Introduction

- Transracial and transethnic adoptees are argued to be at increased risk for problems related to self-esteem and ethnic identity development. (Adorno, 1988; Docan-Morgan, 2011; Hollingsworth, 1997), particularly as adoptive parents are more likely to be white than of color in the U.S. (McRoy, 1989, Simon, 1984).
- Previous studies have found equal adjustment of transracial and same-race adoptees (Brooks & Barth, 1999; Simon, Alstein, & Melli, 1994). Other studies have argued that transracial and same-race adoptees have similar levels of self-esteem and self-worth (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007; Josaph, 1997).
- There is also evidence that transracial adoptees experience discomfort in racial/ethnic identity, and this in turn may have an indirect influence on adjustment (DeBerry, Scarr, & Weinberg, 1996; Feigelman, 2000; Hollingsworth, 1997).
- Communication of race/ethnicity in the transracial adoptive home presents a gap in the research. Because of physical dissimilarity, transracial adoptees become aware of adoptive status at an early age, thus warranting investigating into the ways families support and help manage their child's development of identity.

The purpose of the present study was to compare transracial and same-race adopt children’s ratings on general identity development, adjustment, and report of communication about race and ethnicity within the parent-child relationship.

Method

- This study uses data from the Sibling Interaction and Behavior Study (SIBS, McGue et al., 2007) of the Minnesota Center for Twin and Family Research (MCTFR) at the University of Minnesota.
- The sample consisted of 607 adoptees from 357 families.
- Measures for this study primarily came from Wave 2 of SIBS (2003-2007), during which thorough measurement of ethnic and adoptive identity was conducted (M age = 18.3 years, SD = 2.16).

Method

- Variables measured included:
  - General Identity
  - Affect Regarding Adoption
  - Curiosity About Birthparents
  - Adjustment
  - Racial/Ethnic Communication: Child Report
  - Racial/Ethnic Communication: Parent Report

- Subsequent analyses were conducted that corrected for non-independence of the data using the COMPLEX specification (clustering by family) with Mplus, 6.12 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2014).
- Mean scores were compared across our same-race group and transracial groups using a series of ANOVAs.
- Significant differences were found in identity, affect about adoption, and wondering about birthparents.
- Our results generally provide support that transracial and same-race adoptees are similar in terms of their overall adjustment, curiosity about birth parents, and general and adoptive identity.

Results

- No significant differences were found in 3 of 4 measures of adjustment: antisocial, prosocial, and pro-family behaviors. However, significant differences in aggression were found, F(4, 597) = 3.424, p = .009. Asian adoptees have significantly lower levels of aggressive behaviors than white (p = .002) and Mixed/Other adoptees (p = .01).
- Our results suggest a pattern of disagreement in parent and child perceptions about communication of race/ethnicity across transracial and same-race adoptees. Parents may be overestimating the degree of communication about race/ethnicity with their Black and Mixed adopted children.

Conclusion

- On the other hand, our results suggest a pattern of disagreement in parent and child perceptions about communication of race/ethnicity across transracial and same-race adoptees. Parents may be overestimating the degree of communication about race/ethnicity with their Black and Mixed adopted children.

- An important consideration is the widespread color blindness in the United States, particularly by whites due to the privilege they have experienced in regards to race relations. Race is considered a highly polemic and taboo topic to be avoided in daily conversation (Quinon, 2007).

- Color-blindness may lead to a skewed parental perception of how often race really is being brought up in the home, or the degree to which it is important to discuss issues about race and ethnicity. Adoptees may be experiencing discrimination among their peers and in other social situations which would warrant a greater need for communication with parents.