

Do kids prefer playmates of same ethnicity?

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Multicultural daycares don't necessarily foster a desire for kids of visibly different ethnicities to play together. A study on Asian-Canadian and French-Canadian preschoolers has found these children may have a preference to interact with kids of their own ethnic group.

Led by researchers from Concordia University and the University of Montreal, the findings are published in the *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*.

"We found Asian-Canadian and French-Canadian children seemed to prefer interacting with kids of the same [ethnic background](#)," says Nadine Girouard, a research associate in the Concordia Department of Psychology and member of the Centre for Research in Human Development (CRDH). "Both groups were more interactive with children of the same ethnicity and, when matched with [kids](#) from another background, preferred solitary play."

This study builds on previous investigations that have shown preschoolers prefer to play with children of the same ethnic group. The research team also observed how multicultural playmates could influence [conflict](#) among [peers](#) of the same ethnicity — findings that contradict previous studies.

"We observed that Asian-Canadian children frequently removed or attempted to remove toys from each other," explains Girouard. "When interacting with peers of the same [ethnicity](#), Asian-Canadian preschoolers were more competitive."

Participants were recruited from six daycares located in Montreal and its suburbs: 30 mostly, second-generation Asian-Canadians and 30 French-Canadians. Children were paired with peers they had known for at least three months. According to the research team, social mores likely prompted a lack of interaction between cultures.

French-Canadian children used longer sentences when interacting with same-ethnic peers, yet decreased their verbal interactions when playing with Asian-Canadian peers. "Children of both groups adapted their behaviours by speaking less in the case of French-Canadian children and by speaking more in the case of Asian-Canadian [children](#)," says coauthor Dale Stack, a professor in the Concordia Department of Psychology and CRDH member.

"Consistent with some past research, self-expression and social initiation are highly valued in Canadian culture, self-restraint and cooperation may be more important in Chinese and Asian-Canadian culture and this has an impact on multicultural peer interactions," she continues.

Coauthor Monica O'Neill-Gilbert, a retired University of Montreal psychology professor, says the findings could prove important for new Asian-Canadian families during acculturation.

More information: The paper, "Ethnic differences during social interactions of preschoolers in same-ethnic and cross-ethnic dyads," is published in *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*.

Provided by Concordia University

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