

# 4

## Who's Who

### Names, Nicknames, and *Niños*

**H**ave you ever met someone named Francisco, whose buddies call him Pancho, or someone named Ignacio, whose family calls him Nacho? Don't be alarmed because you probably weren't calling them by the wrong names. They will respond to either—the latter being their nicknames (*apodos*). You may have also noticed that quite often many Latino children have the same names as their parents. Most of the time, the children are distinguished simply by adding the suffix "ito" or "cito" (for a male) and "ita" or "cita" (for a female) after the name or nickname. These suffixes mean "little" and they are similar to how we say "junior" in English. These endings are also used endearingly to mean "my little." For example, the elder Laura may call her daughter Laurita (Little Laura or My little Laura); Sergio—Sergito (Little Sergio or My little Sergio); Andrés—Andrecito (Little Andrés or My little Andrés); and so on. Not everybody has a nickname, but the brief sampling to follow will help you clarify who's who for those that do.

It is important to note that native speakers of Spanish also tack on these endearing suffixes to nonhuman types of adjectives and nouns. If you listen in on conversations between native speakers, you will hear these suffixes all the time. They are that common. For example, don't be surprised if someone offers you a *cafecito* (a little coffee) instead of *café* (coffee), or *lechecita* (a little milk) instead of *leche* (milk), perhaps with a *pedacito de pastel* (little slice of cake). You might even be advised to take your time while eating your cake and drinking your milk *despacito* (instead of *despacio*, which means "slowly").