

Out of the Mouths of Babes: Developmental differences in Microaggressions Conveyed by Young Children and Relations with Parent-Child Discussions

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INTRODUCTION

- Transracial adoptees (TRAs), frequently face public comments
- Comments may reflect *microaggressions*—daily verbal, behavioral, intentional /unintentional that communicate hostile or negative slights and insults (Baden, 2015; Sue et al., 2007)
- TRAs may repeat these messages; but as they grow older, they may better understand these biases and refrain from conveying these messages
- TRAs who have adoption and racial discussions (AD, RD) with parents may convey fewer microaggressions

METHOD

Sample

- 38 TRAs ages 5-11 (M=7.59), and their White parents

Procedure

- Using a codebook, adoption microaggressions (AMA, Baden, 2015) and racial microaggressions (RMA, Sue et al., 2007), were coded when children's discourse contained bias
- Parent interviews were coded to analyze AD and RD. Frequency of ADs and RDs were coded 0-3. PFBs (preparation for bias discussion) were coded in response to bias incidents.

Discussion examples from parent interviews

Adoption Discussion

we talk about [adoption books], and how there are many ways to make a family and one of the ways is adoption

Race Discussion

I have brought it [race] up with her, and I told her that it's a possibility that people might pick on her, because her hair may be darker, or her eyes are more almond shaped

PfB Discussion

She said, "She just threw me away and left me." And I said, "Oh I don't think so...I think you were her dear little baby and it was one of the hardest things...she ever did."

Acknowledgment

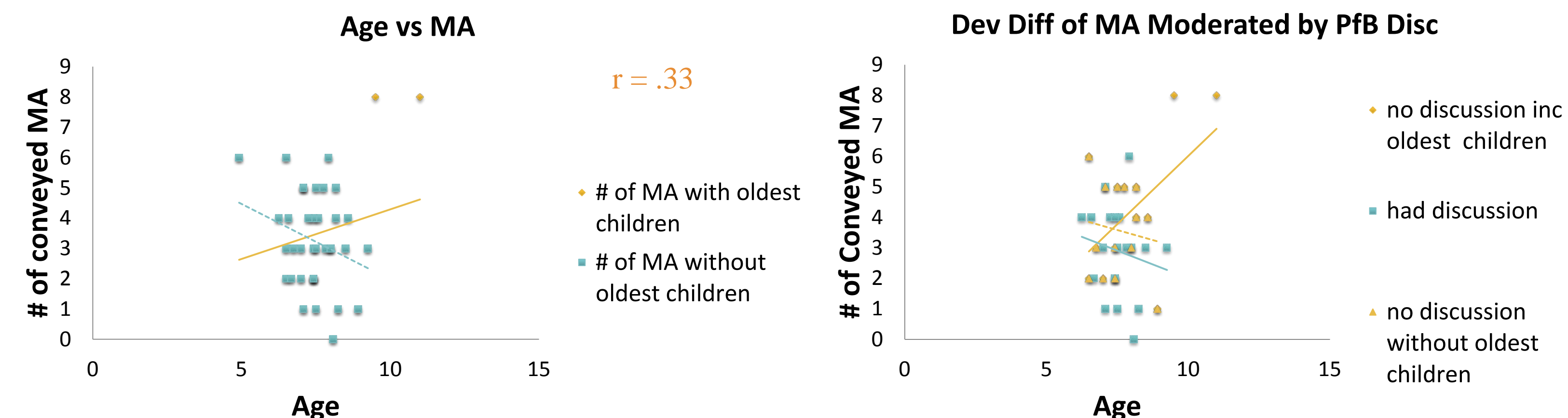
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RESULTS

Question 1: What types of adoption and racial microaggressions are conveyed by young children?

Adoption Microaggression (AMA)		Racial Microaggression (RMA)	
Code	Example from child interviews	Code	Example from child interviews
Biology is best/normative	[People adopt because] they really want to have a child but they can't	Alien in own land	sometimes [I] feel bad because I'm not really like my friends.
Bad seed adoptees	Maybe they wanted a boy instead	Color blindness	some people are white some people are black. But it doesn't matter because we can all be friends
Grateful adoptees	I feel lucky to have been adopted	Pathologizing cultural values/communication styles	...in China...people can have one child that's a boy
Shameful/inadequate birth parents	Sometimes parents cannot take care of the kids ... they could be on drugs	Second class citizen	[Being Chinese is] great, but I like to be America.
Phantom birth parents	I was born from somebody else's body and came to this part of the family	Invalidation of interethnic and intraethnic differences	We look like twins...Because we have the same color of skin and same hair, we all are from China
Pseudo/inadequate adoptive parents	If they get tired of having to clean their diapers and then they have to sell them	Physical appearance microaggression	I said [to another child] people with brown skin couldn't play.
Altruistic rescuers	My parents brought me into a world like America so I could be free	Possible discomfort about being Chinese or Chinese-American.	sometimes I don't like talking about it [China]
Commerce in adoption	Give the man money to get the baby		
Questioning Chinese heritage	My friend... born here speaks Chinese... I can't speak Chinese, so it's kind of...		
Possible discomfort with being adopted	I don't feel like it (talking about adoption)		

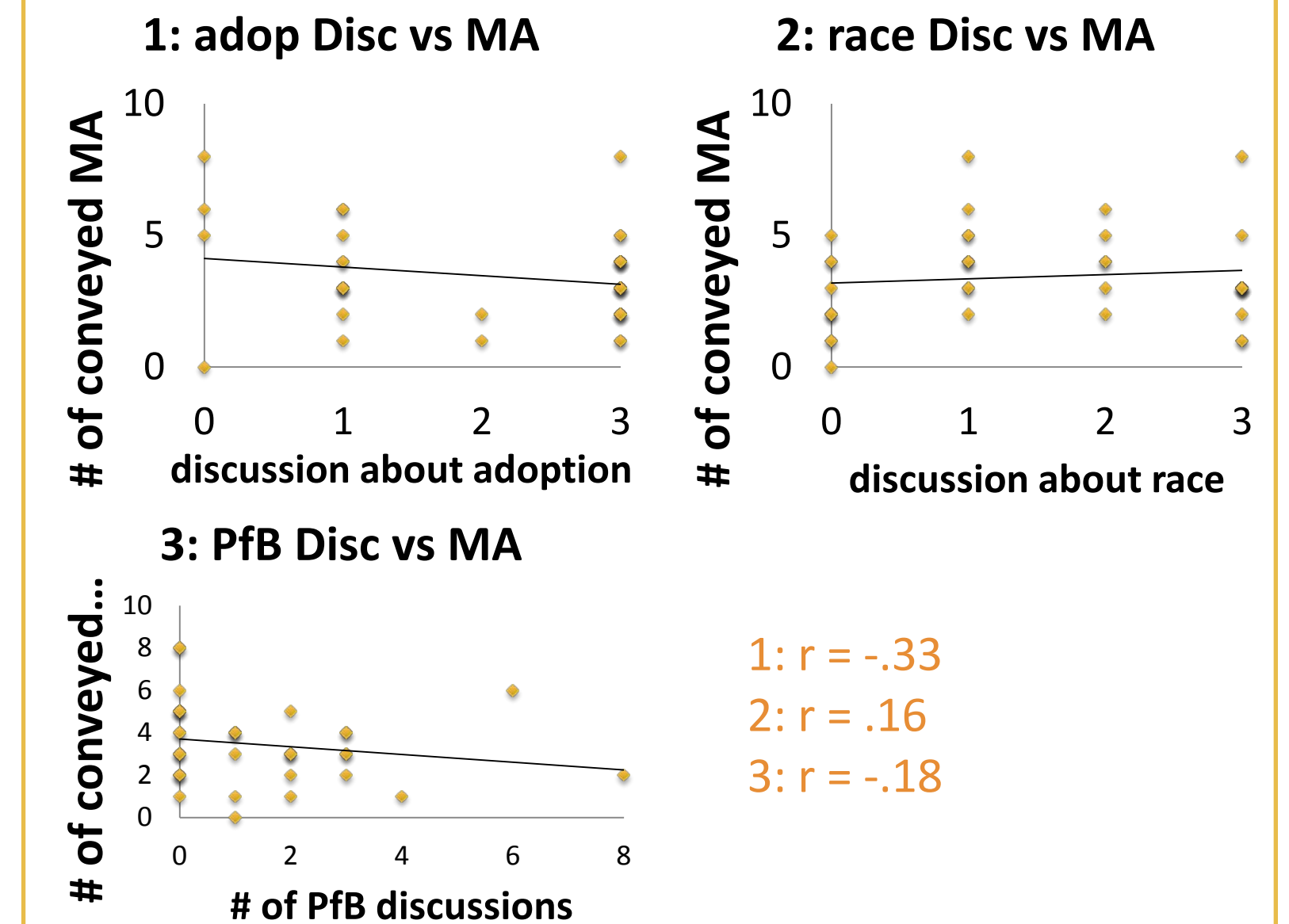
Question 2: Are there developmental differences in the microaggressions conveyed?



References

- Baden, A. L. (2015). "Do You Know Your Real Parents?" and Other Adoption Microaggressions. *Adoption Quarterly*, (just-accepted), 1-25.
- Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: implications for clinical practice. *American psychologist*, 62(4), 271.

Question 3: To what extent are parent-child AD, RD or PFB discussion related to the number of microaggressions conveyed by children?



DISCUSSION

- Older children conveyed more MAs. When moderated by PFB discussions, older children conveyed fewer MAs if they had discussions with their parents. PFB discussions may help children better understand biases, hence conveying fewer MAs.
- RDs positively related to MAs. RDs maybe difficult for White parents, and parents might not be comfortable at having RDs.
- Future studies look at parental influences on sibling patterns of MAs (e.g., the oldest children outliers)
- Future studies look closely at why certain children conveyed fewer MAs

Application

- Parents should prepare to have discussions about adoption and bias
- Post-adoption services can help mitigate TRAs' conveyed and internalized MAs, e.g., parent training, mentoring programs

Limitation

- Small sample size; interview not designed for MAs
- Quality or content of discussions not measured