



Friend or Foe? Empathy Across Demographics and Children's Perceptions of In-group and Out-group Members

Mahnoor Nazeer, Rita Svetlova Ph.D.

Duke University Department of Psychology and Neuroscience

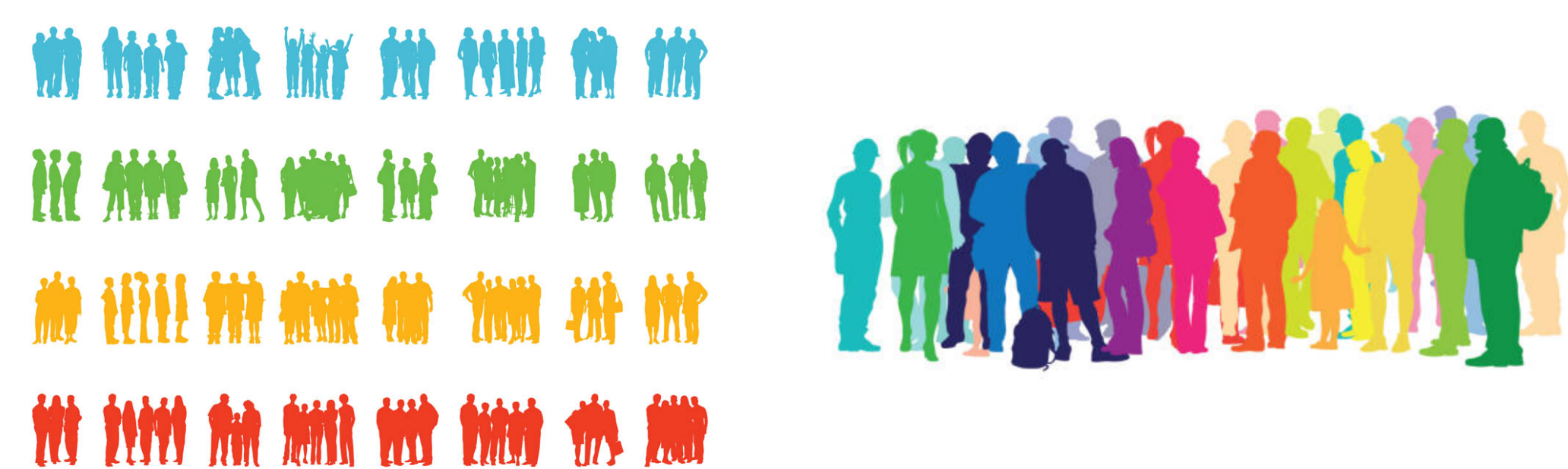


Introduction

In today's multicultural, globalized world, it is more important than ever before to be able to interact favorably with those who are different from ourselves.

- Children's ability to feel empathy is one of the most salient indicators of their ability to engage in prosocial behavior⁽¹⁾
- Empathy aids in the formation of healthy relationships, increases helping behavior, and persuades children to have favorable attitudes toward others.
- Children operate through a lens of essentialism, an early cognitive bias that promotes categorization⁽⁴⁾
 - Essentialist thought promotes group biases and may mediate how, when, or if children show empathy to those different from themselves
- Preschool children (ages 3-6) make generalizations about how groups constrain social behavior^(2,6)
 - They predict between-group harm and within-group helping behavior
- Children distribute fewer resources to out-group members and choose to play with those who have similar preferences or physical appearances^(3,7)
- Perspective taking and living in diverse communities can minimize group bias, but only in adults^(5,8)

How do we promote more favorable interactions between different groups?



Research Questions

Can emphasizing similarities with out-group members override group bias?

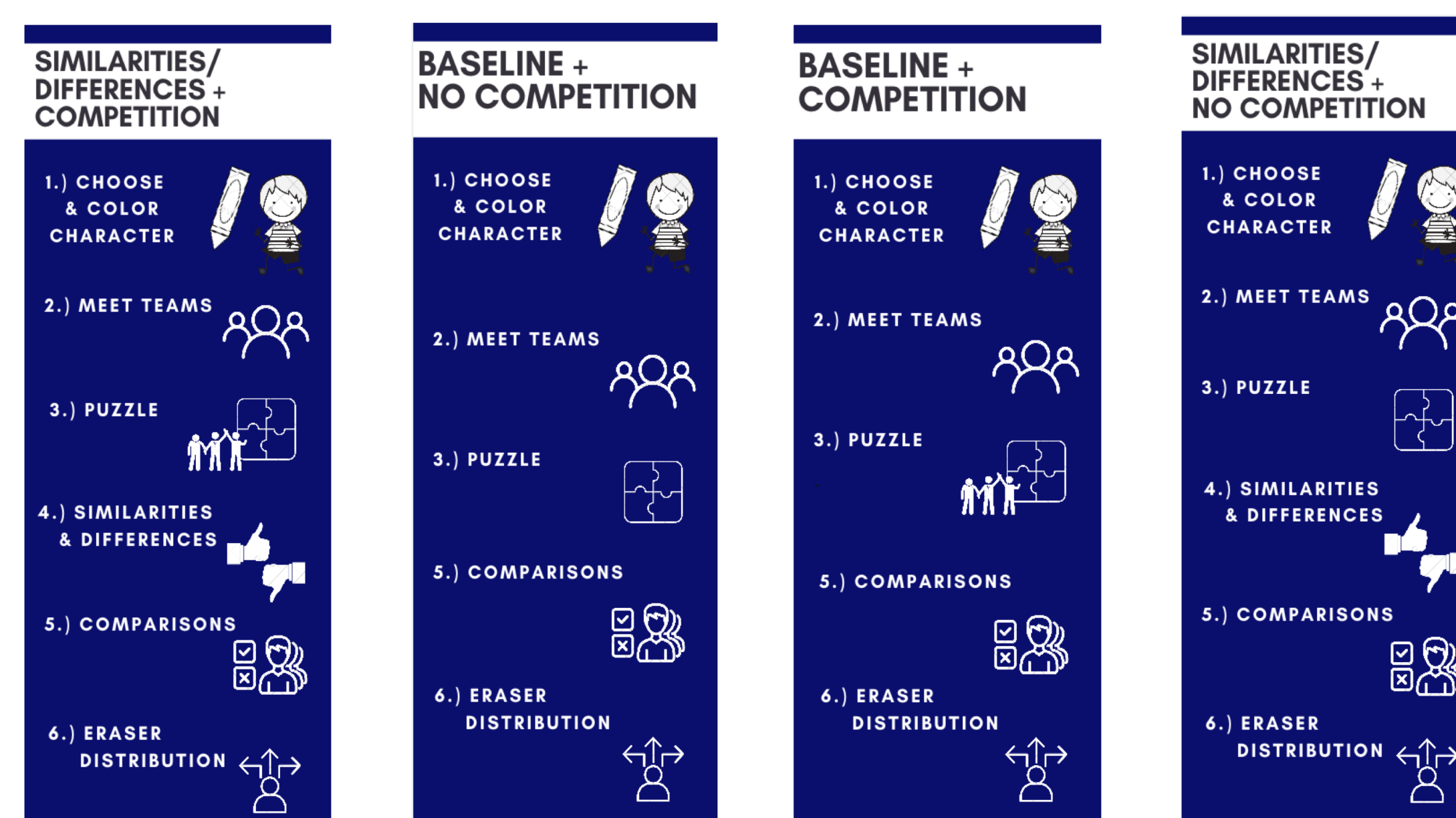
Even though children tend to be biased against members of an "out-group," are they still able to show empathy toward out-group members if they know they are sad?

How do cooperation and competition influence group bias and empathy?

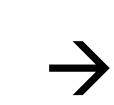
Method



		SIMILARITIES/DIFFERENCES	
		YES	NO
COMPETITION	NO	Similarity + No Competition	Baseline + No Competition
	YES	Similarity + Competition	Baseline + Competition



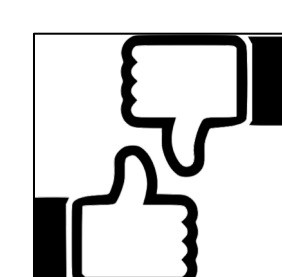
Condition manipulations



Measures of Interest



COMPETITION



SIMILARITIES & DIFFERENCES



% of times silver team is chosen during eraser task



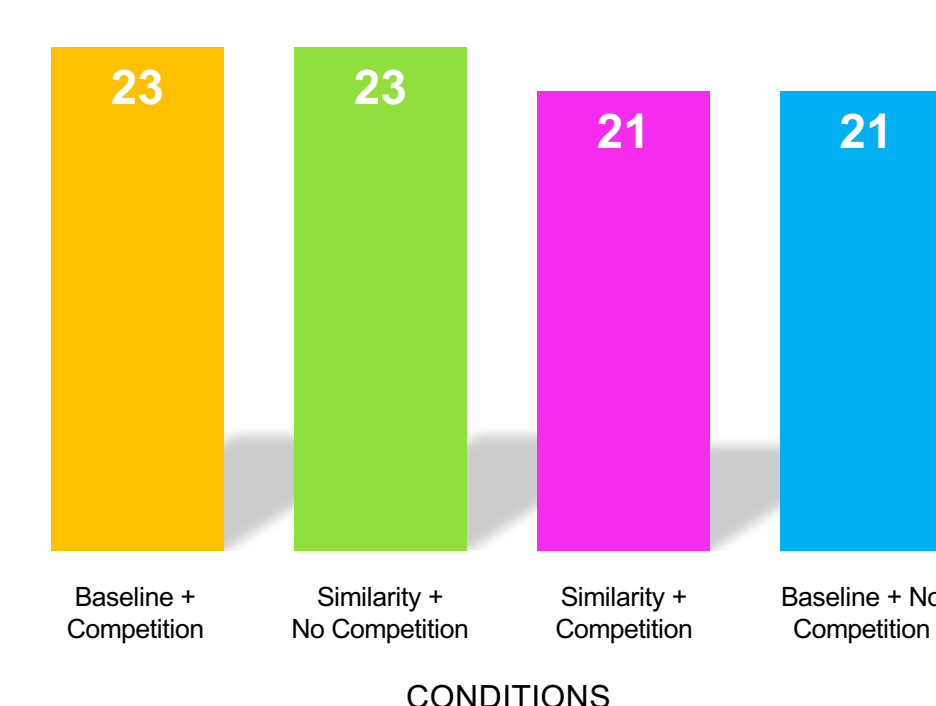
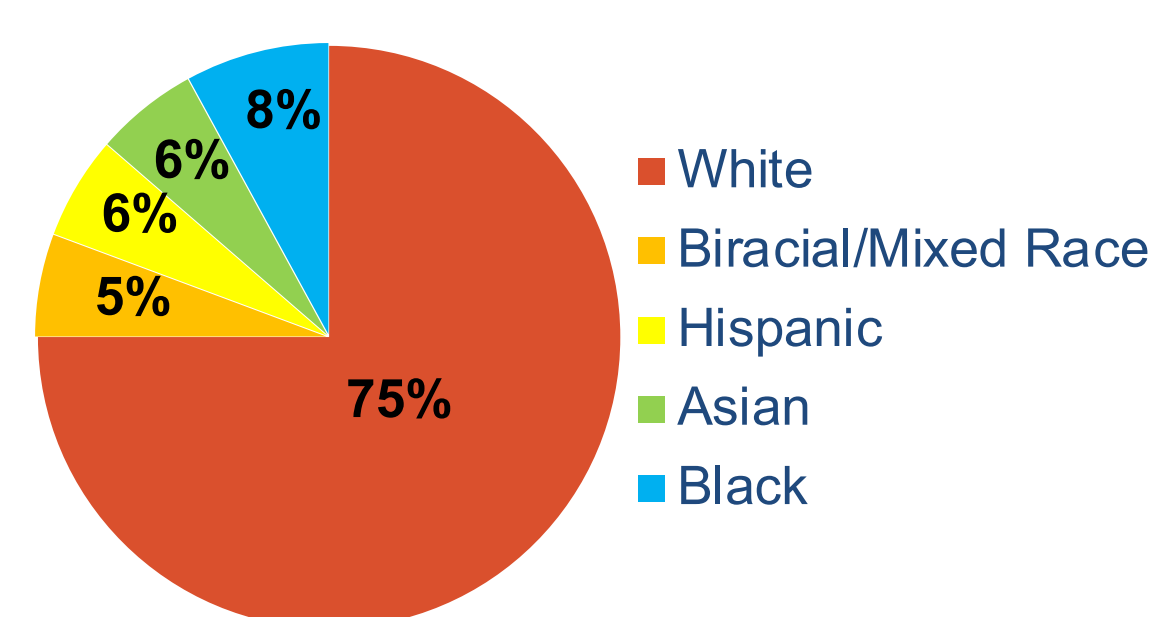
% out-group members chosen across four trials



of times out-group member chosen in IGD vs OGS trial

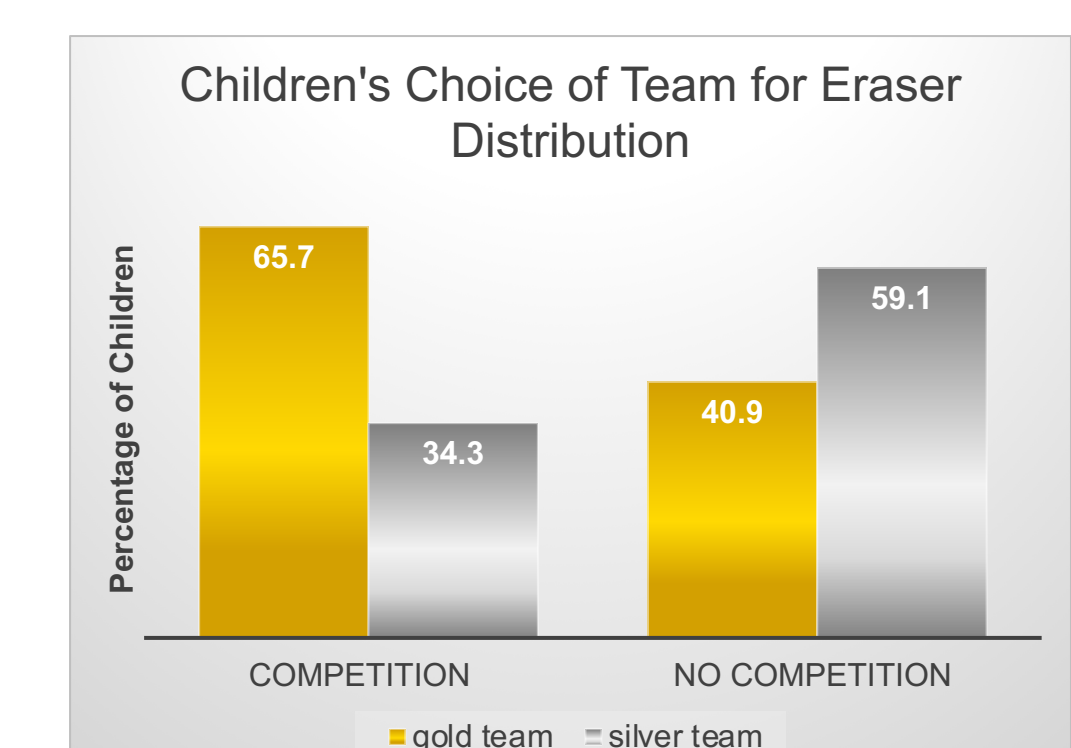
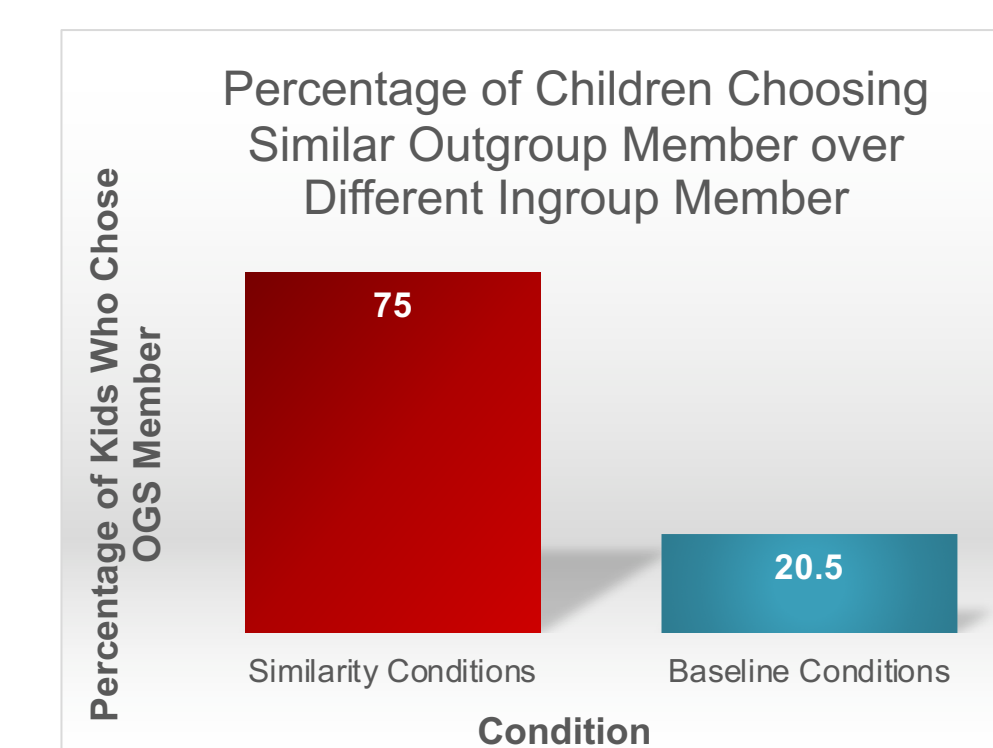
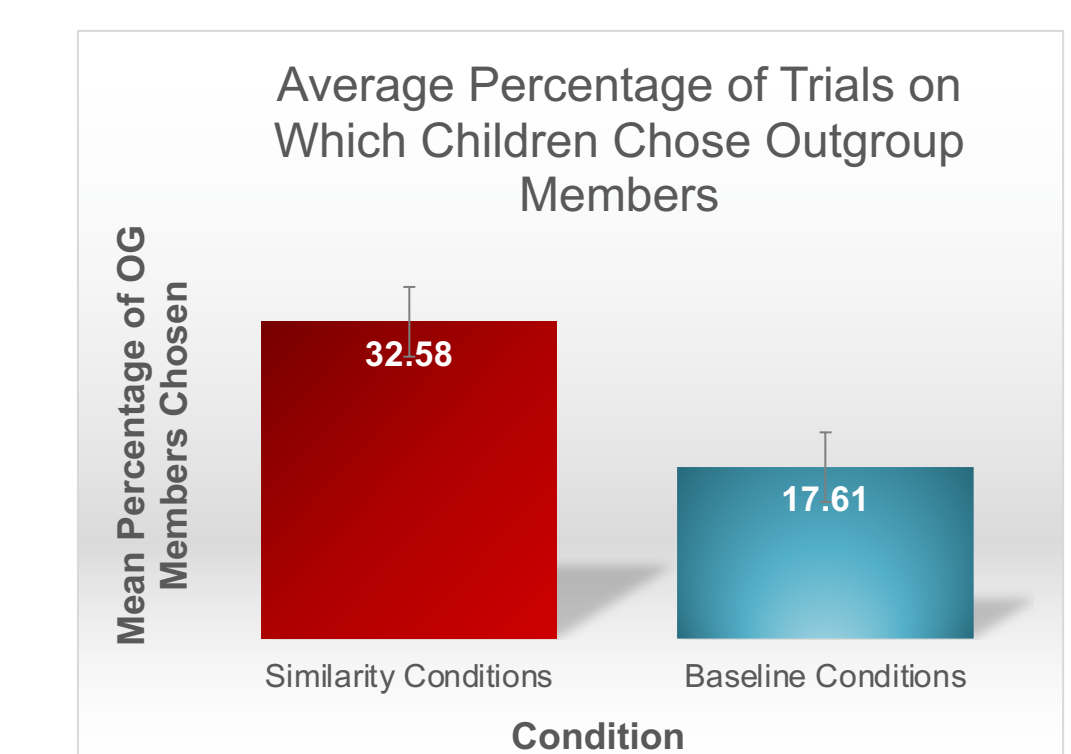
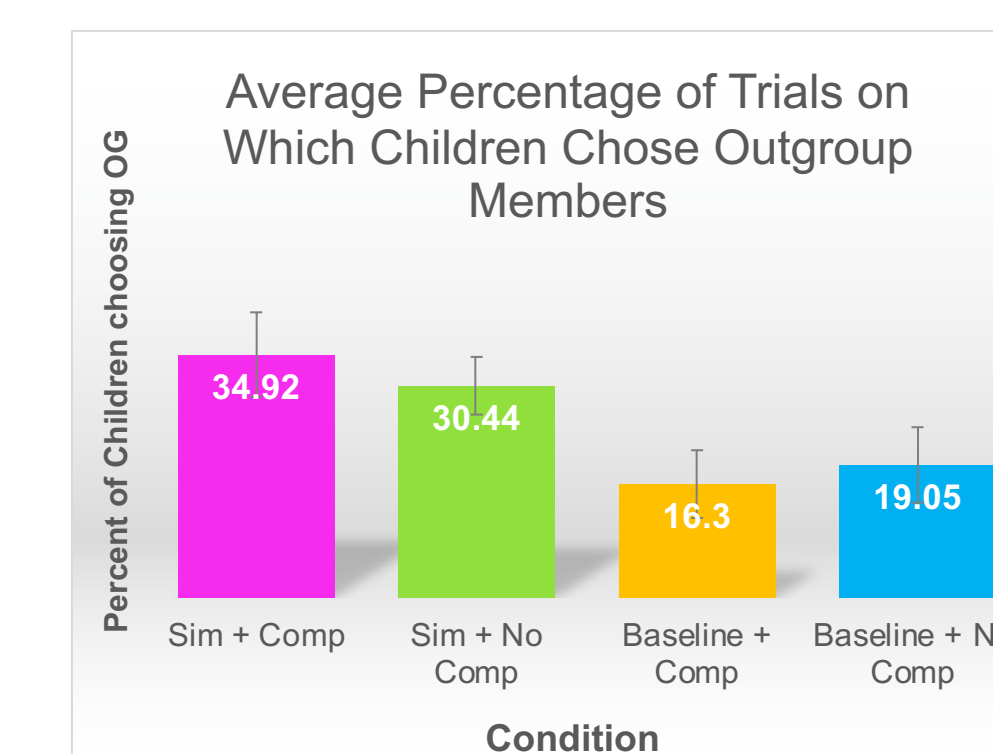
Participants

88 children; 53% girls, 47% boys



Results

- Children in the Similarity conditions chose out-group members more than children in the Baseline conditions did
- More children in the No-competition conditions vs the Competition conditions chose to distribute resources to the out-group after learning they were sad
- Older children were more likely to give resources to the out-group than younger children
- Girls were more likely than boys to choose to play with out-group members



Discussion

- With no information about individuals, children chose in-group members over out-group members. When children learned about similarities with out-group members, they chose them more often.
 - Effects of similarity appeared to override effects of group-belonging.
- Similar preferences seem to influence liking more strongly than physical appearance
- Competition seems to inhibit or minimize empathetic response
- Emphasizing similarity and minimizing competition may be valuable tools for effectively promoting positive interactions between different children and building empathy across demographics.

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