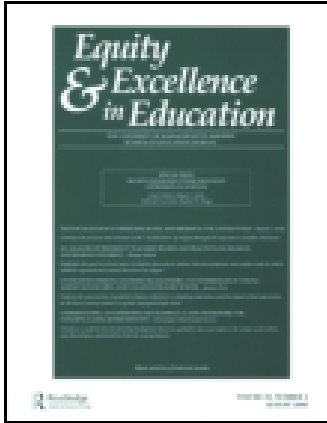


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### Raising Ethnic-Racial Consciousness: The Relationship Between Intergroup Dialogues and Adolescents' Ethnic-Racial Identity and Racism Awareness

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## Raising Ethnic-Racial Consciousness: The Relationship Between Intergroup Dialogues and Adolescents' Ethnic-Racial Identity and Racism Awareness

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Empirical evidence shows that intergroup dialogue programs promote changes in ethnic-racial identity and racism awareness among college students. Expanding on this research, this study examines the effects of intergroup dialogues on adolescents' racial consciousness. Self-reports of 147 adolescents (13–19 years old), of various racial and ethnic backgrounds were used. Repeated-measures ANOVAs, on pre- and post-tests examined changes in racial consciousness (ethnic-racial identity and racism awareness), controlling for parent education. Group differences (ethnic-racial groups, nativity) also were examined. As predicted, ethnic-racial identity and racism awareness increased after completing the program. Although there were statistically significant ethnic-racial group differences in ethnic-racial identity, no group differences in racism awareness were found. The findings demonstrate that intergroup dialogues can promote adolescents' ethnic-racial consciousness.

Developmental psychology suggests that social identity development is an important psychological task during adolescence that provides clarity regarding one's role in society (Erickson, 1968; Marcia, 1980). The development of racial and ethnic identity, in particular, has been found to relate positively to coping, self-esteem, and optimism, and negatively to measures of loneliness and depression (Roberts et al., 1999). In addition, studies suggest that teaching youth about diversity and racism promotes critical thinking and civic agency among youth (Boulden, 2007; Checkoway, 2009; Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004). Therefore, identifying mechanisms that foster ethnic-racial identity and racism awareness among adolescents may be a worthwhile endeavor for scholars and practitioners.

Empirical studies on intergroup dialogues show that participation in these dialogues leads college students to greater personal awareness, changes in attitudes on issues of identity, and increased motivation for social justice action (Dessel, Rogge, & Garlington, 2006; Nagda & Zúñiga, 2003; Stephan, 2008; Zúñiga, Nagda, Chesler, & Cytron-Walker, 2007). While the institutionalization of intergroup dialogue programs within universities across the U.S. has proliferated evidence on the positive effects of these dialogues on college students, less is known about the impact of intergroup dialogue with adolescents. The purpose of this study is to extend research on intergroup dialogues to the field of adolescent development.

There is a growing body of literature on youth intergroup dialogues that demonstrates that the central aims of intergroup dialogue—to raise consciousness, to build relationships across group difference and conflict, and to strengthen participants' individual and collective capacity to engage in civic activities—can be attained with adolescent populations (Boulden, 2007; Spencer, Brown, Griffin, & Abdullah, 2008; Wayne, 2008). These programs range from community-based leadership training programs to school-based conflict interventions using a variety of dialogic methods. This study focuses on one of the main goals of intergroup dialogues—consciousness raising—to examine in more depth the changes in ethnic-racial identity and racism awareness among adolescents of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds.

Do adolescents benefit from their involvement in intergroup dialogues on race and ethnicity and, if so, how? More specifically, does race-based dialogue promote adolescents' ethnic-racial identity and racism awareness? This study aims to explore these questions by examining the relationship between a race-based intergroup dialogue programs on adolescents' racial consciousness. These questions are of significance, since social institutions (e.g., community-based programs and schools) serving American adolescents are continuously affected by diversity issues, such as intergroup conflict, lunchroom segregation, and race-based social exclusion in schools (Crystal, Killen, & Ruck, 2008; Tatum, 1997). Therefore, we might expect that American youth would be engaged in conversations about race and ethnicity. However, racial segregation within and across communities and adults' general unwillingness to talk about race provides limited opportunities for youth to discuss race and racism for themselves (Checkoway, 2009).

## RAISING ETHNIC-RACIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Prior to identifying the effects of intergroup dialogue on adolescents' consciousness, we must first determine what constitutes ethnic-racial consciousness. In addition, related concepts of ethnic and racial identity need to be defined. Current theoretical perspectives argue that ethnic- and racial-identity are not separate entities but rather, overlap (Cross & Cross, 2008; Quintana, 2007). Consequently, hereafter we use the term "ethnic-racial identity" to discuss findings on racial and ethnic identity development. Under intergroup dialogue paradigms, consciousness includes participants' development of personal and social identity (e.g., ethnic-racial identity) and knowledge acquisition of social systems (e.g., racism awareness and white privilege). Accordingly, "ethnic-racial consciousness" is a broad construct that we use to refer to: (1) an awareness of one's ethnicity and/or race (i.e., ethnic-racial identity); and (2) knowledge of social systems that create and perpetuate power differentials between groups (i.e., racism awareness). Thus, ethnic-racial consciousness includes an understanding of how people have been historically classified into ethnic and racial groups based on creed, phenotype, and cultural markers, which then serve to maintain social hierarchy that benefits some groups over others.

### Youth Intergroup Dialogues and Ethnic-Racial Identity Development

Adolescence marks the developmental phase used in public and academic discourse on identity development and group consciousness (Cross & Cross, 2008; Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980; Phinney, 1992, 1996; Quintana, 1994, 1998; Tatum, 1997). Empirical evidence demonstrates

that adolescents are actively examining their ethnic and racial identity (Phinney, 1990, 1992; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Tatum, 1997). Phinney and Ong suggest that ethnic identity development consists of two components: (1) learning more (i.e., ethnic identity search) about social roles and cultural norms within one's ethnic-racial group(s); and (2) ethnic identity commitment, which includes self-identification with and the affective connection to one's ethnic-racial group(s). Identity search is not a precursor to ethnic-racial identity commitment. Instead, both dimensions of identity development are interrelated and continuous aspects of ethnic-racial identity.

Developmental perspectives propose that an increasingly mature ethnic-racial identity is associated with positive feelings toward other groups (Phinney, Ferguson, & Tate, 1997). Indeed, empirical evidence demonstrates a positive and predictive relation between ethnic identity and intergroup attitudes (Phinney, Ferguson, & Tate, 1997; Phinney, Jacoby, & Silva, 2007). Literature on ethnic and racial identity development suggests that contextual factors, such as exposure to peers of diverse ethnic-racial identities, may trigger further reflection about one's ethnic-racial identity (Cross & Cross, 2008; Tatum, 1997). Within intergroup dialogues, we might find that sustained contact with others different from oneself affects certain dimensions of one's ethnic-racial identity (i.e., search vs. commitment) differently.

For instance, in race-based dialogues, experiential activities and semi-structured dialogues directly prompt participants to critically examine the socialization messages that have shaped their ethnic-racial identity. Program evaluations of the University of Michigan's Youth Dialogue on Race and Ethnicity program show that after participating in intergroup dialogues, adolescents increase their understanding of their own racial and ethnic group membership, knowledge about others who are different from themselves, and their willingness to take action against racism and segregation (Checkoway, 2009). In a mixed method study with 11th graders who participated in a school-based intergroup dialogue and conflict resolution intervention, Spencer and colleagues (2008) found that after completing the program, students reported increased awareness of their racial identity and consciousness of intergroup relations in their school. It is evident that youth intergroup dialogue programs are effective in promoting adolescents' self- and social-awareness about race.

### Youth Intergroup Dialogues and Racism Awareness

There is a growing body of literature that documents adolescents' perceived discrimination in relation to psychological, social, and academic outcomes. Typically, perceived discrimination has been conceptualized as one's reports of and psychological response to past discriminatory experiences (Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000; Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006; Landrine & Klonoff, 1996; Pahl & Way, 2006; Seaton et al., 2008). Yet, less is known about adolescents' awareness of racism. Racism awareness is distinct from perceived discrimination in that racism awareness is a conceptual understanding of the social hierarchy that privileges white people and perpetuates racial inequalities that put ethnic-racial minorities at a social disadvantage, regardless of one's experience with discrimination. Thus, awareness of racism requires individuals to think of discrimination and prejudice more abstractly. Neville and colleagues (2000) propose that awareness of racism may range from attitudes that either downplay or deny the presence of racism at the individual, structural, and institutional level to an active awareness of various forms of racism and discrimination.

Intergroup dialogue programs on race and ethnicity have the promise to promote racism awareness among adolescent participants. For instance, to increase participants' knowledge of social systems, intergroup dialogues engage participants in structured discussions about social phenomena (e.g., privilege and oppression) with peers from varying social backgrounds. A mixed-method study of the Anytown program (Matsudaira & Jefferson, 2006), a community-based program for high school-aged youth that uses intergroup dialogues as part of the curriculum to train young community leaders, demonstrates that using dialogic methods in the youth training programs increased participants' understanding and knowledge of various racial and ethnic groups (e.g., white, black, Latino, Asian, and Native American) and increased awareness of how oppression and privilege influence their community (Boulden, 2007; Matsudaira & Jefferson, 2006). In race-based dialogues, semi-structured activities set the stage for intergroup dialogues on the pervasiveness of racism and bigotry in the United States. Thus, we may expect that intergroup dialogues will increase adolescents' awareness of racism.

## PRESENT STUDY

As discussed above, empirical evidence suggests that community-based and school-based intergroup dialogues with adolescents are beneficial and effective (Boulden, 2007; Checkoway, 2009; Spencer et al., 2008; Wayne, 2008). To expand on previous research, this study aims to examine the influence of intergroup dialogue programs on adolescents' ethnic-racial consciousness. Our first research objective is to determine if participation in a youth intergroup dialogue increases adolescents' ethnic-racial identity and racism awareness. First, we hypothesize that participants will report higher scores on ethnic-racial identity and racism awareness after participating in the intergroup dialogues program. According to social identity theory, cross-cultural encounters may motivate individuals' exploration of their identity (Kosmitzki, 1996). Participating in intergroup dialogues with individuals different from oneself over an extended period of time may stimulate the exploration of the meaning of one's identity. On the other hand, ethnic-racial identity commitment is an affective component of identity that develops at an early age (French, Seidman, Allen, & Aber, 2006; Rotheram-Borus, Lightfoot, Moraes, Dopkins, & LaCour, 1998) and has not been found to demonstrate growth patterns in later adolescence (Pahl & Way, 2006). Therefore, we also expect to find greater increases in ethnic-racial identity exploration than ethnic-racial commitment after intergroup dialogue participation. No formal hypothesis was generated for differential effects on racism awareness, given the limited research on racism awareness with adolescent samples. However, program effects on specific dimensions of racism awareness (i.e., racial privilege, institutional discrimination, and blatant racial issues) are examined.

Second, this study set out to identify differences in ethnic-racial identity and racism awareness among groups of various ethnic-racial backgrounds and nativity status. We expect that participants of color and foreign born youth will report higher levels of ethnic-racial identity than European American and U.S. born participants. This hypothesis is supported by empirical evidence that suggests that although white adolescents in integrated schools think about race and ethnicity, students of color engage in a more active search for identity (Phinney, 1988, 1992; Phinney & Ong, 2007). Another reason for group differences in ethnic-racial identity development may be related to differences in the salience and centrality of race and ethnicity in the lived experiences

of immigrant children (Branch, Tayal, & Triplett, 2000; French et al., 2000; Phinney & Tarver, 1988).

Third, we hypothesize that adolescents with more exposure to discrimination (i.e., ethnic-racial minority and foreign born) will be more aware of racism than European American and U.S. born participants. Empirical evidence demonstrates that youth of color report more perceived discrimination than their white counterparts (Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000). At a theoretical level, we might expect that adolescents who experience more discrimination (i.e., youth of color) are likely to be more aware of racism. Hughes and colleagues (2006) found that recent immigrant youth in the United States attribute experiences with discrimination to their immigration status and not to their ethnic-racial identity. Therefore, we examined ethnic-racial group membership separately from nativity status. With this study we hope to provide more knowledge about the ways in which intergroup dialogues on race and ethnicity contribute to adolescents' ethnic-racial identity development and racism awareness.

## METHODS

### Participants and Procedures

We used an action research approach in this study, not an experimental-control group design, to examine the influence of intergroup dialogue on adolescents' ethnic-racial identity and racism awareness (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2003; Nolen & Vander Putten, 2007). The present study draws from program evaluation data collected by the University of Michigan's Youth Dialogues on Race and Ethnicity in Metropolitan Detroit. The youth dialogues in Metropolitan Detroit is an eight-week program that enables adolescents of African American, Asian American, European American, Latina/o American, and Middle Eastern American descent to come together in intergroup dialogues to discuss racial and ethnic issues within and across their communities. At the end of the program, the participants attend a weekend retreat that provides training workshops in youth activism and social advocacy skills (for more program details see Checkoway, 2009).

Participants were recruited through 16 community-based agencies located in various neighborhoods within the city of Detroit and six suburbs across the metropolitan area. Parent consent forms were obtained prior to or during the program orientation. During the program orientation participants and their parents were given a description of the evaluation survey. Participation in the program survey evaluation was voluntary. Participants completed two surveys: The pre-test was completed during the program orientation and the post-test was completed at the program retreat. Participant consent forms were obtained prior to completion of both the pre- and post-test surveys.

### Sample

Participants ranged from 13 to 19 years of age, with a mean age of 16 years. The sample included girls (65%) and boys (35%). The majority (83%) of the participants were U.S. born. Information regarding the citizenship status was not obtained for this study. The use of the term American was used by both domestic and foreign-born participants to indicate their ethnic-racial identity.

Participants' parents or guardians had achieved varying levels of education, ranging from no more than grade school to a graduate/professional degree, with a median parent/guardian educational attainment of an associates degree. The sample included participants from several ethnic-racial groups: black/African American (32%), Asian American (16%), European American (23%), Middle Eastern American (16%), Latina/o American (8%), and multiracial/ethnic (6%).

Data from the 2007 ( $N = 81$ ) and 2008 ( $N = 66$ ) surveys were combined for a total sample of 147. A  $t$ -test was used to evaluate the mean difference between cohorts for outcome variables. The two cohorts only differed in their pre-test reports of institutional discrimination,  $t(135) = -.41, p < .001$ , with the 2008 cohort reporting slightly higher scores ( $M = 2.80$ ) than the 2007 cohort ( $M = 2.35$ ) on the institutional discrimination subscale at pre-test.

## Measures

### *Demographic Variables*

Race-ethnicity, nativity, and socioeconomic status (SES) were included in the analyses. Race-ethnicity and nativity were included as independent variables because both have shown an effect on racial-ethnic identity and/or awareness of racism (Phinney & Tarver, 1988; Rumbaut, 1994). Socioeconomic status was used as a covariate, because it is often a confounding factor with race and ethnicity (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). We measured SES using a combined score for both caregivers' educational level as a proxy (Hoff, Laursen & Tardif, 2002). Participants reported the level of education, in years, for two primary caregivers on separate items. Nativity was measured by a single, dichotomous (yes or no) item in which the respondent indicated whether he or she was born in the U.S. Participants were also asked to report their ethnic-racial identity on an open-ended item (e.g., "What is your race(s)/ethnicity(ies)?"). Participants created over 40 racial and ethnic labels that were later recoded into five pan-racial/pan-ethnic categories that correspond with the ethnic-racial groups used by the program: Black/African American, White/European American, Arab American, and Latino/Hispanic. Multiracial/Multiethnic youth were not considered a separate ethnic-racial group in the intergroup dialogue program; however, we created a separate category for the analyses.

### *Ethnic-Racial Identity*

An adapted version of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney, 1992) was used to measure participants' ethnic-racial identity. Subscales assessing identity search and commitment were created using the revised theoretical framework (MEIM-R) suggested by Phinney and Ong (2007), which has demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties with ethnically and racially diverse adolescents (French et al., 2006). Consistent with the MEIM-R, this measure used a 6-item inventory to assess level of ethnic-racial exploration and commitment. However, respondents reported on a 5-point Likert scale, rather than the suggested 4-point scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. We opted to use a 5-point scale to allow participants to indicate a "neutral" response and be more selective in their response (Adelson & McCoach, 2010; Cronbach, 1950). Moreover, one item in the revised commitment subscale—"I

have often done things to understand my ethnic background better”—was replaced with a reverse coded item from the original MEIM scale: “I have really not spent much time trying to learn more about the culture and history of my ethnic group.” A sample item for the ethnic identity search subscale is: “I have spent time trying to find out more about my own ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.” Mean scores for each subscale were computed to create continuous scores. Although reliability for the exploration subscale was acceptable at the pre-test ( $\alpha = .72$ ), it was more marginal at the post-test ( $\alpha = .63$ ). Psychometric literature suggest a minimal level of reliability between .60 to .70, therefore, the slight decrease in the reliability coefficient was determined satisfactory (Aiken, 2000; Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1999). The ethnic commitment subscale maintained an accepted level of reliability at both time points (pre-test  $\alpha = .76$ ; post-test  $\alpha = .70$ ).

### *Racism Awareness*

A 19-item adapted version of the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS; Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000) was used to measure a lack of awareness of racial privilege, institutional discrimination, and blatant racial issues. The scale assesses the continuum of racial attitudes that ranges from a color-blind ideology (the downplaying or denying of the significance and prevalence of racism) to racism awareness. We chose to frame participant responses in terms of racism awareness for this study. Participants reported endorsement of items reflecting racism awareness on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Neville and colleagues (2000) reported acceptable Cronbach’s alpha for each subscale that ranged from .70 (Blatant Racial Issues) to .86 (CoBRAS total).

In the present study, the racial privilege subscale (pre-test  $\alpha = .74$ ; post-test  $\alpha = .70$ ) measured adolescents’ awareness of how race and ethnicity relates to social privileges and disadvantages (e.g., “Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich.”). A sample item of blindness to institutional discrimination is, “Social policies, such as affirmative action, discriminate against white people.” Even after omitting an item that was negatively correlated with other items (“Due to racial discrimination, programs such as affirmative action are necessary to help create equality”), the reliability of the institutional discrimination subscale remained low (pre-test  $\alpha = .58$ ; post-test  $\alpha = .63$ ). Finally, the blatant racial issues (pre-test  $\alpha = .70$ ; post-test  $\alpha = .77$ ) subscale measured awareness of overt forms of ethnic-racial discrimination (e.g., “Racial problems in the U.S. are rare, isolated situations.”). A mean score was created for each subscale.

### Data Analysis

A pair of repeated measures ANOVAs, using general linear model (Werts & Linn, 1970), were performed on pre- and post-test data where subscales of the ethnic-racial identity (exploration and commitment) and racism awareness (racial privilege, institutional discrimination, and blatant racial issues) variables served as the within-subject dependent variable. The between subjects variables were ethnic-racial groups (African American, Asian American, European American, Latina/o American, Middle Eastern American, multiracial) and Nativity groups (U.S. born vs.



foreign born). To challenge local racial and ethnic segregation and create a diverse group of program participants, the youth dialogue program recruited European American and Asian American participants from affluent suburbs surrounding the metropolitan area, whereas, African American, Middle-Eastern American, and Latina/o American participants were recruited from less affluent neighborhoods throughout the city of Detroit. Thus, we controlled for SES to adjust for the disparities across racial-ethnic groups. Although adolescent girls and young women have been found to report greater levels of ethnic identity (Phinney, 1990; Rotheram-Borus et al., 1998) and racism awareness (Neville et al., 2000), we did not find significant gender differences in mean scores for outcome variables in this study. Thus, we did not include it in our model.

## RESULTS

Fourteen participants had missing data on one or more outcome variables (i.e., racial-ethnic identity and racism awareness). Five univariate outliers were identified and removed from the analysis. The existence of multivariate outliers was then examined separately for each analysis. For ethnic-racial identity, Mahalanobis distance was evaluated as  $\chi^2$  with degrees of freedom equal to the number of independent and covariate variables, in this case six variables, and at  $p < 0.001$ . For racism awareness, Mahalanobis distance was evaluated as  $\chi^2$  with eight degrees of freedom, and at  $p < 0.001$ . No multivariate outliers were found for ethnic-racial identity or racism awareness. Listwise-deletion was selected. Method 3 (SSTYPE3) was used to adjust for unequal cell size. After deletion of cases with missing data and multivariate outliers, assumptions regarding normality of sampling distributions, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, linearity, and multicollinearity were met.

### Ethnic-Racial Identity

A repeated measure ANOVA was used to assess changes in ethnic-racial identity exploration and commitment over the course of the intergroup dialogue program and to identify any group differences in identity search and identity commitment. Ethnic-racial group and nativity status (US born vs. foreign-born) were the between subjects variables, whereas, time (pre-test vs. post-test) and ethnic-racial identity scores (i.e., exploration vs. commitment) were the within subjects variables. Using Wilks' criterion, there was a statistically significant main effect for identity,  $F(5, 108) = 10.74, p < .001$ . This main effect was qualified by a significant Time  $\times$  Identity interaction,  $F(5, 108) = 5.96, p < .05$ . A post hoc test, using paired sample *t*-test, indicated a statistically significant increase in ethnic-racial identity exploration from pre- ( $M = 3.47$ ) to post-test ( $M = 3.75$ ). As expected, there was no statistically significant change in ethnic-racial identity commitment. We also found a statistically significant three-way interaction among time, identity, and parent education,  $F(5, 108) = 4.36, p < .05$ . A post hoc ANOVA, split by parent education level, demonstrates a change in ethnic-racial identity exploration from pre- ( $M = 3.24$ ) to post-test ( $M = 3.76$ ) for participants from families with lower educational attainment,  $F(1, 48) = 5.23, p < .05$  (Figure 1.). There was no statistically significant change in ethnic-racial exploration or commitment among participants of families with higher educational attainment.

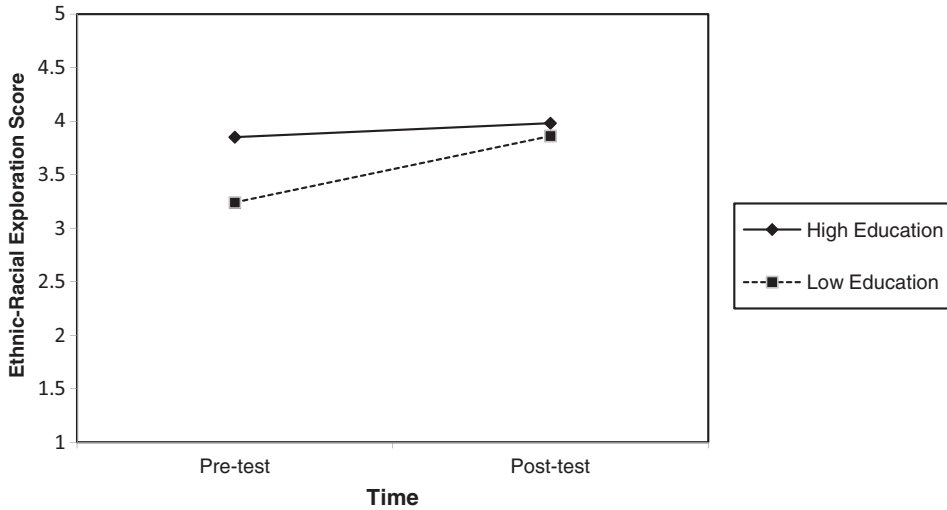


FIGURE 1 Mean group differences in ethnic-racial exploration for participants from families with higher-and lower-educational attainment.

A statistically significant difference between ethnic-racial groups was found,  $F(5,108) = 2.67, p < .05$ . Marginal means in Table 1 show that, in general, participants of color (African American, Asian American, Middle Eastern American, Latina/o, and multiracial) reported greater levels of overall ethnic-racial identity than European American participants. To test whether minority participants reported significantly higher levels of ethnic-racial identity, a post hoc test was conducted. A simple contrast analysis, using European Americans as the comparison group revealed that African American ( $M = 3.83$ ), Asian American ( $M = 4.12$ ), and Middle Eastern American adolescents ( $M = 4.00$ ) reported greater levels of ethnic-racial identity than their

TABLE 1  
Mean scores and standard deviations of ethnic-racial identity for adolescents of diverse ethnic-racial groups

Group	n	Exploration				Commitment				Overall	
		Pre		Post		Pre		Post		M	SE
		M	SE	M	SE	M	SE	M	SE	M	SE
African American	38	3.35	0.21	3.8	0.18	4.07	0.19	4.1	0.16	3.83	0.14
Asian American	17	4.06	0.21	4.08	0.17	4.18	0.19	4.16	0.17	4.12	0.14
European American	29	3.03	0.22	3.55	0.19	3.56	0.2	3.71	0.18	3.46	0.15
Latina/o American	7	3.66	0.35	3.66	0.3	3.61	0.31	3.76	0.28	3.67	0.24
Middle Eastern American	11	4.02	0.27	3.75	0.26	4.19	0.24	4.05	0.21	4.0	0.18
Multiracial	6	3.24	0.38	4.02	0.32	3.43	0.35	3.97	0.31	3.67	0.26

Note. Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney, 1992; MEIM-R; Phinney & Ong, 2007); All values represent raw, nonstandardized scores.

European American peers ( $M = 3.46$ ). Latina/o American and Multiracial adolescents' ( $M = 3.67$ ) reports of ethnic-racial identity were not significantly different from those of European American ( $M = 3.46$ ) youth. There was no statistically significant difference between participants born in the U.S. and foreign-born participants,  $F(1,108) = .45, p = .50$ .

### Racism Awareness

A second repeated measures ANOVA was used to assess any changes in awareness of racial privilege, institutional discrimination, and blatant racial issues over the course of the intergroup dialogue program, and racial-ethnic group differences in awareness. There was a statistically significant main effect for time,  $F(5,108) = 7.83, p < .01$ . Marginal means in Table 2 suggest that participants reported greater awareness of racial and ethnic discrimination from pretest ( $M = 2.51$ ), to posttest ( $M = 2.28$ ). A main effect for type of awareness was also found,  $F(5,108) = 12.28, p < .001$ . Participants reported the least awareness to blatant racial issues ( $M = 1.77$ ), followed by white racial privilege ( $M = 2.32$ ), and institutional discrimination ( $M = 3.11$ ). The absence of a time by awareness interaction in this study suggests that the program worked similarly across dimensions of racism awareness. No statistically significant difference in awareness scores was found between ethnic-racial groups  $F(1,108) = 1.06, p = .39$  or nativity groups (U.S. born vs. foreign born),  $F(1,108) = 1.92, p = .17$ .

## DISCUSSION

During the transition into adulthood, youth are expected to reframe their childhood perceptions of identity and social roles (Erikson, 1968). Nonetheless, there are few social structures to assist adolescents with this critical developmental task. As expected, after completing the intergroup dialogue, program youth reported greater exploration of their ethnic-racial identity than prior to their participation in the program, while levels of ethnic-racial commitment remained constant. Although the increases that we found may reflect normative development in identity exploration, we believe that the results are more a result of participation in the dialogue program. It is unlikely that change of the magnitude seen in this study would occur over a couple of months. Even though previous research demonstrates a steady increase in identity search among younger adolescence (French et al., 2006) and steady declines in exploring the meaning of their ethnic group in older adolescents (Pahl & Way, 2006), participants reported an increase in the exploration of their ethnic-racial identity, such as talking to others about one's identity or spending time learning more about their racial-ethnic group history. In conjunction with previous literature (French et al., 2006; Pahl & Way, 2006), the current findings provide support that changes in ethnic-racial identity exploration are due to the intergroup dialogues and not simply to maturity.

In the dialogue program studied, adolescents were first asked to critically examine their own ethnic-racial identity with youth of similar backgrounds. Thus, the structure of intra-group dialogue discussions directly prompted students to talk and learn about their identity with others (i.e., identity exploration), which in this case did not influence commitment to one's identity. Moreover, ethnic-racial identity commitment is a more stable dimension of identity and is less likely to change over a short period of time or be influenced by contextual factors such as sustained

TABLE 2  
Mean scores and standard deviations of racism awareness for adolescents of diverse ethnic-racial groups

Group	N	Racial Privilege				Institutional Discrimination				Blatant Racial Issues				Overall			
		Pre	SE	M	SE	Pre	SE	M	SE	Pre	SE	M	SE	Pre	SE	M	SE
African American	38	2.76	0.17	2.82	0.16	2.40	0.13	2.34	0.15	1.94	0.14	1.66	0.15	2.32	0.09	2.32	0.09
Asian American	17	3.56	0.17	2.96	0.17	2.53	0.12	2.40	0.15	2.08	0.14	1.7	0.15	2.54	0.09	2.54	0.09
European American	29	3.03	0.18	2.96	0.18	2.56	0.14	2.40	0.16	1.85	0.15	1.64	0.16	2.41	0.09	2.41	0.09
Latina/o American	7	3.37	0.28	3.01	0.28	1.83	0.21	1.93	0.25	1.77	0.23	1.82	0.25	2.30	0.14	2.30	0.14
Middle Eastern American	11	3.53	0.23	3.02	0.22	2.52	0.17	2.27	0.20	2.14	0.19	1.79	0.2	2.55	0.12	2.55	0.12
Multiracial	6	3.26	0.31	2.90	0.31	2.45	0.24	2.20	0.28	1.59	0.26	1.23	0.28	2.27	0.16	2.27	0.16

Note. Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS; Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000). All values represent raw, nonstandardized scores.

intergroup contact (Pahl & Way, 2006). The results suggest that intergroup dialogue programs with adolescents have the promise to be a method that facilitates adolescents' exploration of their ethnic-racial identity.

Our hypothesis regarding group differences in ethnic-racial identity was partially supported. In general, and in line with previous research (Branch, Tayal, & Triplett, 2000; French et al., 2000; Phinney & Tarver, 1988), ethnic minority participants had higher scores on our measure of ethnic-racial identity than European American participants. Not all participants of color, however, reported greater levels of ethnic-racial identity than European Americans. Although African American, Asian American, and Middle Eastern Americans reported greater levels of ethnic-racial identity, Latino/a American and multiracial adolescents did not report greater levels of ethnic-racial identity than their European American peers. Moreover, our expectation that youth born in other countries would have higher ethnic-racial identity than native-born youth was not supported.

There are several possible reasons for these unexpected results. First, it may be that we were unable to detect group difference due to the low number of participants within the Latina/o and multiracial categories. Similarly, since 83% of our sample was U.S. born, it reduced our statistical power to identify group differences by nativity. Second, contextual factors outside the scope of this study, regional location (Midwest vs. Southwest), and racial segregation may influence the saliency of ethnic-racial identity for Latina/o American and multiracial youth in Metropolitan Detroit. One's ethnic-racial identity may be more salient in a context in which one is the numerical minority. For instance, Umaña-Taylor (2004) found that Latina/o American adolescents attending a predominately non-Latino school reported significantly higher levels of ethnic identity than adolescents in schools that were predominantly Latino or ethnically balanced. The Latino sample in this study included high school students from a highly segregated neighborhood, which is consistent with empirical evidence that shows that segregation of Latina/o American youth exceeds that of African American youth (Orfield & Lee, 2005; Valencia, 2000). For the Latina/o American youth in this study, ethnic-racial identity may not have been as salient as other social factors (i.e., immigration status, gender, SES), given that they live among people of their own ethnic-racial group. Nevertheless, mean differences in ethnic-racial identity were minimal, suggesting that all youth experience moderate levels of ethnic-racial identity regardless of group membership. It should be noted that these ethnic-racial group differences were main effects and the interaction with time was non-significant. That is, gains in racial-ethnic identity over the course of the program were similar across groups.

In addition, although we did not hypothesize interactions between socioeconomic status and ethnic-racial identity, we found a significant interaction of parents' education level and ethnic-racial identity. Specifically, we found that youth with less well educated parents tended to have greater gains in ethnic-racial exploration over the course of the intergroup dialogue program. This might reflect a social contextual effect in that youth from lower socioeconomic circumstances are also more likely to live in racially segregated neighborhoods and may have less opportunity for cross-racial/ethnic interactions (Orfield, 2001).

For racism awareness, the results were also mixed. The findings support our hypothesis regarding the positive influence of intergroup dialogues on adolescents' awareness of racism. When composite scores for colorblind racial attitudes were considered, participants reported less endorsement of colorblind ideology at post-test, which suggests that the program was effective in increasing awareness of racism. These findings are consistent with research on the effects

of multicultural education on racism awareness among college-aged adults. As one example, Probst (2003) reported that awareness of institutional discrimination improved for college students completing a psychology of prejudice and racism course. Similarly, Kernahan and Davis (2007) show that college students taking a prejudice and racism course became more aware of racism, including more subtle forms of racism, such as institutional discrimination and white privilege. The current findings provide evidence that an intergroup dialogue can have an effect on adolescents' awareness of racism.

This study supports previous findings that suggest that knowledge about racism can be promoted through multicultural and anti-racist education (Kernahan & Davis, 2007; Probst, 2003; Rudman, Ashmore, & Gary, 2001). For instance, the program studied supplemented intergroup dialogues with an educational curriculum that included content and experiential activities to help participants scrutinize racism and white privilege. It may be that purposeful use of semi-structured activities and dialogic methods that align with the process and content of the dialogue topic allow participants to consider various forms of privilege and oppression (Dessel, Rogge, & Garlington, 2006; Nagda & Gurin, 2007; Zúñiga, Nagda, Chesler, & Crtron-Walker, 2007).

The findings also suggest that adolescents were more aware of certain forms of racism than others. Participants reported more awareness of blatant racial issues than of racial privilege or institutional discrimination. Perhaps, blatant racial issues are more perceivable than institutional discrimination and white privilege for adolescents because they can recall concrete examples of this type of racism from their day-to-day life. However, institutional discrimination and white privilege may be more cognitively taxing for adolescents, especially in the absence of situational cues and individual experiences that provide information about more subtle forms of racism (Brown & Bigler, 2005). For instance, in a qualitative report of Middle Eastern immigrant youth in Canada, adolescents often reported instances when they were treated unfairly. However, youth did not identify themselves as being victims of racist acts (Khanlou, Koh, & Mill, 2008). Though youth, in that study, were able to describe instances of discrimination, they were unable to attribute these experiences to racism. It seems that adolescents' level of cognitive maturity may limit their ability to link concrete personal experiences (e.g., perceived discrimination) to abstract social constructs (e.g., institutional discrimination, structural racism, and white privilege). More research is needed to inform a developmental theory regarding adolescents' racism awareness.

Surprisingly, the results did not support our hypothesis that ethnic-racial minority and foreign born youth would be more aware of racism than European Americans and U.S. born participants. Moreover, all ethnic-racial groups reported similar gains in awareness of blatant racial issues after completing the program. There are several possible reasons for the lack of group differences. The number of participants within each ethnic-racial category was relatively small, which may have minimized our power to detect statistical differences among groups. Finally, it is possible that differences in racism awareness among racial-ethnic groups do not exist among this sample of adolescents. It may be that differences in racism awareness between ethnic-racial and nativity groups emerge later in life when one has reached adulthood. For instance, as a person of color grows into adulthood—and accumulates life experiences of witnessing or being a target of discrimination—they become more aware of the existence of racism. On the other hand, as a function of white privilege, a white/European American individual may grow up not having to think about race and/or racism (McIntosh, 1989). Indeed, research shows that individuals that are economically and racially privileged are less aware of structural causes of inequality than

economically and racially disadvantaged individuals (Cozarell, Wikinson, & Tagler, 2001). Less is known about how youth of color and white youth differ in their knowledge and understanding of racism. We do know, however, that as adolescents of color age they do report more perceived discrimination (Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006). Future research studies may benefit from using longitudinal research designs that examine changes in racism awareness across racial-ethnic groups across the lifespan.

### LIMITATIONS

A number of limitations in this study must be noted. As mentioned previously, the data are from a relatively small sample size, and the number of participants within each ethnic-racial category was even smaller, which may have minimized our power to detect statistical differences among groups. Similarly, the small number of non-native born youth may have masked the effects of immigration on ethnic-racial consciousness. Replication with a larger sample size may yield different results.

Selection bias may have reduced variance within and across groups. Our sample consisted of youth who opted to participate in the program after being nominated by community liaisons. One possibility is that the program attracted adolescents who were already astutely aware of racism and discrimination, as demonstrated by their low endorsement of colorblind racial attitudes.

The study assessed change immediately after the dialogues. The study does not provide evidence that changes lasted over time. On the other hand, it may be possible that some changes were not apparent immediately. Future studies may benefit from gathering follow-up data several weeks or months after the completion of the program.

The measure for awareness of institutional discrimination demonstrated lower than acceptable reliability (Aiken, 2000). A factor that may have affected the coefficient alpha, and consequently reliability, was the small sample size. A larger sample size would have increased variance in construct measurement leading to greater reliability in measurement (Thompson, 1994). The variance for the measure of institutional discrimination was low, given the small sample size, which may explain the lack of significance in change in institutional discrimination. Another potential explanation could be that the CoBRAS scale used to measure (un)awareness of racism has been validated with young adults (Neville et al., 2000) and may not be suitable for use with adolescents.

Finally, the findings are limited to intergroup dialogue participants since we did not randomly assign participants or use a control group for comparison. Although the findings cannot be generalized to adolescents who did not participate in the dialogues, there are lessons to learn from this work as discussed below.

### IMPLICATIONS

The racially and ethnically segregated nature of American cities and neighborhoods has theoretical and practical implications for intergroup dialogues with youth in grades K-12. Despite the increase of minority youth in the public school system, students of color are attending schools that are increasingly segregated (Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003; Orfield & Lee, 2005). A critical

educational element in intergroup dialogues is sustained face-to-face interaction between different ethnic-racial groups. The success of the University of Michigan's Youth Dialogues on Race and Ethnicity in Metropolitan Detroit program may be partially attributed to the engagement of youth from multiple communities. For instance, the structure of the program engaged adolescents from various racial and ethnic enclaves, who otherwise would not have interacted with one another. Implementation of intergroup dialogue with various racial and ethnic groups may be more challenging in highly segregated communities. To be more specific, recruiting students from diverse ethnic-racial backgrounds to participate in intergroup dialogues will be difficult in schools that are not racially or ethnically diverse. Even though empirical evidence of intergroup dialogue in school settings is limited, studies on youth intergroup dialogues underscore the significant contributions of purposeful dialogue to youths' psychological and social development (Boulden, 2007; Checkoway, 2009; Spencer et al., 2008; Wayne, 2008).

Community-based programs, such as youth intergroup dialogues, can be used to challenge school segregation and to provide more opportunities for youth to develop their ethnic-racial consciousness (Rodenborg & Huynh, 2006). Our study shows that intergroup dialogues can successfully engage adolescents in dialogue with one another to critically discuss how to bridge ethnic and racial divides. There are an increasing number of dialogue programs that encourage youth to resolve conflict peacefully and collaborate to promote racial justice (Boulden, 2007; Spencer et al., 2008; Matsudaira & Jefferson, 2006; Wayne, 2008). Intergroup dialogue programs offer opportunities for diverse adolescents to not only interact with one another but also to critically examine their own identity and how they can work toward social justice in their own communities through the analysis of systematic power and understanding issues of equity (Boulden, 2007; Wayne, 2008).

The present program has had effects on its participants, to be sure, but less is known about the effects of participation in dialogues on actual community and civic action. If adolescents in other metropolitan areas, for example, were to participate in intergroup dialogues and to join together in solidarity to address the segregation that divides them, it might make a difference on them as participants, and in so doing, might position them for leadership in a society that is becoming both more segregated and more diverse. Intergroup dialogue perspectives emphasize that both critical awareness regarding cultural distinctiveness and collaboration across differences are necessary to take collective action against social inequalities (Boulden, 2007; DeTurk, 2006; Nagda & Gurin, 2007; Wayne, 2008). Conceivably, and with more research, educators and intergroup dialogue practitioners can find that when the focus of these programs is on youth civic action (in addition to dialogue and intergroup relations) then real community change can begin to occur.

## CONCLUSION

Youth are increasingly engaged in informal multicultural situations that highlight issues of race and ethnicity such as intergroup conflict, lunchroom segregation, and race-based social exclusion from peers (Crystal, Killen, & Ruck, 2008; Tatum, 1997). In a diverse democratic society, adolescents can benefit from having a strong ethnic-racial identity and being cognizant of the social and institutional dynamics embedded in American society that perpetuate social inequality. Nonetheless, there are few social structures set in place to assist adolescents with this critical developmental task. Empirical evidence from youth intergroup dialogue programs suggests that,



with the help of trained dialogue facilitators, critical discussions about race and ethnicity with peers can facilitate adolescents' development of ethnic-racial consciousness (Boulden, 2007; Checkoway, 2009; Spencer et al., 2008; Wayne, 2008). The emphasis of future research must be on strengthening youths' participation in multicultural efforts that promote positive change at the individual and community level. We urge educators and social work practitioners to explore innovative ways to challenge the negative impact of segregated schools and communities and to provide more opportunities for intergroup contact and multicultural learning within school settings.

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