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Do Adolescents' Perceptions of Parental Racial Attitudes Relate to Their Intergroup Contact and Cross-Race Relationships?

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A developmental intergroup framework was used to investigate adolescents' perceptions of parents' messages about cross-race relationships, including friendship and dating, and to relate these attitudes to adolescents' self-reported levels of intergroup contact. Participants (N = 347) were ninth- and twelfth-grade male and female students from the United States, of varying ethnicity. Findings indicated that intergroup contact was related to the likelihood that participants engaged in cross-race relationships. Perceptions of parent racial attitudes were related to the degree of intimacy participants experienced in these relationships. In addition, adolescents reported that parents evaluated the types of cross-race relationships differently, and their messages were significantly related to adolescents' decisions regarding cross-race friendships and dating.

KEYWORDS   adolescent intergroup attitudes, cross-race relationships, developmental intergroup contact

UNTIL recently, few developmental psychologists have examined how intergroup contact bears on decisions made by adolescents regarding cross-race friendships (see Killen, Crystal, & Ruck, 2007; Killen, Sinno, & Margie, 2007; Tropp & Prenovost, 2008). This is surprising due to the extensive number of studies conducted with adult populations on how intergroup contact—contact with others under certain conditions—reduces prejudice (Allport, 1954). For example, Mendoza-Denton and colleagues have examined how cross-race friendships in college settings is related to ethnic minority students' social experiences in academic settings as well as their academic achievements (Mendoza-Denton & Page-Gould, 2008; Page-Gould, Mendoza-Denton, & Tropp, 2008). Further, in their meta-analytic review of the literature, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) found that cross-race friendships strongly predicted prejudice reduction. In a recent chapter summarizing developmental literature on child and adolescent intergroup contact,

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Tropp and Prenovost (2008) reported that positive effects of contact could be generalized across many settings and contexts with youth from a range of backgrounds.

Guided by Social Cognitive Domain theory, Killen and colleagues (Crystal, Killen, & Ruck, 2008; Killen, 2007) have conducted research which complements the approach charted out by Tropp and Prenovost (2008). For example, Crystal et al. (2008) focused on the extent to which intergroup contact is related to evaluations of interracial exclusion in everyday peer encounters at school, as well as the forms of reasoning that are used by children and adolescents to evaluate interracial exclusion. Social Cognitive Domain theory proposes that individuals evaluate socially relevant decisions using different conceptual perspectives, including the moral (is it a matter of fairness and equality?), the social-conventional (is it a matter of cultural or societal expectations?), and the personal (is it a matter of personal decision-making?).

Using this theory, it has been shown that children and adolescents (at 9, 12, and 15 years of age) who have intergroup contact (as measured by teacher encouragement of interracial rela-tionships, cross-race friendships, and living in interracial neighborhoods) were more likely to evaluate exclusion in three interracial peer exclusion contexts as wrong using moral reasons, such as unfairness, than were adolescents without intergroup contact (Crystal et al., 2008). Focusing more specifically on cross-race friendships, research by Killen, Kelly, Richardson, Crystal, and Ruck (2006) found that European-American adolescents with cross-race friendships were less likely to use stereotypes and conventional reasoning to explain racial discomfort in interracial exchanges than were European-American adolescents who had very few cross-race friendships.

Thus, intergroup contact is associated with friendship choice, and it is related to children's and adolescents' moral reasoning about exclusion based on race. What is not yet known is the extent to which intergroup contact is associated with adolescents' viewpoints about *parental expectations* regarding cross-race relationships

and, importantly, the extent to which this relationship varies as a function of the level of *intimacy* in cross-race relationships. Research on cross-race relationships with adolescents has focused mostly on friendships with very little research examining how adolescents perceive parental expectations regarding decisions about intimacy; that is, with dating, or marrying someone from a different racial or ethnic background. Understanding how adolescents evaluate a range of cross-race relationships is important given that social psychological research has revealed the positive long-term consequences of these types of relationships, including higher educational and occupational aspirations, and more positive social relationships in the workforce (see Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Tropp & Prenovost, 2008). In particular, cross-race friendships in childhood are important because they have been found to be a significant predictor for reduction of prejudice (Aboud & Levy, 2000; Pettigrew, 1997; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000, 2006; Schofield, 1995; Schofield & Eurich-Fulcer, 2001; Slavin & Cooper, 2000; Tropp & Prenovost, 2008; Wittig & Molina, 2000). Yet, while intergroup contact research has increased over the past few decades, cross-race friendships remain infrequent (Aboud, Mendelsohn, & Purdy, 2003; Graham & Cohen, 1997; Hallinan & Teixeira, 1987a; Hartup, 1983; Howes & Wu, 1990).

One possible explanation for this continuing low frequency of cross-racial friendships might be due to differing levels of intimacy in cross-race versus same-race friendships (McGlothlin, Killen, & Edmonds, 2005). Although cross-race and same-race friendships are rated to be similar in quality on a wide range of issues, including companionship and reliable alliance (Kerner & Aboud, 1998), and are associated with reducing prejudice, these forms of friendship decrease in number as children approach adolescence and begin to engage in intimate relationships (Aboud et al., 2003; Graham & Cohen, 1997; Hallinan & Teixeira, 1987b). Thus, more research on adolescents' cross-race relationships is warranted to understand how they conceptualize these types of relationships and what adolescents view as the source(s) of information for

making decisions about cross-race relationships, particularly those that reflect intimacy.

Of the conditions theorized to be necessary for intergroup contact to reduce prejudice, authority sanctioning of inclusive attitudes is the least studied. When the role of authority is examined, it is in the context of school settings where it is linked to teachers and coaches; rarely has it been analyzed with respect to parents. While school is an important setting to meet all of the conditions of intergroup contact (Killen, Crystal, & Ruck, 2007; Tropp & Prenovost, 2008), what happens when parents do not sanction these relationships and send opposite messages from that of cooperation and togetherness sanctioned by the school?

Because parents are a source of authority in adolescents' lives, we focused our attention on the role they have in their children's cross-race relationships. Extensive developmental research has found that parents also play a significant role in adolescent social cognition and attitudes (Smetana, 1989, 2006). Using the Social Cognitive Domain model, Smetana (2006) has shown that adolescents use the personal domain when making decisions about friendships (e.g. personal prerogatives). While parents agree to some extent with their adolescents, by using personal reasoning to allow adolescents autonomy regarding with whom to be friends, this orientation changes with the level of intimacy of their adolescents' partners. Social-conventional reasoning is often invoked from parents to explain that adolescent choices about whom to date have a bearing on the family (Smetana, 1989). For example, parents become concerned about societal expectations and social norms, as well as cultural traditions and customs when communicating with their adolescents about social relationships. Conflicts and tensions result when parents and adolescents use different modes of reasoning (adolescents using personal, and parents using social-conventional). This research has not yet been applied to the topic of intergroup relationships, however, and given that societal expectations regarding race and ethnicity remain polarized in the United States (Kennedy, 2003), we hypothesized that parents'

attitudes about cross-race relationships reflect social-conventional and societal reasoning which would conflict with adolescents' views about personal decision-making in the area of friendships (Nucci, 2001).

Prior studies on parental attitudes toward cross-race dating have focused on the extent to which adolescents reveal their cross-race dating partners to parents with expectations of negative attitudes toward these relationships (Miller, Olson, & Fazio, 2004; Mills, Daly, Longmore, & Kilbride, 1995; Vaquera & Kao, 2005). We extended the focus of this research to examine adolescents' evaluations of parental attitudes and whether they believe these attitudes influence their own cross-race relationship experiences. We proposed that adolescents' reports about parental attitudes provide a window into this complex issue, and that how adolescents interpret parental attitudes regarding cross-race relationships will be related to adolescents' intergroup contact.

Goals and hypotheses

The goal of our study was to determine whether intergroup contact (self report) and perceptions of parental racial attitude were associated with adolescents' cross-race relationships, intimacy in those relationships, parental messages regarding these relationships, and the influence these messages play in their choices. In addition, we examined how the different types of relationships—dating versus friendship—are treated, and whether intimacy, parental messages, and influences differ according to the type of relationship.

Based on previous findings, which have shown that negative parental attitudes about choice of friends creates conflict in the home (Smetana, 2006), we expected that perceptions of parents' racial attitudes and levels of intergroup contact would be associated with reports of having cross-race relationships. Social cognitive domain research on parent–adolescent relationships has shown that parents who have open conversations with their adolescents about friendships and dating, and who provide autonomy regarding choice of friendships,

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have adolescents who are better adjusted and socially competent (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Smetana, 1989; Smetana & Turiel, 2003). While prior parent–adolescent studies regarding social reasoning has not included cross-race relationships, using the prior findings, we hypothesized that participants who reported positive racial attitudes in parents would be most likely to have cross-race friends and be willing or experienced in cross-race dating. Further, as relationships become more intimate, parents exert more control (Smetana, 2006). Thus, we expected that intimacy in cross-race relationships would also be associated with perceptions of parents' racial attitudes about cross-race relationships in adolescence. Specifically, we believed that participants who reported negative parental racial attitudes would be more likely to not invite cross-race friends or dates home due to parental discomfort perceived by adolescents. Further differences were expected to be found according to the type of relationship. We expected that reports of parental discomfort would be higher for cross-race dating than cross-race friendships because of its higher intimacy levels (Kennedy, 2003) and based on prior research (Miller et al., 2004; Mills et al., 1995; Vaquera & Kao, 2005). Additionally, we expected that intergroup contact would also be related to adolescents' report of cross-race relationships as well as their willingness to engage in an intimate relationship with someone from a different racial background. This was based on prior studies showing that intergroup contact is significantly related to adolescents' positive views about cross-race friendships (McGlothlin et al. 2005).

Next we hypothesized that intergroup contact and perceptions of parent racial attitude would be associated with the content and type of messages that parents convey to their adolescents about cross-race relationships (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Smetana, 2006). Based on the salience of race relationships (Kennedy, 2003), it was expected that perceptions of negative racial attitudes in parents would be associated with direct statements restricting cross-race relationships (Miller et al., 2004;

Mills et al., 1995). This was expected more for the intimate dating relationship than for cross-race friendships.

Our final expectation was that intergroup contact and perceptions of parental racial attitudes would be associated with the influence that parental messages have on adolescents' decisions to engage in cross-race relationships. Specifically, it was expected that participants reporting negative racial attitudes in parents would be most likely to say that they agreed with their parents' negative feelings regarding cross-race relationships. While much data in the parent–adolescent conflict literature has shown that parental control over friendship decisions often results in conflict and rebellion from adolescents (Nucci, 2001; Smetana, 2006), the context of cross-race relationships is different. Given the low levels of cross-race relationships (Kennedy, 2003) and the negative societal messages (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003), it was expected that negative parental attitudes and low intergroup contact would be associated with negative adolescent views, especially for the dating relationships versus the friendship relationship.

Method

Participants

Participants were 193 ninth-grade and 154 twelfth-grade students ($N = 347$) from a range of ethnic backgrounds, attending high schools in the Mid-Atlantic region. Participants were evenly divided by gender and ethnicity. The sample consisted of 101 male ninth-graders, 92 female ninth-graders, 67 male twelfth-graders, and 87 female twelfth-graders (100 African-American participants, 146 European-American participants, and 101 non African-American or European-American (see below)).

Three schools were sampled from a mixed-ethnicity school district in a Mid-Atlantic state. Schools were chosen if school records reported the student population was equal to or under 65% European-American, demonstrating diversity in the student body. Based on school district records, the student population of

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School 1 was 65% European-American, School 2 was 30% European-American, and School 3 was 12% European-American. Populations at two of the schools were of middle-income socio-economic standing, and School 3 was of low- to middle-income socio-economic standing, according to school records as well as census information about the towns. All students receiving parental consent were surveyed. As described below, individually-based measures of inter-group contact were used in this study rather than relying solely on school composition. Initial tests were run on school composition in order to determine if it had an effect on participant responses. No effect was found for school composition.

Procedure and assessments

Participants completed the survey in their classrooms at school under the supervision of a trained female researcher and a classroom teacher. Only students who returned a signed parental consent form were allowed to complete the questionnaire (85% return rate with 80% participation rate). Participants were told that there were no right or wrong answers and that all responses were anonymous and confidential. In addition, students were told that their participation was completely voluntary and that they could choose to stop at any time. The survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

The survey consisted of three sections and followed the same order for every student: Intergroup Contact Questionnaire, Cross-Race Friendship and Dating Experiences (*Peer Social Experiences*), and Parents Racial Attitudes (*Parental Attitudes*). Every participant received the same survey.

Intergroup Contact Questionnaire   The Intergroup Contact Questionnaire (ICQ) included 12 items measuring participants' intergroup contact and personal experience with other groups in three settings: school, neighborhood, and outside of school (using 4-point Likert scale responses). The ICQ was developed by Crystal, Killen, and Ruck (2008), and was adapted from Kurlaender and Yun's (2002) Diversity Assessment Questionnaire (which was used to measure experience with members of other ethnic groups in school desegregation studies). Crystal et al. (2008) created the measure to analyze the relationship between adolescents' contact experiences and their evaluations of peer exclusion.

Cross-race friendship and dating experiences
This section of the survey instrument asked participants about their experiences in making choices about cross-race relationships as well as any personal experiences with their parents regarding these relationships. The items were:

1. *Experiences*: Do you have cross-race friends or have you ever cross-race dated?
2. *Intimacy*: In these relationships, have you brought a cross-race friend or date home?
3. *Messages*: Have your parents reacted negatively toward your cross-race friends or dates?

Following each judgment (yes or no responses), participants were asked 'Why?' to measure their reasons, or justifications, for their responses. Hypotheses were based on the reasons that adolescents provide for negative parental attitudes and thus reasons were coded for participants who responded 'no' to having cross-race friends or openness to cross-race dating, 'no' to bringing cross-race friends or dates home, and 'yes' to parents expressing feelings regarding these relationships. As shown in Table 1, the categories for coding reasons ranged from those based on 'race' to parental expectations and lack of opportunity (for a complete listing of the reasoning assessments and their response coding categories, see Table 1).

Parental attitudes   This section of the survey instrument, *Parental Attitudes*, measured adolescents' perceptions of their parents' attitudes toward other racial groups and their parents' attitudes toward cross-race relationships in general. For *Friendship and Dating Attitude Rating*, participants were asked to rate their 'positive'

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Table 1. Reasons for lack of cross-race relationships

Assessment	Category	Description	Examples
Experiences	Different interests Race Lack of opportunity Self-segregation No response/Just because	Why do you not have cross-race friends or cross-race date even with the opportunity?	'We listen to different music' 'I don't want to be friends with them' 'Not a lot of Black people at our school' 'They only hang out with each other'
Intimacy	Parental discomfort Lack of opportunity Lack of closeness Parental rule No response/Just because	Why have you never brought cross-race friends or date home?	'My parents would freak out' 'I have no white friends' 'I'm not close enough' 'No one is allowed'
Messages	Positive Wrongness Safety/Jurisprudence Limitations Race restrictions Negative statements No response	What have your parents said or done to indicate their feelings?	'They support me in every way' 'They think it's not right' 'They think blacks are a bad influence' 'As long as we're friends, it's okay' 'They'd prefer I date only someone the same race as me' 'They make racist jokes'

or 'negative' perceptions of their parents' racial attitudes. A follow-up, open-ended question (*Parental Behavior*) asked participants to explain their rating. Participants were then asked to rate their parents' general feelings regarding cross-race friendship and dating (*Friendship* and *Dating Experience Rating*). Participants were asked whether or not their parents had ever expressed feelings regarding cross-race relationships directly or indirectly. A follow-up, open-ended question asked them to describe how their parents expressed these feelings (*Expression*). Finally, participants were asked what sort of influence their parents had on their cross-race relationships (*Influence*) (for a complete listing of assessments for *Parental Attitudes* and their coding categories, see Table 2). At the end of the assessment, participants filled out their demographic background, including date of birth, country of origin, language spoken at home, and race/ethnicity.

Design
A mixed design was used with within-subjects for the measures (all participants evaluated all items) and between-subjects for the intergroup contact variable (high, low) and the parents' racial attitude variable (positive, negative).

Results

Hypotheses were tested by using a combination of univariates and repeated measures ANOVAs. Likert scale data were analyzed with univariate ANOVAs. For the dichotomous data, which were recorded for justification responses (1 = use of the category and 2 = no use of the category), repeated measures ANOVAs were used to test for which justification reflected the greater proportion of the responses. A recent review of existing published developmental psychology studies revealed that ANOVA models, instead of log-linear analytic procedures, are appropriate for this type of data due to the within-subjects (repeated measures) design (see Wainryb, Shaw, Laupa, & Smith, 2001). Paired sample t-tests were conducted to examine differences between the means for justification categories grouped under a larger variable construct.

Intergroup Contact Questionnaire (ICQ)
For use in the analyses, an intergroup contact scale was developed following the same data analytic methods used by Crystal et al. (2008) in order to confirm that the six variables that made up the intergroup contact scale for Crystal et al. (2008) also held together for our sample.

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Table 2. Perception of parents' racial attitudes

Assessment	Category	Description	Examples
Parental behavior	Negative statements Positive statements Negative demeanor Positive demeanor Neutral, nothing	Why do you perceive your parents to have a positive/negative racial attitude?	'They make jokes sometimes' 'They've always taught me to be nice' 'The way they act around Blacks' 'They have a lot of Black friends'
Expression	Limitations Negative statements Forbidden Wrongness Social consequences Race restrictions Positive statements Nothing/No response	How have they expressed their feelings?	'They tell me to keep it at friends' 'They make racist jokes' 'It's a definite no in my house' 'They say it's just not right' 'It will be hard for mixed children' 'They tell me to date only White boys' 'They tell me they value my choices'
Influence	Personal choice Subversion Obey Agree No influence Positive influence No response	How have their feelings influenced your own decisions relationships?	'It's my life' 'I still do it only I don't bring them home' 'I have to do what my parents say' 'It's not a problem b/c we don't disagree' None 'They have different kinds of friends'

To create a measure of intergroup contact, a principal axis factor analysis with a varimax rotation (Kaiser normalization) was performed on seven ques-tions from the Intergroup Contact Measure. The scree plot indicated that a two-factor solution would best fit the data. Extract-ing two factors from the data resulted in the first factor having six variables with loadings above .30. The second factor had only two variables with loadings above .30, and was therefore eliminated from the analysis. The six variables from the first factor were then combined into an Intergroup Contact scale, which had a Cronbach's alpha of .73. The scale consisted of the following variables from the Intergroup Contact Measure:

1. number of cross-race friends in school;
2. number of cross-race friends outside of school;
3. number of cross-race friends in neigh-borhood;
4. number of school friends who date inter-racially;
5. number of friends from neighborhood who date interracially; and
6. level of diversity in neighborhood.

The intergroup contact scale was then collapsed into two categories, low contact ($n = 189$) and high contact ($n = 158$).

Type of relationship
In order to test our hypothesis that cross-race relationships were treated differently by parents and yielded different experiences for participants, separate ANOVAs were conducted for the friendship and dating contexts.

Ethnicity, gender, and grade
Due to the low frequency of significant findings for ethnicity, gender, and grade, these variables were dropped for the final analyses. The main independent variable of interest was intergroup contact (low, high). Thus, the report reflects the findings for an ethnically diverse group of ninth- and twelfth-grade students who varied in their degree of intergroup contact (low, high).

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Cross-race relationships

To test the expectation that intergroup contact was related to the frequency of cross-race relationships, separate univariate ANOVAs were conducted for responses to the friendship and dating assessments. For the friendship assessment, a significant main effect was found for *Intimacy* $F(1, 337) = 19.71$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$. Participants with intergroup contact ($M = 1.09$) were more likely to bring cross-race friends home than those without intergroup contact ($M = 1.28$), $p < .001$. For the dating assessment, significance was found for *Experience*, $F(1, 331) = 32.84$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$. Participants without intergroup contact ($M = 1.65$) were less likely to report that they had dated someone of a different race compared to those with intergroup contact ($M = 1.34$), $p < .001$. Thus, supporting the hypothesis, intergroup contact was associated with establishing intimacy and experiences within cross-race relationships, such as bringing a friend home or being willing to date interracially.

To test the expectation that perception of parents' racial attitudes was related to the frequency of cross-race relationships, separate univariate ANOVAs were conducted for responses to the friendship and dating assessments. For the friendship assessment, a significant main effect was found for *Messages*, $F(2, 335) = 44.85$, $p < .001$, with follow-up tests showing that participants who believed their parents had negative racial attitudes ($M = 1.47$) were more likely to say that their parents had reacted negatively to a cross-race friend than those who said their parents had positive attitudes ($M = 1.94$), $p < .001$. For dating, perception of racial attitude had an effect on *Experiences*, $F(2,333) = 6.75$, $p = .001$, *Intimacy*, $F(2, 325) = 12.83$, $p < .001$, and *Messages*, $F(2, 329) = 41.35$, $p < .001$. Participants who said their parents had negative racial attitudes ($M = 1.21$) were less likely than those with parents who had positive attitudes ($M = 1.06$) to say that, given the opportunity, they would date someone of a different race, $p = .001$. They were also less likely to bring a cross-race date home ($M = 1.35$) in comparison to those who said their parents had positive attitudes ($M = 1.08$), $p < .001$. Participants who believed their parents had negative racial attitudes ($M = 1.36$) were more likely to say their parents had reacted negatively because a person they were interested in was from a different race than those who said their parents had positive attitudes ($M = 1.89$), $p < .001$.

Intimacy in cross-race relationships

Participants who said that they did not bring cross-race friends or dates home were asked for their reasons why. To test the expectation that reasons would differ according to the relationship, we examined participants' responses for both the friendship assessment and the dating assessment. Two one-way ANOVAs were conducted for *Intimacy Justification* (parental discomfort, lack of opportunity, lack of closeness, parental rule) for both relationship types. Significance was found for *Intimacy Justification*, $F(4, 343) = 4.02$, $p < .001$, $\varsigma_p^2 = .08$ in friendship, with the most often used reason being lack of closeness ($M = 1.59$) (not close enough to bring a cross-race friend home). For dating, significance was also found for *Intimacy Justification*, $F(4, 343) = 11.63$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .29$. In this case, parental discomfort ($M = 1.36$) was listed most often as a reason not to bring cross-race dates home. In paired samples t-tests, it was used significantly more often than lack of opportunity ($M = 1.96$), $p < .001$, lack of closeness ($M = 1.88$), $p = .001$, and parental rule ($M = 2.00$), $p < .001$ (see Table 3).

Looking specifically at the association between parents' attitudes and a lack of intimacy, we first examined intergroup contact in order to determine whether it was related to the relationship between parental discomfort and a lack of intimacy in these relationships. Two separate univariate analyses measuring contact and parental discomfort were conducted for the friendship and dating assessments. For the dating assessment, a significant effect was found for intergroup contact and parental discomfort, $F(1, 39) = 8.08$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .18$. Contrary to expectations, those who reported high contact ($M = 1.14$) were more likely to say that parents were the reason they did not bring

Table 3. Means for refraining from inviting cross-race friends and dates home

		Intimacy justifications				
Relationship		Parental discomfort	Lack of opportunity	Lack of closeness	No explicit reason	Parental rule
Friendship	M	1.84	1.93	1.59	1.89	1.75
	SD	(0.37)	(0.25)	(0.50)	(0.32)	(0.43)
Dating	M	1.36	1.96	1.88	1.80	2.00
	SD	(0.50)	(0.27)	(0.36)	(0.41)	(0.00)
Group totals	M	1.60	1.94	1.74	1.84	1.88
	SD	(0.44)	(0.26)	(0.43)	(0.36)	(0.22)

Note: $N = 101$. Judgments: 1 = Yes; 2 = No. Categories listed for intimacy justifications refer to the reasons participants gave for not bringing cross-race friends or dates home: parents, too few cross-race friends, not close enough, just because, and no one is allowed in home. *M* = Mean. *SD* = Standard deviation.

cross-race dates home in comparison to those who reported low contact ($M = 1.58$), $p < .001$. No significant effects for cross-race friendships were found ($p > .05$).

To test the expectation that perceptions of parental racial attitude would be related to intimacy and parental discomfort, two separate univariate analyses were conducted for both the friendship assessment and the dating assessment. For friendship, significance was found for parental discomfort, $F(2, 60) = 6.98$, $p < .05$. Those who said their parents had negative attitudes ($M = 1.44$) were more likely to say parents were the reason they did not bring their cross-race friends home when compared to those who said their parents had positive attitudes ($M = 1.91$), $p < .001$. No significant effects were found for dating ($p > .05$).

Thus, adolescents used different reasons regarding their choices in their intimate relationships. For friendship, a lack of closeness was named as the most common reason adolescents did not bring their cross-race friends home. However, when contact was high or parents were perceived to have negative racial attitudes, parental discomfort was named most often as the reason for a lack of intimacy in cross-race friendships. For dating, there was no relation to intergroup contact or parental racial attitude. Instead, overall, parental discomfort was named as the primary reason cross-race dates were not brought home.

Parental messages about cross-race relationships

In order to test the expectation that the types of messages parents express about cross-race relationships, in general, differ depending on the type of relationship being discussed, parental messages were compared for friendship and dating. In paired samples t-tests, *Coded Messages* (positive statements, wrongness, safety, limitations, race restrictions, and negative statements) were compared for friendship and dating. Supporting our hypothesis, participants reported that their parents used different messages according to the type of relationship. Participants said that their parents were more likely to tell them that cross-race friendships were not wrong ($M = 2.00$) than that cross-race dating was not wrong ($M = 1.96$), $p < .001$. In addition, participants said that their parents were more likely to say dating outside of their race was a betrayal to their race (race restrictions) and would urge them to stay within their own race more often for cross-race dating ($M = 1.93$) than for friendships ($M = 1.98$), $p = .001$. Furthermore, with the exception of the most overt messages used (race restrictions and wrongness), all other forms of reasoning were lower in frequency with dating, while race restrictions and wrongness increased in use for dating.

To test our hypothesis that perception of parent racial attitude was associated with the

ways in which parents reason with their children about their actual cross-race relationships, two separate univariates were conducted to examine the relationship between perceptions of parents' racial attitudes and categories of *Expression* (safety, race restrictions, and negative statements) for the both the friendship and dating assessments. For friendship, perception of parents' attitudes was related to the ways in which parents expressed their feelings regarding cross-race friends, especially in their statements regarding safety, $F(2, 339) = 11.55$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$, and negative statements, $F(2, 339) = 21.92$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .12$. Participants who said that their parents had negative attitudes ($M = 1.87$) were more likely to express concerns over their children's safety among their cross-race friends than those who said their parents had negative racial attitudes ($M = 1.99$), $p < .01$. Participants who reported negative attitudes in their parents were also more likely to make negative comments or jokes about cross-race friends ($M = 1.75$) than those whose parents were perceived to have positive attitudes ($M = 1.98$), $p < .001$.

For dating assessment, significance was found for race restrictions, $F(2, 339) = 13.79$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$, and negative statements, $F(2, 339) = 22.24$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .12$. Participants who said their parents had negative racial attitudes ($M = 1.77$) were more likely to say that their parents believed their cross-race dating was a betrayal to their own race and they should only date within their own race ($M = 1.77$) in comparison to those whose parents had positive attitudes ($M = 1.97$), $p < .001$. They ($M = 1.82$) were also more likely to say that their parents made negative racial comments when expressing their feelings regarding cross-race dating in comparison to those who perceived their parents to have positive racial attitudes ($M = 1.99$), $p < .001$ (see Table 4).

Thus, adolescents reported that their parents used different messages about cross-race relationships depending on the type of relationship being discussed. When the two relationships were compared, participants, overall, perceived more negativity in parental messages about cross-race dating than cross-race friendships.

When parent racial attitude was added and expressions toward participants' actual relationships were considered, again the results showed that perception of negative attitudes in parents added an even larger divide between the ways in which different types of relationships were treated. Participants reported that parents used a more direct line of negative expressions about cross-race dating in comparison to cross-race friendship. Intergroup contact yielded no significant results ($p > .05$).

Influence

Based on Smetana's theory about parent–adolescent relationships (2006), it was expected that adolescents who reported high intergroup contact would be more likely to 'discuss the issue with their parents' than those with low contact, who would be more likely to agree with their parents. It was expected that this would be especially true for the dating context. In two separate univariate analyses examining the friendship and dating contexts, contact and its relationship to *Influence* (personal choice, obey, discuss, subversion, agreement) was examined. The only significant relationship found was in the dating context for agreement, $F(1, 44) = 4.88$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$. Those who reported low contact ($M = 1.82$) were more likely to report that they agreed with parents than those who reported high contact ($M = 2.00$), $p < .05$. While the majority of participants (both those reporting low contact and high contact) said they would ignore parents and use personal choice, higher intergroup contact was associated with greater agreement with parents.

Perceptions of parents' racial attitudes were also expected to influence the decisions participants made to engage in cross-race relationships. In two separate univariate analyses examining the friendship and dating contexts, perceptions of parents' racial attitudes, and its relationship to *Influence*, a main effect was found for the dating context, $F(2, 339) = 4.47$, $p < .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .12$, but not for the friendship context. Participants who perceived their parents to have negative racial attitudes were more likely to use personal choice ($M = 1.82$) than those who said their parents had positive

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Table 4. Means for perceptions of parent racial attitude and parental expression of feelings

		Expression of feelings										
		Positive statements		Wrongness		Safety		Limitations		Race restrictions		Negative statements	
Attitude		Friendship	Dating	Friendship	Dating	Friendship	Dating	Friendship	Dating	Friendship	Dating	Friendship	Dating
Positive	M	2.00	1.99	2.00	1.97	1.99	1.99	2.00	2.00	1.99	1.97	1.98	1.99
	SD	0.06	0.09	0.00	0.16	0.09	0.09	0.00	0.06	0.09	0.18	0.15	0.09
Negative	M	1.98	2.00	2.00	1.88	1.89	2.00	1.98	1.98	1.95	1.77	1.75	1.82
	SD	0.15	0.00	0.00	0.32	0.32	0.00	0.15	0.15	0.21	0.42	0.44	0.39
Group totals	M	1.99	2.00	2.00	1.93	1.94	2.00	1.99	1.99	1.97	1.87	1.87	1.91
	SD	0.11	0.05	0.00	0.24	0.21	0.05	0.08	0.11	0.15	0.30	0.30	0.24

Note: N = 347. Expression categories refer to parents' messages regarding cross-race relationships: positive/supportive statements, wrongness or concerns with societal perceptions, concerns with safety, limit the type of relationship, restrict relationships to specific race, and negative statements or jokes. Judgments: 1 = Yes; 2 = No. *M* = Mean. *SD* = Standard deviation.

attitudes ($M = 1.97$), $p < .001$. Those who reported that their parents had negative attitudes ($M = 1.96$) were also more likely to say they would use subversion and see a person in secret compared to those whose parents had positive attitudes ($M = 2.00$), $p = .001$. Finally, participants who reported that their parents had negative attitudes ($M = 1.96$) were more likely to say they would obey parents than those who described their parents as having positive attitudes ($M = 2.00$), $p = .001$. Thus, participants who described their parents as having negative attitudes said, on the one hand, that they were not influenced at all by their parents' messages. On the other hand, they were the ones who were more likely to use subversion to get around parents and to obey parents when compared to those who perceived their parents to have positive racial attitudes.

Discussion

The novel findings of this study were that adolescents' intergroup contact and parental racial attitudes were significantly associated with their cross-race relationships and experiences, and these associations differed according to the type of relationship. Four dimensions were examined regarding cross-race relationships, and these were:

1. cross-race relationship experiences;
2. the role of intimacy in these relationships;
3. the messages parents conveyed about these relationships; and
4. the extent to which adolescents were consistent or inconsistent with parental viewpoints about cross-race relationships.

Our findings are discussed in the following section.

Development of cross-race relationships
Based on previous research, which has demonstrated that intergroup contact is associated with closer feelings toward outgroup members (Fishbein, 1996; Tropp & Provenost, 2008), we tested our expectation that intergroup contact would be associated with the development

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of intimacy in cross-race relationships. This expectation stemmed from Social Cognitive Domain theory, which has demonstrated that individuals evaluate intergroup relationships differently depending on the level of intimacy (Crystal et al., 2008). Indeed, the results showed that high intergroup contact was associated with intimacy in cross-race friendships and experiences with cross-race dating. These associations were not found in relation to perceptions of parents' racial attitudes, demonstrating that intergroup contact rather than perceptions of parents' attitudes were likely to have facilitated the development of these relationships.

Intimacy in cross-race relationships

For those participants who chose to limit intimacy within their cross-race relationships, we found that they justified these decisions differently according to the type of relationship, as well as their perceptions of their parents' racial attitudes. The role of parental attitudes is important, and past research from the Social Cognitive Domain model has shown that adolescents view parental attitudes from personal and conventional perspectives, which often involves challenging as well as adopting these attitudes (Smetana & Turiel, 2003).

Supporting the strong role of parental attitudes regarding cross-race relationships, we found that parental discomfort was mentioned by participants most often, overall, as the reason they did not bring cross-race dates home. Past research on adult decisions about intimacy in cross-race relationships has shown that discomfort and unease become more overt and grow as levels of intimacy increase (Kennedy, 2003). Our findings confirm this trend by demonstrating that the more intimate dating relationship led to higher reports of parental discomfort without parents' racial attitudes or intergroup contact being taken into consideration.

While we expected intergroup contact to be associated with intimacy decisions in adolescents' cross-race relationships, we did not expect the association to be revealed for participants with high intergroup contact. Participants reporting high intergroup contact were more likely than those with low intergroup contact to

name parents as the reason they did not bring cross-race dates home. One possible explanation might be to do with the fact that those individuals reporting high intergroup contact would have more opportunity and prospects for dating outside of their race. Therefore, if, overall, parents were perceived to be uncomfortable with cross-race dating and were the primary reason cross-race dates were not brought home, it is most likely that, by having the greater opportunity to encounter conflicts about cross-race dating, participants would also have more experience viewing and being affected by parental discomfort (Miller et al., 2004).

Parental messages

Further relationship differences were found when evaluating the messages parents conveyed to their children about their cross-race relationships. Grusec and Goodnow (1994) have demonstrated in their research that when children are confronted with threats to their autonomy by parents then they will be more likely to reject their parents' values and rebel (see also Smetana, 2006). Furthermore, the more salient the relationship is, the more likely they are to reject their parents' views. Because of the salient nature of cross-race dating relationships (Kennedy, 2003), we expected that parents would be more direct in their negative feelings toward cross-race dating compared to cross-race friendships. As expected, participants reported parental messages to be more direct in nature for cross-race dating as compared to cross-race friendships with an appeal to conventional lines of reasoning (Smetana, 2006).

When parents expressed concerns over cross-race friendships, they used an indirect approach by appealing to concerns over safety. In this way, these findings supported the results of Smetana and Daddis (2002) along with Grusec and Goodnow (1994) by showing that parents understood that friendship choices and decisions should remain within the realm of personal choice, granting autonomy to their children. By appealing to safety concerns, parents were granting their children the choice to decide whom to be friends with. The difference between the relationships was demonstrated in their mes-

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sages about cross-race dating. With greater intimacy and saliency in the relationship, parents were more direct in their messages and used stronger conventional reasoning. They were more likely to say that cross-race dating, in general, was wrong and that their specific cross-race dating relationship was a betrayal to their race, inferring that they should stay within their own race.

One possible explanation for the different treatment of the two types of relationships could be rooted in the theory of aversive racism (Devine, 1989; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004; Katz & Hass, 1988). Aversive Racism Theory states that adults who neither believe they are racist nor have prejudice feelings will instead rationalize their negative feelings about race in terms of abstract political and social issues (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). The aversive racist (Dovidio, 1999) consciously rejects prejudice and endorses fair treatment. They will not discriminate directly but will unconsciously justify negative feelings on a factor other than race (such as concerns for safety and jokes, as is the case in the present study). In this case, parents might be uncomfortable discouraging a cross-race friendship, which is essentially harmless, for fear that it would make them appear racist. Rather than focus on race as a reason, they turn to concerns with safety or make negative comments or jokes as an indirect means of discouragement. This is a safe and indirect route to take without being overtly opposed to the relationship. Dating, on the other hand, might be too salient a relationship to ignore and to push to a subconscious level.

While intergroup contact had no association with the types of messages parents conveyed to their children about cross-race relationships, it did play a role in the influence felt by participants, especially those participants who reported low intergroup contact. Thus, low intergroup contact led to less intimacy in cross-race relationships, but it also shaped the attitudes of the participants to mimic that of parents. While Grusec and Goodnow (1994) demonstrated that children are more likely to rebel when their autonomy is tested, the results here seemed to indicate that when the values expressed by parents are not challenged and there is less opportunity to see norms questioned, then adolescents will be more likely to agree with their parents even over issues about race. Further, if parents are more negative and direct about cross-race dating, and these attitudes are not challenged by a child's experiences outside of the home, they would have no reason to question their parents' authority. In essence, they would assume the decision being made is their own. Indeed, Yancey (1998) found that integrated school settings predicted the possibility of individuals dating interracially more than any other setting, apparently offering individuals the opportunity to interracially date in ways that were not present in integrated residential or religious environments. According to subjective group dynamics, seeing a behavior, a belief, or a value over and over again will cause the individual to see this as the norm (Abrams & Rutland, 2008). In this case, hearing a particular value repeatedly, and having little experience to see it challenged, might have led these particular adolescents to see nothing wrong with their parents' views and to feel that their behavior and choices were an expected outcome of who they were.

Limitations
One of the limitations of the current study was its inclusion of mostly ethnically heterogeneous schools. A more comprehensive measure of the relationship of intergroup contact and parents' racial attitudes with cross-race experiences could be analyzed with a study designed to measure attitudes in a sample of students enrolled in both ethnically homogeneous and heterogeneous schools. In addition, more nuanced measures could be applied to determine whether and how the ethnicity of the participant plays a role in perceptions of parental attitudes about cross-race dating and friendship. Interestingly, students from the same schools rated diversity in their schools differently and came from a range of ethnically diverse neighbourhoods, which supports the notion that heterogeneity of school does not necessarily translate into high quality intergroup contact (see Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003).

Nonetheless, despite the lack of extreme levels of intergroup contact, contact was found to play a key role in the development and likelihood of cross-race friendships.

In this study, adolescents were surveyed regarding their perceptions of parental attitudes. Clearly, peer relationships play an important role in the formation of intergroup attitudes (Abrams & Rutland, 2008; Killen et al., 2007), and this dimension should be included in a future study. Peer relationships have been shown to contribute both positively and negatively to intergroup attitudes. In fact, cross-race friendships can provide personal experiences that help children to counter negative stereotypes about groups. At the same time, issues of inclusion and exclusion become predominant in early adolescence, and group loyalty can hinder inclusive attitudes. The messages that peers communicate to friends about cross-race friendships is important to investigate.

In this study, adolescents' intergroup contact as well as parental messages were measured. In future research, it would be quite revealing to measure cross-race friendships through peer nomination studies in which participants identify the quality of peer relationships, and to compare these data with parental attitudes. Further, ascertaining parental attitudes would be valuable. One limitation of surveying parents is the issue of self-presentation, and the increasing pressure to appear inclusive by adulthood. An advantage of surveying adolescents' viewpoints of parental attitudes is the lack of presentational bias given that the surveys were confidential and anonymous. Yet obtaining parental attitudes remains an important goal for future research to determine the impact that parental viewpoints have on adolescent intergroup attitudes.

Conclusions

Intergroup contact is an important contributor to positive cross-race relationships. Having high intergroup contact has been shown repeatedly to be associated with positive attitudes toward other groups into adulthood. In our study, we found support for the notion that high intergroup contact was associated with higher reports of cross-race friendships and dating experiences. What does an adolescent do, however, when they experience intergroup contact in school, have plenty of cross-race friends, and are open to cross-race dating, but at home they hear messages strongly against these relationships? Our findings demonstrated that intergroup contact allowed for the opportunity of intimacy and experiences with cross-race relationships, but parents inhibited the development of intimacy within some of these relationships through their attitudes and messages.

Yet despite these messages—especially the negative messages about cross-race dating—almost all participants said that they made their own decisions and that parents should not intervene in their personal lives. Perhaps they chose not to bring cross-race dates home, as many of them reported, but they insisted that they did what they wanted despite their parents' disapproval. In fact, intergroup contact appeared to act as a buffer toward parents' messages. When intergroup contact was high, participants reported that they were not influenced by parental messages and still insisted that they made their own choices. Those children who did not have the benefit of intergroup contact, or perceived themselves to be low on contact, appeared to be the most vulnerable to their parents' negative messages.

We concluded that intergroup contact helps to establish cross-race relationships, opening up individuals to possibilities with other races. Some parents do send their children negative messages, especially toward more intimate cross-race relationships. However, the influential effect on adolescents' decision-making appears to only be effective on those who do not have the opportunity for, or who have not opened themselves up to, cross-race relationships outside of the home. Thus, this study demonstrated that intergroup contact in school settings is significantly related to adolescents' attitudes about cross-race relationships. Given that cross-race relationships decline with age (Aboud et al., 2003) but appear to be a significant predictor for

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prejudice reduction (Tropp & Prenovost, 2008), future research is needed to understand the complex relationship between parental attitudes and adolescent decision-making about cross-race relationships.

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