is a moment of panic and everything gets always solved at the end. Book # 5 is surprising in the sense that the reader expects Uncle Nacho to permanently keep his old hat, but finally he decides to change it. So, the end is unexpected. With Book # 7, Dominique indicates, “you would not expect an old lady to fly around town. That’s coming of an adventure, a real defiance from cover to cover.” Book # 8 shows a great deal of compassionate understanding between the different generations.
Roles, Lifestyles and Relationships

With Book # 1 there were a senior lazy frog and a couple of old characters, but they are all treated all the same: in a good way. They talk the whole night long, so that is their special characteristic. Comparing lifestyles, Martina as a woman would not be living by herself in Latin America. “That struck me at the beginning, Martina did not have any other people around living with her in such a big house and that is not common in Latin America, not like here that it is quite normal.” This book does not show real relationships, people are just coming to see her, but they come and go. In some of the stories in Book # 2 Dominique believes that children were shown as being the victims. They were the victims of the adults and women were the perpetrators of the bad things that happened to children. For example, in one case one woman imprisons the boy under the bed. “My impression is children were subjected to these adventures, they had to get themselves out of it. So they were the victims, but consequently they became the heroes.” Lifestyles were more similar to the times when the book was written (1946). Relationships show characters that used to use more their brains and intelligence than their physical strength. In Books # 3, # 4, and # 8, the roles follow along the typical stereotypes: women just go shopping, take care of the house and the kids and socialize. Kids are there just to play and wait for their parents. Senior citizens are only walking around and there is an old poor man with no shoes; “all of these characters have this kind of typical depiction.” The only change in Book # 8 is that men take a more active role in the cooking in this story and that was not common situation years ago. Christmas anticipation is in the air as everywhere. Just the customs and traditions to follow are different, but the sense of vacation and family reunion is the same. Relationships are good, everybody feels well. Parents are nice to kids and kids are nice to everybody else. Book # 4 shows a more
universal approach. These lifestyles and relationships could happen anywhere. The role of women in Book # 5 is interesting as they are showing Uncle Nacho the right way to view his new hat, they are giving him advice and their opinions are valued. Lifestyles in Latin America are somewhat different because you can see the relationship between the whole community and Uncle Nacho. They know each other and they care about themselves. “There is a focus on the rural world and in the community.” There is also another difference to think about, “What to do with this old hat? I mean, something non-materialistic, people in the United States do not think twice before throwing away something old.” Then, it can be concluded that it is better to give away before throwing away. Concerning Book # 6, Dominique says that in general, people have a passive role. They are only used to reinforce the descriptions of how the magic dogs are integrated into their lives. Lifestyles in Latin America, as shown in the book, “are dissimilar because there is a close integration with the environment. They really live by the volcanoes and with the dogs. People are really part of the nature that surrounds them, whereas in North America we are separated from the natural environment. We are in our own-built environment. They also show the striking difference of classes. Not only this, but also the overpowering nature of the richer people and how they want to be paternalistic and control the lives of the poor people. At the same time, how they are connected with the military to exert the power.” This is a good story for everybody to get to know some more about the realities in Latin America, according to Dominique. Book # 7 transmits a positive image of the roles and relationships between children and the elderly. “Both of them are active and doing extraordinary things.” In this lifestyle there is a lot of harmony, sort of ideal situation. Relationships between elderly and youngsters are beautifully depicted, not the common way they are in the United States. Book # 8 shows similar
lifestyles within a nuclear family in Latin America and the United States in this exciting period of anticipation for Christmas. The relationships are part of what happens in a middle class family in Latin America. In Book # 9, the grandmother once again has an outstanding role. “She is the resourceful person, the one who creates anything to pursue her goal.”

Heroes

With Book # 1, Participant # 3 sees the characters representing the suitors as the heroes, mainly, Raton Perez who is gallant, courteous, beautifully dressed and more positively seen, and always displaying class and charm. In some of the stories in Book # 2 some of the characters were the heroes on the one hand, but in other situations they were the victims. For Book # 3 everybody is part of the story. “Everybody is and even the girls are heroes.” Book # 4 would have no special heroes to consider. For Book # 5, Dominique expresses her opinion, “I think the people who find the hat and bring it back to Uncle Nacho can be considered as heroes.” For Book # 6 “the peasants were clever and that is how they defeated the antagonistic characters, using their cleverness and not their strength.” Books # 7 and # 8 present heroes who are similar to the heroes in the American writings and Dominique demonstrates this saying, “You see just common people who act in a similar way to common people.” In Book # 9, grandmother is the hero as she has the persistence to continue until she gets all she needs: she never gives up. “She is the one who is going to get all the ingredients whatever it takes.” For Book # 10, Dominique mentions the optimism held by the characters to survive all adversities and continue hoping for the best, demonstrating friendship and care for the others as their strongest value.
Reaffirmation of Hispanic Pride

Concerning Book # 1 this pride can be confirmed through the messages that men are very polite and respectful and this female character keeps pride of cleaning her house. For Book # 2, Dominique indicates that it does not help very much as it has a number of universal stories belonging to the universal culture. Just the names indicate these stories have a Hispanic background. Book # 3 has some important positive elements. It shows a fun time “a different way to celebrate Christmas that is unique to the Hispanic culture.” Book # 4 would not harm the reader at all “with the names in Spanish and the different attitudes the characters develop.” Book # 6 shows the importance of nature in the Hispanic life. “How Hispanic people worship it, fear it and respect it: the way they can see the positive side even in the most dangerous situations. The way they feel empowered by the volcanoes.” Books # 5, # 7, # 8, and # 9 show the positive side of having a member in the family who speaks another language, so children of the second generation can perceive the flow of the conversation and how easy it can be to keep up with the conversations in both languages. Besides their relationship is so rich and they project happiness to the reader. Book # 10 points out,

I would say it is more or less positive depending on where you live. As if you live in an area of the barrio, the book will help to show the valuable signs such as friendship, commitment, community life and responsibility. If you do not live somewhere like the one shown in the book, you will have to give more explanations to let children understand.

Authors’ Origins and the Projection of Their Knowledge

For Book # 1 Dominique indicates that it is not essential to know about the author’s origins, but to learn that this story is based on the oral tradition, that it has a historical and cultural base and it is not only pure fiction. The author projects her knowledge through the
language, the traditions and the onomatopoeias used to distinguish the animals’ language. In Book # 2, it is interesting to know about the author, “as these are universal stories but they have been told from a slightly different perspective, with a Latin American spin.” The projection is through the language and the mixture of the Hispanic and non-Hispanic settings, the direct environment where the story is told that project the author’s cultural environment. Book # 3 indicates it is not necessary “as the story says it all.” The projection is through the language and the cultural descriptions. Book # 4 shows the projection through the different perceptions of the animals. In the illustrated story, cows are seen as pretty and soft animals as they are domestic and a commodity. The story in Book # 5 and the way that it is portrayed helps understand much better the author’s origins. Simultaneously this book shows the cultural relationship that exists between the young and the older people. Concerning Book # 6, Dominique comments it is quite important to know about the author as this is based in real history and “you can perceive the author’s experiences and involvement.” The author’s projection is quite accurate. With Books # 7, # 8, and # 9, Dominique indicates it is important to know about the authors “because of the use of the language, the authentic depiction of the reality and the way the story has been told.” For Book # 10, it is also important to know about the author “as he does such a good portrayal of this reality: the whole culture of ‘I’m your brother’. He calls them brothers, even though they are not brothers, just friends. But this group of friends comes to supersede the family.” You can not always show just the good side of life, but you can also do it in a positive way.

Use of Negative Words, Concepts or Illustrations

In Book # 1, Participant # 3 indicates that it is negative when Martina speaks so openly proud of her ancestry, because that gives the idea she is going to discriminate against
other ancestries. Book # 2 shows the older generation “doing wrong, bad things and they have yellow faces and little eyes which is contrary to the belief that big eyes reflect honesty. So, negative roles are given to the older people.” This was quite common before in the stories for children, as older people were the wicked, the evil and the witches. Today there is a change as there is a reverence for older people and they are absolutely integrated with the rest of the family and the community. Book # 3 shows a reflection of reality--poor working people carrying heavy loads. A dog with fair fur is kind of unusual because the reader would think dogs would usually have dark fur in a Latin American context. In Book # 4 the behaviors of Señor Dog and Señor Goat that restrict their wives to stay at home can be observed as negative. As a negative misconception in Book # 5 “this idea that anybody who does not live in a developed country lives in the jungle can be observed.” The book shows monkeys and parrots all around that are part of the reality, but these illustrations can be wrongly interpreted. Book # 6 shows a depiction of two worlds: the rich and the poor. But this is not held as absolutely negative because it is reality and how these two worlds interact and face each other. Books # 7, # 8, and # 9 do not have negative images. Book # 9 for instance deals with the concept of poverty in a respectful way. In Book # 10 “the absence of parents can be seen as a sadly negative image and that family has to be substituted by friends.”

Copyright Date

Book # 1 for Dominique is a real jewel. “I was surprised to see the neat illustrations considering it is from the 30’s.” For Books # 2 and # 4 it is not important to know about the copyright date. There is no time restriction in these stories. In Book # 3 rigid roles in certain
characters can be observed and this can be connected with the time of publication when there were less openings for women in societies. In Book # 5 it is positive to know its publication date as it shows the empowered roles women have nowadays. For Book # 6 Dominique indicates that it is important to know the date (1990) because this book deals with hard issues, but in a realistic way. “It is not just a fairy tale out of the imagination, but it is authentic.” Book # 7 has the naïve type of illustrations. They are also two-dimensional. So for the artwork it is interesting to learn the copyright date. Books # 8, # 9, and # 10 shows marked similarities between the American and the Latin American families to celebrate holidays, so “we can observe it is closer to our current reality.”

Participant # 4: Charles

Description:

Charles was born in Birmingham, AL and he has lived for 14 years in Louisiana. He holds an M.A. in Geography and a B.A. in Psychology. Currently, he is pursuing his Ph.D. in Geography. Previously he worked in a Camp for Emotionally Disturbed Adolescents and as a Teacher Lab at a College level. Nowadays, he is a consultant in Computer Mapping. He has a regular contact with foreigners at the university. He has traveled extensively within the United States.

Elements

Commenting on Book # 1, Charles indicates that the elements that portray the Hispanic culture are the words in Spanish along the text, the clothing and the architecture. He also calls the attention to the opening where it says this is taken from the oral traditions in Puerto Rico. The stories in Book # 2 could be set up anywhere in the world and they remind Charles of the Aesop’s fables. With Book # 3 he indicates that “. . . the posadas is a typical
Hispanic tradition, besides the illustrated clothing.” Book # 4 is more difficult to distinguish as Hispanic as it is based on fables on animals; just some of the language in Spanish indicates that there is a connection with the Hispanic culture. Book # 5 is bilingual, “so that is a big clue and a great help. The graphic art is definitely showing a Hispanic setting, some Hispanic village type of situation.” Book # 6 clearly indicates that the story is set in El Salvador. In addition it is a bilingual book that can also be used as an educational tool for the Spanish class. Concerning Book #7, “It is a kind of universal story involving the relationship between grandma and her grandchild. But it is the tone; the use of the Spanish language and the magical realism behind the story that tells me it is a Hispanic story,” according to Charles. Book # 8 is setting up right from the title ‘tamales’ and all the food around, from the names in Spanish and all the words in Spanish that it is a Hispanic story. Book # 9 is rich in Hispanic elements: some of the clothing, the way the characters wear their hats, life in a rural area, Hispanic names and they way people address each other, the bartering for items at the market—taking baskets to the market to exchange the products. With Book # 10, Charles says, “there is a glossary of Spanish terms in the front part of the book and I really got the feeling the story develops in South Central, Los Angeles, California trying to show that lifestyle there.”

**Stereotypes**

Connected with stereotypes in Books # 1 and # 7, Charles mentions the dresses—“kind of exotic”—and the architecture. There are no stereotypes in Books # 2, # 4, # 5, # 8, and # 9. In Book # 3 this Participant refers to the working men with the heavy loads in their backs and barefooted, and also “a couple of references to the relationship servant-girl.” For Book # 6 there is “this image of the mean plantation owner exploiting the workers. As well,
the way this landlord is dressed, with elegant Westernized clothes and a huge ring. There is also a waiter in the scene whose complexion is dark.” With Book # 10 “the kind of hip-hop youth culture from Los Angeles, California could be interpreted as stereotyped . . . if readers want to interpret them in a negative way,” according to Charles.

Development and End of the Stories

When discussing Book # 1, Charles points out “It is difficult to indicate this story follows an expected story line because there is violence, that was quite common in the classic children’s books—the witch burnt into fire, the wolf parted into two, the princess poisoned to death. But later on, in more contemporary stories there is more of a moral advice. There is not such an unexpected end like in this story.” In Book # 2 the good people get to be good and win somehow over the forces that are not so good and are sort of irritating. For this reason, the end is expected in these stories. For Books # 3, # 4, # 8, and # 10 both the story lines and the ends are expected. In Book # 7, Charles mentions his delight and his surprise with the way this story evolves. He observes the element of magical realism transferred to this children story and “it gives the story a soft tone, kind of mysterious feeling of floating around.” The end is unexpected, too. Books # 5, # 6, and, # 9 have an unexpected story line as the characters perform such a number of unusual activities, but after all you are ready to expect anything for the end. “You can only know they will get everything because of their perseverance.”

Roles, Lifestyles and Relationships

For Book # 1 Charles points out that the main role is on Martina’s hands, the only female character. She is passive and sits down to wait for her suitors to come, but then she makes the decisions about who will be the selected suitor and in general terms, what happens
in the story. Life in North America was different in those years. There was more time to stop by and talk to the neighbors, so it was more alike to Latin America. Today is absolutely different. “No woman would be sitting down and waiting to be proposed by four or five suitors in a row.” Relationships have also changed because getting married is not the primary quest. Most of the stories in Book # 2 show animals personifying people as the main characters. In general, these characters are weaker or more fragile, but they become stronger along the story. “Their world is different, but the stories seem to be set up in a close reality . . . somewhere you could find today, not in a distant past or mythological environment.” Concerning Book # 3 the little girl Cecilia has a prominent role, “. . . You can see the world through her eyes and it is a kind of childlike innocence.” In North America there is so much pressure on getting everything for everybody for Christmas, but in this story practically nobody worries about getting the presents. They are more focused on the celebration and gathering together. With Book # 4 Charles expresses his opinion saying that the roles performed by the animals characterizing human beings are funny for today’s reality because the females are incredibly passive. Lifestyles are different as everything takes place in the jungle. But they have a great time with musicians, dances and party around and relationships turn to be positive. Everybody seems to have the main roles and have some relevant importance in Book # 5. Dealing with lifestyles and relationship, there is a fairly, typical rural setting that does not show an absolute change between North America and Latin America. For Book # 6 the central characters are the magic dogs. “The established relationships among the characters are quite similar to what it is observed in Latin America: among the peasants, between the peasants and the landowners and among the people in the privileged positions.” Lifestyles are pretty similar to what happens in the United States and in
Latin America. Book # 7 portrays a girl who is instrumental in the story. She leads the sequence of actions and grandma follows her. The story takes place in New York, and then it helps to show some landmarks in the city. The relationship between the girl and grandma is quite close and tender. In Book # 8 the children make the action. The way lifestyles are depicted is similar and comparable to lifestyles in Latin America and in North America. The relationships are the beautiful relationships sustained in the family and friends circle. For Book # 9, children, women and senior citizens have leading roles. They encounter the people in the market, they establish the necessary connections and they develop the thread of the story. Lifestyles in Latin America are similar to the story, especially in the rural areas were you could still probably see this kind of bartering. This type of exchange does not take place in the United States, but family relationships are comparable. “What is different is the relationship with the vendors in the market as in the United States it is quite difficult to become friends with the sales people.” Main roles in Book # 10 are in the hands of male characters. Lifestyles are similar to what happens in a suburban area of a big city, either in Latin America or in the United States. “I can also observe this story happening to either an adopted or a foster child who is trying to learn more about his own birthday and feels quite sad. It is then when his friends come to support him.”

Heroes

In general terms in Book # 1 there are no heroes for Charles; they are common people doing common things. There are no grandiose acts of heroism. Book # 2 shows some “heroes” because there are trickster characters who try to smart out the rest. Book # 3 shows the little girl “who has so much curiosity and desire for this party and she does everything possible to pursue her dream.” Commenting on Book # 4 Charles sees the dog as very clever,
unseeing the danger to escape with his friend, the goat. So, he becomes the hero of the story. Heroes in Books # 5, # 6, # 8, # 9, and # 10 are quite similar to the heroes in American writings, common people doing their daily activities, behaving in a similar way and doing all their best to get the best of life. Book # 7 does not have specific heroes, “. . . just the whole situation is different and magical.”

Reaffirmation of Hispanic Pride

For Book # 1 Charles expresses that there are two parts: one is the use of the language and the songs in Spanish and then, the cast of characters having a cockroach as the starring role. “. . . Evidently this has a particular meaning in this culture to have put all this into context.” Concerning Books # 2 and # 4 there are not any particular elements that could be used to reaffirm the Hispanic pride. “I did not see it connected to any culture in particular.” Book # 3 is much closer to reality and to the possibility to use it as a learning tool. Parents can use it with children to remember their upbringing and children learn and reaffirm their roots. Children from other cultures can learn about this tradition and compare them with their own ways to celebrate. The positive aspects for Books # 5 and # 6 are that they are bilingual and their aesthetic beauty expressed through the pictures. With Book # 7 Charles indicates that he is absolutely positive because the illustrations are so beautiful and enchanting. The family relationships are so valuable in the way they are shown in this book. The tone of the story is tender and touching and the way Spanish and English are interwoven throughout the story is pleasant. Besides it is a nice way to demonstrate it is not so difficult to understand a second language. Book # 8 shows the family values as the most important to care for. Book
# 9 is more difficult to deal with as some children can make fun of the bartering. With Book # 10, Charles points out “. . . it can be more trivializing because it is so hip. It is a kind of life that it is difficult to explain and it will depend on the environment to be accessed.”

### Authors’ Origins and the Projection of Their Knowledge

For Book # 1 Charles points out that it would be interesting to know more about the author because “he was impressed with such a deep and meaningful Hispanic story, with such an abundance of Hispanic elements.” There are so many subtle meanings and unspoken situations that lead to so many possible different interpretations. For example, he enjoyed when Martina said, “How will you talk to me in the future?” In Book # 2 Charles indicates that these stories have been picked up from the author’s family, so it interesting to learn more about the author and learn how well he projects the Hispanic images. Charles comments on Book # 3 that just in order to satisfy the curiosity he would read more about the author and how well the author projects his knowledge with solid descriptions of this type of Christmas celebration. For Book # 4 it does not seem necessary to learn more about the author, as it is a more universal type of story. Books # 5 and # 6 project the authors’ knowledge through the use of the language, the contextual situation of the story and the illustrations. So it is also positive to know about the author. With Book # 7 Charles indicates that as a teacher “it is always good to know as much as possible.” The projection is done with the help of the Spanish language and the use of ‘magical realism element’ that is a way to understand, live the reality and have a different view of the world so particular to Latin American people. “And there is something really intense, sort of intangible, sweetness of tone, subtle, kind of real tenderness that is just brilliant that I was able to pick up in this story.” Commenting on Book # 8, Charles says that it is interesting to know about the author because he has been
able to depict this middle class family following the same old traditions for Christmas in such a good way. Book # 9 projects the bartering situation in a positive way and there is a feeling that people want to be absolutely fair and nobody wants to take advantage over the other. With Book # 10 Charles indicates, “the book would have more credibility if I know more about the author.” The use of the slang language demonstrates that somebody who is immersed in that kind of reality has written this story.

Use of Negative Words, Concepts or Illustrations

In Book # 1 Charles points out “that once I got passed the idea that a cockroach was the object of desire, I perceived her as very tidy and thrifty. I thought about this like positive. Thus, in general, this story did not strike me as negative.” Books # 2, # 4, # 7 and # 8 do not contain negative words, concepts or illustrations. Book # 3 shows the poor working people and that image can lead children to think that everybody looks like that in Latin America. With Book # 9, probably American children could tease around the situation of plucking a chicken in the kitchen. Book # 10, according to Charles, could be easily misunderstood and transformed into negative images, even saying, “I knew it was like that. So it has to be carefully handled and correctly portrayed.”

Copyright Date

For Book # 1 Charles indicates “it is interesting to know the copyright date as the story makes you think of those times when there was not so much time pressure and people were more rural, even in the United States with not so many cars around or noise around.” Concerning Books # 2, # 3, # 4 and # 5 “it is not so important as these stories are timeless, but at the same time the more information you get the better.” Books # 6, # 7, # 8, and # 9 show some progress in cultural sensitivity. “There is more appreciation and understanding
that other cultures have given value to the rest of the only English speakers. Definitely and simultaneously there is more awakening to the different cultures.” Book #10 shows what is happening right now, so it is absolutely updated.

Participant #5: Mary

Description

Mary was born in Edinburgh, Scotland. She has lived in the United States for 30 years. She is the mother of two children. She holds an MLIS from Louisiana State University and a Bachelor in Arts from the University of Bristol, England. Currently, she is a Children’s Librarian at the Greenwell Spring Road, Regional Branch East Baton Rouge Parish Libraries. She has a daily contact with foreigners at work, mostly Hispanic and Vietnamese. She has traveled extensively in Europe, Canada and the Caribbean.

Elements

Concerning Book #1 Mary refers to the clothing, when Martina wears a mantilla; the illustrations, which show traditional places in a Latin American setting; and the names of the main characters, Martina and Mr. Perez. With Book #2 the stories have some Hispanic flavor “. . . for some words in Spanish and probably some songs or exactly, lyrics in Spanish which probably were rescued from original legends.” But in general these stories have a more universal character. Book #3 does not necessarily have only Hispanic illustrations, but there is some vocabulary in Spanish. “It also contains all this story around the posadas and the Christmas traditions.” For Book #4 the characters address each other in a formal style, and “of course it is party oriented—they are preparing a dance party with all the guest animals.” Book #5 has the clothes; the names of the people, the illustrations and the way people look that give the book the Hispanic characteristics. Concerning Book #6 Mary
points out the location, the volcanoes, the *cadejos* or magic dogs, the colorful illustrations, the people’s appearances, and the Spanish words throughout the story. With Book # 7 Mary refers to the colorful and fanciful illustrations. “People look sort of the way Hispanic people look. They are wearing colorful clothes with all possible designs.” It is almost like a language-teaching book for North American children introducing them to the Spanish language. For Book # 8, Mary mentions the Spanish words that are used throughout the story, besides the colorful illustrations and the tamales presented as typical food for celebrations. Starting with the theme of the *sancocho* dish, everything looks Hispanic in Book # 9. With Book # 10, the glossary in the front of the book helps the reader understand immediately that it is a Hispanic book. There are some banners and signs on the streets in Spanish and English that make the reader think of the barrio.

**Stereotypes**

Book # 1 shows the gracious lady with the shawl, the fan and the sort of formal black dress. The style of the house looks Spanish “more Spanish than Hispanic, even though the book was written in Puerto Rico.” It is an elegant house, so the lady is in the balcony and there is the typical flamenco dancing. For Book # 2 Mary mentions the clothes and the specific regional dialects, “mostly used in the countryside, probably.” According to Mary, many children will not understand these stories connected with kings, as they look old fashioned and not connected with the Latin American reality. “They are just stereotyped images to show the connection with Spain the author probably has. Many people in Latin America find a way to say they are of Spanish descent.” Book # 3 definitely depicts two social classes: upper and lower. “The little girl lives in a big house and gets everything she wants, while you have all the poor people on the streets: old men looking poor, people
carrying baskets and heavy burdens on their backs.” Book # 4 has some stereotyped animals, but not necessarily looking Hispanic. The lion is the king in the jungle and everywhere, and the goat has a soft look. All the animals have big eyes. In Book # 5 the setting is rural, tropical and colorful. “It looks like Central America with the banana trees and the monkeys playing around.” The people look poor, but happy. The sombrero is made of straw: “you would expect a sombrero like that in a place like this.” For Book # 6 there is Don Antonio and his 13 brothers. “This is the stereotypical image of the really large Latin American family.” Also, some elements connect with the rich people in the story like the sparkling ring, sunglasses all the time and the fancy suits. They seem to be never working; just the poor people go and work. As the story develops in New York in Book # 7, not everything looks to be pertaining to the Hispanic culture; in fact, it shows a more diverse world. There are no stereotypes to distinguish in Book # 8. Book # 9 shows typical Latin American women in control. Grandpa is resting at home, while Grandma is doing the housework and looking around for the ingredients for the sancocho. The colorful illustrations show the natural world and the clothing of the characters, besides the long dark hair in plaits. Book # 10 is full of symbols: the angels flying around, the little devils on every page, the crosses, the characters wearing bandanas and the cool cats who are friends with everybody, including the dogs and the mice.

**Development and End of the Stories**

Concerning Book #1 Mary says that to some extent Martina had found the person she wanted for a husband, but unexpectedly he dies. “The reader even thinks that once the suitor has fallen into the pot, he will be able to come out and turn the whole story into something funny. Instead Martina turns into the widowhood. She will be sad forever. She shows the
typical Spanish way to lament: crying, singing and writing.” Mary comments that maybe most of the literature at that time (1932) was tragic. It is almost like an opera. Somebody has to die at the end to have a hero or a heroine. As stated by Mary, it is not easy to understand in Book # 4 why the goat loses his tail. He is a nice animal and normally, the boastful animals have accidents like this. Simultaneously, there is a festive mood in the characters, they cooperate to prepare the party: this is a common situation anywhere in the world, but then the events develop in an unclear way. There are a number of assumptions left in the air. So, “the end is absolutely unexpected and the situation around the tail is sort of tagged on as an excuse.”

For Books # 2, # 3, #5, # 6, # 7, # 8, and # 9, Mary indicates that the story lines flow easily and “you know what will happen. That everything is going to be all right and the crisis will be solved.” The end is expected, too. There are no outstanding surprises. In Book # 6 Mary enjoyed the way nature overcame the human power. Book # 10 does not follow the necessary typical story line, but “if you know something about the Latin American traditions, you know that anything can happen.” The end is not a surprise, as everybody gets together and they all enjoy the party.

Roles, Lifestyles and Relationships

For Book # 1 not any particular age is referred to. The characters all seem to represent adults. Commenting on lifestyles, Mary says “probably children would not connect with this type of lifestyle nowadays; everything seems to be so old-fashioned: the courtship, the weeping and wailing and the mourning for the rest of Martina’s life.” Even in Latin America lifestyles have changed; everything is faster and people are more determined to make things happen faster. Relationships are also different as people are committed to different activities
at the same time. With Book # 2 children play an important role; they are always playing around and observing the adults’ world. Senior citizens play an advisory role, being the wise people. Lifestyles are quite different as most of the stories are based on fantasy. Some of them look like Grimm’s fairy tales. But, there is an interesting interaction between the animals and the people in general when they have to get connected. Book # 3 shows the little girl Cecilia as the main character. Cecilia’s nanny is always around her and her mother is a more remote figure who controls the situation from the background. “This story shows a very feminist world. Women do all the actions.” Lifestyles are different from those in the United States as the characters in the story do a number of activities outdoors, even when they are at school, and there is a strong sense of community. They try to help each other to make the best possible celebration. There is also a difference between rich people and poor people and the way they look. “This lifestyle for Christmas could be compared with the tradition of Christmas carols in the United States when children go singing from door to door.” In Book # 4 the male animals have the main roles. They make the decisions of what to do next and just demand everything from their female counterparts. Lifestyles to prepare and celebrate parties are quite similar in Latin America and the United States. The only big difference is the type of dances these characters perform: tangos, jotas, waltzes and mazurkas. All these are closely connected with the Hispanic traditions. With Book # 5 Mary says, “senior citizens do not get treated very well. They have to follow the other people’s wishes. Uncle Nacho is kind of helpless.” On the other hand, the niece is the catalyst of the story. Women in general seem to be leading the story; they are strong and competent. Lifestyles are in a rural and poor area, just a small farm village where everybody knows each other. People are surrounded by the domestic animals, and they live in a close contact with nature. This is a typical situation
in many small places in Latin America. It is different from lifestyles in the United States, as you do not see so much poverty in a similar place here. For Book # 6 Mary points out that the female volcano is the strong figure. She has the water and the control of nature and over people. “This story shows the relevance of nature in people’s lives in Latin America. Music also plays an important role in these lifestyles and relationships. There is also the big contrast between the oppressed peasants and the oppressors: the reader can really perceive the gaps.”

Lifestyles are different from the possibilities of life in the United States, not only because of the contact with nature but also because of the differences of classes. In Book # 7 there is a beautiful sharing of responsibilities to lead the story between the grandma and the girl. They want to have all the adventures together and they keep on with them. It looks like the two characters are doing what they can do in a big city like New York or in any big city in Latin America. So, lifestyles as depicted in the story are similar. With Book # 8, senior citizens are in the background. They are visiting or around the scene because of the holidays. Children are always present; they are playing around. The little girl who lost the ring is the main character. The other children just follow her. This type of lifestyle could be anywhere in the Western world; it involves a modern urban family. The relationships are quite familiar and alike to the United States. Everybody tries to get involved in the preparation and celebration of this Christmas holiday. Everything is predictable: the reader expects it to happen like this.

In Book # 9, women have the main roles. Grandma is determined to get what she wants and she is trying to show her granddaughter how to do it. The rest of the children are going back and forth, just playing around. Lifestyles in Latin America are different from those in the United States because people are bargaining, a practice that is not common here. “They are poor, but they do not look so poor and they seem to have a comfortable and happy life with
strong relationships in the family and with the community.” Probably, this type of life is still possible to carry on in small towns or villages in Latin America. Book # 10 mostly has young male characters. Concerning lifestyles, everything around is contemporary: the way they prepare the party, the shopping at the market, the food for the party and the telephone conversations. This lifestyle can happen anywhere: either in Latin America or in the United States. “The difference relies on the barrio friendship and the protectiveness they have one for the other. These are strong feelings among Latin American people. They generally do not have the material resources, but they share that sense of friendship and protection.”

Heroes

Concerning Book # 1 Martina seems to be the heroine: “she is in charge of everything and even a little bossy. Men are kind of secondary characters in this story. They just follow her rules.” In Book # 2 all the characters at different times in the different stories look to be heroes. Book # 3 depicts the little girl, Cecilia, as the heroine because she does all the efforts to get what she wants, the piñata. For Book # 4 the real heroes are the dog and the goat that manage to escape from the lion. The heroine in Book # 5 is the niece. “She solves the problems, she has the ideas to do something different. This is similar to many North American books where children are able to come up with the creative ideas in an adults’ world.” When discussing Book # 6 Mary indicates that the real hero is nature. For instance, “the mountains defeat the bad guys and defend the weak people. Nature is looking after itself and looking after the people.” In Book # 7 the little girl is leading grandmother. This heroine looks more like the heroes in American stories when these heroes are trying to do something extraordinary. For Book # 8, the heroine is the little girl who does what it is expected from an American girl. “Her first reaction is to cover her tracks and then, asks for help to her peers.
Everybody helps her at the end and she is happy again.” Grandmother is the heroine in Book # 9, as she would do anything to provide for her family. “She would not take no for an answer.” Book # 10 shows the cats, members of this street gang, as the heroes because “they hang out with their friends, they want their friends to feel good and do something about it. Finally they carry on through their promises to their friends.”

Reaffirmation of Hispanic Pride

Book # 1 is not the best example to show the Hispanic pride. It only shows the great differences with the past from the historical point of view. Book # 2 portrays more of a worldview; that is to say, it refers to any culture in the world. Book # 3 is a positive book as it covers the traditions for Christmas very well. Books # 4 and # 7 could also be useful to make any child proud of his ancestry. Book # 5 mostly presents the younger generation as more intelligent and resourceful than the older generations. With Book # 6 the reader can learn very well about all this lifestyle. “The story has to be properly contextualized from the historical and geographical point of view and presented, not only to show the foreground of the story but also its background.” Book # 8 can be very useful to uplift a child’s pride. The traditional foods and the families’ long feasts are part of the customs that have been integrated into the modern world. Book # 9 can be positive to strengthen the relationships between girls and the rest of the family. But it is difficult to understand the view of this world in this story for a child who lives in North America. Book # 10 could also be used to make the Hispanic child proud if he were not confused with so many images. “The strong friendship they share suggests strong family ties.”
Authors’ Origins and the Projection of Their Knowledge

With Book # 1 if the writer knows the culture in an original way, it is possible to know where he is from. This author has projected his knowledge through the language and the unique way the story develops. Book # 2 is a compilation of stories, and it is interesting to see who the author is and how he projects the Hispanic culture in these stories. “So, the author has done it through the language transmitted with the songs, rhymes, dances and some typical customs for food, dressing or celebrations.” For Book # 3 it is helpful to know more about the author because the projection of this custom—the posadas—has been very well done. The reader can get to appreciate the meaning and the way these traditions are carried along. “You would assume the author has considerable knowledge of this Mexican world.” In Book # 4 it is not necessary to learn about the author because “it is a kind of universal story.” With Book # 5 it is important to get to know about the author because there is fantasy and reality at the same time, so as to be able to understand more of this world. The projection is based on the way people behave by either working or lazing around. Concerning Book # 6 it is important to be acquainted with the author as the book has a political content and message. “You understand it is not just sheer imagination. There is personal background knowledge.” Book # 7 would be nice to know if the author is Latin American; if he has been through similar situations to the ones in the book as an immigrant to a big city. With Book # 8, Mary says that it is interesting to know about the author: if he is an insider or not. The projection is through the number of simple elements used throughout the story. “There is not a great in depth cultural description or extraordinary rituals in this book, but all the same it is valuable to show these traditions.” For Book # 9, it is important to recognize the author because the depictions are accurate. “It is kind of confident art work; you can see the author
in the background saying that he has lived there.” With Book # 10 it is essential to know the author and his origins because otherwise it would not be possible to appreciate all the information in the book. “There is so much information for the adults in this book—like The Beatles album covers, the Che Guevara poster, the names of the streets, etc—that can be used to open up the channels of communication with children.” This can be done for entertainment but also as a reading object for Social Sciences.

Use of Negative Words, Concepts or Illustrations

According to Mary, in Book # 1 characters and situations are out of the realm of reality, as it is perceived nowadays. “I do not think it has much effect on the child’s impression. It is obviously not current, so it would not make too much difference.” It might be that children could notice that the ending is a complete turnaround from the rest of the story. They could not love the ending because this is severely twisted. “Tragic that this woman is left surviving at the end.” For Book # 2 there is a lot of poverty, but most of fairy tales have poverty that characters strive to overcome. “I would not say there is more poverty than in any other story of this type of cultural set up. Everywhere there are poor and rich people, more powerful and less powerful people.” With Book # 3 Mary mentions this concept of being rich and fairly privileged referring to Cecilia, the little girl. “Maybe rich people can do this and transmit it to the next generations. But as it is an older book you do not know if it is like that right now.” Book # 5 is a kind of flat story because there is not much to give to children out of this story. Uncle Nacho and his idea that he does not know what to do with his old hat are not very positive. “He does not want to change his way of thinking. It does not even occur to him. The boys do not have anything better to do than bother other people. They think they are rescuing Nacho’s hat, but they do not believe in him
or listen to him, presumably because he is an old and poor man.” So, in general it is not a positive book. Book # 6 has a mixture of different messages. The negative side of the book can be the difference of classes and possibilities for everybody. Mary was not able to see any negative images, concepts or illustrations in Books # 4, # 7, # 8, and # 9. “They are pretty positive books.” In Book # 10 Mary states, “I suppose the kind of gang member image is sort of negative. The clothing is suggestive of bad and uncontrolled behavior. But they are not doing anything negative; on the contrary they are showing friendship and concern in all the extent of the situation.”

Copyright Date

With Book # 1 it might be interesting to know about the copyright date as “ I do not know what was going on at that time in Latin America, and maybe I could associate with something of my own reality.” For Book # 2 Mary indicates that the topic of the stories could be the same, but the language would be more current if the book were published nowadays. “So it is necessary to point out the copyright date, so as to understand the differences in the language style and the painting style used with the illustrations.” Book # 3 shows a tradition that still continues, so the copyright is not important at all. On the contrary, it is interesting to emphasize the fact that the book shows such old traditions like the posadas and the piñatas that still continue. For Books # 4, # 5 and # 9, the copyright dates do not make any difference because the stories are “more universal and extemporaneous.” With Book # 6, Mary says, “maybe it is valid to refer to the copyright date as we are getting closer to our days, and situations like these in the story have not changed much.” Book # 7 seems to be absolutely modern: “it celebrates the American diversity, and probably a book like this would not have been seen in the 30’s or 40’s.” For Book # 8, Mary points out children can
relate to this book because “people and actions look quite close to their reality, as it is a
ccontemporary book and the illustrations look like real photographs.” Book # 10 is absolutely
current. “The message of getting around with your friends would work at any time. The
language, the general approach, the social content, the obscure side of religious symbols and
the way the story flows are very modern.”
CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION OF CASE STUDIES: HISPANIC

This chapter presents five case studies of five Hispanic participants. A description of their background is presented at the beginning of their individual case studies.

The table below gives a summary of the pertinent information as to the background of the Hispanic participants.

Table 2. Hispanic Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Place of birth</th>
<th>Years in USA</th>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Contact with foreigners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norma</td>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Speech Communication and Education</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Daily at work and at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudia</td>
<td>Baton Rouge</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Education, Spanish</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Daily at work and at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eva</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Law Master</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Daily at work and at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marjorie</td>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>B.S. in Education</td>
<td>Education, Spanish Teacher</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Daily at work and at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ericka</td>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>B.A. in Law</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Daily at work and at home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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A list of the books used in this study follows:

Book # 1 – Perez and Martina, A Portorican Folk Tale

Book # 2 – The Tiger and the Rabbit and other tales

Book # 3 – Nine Days to Christmas

Book # 4 – Dance of the Animals: A Puerto Rican Folk Tale
Participant # 6: Norma

Description

Norma was born in Puerto Rico and she has lived in Louisiana since 1978. She is the mother of two daughters. She holds a Ph.D. in Speech Communication, an M.A. and a B.A. in Education. At this moment, she has her own firm as an Educational Consultant. Previously, she was the State Director of Bilingual Education/ESL in Louisiana. She is often in contact with foreigners. She has traveled worldwide for professional and personal interest.

Elements

Norma referring to Book # 1 indicates that flowers are a prototype of the Hispanic culture, as well as Cucarachita Martina’s dresses. The crane of her dress when she is walking together with the comb in her hair and the ‘mantilla’ or shawl, she wears as “everyday” dress with an apron on it and when she is dressing up she changes completely to a fancy dress with laces. That’s typical of the Hispanic woman who dresses for a dinner or any festival event. Norma says, “We see this in the Hispanic culture, not in other cultures where you see people wearing jeans all the day long, either in formal or informal situations.” Basically the use of a roach, a rooster, a cat and a mouse which are common figures personifying characters with human characteristics can be seen in this story. Also, to consider, there is the architecture of
the house, the tiles and the iron balconies. The story is also understood as Hispanic because “...the male is gallant to the female in that social situation, the male comes to call upon the lady for her favors. This is a very Hispanic characteristic and of course, Martina is dancing around all the time which is typical of a Hispanic woman.” For Book # 2, Norma mentions the use of animals and the presence of the character Juan Bobo who is like the village fool and his gluttonous wife, who always overeats. Norma also points out that “that the stories are universal, but when you open the book you immediately see a donkey, which is first identified as Mexican. The social structure is basically agricultural. You also see the tall grass, the type of vegetation that gives me the idea of a tropical environment, the green land forests, the well-dressed señorita with her earrings, the little boys with their sombreros.” For Book # 3 Norma indicates that everything is Hispanic, but more exactly typically Mexican “...not Hispanic from other places as I do not recognize this depiction as part of my own culture.” For example, the bright colors are easily identified with the Mexican culture...oranges, hot pinks, purples and probably the colors have been added on purpose to draw the reader’s attention to those specific elements of the Hispanic culture. The book illustrates a Hispanic story that is portraying the posadas, which are recognized as part of the religious beliefs in many countries in Latin America and the piñatas that are gotten together with all the community effort, the family and the neighbors. Everything says this book is Hispanic with a clear voice. For Book # 4 Norma says that there are not many elements except for the flowers, the vegetation and the presence of animals that are acceptable in the Hispanic culture. She points out the use of ‘Señor’ and ‘Señora’ to give titles to the dogs. She wonders “Why didn’t they use ‘Mr. and Mrs. Dog’?” and she replies that this book is intended for a Hispanic audience. “That’s why the use of these Spanish words,” she says.
Book # 5 Norma refers to the names of the characters, the colorful drawings and the use of the sombreros which is a typical symbol of the Hispanic culture. For Book # 6 Norma comments on the use of the vivid colors in the elaborated illustrations and the use of mystical symbols, for example animals and people who are portrayed like in a fairy tale. In Book # 7 there is a rich variety of colors and a simple fact, like this little girl is planning to go out with her grandmother who does not speak English, only Spanish “so the little girl wants to show off a little, helping her around.” This little girl together with her grandmother shares the main roles. For Book # 8, Norma refers to the use of tamales which is a symbol of the Mexican food in North America, “it is part of that culture.” In addition, the ribbons in the girls’ hair and the portrayal of a typical Hispanic family making food at home for a special holiday. In Book # 9 all the presented elements are Hispanic; for example, the use of the word ‘sancocho’ in the title which is typical food in Latin America and in the Caribbean. Norma itemizes the wooden spoon in the cover, the bowls made of gourd [made of plants], the housewife is wearing an apron on top of her dress. Also, she lists the house and the kitchen with the typical tiles, the hammock to take a siesta, the portrait of the town itself with its Hispanic looking market. Part of the picture are the people coming to the market loading trucks, ponies and donkeys and finally the type of vegetables that are used for the recipe. In Book # 10 Norma indicates that she understands this Mexican-American culture depicted in this book through the clothing, the names, the graffiti and the vocabulary. “But the author also wants the reader to know about this culture, so he includes a glossary at the beginning of the book. Even a foreigner could understand all these dialogues with interspersed Mexican slang.”
Stereotypes

Norma, referring to stereotypes in Book # 1, says that they absolutely exist, as the woman’s job is apparently to be at the scene at home, cooking, cleaning and the male approaches from the outside, and is not in the household. “The fact that he is calling upon her to apparently court her is a typically Hispanic custom.” With Book # 2 Norma basically mentions “the use of animals which are kind of stereotyped.” The fox is seen as a figure of somebody who is very sly and smart, so you have to be careful with the fox. The tiger is powerful and violent. It is usually portrayed like this in our Latin American society. Another symbol is the rabbit shown as weak and fearful. For Book # 3 Norma confirms the use of stereotypes through the presence of women with their aprons and as being the laborers at home, men in their working clothes and working outside the home. The barefooted peasants are carrying goods in their backs and working hard as part of the demonstration of the Hispanic traditions. Concerning Book # 4 Norma mentions the choice of animals, in this case the lion that is powerful and violent. This is the set for different expectations, either for a happy or unhappy ending, to happen in this Hispanic story. Discussing Book # 5 Norma indicates the use of sombreros as a stereotypical image, besides the powerful colors. These can be taken as positive or negative elements. For Book # 6 Norma refers to “People with elaborated clothing, typical of the Indians of South and Central America.” In addition flowers are mentioned, the coyote type of dog, the serpent as a symbol of evil, and the houses and the way they are built. Also, this story depicts women with long dark hair, their sandals, and the sun portrayed as a symbol of the Hispanic culture and the agricultural occupations. It also shows how the peasants work for the landlords and the soldiers are the ones who are in control of the country. This is a clear stereotype of the Latin American culture due to the
number of years that many of the Latin American countries have lived under military
regimes. With Book # 7, there is the old traditional grandma with her braided white hair, the
little purse and the typical colorful clothes. The little girl is stereotypically loving and kind
and tries to help her grandma at every minute. “The girl is wearing earrings that are quite
common among Hispanic girls.” Book # 8 points out the whole gathering of the family
around the kitchen to make typical food for Christmas. The mother is caring for the family
while the father shows the pride of having mom being responsible. The pictures are trying to
portray people as if they were real, “…as if they were photographs, which is different from
any of the other books. At the same time, they do not all look alike…that tokenism, in fact as
the situation is in our countries where we have people with dark, blonde, brunette hair, etc.”
In Book # 9 one can see the typical mother with an apron; children with certain toys made of
wood and attributed to Latin American reality. The book also shows the Plaza where they get
or exchange their products and the presence of the sancocho, which is a typical stew made
around different countries, just changing some ingredients according to the geographical
regions. For Book # 10 Norma refers to the use of animals. “These animals are hip, they are
sophisticated and the main characters are the cats.” You also have the other animals in their
surroundings to show they are friends and not enemies. For example, the mice and the dog
with their bright clothes and bright smiles illustrate the positive relations in the story.

Development and End of the Stories

Norma in Book # 1 understands this segment refers to the way the story develops
following the expected story line: there is a female principal character and a line of seducers,
who are trying to marry Martina; but apparently Mr. Mouse is the favorite and he is the one
who falls into the pot. The end is unexpected because “you do expect something to happen,
but not this fall and death.” So it is known she will be sorry at the end because of the way she
cared about him, she cried, she mourned him forever . . . all this is expected to happen in the
Hispanic society. “When seducers die in the Hispanic society women are trapped, contrary to
the society here where women are sad for a little while, but then they continue and say ‘who
comes next’?” Book # 2 the story of ‘Juan Bobo,’ shows this main character who is not very
smart and gets into lots of troubles, but he becomes smarter than what people think because
he needs the things. This is very typical of Hispanic people. They appear to be not quite
bright and rather slow, perceived as unintelligent, but resourceful, witty and always using a
lot of common sense. “I am figuring out in the Portorican folklore there is the countryside
man called the jíbaro. He usually entices no reading, no writing but he is very smart and he
can take advantage of whatever there is around him to punch his needs or his wants.” The
end of these stories is usually expected: there will be a problem, but they will resolve it one
way or another. Book # 3 follows a pretty common story line. There are poor people and a
child concerned about following the tradition of the ‘posadas,’ the community pushes in, the
story gets to a climax and all of a sudden there is a resolution. They get to have the piñata
and the celebration starts nine days before Christmas with the ‘posadas’ as the tradition
demands. The end is absolutely expected “I really knew that the girl would be able to break
her piñata and enjoy the celebration.” In Book # 4 there is a common development and
problem. The lions are hungry, there are dwellers and they are looking for ways to outsmart
the lions. Therefore you have the ones who are smarter than they appear and are able to
escape. The end is unexpected because you think the weaker--the goat--will be eaten as he
could not cross the river, but the lion turns down the story and he saves the goat. “This is
very common in our Hispanic society, somebody has a break of luck or just does something
smart to win the situation.” Book # 5 follows the traditional story line; just the old hat becomes an ordeal. The end correlates with the fact that he has to have the new hat and he gets it. Then there is a resolution. Commenting on Book # 6 Norma answers positively as there is somebody who creates a problem shared by the landlord and the greed forces. At the end the dilemma is if the forces kill the people or the people dominate the forces. “In this case the soldiers are dominated by the elements of nature and the countrymen.” Soldiers represented the evil; they had to be taken care of. So nature personified the elements to control the cruel negative forces. All this is sort of expected in the Latin American folklore. With Book # 7 Norma indicates that in one sense the book follows a regular story line as it shows a little girl whom her grandma has taken care of and they go out to the park. What it is unexpected are the fantasies of the little girl and her grandma sharing them. It can be seen that both of them are very happy in the end, which is expected. Throughout this fantastic voyage many elements pertaining to the Hispanic and North American cultures can be seen; for instance colors around everywhere, the way the two characters are dressed, some words in Spanish and the extended family they visit during this fantastic voyage are some of the Hispanic elements. For the North American culture, it is possible to see some icons from New York City, such as The Central Park, the Empire State, the skyscrapers and the people of diverse origins. For Book # 8 Norma says it follows a common story line as it gets to the end which is expected. In Book # 9 there is an initial crisis and this is resolved with the grandmother’s ingenuity. Again there is recurrence to the resourcefulness until they get to the predictable end. In other words, the characters do all what they can do to get what they need; they exploit their wit and imagination up to the limits. Book # 10 has a surprise element in the development of the story as they are all having fun preparing the birthday party and when
the celebrated character does not show up they continue with the party. They think he is
dead, but when he really comes back they are all very happy and continue celebrating. It is
easy to understand the end will have a happy ending.

**Roles, Lifestyles and Relationships**

When addressing these emerging themes for Book # 1 Norma indicates that “a
woman is the central character and most people think that Hispanic societies are male
societies.” If you come from a Hispanic society you know that the female role in the family is
much more important than the male role because she is ‘the mother’ who is the central figure
of the family. If the mother is not happy, nobody is happy. So this can be stretched to the
woman being the central character. Lifestyles look to be different—the way characters are
dressed and the way they act socially. It is expected then, that *Cucarachita* Martina will
continue to mourn Mr. Mouse for a long time. Readers feel sorry when she cries, when she
sings and we assume her grief will last forever. This would not be found in a typical North
American ending: “the person at the moment would be very sad but then, eventually you
would expect her or him to remake her/his life, find somebody else and be happy forever.” In
the Hispanic society to be mourning a person for the rest of one’s life is very common. With
Book # 2, along the different stories women have outstanding roles. They are the main
characters and children are also part of the families and are included to mirror the role of the
family, not just to develop the story. Women may not have the central role in all the stories,
but they are included as a fundamental part of the stories. Lifestyles are almost universal.
Characters represent Latin American people, but they seem to be very similar to the ones in
the North American folk stories. Relationships among the characters are similar and different
at the same time. Similar because they are all involved in a conflict and everybody is part of
it. But the weight on the roles of the people is different. “Women as I said before are stronger, they are appreciated; they seem to matter more, even though it is a male society. Children are valued too; they get more freedom to talk and in the Hispanic countries children are precious.” For Book # 3 Norma indicates that the child--Cecilia--is the main character and women are helping to carry along the story. Men are only supporting characters.

Lifestyles with Latin America and North America are alike. “I can say that in Puerto Rico there is a similar story with different clothing and different items around, but following a comparable pattern which is universal in the world of Latin America, but not universal to the world.” Relationships are different, as in the United States there is more inclination to help the community effort than helping one person in particular. So, to help this little girl make her dream come true would be less easy if the community would not be so involved.

Concerning Book # 4 she mentions it is all about animals but within the animal community the smart ones are the males, Señor Dog and Señor Goat were very smart. Women in this story are figures of embellishment because they are seen in couples—they cannot be seen apart from the male counterpart--like Señora Lioness is the support for Señor Lion. For lifestyles she expresses her opinion: “it is the strongest and the smartest the ones who will survive and that is typical of lifestyles in Latin America. It is always a contest for whom will survive.” Relationships are very similar. Animals anywhere in the world would be portrayed to be as smart as the animals in the story. It is a good story to show how animals can represent the roles pertaining to human beings. For Book # 5 Norma says the uncle is portrayed as a senior citizen, as a little clumsy and not as intelligent as the readers would expect him to be because of his age. He thinks frivolous things such as “…with this hat a pretty woman will fall in love with me,” and refuses to discard his hat. Throughout the text
women consistently take care of him. Referring to lifestyles she says that this situation of the
fierce tie to the hat would not happen to anybody here in the United States. Whereas in the
Latin American rural context is possible to happen as everybody knows everyone else and
there is a community that knows this hat belongs to the main character. “Everybody knows
you and knows what is yours,” as Norma states. There is a strong relationship among all the
people. In Book # 6 there are the senior citizens and the woman who are playing the main
roles, suffering the conflicts, they are the ones in need. The coyotes are taking care of the
people that need help and the landlords and soldiers are creating the conflicts. In North
America, lifestyles are quite different. In Latin America, specifically in El Salvador there is
this magical realism world where there is a confluence between the real “daily life” world
and the world where they prefer to escape in their daydreams to be able to endure the real
world. Nature plays an important role in this world and the wise connection with it.
Relationships among the people are quite different, as in the book there is a community of
interests, a common goal. “Everybody takes care of each other, of the common goal. In the
United States everybody takes care of themselves individually.” For Book # 7 the most
important characters are the grandma, a senior citizen and the little girl. Lifestyles compared
with the United States are very similar as they show the adventures in a big city, sightseeing
around and visiting familiar places. The unusual part is the grandma taking care of the little
child, which is quite uncommon in the American society. Even in Latin America this
situation has changed with women working outside their homes. It used to be like this in the
older times, but not anymore. Relationships are quite strong, and there are family ties, even
though they are expressed differently nowadays, they still exist. The grandmother is taking
care of the grandchild while her parents are probably at work: the parents are non-existing
figures in the story. With Book # 8 children are the central characters. It is the child who creates the conflict and then the mother, the female figure resolves the crisis as usual. The father’s role is new in this story in the sense that now he is helping in the kitchen. “Today, Latin American men have also assumed the responsibility of the house chores as women have become laborers too.” Lifestyles are similar as for holiday seasons families come together and make special food. These characters seem to live in a typical North American home, but still following the Latin American traditions. For Book # 9 women have the central role. The grandma is the one who does all the bartering and who solves the problem. Grandpa is shown as the one who stays at home, waiting for his wife to solve the situation. Norma observed, “Women are shown like the real leaders, strong, positive, caring for the situations.” Lifestyles are different, as there are no open-air markets where you can go and barter for fruit and vegetables “… you’d better go with nice, fat cash.” Even in Latin America would be difficult to see this event taking place nowadays. The environment is very friendly; relationships are very open as everybody knows everybody. “Grandma goes to the people she knows and who knows her.” In Book # 10 there were no children or women or senior citizens. The cats look like young people, dressed, talking, following the fashions, and moving around, they have their personal lives and the majority is males. “I would say the story is male oriented.” Concerning lifestyles, there is a depiction of an urban Mexican American environment that could be found in the barrios and in the big cities. Norma says it is difficult to compare this place in the story with the urban atmosphere in Latin America as she has not got enough knowledge about this, but she assumes many of the attitudes represented by the characters can be similar. Relationships are very similar as “when you have a friend, you will try to do all the best for him and make him feel happy.” The same
kind of feelings with friends is displayed in North America, maybe less affectionate, as people here keep a certain physical distance, but also showing care and concern for the family and friends.

**Heroes**

Answering the questions about how heroes are or not similar to the heroes in the American writings, Norma says for Book # 1 there is an affirmative and a negative answer. In both American and Latin American writings, the heroes have the same politeness; they follow the same rituals to court, but Hispanic heroes have an extreme devotion to the female figure. In Book # 2 “the heroes are similar to the North American heroes as they act in a heroic way.” They try to solve the conflict, they understand it and at the end something unexpected happens that helps them do it. With Book # 3 the heroes in this story are the people themselves and how they help along. “It would be difficult to find in an American community, people who are so caring and wanting to cope with this little girl.” For Book # 4 Norma expected the dog and the goat to cross the river and become the heroes, but they did not. The story does end with a moral teaching, however. And, they became heroes together with the lion from a different perspective: the lion became better when he helped the weaker animals and these weaker animals became wiser trying to save their lives. Concerning Book # 5 this participant indicates that heroes are similar to the folklore in America: for example, David Crocker, his hat and the way he wears it. It is a way to identify a person. Hats seem to have a similar symbolism in both cultures. With Book # 6 the heroes are the coyotes and the volcanoes. They act in a way they help the poor and needy people. They also control the cruelty, so “. . . they agree with a number of care-givers who do the same anywhere.” For Book # 7 Norma points out that “the hero is the grandmother and definitely not the kind of
grandma you would expect: this grandma flies around the city and she is into adventure.” At the end the little girl says, “My grandma likes adventure.” With Book # 8 everybody is a hero as they are trying to help the little girl who is so nervous because she lost her mother’s valuable ring. As a typical situation, parents save the day at the end. In Book # 9, the grandmother is the strong figure in this story. “I would imagine it would be the same in the American culture--a strong female who takes care of the problems. Probably there are a number of them in the American literature.” For Book # 10, Norma confirms there are similarities with the American writings, as the heroes want to take care of whatever the problem is. “In this story the hero says there is a problem, he addresses it and when the crisis arrives, they solve it among all of them.” They follow their special ways to get to the solution, and are all happy with a profound sense of friendship at the end of the story.

Reaffirmation of Hispanic Pride

In Books # 1, # 2 and # 3 the purpose is to uplift the Hispanic pride. Norma indicates that "both the male and female characters accept their respective roles in a happy and positive way.” The reader can also get some knowledge of the past traditions and be able to understand in a better way how people from this society and time lived their lives. Meanwhile, Norma does not see the use of Book # 4 for reaffirmation of the Hispanic pride as this book tells the reader a more universal story. “It does not seem to focus on the Hispanic characteristics, except for the fact the animals are called ‘Señor’ or ‘Señora’.” The setting seems to be tropical, but again this could be anywhere in the world. The animals could have been called Mr. & Mrs.” About Book # 5 Norma replies, “I do not see any redeeming value in this book to be proudly used as a Hispanic symbol, so I would not use it.” Book # 6 has a positive application. The main story line is good against evil. “People who are
cruel, with no real heart, whose heart is made of lead are destroyed.” Consequently there is a moral lesson in addition to all the elements mentioned above. Books # 7 and # 8 show love for the family and the older generations. As a result of these stories, it can be perceived that this type of loving relationships among the members of a family can be easily transmitted. With both Books # 8 and # 9 there is a pride for the ethnic food that can be transmitted from one generation to the next. Book # 9 as well shows that everything is clean, colorful, and that there is abundance in the market, there are no luxuries but there is a dignified poverty. Book # 10 is very specific to the culture of the ‘vato’ in the barrios. So this story would be difficult to understand for a child who is not Mexican American and who is not inserted or close to this reality. “A Portorican child living in Baton Rouge would not get the symbols; he could not identify himself with this culture. Probably, he would only be able to make a connection with ‘The Day of the Dead’ on November 1st and all the symbols connected with this day presented in Authors’ the book”

Authors’ Origins and the Projection of Their Knowledge

For Books # 1, # 2, # 3, #4, #6, # 8 and # 9 Norma indicates it is not important to know about the origins of the author. But they are clearly distinguished when Norma refers to the rituals followed by Martina’s priming for the evening, the fact she can not just wear jeans or say ‘Hi’ to her suitors, she has to powder herself and look exquisitely beautiful. “All this tells me this is a person who knows the culture.” For Book # 2 Norma says that all these are well-known stories in the Hispanic society. They are different from country to country, but based on the same legend. So the author has chosen them to represent the wide range of variations within the different Hispanic cultures. With Books # 3, #4, #6, # 8 and # 9 the projection is through the colors, the clothing, the food, the social context and the landscapes.
Concerning Book # 5 Norma points out “From what I see, this author is more Anglo-American as there are more stereotyped images: the sombrero, the peasants, the parrots and the barefooted people.” In Book # 7, Norma says that this is a universal theme, so the author could belong to any ethnic group. He projects his knowledge through the costumes, the relationship in the family and “the way they talk about the Statue of Liberty and its symbolic meaning for any immigrant.” With Book # 10 Norma expresses her opinion, “In this case it is important to know the origins of the author because he projects so much knowledge about the cats’ life and the Mexican-American culture. There are so many details on every page and every illustration. He is constantly using a familiar tone.”

**Use of Negative Words, Concepts or Illustrations**

For Book # 1 Norma says “perhaps to somebody who sees housework as a negative activity, Martina’s main occupation was to cook and clean the house, so for females who think we should not be portrayed only as housewives this can be negative.” This is a dichotomy in the Hispanic culture that sometimes is difficult to be accepted by other social groups. With Book # 2 the reader thinks about Juan Bobo and the person who lives in the countryside that is not so smart as somebody who lives in the city. “Of course at the end of the story he is redeemed with the way he turns up the story.” For Books # 3, # 7, # 8 and # 9 Norma does not see any negative element. In Book # 4 the only negative element could be the regular portrait of the lion as a superior animal that can do whatever he wants. With Book # 5, Norma refers to Uncle Nacho’s attitude that is so slow to react with a decision connected with the sombrero. “All this can bring a stereotyped image of Mexican people, their sombreros and the attachment that people can feel for the old objects.” With Book # 6 the negative images of the landlord who is depicted as harsh, uncaring, distant and frivolous. The
soldiers also have a negative image, hard, made of lead, not easy spirit, caring for their own welfare and not nature-lovers at all. Book # 10 contains negative images depending on who is reading and interpreting it. They would be negative images because the author is showing the real life in the barrios or in the underground of the big cities. So, some parents or readers can become shocked to see this type of life and language in a book for children. Positive would be for readers who like to see real life represented in literature; and strongly believe children should also read this type of authentic literature. “Somebody could imagine that Mexican-American culture is this vulgar because of the language. Some people would not react well at all at this cultural expression. But for me it is very interesting to look at this cultural phenomenon and as a linguist I think it is fascinating.” There is an opening to other sides of the culture, not only the ones that agree with the so-called establishment. It sounds like the big controversy around the Ebonics language or the language used by the rap singers: to teach or not to teach it.

**Copyright Date**

For Books # 1, # 3, # 4, #6, # 7 and # 9 Norma replies saying that they are classic books. There is nothing that is outdated. “People will be rereading these books in 25 years. Even if nothing happened in the Hispanic culture we would recognize these stories as part of our heritage.” Concerning Book # 2 Norma indicates that the copyright date does not make any difference, because these are stories that are not encapsulated in time. They are timeless and universal as they are based on legends and fables. For Book # 5 she adds the story is set upon a rural timeless society that nowadays looks sort of unrealistic. Books # 8 and # 10 can be perceived as portraying modern urban stories, “so the copyright helps understand how contemporary the stories are.
Participant # 7: Claudia

Description

Claudia was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She has lived in the United States for 43 years. She is married to a Puerto Rican and the mother of three children. She holds a Ph.D. in Education, an M.A. in Spanish Linguistics and a B.A. in Spanish. Currently she is a Graduate Assistant in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Louisiana State University. She has daily contact with Spanish speakers at home and at work. She has traveled extensively in the United States, Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Europe for studies and pleasure. She is considered near native in Spanish because of her cultural experiences and family relations.

Elements

In Book # 1, Claudia points out that the songs they sing along the story, the balcony that sticks out because Martina is always sitting there and the constant sweeping around of Martina, even when she is with her suitors are some of the prominent elements that make this story characteristic of the Hispanic culture. These are traditional actions that people usually connect with the Hispanic culture: most of the times, they are present in books portraying this culture. Book # 2 seems to be more universal, though there are elements that can be recognized as Hispanic. There are also universal elements. For Books # 3 and # 9 Claudia indicates “This book is full of Hispanic culture, it is a very typical book.” Book # 4 contains very few elements, practically none except for the use of words ‘Señor’ or ‘Señora.’ In Book # 5, she refers to the illustrations, which are extremely colorful, the use of the words Nacho and sombrero and the landscape. For Book # 6 Claudia knows it illustrates a Hispanic story because it develops in El Salvador, a country located in Central American. Book # 7 uses a
number of words in Spanish and “…they directly speak about the country the grandma comes from and the fruit that is produced there.” Book # 8 is a very soft going gentle book. The elements to transmit the Hispanic culture are the food for special occasions, the colorful and lively illustrations, and the colorful plates on the wall and the use of Spanish words. In Book # 10 Claudia says “it is everything and this Chicano-style portrayal of the animals to make it more accessible”

Stereotypes

For Book # 1 Claudia mentions a number of stereotypes such as the clothes, the ‘mantilla’ or shawl, the high hat, the Flamenco look, the place, the house that looks more Mexican than Spanish, and all the flowers in the pots. “That looks very stereotypical to me as they have empty buckets and they are also cleaning them. They are always cleaning everything around.” In Book # 2 this participant does not see much, “…there are mostly animals and you only see a man wearing typical sandals—guarachas—and that’s all.” In Books # 3, # 4, # 6, # 7 there is the same situation as mentioned above--no stereotypes. In Book # 5 definitely there are a number of stereotypes that are not only present in these books, but in the daily, real life. Some of them can be observed in this book, like people who are barefooted, they are bringing heavy stuff to the market on their backs, they are all dressed in a tropical way and there is a monkey screaming in the house. In Book # 8 people are extremely well dressed, as if it were for church here in the United States. In this case it is a family gathering, “… and as in my husband’s family who insist on getting neatly dressed for special occasions like Christmas … it is not a negative stereotype, but it is different.” Book # 9 has a number of indications that point directly to Hispanic society: the market, the bartering, the relationships among the people, the colors of the clothing, the animals running
around, and the fruit and vegetables that are used for the recipe. For Book # 10 Claudia mentions the fact of wearing bandanas and their caps backward, besides the type of informal and slang language they use.

**Development and End of the Stories**

For Book # 1 Claudia comments that “pretty much follows a common story line… they all want to marry Martina, she sits down on the balcony with her fan, waiting for her suitors to come.” The end is unexpected because the main suitor dies in a book that is a children’s story. But her attitude of eternal mourning, all dressed in black and singing lament songs is unexpected for these times. In Books # 2, # 3, # 4, # 5, # 6, # 7, # 8, # 9 and # 10 both the story line and the end happen exactly as it is expected. Some of them have some awkward events—like “Abuela” flying around the city—taking place along, but they are just an interruption in the regular pattern or there is a whole circle of events to get to the end. “Once you get started you kind of know what’s going on there, what’s going to happen and how it is going to end.”

**Roles, Lifestyles and Relationships**

In Book # 1, Claudia says that there are no children or senior citizens’ roles. Only one woman is represented, Martina, who is depicted as a stereotypical version of a Hispanic woman. She is stereotypical because she is waiting for her suitor to propose and change her life; besides she is always cleaning the already clean house. Her great concern is always the housework. Life styles are different to today’s because of the projected time and the copyright date. “Our grandmothers would have been cooking, sweeping and cleaning regularly.” But even in Latin America is not like this projected situation anymore because women are also in the job market and becoming professionals. They also have more freedom.
to decide about their marital lives. For Book #2 Claudia indicates that Juan Bobo’s role is different to the other characters in the stories because he is a troublemaker; he reminds readers of Jack & the Beanstalk. The other characters are always trying to solve the difficult situations and not making things more difficult. The story is like a fairy tale. “Fairy tales are not really similar to any life style or anybody’s life.” In Book #3 Claudia points out that children and women have outstanding roles: these characters help organize the celebration and they participate together with the community. Lifestyles in comparison with the United States are very different, because of the community involvement in Latin America. The children/parents relationship is very similar as the way it takes place in the United States. For Book #4 Claudia says “that they are all animals so they do not have specific roles and there are no ways to compare with realities in Latin America or in the United States.” Just it is possible to say that there are similar stories around animals in this American context. In Book #5 she points out that Uncle Nacho is a senior citizen and “he is the leader in the story.” Because of the way they deal with each other, relationships are said to be similar, the same as lifestyles in both places. For Book #6 the main roles are not centered on women or children “… volcanoes are women, the same as it happens in Hawaii, so I was surprised to see that one of the volcanoes was representing a male figure.” Lifestyles are different just showing the idea that these people are living at the foot of the volcanoes, which is not a usual habitat place. In addition, the illustrator was very clear to portray the differences between the rich and the poor people. This helps understand the contrasting characteristic between Latin America and North America. Claudia states,

This book really reminds me of the salsa music as it is kind of political. It definitely has an agenda and if you know some of the history of El Salvador we see its reflection. I had heard of the cadejos and the daily risks people run or used to run living there with the political regime, the contrasting
differences and the presence of the army. You have this kind of dichotomy when there are these blunt differences between the rich and the poor people.

In Book # 7 and # 9 Claudia mentions that there is clear centering on the two females: the little girl and her grandma. Lifestyles are similar to the existing in Latin America: families going to the parks and enjoying their free time in a big city. The idea of flying around this big, majestic and important city makes the story more like a modern fairy tale. The projected family relationships are universal situations and in this case, grandma going to the park with her granddaughter can happen anywhere anytime. In Book # 8 children have the main role in the tricky plot, trying to find the lost ring. There are many similarities with the traditions in Latin America and in North America, though the weather seems to be dissimilar to the Hispanic world. Moreover, the relationships among the members of the families are similar to Christmas celebrations. For Book # 9 Claudia indicates they possibly follow some similar customs of exchanging products in some towns in Latin America, but most of the cities have these modern supermarkets that have given way to the older traditions. Relationships among the people in the town are different to the ones in the United States: “… grandma knows everybody and that facilitates the bartering.” In Book # 10 these animals are representing adolescents. “To me they are representing second generation of immigrants, probably border kids. They are all gang people, but they are showing the family values and the importance of friendship.”

Heroes

In Books # 1, # 2, # 3, # 4, # 5, # 6, # 7, # 8, # 9 and # 10 Claudia does not see any heroes. “We cannot establish parallels with the real world in some of the stories as the main
characters are animals. On the other hand when there are people, they are everyday people and they are trying to protect among themselves.”

Reaffirmation of Hispanic Pride

Book # 1 can be used “in a positive way pointing out the time frame,” according to Claudia. Time and situations were different, so the ancestors had to face other kind of life and decisions. So this should be stressed. “I would play more on the pride on the job, on taking care of what you own, on the cleaning, on talking with your neighbors, on that community sense.” Books # 2, # 4, # 6 do not have specific elements that would help a child feel prideful about his Hispanic origins. Book # 3 can be used to make a child feel proud, as it is a beautiful portrayal of the colorful aspects of these scenes, story and tradition. Book # 5 is a helpful bilingual device, in addition to the relationships among the people in the town and the friendly and caring atmosphere. Book # 7 has value for the strong family ties, not only with the nuclear family but also with the extended family. Book # 8 shows the joy of passing traditions, the kind and supporting mother and the helping father. Book # 9 shows the resourcefulness of the grandmother who does anything and everything to provide for her family. “This is a typical characteristic of the Latin American people.” For Book # 10 Claudia indicates that even though it is a negative reality, in the sense of poverty and difficulties in every day life, there are hopes in the human feelings, such as friendship, support and care. She remembers it is a similar story to “Smoking Eyes” that shows a cruel and sad reality--the riots in Los Angeles, CA in 1992. This was a rejected and criticized book at the beginning. Later on, it took its place among the children’s awarded books.

Authors’ Origins and the Projection of Their Knowledge

For Books # 1, # 2, # 3, # 4, # 5, # 6, # 7, # 8 and # 9, Claudia points out that it is not necessary to know the origins of the author. Most of the books project the typical traditions
of the Latin American world. Nevertheless, in Book # 1, Claudia mentions the author does not seem to be using the English language as a native speaker, either it sounds as archaic or non-Native English. It is known it is a tale from Puerto Rico, but it looks to be more from Spain because of the clothes, the landscape and the traditions. So that is the projection given to the reader. In Book # 2 “the author is projecting universal knowledge with some of the stories.” Book # 3 shows a beautiful and bright display of colors to pinpoint the Hispanic elements. For Book # 5, Claudia says “I’d rather get to know more about the illustrator due to all the stereotypes: the hat, the monkey, the parrot, the Caribbean almost tropical environment and going daily to the market.” Book # 6 shows that there is a deep knowledge of the real situation of the country and also of the legends around the place, mainly those ones directed to protect the poor people. In Book # 7 Claudia indicates that it is interesting to know more about the illustrator because illustrations are way too busy for her. This means that there is more color and objects than the necessary in the illustrations. “There’s not a simple building without color. Everything is almost psychodelic, color and designs: dots, triangles, poker dots make me dizzy. It can look like a stereotype, but it is too much colorful.” In Book # 10, Claudia would like to know more about the author, if he is an inside or an outside writer, if he is trying to uplift this urban/inner city culture from an insider point of view, or if it is a number of stereotyped ideas about this world.

Use of Negative Words, Concepts or Illustrations

In Book # 1 Claudia can only see as negative elements the excessive cleaning and the constant powdering Marina does when anybody comes to the house. In Book # 2 Juan Bobo looks to be not very smart, but “I did not necessarily connect it with the Hispanic culture. As I said it reminded me of Jack and the Beanstalk.” For Book # 3 the use of the word ‘servant’ is considered as negative and the contained idea that there is still a class of people who serve
others. Books # 4, # 8 and # 9 do not have any direct or indirect negative implications. They have some stereotypical images mentioned above. But again, “it does not mean that everybody like this is going to behave this way.” Book # 5 constantly stresses that the girl is so intelligent. “Could this imply the rest of the characters are not?” In Book # 6, some of the elements are the hard work the peasants do, as if they were enslaved they are called ‘lazy’, while the landlord sits and observes everything around as a ‘godfather.’ For Book # 7, Claudia would mention the excess of colors that distract the attention from the real message. In Book # 10 Claudia observes some images that are dark and condescending. “In this way Hispanic people living in areas like these ones are kept on down.”

Copyright Date

For Book # 1 it is indicated that knowing the date of publication (1932) makes it easier to tolerate, interpret and understand. Claudia adds,

I do not think I would tolerate such a book coming out in 2002, but now it is considered as a rich historical resource, if you pick up the language usage, you do not have all these ways nowadays and the life style looks to be radically different.

In Books # 2, # 4, # 5, # 7, # 8 and # 9 the copyright is not important at all. It is interesting to know this information, but they are permanent, timeless and classic stories. They will endure forever. In Book # 3 Claudia points that probably some as this kind of celebrations are not carried on in the same way anymore, especially in the big cities. For Book # 6, it is important to know about the time when it was written because of the strong sociopolitical content and meaning. It will be easier to understand the references behind the illustrations and the dialogues. Book # 10 is current. It is prevalent about the border between Mexico and the United States, “so probably fifty years ago, it would not have had any sense or meaning.”
Participant # 8: Eva

Description

Eva was born in Barcelona, Spain. She has lived for nearly five years in Louisiana. She holds a L.M. (Master in Law) from Louisiana State University and a Law Degree from the University in Barcelona. Currently, she works as a lawyer in a private firm. She has an extensive contact with foreigners at work and in her personal relationships. She has traveled abroad for pleasure and business.

Elements

Considering the elements that portray the Hispanic culture, Eva mentions that in Book # 1, “It is Spanish from Spain, I was kind of surprised that illustrations show a middle class situation and a clear Spanish language from Spain. Also, Spanish women are considered to be presumptuous and that is the way they are shown here. She finds a coin and she only thinks about buying dresses, getting pretty and looking for a husband.” Book # 2 shows a few elements; for instance, the jungle; a girl dressed like a gypsy, and a boy wearing a typical hat. The stories have more universal characteristics. Eva indicates that Book # 3 is completely focused on the Mexican culture. For Book # 4, Eva refers to only the Spanish language, and argues that “the rest of the book is more universal oriented.” Book # 5 is easy to distinguish it belongs to the Hispanic culture based on the fact the book is written in both languages, i.e. the translation is side by side. In addition, there is a typical countryman who loves his hat and lives in this Latin American side of the world. There is this bond between something material, the land, and common things in life like this sombrero and the attachment to this sombrero and to people. Book # 6 displays a number of elements that portray the Hispanic culture starting with the political aspect to the traditions and nature. There is a representation showing why there are these different classes in Latin America;
where the people are, who is in the lower class and the people in the upper class. “Politically speaking, you can talk about this book as much as you want.” Another element present in this story is the cadejo, he is an animal who is part of nature, part of the tradition, part of the family and part of their lives. Consequently, Eva suggests that, “So far this is the book that really shows the Hispanic culture with its strongest voice.” Book # 7 shows a more universal story. Grandma speaking Spanish and the way she is dressed makes the reader understand it is a story connected with the Hispanic culture. In Book # 8 the traditional tamales and the custom of all the family and friends getting together to celebrate Christmas around this traditional dish in Mexico, Central America and some countries in South America are the key elements to portray the Hispanic culture. Again Book # 9 portrays typical food and a typical poor family attempting to make the best of their possessions. Book # 10 is not a typical Hispanic story. “It is a story that takes place here in the United States, youngsters in an urban area. The author is personifying the young people who live in these urban areas, suburban worlds. He is trying to explain their vocabulary.”

Stereotypes

Book # 1 for Eva shows people dressed with Hispanic clothing and the bullfighter as the typical stereotypes. These two elements look essentially Spanish, but people confound them to belong to the whole Latin America. In Book # 2 there are not many illustrations, but “men are performing their typical roles, such as going to the jungle to gather food and women staying at home, taking care of the house and waiting for the men to come back.” In Books # 3 and # 8 the distinctive roles for men and women are pointed out. Even children follow the same pattern when they do different activities with their parents, i.e. girls perform the same tasks as moms and boys follow the father’s roles. Book # 4 does not have any stereotypical images of the Hispanic culture because it has a universal context. Book # 5
depicts some images such as the dark skin color, the typical houses with the brick roof and animals living all around, inside and outside the house, houses close to the river, people going back and forth to the market and people walking barefoot. For Book # 6 Eva points out the political and social aspects,

How really the society is structured: the upper class and the lower class. This is even transcended by the hair and skin color. The upper class people usually have blonde hair and fair skin and they are usually tall and thin, while the poor people have dark hair, dark skin, and are short and fat; and they are all alike.

In Book # 7 Eva indicates the dressing as the most notorious stereotype. Again, an old lady is seen with dark skin. She looks more like an indigenous person. Book # 9 portrays grandma who knows what she has to do to feed her family, while grandpa stays at home resting and doing nothing. In Book # 10 Eva mentions “the graffiti, a typical reflection of the Hispanic culture in the urban areas.”

Development and End of the Stories

In Book # 1 Eva, suggests that this story should not be for children due to the “shocking end.” She says she was reading the book smoothly, hoping for a nice wedding at the end when the suitor falls into the pot and dies. After that, Martina lives in eternal mourning. In Book # 2, # 9 and # 10 the stories follow a predictable story line, the same as the ending of all three books, as they are traditional stories based on legends. Book # 3 follows an unusual story line for American children as the little girl, Cecilia, gets the piñata, she is playing with her friends and finally the piñata is broken following the Mexican tradition. This means it has to be broken as part of the joy and get all the inside containing--candies, fruit, little toys. Her dreams go wrong. “This story does not follow what we are used to see today: always a happy ending for children and for adults.” Cecilia gets all upset, she cries and she reacts like an American girl. “So this has to be explained when the story is told to American children, so they can understand the different traditions and why people follow
them.” In Book # 4, Eva observes that the book follows the traditional story line; some animals are smarter than others, and it is expected the story will have the happy ending it has: all the animals are happy together having a big party. Book # 5 has surprises along the story line and at the end because “Uncle Nacho was able to listen to his niece, get rid of the old hat, break down the circle and change.” Book # 6 has a smooth flow with a wealth of illustrations and subtle meanings. As a way to explain this, Eva says, “It is very nice that poor and honest people get what they want with the help of Mother Nature. Nature plays an important role in this book: we are all tied up to her and it is the most important element outside ourselves.” It is also positive that at the end any child can see that those who are good deserve to be treated well, and bad people do not deserve to get what they are looking for, meaning more power and more money. Book # 7 is commented to be more an educational book to teach children some words in Spanish. It does not follow an expected story line, as the story itself is unusual and unreal, as there is a grandmother and her granddaughter flying around a city. The end is expected when you have read about so many unexpected events. Book # 8 does not follow an expected story line as everybody expects somebody will bite a piece of tamal and find the ring, but then the ring has been in the mom’s hand all the time. The little girl is so concerned about the ring throughout the story, but when finally the ring appears, there is a sweet communication, support and tenderness from the adults to the children. On the other hand, “Finally this book shows a typical middle class family wearing Western clothes and more Americanized. They seem to be second or third generation and more involved in the modern American culture.” Once you get into the book you expect the end to be happy and even surprising.
Roles, Lifestyles and Relationships

Book #1 has Martina as the main focus. She is looking for a husband and the whole story develops around that situation. Lifestyles in the Hispanic countries are different in this sense, as it seems the most important task is to find a husband; women seem to have this specific role in their life and nothing else matters. This is different in Latin America nowadays and to lifestyles in North America. Relationships are also shown to be different as women are subjected to men’s decisions for marriage in this book and at that time. All this female character’s life is around this transcendental decision. In Book #2, in general terms, women and senior citizens have a secondary role. Men and male animals that rule everything have taken the most important roles. Lifestyles can be anywhere in the world as these stories are based on legends or fables. In Book #3 the main role is centered on the girl. There are some people on the streets performing diverse activities, like it is the typical lifestyle in Latin America and in Spain. “There is a lot of action on the streets, different to North America where you rarely see a lot of people walking around on the streets.” Book #4 tells us the lion, the male is the one in charge of getting the food: the provider. The lioness stays at home waiting for him to come back. “This book does not portray any culture in particular, in spite of the few words in Spanish, because it is a book about nature, about animals and who are stronger and who are weaker: there is always a hierarchy. It can happen anywhere in the world.” In Book #5 the main character is a senior, Uncle Nacho who stays at home while his sister and his niece do all the action. He has a passive role and just wanders around trying to understand what happens. The scenario is quite similar to any small town in Latin America and quite different to what happens in the United States. “There are populated streets with people performing several tasks, not empty like you see here.” Relationships are very close, not only among the members of the family but also with friends and acquaintances on a daily
base. So when the sombrero is lost, they find it and immediately recognize it belongs to Uncle Nacho.” Eva points out that in Book # 6, “Women and children have an interesting role because they realize the *cadejos* are part of their lives and that is a tradition that senior citizens have transmitted from one generation to the next.” It is amazing to see the portrait of all the poor people working, while the rich people are standing up in the background and the sun is crying in the far back. Every one of them has a significant role in the story. Lifestyles compared with the United States can be said to be quite similar. Especially here in the South and in the countryside where not long ago there were the rich people in the plantations and the slaves, so it can become easy to relate and compare these situations based on a story like this. Nowadays the situations have changed over here, but not so much in Latin America. “There is still this big gap in the Hispanic countries, but in a positive way they have been able to preserve their traditions and the close relationships in the family and friends circle and with nature.” In Book # 7 they are not trying to depict a specific role for any character in particular. “Lifestyles are different because parents give a high value to the presence and help of grandparents in Latin America, so it is nice to see the great connection between grandma and her grandchild. They really devote time to each other.” But Eva indicates that kind of relationship is more complex to see in the United States because of the distances and the rush of life. In Latin America grandparents have more time for children because the grandmother usually does not work and stays at home to take care of the house and the family. Life goes on more slowly in Latin America. In Book # 8 Eva observes the typical roles within a family. “It clearly seems that this family lives in the United States but they are following the Latin American traditions. So these life styles and type of relationships can be encountered in any of the two contexts: Latin America or the United States.” Book # 9 shows that the role of somebody supporting the family is in the grandma’s hands. “Again you can establish some
connections with the lifestyles in Louisiana where many times the elderly people take care of children while parents are away, but it is not common everywhere. And you also see the decision to stay in your piece of land. ” Life in small towns in Latin America continues to be like this, full of outdoors life, going to the open-air market and getting to know everybody around. Relationships are different, as the structure of the society is different. The sense of community is much stronger in Latin America than in North America, people in the United States continue to be more independent and a story like this probably would never happen in this country. In Book # 10 the most appreciated role is in the friends’ hands and the meaning of friendship. The lifestyle is the same as in the urban/suburban areas here in the United States. “The relationships are caring and rich among these friends, who are unusual characters, but all the same they represent certain types of human beings.”

Heroes

In Book # 1, Eva has a stronger inclination to believe that the heroine is Martina because of all the experiences that she goes through, and at the end she still remains alone. “The normal tendency in Latin American stories is to perceive the males as the heroes, but not in this case because he dies and disappears from the picture.” Book # 2 shows regular, common people getting to the position of heroes because of unusual events in this collection of stories that change everything around. Book # 3 has a sad ending for the little girl because the piñata is broken. That makes the little girl a heroine because she does not have the piñata anymore, mainly from the perspective of an American child. She would have kept the piñata, not like in Mexico where the people at the party usually break it and enjoy the contents. Book # 4 can be associated with the film ‘Lion King,’ so the heroes are similar, stronger animals at the beginning who are defeated by the weaker and smarter ones at the end. In Book # 5 at the beginning Eva (Participant # 8) saw Uncle Nacho as a simple and common person, but then
he grew to become wiser and easier to approach. “For me, heroes have mostly been like untouchable, practically impossible to get to their standards, So that is maybe a great difference between a Latin American and a North American hero--books here try to project a hero who is far away from the reality.” Book # 6 shows that the hero is the personification of a natural element--a volcano personified as a woman dancing and wearing a skirt. “For a child this is a super-hero and it is very similar to the heroes in the American writings.” In Books # 7 and # 9 the heroine is grandma, the kind of relationship she has with the grandchild and the way she cares for the family. Book # 8 shows a little girl who becomes the heroine for the rest of the characters, a common human being becoming a hero in a confrontational situation. In Book # 10 Eva indicates that there are no heroes. “They are describing common people through the cats’ personification. There is no Superman or Spiderman. So, any common human being can become a hero and be part of a book.”

Reaffirmation of Hispanic Pride

According to Eva, Books # 1, # 2 and # 4 are not good enough to help reaffirm the Hispanic pride “in a modern context.” There are no elements to be picked up from these books in this modern world. Book # 3 can be better used because words in Spanish are in Italics so they are easily distinguished; then, there is a clear depiction of the Mexican culture through lifestyles, the way people behave and the tradition of the piñatas. Books #5 and #6 are positively useful because of the Spanish language (the bilingual version) and that Uncle Nacho can be seen as any other Uncle in the world, having similar attitudes and behaviors when they get to a certain age. Book # 6 has to be presented with care because “it depends on what kind of society the child belongs to, because if he is in the low economic status group, he can see himself constantly reflected on this side of the society. There is always somebody trying to submit the poor people and he will feel the pressure against him.” Books # 7 and # 9
show the good level of communication between the older generation and children--how they can play around, how they can fantasize and how they can dream together. Book # 8 highlights the traditional celebrations with Hispanic flavor. Book # 10 can be very positive, because it shows a different perspective of the Mexican culture--how they celebrate friendship and bring all this food and joy to try to uplift the spirits. This is a different type of community, a different kind of language, a different reality, if we compare it with a community in an urban area. It is a reality in the suburban areas, but sometimes difficult to accept. All this is very positive to show to a child as in today’s world, children have to learn about their surroundings.

Authors’ Origins and the Projection of Their Knowledge

For book # 1 Eva states, “It is important to know the origins of the author or illustrator as he/she will regularly project the story according to his/her own world. In this specific case, it does not happen like this as the author refers to the Spanish world, instead of the environment in Puerto Rico.” With Book # 3 she indicates it is positive to know the author is Hispanic because there is a beautiful and detailed depiction of these posadas and all the traditions behind them. For Books # 2 and # 4 Eva points out that it is not necessary, as they are universal stories. Books # 5, # 7, # 8, # 9 and # 10 clearly reflect the origins of the authors through the positive sides of the story, the personal experiences, knowledge of the Hispanic world, the detailed descriptions and the use of the Spanish language. According to Eva, somebody who really knows about the history of his country wrote Book # 6 and this is projected on every single page of the story.

Use of Negative Words, Concepts or Illustrations

The only negative image connected with Book # 1 is that the suitor dies at the end and all the dreams cannot come true. For Book # 3 “it depends on what you consider negative, because for a Mexican it is a normal image to carry the child on his or her back.”
The child who sees this image will be able to learn that there are other realities, that life is different in different places and everybody can be happy in different ways. Books # 2, # 4, # 7, # 8 do not contain negative images. In general terms, Book # 5 is quite positive. “Just when they told the old man that he had stolen Uncle Nacho’s hat without any base. The community intended to accuse the old man for this, and it proves that they are wrong. So, as a lesson, readers can learn that accusations have to be done extremely careful. You cannot just blame somebody with no proof.” When discussing Book # 6 Eva says that from an adult point of view this book has the negative image of how some groups are overpowered by other groups. “A child cannot perceive this so distinctively, but the images are there.” With Book # 9 the only situation that can be considered negative is the characters that are poor and they have to be resourceful to get the basic food. Book # 10 “. . . is trying to break the stereotype of these so considered bad people.” If you live in one of the southern states in the United States, this is a reality and it is important for children to learn about it.

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Eva points out that knowing Book # 1 was published in 1932, a reader may understand it better and appreciate the illustrations. “Nowadays, knowing the psychological effects this book can have on children, maybe the end would be readapted.” With Books # 2, # 3, # 4, # 5, # 9 and # 10 the copyright date do not make any difference. “We only have to pay attention to illustrations, how they have changed and become more colorful along the decades.” Book # 6 is quite interesting because it contains a strong sociopolitical criticism. “Probably twenty or thirty years ago this book could not have been published, as the political disturbance and the guerrilla was really taking place in El Salvador.” Books # 7 and # 10 show how the use of the Spanish language has changed in a positive way. Then it is a more updated book if all the elements and plots are considered. When discussing Book # 8 Eva
expresses that the author shows the pride of being a Hispanic descendent and how a second
generation has adapted to the new type of life in the United States, “the new trend.”

Participant # 9: Marjorie

Description

Marjorie was born in Costa Rica. She has lived in the United States for 19 years. She
has one daughter. She holds a B. S. in Education from Louisiana State University. Today she
is a High School Spanish teacher. She has a wide contact with foreigners through work and
personal experience. She travels abroad whenever she can for cultural and personal pleasure.

Elements

Martina is a very preoccupied lady for her physical appearance in Book # 1. She finds
no other way to spend her money but on powder. Then, she sits outside and waits to be
courted. That is basically it . . . sitting on the balcony, sweeping, using the broom and
wearing an apron. “All this is typically Hispanic.” In the stories in Book # 2 there are no
basic Hispanic elements. “They could be related to any kind of culture. They are fables
interpreted according to the different cultures. In this case, they get some Hispanic flavor
with the clothing and some words in Spanish.” For Book # 3 there are many elements such as
the piñatas, the posadas, the clothing, and the names of the people and the colorful
illustrations. Book # 4 only has the ways to address people--Señor or Señora. Book # 5 would
have a universal theme for Marjorie with universal elements. Getting something new would
not be better than keeping the old one. That situation can happen anywhere in the world, so
this is the universal theme for her. This is portrayed through the possession and the
attachment to the hat. Book # 6 depicts a very common tale in Latin America with the help of
the cadejos and the volcanoes. It also portrays the political situation in El Salvador connected
with the military power. Book # 7 contains the colors, the many words in Spanish and the
close relationship between the grandma and her granddaughter. Book # 8 shows the regular activities that happen around Christmas in a Hispanic family. “You can see the making of tamales and the gathering for Christmas of all the family and friends.” In Book # 9 the family is making *sancocho*—this famous Latin American dish—and all the characters in the story are doing their best to get it well done. Book # 10 does not contain many typical Hispanic elements, besides the Spanish words interspersed in the story.

**Stereotypes**

In Book # 1 “You can see the typical Hispanic lady--Martina--wearing an apron, the shawl on her head, sweeping and the boys are the ones to pursue her by coming to her door, proposing her and she is just waiting for the right guy to come.” Book # 2 pictures more “Mexican type peasants wearing the hats and typical clothes.” In Book # 3 there is the clothing, the color of the skin of the people, the way they wear their long hair with braids and the little girl’s blonde doll. This last element is a significant stereotype because it portrays something that Cecilia will never have--the blonde hair--but she can have a subliminal substitute through her doll, a wish to be different. It was quite common in the Hispanic world to have dolls like Barbie to pretend the girl could look like Barbie. Book # 4 does not have stereotypes as this story could take place anywhere in the world. Book # 5 shows the peasants, the parrots, the clothing and the old houses made of mud with red-tiled roofs. In Book # 6 Marjorie mentions the way people are depicted with the Hispanic look such as their dark and long hair, the clothing and carrying a heavy load on their heads. Besides, the scenes are full of flowers all around and even the volcanoes look Hispanic. For Book # 7 the colorful clothes and all the colorful landscape could be considered as exaggerated to portray the Hispanic reality. The only possible stereotype in Book # 8 is the mother in the kitchen.
wearing her apron. For Book # 9 Marjorie mentions the poverty of the family, the father
staying at home and not doing a lot to help, and at the end the main characters taking a siesta.
With Book # 10 Marjorie points out there are no stereotypes because it is an allegory. “It is a
story that can happen anywhere.”

Development and End of the Stories

Book # 1 has a common story line, but the end is unexpected for a child. “Children
and everybody in general, expect a happy ending in a children’s book. But it does not happen
like this in this story as Martina will be probably mourning for the rest of her life.” For Book
# 2, there is a mixture: some of the stories have an expected development and end and some
others do not. Nevertheless, there is a sense of triumph of the victimized characters over the
strong ones. They get their way to overcome difficulties. With Book # 3 “We understand the
story flows normally; it shows what regularly happens at the posadas. But the end is
unexpected as Cecilia--the little girl--does not want to break the piñata and she does not want
anybody to touch it.” Book # 4 has a habitual development. There is the power of the witty
characters over the big and strong characters. At the end, the goat loses his tail but he is able
to get away from the lion. It is an expected ending for these times. Books # 5 and # 6 present
very smooth story lines, but the ends are unexpected. “I always thought Uncle Nacho was
never going to get rid of his hat.” Commenting on Books # 6, # 8 and # 10 Marjorie points
out that the stories and the ends develop in a way she expected to be like that “ . . . especially
when you know some of the Latin American history.” Book # 7 and # 9 flow very easily up
to the end and “ . . . you know somehow the characters are going to have a happy ending.”
Roles, Lifestyles and Relationships

When discussing Book # 1 Marjorie says, “There are no children in this story and Martina, the only female character is representing the Hispanic culture in a very traditional way. Nothing outstanding, she does the daily chores and waits for her future possibilities.” Lifestyles are totally different, especially nowadays in both Latin America and the United States. It is no longer the role of the little homemaker waiting to be proposed to at home. “Today women are more determined and aggressive with the influence of the mass media, so this story looks out of the regular context today.” With Book # 2 children appear to have the most important roles. In some of the stories, the adults victimize them, but at the end they are able to overcome the difficult times. Comparisons are difficult to establish, as these are fables based on animals. Relationships are positive, as there is always solidarity among the characters. In Book # 3 children are the center of the story. “Everything revolves around them. The story has been written knowing the children’s imagination.” Lifestyles are different than the United States as they are trying to show the typical Mexican way to celebrate Christmas. With Book # 4 “we have no human beings and animals represent adult characters.” Then, it cannot be compared with the lifestyle in the United States, as this story is all based on animals. Referring to Latin America, “. . . it could be in the way it happens there, the predominance of men over women.” In Book # 5, Ambrosia, the girl is the most important character as she does all the convincing part with Uncle Nacho to get rid of his hat, besides being Uncle Nacho’s caring relative. “This book depicts the caring and loving relationships that can happen anywhere in the world.” Lifestyles can be compared with the country living style anywhere, either in Latin America or in the United States. With Book # 6 the most important roles are given to women; even the volcanoes are depicted as female characters. “Women are the brain behind the action and they have the old tricks and courage
to come up with the strategies to solve the problems.” Lifestyles are different in the United States because “... this book shows a plot to defeat the military power, wealthy people trying to oppress the needy and the poor and the cadejos protecting these needy and poor workers. The plot is quite real, and could possibly happen in Latin America.” Book # 7 portrays a positive image of the relationships between children and senior citizens. It is a contemporary story that can happen anywhere in the world. With Book # 8, children have the central roles to the story. Lifestyles are different than the United States because this story portrays a typical way to celebrate Christmas in Latin America and how important it is for these families and their friends. The way to celebrate Christmas in the United States is different because there is a more intimate celebration. Latin American Christmas celebrations are open to the extended family and all the circle of friends, besides the close family. So, generally it is a big gathering of people where food is transcendental and also dancing and music. For Book # 9 the children who are helping their grandparents have the central roles. There is a close connection among families and friends in this Latin American depiction. Lifestyles in the countryside in the United States are different because people live in more physical distant areas, so it is not easy to have these neighboring relationships, as it is possible to see in this story. Everything is closer as the distances are shorter, so it is easy to get to know all your neighbors. About Book # 10 Maggie says, “these cats represent the adolescents’ world to me, cats who love to party and have friends everywhere.” Their lifestyles are common to everywhere or anywhere in the world.

Heroes

For Book # 1 Marjorie indicates that the hero is Raton Perez from the beginning. “He is a gentleman, very stylish, with a charming personality, conscious of other people and with
an attractive appearance. Martina is thinking about him all the time, but she is willing to look into other people.” About Book # 2, Marjorie refers to the reactions in face of danger. These would be more a thing of human nature rather than cultural, doing something to protect your life. They are using their intelligence to overcome obstacles. So, there are heroes in these stories who use all their wit and all possible resources. In Book # 3 Cecilia, the little girl is the hero. This shows that children’s perceptions are similar all over because she is a common girl who goes to school and to the market, and then becomes a heroine. “She projects all her fantasy into the real world and this happens everywhere. So, everybody is the same despite the differences that adults want to make up.” In Book # 4 the heroes act similarly to the heroes in the American writings. Book # 5 shows a girl who is trying to change the ways of the old man by convincing him to change his old hat for a new one, meaning that he needs to move on, to be different and to be progressive. That is a universal pursuit. Book # 6 depicts the way to overcome evil, which is a universal behavior. What happens in Book # 7 happens anywhere in any story: the close relationships and all the fantasy that can be developed out of something simple and trivial as a walk around a park. For Book # 8 Maggie mentions the warm understanding between the mother and the daughter that can transform them into heroes. In Book # 9, “the real hero is the grandmother who uses all the possible resources to feed her family and not to lose the tradition.” With Book # 10 the cats are the heroes because they value friendship.

Reaffirmation of Hispanic Pride

Book # 1 can be used to give background information--to show a contrast between the past and present society. With Books # 2, # 4 and # 10 there are clear-cut cultural differences because the stories are more universal. Book # 3 clearly reaffirms the Hispanic pride because
it shows a unique tradition. “A child would really feel good in the United States about his roots. He would feel important and very special saying that they have all this in his country.” Books # 5, # 6, # 7 and # 8 show the pride and a positive source to learn about the roots of being of Hispanic descent, throughout the illustrations showing all the Hispanic elements and the close relationships among the members of the families and the friends. Book # 9 is more difficult to deal with because “it shows so much poverty, detriment of basic needs, but all the same the characters struggle to obtain what they need.”

Authors’ Origins and the Projection of Their Knowledge

According to Marjorie, it is important to know about the author’s origins for Book # 1 because this story is based on an oral legend. Therefore, in every country has its own flavor and details. In this case, the elements are based on the Spanish culture: the shawl, the fan, the clothing and certain mannerisms, like the way to address each other or the sitting on the balcony, which are typical from Spain. The author has projected all this quite well. The question is why the story is based on the Spanish culture. For Books # 2, # 3, # 4, # 5, # 6, # 8, # 9 and # 10 in general terms, Marjorie indicates that “if the purpose of the reading is to emphasize the cultural understanding, it is important to know about the author and the illustrator. Knowing all this information will give more credibility to what is being read. In that way, we will be able to understand the perspectives in a closer way. Knowing about the author gives more reliability to what we are reading. We can trust the details.” In these stories, the authors use songs, rhymes, colorful illustrations and the language to demonstrate the Hispanic culture and the exposure the authors have had to it. Book # 4 is a universal story and it does not show any particular knowledge of this Hispanic culture. Connected with Book # 6, Marjorie says, “It looks like the author lived all this period there, [El Salvador]. It makes
the story more real if you know the author has lived the experience.” For Book # 7, the author has developed some good sense of observation of the city of New York “without losing the Hispanic elements and the cultural projection.” The author shows his acquaintance with the city through the use of the language, colors, famous places, and the multicultural world reflected on the people in the streets. With Book # 10 the author shows how to organize a party in the Mexican style, including even the birthday song “Las Mañanitas.”

Use of Negative Words, Concepts or Illustrations

For Book # 1 Marjorie expresses her opinion saying that, “the story is negative only at the end because the husband to be dies and that situation is not very commonly seen in children’s stories.” A negative message portrayed in Book # 2 is that children can learn through these stories not to trust people. People and animals can always become mischievous. So, children can be inspired to be constantly careful with the strangers who can become their enemies. The only negative image in Book # 3 is that Cecilia’s favorite doll is blonde and all the rest of the people have dark hair. Books # 4, # 7 and # 8 do not contain negative images or words. With Book # 5 the negative side can be the fact of not wanting to get rid of the old hat; in general terms, to be afraid of changes. With Book # 6 Marjorie mentions the conversation of the landowners. They say, “these peasants are lazy because they just want to eat or drink.” This statement can be misinterpreted and projected onto all the Latin American peasants making readers believe they are all alike. For Book # 9 the bartering could be considered as negative because readers could get misled and believe that Latin American people engage in bartering everything. In Book # 10, the portrayal of gang members could be taken negatively, even though this group of friends looks like good people
and they are supporting each other. “As the situation goes on for foreigners in this country at present, gangs can be seen in a negative way.”

Copyright Date

Referring to Book # 1, Marjorie points out, “The copyright date is important because this is an old traditional story and times have changed today. Consequently, this story can not be used as a typical Hispanic situation to picture how courtship would happen or what a relationship would be like. It does not really happen that way anymore.” For Book # 2 stories and situations have changed, sometimes not for the better. So, these stories can help to show the differences. With Book # 3 Marjorie says that this is a more realistic story. The illustrations are helpful to show that this story is closer to contemporary times. Book # 4 is a story that can be told at anytime, so the copyright date is not essential to be known. Book # 5 refers to a countryside lifestyle that is modern and permanent. There are no striking changes. In Book # 6 there are a number of events that took place in El Salvador in real life. So, a reader can better understand the richness of details when he/she knows the copyright date because it seems more real. Books # 7, # 8 and # 9 are modern stories. Even the writing style and the use of words are current. “The copyright date can place in time, although the story could happen anywhere, anytime.” Book # 10 relates to “situations that are happening nowadays in certain big cities in the United States.”

Participant # 10: Ericka

Description

Ericka was born in Honduras. She has lived for nearly five years in Louisiana. She is the mother of two children. She holds a Bachelor in Law. Currently she works as a Pre-K
teacher. She has a permanent contact with foreigners in her family and friends circle. She has traveled extensively in Latin America and in the United States.

**Elements**

Ericka points out that in Book #1 the colorful illustrations, the flowers, the architecture of the house and Martina—the main female character—doing the housework illustrates that this is a Hispanic story. Ericka comments that in Book #2, “the strongest characters are always in peace with the weaker characters at the end of the story. In almost all Hispanic stories, everyone is in peace and in contact with nature at the end.” Ericka indicates that Books #3 and #8 highlight the importance of Christmas as a gathering of family and friends. In this specific case, the *posadas*, the tamales and all the traditions connected with this type of celebration. The Hispanic element in Book #4 is the way people invite their neighbors to have a party in their homes informally, which illustrates that for the most part, the culture is carefree and joyous. In Book #5, “we can see the family relationships and the attachment to one object—the hat in this case—that is a typical characteristic of Latin American people.” Book #6 is realistic for Ericka “because it shows the reality of our countries: the differences between the high society and the poor people, the needs and the oppression of the military regime and the importance and constant presence of nature.”

Through the relationship between the grandma and her granddaughter, Book #7 shows the reality of Latin American children in the United States. Ericka observes that in Book #9 the family comes together on the weekend and cooks a special meal, which is part of the traditions in Latin America. Book #10 portrays a birthday celebration; at this gathering, friends get together in the neighborhood, have good food, dance and relax.
Stereotypes

Book # 1 shows Martina doing all the housework, “they, referring to the people in the United States, say we love doing that” Ericka explains. Also, the clothing and the flowers around the house are considered as typical stereotypes. In the different stories contained in Book # 2, there is a weaker and a stronger character respectively. There is a constant search for that type of presence of a weaker and stronger character in the Latin American countries in real life. Possibly that is why the presence of politicians holding the power is so necessary. Many implications can be continued around this statement, but there is always a dual presence. Ericka mentions that in Book # 3 the mother is always with the kids. “Mom is always in charge of the house and the kids; she never has any other roles.” Ericka points out that Book # 4 perpetuates the roles of men and women as husband and wife. Concerning Book # 5 Ericka says about Uncle Nacho that, “there is always somebody like him in any family. The rest of the family protects him and he has something invaluable for him--in this case, the hat--that everybody recognizes it belongs to him.” Book # 6 depicts the rich and the poor people in a stereotyped way according to Ericka. She says that poor people have dark hair and dark complexion and they are always barefoot performing heavy tasks; while rich people have lighter skin, they are well dressed and they seem to have an idle life. Ericka does not see any stereotypes in Books # 7 and # 9. Ericka mentions the physical appearance of the characters in Book # 8. She comments that everybody has dark hair, dark eyes and dark skins. Ericka mentions that all the names of the main characters in Book # 10 are in Spanish slang.
Development and End of the Stories

Book #1 does not follow an expected story line and it has an unexpected end, according to Ericka, because the suitor Mr. Perez dies in such a tragic way. Children would never expect such an end. Books #2, #6, #7, #8 and #10 are absolutely predictable, as are the ends of the stories. Their development is predictable because there is a smooth beginning, a conflict arises and there is solution to this problem at the end. Ericka indicates that in Book #3 the development is normal, but the end is different as Cecilia, the little girl, accepts that the piñata has to be broken. Cecilia gets happy because she understands it is part of the tradition. Ericka elaborates that the development in Book #4 is unusual “because so many things happen in this story, but at the end, the lion is tamed and that is expected after all the adventures.” Book #5 has an unusual development and end because Uncle Nacho gets rid of the old hat. “That incredible attachment we have for old objects in Latin America is broken in this story.” In Book #9 according to Ericka the story does not follow a traditional story line because even though the grandparents do not have money, they have an incredible power to be creative. “These grandparents and their granddaughter just go and solve the situation one way or another, they get to the solution and they make their sancocho. The end is unexpected because I thought they were going to make just eggs. They are incredibly resourceful.”

Roles, Lifestyles and Relationships

Book #1 portrays a typical situation in Latin America, according to Ericka, a female character looking for a husband to have a family and be happy. “The entire story centers on Martina. Lifestyles are different today in the United States and in Latin America because women want to be in the job market and they do not have a lot of time for the chores at
home.” On the other hand, relationships between men and women are still similar to the ones portrayed in the story. This means there is still that wish to start a family and be proposed for that in a romantic way. Instead of human characters, Book # 2 features animals that personify people and as such they want to do their best in life and be the best in any kind of competition. “Throughout the stories, the characters change and are transformed into stronger characters. At the end they become the same as the weaker characters. Therefore, lifestyles as portrayed in this book are quite similar everywhere because everybody tries to make their best.” In relationships, the weaker characters are pushing to become the best or the heroes.

Ericka mentions that the children and the mother have the important roles in Book # 3. “The mother is always trying to make the kids happy and the children are discovering this world of traditions.” This kind of lifestyle and relationships are different in the United States because Christmas is celebrated among the close family. In Latin America, it is a celebration that involves the extended family and friends. It also takes place during the entire month of December. Concerning Book # 4 the roles of the husband and wife are present. These characters represent the universal relationship of husband and wife. When discussing Book # 5, Ericka says that “the senior citizen Uncle Nacho and his relationship with his niece Ambrosia is representative of our countries, there is this care for the family that children learn since childhood; the family relationships are the base of the society.” Lifestyles are different to North America because there is this close attachment to something old, that even though Uncle Nacho knows it is useless, he still loves it. In Latin America, situations like this still occur. Ericka indicates that the roles in Book # 6 are distributed among all the characters; they are all equal in importance: it is a collective story. “Lifestyles are different than the United States because this story shows many contrasts among the people. In Latin
America, it is possible to find places and situations like these in the story.” Interactions in Latin America are similar to the possible relationships that can take place in the United States in similar situations, such as the struggle for power between the social classes. The Abuela is the most important role in Book # 7. She is a senior citizen and has the power to lead the story. “Lifestyles concerning relationships are different in the United States as families are more physically separated. In Latin America, distances are shorter, so it is easier to be in closer contact with the whole family. Women and children have salient roles in Books # 8 and # 9. Lifestyles are similar in Latin America and in the United States because children want to help mom or their grandparents in their daily housework and there is much excitement and communication to prepare for big celebrations such as Christmas or even for a regular weekend with family. In Book # 10, the main roles are given to young people, because “this world belongs to them.” Lifestyles are different to the United States, as there are not close connections with neighbors to celebrate a birthday. In Latin America, it is possible to encounter this kind of lifestyle for celebrations and contact with neighbors.

Heroes

According to Ericka, the hero in Book # 1 is Mr. Perez who dies at the end. So this is not a happy ending. Different to the North American stories and their heroes who do not die; they always survive and they are the best at doing what they can do and that is why they become the heroes. Ericka points out that in Book # 2 the weaker is the hero at the end, and that is also the most intelligent. Ericka does not see any heroes in Book # 3. She observes that it is a plot that could be any situation in real life. In Book # 4, Ericka notices the differences “. . . because first the lion is the hero, then he takes a passive role and decides to give the stage to the rest of the animals.” Concerning Book # 5, Uncle Nacho could have been the
hero, but he does not act like that. He is a simple human being with real feelings that grow for the positive development of the story. Probably the niece grows to be the real hero in the story. Ericka mentions that in Book # 6 “nearly everybody involved in this story becomes a hero, trying to defend their piece of land and their freedom.” When discussing Books # 7, # 8 and # 9, Ericka suggests that the heroines are Abuela and the mother (female figures). “They take care of the children and teach them about life.” In Book # 10, the hero is Chato who just wants to make his friend happy. “It is from the heart that he wants to show his love and friendship under all circumstances.”

Reaffirmation of Hispanic Pride

Ericka says Book # 1 gives a positive image of this female character [Martina]. She takes care of the house and for Martina, home is the center of attention. Books # 2, # 3, # 5, # 6, # 7, # 8, # 9 and # 10 help project positive images of the Hispanic culture. Book # 4 is a more universal story, “but the idea of getting together with the neighbors to celebrate is a Latin American tradition, too.”

Authors’ Origins and the Projection of Their Knowledge

Ericka believes it is important to know the author’s origins for Books # 1, # 2, # 3, # 4, # 5, # 7, # 8, # 9 and # 10. The authors projected their knowledge of the Hispanic world in Books # 1, # 3, # 4, # 5, # 7, # 8, # 9 and # 10, and depict a simple, family-oriented life, where there is a sense of community, a respect for the traditions, and a constant contact with nature. Book # 2 projects the value of friendship for the author. Ericka points out that in Book # 6 it is important to know more about the author because he captures the idea of myths and work around people. Moreover, this author understands the differences among the people in this particular Latin American society.
Use of Negative Words, Concepts or Illustrations

Ericka does not see any negative words, concepts or illustrations in Books #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #7, #8, #9 and #10. Ericka mentions that in Book #6 the only negative point could be the presence of the military in the story. Ericka says that in Book #10, “Even the characters are supposed to be bad boys in LA, but they are portrayed as good and the story shows their good values.”

Copyright date

Concerning Books #1 and #2 Ericka says that readers should know the copyright dates “because everything contained in the stories has changed since that time.” For Book #3, even though it is more current it is important to learn the date “to establish parallels.” With Books #4, #7, #8 and #9 Ericka believes it is not imperative to know the copyright dates because these are stories that are permanent, and are not related to a specific period. Ericka points out that for Book #5 it is necessary to establish this is an extemporaneous story, but it belongs to the countryside traditions. Something like this does not happen in the big contemporary cities. The story in Book #6 is contemporary and it could take place anywhere in Latin America. Both Books #5 and #6 are said that it is not important to know their copyright dates because they are stories that will always be present and important to read in order to learning more about this reality. For Book #10 Ericka points out that it is interesting to know the copyright date because the rhythm of the story is very fast, though the main idea is the traditional friendship.
CHAPTER 6
CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

The following themes have emerged from the data, derived from the information that
the participants provided during the interviews. Then, all this information was placed into
categories. These different emerging themes are: elements; stereotypes; development and end
of the stories; roles, lifestyles and relationships; heroes; reaffirmation of Hispanic pride;
authors’ origins and the projection of their knowledge; use of negative words, concepts or
illustrations and copyright date.

Elements

Elements or the cultural elements are the simple accountability of physical or
crude items that show they are in part one way or another of a specific culture. When the
non-Hispanic participants bring up the elements that portray the Hispanic cultures in the ten
objects of study—the books in Appendix B-- the most commented elements are the bright,
vivid and energetic colors in the illustrations. This colorful way to depict the stories is a clear
reflection of the reality, in other words how the real landscapes look in the Latin American
countries: a varied and aggressive geography full of contrasts. In general terms, some of the
cultural elements that portray this Hispanic culture are positive elements and some others are
negative elements.

Clothing is mentioned as an easy way to understand the story refers to the Hispanic
culture. For example, they reveal the traditional costumes, the shawl, formal and elegant
clothes people wear at any time of the day or place, and the comb in the hair. An element that
is outstanding for the non-Hispanic readers is the color of the skin, eyes and hair. Everybody
referred to “the dark eyes, the dark skin and the dark hair.” It looks like it is something that
immediately calls their attention. It can be interpreted that it is faster for these participants to pick up these features as soon as they see them. Is this color-consciousness so obvious for people in the United States? The Hispanic participants did not refer to these characteristics--the skin color and the hair color--as one of the positive elements to recognize the Hispanic culture. For them, it is considered as a negative element and stereotype, in the sense, that the other participants highlight it immediately as an important characteristic. The next important element for the non-Hispanic participants is the use of the Spanish language throughout the stories; dominant words that can not be translated like the vocabulary for food or celebrations or names of people; in addition to, interspersed words to describe aspects difficult to give the same connotation in the English language. Moreover, another element of culture is the formal way to address each other. This is a typical characteristic of the Latin American people and this was mentioned by all of the non-Hispanic participants. Rhymes, songs, dancing and names of people that you connect with the Hispanic culture are said to be useful elements to portray this culture. Conversely, the use of the Spanish language can be taken as a teaching tool for North American students to help them lose the fear to learn a foreign language.

Some of the traditions, for example the posadas, the piñatas, the preparations of special food and distinctive ways to celebrate special occasions were rated by the non-Hispanic participants and mentioned more often during the interviews. They also discussed the architectonic style of the houses, the way they look indoors and outdoors with all the plan of the house around and the decorative elements. The care for the house and the constant performance of household activities were typical of Latin American women.

It is also interesting to observe how non-Hispanic participants noticed the interaction with the opposite sex. In the same level, the traditional roles for men are women are clearly
distinguished. Division of classes and political aspects are noticeable in the stories to portray
the reality in Latin America. The use of the word ‘magic’ is mentioned as one of the elements
to recognize the Hispanic culture. Non-Hispanic participants indicate that it is always
believed there is a certain amount of magical realism in that cultural world, things happen in
a certain way and there is no logical explanation for the way they happen.

The Hispanic participants made special remarks on clothing, saying that there is a real
concern for the way people dress up for any occasion in Latin America. Women, in a special
way, get well dressed even to do the house chores. One more important element is the bright
colors everywhere. These colorful images are a reflection of the daily contact with nature that
Latin American people have. They live around nature, depend on it, fear it, respect it,
worship it and love it. Associated with this, these participants mentioned the presence of
nature as a natural surrounding in the stories and how much they love outdoors life. The use
of the Spanish language is a further element that makes them feel proud. They believe it is
positive to have these words, songs, rhymes and even dancing, connected with the Hispanic
culture because it is a way to show an artistic side of the culture. They thought this
immersion process in the language could help get people closer and understand one another
much better. The presence of typical food and the way some of the representative
celebrations are depicted are elements considered by the Hispanic participants when
portraying the Hispanic culture in a positive way. Hispanic participants also mentioned the
way family and friends get together for the special occasions and how important it is to have
these gatherings as a way to support the individuals, the family and community connections.
They also mentioned the paganism mingled with the Christian religion. This pairs up with the
perception of the non-Hispanic participants of the presence of the ‘magic world’ in different instances in daily life.

Both groups of participants share some of the most outstanding elements to distinguish in the Hispanic culture. They are clothing, location of the stories transmitted in the presence of the landscape, the bright and energetic colors everywhere, the use of the Spanish language, the food and its importance as a cultural representation and the traditional celebrations.

Stereotypes

According to *The Oxford English Dictionary* (2002), “stereotype is a preconceived and oversimplified idea of the characteristics which typify a person, situation; etc.” The danger that can be perceived is that any stereotype may be consistently and authoritatively transmitted in each generation from parent to child, or more extensively, from educators to students. In the long run, this stereotype seems almost like a biological fact. It is also defined in *The Oxford English Dictionary* (2002) as “a tendency for a given belief to be widespread in a society.” These two definitions have been compelling to develop the stream of thoughts and reactions in this present study, as there is a constant presence of stereotypes, either positive or negative, in many of the selected children’s books.

Following the former definitions, stereotypes refer mostly to the preconceived ideas that readers or observers bring about before start working with the objects of study, or, it is what the participants can observe that has been portrayed in a typical way as it is always portrayed.

Non-Hispanic participants, when discussing the stereotypes throughout the stories mostly refer to the physical appearances of the characters, that is to say, dark hair and dark
skin together with the fact that just until recently everybody looked alike. The way of
dressing and clothes in general are stereotyped, because they are bright and colorful
following the style of traditional costumes. In particular, non-Hispanic participants mention
the formal way of dressing, even when women are at home and doing the household
chores—they look like ready to go out. The typical roles assigned to women and men are
constantly present in the stories. Men are usually just working outside the house, but in the
books pertaining to the last decade, men can be seen sharing the house chores and taking a
more active role at home. On the other hand, typical food is considered a stereotype as these
participants bring up it is not the only food eaten in Latin America. This means that there is
always an association of the Mexican food, like tamales, tacos, burritos, etc. with all the rest
of Latin America, when it is well-known that every country and region has its own typical
food. Non-Hispanic participants list the use of slang language. This is an arguable point as
this is natural language that is used by different social groups, so it is a sociolinguistic
representation. In the researcher’s opinion this type of language should be used in children’s
books and in that way, children will have the exposure to this type of language. One more
outstanding stereotype mentioned by the non-Hispanics is the difference among the social
classes. Embedded with this, the way the social classes are presented in the books, the levels
of poverty, poor people usually barefooted and men of the working class performing heavy
duty activities. Connected with poor barefooted people, it is interesting to point out that in
the United States to be barefooted is paired with comfort and relaxation, while in Latin
America it is associated with poverty. Less mentioned as stereotypes are the architecture of
the houses, the formal attitudes and the formal ways to address each other, the presence of
some religious symbols, and activities, like taking siestas.
The Hispanic participants refer to some elements that stereotype and preserve the negative image of Hispanic characters and consequently, Hispanic people. They mention, for instance, the characters’ clothing is generally very colorful, still wearing typical, traditional costumes and hats. It looks like updated fashion has never gotten to the locations of the stories. Characters are overly dressed, even when they are at home. Most of the characters still have dark skin and dark hair; there is no variation as there is in the real world. It must be remembered that Latin America is a land of *mestizos* where many races have mingled together, especially in the most recent decades. This has resulted in a wide variety of physical characteristics. In the earlier books, (Books #1 to #4), there is an extreme formality among the characters to address each other. In the most current books there is a more informal atmosphere and way to speak to each other. Also, in the earlier books typical roles of males and females assigned to the characters are more exaggerated. Women are always taking care of the children, cleaning the house to the extreme, girls are around their moms and boys are together with their dads. Social classes are extremely different in some of the books. Hispanic participants agree on this aspect, as it is the reality. The negative side is observed when in most of the books there is the constant presence of poverty, men working on jobs that require physical labor, people with no shoes and wearing the typical peasants’ clothes. The positive side is these characters are able to resolve the conflict, use their imagination to be resourceful and get to a happy ending.

It is interesting to notice that most of the stereotypes are equally mentioned by the two groups of participants: clothes, colorful images, physical appearances, assigned roles to women and men, attitudes and formalities, differences among the social classes. This could be interpreted as there is a conscious or unconscious knowledge of the presence of
stereotypes that through education and constant use of this type of books should be improved and better understood by the general readers.

Development and End of the Stories

This emerging theme refers to the way the two groups of participants perceive the way the story line develops throughout the different stories and the different expectations for the conclusions of the story.

In general terms, the non-Hispanic participants declared that the conclusions of the stories were unexpected because generally there was a surprise ending. This is associated with the fact that people in North America are used to living a regular, organized life in general terms. When something unexpected happens, it is shocking for them and it changes their perspective and focus of attention. For example, Books # 1, # 5, # 7, # 9 and # 10 ended up in a way the readers had not perceived at all. It is interesting to notice that these books belong to different times and the first four of them, #1, # 5, # 7 and # 10 portray a rather exotic reality, meaning a reality that is out of the common grounds for this selected group of readers. For instance, it is possible to see a tropical environment, or a city observed from the sky or the suburban barrio of a big city. The Book “Saturday Sancocho” is closer to reality, but the main character goes through difficult situations to get to the happy ending, so it is unanticipated if she will be able to do it or not. In these same books, the development of the story was unexpected as well. The participants pointed out they would never know what was going to happen from one page to the next. For these non-Hispanics participants, most of these same books were full of surprises. This characteristic can be easily used to attract the children’s attention and to spark their imagination and motivation.
For the Hispanic participants, in general terms, the development and the conclusions of the stories were expected. The reason behind this statement is the settings, characters and elements presented are familiar on the one hand, and on the other hand, Hispanic readers are used to these magical worlds where reality mixes up with magic. It is interesting to mention that Book # 1 was the most unusual because of the old-fashioned Spanish portrayal and the sad and violent ending. They said they could not identify with this book and they would only use it as a historical reference. The Book “Nine Days to Christmas” had an unexpected ending for these readers because they believed Cecilia, the main character would keep the piñata. They agree on the Book “Uncle Nacho’s Hat” with the non-Hispanic participants, as a book full of surprising events. For the rest of the books each present an expected development and end of the stories. Thus, Books # 1, # 5 and # 9 were the most unexpected in their development and way to conclude for both groups of participants. The three books belong to different decades (1932, 1959 and 1994) but they show a different world where characters, women and senior citizens, struggle to get what they want. Some of them do it, some others do not, but they bravely pursue their wishes.

Roles, Lifestyles and Relationships

This theme refers to the different roles taken by children, women or senior citizens and their importance for the development of the stories. It also intends to compare the different perceptions of the lifestyles and relationships inserted in the studied books that the non-Hispanic and the Hispanic participants have of Latin America and the United States.

Non-Hispanic participants attributed most of the roles to female characters. Some of these female characters had passive roles, that is, they were performing the typical stereotyped image of a wife directed by her husband: Books # 3 and # 4. Women have a
strong leading power of decision in most of the stories, like in Books # 1, # 3, # 7, # 8 and # 9. Besides, senior citizens also seem to be particularly important in some of the stories, like for # 5, # 7 and # 9. Children also play significant roles in the stories in Books # 5, # 7, # 8 and # 9. All these books were published in the later decades. More attention has been paid to minority groups, like senior citizens and children. Book # 6 was said to present people with a passive role, while nature has the most active role. It is interesting to say that nature and the symbol of the volcanoes are represented with a female figure. This demonstrates the important connection with nature in Latin America and how people see it as Mother Nature, the provider for everything. At the same time, some participants mentioned that people were taken as a collective group in this book: all characters have a certain degree of importance. One character can not be devalued in front of the other because all of them give balance to the story. This is the story that basically shows the struggle between the different social classes. For Book # 10 all the participants agreed that all the characters are quite interesting, in addition to the fact that they are mostly representing young males. So, this is the new generation to be heard and paid attention to. Answering the questions about lifestyles in the stories, most of the Hispanic participants pointed out they are similar to both the lifestyles in the United States and in Latin America. This refers to the most common settings for the stories, either rural or urban and the way people develop their activities daily. The reader can see many elements, which are in either of the two worlds, such as the architectonic design of the houses, the trees, plants and gardens around, the landscape, the streets and the environment around, the diverse activities performed at home or on the streets. In some cases, lifestyles are different because the setting is the middle of the jungle, like in Books # 2 and # 4. For Books # 6 and # 9, the stories evolve around small towns that seem to be located
in the highlands, but these same places can be found in the diverse geography of the United States. When the stories are set up in urban settings it is easier for all the participants to perceive the similarities of lifestyles. Therefore, this will help teach children that lifestyles can be absolutely similar in many places around in the world, not only at home but also outdoors. In the first books, if there is a comparison between the ways relationships take place in Latin America and in the United States; these relationships are similar but mostly based on the old people taking an advisory role or just a casual encounter. As the participants advanced in time with the books, it was observed that relationships become closer and closer. The family takes an outstanding role, older members of the family get closer to the younger ones, the community becomes more and more involved and later on, friends become extremely important. In general, the perception is the family, either close or extended, is always in the picture. This happens in the United States and in Latin America and it demonstrates that the family is still the foundation of society.

Most of the Hispanic participants stated that the main roles are centered on women, overall. The Book “Dance of the Animals” is pointed out as having the male characters as dominant characters or providers. With Books # 5, # 7 and # 9 senior citizens and children share the prevailing roles. Just for “Chato and the Party Animals,” young males take on the stage and build up the story. All this highlights the importance of women in the Latin American society. The mother is the thread that links everything, from the perspective of the natural environment to the simple activities at home and the provider of support, advice, care and love.

Lifestyles are seen to be different between Latin America and the United States for the non-Hispanic participants who state some reasons. For example, they mention the
depictions are exclusively centered on a Latin American rural setting, the geography is
dissimilar and this gives variations in lifestyles. There is a strong connection with the
community. This means everybody belongs to a social group besides belonging to a family
circle. Non-Hispanic participants understand the physical distances are farther apart in the
United States, so it is more difficult for people to be in constant contact, either with family or
with the community. But it is important to bring up that the latest books were said to be
showing more similar lifestyles to anywhere and everywhere. The stories are becoming more
likely to take place either in the United States or in Latin America. They are showing more
common settings for either of the two places. This supports the idea of closeness or getting
the societies and the world together. Referring to relationships among people, the Hispanic
participants said with the first books that they are different to what they regularly see in the
United States, but along the time period covered by the books, these relationships become
more similar. This happens because there is more solidarity among the characters and this
has to be taken as universal value. For more solidarity, it is meant that there is more concern
of what happens to the rest of the people in the world. In a positive way, media has helped
with this, bringing images of what happens everywhere in the world to homes. In addition,
characters in these books become more involved and closer to the community where they
live, as in the books “Uncle Nacho’s Hat”, “Magic Dogs of the Volcanoes,” or “Saturday
Sancocho.” As a way to connect this to reality, it can be observed that some sub-cultures in
the United States, such as those in Louisiana may be comparable to Latin America because in
the Cajun culture there is a strong sense of family, family traditions, care and respect for the
elderly and the children. This pairs up with the observations made by the two groups of
participants about the importance of family and human relationships.
Overall, female characters are leading characters in the stories for both groups of participants. The way lifestyles were shown in the earlier books has changed to become more similar between the Latin American and the North American lifestyles. In addition, relationships among people also appear to be more similar in these societies nowadays.

Heroes

The non-Hispanic participants indicate that heroes in the books written by Hispanics living and writing in North America were more difficult to recognize among the characters representing the common people in the early books. Heroes were among the most outstanding characters, either for their physical strength or because there were no more main characters. This is different from the later published books when the common people were the heroes. For instance, Martina and her rejection of all the suitors in the Book “Perez and Martina: A Portorican Folk Tale” has an ongoing role as a heroine, and she is expected to continue like that. In later books, the idea of heroes begins to change and the heroes are just family members that children look up to with respect, but not impossible to emulate. More than heroes, they are role models to follow; such as grandmothers in the Books “Abuela” and “Saturday Sancocho” or senior citizens, or the children themselves. Even the situation presented in the Book “Chato and the Party Animals” focuses on youngsters, and shows a hero who wants to do everything possible to help a friend and make him feel happy. So, simple actions let characters become heroes by doing simple things. This is corroborated by one of the participants who point out that the common people who become heroes in the stories act as the common people in real life.

For the Hispanic participants, heroes are encountered within the community; for example, grandmothers are represented as the strong figures. In general terms, women take
the responsibility to become the leaders and the heroes. They use all their wits and possible resources. Heroes take care of whatever the problem is. It seems that it has been established in the Hispanic culture that you look for positive role models or for heroes within the family, you do not go far away from the circle: generally parents are the first heroes. Interesting to mention that for one of the Hispanic participants there were no heroes in any of the stories. “They are all everyday people and they do what they need to do,” Claudia said. Some of the Hispanic participants say that heroes in North American writings are untouchable, they are like super heroes; it is very difficult for any regular person to get to their standards. When North American writings are mentioned by the participants, they refer to the writings that have been created by the English speaking writers, not by these authors who are Hispanic, but live in North America. Volcanoes and nature become sort of heroes too for the Hispanic participants who always pay respects to these natural elements. For example, there is the female figure, also respected as a heroine in many of the stories, and in this case represented by the volcano that is dressed up as a woman and dancing in the Book “Magic Dogs of the Volcanoes,” and ends up as a heroine in this story.

In summary, for both groups of participants, the heroes are the weaker characters who at the end of the stories demonstrate their intelligence and resourcefulness, in spite of all the difficult events. Women seem to be the most outstanding characters and at the same time, the heroes in most of the stories, even the little girls act as heroes, like in Books “Abuela,” “Too Many Tamales” or “Saturday Sancocho.” The important aspect is to make family and people around happy and to do what has to be done to get this goal.
Reaffirmation of Hispanic Pride

This category refers to the way the book can be used to help children, especially of Hispanic descent, to feel the pride of being who they are and respect their ancestry. At the same time, this implies that books can be positively used to disseminate this Hispanic culture.

For the non-Hispanic participants some of these books should not be used for the specific purpose of reaffirming the Hispanic pride, either because they are more universal oriented or they do not find many positive situations to really support the Hispanic culture. When they say they are universal books, this means that the topics or the settings could be anywhere in the world and not necessarily in a Hispanic environment.

In the books studied, positive elements such as the energetic and enchanting colors in the illustrations, the landscape, the togetherness with nature, the care for the house, the family traditions and ties, the strong bonds with the community, the traditions and celebrations reflected on the story, the use of the Spanish language and the heroic actions some characters perform are sources of pride for the Hispanic participants. The Books “Perez and Martina” and “Chato and the Party Animals” are more difficult to use and it largely depends on the age of the child and his or capacity to understand the content and the message of the books. Some of the objects of study –the books are amusing to show what happens in daily life and in this way, to make the stories more realistic.

The Hispanic participants consider that some of the books are positive as they deal with historical traditions, either still in use or already disappeared. Other books present more universal themes. One situation in these books can take place anywhere in the world. But the same as the non-Hispanic participants, the Hispanic participants especially enhance the
importance of family and friends, the traditional celebrations including the ethnic food, the resourcefulness to face a dignified poverty and the constant hope for a better future.

Authors’ Origins and the Projection of Their Knowledge

This theme emerged based on the intention to know more about the origins of the authors or illustrators of the ten books in this study. The participants also referred to the way the authors projected their knowledge of the Hispanic world throughout the stories. It is important to point out that the authors of these books are either Hispanic, because they were born in Latin America or they are first generation of Hispanic in the United States, so they have a direct contact with the Hispanic culture. Therefore, they can be considered as “insiders” in literary terms.

In general, the non-Hispanic participants point out it is interesting, but not absolutely essential to be more acquainted with the authors while these authors are able to project their knowledge of the Hispanic world in a truthful, credible and detailed way. This is well perceived in all the books directly portraying the Hispanic culture. These participants could also distinguish when the books were depicting a more universal world. In some of the books, such as “Magic Dogs of the Volcanoes,” there is a strong political and social message, so the reader wants to know if the author lived during a similar historical period. In other books, such as “Nine Days to Christmas” and “Too Many Tamales,” celebrations and traditions are well depicted, thus it is interesting to know who created these books. The way these Hispanic authors demonstrated their knowledge of the Hispanic world is through the use of the elements mentioned earlier in this chapter under the theme Elements.

The Hispanic participants have divided opinions on knowing more about the author. Some of them indicate it is necessary to see how the authors support everything they say.
Some others point out it is not absolutely essential because the message is completely clear and an authentic portrayal of the reality. Once again, the way the authors project their knowledge is through the correct use of the elements in the stories.

On the whole, for teachers, librarians and parents it seems to be more comfortable to know as much as possible about the authors because they feel they can relate better and understand the message and the content of the books in a more profound way. Hispanic participants place less emphasis on this issue because they feel they know enough to make the necessary interpretations. Different to the non-Hispanic participants who feel need to learn more to understand deeper and be able to interpret the right message. This correlates with the importance that must be given to this multicultural literature as a way to portray the different realities around the world.

Use of Negative Words, Concepts or Illustrations

As a contrast, this theme emerged to see and understand the reason why there could be any negative elements throughout the readings. This theme is more at a superficial level than the stereotypes. In other words, they are words, concepts or illustrations that would become immediately visible to the reader and would not necessarily contain a social, aesthetic or psychological meaning.

For the non-Hispanic participants, most of these books do not carry any negative words, concepts or illustrations that give a negative image of the Hispanic culture. On the contrary, these books show a positive, vibrant, mesmerizing mixture of magic and realism, fast pace and authentic portrayals of the Hispanic world. Only the Book “Perez and Martina” because of the sad and violent ending or the Book “Magic Dogs of the Volcanoes” that show the power of the oppressor over the oppressed are more difficult to explain and have these
negative concepts. But in a positive way, even if these concepts are positively used, they can be helpful. In a lesser extent, the Books “Uncle Nacho’s Hat” and “Saturday Sancocho” show places and situations where people are extremely poor, but this can illustrate to students that these characters appear to be happy because they have the support from the family and the community. They also know how to handle these levels of poverty.

Hispanic participants point out the constant activity around the house doing housework as something that could be taken as negative. This implies these women only deal with the household activities and can not do anything else. This image has started to change in the latest years because men have begun to help in the house, but none of the books showed a professional woman. Uncle Nacho, in Book # 5, has been observed as a senior citizen, slow to react, that is a contrasting image with the grandmothers in the other books. They have and absolutely participatory and outstanding roles. The Book “Chato and the Party Animals,” in some cases, was interpreted as a difficult book because it shows the youth culture, difficult to explain and to understand, but other participants found it fascinating just because of having the opportunity to read such a book. The non-Hispanic participants had a similar reaction to the Book “Chato and the Party Animals”. This group of Hispanic participants mentioned the situation of oppression and difficult political/social times in the Book “Magic Dogs of the Volcanoes.” On the whole, these Hispanic participants dealt more with the specific details in the different books because evidently, they know more about this reality. Their parameters of comparison are broader and more refined.

Copyright Date

This theme refers to the implied differences based on the date when the book was first published. It is necessary to remember that our objects of study cover seven decades,
beginning with the decade when the Caldecott and the Newbery Awards were established. This question in the interviews was directed to know if the corresponding copyright date made any difference to make the story easier to understand.

Non-Hispanic participants answered in general that it was not decisively important as most of the stories are extemporaneous, meaning that what happens throughout the book can happen at any time in our contemporary world. The Book “Perez and Martina” was the only book that shows a more distant world, in other words, it is a clear example of what happened before and to contrast it with what happens today. From the artistic point of view, this book is considered a jewel. The rest of the books depict situations, either real or based on legends or fantasies that are timeless stories—any generation can relate to them. Some of them, like Books # 5, # 6 and # 10 have a stronger socio-historical and political content and meaning: they can be easily connected to the real world. Two of the books, “Uncle Nacho’s Hat” and “Magic Dogs of the Volcanoes” are bilingual and they correspond to the period when bilingualism was a strong hold in Education. Along the decades, these participants are able to perceive that these books demonstrate progress in cultural sensitivity towards the Hispanic culture and its people. This could be paired with the way portraying African Americans have changed. At the beginning of the 20th century, they were often involved in menial jobs, as peasants or servants and just a few main roles were assigned to them. After the 1990’s, this situation began to change and African Americans began to take leading roles in children’s books and stories about the relevant people who framed the history of this country were told.

For the Hispanic participants, the copyright dates are not necessarily important to know because these books are a reflection of the Hispanic culture and, as so, they can be applicable to any time or place. In some way for some participants it can be significant to
know the date of publication to be able to establish parallels between those times when it was published and nowadays. Some of the participants state they are classic, permanent books. They can be recognized as part of the Hispanic heritage and they can be used as a historical and teaching resource. When the countryside is shown in some of the books, it is pointed out that there have not been striking changes in this kind of life in Latin America. So, Hispanic participants keep on with the idea of extemporaneous stories.

The idea to consider this emerging theme has demonstrated to be useful and valid because it supported the choice of the books along the time period they covered.

To conclude this analysis, the participants gave their opinions on the preferred books and the books they would not select to portray the Hispanic culture. They are as follows:

Non-Hispanic participants had as their favorites, ‘Magic Dogs of the Volcanoes’, ‘Sancocho’ and ‘Abuela’. The least favorite books were: ‘The Tiger and the Rabbit and other tales’, and ‘Perez and Martina: A Portorican Folk-Tale’.

For the Hispanic participants, the favorite books were ‘Magic Dogs of the Volcanoes’, ‘Nine Days to Christmas’ and ‘Too Many Tamales’. The least favorite books for this group were: ‘The Tiger and the Rabbit and other tales’, and ‘Uncle Nacho’s Hat’.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

In this section I will discuss the answers to the three research questions.

What characteristics are present in children’s books to help readers become aware and respectful of other cultures and to increase the readers’ awareness of similarities and differences between cultures?

The answers to the questions presented to the ten participants during the interviews are the foundations to identify the characteristics in the children’s books that help readers become aware and respectful of other cultures. The three research questions were the groundwork to formulate the emerging themes, presented earlier in Chapter 6. They are the following: elements, stereotypes, development and end of the stories, roles, lifestyles and relationships, heroes, reaffirmation of Hispanic pride, authors’ origins and the projection of their knowledge, use of negative words, concepts or illustrations and copyright date. These themes became evident after looking across all the collected data, and they have proved to be helpful to determine the characteristics and establish different perceptions.

Based on the responses, the following findings are evident and they have come to support the presence of the characteristics in these children’s books: non-Hispanic participants revealed that the selected books are full of surprises, that is to say, elements which have helped them become aware of similarities and differences between cultures. In addition, non-Hispanic and Hispanic participants assigned different degrees of importance to physical characteristics. Outstandingly, it is necessary to point out that both groups of participants said that the elements present in the books are sources to be used in the reaffirmation of Hispanic pride by children and educators when reading these books.
What are the readers’ perceptions of the accurateness of the culture portrayed in the selected books?

In general terms, the two groups of participants, the non-Hispanic and the Hispanic participants answered that the Hispanic culture was accurately portrayed in most of the selected books. Until the 1990’s, we cannot say that these books were inaccurate, but they were not accurate either. The books were not a complete picture of the reality, they were just showing part of the reality. It would be the same situation in African books when they show everything taking place in the jungle, the animals and the people around there. The authors do not show cities in Africa.

In some of the books, this accurateness to portray the culture was more precise. For example, in “Nine Days to Christmas” there is a precise picture of how the posadas are prepared and celebrated in Mexico. The books “Uncle Nacho’s hat” and “Magic Dogs of the Volcanoes” show a number of elements to portray the natural environment of the stories, besides the relationships inside the community. The books “Too Many Tamales,” “Saturday Sancocho,” and “Chato and the Party Animals” are centered on typical food Hispanic people prepare for different celebrations. They even include recipes. With the books “The Tiger and the Rabbit”, “Dance of the Animals” and “Abuela,” this accurateness was not so precise as they were accounted to be more universal stories. This means that these stories could be transferred to any worldwide context. There were some elements contained in these stories which were evidently connected with the Hispanic culture, but the theme of the book was either based on fables or legends. Some of the most common elements associated with the Hispanic culture were the food, the colors and the nature.
The following major findings for the study have supported the answer to this question: Non-Hispanic participants were surprised by the number of female characters who hold the main roles along with children in the studied books; particularly girls. They also referred to the relationships that were significantly different in the way they were presented to the readers in the earlier books (1930-1990). In these books, there was a marked social class gap or a hierarchical family relationship. In the same way, women and men sustain traditional occupational roles. Finally, food and celebrations continue to be an important and valuable way to depict any specific culture.

How do the perceptions and beliefs of non-Hispanic and Hispanic participants differ in the interpretation of the cultures portrayed in the selected books?

Perceptions and beliefs of non-Hispanic and Hispanic participants differed in the interpretation of the cultures portrayed in the selected books based on questions answered throughout the interviews. The most striking differences were the perceptions of the relevance of family relationships, on the importance of traditional foods as a token to transmit customs and traditions from one generation to the next, and the presence and levels of poverty.

The differences of opinions and perceptions between the non-Hispanic and the Hispanic participants, according to my own opinion, are because of the lack of opportunities to come in contact with the Hispanic culture. This lack of possibilities is based on different situations such as difference of language, no opportunity to experience the reality ‘in situ’, I mean, the difficulties to travel and have the direct experience in the same countries. The media promotes the misinformation or lack of information. Specifically, the news we get
from Latin America is usually limited to catastrophic situations, drug dealing, or political and economical upheavals.

Supported on the findings, this question can be answered indicating that more of the Hispanic participants commented on the importance of nature and life outdoors. As well Hispanic participants stressed the importance of family and friends more often than the non-Hispanic participants as part of their daily life.

Findings for the Study

- For non-Hispanic participants, the selected books are full of surprises, not only for the elements, but also for the way the stories evolve and the endings.

These participants are used to living in a regular and established way. Everything starts, it develops in a certain regular way and then, it finishes as predicted. Everything can be planned ahead. An example to clarify this statement is a referral to the tragedy of September 11, 2001 when nobody could suspect something of that magnitude could happen in the United States. Similar situations are constantly in the news coming from the rest of the world, but not in this space of the world. The system of life in the United States is quite well organized in all possible aspects, besides having the possibility to enjoy stability, so people are used to perceive what can happen next. That is why it is easy to understand why non-Hispanic participants were more surprised with the endings of the stories. This is a contrary situation for Hispanic people who are used to have a more unpredictable life, with ups and down which are many times, governed by the political, social or economic circumstances or system of living.
• Non-Hispanic participants were also surprised by the number of female characters who hold the main roles along with children in the books; particularly girls.

This can be explained because women hold a high respect in the Latin America society. It is a more matriarchal way of living, where women are the heart of the home and even though, it could look like only men make decisions, women are also taken into account their opinions are respected. It is a similar situation to what it can be observed among the African American families where women are the stakeholders.

• Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants assigned different degrees of importance to physical characteristics.

One of the first things the non-Hispanic participants noticed was the way the Hispanic culture is portrayed through the color of the skin or hair. For Hispanic participants, this is not a characteristic to be enhanced because Hispanic people are used to see people of different colors in the racial spectrum. Hispanic people are color blind because they come from a diverse variety of origins, which results in different colors. Children grow up without paying attention to such a difference, so these variations in color do not become part of their mental scheme.

• More of the Hispanic participants commented on the importance of nature.

There is more contact with nature and people live more outdoors in the Latin American countries. It is the place to relax, to enjoy, to worship and to respect. This may be attributed to the fact that it is a more agricultural society. It is possible to observe this fact in two of the selected books, “Uncle Nacho’s Hat” (1989) and “Magic Dogs of the Volcanoes” (1990) which show an agricultural setting. Non-Hispanic participants also observed this
characteristic and they understand that Latin American books and consequently Latin American people give a special role in their lives to nature.

- Hispanic participants stressed the importance of family and friends more often than the non-Hispanic participants.

We can observe how these relationships are maintained throughout life. Nowadays, grandparents and children have become closer and involved in a more active life; senior citizens have active roles, and this corresponds to what happens in North American society.

- Relationships were significantly different in the way they were presented to the readers in the earlier books. In these books (1930-1990) there was a marked social class gap or a hierarchical family relationship.

In contrast, the relationships portrayed in the books from the 1990 to the present reflect more closely what happens in real life. Nowadays social structures are not as well defined and this is reflected even in the way parents, grandparents and children establish communications.

- The traditional roles of men and women, even reflected in their traditional occupations, as peasants or housewives are evident in these early books.

Unfortunately, it is not until the last decade--1990--with the Book “Abuela” (1992) that there is not a new portrayal of life. In this example, it is possible to observe people who have different activities in a new world with new possibilities. Later on, in Books like “Too Many Tamales” or “Chato and the Party Animals” characters look to be better off, they live in a city, they wear fashionable clothes and have the means to host large parties.

Therefore, overtime books have evolved to become more authentic, more real, more representatives of the different aspects of the diversity of cultures. Along the timeline
covered by the studied books, we have been able to observe a culture sensitivity to be open-minded to the different ways to represent the corresponding culture. On the contrary, non-Hispanic participants are concerned these books are too realistic and they contain not enough magical realism to trigger the child’s imagination. For example, books like “Chato and the Party Animals,” “Saturday Sancocho,” or “Too Many Tamales” are realistic books, based on real modern life and they get out of the streamline of fantasy and different possible interpretations.

- The Spanish language has been incorporated in a natural way, so the books can help as a learning tool for the Spanish as a Foreign Language class.

This is an important tool to use to encourage educators and parents to teach children a foreign language, so they can learn it in a natural way—the same way people learn the mother tongue. At the same time, children can be learning about other cultures around the world and easily see the similarities and get used to the differences.

- Food and celebrations continue to be an important and valuable way to depict the specific culture.

Today, it is important to establish the link among certain types of food; for instance, gumbo and sancocho, or jambalaya and paella. Celebrations, like Christmas have a different flavor in every country and social group, but the motivation to celebrate is still under the same tradition.

- Characters who become heroes are always optimistic, even though they have to face adversities in their daily life.

- The elements present in the books are sources to be used in the reaffirmation of Hispanic pride by children and educators when reading these books.
• Stereotypes are still found in these selected objects of study, for example, through the way clothing is portrayed.

Recommendations for Educators and Further Research

The United States is a reflection of the ethnic and cultural change throughout the world. Therefore, any innovation that takes place in this country in any area of study or research means that sooner or later, it will travel around the world, and possibly be applied in the most remotely distant places. Banks (1979) suggested that multiethnic educators must move to a reconciliation, which sees a universal culture with ethnic groups and subgroups. So, as a contribution to the better understanding, to the links to create this universal culture and better educational possibilities, I dare to suggest some recommendations based upon the findings from this study.

1. Use the set of questions from the interviews to select books representing other cultural groups, for instance to Asian American, African, Native American, Jewish American and/or Caribbean representatives. Following Hooks (1994) statement it is essential to hear the polyphonic voices in the classroom and in the texts, so this could become a plausible way to perform this task, examining the multicultural books and understanding the different perceptions coming from the different groups. In such a way, participants and researchers can get to conclusions to see the similarities and differences among the diverse cultures.

2. Use this set of questions to further the research with children, representing a number of non-Hispanic and Hispanic participants. It means it would be interesting to use exactly the same books and questions with children in the Elementary level. In this way, the
researcher would be able to establish comparisons between their perceptions and portrayals of the Hispanic culture and those of the adults.

3. Make the course on Multicultural Education (EDCI 3400) compulsory for all the students in the College of Education. In that way, future educators will be better prepared to work and face the diversity in the classroom because a teacher would have to be sensitive and understand the global situation in his/her community. As it was stated in Chapter 2, p.6 the definition for multicultural education has been broadened to make it inclusive to cover all segments of the population who have a specific characteristic. De Anda (1997) has provided an encumbering understanding of this term.

4. Offer the Multicultural Education course campus-wide to all future professionals. This recommendation can be tied up to Tiedt and Tiedt (2002) definition for multicultural education that refers to the individual and to this individual inserted in a society.

5. Encourage writers to write children’s books reflecting the diversity that is present everywhere and to make them accessible to every child with the help of educators. The statement made by Khazzaka (1997) that deals with the teachers and administrators’ responsibility to mold the environment, and consequently mold the world can support this thought. Educators have a primary task to continue helping change the world for the better. In this particular case, it means to make the best use of these multicultural books or materials. All this motivation for writers to create multicultural writings is also supported by Dudley-Marling (1997) who speaks about the importance of literature written by and for people from marginalized groups.

6. Implement foreign language instruction at the Kindergarten level, as it is happening with the French Immersion classes in Louisiana and, as it is done with the English language in
the South American countries: in a compulsory way. So, little children will get
acquainted with the different cultures as soon as they are starting to open up a book and
then, read. If we show children right from the beginning books like the selected books for
the study, we widen the possibilities to use books representing other cultural groups and
children will get used to these different characteristics and elements. This learning of the
language becomes part of the process of socialization with the world and the surrounding
environment. In theory, it is important to remember Waggoner (1988) and Cloud (1993)
affirmations that the number of people speaking other languages than European
languages is increasing and that the United States is not anymore a monolingual country.
So, nowadays it has become essential to get acquainted with other languages, even to
assist parents or students in daily life or daily meetings. Careful attention must be paid to
the emerging majorities, Hispanics, and provide them with the necessary tools to be
incorporated into the society, and so become useful members. For instance, Texas,
Florida and California are states with the highest number of Spanish speaking
immigrants. These immigrants have become an important labor force and at the same
time they need to be educated to improve their possibilities, so language classes both for
the English and Spanish languages are essential.
Guidelines for Assessing Multicultural Children’s Books

Based on the information obtained through this study, I would like to suggest the following guideline for determining whether or not a complete and accurate portrayal of the culture is present in the selected book.

1. What are the specific multicultural elements used to portray the story?
2. Are there recognized stereotypes in the illustrations or the text of the book?
3. Does the story follow a common or unexpected story line?
4. Is the end expected or unexpected?
5. Are children, women or senior citizens playing important roles throughout the story?
6. Are the characters in the story holding traditional jobs that are indicative of the culture?
7. Are the main characters empowered throughout the story?
8. Are lifestyles in the book different or similar to what you regularly see in the United States?
9. Does the book contain a glossary to help the reader understand the possible terms in foreign language?
10. Does the information on the author help the reader understand the book and the respective culture in a better way?
11. Does it appear that the author has projected his/her knowledge of the culture in a correct way?
12. Is the copyright an important factor to make the story easier to understand?
13. Which elements from the book would you use to make the child feel proud of his/her origins?
14. Have the readers learned something positive about this culture?
Summary

This study attempted to determine the accurateness of the representation of the Hispanic culture in children’s books. I interviewed ten people: five non-Hispanic and five Hispanic, and I found that the Hispanic people do not seem to pay as much attention to physical features as non-Hispanic people do. However, they were concerned about the portrayal of the Hispanic culture in traditional ways: the traditional roles of women, the traditional dress, the architecture of the houses and the portrayal of the Hispanic people living in rural areas and being extremely poor. It appears from the timeline covered by the books, from the 1930’s until the present time, that the more recent the publication, the more accurate the portrayal of the Hispanic culture becomes. In recent years we see more books in the literature that portray characters from the Hispanic culture as middle class citizens living in cities rather than poor peasants living in rural areas and doing agriculture-based jobs.

The results from this study confirm my own perceptions of the portrayal of the Hispanic culture in children’s books. To support this statement I refer to Hamel (1993), who explains the notion called initial theory. This means that the researcher has an initial idea of the perceived social issue or phenomenon. In my specific case, this has come from the years studying and working as a librarian, where I have had a wide exposure to books and people from diverse origins. As the participants were going through the books, they were distinguishing more details and becoming more aware of their own perceptions and the details in the books that supported their perceptions. They became more aware of the stereotypes and more aware of the way the culture was represented. An important aspect to point out is that the authors of most recent books like “Too Many Tamales,” “Abuela,” or “Chato and the Party Animals” are authors who have lived in the United States for a long
time, so they are setting their stories in this country. This aspect can be absolutely helpful if we consider that these books have been created to be used in the United States. Therefore, children and readers in the United States will identify more with the characters and settings. Consequently they will feel pride and may wish to continue their traditions. At the same time, children will be able to establish comparisons and differences with other ethnic groups; and other children can learn about the Hispanic culture.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

RUBRIC FOR PILOT STUDY

I. SETTING:

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II. CHARACTERS:

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<td>by social class</td>
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<td>(homeless, urban, working class, middle class, rich)</td>
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<td>by generation</td>
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<td>(old, young, middle-aged, children)</td>
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<td>by nationality</td>
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<td>by regional group</td>
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**III. ILLUSTRATIONS:**

- Graphical elements
  - ☐
  - ☐
  - ☐
  - ☐
  - ☐
- Photographs
  - ☐
  - ☐
  - ☐
  - ☐
  - ☐
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very colorful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black and white</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Light colors</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The illustrations and layout evoke:

- strong visual images
- moods and attitudes
- facts and objects
- unreal or fantastic images
- common landscapes
- unusual landscapes

**IV. LANGUAGE :**

Characters use standard language:

- at work
- at home
- at random

Characters use dialect language:

- at work
- at home
- at random

Characters use universal languages, such as:

- hand or sign language
- easily recognizable words (cognate words)
When characters use code-switching or interlanguage, they use the native language, under the following circumstances:

- for specific word(s)  
- for slangs  
- for family relationships  
- for games  
- for insults or derogatory words  
- to describe the landscape  
- to describe the artifacts at home

After reading the story, the vocabulary is:

- Easy  
- Difficult  
- appropriate for the age level  
- constant acquisition of the foreign language

V. RESOLUTION:

Characters look for:

- Success  
- Independence  
- Friendship  
- transcendental values  
- national values
The story is:

- a folktale ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
- a contemporary story ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
- a realistic story ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

If a folktale:

- all people look alike ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
- they look different ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
- they wear similar or stereotypical clothes ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
- they act in a stereotypical way ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

The book portrays:

- one cultural group ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
- more than one cultural group ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

We can make connections:

- to other stories ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
- to other cultural environments ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
APPENDIX B

SELECTED BOOKS FOR THE DISSERTATION
IN ORDER OF PUBLICATION DATE


In every other page, there is a powerful and rich water color illustration. It has a dedication that says “This story runs from mouth to mouth, but has never been published. This story is told here in the way it came down to me from my grandmother.” So, this is a preservation of oral history.

The main character is a Spanish cockroach called Marina. On the first page, there is an emphasis of her diversity when the author says: “She was refined and exceedingly proud of her descent.” Then, different animals come to visit her as she is sitting on the patio, well dressed and powdered: the cat, the cock, the duck, the frog, the cricket, the mouse, and finally Mr. Perez. There is a song sung by the mouse in Spanish. It has the corresponding translation into English at the bottom of the page (with mistakes). This is a story where characters, represented by animals, take the traits of human beings.

This story was selected because it was the only representative of this decade. At the same time, it was written by one of the most prestigious Hispanic authors, who was prolific in her compilation and creation of stories that reflected the Hispanic heritage in some way.

This book contains 15 short tales. There is an illustration, representing the main theme at the beginning of every tale. All illustrations are in black and white strokes in pencil and ink. It begins with the traditional tale that demonstrates wisdom versus strength called “The Tiger and the Rabbit”, two representative animals who in the end become friends. This is a universal story, with no specific time or setting. Some of the stories intermingle the English and Spanish language, especially in the songs and poems that have corresponding translations. This selection of tales is mostly based on stories related with animals or fables, not exactly representing the daily life of common Hispanic people.

This book was selected, as there was no other illustrated story of Hispanic origin to represent that period.

With a background in gray watercolors, all the human beings and relevant items for the story are painted in warm bright colors along every page of the book. It portrays typical elements of Mexican culture. Cecilia, the little girl, has become old enough to stay up for the ‘*posadas*’-the special Mexican parties given, one each night, for the nine days before Christmas. It is a gentle story of a loving modern Mexican family beautifully told and colorfully illustrated.

Being the awarded book of that period was reason enough to select this book. On the other hand, it tells us about a traditional way in Mexico to celebrate this worldwide festivity. It refers to the way people get ready for it and how it is developed along the nine days of the ‘*posadas.*’ So, it gives us the cultural, historical, sociological and geographical perspectives.

The pages in this book alternate between illustrations in black and white and watercolors. The reading is based on animals’ lives that are hungry and trying to chase the weaker ones and eat them. It also shows the courage and wit of the dog and the goat to outwit the lion’s cunning.

This book was selected because it is one of a series of mythological tales. It demonstrates that these tales have a universal theme and that they show common values everywhere in the world.

Soft, bright and realistic colors illustrate this story page after page. There is a notable change of more attention addressed to human beings than to animals. It is a bilingual book, using some typical Central American dialect. It has been adapted from a Nicaraguan folktale.

Uncle Nacho is a very kind person, but unable to change. His hat becomes a metaphor for all the bad habits that he cannot discard. Uncle Nacho’s old hat keeps coming back to the story having its own presence. He can not get rid of the hat because he still thinks in the same old ways. Ambrosia, his niece tells him to think about the new hat. She represents the voice of change, which is youthful, intelligent, yet still respectful and loving.

This book was specially selected, as it is a good example of the melting between the traditions and the new era for changes that has been taking place in Latin America. Even though it is still depicting the country lifestyle, readers can see traces of modern influences seeping into this typical environment.
On the volcanoes of El Salvador live magic dogs called *cadejos*, similar to the coyotes. They live on morning glory seeds and they can make themselves invisible. Everyone loves them because they protect people from danger and misfortune. But one day, Don Tonio and his 13 brothers call in the lead soldiers to hunt the *cadejos*. The *cadejos* seek the help of their great great grandparents, the volcanoes.

This book was selected as it is richly illustrated, in color and details. It also shows some of the aspects of military interventions in Latin America, and how these events have not changed the spirit of the people. The book explores the human side of political conflicts and questions of justice.

Collage illustrations bursting into color and full of energy and beauty, this book reminds us of the literary movement in Latin America called “the magical realism”- you do not know exactly where imagination and reality begins or ends. Flying over Manhattan Island, Rosalba and her grandmother (abuela) are taking an extraordinary trip in Rosalba’s imagination. These sights remind *Abuela* of when she first came to this country and the concept of ‘The American Dream’ for many immigrants.

It is full of rich details to refer to this big city and to the first encounters with this New World and all the dreams represented behind these magnificent illustrations. This book not only deals with specific characters, but these characters become universal in the transmitted message.

This book was chosen because it is an award winning book and for the way it shows what the New World means to immigrants. It also has a rich content and there is universality in this story.
Oil painted illustrations depict real characters in a real Hispanic middle class family who live in a city. This book represents the Hispanic culture and a common tradition followed in different countries throughout Latin America.

Christmas Eve had started out so perfectly for Maria. Her favorite cousins were coming over and she got to help make tamales for Christmas dinner. Everything was running smoothly when her mother left the kitchen for a moment and Maria wanted to try on her mother’s diamond ring. The ring gets lost in a batch of tamales. All the children try to eat their way out of the problem, but in the end, all the family pulls together to make it a perfect Christmas after all.

This book serves as an excellent example of how comparisons are established with other cultures. The richness of cultural elements and home life situations that are portrayed are universal situations make the book worthy of inclusion. At the same time, we can observe the evolution in this type of literature as it is more immersed in the social and historical contexts depicted in a realistic way.
Every Saturday, the little girl Maria Lili looks forward to making chicken sancocho (a typical Colombian dish) with her grandparents Mama Ana and Papa Angelino. But one Saturday they discover there is nothing in the house, except eggs. The girl wonders how they will ever be able to have their sancocho. The grandma has a plan though, and taking the eggs with her, she invites Maria Lili to come to the market. So, the girl will be part of the conflict solution and she cannot wait to find out how.

This book was selected to show the similarities that exist among the Spanish speaking countries. In this case the author uses the dishes ingredients to show familiar items of main dishes that are daily prepared around the world.
Chato, the coolest cat in the neighborhood, loves to party, but not his best buddy Novio Boy. Birthday parties always make him blue, as he does not know his origins. He does not know his mother or when he was born. So, Chato plans the coolest surprise for his friend inviting the entire neighborhood and cooking up a storm. But he forgets the most important thing – inviting Novio Boy. So, when he arrives, it will really be a surprise.

As the literal meaning of the first word in the book title, this book is really cool. The life of a Hispanic neighborhood, probably located in the United States, is very well depicted and the striking illustrations enrich the text with delightful, witty details. The text is constantly interspersed with words using street language in Spanish.

This item was specially selected as a rich and natural contemporary example of everyday life, in addition to the great illustrations that are full of color and life.
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Check the illustrations:

   What elements do you see that portray the Hispanic culture in this book?

   Would you recognize certain stereotypes presented by the illustrations?

2. Check the story line:

   Does the story follow a common / or expected story line?

   Is the end unexpected?

   What’s the role of children / women / senior citizens along the story? Do they have an outstanding / an uninteresting role?

3. Look at lifestyles:

   Are lifestyles different / similar to what you know?

   Do you think that lifestyles in Latin America are similar to this depiction?

4. Are relationships among people different / similar to what you regularly see in the United States?

5. Do the heroes act in a similar way to the heroes you know in American writings?

6. Do you believe this book will reaffirm in the child his image as a Hispanic descendant?

7. Do you think it is important to know the origins of the author / illustrator?

8. How does the author project his knowledge of the Hispanic world?

9. Are there any words or concepts that give a negative image?

10. Does the copyright date make any difference to make the story easier to understand?

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

I __________________________ voluntarily agree to take part as one of the 10 participants in a qualitative research project titled, “Perceptions of Stereotypes in Hispanic Children’s Literature,” which is being conducted by Nancy Gomez. I understand that this data is being collected for Nancy Gomez’s dissertation in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Louisiana State University. Ms. Gomez can be reached at (225) 757-0891 or by e-mail at ngomez@lsu.edu, during the regular working hours. The supervising professor is Dr. Janice Hinson, and she can be contacted at (225) 578-2280 or by e-mail at jhinson@lsu.edu.

The purpose of this research is to examine the portrayal of the Hispanic culture, from the 1930’s to the present, as represented in illustrated books for children published in the United States. This examination will be done through the perceptions of the two groups of participants: non-Hispanic and Hispanics. The books illustrate the way the world has evolved during this period and these evolutions reflect the portrayals of the traditions, customs, myths and use of the language in the past 70 years.

The procedure(s) in which I voluntarily agree to take part will require me to read ten children’s books and be interviewed once at my convenience. I also understand that I will not be compensated for my participation in this study.

I understand there are no risks to my health and wellbeing if I agree to be a participant in this research. If at anytime I cannot continue with the study, I am aware that I can contact Nancy Gomez and withdraw.

This study will allow other educators, librarians and parents to learn about the importance of the accurate perception and portrayals of the Hispanic culture in children’s books to use them as a vehicle to improve the channels of contact and communication.

All information in this research will be kept confidential. I am an adult between the ages of 18-65.

This study has been discussed with me, and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects’ rights or other concerns, I can contact the LSU Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the researchers’ obligation to provide me with a copy of the consent form if signed by me.

_________________________      ___________________________      ________
Participant’s signature  Participant’s name (print)   Date
VITA

Nancy Gomez was the only child born to Arturo Gomez and Maria Segovia. She was born in Valparaiso, Chile. She graduated as a Teacher of English as a Second Language in 1972 and with a Master of Arts Degree in Linguistics in 1991 from the Universidad de Chile. Recently married, she went to Lima, Peru, and worked at the Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Lima as a Teacher of English for seven years. She had two beautiful daughters. In 1981, she returned to Santiago, Chile, where she worked as a Teacher of English in the Teachers’ Training College of the Universidad de Chile for ten years. In 1992, she decided to fulfill one of her greatest dreams in her life and come to study at a university in the United States of America. She obtained a scholarship to come and study for the degree of Master of Library Science Information at Louisiana State University. She got this degree in 1993 and continued with the Certificate of Specialization in Library Science, which she got in 1995. Together with Nancy, her daughter Sandra Vanessa came along and she got her Bachelor of Science Degree in microbiology at Louisiana State University in 1998. During these years, Nancy was a Research Assistant in Library Science and in the Office of Academic Affairs. She also taught Spanish in Southern University and in the Spanish Department of our university. In 1995, she started with her program for the doctorate degree in curriculum and instruction at Louisiana State University. In 1996, she went to work to the Main Public Library in Lafayette, Louisiana, as a Reference Librarian and Program Coordinator until 1999. That year, she started working as a Teacher of English at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Louisiana, from where she decided to come back to Louisiana State University in August 2001 to complete her doctoral program. During this time, she has been teaching the course called College Study Skills.