

Introduction

Children develop an understanding of ethnicity & race early in life. Prior research primarily focuses on how older adolescents integrate ethnicity into their identity.

What is missing is: **How young children label their own ethnic/racial identity, and whether early exposure to school settings predicts children's ability to label themselves in ethnic/racial terms.**

Why Ethnic Labeling?

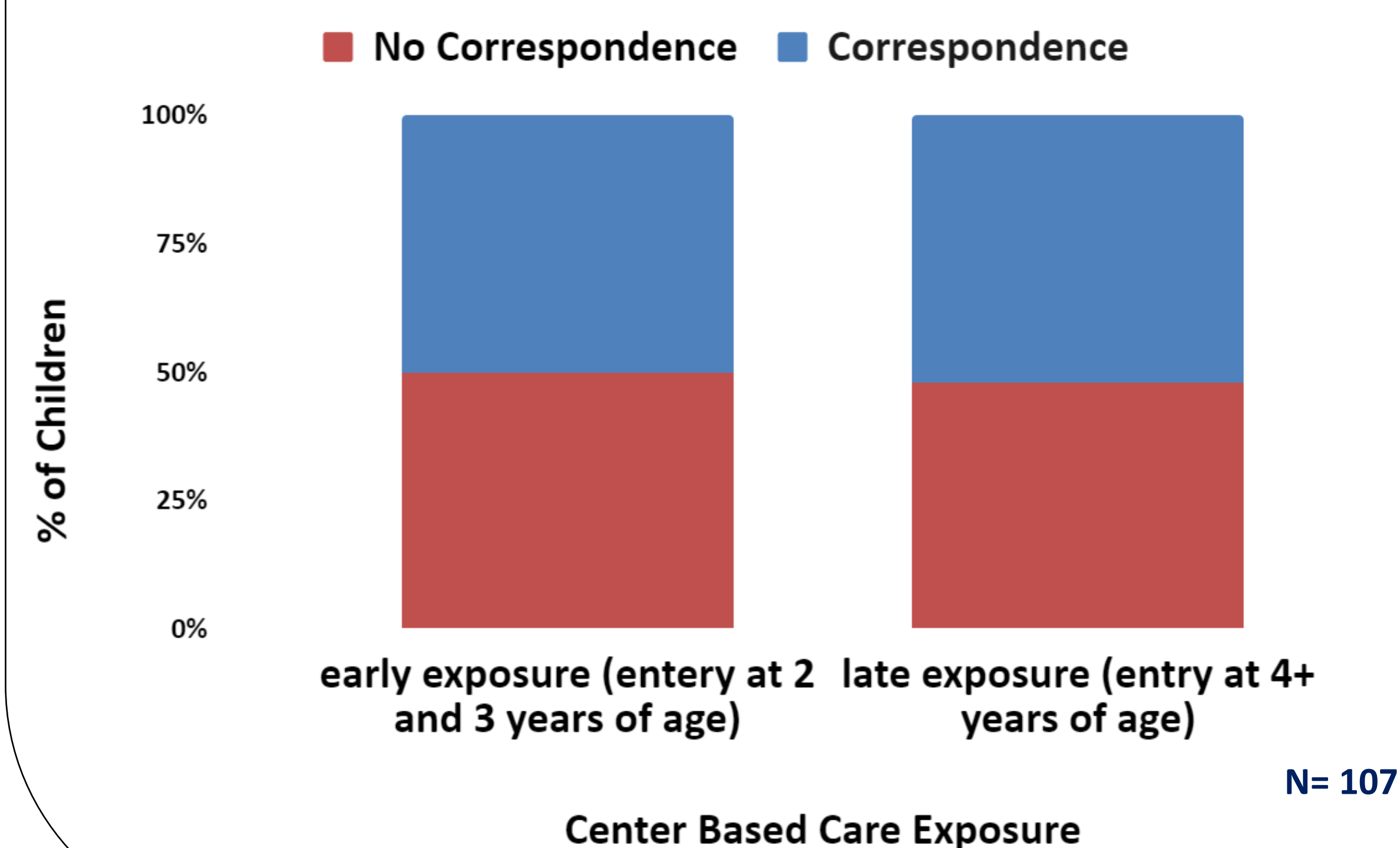
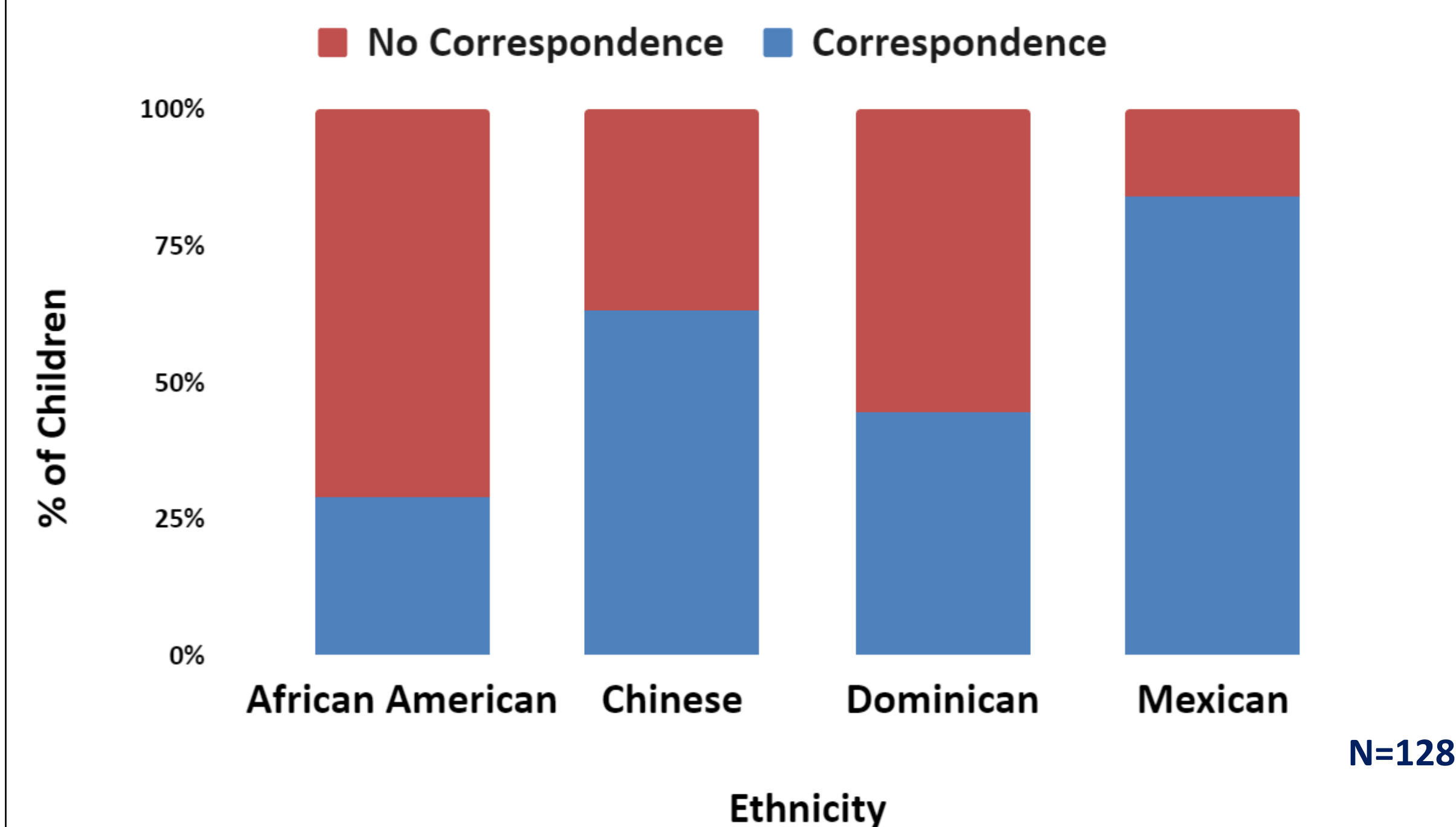
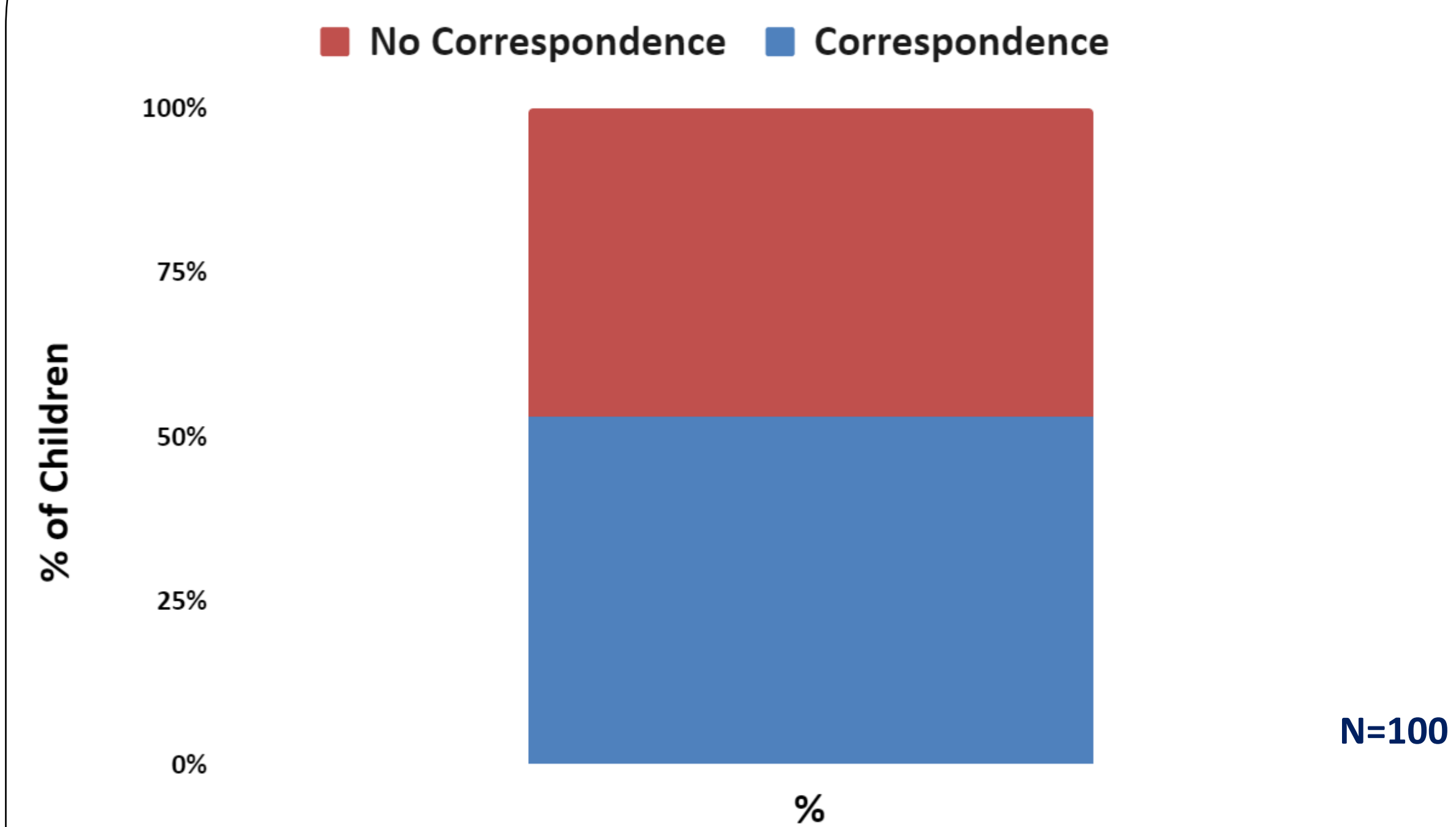
- Ethnicity is embedded in a broad context
- Mothers from different heritage experience unique cultural practices, patterns of migration, economic capital, etc.
- How these messages get transferred to their children → **Ethnic-racial Socialization.**

Methodology

African American, Mexican, Chinese and **Dominican** families were chosen because they represent prominent ethnic groups in New York City who are not always represented in research.

- The mothers reported which age child entered center-based care and 6 yo children were asked **"What is your ethnic background?"**
- Children's responses were recorded verbatim and analyzed for types of labels (ethnic/racial, geographical markers i.e., state or country, language). Secondary data was used.

Results



Summary

Did they Use Socially Accepted Labels?

Fig.1 Results showed that **53% of children used socially accepted labels** for ethnicity/race (e.g., Black, Jamaican, Chinese). Responses with no correspondence included English and Manhattan.

Was Ethnicity a Factor?

Fig.2 Chi-square test of significance showed a **significant difference by ethnicity**: African American children were less likely to use the socially accepted label for ethnicity than Chinese, Dominican and Mexican children. Migration patterns of these groups can potentially account for this difference as many of these parent are first generation parents opposed to many of the African American children's parents. First generation parents are more prone to hold on to cultural traditions.

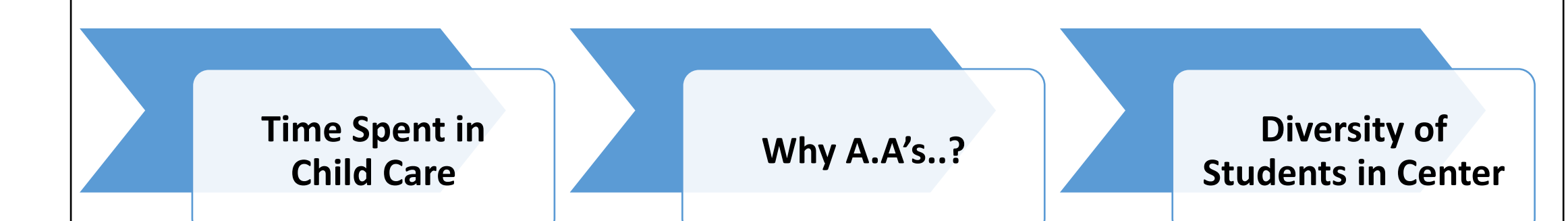
Age of Entry to Child Care Center...?

Fig.3 Finally, **analyses did not reveal significant differences in labeling by age of school entry.** However, data was not collected on how long children spent in child-care a day, like 12 hrs. a week or 6 hrs. a day for two years, only how long they have been admitted.

Conclusion

Many U.S. children spend a significant amount of time in center-based care prior to entering preschool. Previous research would suggest center-based care settings offer important opportunities for socialization about race and ethnicity. Several studies reported that **children in center-based care demonstrated higher language and cognitive skills** relative to peers not in center-based care. While results for this study did not prove significant for age of entry into child-care, there was a noticeable difference in that children of Chinese, Dominican and Mexican descent were more prone to refer to themselves using socially accepted ethnic labels.

Future Work



References

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