

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 128 444

TM 005 635

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 TITLE           Two Studies on Student Perceptions of Isolation in  
                   Desegregated School Settings.  
 INSTITUTION     Southwest Educational Development Lab., Austin,  
                   Tex.  
 PUB DATE        [Apr 76]  
 NOTE            21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the  
                   American Educational Research Association (60th, San  
                   Francisco, California, April 19-23, 1976)

EDRS PRICE       MF-\$0.83 HC-\$1.67 Plus Postage.  
 DESCRIPTORS     Anglo Americans; \*Cultural Isolation; \*Educational  
                   Environment; Ethnic Relations; \*High School Students;  
                   \*Integration Effects; Mexican Americans; Minority  
                   Groups; Needs Assessment; Negro Students;  
                   Questionnaires; School Integration; Secondary  
                   Education; Social Isolation; \*Student Alienation;  
                   \*Student Attitudes; Student Needs

ABSTRACT

Two studies reporting the results of surveys of minority student perceptions of isolation extant in desegregated school settings in Texas and New Mexico are presented. Study I involved Mexican-American students who were given a 25-item questionnaire concerning their perceived educational environment. Students were asked to what extent each condition existed in their school and to what extent it should exist. A discrepancy between the two responses indicated an area of perceived isolation. A factor analysis was conducted on the discrepancy scores to investigate clustering of areas of isolation and to verify the construction of the instrument into social, academic and extracurricular areas. In study II a 26-item instrument for assessing perceived student needs in various areas of cultural specifics was administered to 200 students in grades seven through twelve. The instrument allowed for the identification of perceived student needs through a comparison of their responses to each item across the response columns. The first column response indicated how strongly the student agreed with the proposition contained in each item; second column response indicated a perception as to the extent that the proposition contained in each item is presently being taught in the school curriculum. Results are reported on the basis of the total sample analysis, of an ethnicity analysis and of a sex analysis. (RC)

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# TWO STUDIES ON STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF ISOLATION IN DESEGREGATED SCHOOL SETTINGS

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## ABSTRACT

This paper reports on two studies conducted by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory in the Spring of 1975 and 1976. The two studies had essentially the same purpose: to measure secondary students' perceptions of racial/ethnic isolation in their educational environment. The first study was conducted on a small scale and was limited to Mexican American students in Texas; the second study, conducted in the Spring of 1976, included Anglos, Blacks, and Mexican American students in Texas and New Mexico. The studies are reported chronologically.

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## Perspectives

The educational setting in the Southwest is one in which substantial desegregation efforts are taking place in schools with significant Mexican American student populations. An increasingly important variable in research is the perception of isolation by students in desegregated settings and particularly by the Mexican American student. The present study therefore reviewed the literature for research on the effects of school desegregation in terms of the perceptions of isolation/alienation by secondary-level Mexican American students.

The literature is limited and does not directly treat perceptions of isolation, but rather reports obliquely through studies of self-concept, alienation, and similar variables. The extensive U.S. Civil Rights Commission Study (Mexican American Education Study, Volumes I-VI) reported on several relevant variables such as self-concept in both segregated and desegregated schools with Mexican American populations. Felice (1973) studied students in desegregated high schools and reported on the effects of these settings on Mexican American achievement. Newton (1969) found that Mexican American student contact with Anglo students was a significant factor in school adjustment; Donnelly (1970) attempted to define alienation by Mexican American students in terms of the degree of powerlessness, normlessness, self-estrangement, and expressed or implied isolation. Cordova (1970) suggested that the inadequate assimilation of Mexican American students into the dominant society contributed to their educational alienation. Hathaway (1972) studied the differences in teacher-student relationships in Anglo, Black and Mexican American students. Pruneda (1973) reports on self-concept in Mexican American students with high and low Anglo acculturation.

The literature review revealed little upon which to base or adapt prototype instruments to measure student perceptions of racial or ethnic isolation in their educational environment, although general areas of investigation were identified.

Work by Spellman (1971) and Wallin (1970) on perceptions of alienation by high school students formed a baseline for developing new instrumentation. Nelson and Uhl (1976) devised the High School Environment and Human Relations Inventory (HSEHRI) to examine the relationship of racial composition to various dimensions of school environment and social climate as perceived by Black high school students; students indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements directed at (among others) teacher-student relationships and interpersonal relationships among students. A similar study was conducted with Mexican American students by Fernandez, Espinosa, and Dornbusch (1975); this study sought to compare perceptions of schooling among Mexican American students with perceptions of other Whites, Blacks, and Asians. A portion of the instrument studied alienation and asked four questions: How often (1) do you ever feel that you hate school? (2) do you have a good time at school? (3) do you ever wish you never had to go to school? (4) are there things about school that you like very much?

This paper reports on two studies conducted by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory in the Spring of 1975 and 1976. The two studies had essentially the same purpose: to measure secondary students' perceptions of racial/ethnic isolation in their educational environment. The first study was conducted on a small scale and was limited to Mexican American students in Texas; the second study, conducted in the Spring of 1976, included Anglos, Blacks, and Mexican American students in Texas and New Mexico. The studies are reported chronologically.

## Study I: Spring 1975<sup>1</sup>

Utilizing the input from a committee of five adult Mexican Americans and five adult Anglo Americans, a 25-item instrument was constructed. Each item on the questionnaire consisted of a statement describing a condition that may or may not exist in the students' perceived educational environment. For each statement, students were asked to respond to two questions: (1) to what degree does this condition NOW exist in your school, and (2) to what extent SHOULD this condition occur in your school. A discrepancy between what SHOULD occur and what is occurring NOW identified an area of perceived isolation.

The instrument was designed to cover three areas: social, academic, and extracurricular. Items were included to measure all three areas of alienation. The instruments were administered to Anglo and Chicano students in secondary schools in Houston, Lockhart, McAllen, San Antonio, and Waxahachie, Texas. Ninety-nine completed instruments were returned in time for processing. Analyses of the results included a ranking of the items by computing the discrepancy between the SHOULD and NOW responses for each student. A factor analysis was conducted on the discrepancy scores to investigate clustering of areas of isolation and to verify the construction of the instrument into social, academic, and extracurricular areas.

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<sup>1</sup>Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, April, 1976.

## Results and Conclusions

Of the ten top-ranking items (see Table 1), all but one were social or academic in nature. Items dealing with positive social interactions between Mexican American students and Anglo students, Black students, and teachers, were top ranked, with verbal harassment between Mexican Americans and Anglos being identified as the number one area of isolation. One interesting social-area item indicated the need for schools to offer a formal course in human relations skills. Highly ranked unmet academic areas were the inclusion of the desires of Mexican American students in planning course schedules and the importance of Mexican American students' wanting to perform in the classroom, make good grades, and "get a good education".

The factor analysis generally confirmed the three-area structure of the instrument, and broke some of the areas into sub-areas. An eigenvalue cutoff of 1.0 was used, which yielded seven factors; 64.9 percent of the variance was extracted. The factors were interpreted as follows:

1. Social relationships among students.
2. Harassment among students.
3. Extracurricular activities--popularity-related.
4. Extracurricular activities--leadership-related.
5. Isolation due to poor academic performance.
6. School and authority
7. Relationships with teachers.

TABLE 1:

## Study I: Ten Top-Ranked Items

<u>RANK</u>	<u>TYPE OF ITEM</u>	<u>ITEM</u>
1	Social	Physical and verbal harassment (fighting, insults, etc.) is common between Mexican American students and Anglo students.
2	Academic	The desires of Mexican American students are taken into consideration in planning course schedules.
3	Social	Schools offer a formal course in human relations skills.
4	Academic	Getting a good education is important to the Mexican American students.
5	Social	Mexican American students having teachers as friends.
6	Academic	Classroom performance and good grades are important to the Mexican American student.
6	Social	Mexican American students and Anglo students interacting on a social basis <u>inside</u> school.
8	Extracurricular	Mexican American students are elected to the Student Council.
9	Social	Mexican American students and Black students interacting on a social basis <u>inside</u> school.
10	Social	Physical and verbal harassment (fighting, insults, etc.) is common between Mexican American students and Black students.

## Study II: Spring 1976

An instrument composed of 26 items designed for assessing perceived student needs in various areas of cultural specifics was administered to a total sample of 200 students in Grades 7 through 12. The following geographic sites were represented in this sampling: Albuquerque, New Mexico and Austin, El Paso, Lockhart, McAllen, and San Antonio, Texas. Respondents included 55 Anglos, 114 Mexican Americans, 29 Blacks, and two students who characterized themselves as "other". Among those who responded were 86 males and 114 females. Results following from several discrete analyses of the collected data are presented below.

### Analysis

A copy of the Needs Assessment instrument is attached. It was designed in such a way as to allow for the identification of perceived needs on the part of the students through a comparison of their responses to each item across two response columns. Response to Column I indicates how strongly students agree with the proposition contained in each item. Response to Column II indicates a perception as to the extent that the proposition contained in each item is being taught presently in the school curriculum. By comparing for each item the mean response under each column, it is possible to identify perceived needs of two types.

First of all, for those items containing propositions with which the students strongly agreed under the first column, but which they perceived as being minimally taught in the school curriculum, a need resulting from underexposure was felt to have been identified. That is, a need of the



following type was perceived by the respondents: "it IS important for schools to teach that..." but "this IS NOT being taught in school now." Second, for those items containing propositions with which the students strongly disagreed under the first column, but which they perceived as being maximally taught in the school curriculum, a need resulting from over-exposure was felt to have been identified. In this case, a need of the following type was perceived by the respondents: "it IS NOT important for schools to teach that..." but "this IS being taught in school now."

For determining the existence of perceived student needs, the following descriptor of analysis procedures applies. Responses under Column I were ranked according to how strongly students agreed with each item; the result of this process was an item ranking, with items to which students agreed most strongly being ranked most highly. Responses under Column II were treated similarly: those items which students perceived as being maximally taught in the school curriculum were ranked most highly. Based on these two independent item rankings, discrepancies between relative rankings on the two scales were computed for each item individually. In this way, absolute differences across relative ranks could be obtained.

A need was arbitrarily defined as existing for a particular item if its rank discrepancy score was equal to or greater than 5 rank places (i.e., approximately 20 percent of the total 26-item scale). Once this general criterion of perceived need identification had been met, items were then categorized in terms of specific type of need which they represented, as earlier described. Finally, in addition to applying this process of need identification to the total sample, it was also applied independently under the variables of ethnicity and sex in an attempt to determine

the existence of any differential need patterns as a function of the respondents' ethnicity or sex.

## Results

Results will be provided first on the basis of the total sample analysis, then on the basis of the ethnicity analysis, and finally on the basis of the sex analysis.

1. Total Sample Analysis. Needs of the underexposure variety ("it IS important for schools to teach that..." but "this IS NOT being taught in school now") were identified for the following items:

- a. not all members of a particular ethnic group are alike
- b. people can have heroes outside their own ethnic group
- c. Blacks need to learn more about the Chicano culture

Needs of the overexposure variety ("it IS NOT important for schools to teach that..." but "this IS being taught in school now") were identified for the following items:

- a. people of different ethnic groups look and act differently from me
- b. people in different ethnic groups have different ways of talking
- c. people in different ethnic groups have different styles of dress for work and play

2. Ethnicity Analysis. Needs of the underexposure variety ("it IS important for schools to teach that..." but "this IS NOT being taught now") were identified for the following items, and for those ethnic groups as indicated specifically after each item:

- a. not all members of a particular ethnic group are alike (Mexican American)
- b. people can have heroes outside their own ethnic group (Anglo, Mexican American, Black)
- c. relationships between men and women are different in different ethnic groups (Black)
- d. there are some things that one ethnic group accepts that would be "taboo" in another ethnic group (Anglo)
- e. Anglos need to learn more about the Chicano culture (Mexican American)
- f. Anglos need to learn more about the Chicano culture (Mexican American)
- g. Blacks need to learn more about the Chicano culture (Anglo, Mexican American)
- h. Blacks need to learn more about their own culture (Black)
- i. Chicanos need to learn more about their own culture (Mexican American, Black)

Needs of the overexposure variety ("it IS NOT important for schools to teach that..." but "this IS being taught now") were identified for the following items, and for those ethnic groups as indicated specifically after each item:

- a. people of different ethnic groups look and act differently from me (Mexican American)
- b. people in different ethnic groups have different ways of talking (Mexican American)
- c. people in different ethnic groups have different styles of dress for work and play (Mexican American)
- d. being on time is important to all ethnic groups (Mexican American)
- e. some ethnic groups are more united as a family than others (Black)
- f. different ethnic groups have different musical tastes (Mexican American)
- g. different ethnic groups celebrate birthdays and other occasions differently (Black)

- h. not all members of a particular ethnic group are alike (Black)
- i. different ethnic groups eat different things (Anglo, Black)
- j. Anglos need to learn more about the Black culture (Black)
- k. Chicanos need to learn more about the Anglo culture (Anglo)
- l. Anglos need to learn more about their own culture (Black)

3. Sex Analysis. Needs of the underexposure variety ("it IS important for schools to teach that..." but "this IS NOT being taught now") were identified for the following items and for those groups as indicated after each item:

- a. not all members of a particular ethnic group are alike (female)
- b. people can have heroes outside their own ethnic group (male, female)
- c. there are some things that one ethnic group accepts that would be "taboo" in another ethnic group (female)
- d. Anglos need to learn more about the Chicano culture (male)
- e. Blacks need to learn more about the Chicano culture (male, female)
- f. Chicanos need to learn more about the Black culture (male)
- g. Blacks need to learn more about their own culture (male)

Needs of the overexposure variety ("it IS NOT important for schools to teach that..." but "this IS being taught now") were identified for the following items and for those groups as indicated specifically after each item:

- a. people of different ethnic groups look and act differently from me (female)
- b. people in different ethnic groups have different ways of talking (female)
- c. people in different ethnic groups have different styles of dress for work and play (female)

- d. being on time is important to all ethnic groups (male)
- e. different ethnic groups have different musical tastes (male)
- f. different ethnic groups celebrate birthdays and other occasions differently (male)
- g. different ethnic groups eat different things (female)
- h. Blacks need to learn more about the Anglo culture (male)
- i. Chicanos need to learn more about the Anglo culture (male)
- j. Anglos need to learn more about their own culture (male)

#### Educational Importance of the Studies

Educators are becoming increasingly concerned with the problems created by desegregation. These studies report the results of multi-state surveys of minority student perceptions of isolation extant in desegregated school settings. The results of the surveys can provide guidance to administrators attempting to solve such problems, and the instruments used in the surveys can act as prototypes for future data collection.

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Dear Student,

We would like to collect some information about how you feel about your high school. This information is important to us, and only you, a high school student, can tell us what we need to know. Your responses will be used to design plots for a series of television shows. You can not be identified from your responses on this form, so please be as honest as you can. There are no correct or wrong answers. All we want here is your opinion of how you see things in your high school.

**DIRECTIONS:** There are 25 statements of situations that may or may not exist in your high school. Beside each statement are two 1-4 numerical scales. In Column I, you are asked "to what extent SHOULD this (whatever the statement is) happen in your high school?" You should respond by circling 1, 2, 3, or 4 where

- 1 = To a great extent
- 2 = To a moderate extent
- 3 = To a small extent
- 4 = To no extent.

In Column II, you are asked "to what extent does this (whatever the statement is) happen in your high school NOW?" Again, you should respond by circling 1, 2, 3, or 4.

**EXAMPLES:**

- 1 = To a great extent
- 2 = To a moderate extent
- 3 = To a small extent
- 4 = To no extent

Column I  
To what extent  
SHOULD  
this be happening?

Column II  
To what extent  
does this happen  
NOW?

Statement

- a. Mexican American girls in the Drill Squad . . . . . 1 (2) 3 4                      1 (2) 3 4

If you feel that Mexican American girls should be in the Drill Squad to a moderate extent, you would circle 2 under Column I. If you also feel that Mexican American girls are now already in the Drill Squad to a moderate extent, you would circle 2 under Column II.

- b. People shooting stray dogs . . . . . 1 2 3 (4)                      1 2 (3) 4

If you feel that people should not shoot stray dogs, you would circle 4 (to no extent) under Column I. If you also feel that people shoot stray dogs now to a small extent, you would circle 3 under Column II.

1 = To a great extent 2 = To a moderate extent 3 = To a small extent 4 = To no extent	Column I Circle One To what extent <u>SHOULD</u> this be happening?	Column II Circle One To what extent does this happen <u>NOW?</u>
1. Mexican American students are involved in athletics . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
2. Mexican American students are involved in non-athletic school extracurricular activities (organizations, math club, FHA, etc.) . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
3. Some of the school's cheerleaders are Mexican American . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
4. Mexican American students are involved in band or drama presentations . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
5. Economic pressures prevent participation in extracurricular activities by Mexican American students . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
6. Mexican American students are elected to the Student Council . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
7. Mexican American students are elected to the Honor Society . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
8. Classroom performance and good grade are important to the Mexican American student . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
9. The desires of Mexican American students are taken into consideration in planning course schedules . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
10. Mexican American students feel isolated in the classroom because the teacher does not call on them . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
11. Mexican American students feel isolated in the classroom because they are reluctant to raise their hand or participate . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
12. Not having good enough grades prevents Mexican American students from participating in extracurricular activities. . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
13. Schools offer formal courses in human relations skills . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
14. Mexican American students having Black Friends . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4



<p>1 = To a great extent  2 = To a moderate extent  3 = To a small extent  4 = To no extent</p>	<p>Column I  Circle One  To what extent  <u>SHOULD</u>  this be happening?</p>	<p>Column II  Circle One  To what extent  does this happen  <u>NOW</u>?</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

15. Mexican American students having Anglo friends . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
16. Mexican American students having teachers as friends . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
17. Mexican American students and Black students interacting on a social basis <u>inside</u> school . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
18. Mexican American students and Black students interacting on a social basis <u>outside</u> school . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
19. Mexican American students and Anglo students interacting on a social basis <u>inside</u> school . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
20. Mexican American students and Anglo students interacting on a social basis <u>outside</u> school . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
21. Mexican American students sticking together inside and outside of school . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
22. Physical and verbal harassment (fighting, insults, etc.) is common between Mexican American students and Anglo students . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
23. Physical and verbal harassment (fighting, insults, etc.) is common between Mexican American students and Black students . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
24. Physical and verbal harassment (fighting, insults, etc.) is common between Anglo and Black students . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
25. Getting a good education is important to the Mexican American student . . . . .	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
26. What are your <u>three</u> favorite TV shows? 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____		

27. Check one:  male  female  
Your age: \_\_\_\_\_

INSTRUMENT -- STUDY II

Dear Student,

We would like to collect some information about how you feel about your school. This information is important to us, and only you, a student, can tell us what we need to know. Your responses will be used to design plots for a new series of television shows. You can not be identified from your responses on this form, so please be as honest as you can. There are no correct or wrong answers. All we want here is your opinion of how you see things in your school.

First, we need to collect some general information about you. Please fill in the blanks at the bottom of this page.

On the next page, we present a series of statements. We ask that you do two things after reading each statement. First, we would like for you to tell us whether you agree with the statements. Put a check in the box to indicate if you strongly agree; agree; are neutral or don't know; disagree; or strongly disagree. Then, tell us whether or not the information presented in the statement is already being taught in your school; to do this, put a check in the box to indicate if yes, it is being taught; if it is being taught a little; or no, it is not being taught.

Finally, at the end of this questionnaire is a series of fill-in-the-blank items. Please complete them, and turn this form in to the Moderator.

Thank you for your help.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location (City): \_\_\_\_\_  
Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level in School: \_\_\_\_\_  
Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ male; \_\_\_\_\_ female  
Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_ Anglo; \_\_\_\_\_ Mexican American; \_\_\_\_\_ Black; \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

How would you describe your background:  
\_\_\_\_\_ I was raised mostly in a rural area or small town  
\_\_\_\_\_ I was raised mostly in large cities  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_



IS THIS BEING TAUGHT IN YOUR SCHOOL NOW?

YES  
A LITTLE  
NO

STRONGLY AGREE  
AGREE  
NEUTRAL or  
DON'T KNOW  
DISAGREE  
STRONGLY  
DISAGREE

It is important for schools to teach that people of different ethnic groups look and act differently from me.

It is important for schools to teach that people in different ethnic groups have different ways of talking.

It is important for schools to teach that people in different ethnic groups have different styles of dress for work and play.

It is important for schools to teach that different ethnic groups use different "body language" when they speak.

It is important for schools to teach that being on time is important to all ethnic groups.

It is important for schools to teach that it's normal for people of some ethnic groups to stand very close to the person they are talking to.

It is important for schools to teach that some ethnic groups are more united as a family than others.

It is important for schools to teach that different ethnic groups have different ways of spending their spare time.

It is important for schools to teach that different ethnic groups have different musical tastes.

It is important for schools to teach that different ethnic groups celebrate birthdays and other occasions differently.

Response grid with checkboxes for each statement and category (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral or Don't Know, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Yes, A Little, No).

IS THIS BEING TAUGHT IN YOUR SCHOOL NOW?

YES A LITTLE NO

STRONGLY DISAGREE DISAGREE NEUTRAL or DON'T KNOW AGREE STRONGLY AGREE

- It is important for schools to teach that not all members of a particular ethnic group are alike.
It is important for schools to teach that people can have heroes outside their own ethnic group.
It is important for schools to teach that relationships between men and women are different in different ethnic groups.
It is important for schools to teach that different ethnic groups do different things at social parties.
It is important for schools to teach that different ethnic groups eat different things.
It is important for schools to teach that hair styles are different for different ethnic groups.
It is important for schools to teach that there are some things that one ethnic group accepts that would be "taboo" in another ethnic group.
Anglos need to learn more about the Black culture.
Anglos need to learn more about the Chicano culture.
Blacks need to learn more about the Anglo culture.
Blacks need to learn more about the Chicano culture.
Chicanos need to learn more about the Anglo culture.
Chicanos need to learn more about the Black culture.

Grid of checkboxes for response selection, organized into columns corresponding to the response categories: STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, NEUTRAL or DON'T KNOW, DISAGREE, STRONGLY DISAGREE, YES, A LITTLE, NO.

IS THIS BEING TAUGHT IN YOUR SCHOOL NOW?

YES  
A LITTLE  
NO

Anglos need to learn more about their own culture.  
Blacks need to learn more about their own culture.  
Chicanos need to learn more about their own culture.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

STRONGLY AGREE  
AGREE  
NEUTRAL or  
DON'T KNOW  
DISAGREE  
STRONGLY DISAGREE

What kind of music do you like to listen to most:  
 \_\_\_\_\_ rock  
 \_\_\_\_\_ western  
 \_\_\_\_\_ chicano  
 \_\_\_\_\_ soul

The person with the best job in the world is: \_\_\_\_\_  
 How do your parents reward you for good grades in school: \_\_\_\_\_  
 How do your teachers reward you for good grades in school: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much!

