

Unpacking the Racial Preferences of Young Transracial Adoptees from China

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Introduction

- Researchers have looked at racial preferences of adult transracial adoptees (TRA), but few have looked at young TRA
- Spencer and Markstrom-Adams (1990) suggested the application of Bronfenbrenner's (1994) model to racial identity development to explore all aspects of a child's environment
- The present study examined racial preferences of young transracial adoptees as well as environmental factors such as community diversity and parental acknowledgment of ethnic and racial differences

Method

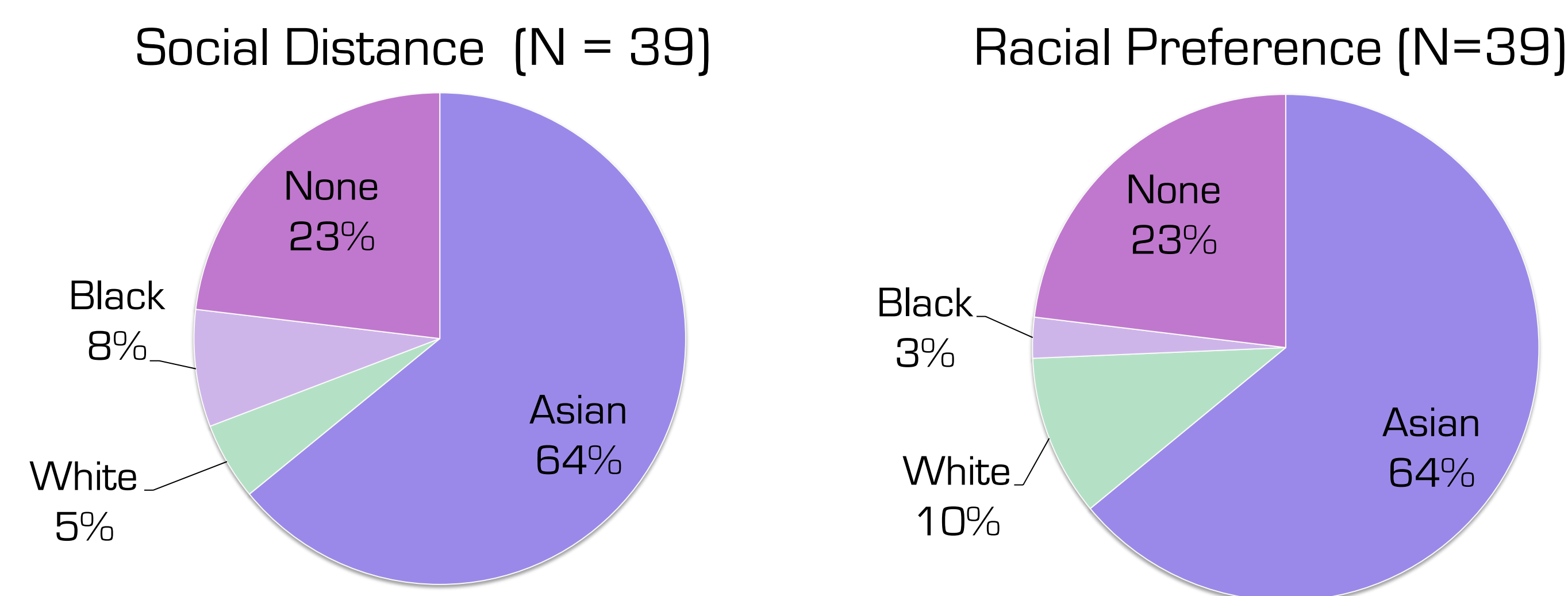
Participants

39 transracial adoptees aged 6-10 from 32 families, who were part of the Adoption and Development Project

Measures

- Clark Doll Test (1947): Children were asked a series of questions about their preferences for White, Black and Asian-looking dolls
 - questions categorized into racial preference, racial identification and social distance
 - score of 1 given for each positive question and -1 for each negative question; doll with highest points in each category represented the child's preference
- Ethnic self-label: Coded from child interview: "You were born in China and are growing up in the U.S. What do you call that/yourself?"
- Parental acknowledgment of ethnic and racial differences (ackERD): Coded from parent interview: comments recognizing or minimizing racial differences were coded and summed for an overall score of ackERD
- Community diversity (Vashenko et al., 2012; Blau (1977) index of heterogeneity using 2000 US Census Data

Results



Children's Reasons for Doll Choices (N = 12)



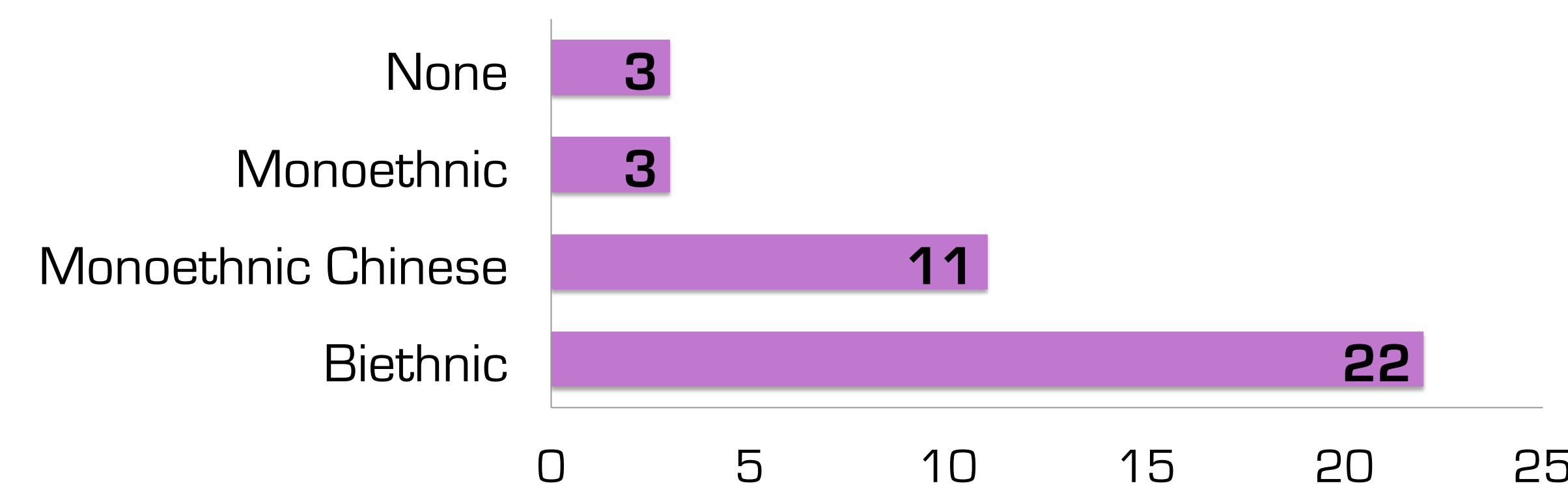
Racial Preference and Parental Acknowledgement of Ethnic Differences

	Asian	White	Black	None	Total
Low % within ackERD	5 83.3%	1 16.7%	0 0%	0 0%	6 100%
Mixed % within ackERD	7 70%	1 10%	0 0%	2 20%	10 100%
High % within ackERD	13 56.5%	2 8.7%	1 4.3%	7 30.4%	23 100%
Total	25	4	1	9	39

Social Distance and Parental Acknowledgment of Ethnic Differences

	Asian	White	Black	None	Total
Low % within ackERD	4 66.7%	1 16.7%	0 0%	1 16.7%	6 100%
Mixed % within ackERD	8 80%	0 0%	1 10%	1 10%	10 100%
High % within ackERD	13 56.5%	1 4.3%	2 8.7%	7 30.4%	23 100%
Total	25	2	3	9	39

Ethnic Self-Label (N = 39)



Ethnic self-label and racial preference: $\chi^2(9, N = 39) = 4.64, p = 0.86$

Community Diversity

	Racial Preference for Asian	No Racial Preference
Community Diversity	$M = 0.27$ $SD = 0.19$	$M = 0.26$ $SD = 0.10$

$t(31) = 0.18, p = 0.86$

	Social Distance Preference for Asian	No Social Distance Preference
Community Diversity	$M = 0.28$ $SD = 0.18$	$M = 0.22$ $SD = 0.13$

$t(31) = 1.06, p = 0.30$

Discussion

Findings

- When cell sizes fell below 10, statistical analyses are not reported; instead patterns are reported
- Majority of children showed preference for, and identified with Asian-looking dolls
- Almost all children selected the Asian-looking doll when asked, "Which doll is most like you?" yet majority of children selected a biethnic self-label, suggesting discrepancy between physical identity and ethnic identity; there did not appear to be a relation between ethnic self-label and doll preferences
- Children of high acknowledgement of differences parents tended to have no racial preference, potentially reflecting an openness to different races
- Community diversity perhaps did not affect racial preferences because living in a diverse community does not necessarily mean increased *interactions* with people of diverse backgrounds

Limitations

- Small sample size/incomplete data points
- Preexisting dataset, therefore questions were limited to what could be gleaned from the measures used in the study
- Each doll had a different outfit and some had accessories (books/glasses), many of the children acknowledged these qualities of the dolls and stated that their choices were based on these doll characteristics
- The Asian, Latina, and Native American dolls looked very similar and were eventually grouped into an "Asian-looking dolls" category
- Interpretations of questions—children may define "pretty" and "ugly" differently, therefore difficult to assume comparable preferences from child to child

Future Research

- Larger, more diverse samples (the present study only examined families from the Northeast region of the US)
- Exploration into other components of parental racial and ethnic views beyond just acknowledgement, such as opinions of cultural socialization
- How do the doll choices relate to children's social preferences in their lives?

References

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- Clark, K. B. (1947) "Racial identification and preference in Negro children," in T. M. Newcomb and E. L. Hartley (eds.) *Readings in Social Psychology*. New York:Henry Holt.
- Spencer, M. B., & Markstrom-Adams, C. (1990). Identity processes among racial and ethnic minority children in America. *Child Development*, 61(2), 290.
- Vashchenko, M., D'Aleo, M., & Pinderhughes, E. E. (2012). "Just beyond my front door": Public discourse experiences of children adopted from china. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 49(1-2), 246-257.