# Developmental trajectories of racial attitudes in young children

Helen Peng and Smrithi Krishnaswamy
Advisors: Rebecca Farina, Gonzalo Mena, Zach Branson  Client: Catarina Vales

## Background

PRAM Task

*"Who {plays nicely with others}"?*

Friendship Task

*"Who would you {have a playdate with}?"*

- Racial attitudes emerge early and are shaped by children's social environments.
- Evaluative beliefs (PRAM) and social preferences (Friendship) capture related but distinct dimensions of racial attitudes.
- We examined predictors of children's racial attitudes and short-term change across tasks.

## What predicts individual differences in children's racial attitudes at pretest?

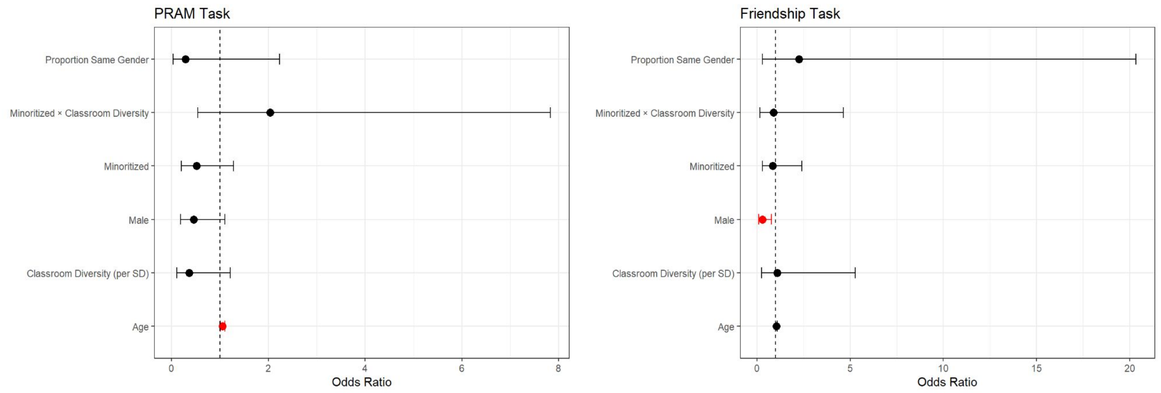


**Figure 2:** Logistic regression revealed that age significantly predicted bias in the PRAM Task (older children more pro-White), while gender significantly predicted bias in the Friendship Task (females more pro-White)

**Multinomial Results**

- **PRAM:** Children from minoritized racial/ethnic backgrounds were less likely to show pro-White evaluative bias and more likely to show non-White or mixed patterns.
- **Friendship:** Gender predicted social preferences, with boys more likely to show non-White friendship choices.
- Predictors of bias differed across tasks, underscoring the importance of measurement choice.

## Are there identifiable predictors of change in children's racial attitudes?

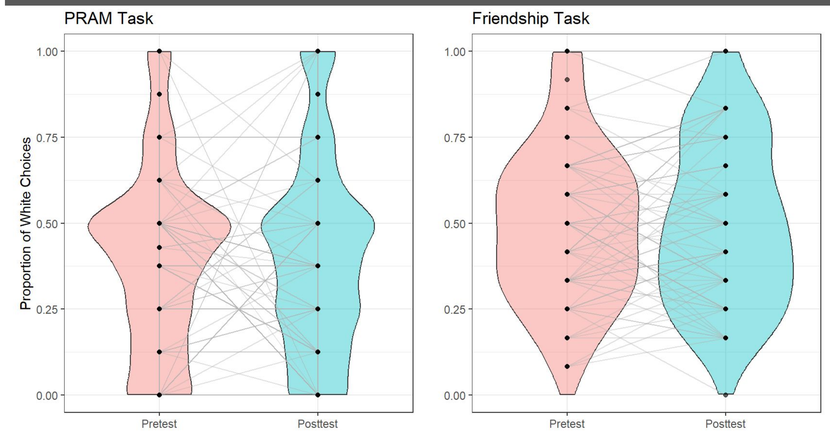


**Figure 3:** Violin plot shows no overall change in the distribution of white choices from pretest to posttest in either task.

All results are from **logistic regression** analyses:

- **No overall change** in pro-White bias from pre- to posttest in either task.
- **Age predicted PRAM bias at pretest only**, suggesting the intervention may **level out age effects**.
- **Gender predicted Friendship bias at both pre- and posttest**.
- **Classroom diversity index (evenness)** predicted posttest bias: children in more **racially balanced classrooms** showed lower bias, especially when the classroom mirrored the **diverse characters in the book-based intervention**.
- **Diversity ratio** (proportion of minoritized students) was not significant, suggesting that overall **classroom balance**, rather than the number of minoritized students, may matter.

## Exploratory Data Analysis

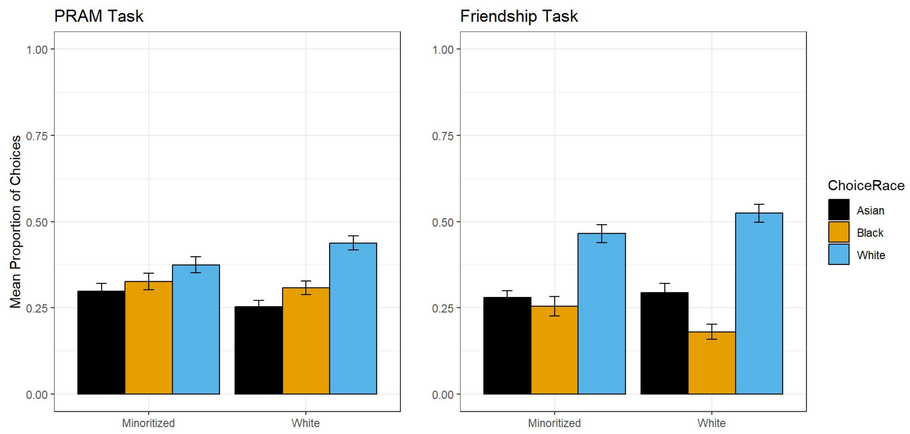


**Figure 1:** Children from minoritized and White backgrounds showed similar patterns of Asian, Black, and White selections across the PRAM and Friendship tasks, with no clear group-level differences in choice distributions.

- **Task × Choice Race was significant**: children chose differently in PRAM vs. Friendship.
- **Tasks were moderately related at pretest (r = .45)**: kids who chose White in one task often did so in the other.

## Discussion

- Children's racial attitudes were systematically patterned at baseline, with predictors differing across evaluative beliefs (PRAM) and social preferences (Friendship).
- Despite clear individual differences, we observed **little short-term change**, suggesting stability in racial attitudes over the study period.
- Multinomial analyses revealed race- and gender-specific patterns that were not captured by binary measures of pro-White bias.
- Classroom diversity, particularly when measured using balance-based indices, was associated with children's posttest attitudes, highlighting the role of broader social context.
- Together, these findings underscore the importance of **measurement choice and social environment** in understanding early racial attitude development.