Peer and Parental Sources of Influence Regarding Interracial and Same-Race Peer Encounters

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Abstract

This study investigated the socializing influence of peers and parents in interracial encounters by disentangling how children and adolescents consider peer and parent messages when predicting interracial and same-race inclusion. Black and White children (9-14 years old, *N* = 246) predicted the likelihood of interracial and same-race peer inclusion when peer and parent sources of influence were present and provided justifications for their expectations. Results revealed that, while participants predicted inclusion would be less likely when parent sources of influence were present than when peer sources of influence were present, the racial composition of the encounter and the race of the participant mattered only in contexts with peer sources of influence. Participants' reasoning about the benefits of inclusion and social pressure also differed when parent or peer sources were present. This study informs efforts to improve the quality of interracial peer interactions and programs designed to promote positive intergroup peer relationships.

Key words: racial bias, interracial friendships, peer relationships, parent influences, social exclusion

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Throughout child development, parents and peers have distinct and significant influences on children's attitudes about interracial peer interactions and the emergence of bias and prejudice (Degner & Dalege, 2013; Hughes et al., 2006; Nesdale, 2004; Pahlke et al., 2012; Seaton et al., 2012). While it is clear that parents are significant socializing influences on children's early conceptions of their own race and interracial attitudes (Brown, 2017; Hughes et al., 2006; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009), recent research has emphasized the importance of peer messages on developing interracial attitudes, friendships, and biases during middle childhood and adolescence (Brown, 2017; Burkholder, D'Esterre, et al., 2019; Levy et al., 2016).

We propose that peers are complex socializing agents. They are both perpetrators and victims of prejudice, and communicate (sometimes conflicting) messages about group loyalty, affiliation, and perceptions of fairness in interracial contexts (Burkholder, D'Esterre, et al., 2019; McGuire et al., 2015). Ultimately, when making decisions about whether and how to interact with interracial peers, children and adolescents must weigh their own desires and biases with potentially competing interests of both peers and parents. It is thus important to examine the process by which children are socialized about interracial encounters by disentangling the influence of peer and parent messages on children's and adolescents' predictions for interracial inclusion.

Peer Influence in Interracial Encounters

Beginning in middle childhood, children increasingly prioritize loyalty to peer social groups (Abrams & Rutland, 2008) and seek autonomy from parents (Smetana, 2011). Thus, peers are particularly influential on children's and adolescents' decisions about interracial

encounters, especially as many peer interactions occur in environments with some racial diversity (e.g., schools, recreational activities, public spaces) (Rutland & Killen, 2015). While positive interracial contact and friendships decrease prejudice and bias (Bagci et al., 2017; Levy et al., 2016), negative or biased peer group norms may encourage discrimination and discourage speaking out against prejudicial attitudes (McGuire et al., 2015; Mulvey et al., 2016). Navigating peer sources of influence may be difficult for many children as they weigh potentially conflicting messages from racial ingroup and outgroup members while simultaneously considering the importance of fitting in (Crosnoe, 2011) and avoiding the consequences of noncompliance with peer group norms (Abrams & Rutland, 2008; Mulvey et al., 2016).

Negative messages from peers, such as negative racial stereotypes, expressions of discomfort, or direct and indirect preferences for exclusion, can exacerbate prejudicial attitudes, impact ethnic-racial identity, and discourage interracial contact (Burkholder, D'Esterre et al., 2019; Del Toro et al., 2021). This may especially be the case for White children who are not often victims of racial discrimination and sometimes have difficulty recognizing their own biases and instances of prejudice among others (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Brown, 2017). For example, in a study with 9-15 year old children, White children were less likely than their Black peers to recognize exclusion as motivated by race when interracial exclusion was justified through racially ambiguous excuses, such as general lack of comfort or peer pressure (Killen et al., 2007). Black children and adolescents were also more likely to expect interracial exclusion to occur than did their White peers (Killen et al., 2007). The disparity in recognition of interracial exclusion may be due, in part, to Black children's personal experiences with racial discrimination from peers (Rivas-Drake et al., 2009). Having direct, personal experience with interracial exclusion and discrimination may highlight the wrongfulness of the act when children

observe it happening to others (Killen et al., 2007). Therefore, negative messages from peers about interracial encounters may be particularly impactful on White children's interracial attitudes.

Even when White children recognize and personally disagree with instances of racial discrimination, it may not be enough to overcome negative peer messages and group norms. Fear of ostracization may decrease children's desire to intervene when witnessing discrimination. For example, White adolescents recognize that in some contexts, standing up against racial discrimination may increase the likelihood of being rejected from the peer group, thus decreasing their desire to take action (Mulvey et al., 2016). Biased peer group norms, regardless of the race of the peer group, also dampen children's preference for interracial contact and friendships (Hitti & Killen, 2015). For example, there is evidence that increased prejudice and expectations for interracial exclusion occur both when outgroup peers of color express exclusive norms (Hitti & Killen, 2015) and when ingroup (White) peers express exclusive norms (Nesdale et al., 2005). Exclusive peer messages may even work against inclusive messages from authority figures (e.g., teachers) that encourage interracial contact (McGuire et al., 2015). Children and adolescents often find it difficult to reject racial discrimination, especially in the presence of peers or when receiving mixed messages from multiple peers or from peers and other influences.

Although negative messages from peers may exacerbate racial biases, positive messages also influence children's and adolescents' interracial attitudes and racial/ethnic socialization (Kende et al., 2021). These influences often occur through interracial friendships, as friends of other races can have a particularly positive impact on children's interracial attitudes and psychological wellbeing. For White children who are in the racial status majority across various cultural contexts, initiating and maintaining cross-race friendships increases positive interracial

attitudes and expectations for social interactions, thereby reducing prejudicial attitudes and biases (Feddes et al., 2009; McGlothlin & Killen, 2006; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Wilson & Rodkin, 2011). Interracial friendships also influence children's perceptions of interracial encounters within their social environments (Aboud et al., 2003; Crystal et al., 2008). For example, White adolescents with higher levels of interracial contact were more likely to perceive interracial peer exclusion as occurring due to racial bias than were White adolescents with lower levels of interracial contact (Park et al., 2019).

While some research suggests that interracial friendships particularly benefit children from majority status racial groups (Dixon et al., 2012), there is burgeoning evidence that interracial friendships also benefit children from minority status racial groups (Bagci et al., 2017; Elenbaas et al., 2020; Ruck et al., 2014). For South Asian children living in the United Kingdom, having even one high quality friendship with a White peer (i.e., member of the racial majority) may positively influence psychological wellbeing (Bagci et al., 2017), possibly due to increased feelings of social belonging within the peer context. Children from both majority and minority status racial groups also use interracial friendships to voice viewpoints and challenge inequalities and racial biases (Elenbaas et al., 2020). Thus, while more research is needed on this topic, it is clear that high quality cross-race friendships are beneficial, in different ways, for both White children and adolescents and youth of color.

While peers are both positive and negative sources of influence about interracial contact and attitudes, these messages may differentially impact children from different racial backgrounds. In particular, negative messages from peers may be more influential on White children's behavior than for Black children, as White children are less able to identify forms of discrimination and may be more susceptible to messages from peers that discourage interracial

contact. It is important for research to directly investigate how peers influence expectations for interracial inclusion, and to include perspectives from both White youth and youth of color.

Parental Influence in Interracial Encounters

In addition to peer sources of influence, parents remain important racial socializing agents for children and adolescents (Hughes et al., 2016; Scott et al., 2019). There is evidence that direct and indirect messages from parents in interracial contexts may differentially influence children's understanding of interracial peer interactions and evaluations of racial bias. For example, general references to parental discomfort as justification for interracial exclusion was seen as less wrong by White children than youth of color, which suggests that youth of color may be more averse to subtle forms of racial bias and prejudice than their White counterparts (Killen et al., 2007).

Children also receive different types of parental messages regarding racial bias and discrimination (Brown, 2017; Hughes et al., 2006; Scott et al., 2019; Williams & Banerjee, 2021). For example, Black parents frequently address race and racism with their children early in development, which can act as a protective factor by promoting resilience in the context of social exclusion and victimization (Neblett et al., 2010; Sellers et al., 2003; Yip & Douglass, 2011). Black parents use multiple strategies to prepare their children for experiences with bias, such as encouraging compliance due to safety concerns or avoiding behaving in ways that could endanger them to racial targeting, and cater these strategies to specific situations (Scott et al., 2019). These conversations are associated with increased racial identity and better mental health and bolster social and academic outcomes for youth of color (Huguley et al., 2019).

Conversely, for many White parents in the United States, discussions of race may be avoided altogether, suggesting to their children that these discussions are not acceptable (Hughes

et al., 2016). This is often referred to as a colorblind perspective, which avoids discussing race with children due to the belief that addressing race and bias perpetuates prejudice (Pahlke et al., 2012). Egalitarian strategies, which emphasize that all racial groups are equal, may be associated with positive outcomes for both White and youth of color (Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020). While research on this strategy is still burgeoning (Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020), it may be the case that the use of colorblind and egalitarian strategies vary among White families, and these strategies may also differ in use on average between White and Black families. Regardless, common socialization strategies utilized by parents (e.g., emphasizing protection from bias and discrimination, emphasizing a colorblind lens) may both lead to direct and indirect messages that discourage interracial contact. Thus, it is important that researchers consider how race could potentially impact the extent to which parental messages influence children and adolescents' interracial interactions.

It is certainly clear that children's racial attitudes stem, in part, from both parents and peers, encouraging a direct comparison of how children consider both sources when making decisions about interracial peer encounters. While both parents and peers can serve as positive or negative sources of influence, peers become increasingly valued social partners across this developmental timeframe. Investigating how children consider both parent and peer sources of influence in interracial peer encounters is central to understanding when children may or may not view exclusion as permissible.

Interracial Inclusion and Exclusion

Biases and stereotypes affect children's interactions with members of other races (Aboud et al., 2003; Burkholder, D'Esterre et al., 2019; Killen et al., 2013; Nesdale, 2004; Tropp et al., 2016). Children often prefer to include members of their racial ingroup and consequently exclude

members of racial outgroups (Abrams et al., 2009; Burkholder, Sims et al., 2019; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998; Killen & Rutland, 2011; Møller & Tenenbaum, 2011).

Many children and adolescents view overt interracial exclusion as wrong and unfair, citing concerns for equal treatment and the well-being of others (Killen et al., 2007; Ruck & Tenenbaum, 2014). However, children who endorse interracial exclusion often justify their discriminatory behavior by citing stereotypes, biases, and prejudices about racial outgroup members (Horn, 2006; Killen et al., 2014), or by citing social pressure or fear of retribution from other ingroup members, such as peers, parents, or authority figures (Killen et al., 2007; Mulvey et al., 2016). Thus, decisions to include or exclude based on race are impacted by children's priorities for fairness as well as biases about race and desires to adhere to social norms.

Expectations for interracial inclusion and exclusion have been well documented among children from different ethnic and racial backgrounds (Hitti & Killen, 2015; McGlothlin & Killen, 2006; Møller & Tenenbaum, 2011; Shutts et al., 2013). As early as four years old, White children expect others to prefer same-race friendships over interracial friendships, and this effect is particularly strong for those who attend racially homogenous schools (McGlothlin & Killen, 2006; Shutts et al., 2013). Further, adolescents who hold stereotypes about youth of color have lower expectations for interracial inclusion, compared to those who do not hold stereotypes (Hitti & Killen, 2015). There is evidence that children can have biases from very early on and that these biases and negative expectations extend well into childhood.

Developmental psychologists have highlighted the importance of including perspectives from both White children and youth of color to capture a more comprehensive understanding of children's social reasoning and behavior (Burkholder, D'Esterre et al., 2019; Crystal et al., 2008; Hitti et al., 2017; Roberts et al., 2017; Thijs, 2017). Studies that have included diverse samples

have revealed unique perspectives based on children's racial backgrounds in their evaluations and reasoning about interracial exclusion (Killen et al., 2007; Thijs, 2017). Specifically, although White children and youth of color may reject interracial exclusion overall, youth of color are more likely to consider the role of discrimination and bias during instances of interracial exclusion (Killen et al., 2007; Thijs, 2017). Additionally, White children are less likely to recognize that race may contribute to exclusion in ambiguous contexts where racial prejudice is not explicit (Killen et al., 2007). It is therefore important to include perspectives from multiple racial groups with differing levels of status in order to capture nuances in expectations about interracial inclusion and exclusion.

Children must consider various factors during interracial encounters, such as their own desires, the fairness and welfare of those involved, and societal pressures (both inclusive and exclusive) from parents and peers. However, research on interracial inclusion and exclusion has not yet compared the extent to which these sources of influence impact children's and adolescents' evaluations and decisions in interracial peer encounters. Further, because racial majority and minority status children and adolescents often interpret instances of interracial exclusion differently, it is imperative that research examines both racial majority and minority status perspectives.

In many cases, children and adolescents evaluate explicit race-based exclusion as wrong and unfair (Killen et al., 2013; Mulvey et al., 2016). However, they may simultaneously expect that others will be more likely to include a peer of the same race than of a different race (Hitti & Killen, 2015; Møller & Tenenbaum, 2011). Since children may be averse to responding negatively, asking participants to predict interracial peer *inclusion* provides a more neutral framing that allows them to evaluate the likelihood of whether an individual would be included

or accepted into a peer group, rather than blatantly asking if participants would like to *exclude* based on race (Burkholder, Sims et al., 2019). Peer inclusion decisions may be particularly influenced by two sources of socializing agents, peers and parents (Abrams & Rutland, 2008; Hughes et al., 2006; Killen et al., 2007). In the current study, we investigate the intersection of two sources of influence, parents and peers, on White and Black children's and adolescents' predictions of interracial peer inclusion.

Present Study

The present study was an empirical investigation of how Black and White children and adolescents weigh sources of peer and parental influence when making predictions for peer inclusion in interracial contexts as compared to same-race contexts. Yet, there is a paucity of research informing the extent to which parent and peer sources influence children's expectations for peer inclusion (Nesdale, 2004; Sinclair et al., 2005). Thus, the main measures for this study were 1) children's and adolescents' predictions of interracial inclusion compared to same-race inclusion, and 2) participants' justifications for their responses.

To investigate this research question, this study included Black and White children and adolescents between the ages of 9 and 14 years. This specific sample was selected because in the United States there is a long history of discrimination and prejudice against Black individuals, often perpetuated by the White racial majority status group. Additionally, as it is typical for Black and White children from the area of data collection to have significant interracial contact, it is especially important to study children's navigation of interracial encounters and whether their decisions are influenced by socializing agents.

During this age range, children and adolescents are aware of group factors and intergroup dynamics, which they subsequently incorporate into their peer evaluations and social

decisions (Abrams & Rutland, 2008; Recchia et al., 2012). While friendships generally become more stable by early adolescence, interracial friendships decline dramatically by this period (Aboud et al., 2003; Hallinan & Teixeira, 1987). Additionally, as children reach late childhood and adolescence, topics of race become more common within households, especially for Black youth (Brown, 2017). Thus, this developmental timeframe is particularly relevant for addressing questions about the influence of parents and peers on interracial peer inclusion.

We investigated several factors that may influence children's and adolescents' predictions of peer inclusion, including the relationship status of individuals influencing the decisions (parents, peers), the type of racial composition of the peer encounter (interracial, same-race), and participants' own race.

Theory and Hypotheses

Research design and hypotheses were motivated by the social reasoning developmental (SRD) model (Rutland & Killen, 2015), which draws from social identity theory (Nesdale, 2008) for hypotheses regarding group identity and social domain theory (Turiel, 2002) for hypotheses regarding decisions in context and different forms of social reasoning. The SRD perspective postulates that children weigh both moral principles and group norms when making decisions in intergroup contexts. While some social conventional norms aid in making groups work well and promote positive interpersonal interactions (Smetana et al., 2012), biased or racially exclusive norms can result in children's use of prejudicial reasoning (Rutland & Killen, 2017). Conversely, positive intergroup dynamics can promote children's use of more inclusive and moral reasoning. Thus, the SRD perspective provides a framework to understand how children's decisions are impacted by the nature of the intergroup setting, adherence to fairness and group norms, and

individual differences that impede or advance children's capacity to hold positive outgroup attitudes.

Regarding children's predictions of inclusion, we expected that (H1) regardless of the racial composition of the peer encounter (same-race or interracial), participants would be less likely to predict inclusion when receiving a negative message from a parent than a peer. Parents maintain positions of authority in children's lives, and children may reason that ignoring parental desires is less acceptable than ignoring a negative message from a peer (Killen et al., 2007; Umaña Taylor & Hill, 2020). We also predicted that (H2), across conditions when parent and peer sources of influence were present, participants would be more likely to expect inclusion to occur between peers of the same race than those of different races, as negative messages about inclusion in interracial contexts will generate greater adherence to norms and preferences of the racial ingroup than will negative messages in same-race contexts (Rutland & Killen, 2015). Finally, we predicted that (H3), when peer sources of influence were present, White participants would be less likely to expect interracial inclusion to occur than Black participants. While peers can be both positive (Bagci et al., 2017; Park et al., 2019) and negative (Mulvey et al., 2016; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009) sources of influence for Black and White children's interracial attitudes, White children are less likely to acknowledge biases and are more likely to accept reasons for race-based exclusion than Black children (Brown, 2017; Killen et al., 2007; Mulvey et al., 2016) and thus, may be more susceptible to negative peer influences about interracial contact.

Regarding children's reasoning about their predictions of inclusion, we expected that (H4) participants who expected inclusion to occur would be more likely to reason about the benefits of including the peer, and participants who did not expect inclusion to occur would be

more likely to reason about social pressure from the source of influence (peers or parents) (Rutland & Killen, 2015). We also expected that (H5) participants would be more likely to reference social pressure and less likely to reference the benefits of inclusion when parent sources of influence were present than when peer sources of influence were present, due to children's expectations about parents' authority (Killen et al., 2007).

Method

Participants

Participants (N = 246; n_{males} = 108, $n_{females}$ = 138) included 9- to 14-year-olds from middle income backgrounds in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Participants were recruited from suburban counties in a large metropolitan area, through private schools and summer camps. While individual socioeconomic status information was not collected due to adolescent assent procedures (see Procedure), participants were recruited from areas serving families of middle-income backgrounds. Approximately half of participants self-identified as African American or Black (n = 115, M_{age} = 11.98 years, SD = 1.86 years) while the rest identified as European American or White (n = 131, M_{age} = 11.81 years, SD = 1.91 years). An a priori power analysis conducted in G*Power (Faul et al., 2009) determined that a sample size of 240 participants would be required to detect an effect size of 0.20, based on previous research similar to this study (e.g., Nesdale & Lawson, 2011).

Procedure

Institutional Review Board approval and parental consent (for 9- to 12-year-olds) and adolescent assent (for 13- to 14-year-olds) were obtained prior to participation and participants received a small token of appreciation (e.g., a pencil or an eraser) for participation. Children and adolescents participated in individual and small group settings by filling out self-paced surveys,

which took approximately 20-25 minutes to complete. Participants were informed that there were no right or wrong answers and that their responses were anonymous and confidential. Trained research assistants provided instructions and were present to provide additional clarification to participants as needed throughout the survey administration.

Design and Measures

The design was a 3 (Composition of the Encounter: White includes Black vs. Black includes White vs. Same Race) × 2 (Participant Race: Black vs. White) × 2 (Participant Age: Children vs. Adolescents) × 2 (Source of Influence: Parent vs. Peer) ANOVA with repeated measures on the last factor. Children and adolescents were given brightly illustrated survey packets and read vignettes describing a peer encounter in which parents or other peers were also present. The race of the characters was depicted visually using illustrations in color (see Figure 1). To control for potential confounds with gender preferences, peer characters were gender-matched to the participant and parent characters were described without gender pronouns (e.g., “one parent”, “other parent”).

Participants read two vignettes (adapted from Killen et al., 2007) in which a character considered whether or not to include a novel peer. In order to model the complex way in which children receive messages about others in their daily lives, each vignette included conflicting positive and negative messages about the novel peer. Within subjects, the two vignettes were similar in content but varied by the sources of influence, where in one vignette, both statements were made by peers and in the other vignette, both statements were made by parents.

Example of vignette with peer sources of influence:

Alex is outside at recess and shouts at the top of his lungs. Marcus, Leland and Thomas are a group of friends who heard him from the other side of the field. Marcus overhears **his friends** talking:

Leland says: "Did you hear Alex? He is so loud and angry!"

Thomas says: "No, he's outside and just likes to have fun!"

Later, in the lunchroom, Marcus is sitting with his friends and sees **Alex** walking by, looking for a place to sit. There is room at their table.

Example of vignette with parent sources of influence:

Andre, a boy from the neighborhood, is outside at the park and shouts at the top of his lungs. Mike happens to be playing near his parents. They all heard Andre from the other side of the playground. Mike overhears **his parents** talking:

One parent says: "Did you hear Andre? He is so loud and angry!"

His other parent says: "No, he's outside and just likes to have fun!"

Later, Mike sees **Andre**. Mike'**s** birthday is coming up and there is room for more people to come.

Between-subjects, participants read two vignettes (varying parent and peer sources present) that differed in the racial composition of the characters: (1) interracial inclusion in which a White character decides whether to include a Black peer, (2) interracial inclusion in which a Black character decides whether to include a White peer, or (3) same-race inclusion, where all characters were matched to the participant's race. The between-subjects conditions were randomly distributed so that participants viewed two vignettes that included one same-race and one interracial composition (counterbalanced), or two vignettes with interracial compositions.

It was speculated that participants might treat a child who is "loud" differently if the child is depicted as Black or White, and if the encounter occurs within a same-race or interracial peer dyadic context. Prior research has shown that stereotypes in the United States associate aggression and anger with Black individuals more so than White individuals (Halberstadt et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2000). In order to create a more nuanced context, we chose to use the adjective "loud" given that it could be interpreted as aggressive/angry (source of influence 1) or assertive/playful (source of influence 2) as depicted by the peers or parents. This design allowed for the investigation of same-race and interracial composition effects, while also testing and controlling for the effects of participant racial group membership.

Prediction of Inclusion. Following each vignette, participants made predictions about whether the character would include the novel peer in a social activity (e.g., sitting together at lunch in the context including peer sources of influence, inviting them to a party in the context including parent sources of influence). Participants responded to the following written prompt, "How likely is it that [character] will invite [peer] to [activity]?" Responses were provided on a scale ranging from 1 (*not likely at all*) to 6 (*really likely*).

Justifications for Responses. Following children and adolescents' predictions of inclusion, justifications for responses were used to examine variance in reasoning by asking participants, "*Why is it that likely/unlikely?*". The open-ended responses were coded into three primary reasoning categories established in the SRD model: (1) *Benefits of Inclusion or Wrongfulness of Exclusion* - emphasis on moral considerations of fairness, equal treatment, and concern for others' welfare (e.g., "He doesn't know him yet, so he shouldn't exclude him just because of his skin color"; "She should invite her. Otherwise, her feelings will be hurt"), (2) *Social Pressure* – emphasis on group concerns, such as pressure from parents or peers (e.g., "It's

not likely because she would be going against her friends."), and (3) *Trait Attributions* – emphasis on the negative trait attributions provided by the source of influence (e.g., "because he's probably scared he'll scream at him."). An additional category was created for responses that did not clearly explain "why" participants gave their evaluation: (4) *Other/Uncodable* (e.g., "Because I like them better").

Open-ended responses could include up to two codes if they included two separate clauses that contained different codable justifications (e.g., if a two-clause response referenced both concerns about fairness and concerns about group functioning). Proportional data were used in the analyses for the reasoning data. Justifications were coded as 1 = full use of the category, .5 = partial use (if two codes were allocated), 0 = no use of the category (see Posada & Wainryb, 2008, for a full explanation of this data analytic approach). Three research assistants conducted the coding and were blind to the hypotheses of the study. Coders were trained on the coding scheme and interrater reliability was conducted on a subset of justifications in order to test for coder agreement. Among the 29% of responses (n = 72) analyzed for reliability, interrater reliability was achieved (Cohen's κ = .85).

Results

Preliminary analyses confirmed that children's predictions and reasoning did not differ significantly by gender, ps > .05, thus gender was dropped from subsequent analyses.

Prediction of Inclusion. We conducted a 3 (Composition of the Encounter: White includes Black vs. Black includes White vs. Same Race) × 2 (Participant Race: Black vs. White) × 2 (Participant Age: Children vs. Adolescents) × 2 (Source of Influence: Parent vs. Peer) ANOVA with repeated measures on the last factor.

Consistent with our hypothesis (H1) that regardless of the racial composition of the encounter, participants would be less likely to expect inclusion when receiving a negative message from a parent than a peer, a main effect for source of influence was found, $F(1, 234) = 18.80$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$. Overall, participants expected inclusion to be less likely when parental sources of influence were present ($M_{Parent} = 3.59$, $SD_{Parent} = 1.28$) than when peer sources of influence were present ($M_{Peer} = 4.01$, $SD_{Peer} = 1.18$).

Corresponding with our hypotheses (H2) that participants' inclusion predictions in interracial encounters would be lower than in same race encounters, and (H3) White participants would be less likely to expect interracial inclusion than Black participants, we found that when *peer* sources of influence were present, there was a significant interaction between composition of the encounter, participant race, and source of influence, $F(2, 234) = 12.27$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$.

As shown in Figure 2, post hoc Bonferroni analyses revealed that when predicting the likelihood of inclusion when *peer* sources of influence were present, White participants ($M = 3.62$) thought inclusion was less likely than did Black participants ($M = 4.57$) in the interracial encounter where a White character decided whether to include a Black peer, $p < .001$, but not in the interracial encounter where a Black character decided whether to include a White peer ($M_W = 3.68$, $M_B = 3.69$; $p = .788$). White participants ($M = 4.51$) also thought same-race inclusion was more likely than did Black children ($M = 3.81$) $p = .011$.

Moreover, White participants expected that inclusion was more likely in same-race encounters ($M = 3.81$) than an interracial encounter where a White character decided whether to include a Black peer ($M = 3.62$) $p = .001$, and only marginally more likely than an interracial encounter where a Black character decided whether to include a White peer ($M = 3.69$) $p = .056$.

Black participants, on the other hand, expected inclusion to be more likely in the interracial encounter where a White character decided whether to include a Black peer (M = 4.57) than in the interracial encounter where a Black character decided whether to include a White peer (M = 3.68) p = .021, or when the encounter included same-race characters (M = 3.81) p = .028.

Participant race and the racial composition of the encounter did not significantly predict expectations of inclusion when *parent* sources were present, ps > .05.

Thus, overall children and adolescents expected inclusion to be less likely when parent sources of influence were present than when peer sources of influence were present; however, both the race of the participant and the racial composition of the peer encounter impacted predictions under peer sources of influence. White children and adolescents expected same-race inclusion to be more likely than interracial inclusion in peer contexts, while Black participants were more optimistic about interracial inclusion where a member of their racial ingroup might be included.

Participant Reasoning. To test our hypothesis (H4) that participants who expected inclusion to occur would be more likely to reason about the benefits of including the peer, and participants who expected inclusion to be unlikely would be more likely to reason about social pressure from the source of influence (peers or parents), we conducted 3 (Composition of the Encounter: White includes Black vs. Black includes White vs. Same Race) × 2 (Participant Race: Black vs. White) × 2 (Participant Age: Children vs. Adolescents) × 2 (Inclusion Prediction: Unlikely vs. Likely) × 3 (Reasoning: Wrongfulness of Exclusion vs. Social Pressure vs. Trait Attribution) ANOVAs with repeated measures on the last factor separately for parent and peer

sources of influence. Table 1 reports the proportions of justification responses for parent and peer sources of influence.

Parent sources of influence. There was a main effect of reasoning when parental sources of influence were present, $F(2, 442) = 67.82$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .24$. Post hoc Bonferroni analyses revealed that overall a higher proportion of participants reasoned about social pressure from parent sources than benefits of inclusion, $p < .001$, or references to trait attributions about the target peer, $p < .001$.

There were also 3 significant interactions. First, there was a significant interaction between inclusion prediction and reasoning, $F(4, 442) = 4.63$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. Post hoc Bonferroni analyses revealed that participants who thought inclusion was *likely* reasoned more about the benefits of inclusion than did those who thought it was unlikely, while those who thought inclusion was *unlikely* reasoned more about social pressure from parent sources than those who thought inclusion was likely, ps $< .001$.

Second, there was a significant interaction between participant race and reasoning, $F(2, 442) = 3.85$, $p = .022$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Post hoc Bonferroni analyses revealed that a higher proportion of Black participants than White participants reasoned about the benefits of inclusion, $p = .020$, and a marginally higher proportion of White participants than Black participants reasoned about social pressure from parents ($p = .051$).

Third, there was a significant interaction between composition of the encounter and reasoning, $F(4, 442) = 4.63$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. Post hoc Bonferroni analyses revealed that a higher proportion of participants reasoned about the benefits of inclusion when a Black character decided whether to include a White peer than in either other racial composition encounter (ps $< .01$). A higher proportion of participants reasoned about social pressure from parents when a

White character decided whether to include a Black peer than when a Black character decided whether to include a White peer, $p = .013$.

Peer sources of influence. There was a main effect of reasoning when peer sources of influence were present, $F(2, 442) = 20.41$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$. Post hoc Bonferroni analyses revealed that overall a higher proportion of children reasoned about social pressure from peer sources than about the benefits of inclusion ($p < .001$) or references to trait attributions regarding the target peer ($p < .001$).

There were also two significant interactions. First, there was a significant interaction between inclusion prediction and reasoning, $F(4, 442) = 23.07$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$. Similar to participants reasoning about parent sources, post hoc Bonferroni analyses revealed that a higher proportion of participants who thought inclusion was *likely* reasoned about the benefits of inclusion than did those who thought it was unlikely ($p < .001$). Further, participants who thought inclusion was *unlikely* made more references to peer pressure ($p = .002$) and the traits of the target peer ($p < .001$) than those who thought it was likely.

Second, there was a significant interaction between composition of the encounter and reasoning, $F(4, 442) = 2.76$, $p = .027$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Post hoc Bonferroni analyses revealed that participants referenced trait attributions more when Black characters were deciding whether to include a White peer than in the encounters featuring the other interracial ($p = .017$) or same race ($p = .032$) compositions.

Reasoning across sources of influence. To test our hypothesis (H5) that reasoning would differ when parent or peer sources of influence were present, 3 (Composition of the Encounter: White includes Black vs. Black includes White vs. Same Race) × 2 (Participant Race: Black vs. White) × 2 (Participant Age: Children vs.A) × 3 (Source of Influence: Parent vs. Peer) repeated

measures ANOVAs were conducted separately for each reasoning type. As shown in Table 1, the analysis of the benefits of inclusion revealed a main effect of source of influence indicating that participants referenced the benefits of inclusion significantly more when peer sources of influence were present than when parent sources of influence were present, $F(1, 232) = 7.14$, $p = .008$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. Additionally, there was a significant interaction between source of influence and participant race, $F(1, 232) = 7.14$, $p = .026$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Post hoc Bonferroni analyses revealed that this main effect was driven primarily by White participants, who referenced the benefits of inclusion significantly more when peer sources of influence were present than when parent sources of influence were present.

The analysis of reasoning about social pressure revealed that participants referenced pressure more when parent sources of influence were present than when peer sources of influence were present, $F(1, 232) = 7.21$, $p = .008$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. There were no significant interactions between sources of influences and other independent variables on reasoning about social pressure, ps > .05, and there were no significant differences between sources of influence and references to trait attributions, $p = .958$.

Discussion

Parents and peers provide socializing messages about when interracial and same-race peer inclusion is encouraged or discouraged (Nesdale et al., 2005; Scott et al., 2019). Children and adolescents' interpretations of these messages then influence their intergroup interactions and relationships (Brown, 2017; Hughes, 2003). Given that extensive research has revealed the significant and positive effects that interracial friendships have for reducing prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), it is imperative to better understand how children and adolescents both interpret and distinguish messages from parents and peers about intergroup relationships. Few studies

have systematically tested the relative impact of peer and parent sources of influence on children's predictions about interracial and same-race inclusion.

This study revealed three central findings. First, overall, participants predicted that inclusion would be less likely when parent sources of influence were present than when peer sources of influence were present. Second, the racial composition of the encounter and the race of the participant impacted predictions of inclusion only in contexts with peer sources of influence, not in contexts with parent sources of influence. Third, participants' reasoning about the benefits of inclusion and social pressure differed when parent or peer sources were present.

A novel aspect of this study was the direct comparison of peer and parental sources of influence on children's inclusion decisions in interracial and same-race contexts. Confirming our hypothesis, children and adolescents expected inclusion to be less likely when the peer encounter included parent sources of influence than when it included peer sources of influence. Research on parent socialization has highlighted the importance of parent messages about interracial attitudes and relationships (Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Hughes, 2003; Pahlke et al., 2012; Scott et al., 2019), and the authority status of parents may discourage acting against a negative message from a parent. The parental messages about inclusion in this study were subtle, yet even this small manipulation was enough to impact participants' expectations for inclusion. Thus, it is important to understand the array of messages that parents communicate to their children (directly and indirectly) about friendships, both same-race and interracial.

Peer contexts may be more promising areas of intervention for promoting inclusivity, especially if some peers support inclusion (McGuire et al., 2015; Nesdale et al., 2005) or children have positive experiences of interracial contact (Park et al., 2019). Peer messages are powerful sources of influence on children's friendship choices, but consistent with our

expectations, encounters that included peer messages were viewed by participants as more likely to result in inclusion than encounters than included parental messages. This suggests that peers may be potential mechanisms for fostering inclusive attitudes towards others, and research on how peer messages are conveyed warrants further examination.

There was a significant interaction between participants' race and the racial composition of the peer encounter for contexts that included peer sources of influence but not for contexts that included parental sources of influence, thus partially confirming our hypotheses. When confronted with negative messages from a peer, White participants expected that interracial inclusion would be less likely than same-race inclusion, and they also predicted it would be less likely than did Black participants. This finding complements previous work suggesting that White children view peer pressure as a more acceptable excuse for interracial exclusion than do children of color (Killen et al., 2007). When confronted with ambiguous reasons to justify interracial exclusion (such as general discomfort), White children viewed exclusion as more acceptable than minority racial status participants, and were less likely to reference possible underlying prejudice (Killen et al., 2007). Additionally, White children, with age, become less motivated to stand up to instances of racial bias, citing concerns for personal peer rejection (Mulvey et al., 2016). It is important for future research to continue to study the impact of peer pressure on children's interracial inclusion and exclusion decisions, as this may be a particular avenue to target change.

Unexpectedly, Black participants were more optimistic about interracial inclusion when a White character had to decide whom to include than when a member of their own racial ingroup had to make the inclusion decision. That Black participants were optimistic about a White peer including a Black peer differs from previous research on Black children's evaluations of

interracial peer exclusion (e.g., Killen et al., 2007), and is an avenue for future investigation. It is possible that these expectations are protective for Black children, as not reporting expectations for bias may ameliorate the potential negative consequences of bias (Huynh & Fuligni, 2010; Kiang et al., 2006; Neblett et al., 2008; Seaton et al., 2012). Another possibility is that Black children in this sample might have a high number of interracial friendships, and their expectations reflect their experiences in daily life. Future research should include information about participants' interracial friendships as a variable in the study design to further examine how children's own experiences may impact their expectations for inclusion (Tropp et al., 2016), as well as directly target the reasons behind children's inclusion expectations.

In this study, White participants expected same-race inclusion to be more likely than interracial inclusion when peer sources of influence were present. Youth of color gain awareness of their own racial and ethnic group membership often by being the target of bias (Rivas-Drake et al., 2009), while many White children are less aware of race and the racial biases that they may hold (Brown, 2017). White children who view interracial encounters but do not reference the intergroup differences between individuals are less likely to view scenarios of overt peer, race-based exclusion as instances of racial discrimination (Apfelbaum et al., 2008). For example, White children who witness instances of race-based bullying might perceive this as a typical playground transgression among schoolmates, devoid of the racial context. Children's moral judgments about the transgression and perhaps their likelihood of intervening might vary based on these perceptions. Thus, future research should investigate the extent to which children and adolescents interpret the racial nature of parents' and peers' social inclusion and exclusion messages.

Assessments of reasoning provided a window into the motivations behind children's expectations for inclusion. When parent sources were present, participants did not differentiate between inclusion predictions for same-race and interracial peer encounters; however Black and White children provided different reasoning for their expectations of inclusion in this context. Black participants reasoned significantly more about the benefits of inclusion than did White participants and White participants were marginally more likely to reason about social pressure from parents than were Black children. Differential parent socialization between White and Black children may thus indirectly underlie the motivation behind children's decisions regarding negative parent messages.

These findings are consistent with previous work that suggests White children and adolescents have difficulty rejecting negative messages from parents about interracial exclusion (Killen et al., 2007), and that children and adolescents from different racial backgrounds may receive and interpret separate messages about race from parents (Brown, 2017). Further, this information is important for Black parents who are preparing their children for the world of potential discrimination and bias (Scott et al., 2019). Knowing the ways that social pressure might communicate biases provides a basis for helping their children to interpret and communicate peer messages in interracial contexts, and to seek strategies to foster and promote positive peer relationships. The findings provide a strong motivation to further investigate how parents convey messages about friendships during childhood and adolescence.

Confirming our hypotheses, children and adolescents reasoned about the benefits of inclusion more when they thought inclusion was likely and in contexts with peer sources of influence. Conversely, participants reasoned about social pressure from parents and peers more when they thought inclusion was unlikely and in contexts with parental sources of influence.

That children reasoned most about social pressure from peers and parents shows the overwhelming influence of messages from socializing agents and identifies a possible avenue for intervention. Hearing more positive messages about interracial contact from peers and parents may increase children's desire to participate in interracial encounters. A possible direction for further investigation would be to target messages from sources of influence as potential mechanisms for change.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study is a first step in understanding how parent and peer messages influence children's predictions of inclusion in interracial and same-race peer contexts. While investigating the likelihood of inclusion among children from different racial backgrounds reflects an important context in the United States, it is necessary to note that children's predictions may differ when considering peer encounters between other racial groups or ethnicities within the United States (e.g., interactions between Latinx and Asian American children), in other countries, or among other social groups like gender or wealth status (Grütter et al., 2021). Future research should extend this work to explore other comparisons and samples.

Additionally, it is important to note that in the current study participants made inclusion predictions involving invitations to sit together in a lunchroom and invitations to a party. It may be the case that an invitation to a party may be seen as more exclusive than an invitation to sit together at lunch. However, as there were significant differences in participants' assessments of inclusion in the lunchroom context, there is evidence that this vignette was still powerful enough to produce differences in children's predictions based on participant race and the racial composition of the peer encounter. Nevertheless, future research should include multiple

vignettes featuring different scenarios and levels of exclusivity to determine how context may influence children's predictions of interracial and same-race inclusion.

Finally, it is an important and necessary direction of future research to investigate how specific negative stereotypes about race may influence children's decisions in interracial peer encounters. In the United States, negative traits like "loudness" are often assigned to Black children (Halberstadt et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2000), which may in turn influence children's preferences for inclusion and friendship. In the current study, all characters, regardless of race, were described identically by the negative source of influence. However, future research could vary negative socialization messages based on explicit racial stereotypes or even include socialization messages based on positive racial stereotypes to further understand exactly how stereotypes impact children's navigation of interracial peer encounters.

Implications and Conclusions

Given that children often participate in interracial encounters in their daily lives, it is necessary to understand how socialization factors influence their decisions. In the United States, which has a history of discrimination and prejudice against Black individuals, it is especially important to understand whether peer and parental sources of influence serve as barriers to interracial inclusion. In the current study, children considered the racial composition of the encounter only when peer sources of influence were present, which suggests that an avenue for intervention against prejudice in children's peer encounters may include addressing or challenging negative peer messages.

This study contributes to research examining the process by which children are socialized about interracial encounters by highlighting the role of peer and parent messages in influencing predictions of interracial inclusion. While much research has focused on parental socialization

for messages about intergroup friendships, the current study points to the significant role that peer socialization plays on this developmental process. Understanding both parental and peer sources of influence for both racial majority and minority groups will provide a fuller understanding of how prejudice emerges in childhood and adolescence. This information will help to develop ways to foster friendships from diverse backgrounds, which is an important step towards ameliorating bias and prejudice that begins in childhood.

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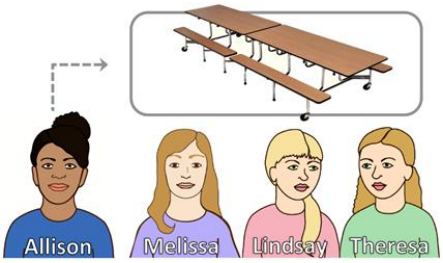
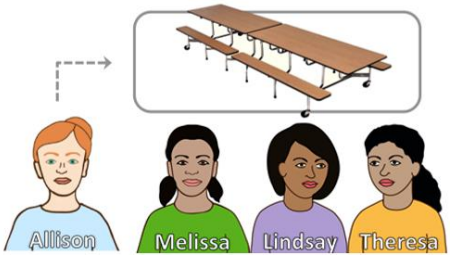
Peer Source of Influence Interracial (Conditions 1 and 2) Female Versions

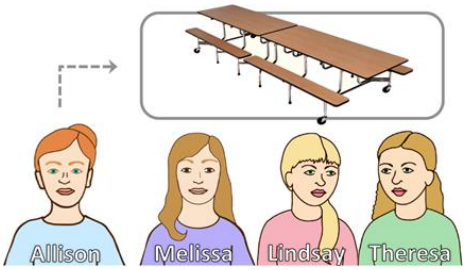


White peers decide whether to include Black peer (Condition 1: Interracial)

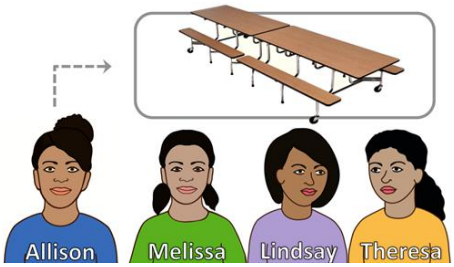


Black peers decide whether to include White peer (Condition 2: Interracial)

Peer Source of Influence Same-race (Condition 3) Female Versions



White peers decide whether to include White peer (Condition 3a: Same Race, matched to participant)



Black peers decide whether to include Black peer (Condition 3b: Same Race, matched to participant)

Figure 1. Examples of stimuli for predictions of inclusion when peer sources of influence were present. Participants viewed one of three conditions: 1) an interracial peer encounter in which White peers decided whether to include a Black peer; 2) an interracial peer encounter in which Black peers decided whether to include a White peer; 3) a same race peer inclusion encounter matched to the race of the participant. Pictures and characters names were gender matched to participant gender identity.

Note. (c) 2012 Illustrations by Joan Tycko

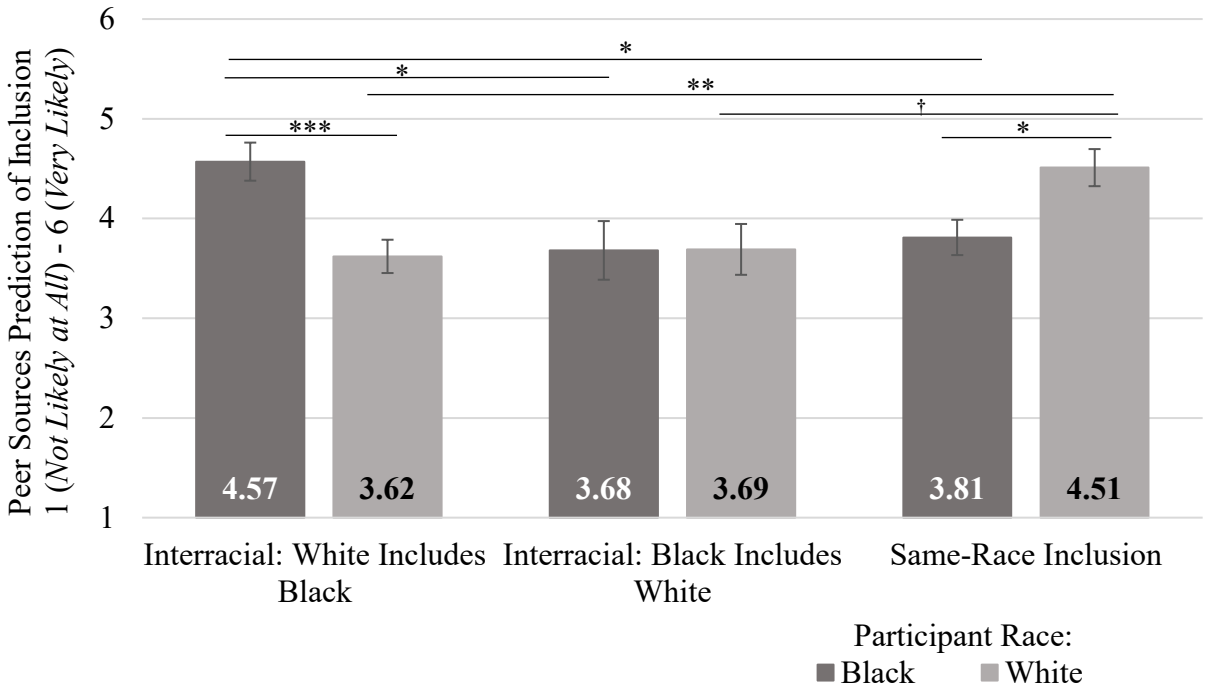


Figure 2. Prediction of inclusion by racial composition of the encounter and participant race when peer sources of influence were present. Higher scores indicate predicting greater likelihood of inclusion.

Note. Error bars represent standard errors of the mean.

†p<.06. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 1

Children's Justifications for their Predictions of Inclusion Across Parent and Peer Sources of Influence and Participant Race

	Benefits of Inclusion		Social Pressure		Trait Attributions		Other	
Context by Target Group	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Parent Sources								
Black participants	.10	(30)	.51	(.49)	.20	(.39)	.19	(.38)
White	.07*	(.25)	.57	(.49)	.13	(.32)	.23	(.41)
Total	.09[a]	(.27)	.54[a]	(.49)	.16[a]	(.36)	.21	(.40)
Peer Sources								
Black	.17	(.36)	.40	(.47)	.19	(.37)	.24	(.43)
White	.20*	(.38)	.47	(.49)	.13	(.32)	.20	(.39)
Total	.18[b]	(.37)	.43[b]	(.48)	.16[a]	(.35)	.23	(.41)

Note. Row proportions total to 1.0. "Total" superscripts that do not match within a column indicate proportions that differ from each other at $p < .05$ between parent and peer sources of influence. The significant interaction between participant race and source of influence within Benefits of Inclusion is marked with an asterisk.

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