Introduction

- Transracial adoptees (TRAs) typically experience challenges in the development of identity.
- TRAs often experience biases in the form of microaggressions (MAs); daily verbal, behavioral or environmental messages, intentional or unintentional that communicate hostile or negative slights or insults (Sue et al., 2007) that may affect their self-perception.
- TRAs experience both racial microaggressions (RMAs) and adoption microaggressions (AMAs) (Baden, 2016) from an early age, and may repeat them without fully comprehending the impact of these messages.
- Children’s cognitive capacities affect their ability to comprehend complexities associated with adoption (Brodzinsky et. al., 1984) and racial difference, therefore, as children age, the frequency and content of the microaggressions internalized/conveyed may change.
- TRAs in the same adoptive family may convey similar MAs due to a similar experiences of cultural and adoption socialization.

Methods

- Data was taken from a larger sample (The Tufts Adoption and Development Project) in which TRAs were interviewed about topics of race and adoption.
- TRAs ages 4-11 (M=7.95, SD=1.82) were included in this study if they were a part of a sibling dyad (N=14).
- Interviews were coded to identify both experienced and internalized/conveyed MAs.
- Data were analyzed for trends in cognitive developmental age. 7 children ages 4-7 (M=6.54, SD=0.96) and 7 children ages 8-11 (M=8.36, SD=1.26) were analyzed as preoperational (PO) and concrete-operational (CO) (Piaget, 1952) respectively for trends in internalized/conveyed MAs.
- 7 sibling dyads were included in the sample. Families were included in the sibling analysis if they had 1 child in each PO and CO developmental stage (n=5).

Results

- **Total Sample**
  - Children averaged more internalized/conveyed MAs than experienced MAs.
  - Children experienced and internalized/conveyed more AMAs than RMAs.
  - Common AMAs internalized/conveyed included:
    - biology is best/normative
    - Shameful/inadequate birth parent
    - Phantom birth parent
    - commerce in adoption
    - possible discomfort in talking about adoption

- **By Age Group**
  - CO children internalized/conveyed more AMAs than PO children.
  - CO children internalized/conveyed fewer RMAs than PO children
  - CO children notably conveyed more:
    - biology is best/normative
    - Shameful/inadequate birth parent
    - phantom birth parent
    - possible discomfort in talking about adoption

- **Sibling Dyads**
  - CO children internalized/conveyed more total AMAs (m=5, SD=1.87) than their PO siblings (m=3.4, SD=0.55)
  - CO children internalized/conveyed a comparable number of RMAs (m=0.6, SD=0.89) as their PO siblings (m=0.8, SD=0.84)
  - CO children internalized/conveyed “Phantom birth parent” AMAs:
    - more times in 2 families
    - fewer times in 1 family
    - an equal number for 1 family
  - CO children internalized/conveyed “Biological is best/normative” AMAs
    - more times in 4 families
    - an equal number in 1 family
  - CO children internalized/conveyed “Possible discomfort in talking about adoption” AMAs
    - more times in 1 family
    - an equal number for 1 family
    - fewer times for 3 families

- **Common Adoption Microaggressions**

- **Discussion**
  - TRAs may internalize and convey more AMAs than RMAs because of higher awareness due to greater racial socialization than adoption socialization.
    - Increased adoption socialization and education may increase adoptees’ understanding of adoption, thus decreasing number of AMAs conveyed.
  - Adoption is a multifactorial entity with many components, including adoptive and birth families, and financial transactions.
    - CO children have a greater adoption vocabulary (Brodzinsky, 1984), than their PO counterparts, but lack the abstract thinking to consider all of the complexities of adoption process.
  - Thus, CO children may convey more complex AMAs by only considering one aspect of adoption

- **Limitations**
  - Limited sample size to only include sibling dyads
  - Only 5/7 families included siblings of different developmental level
  - Does not include other developmental levels (formal operational, adulthood) due to study constraints

Future Directions

- Further studies to examine a wider range of ages of TRAs and MAs
  - Including adolescents, adults
- Further studies with a larger samples that specifically examine TRAs’ families and sibling dyads:
  - Effects of family adoption socialization and discussion on internalized/conveyed AMAs
  - Environmental adoption socialization/education on internalized/conveyed AMAs
  - Patterns of AMAs within sibling dyads

References

Sue, D.W., Capodilupo, C.M., Torress, G.C., Buk*</p>