

When skinfolk are kinfolk: Higher perceived support and acceptance

characterize close same-race (vs. interracial) relationships for people of color

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### Abstract (149 words)

People of color cope with racial stigma daily. In this context, support and acceptance from people who share similar racial/ethnic backgrounds can take a special importance. In two studies, using a national U.S. sample ( $n = 1618$ ) and a term-long weekly-diary design ( $n = 103$ ), Black, Latine, and Asian students received more support and acceptance from close same-race (vs. interracial) relationships. Compared to White participants, Black and Latine participants also reported greater support in all relationships. Furthermore, greater support and acceptance in same-race relationships predicted greater flourishing and lower depressive affect, even after controlling for support and acceptance in interracial relationships. This is the author manuscript accepted for publication and has undergone full peer review but has not been through the copyediting, typesetting, pagination and proofreading process, which may lead to differences between this version and the Version of Record. Please cite this article as [doi: 10.1111/josi.12534](https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12534).

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## CLOSE SAME-RACE RELATIONSHIPS FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR

These results underscore the importance of same-race relationships for people of color in the U.S. In conjunction with practices addressing structural barriers, opportunities to connect with same-race peers can nurture the flourishing of people of color in the U.S. and possibly other contexts in which they are stigmatized.

### **When skinfolk are kinfolk: Higher perceived support and acceptance**

#### **characterize close same-race (vs. interracial) relationships for people of color**

Two central functions of close relationships are to provide support to cope with life's adversities and to foster meaningful connection through acceptance. Receiving support during difficult times can provide emotional safety and understanding, assist in problem-solving, encourage persistence in the face of obstacles, and sometimes even foster resilience (Feeney & Collins, 2015). Close relationships also generate feelings of acceptance by affording opportunities to act and feel true to oneself. Feeling accepted is essential to meaningful connections, which in turn fulfill the innate and universal need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Leary & Kelly, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Therefore, support and acceptance from loved ones signal their responsiveness to one's needs and are among the key benefits afforded by close relationships.

Support and acceptance in close relationships may especially benefit people who experience stigma. While stigma-related incidents such as racial/ethnic discrimination can influence people in a variety of ways, they generally undermine well-being and mental health (Benner et al., 2018; Pascoe & Richman, 2009; Schmitt et al., 2014). These incidents can bring about the onset of or amplify existing distress and health issues (Levy et al., 2016; Major et al., 2013; Miller & Kaiser, 2001), such as contributing to anxiety and depression (Cox et al., 2012; Hudson et al., 2016; Hunter & Schmidt, 2010). In addition to heightened distress, stigma also undermines purpose in life, positive relationships with others, and the self-acceptance that characterizes flourishing lives, resulting in decreased well-being (Ryff et al., 2003). Given these challenges, people of color in North America, stigmatized and positioned as minorities for the last five centuries, may benefit from support and acceptance from close loved ones with similar racial backgrounds. Yet, most research on both short-term interactions and long-term relationships has neglected the interpersonal experiences of people of color, particularly in same-race dyads.

In the present research, we address this gap by examining the closest relationships of young adults of color by (1) comparing how supported and accepted they feel in same-race and interracial relationships and (2) examining how weekly perceptions of and variations in support and acceptance in these relationships predict flourishing and distress. By focusing on the experiences of young Black, Latine, and Asian people that were documented in a large national study and in a longitudinal study, the present research sheds light on unique benefits of support and acceptance in close same-race relationships for people of color in the U.S.

### **Roles of Support and Acceptance for People of Color**

Extensive research has shown that when people receive social support, they experience positive outcomes, such as improved mental (e.g., lower anxiety and depression; Taylor, 2011) and physical health

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(e.g., reduced inflammation; Uchino et al., 2018). Black, Latine, and Asian people are no exception: When they receive more social support, they report less distress, less stress, fewer symptoms of depression, improved mental health, and higher life satisfaction (e.g., Bronder et al., 2014; Campos et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2021; Kim, 2014; Kim & Epstein, 2021; Lee et al., 2020; Linnabery et al., 2014; Sangalang & Gee, 2012; Watson-Singleton, 2017). In addition, social support can buffer against microaggressions, racial discrimination, and race-related stress (Odafe et al., 2017; Salami et al., 2021; see also Reife et al., 2020). When prejudicial events occur, many Black, Asian, and Latine people seek support from close relationships (Carter & Forsyth, 2010), thus suggesting the importance of support for them.

Acceptance is another influential aspect of interpersonal relationships for well-being (Murray et al., 2006; Stinson et al., 2010). Feeling accepted by close others buffers people against distress and threats (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Murray et al., 2001), and is essential to maintaining healthy close relationships (e.g., Reis, 2012). People from stigmatized communities, however, are afforded fewer opportunities to fulfill their need to belong. For example, they often face obstacles to feeling a sense of belonging and to feeling authentic (Mallett et al., 2011). These difficulties arise, for example, when non-White individuals navigate spaces that center Whiteness, or where their racial group is underrepresented or negatively stereotyped (Gray et al., 2018; McCluney & Rabelo, 2019; Schmader & Sedikides, 2018). Given these challenges, feeling accepted by close loved ones around whom they feel true to themselves may be uniquely important for people of color. Yet, there is little research on their experiences of acceptance in close relationships.

### **Support and Acceptance in Interracial Relationships**

From an intergroup perspective, friendly and intimate contact represents one of the best ways to reduce prejudice (Davies et al., 2011; Tropp & Barlow, 2018). However, interactions with people from other groups can be challenging, and even more so for people contending with minority status or stigma. Interracial interactions with White people can generate stress, heightened vigilance, feelings of threat, ambiguous interactions, and misperceptions (Major et al., 2013; Shelton & Richeson, 2006), or even forms of “intimate racism” (Yampolsky et al., this issue).

For people of color, requesting and receiving support can be especially difficult in interracial relationships. People are often reluctant to talk about their experiences with discrimination because they do not want to seem oversensitive, be embarrassed, or face retaliation (Stangor et al., 2002; Zhang, 2020). In dyads of roommates randomly assigned to live together, students of color who had a White roommate reported less intimacy and less positive emotions than students of color assigned to a roommate of color (e.g., Trail et al., 2009). Additionally, the support people of color receive when they choose to share about these experiences can be inadequate. For instance, Black university students in a predominantly White institution were more likely to feel worse after discussing an incident of racial prejudice with a non-Black friend (43%) than with a Black friend (17%) (Mashburn & Campos, 2021). Consequently, people of color may expect less support from interracial relationships, particularly with White people but also with other people of color, and thus may not want to disclose as much about race-related experiences in these relationships (Davis & High, 2019; Sanchez et al., 2021).

Furthermore, stigma may limit opportunities to feel authentic and accepted in interracial relationships, particularly with White people. People of color risk being disliked or having their experiences denied

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when sharing about stigma experiences in interracial interactions, particularly with White people (Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Phillips & Lowery, 2015). Relatedly, they sometimes engage in racial code switching by mirroring norms, behaviors, and attributes of the dominant group (i.e., White people), but this may translate to behaving less authentically than if they did not code switch (McCluney et al., 2021). For example, students of color sometimes engage with their White roommates and peers and make efforts to leave good impressions, but as a result they behave less authentically, feel less authentic, and experience more negative affect (Shelton et al., 2005; see also Richeson & Shelton, 2007). Thus, it comes to no surprise that the more Black and Latine people expect stigma-based rejection, the fewer White friends they have (Mendoza-Denton & Page-Gould, 2008). Taken together, these findings suggest that it may be especially difficult for people of color to feel truly supported or accepted in interracial relationships, particularly with White people.

### **Support and Acceptance in Same-Race Relationships**

People of color may find it easier to meet their relational needs with people who have similar than dissimilar racial/ethnic experiences. Perceived similarity facilitates connections with other people (e.g., McPherson et al., 2001; Walton et al., 2012). Consistent with this possibility, people of color tend to seek connections with others who share their racial/ethnic backgrounds (Echols & Grahams, 2020; Mollica et al., 2003; Rivas-Drake et al., 2019). They pay close attention to racial representation, and they prefer racially diverse spaces and networks (Emerson & Murphy, 2014; Green et al., 2021; Hart, 2020; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; see also Robertson et al., this issue). On average, people of color highly value same-race relationships and will invest a great time and effort into finding people who share their experiences (e.g., Gilkes Borr, 2019). For instance, Shook and Fazio (2008) found that Black students in a predominantly White institution requested same-race roommates in higher numbers (51.8%) than their White peers (32.6%). In the same study, students paired at random with roommates were also more likely to maintain this relationship if it was same-race as opposed to interracial.

Although they are sought after, same-race relationships between people of color are not well documented. The limited evidence available suggests that same-race relationships often benefit people of color. Young Black people are more likely to open up to and feel accepted by potential Black friends compared to potential White friends, and report less distress when they have supportive (vs. unsupportive) Black parents (Shelton et al., 2010; Taylor, 2010). Relative to integrated spaces and predominantly White spaces, predominantly Black spaces can also provide support that buffers Black people against distress (Graham & Roemer, 2012) and acceptance that increases well-being (Postmes & Branscombe, 2002). These studies indicate that same-race relationships of all kinds may provide feelings of acceptance, possibly with fewer restrictions on authentic expression, than interracial relationships. These relationships may also provide support tailored to overcoming stigma-related challenges. However, the unique contribution of close same-race relationships of people of color and how these relationships influence their daily lives have not yet been fully explored, particularly in contrast with close interracial relationships.

### **The Present Research**

Close same-race relationships may take on special importance for people of color. While limited, the existing literature suggests the possibility that people of color perceive greater support and acceptance in same-race relationships than in interracial relationships. In turn, high quality same-race relationships may

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promote more positive outcomes than high quality interracial relationships. Yet, close same-race relationships between people of color have not been studied as extensively as interactions and relationships that involve White people. In fact, the way people of color uniquely experience close relationships, even interracial, has not been examined extensively. This oversight may be, in part, because psychology has historically centered White experiences and perspectives from the middle and upper classes of North American/Western countries, while making universal claims minimizing contextual factors like race (e.g., Henrich et al., 2010; Roberts et al., 2020; Sabik et al., 2021). As a result, many scholars highlight that psychology is not neutral and call for embracing scholarship that focuses on, uncovers, and serves the needs of marginalized communities (e.g., Buchanan et al., 2021; Cole, 2009; Salter & Adams, 2013; Settles et al., 2020; Syed & McLean, 2021).

The present research represents a step to address gaps in the literature on close relationships, by centering young people of color and how they experience support and acceptance from their close same-race and interracial relationships. In Study 1, we use a U.S. national dataset documenting experiences of Black, Latine, Asian, and White students with their four closest loved ones, to compare their same-race and interracial relationships. In Study 2, Black, Latine, and Asian undergraduate students reported about their three closest relationships in weekly diaries that spanned an academic term. We hypothesize that higher support and acceptance characterize same-race relationships, compared with interracial relationships. In Study 2, we also examine whether support and acceptance in close same-race and interracial relationships predict psychological health. We expect that support and acceptance in same-race relationships predict well-being above and beyond support and acceptance in interracial relationships. As such, the present research examines the unique role of close same-race relationships for people of color in the U.S., where they are minoritized and face stigma.

### Study 1

In Study 1, we assessed whether close same-race and interracial relationships differed in terms of relationship quality, using survey data from a national study conducted in the U.S. Specifically, we tested whether close same-race and interracial relationships differed in terms of perceived support and acceptance by asking students about their four closest relationships. We hypothesized that same-race relationships would be associated with higher support and acceptance. We also examined whether participants' race influenced perceptions of support in acceptance. Because we were interested in the added contribution of same-race relationships compared to interracial relationships, we included the White participants in analyses, with the purpose of exploring if their experience of interracial and particularly of same-race relationships generally differed from people of color's relationship experiences.

### Method

#### *Sample*

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The data was obtained from the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen (NLSF, see <https://nlsf.princeton.edu/>), a project about race, school achievement, and interracial relationships that recruited comparable numbers of young White, Black, Latine, and Asian people (Charles et al., 2009; Massey et al., 2011; see also Bowman & Park, 2015; Smith & Meri Jones, 2011). Recruitment was conducted in 27 predominantly White institutions and one historically Black college in the U.S. (9.7% are liberal arts colleges, 58.7% are private research universities, and 31.6% are public research universities). Students were surveyed once a year, for five consecutive years. The present analyses focused on sophomore year data (wave 3, collected in 2001), which included questions about participants' four closest relationships. Because we were interested in differences between same-race and interracial relationships, we included participants who reported about both same-race and interracial relationships; thus, participants were omitted if they did not provide racial information about close loved ones or themselves (18.9%), if they listed same-race relationships only (26.6%), or if they listed interracial relationships only (13.3%). The final sample ( $n = 1,618$ , 41.2% of the original sample) included 162 White men and 171 White women, 148 Black men and 255 Black women, 156 Latinos and 262 Latinas, and 184 Asian men and 280 Asian women (no data was collected on age).

### **Measures**

**Close relationships.** Participants were asked to “*please give [...] the first names of the four people you consider to be closest to you. These are people with whom you talk about things going on in your life, do things with, etc. They may be friends or relatives.*” Then, they were asked about how they would describe the close other in each of these relationships, from a list of options. Most close relationships were established with a friend (64.47%), a family member (i.e., parent, sibling, or relative; 23.13%), a roommate (8.82%), or a romantic partner or spouse (7.16%). Participants also included relationships with classmates, coworkers, family friends, or teachers.

**Length.** Participants were asked about the length of their relationship with each loved one, in weeks, months, or years. To facilitate analysis, all relationship lengths were converted to years.

**Support.** Participants then indicated how much support for their goals they received in each of their four close relationships, on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very supportive*) to 5 (*very unsupportive*). For each participant, we calculated two mean scores: perceived support in same-race relationships and perceived support in interracial relationships. To facilitate interpretation of analyses, support scores were reversed to span from 1 (*very unsupportive*) to 5 (*very supportive*).

**Acceptance.** Participants were also asked to rate the item, “*How often does this person accept you no matter what you do?*” using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*always*) to 5 (*never*), about each of their close relationships. For each participant, we calculated two mean scores: perceived acceptance in same-race relationships and perceived acceptance in interracial relationships. To facilitate interpretation of analyses, acceptance scores were reversed to span from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*).

### **Results**

#### ***Descriptive Analyses***

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Of the 6,452 relationships described in the final sample, 51.45% were same-race dyads, 34.68% were interracial dyads involving a White person and a person of color, 7.46% were interracial dyads involving either Black and Latine people, Latine and Asian people, or Black and Asian people, and 6.42% were interracial dyads involving a Black, Latine, or Asian person with a person identifying with an undisclosed other racial group (for the breakdown of dyad composition for each racial group, see Table 1). Moreover, 23.13% of all relationships described were with family (19.68% same-race, 3.44% interracial), and 76.87% were not (31.76% same-race, 45.10% interracial). The potential role of familial relationships could not be fully accounted for, however, as only 2.10% of the sample presented the data necessary to examine this question. We also computed the means, standard deviations, and correlations of all the main variables and presented them separately according to respondent's racial group (see Table 2). Of note, same-race and interracial support markers were positively correlated, as were same-race and interracial acceptance ( $.294 \leq r\text{'s} \leq .489$ ;  $p\text{'s} < .001$ ).

### *Analytic Strategy*

We hypothesized that higher levels of support and acceptance would characterize same-race relationships of people of color, compared to interracial relationships. To test these hypotheses, we computed three mixed ANOVAs to examine whether respondent race (between-person factor: *Black*, *Latine*, *Asian*, or *White*), type of relationship (within-person factor: *same-race* or *interracial*), and their interaction predicted relationship length, support, and acceptance. For people of color, interracial relationships were aggregated, whether they were with White people or other people of color. We conducted sensitivity analyses using G\*Power 3.1 that accounted for sample size ( $n = 1618$ ), for between-person effects (four levels: White, Black, Latine, and Asian), for within-person effects (two levels: same-race and interracial relationships), for correlations between them, and for non-sphericity estimates ( $\epsilon = 1.00$ ). These ANOVAs had 80% power to detect respondent race main effects of  $f = .062$  (*relationship length*),  $f = .065$  (*support*) and  $f = .067$  (*acceptance*); relationship type main effects of  $f = .046$  (*relationship length*),  $f = .049$  (*support*) and  $f = .040$  (*acceptance*); and race  $\times$  relationship interaction effects of  $f = .054$  (*relationship length*),  $f = .051$  (*support*), and  $f = .047$  (*acceptance*). These effect sizes correspond to  $r$ -squared ( $r^2$ ) values of approximately .004 (main effect of race), .002 (main effect of relationship type), and .003 (interaction effect). The assumption of sphericity was not violated in any multivariate analyses (Mauchly's  $\omega = 1.00$ ,  $p < .001$ , Huynh-Feldt's  $\epsilon = 1.00$ ).

### *Relationship Length*

Analyses first compared relationship length by type and respondent's race (see Figure 1). There was a main effect of relationship type on relationship length,  $F(1, 1614) = 997.493$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .382$ . On average, students reported that their close same-race relationships ( $M = 9.835$  yrs,  $SD = 6.804$ ) had been established for longer than their close interracial relationships ( $M = 4.026$  yrs,  $SD = 3.870$ ). Respondent race also predicted relationship length,  $F(3, 1614) = 40.196$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .070$ . Compared to White respondents, Black (diff = 1.706 yrs,  $CI_{95\%} [1.126, 2.286]$ ,  $p < .001$ ), Latine (diff = 3.123 yrs,  $CI_{95\%} [2.547, 3.698]$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and Asian (diff = 1.137 yrs,  $CI_{95\%} [0.574, 1.699]$ ,  $p < .001$ ) respondents had longer relationships, whether same-race or interracial.

An interaction effect was also found,  $F(3, 1614) = 16.396$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .030$ . Although participants reported longer same-race than interracial relationships on average, differences in length varied depending

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on racial group membership. Specifically, Latine,  $F(1, 417) = 423.960, p < .001, \eta^2 = .504$ , Black,  $F(1, 402) = 197.090, p < .001, \eta^2 = .329$ , and Asian students,  $F(1, 463) = 266.616, p < .001, \eta^2 = .365$ , reported greater differences in relationship length than White students,  $F(1, 332) = 173.275, p < .001, \eta^2 = .343$  (see Table 2 for means). Thus, although close same-race relationships were established for and lasted longer than close interracial relationships for all participants, regardless of race, length differences between same-race and interracial relationships were larger for Latine, Black, and Asian students.

### **Support**

In terms of support for their goals, there was a main effect of relationship type,  $F(1, 1613) = 36.499, p < .001, \eta^2 = .022$ , such that students felt more supported in same-race ( $M = 4.793, SD = .445$ ) than in interracial relationships ( $M = 4.718, SD = .536$ ). Respondent race also had a main effect predicting support,  $F(3, 1613) = 10.698, p < .001, \eta^2 = .020$ . Compared to White respondents, greater support was reported by Black respondents (diff = 0.104,  $p = .001, CI_{95\%} [0.044, 0.165]$ ) and Latine respondents (diff = 0.160,  $p < .001, CI_{95\%} [0.100, 0.220]$ ), but not Asian respondents (diff = 0.045,  $p = .129, CI_{95\%} [-.013, .104]$ ). There was no interaction,  $F(3, 1613) = 0.635, p = .592, \eta^2 = .001$ . In sum, regardless of race, students felt more support for their goals in same-race relationships. Compared with White respondents, Latine and Black students also felt more support from close loved ones, regardless of relationship type.

### **Acceptance**

There was a main effect of relationship type,  $F(1, 1614) = 17.445, p < .001, \eta^2 = .011$ , such that, on average, more unconditional acceptance was reported in same-race relationships ( $M = 4.671, SD = 0.509$ ) than in interracial relationships ( $M = 4.601, SD = 0.553$ ). Respondent race also had a significant main effect on acceptance,  $F(3, 1614) = 7.785, p < .001, \eta^2 = .014$ . Specifically, compared to White students, greater acceptance was reported by Black (diff = 0.081,  $CI_{95\%} [0.018, 0.144], p = .012$ ) and Latine students (diff = .0143,  $CI_{95\%} [0.081, 0.206], p < .001$ ), but not by Asian students (diff = 0.038,  $CI_{95\%} [-0.023, 0.099], p = .216$ ). There was no race  $\times$  relationship interaction,  $F(3, 1614) = 1.757, p = .154, \eta^2 = .003$ . In short, compared with White students, Black and Latine students felt both more accepted in same-race relationships and more accepted overall, regardless of relationship type.

### **Discussion**

Study 1 indicates that young people perceive greater support and acceptance from their same-race relationships than from their interracial relationships, regardless of their racial/ethnic background. It is meaningful that these patterns were found in participants' four closest relationships. Even in the closest relationships, in which arguably the highest levels of support and acceptance are generally to be expected and where ceiling effects are likely, same-race relationships were significantly perceived as greater in quality than interracial relationships. Further, we found that Black and Latine respondents perceived greater support and acceptance in their relationships, regardless of type (i.e., same-race or interracial) compared to Asian and White respondents. Thus, young Black and Latine adults may intentionally seek relationships that provide greater support and acceptance, compared to young Asian and White adults.

Study 1 also indicated that same-race and interracial support were correlated, as well as same-race and interracial acceptance. These findings may reflect individual differences in how relationships are



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perceived, or in the types of relationships sought by participants. For example, some students may seek and maintain close relationships only from people who can provide high levels of support and acceptance, regardless of the race of close others. It is also possible that close same-race relationships facilitate the development of interracial relationships for some people. For example, having supportive and accepting close same-race relationships may make it safer to also entertain and develop interracial relationships. In this context, these correlations suggest that same-race relationships may be a pillar on which mixed networks can develop.

### Study 2

Study 1 provides initial evidence that people generally view same-race relationships as providing greater support and acceptance than interracial relationships. It is unclear, however, whether these higher quality same-race relationships also promote greater psychological well-being in daily life, and whether these effects are unique to same-race relationships. Thus, in Study 2, we examined whether higher quality same-race relationships predicted greater psychological well-being in daily life, and whether these effects held when accounting for contributions from interracial relationships. Study 2 furthers the focus on communities of color by including only participants identifying as Black, Latine, and Asian in the sample<sup>1</sup>. Study 2 data also allowed us to control for the possible role of familial relationships.

Additionally, Study 1 used global measures of relationship quality to provide a high-level portrait of how people perceive same-race and interracial relationships. These measures may reflect people's motivation to see close others positively (e.g., Murray et al., 1996), especially for broader traits that encompass many behaviors (Neff & Karney, 2002). That is, when asked to reflect on their relationships in a general sense, people may more easily recall instances in which close others were supportive and accepting than moments when they were not, because they want to see their close others positively. In daily life, however, various experiences may result in fluctuations in relationship perceptions. For example, if a close other was unavailable to provide support during a particularly stressful week, people may report a decrease in support relative to previous weeks. Consequently, Study 2 focused on perceptions of support and acceptance during particular weeks rather than on general perceptions of close relationships.

In Study 2, we tested two sets of hypotheses. First, with the aim to replicate the main findings from Study 1, we predicted that same-race relationships would be perceived as more supportive and accepting than interracial relationships. Second, and extending these findings, we examined whether higher quality same-race relationships was associated with greater psychological well-being (i.e., flourishing and depressive affect) in daily life, above and beyond interracial relationships, in two ways. Specifically, we expected that during weeks when people of color perceived more support and acceptance in their same-race close relationships, they also experienced greater psychological well-being than usual (within-person effects). We also expected that, compared with people of color reporting less supportive and accepting close relationships, people of color who perceived their same-race relationships to be more supportive and accepting experienced greater psychological well-being in daily life (between-person effects). In testing for these effects, we considered the alternative hypothesis that greater psychological well-being is associated with high-quality close relationships, regardless of relationship type, by assessing whether the effects of same-race relationships held when controlling for the effects of interracial relationships. We predicted

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that high-quality same-race relationships would continue to predict greater psychological well-being above and beyond the effects of interracial relationships.

### Methods

#### *Participants*

First-year students were recruited from an elite university in the Midwest, a predominantly White institution, during the first three weeks of their first term. We recruited 103 students ( $M = 18.14$  years-old,  $SD = 0.60$ ), including 62 women, 32 men, and nine participants who did not declare a gender. The sample consisted solely of participants of color, with 43 Asian, 29 Black, 30 Latine, and one Multiracial participant.<sup>2</sup> On average, participants completed 4.72 ( $SD = 1.52$ ) of the seven diary surveys they were invited to complete (median response rate: 71.43%). In total, participants provided 486 diary surveys. Compensation was provided depending on the number of diaries completed, for a maximum of \$60.

#### *Procedure*

Participants completed an initial survey in which they provided details about their three closest relationships. This initial survey included a question on whether participants had the same race/ethnicity as their each of their closed loved one, which was used to code same-race and interracial relationships. Next, participants were invited to complete diaries every Sunday night at 8 PM during the seven remaining weeks of the term through a customized smartphone app (ExperienceSampler; Thai & Page-Gould, 2018) or through online surveys hosted on Qualtrics.<sup>3</sup> Participants who did not complete their survey by Monday morning received a reminder to do so. Surveys were considered missing if they were not completed by the end of Monday.

Every week, for each of their three closest relationships, participants indicated whether they felt “*supported by this person,*” and whether they found that “*this person accept[ed them] unconditionally, no matter what*” during that week, on a scale ranging from 1 (*None of the time*) to 5 (*All of the time*). To ensure that participants reported about the same relationships each week, we customized questions with the initials of their closest loved ones. Participants then completed the Flourishing life scale (Diener et al., 2010), which was adapted to capture weekly fluctuations during which the diaries were completed; this led to the exclusion of two items less conducive to such rephrasing. Specifically, they indicated agreement with the resulting 6-item version of the scale (e.g., “*This week, I led a purposeful and meaningful life*”)<sup>3</sup>, on a Likert scale with endpoints labeled 1 (*Strongly disagree*) and 5 (*Strongly agree*). A multilevel CFA revealed that this composite was reliable at both within-person,  $\omega^w = .79$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [.75, .82]$ , and between-person levels,  $\omega^b = .91$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [.87, .93]$  (Lai, 2021). Using the same Likert scale, they also reported their depressive affect (“*This week, I had little interest or pleasure in doing things*”; Bowling, 2005).

### Results

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***Descriptive Analyses***

For each variable of interest, we reported means and standard errors for each racial group included in the sample and for the overall sample. We also computed correlations for these variables using the overall sample (see Table 3). In this sample, 41 participants reported that all three of their closest relationships were same-race relationships, five reported that all three were interracial relationships, and 55 participants had a combination of close same-race and interracial relationships as their three closest. Race of relationship partners was not available for two participants. Participants reported about 211 same-race relationships (60.19% with family members, 39.81% with non-family members) and 92 interracial relationships (7.61% with family members, 92.39% with non-family members). On average, relationships lasted 10.91 years ( $SD = 6.92$  years,  $range = 0$  to 20 years).

***Support and Acceptance in Same-Race and Interracial Relationships***

**Analytic Strategy.** In all analyses reported, we used the lme4 package (Bates et al., 2015) in R version 4.1.1 (R Core Team, 2021) with an unstructured covariance matrix and Satterthwaite degrees of freedom. To examine if the findings of Study 1 replicate, we first tested whether students reported within-person differences in support and acceptance in same-race and interracial relationships (see Figure 3) using 2-level multilevel models, with weekly reports of relationship quality (Level 1) nested within participants (Level 2). These models included a random intercept for each participant, allowing the average level of relationship quality to vary between participants. There were no apparent time trends and no specific hypotheses about time, however we accounted for time in order to control for any variable co-varying with time. To do so, we used a grand-mean centered variable (i.e., values were centered around week 4, the midpoint of the data collection period), as a fixed linear effect. We also modeled time as a random slope to allow for different trajectories across the seven weeks for each participant (within-person effect; Bolger & Laurenceau, 2013). Because we were interested in whether individuals perceived their same-race and interracial relationships differently, we entered relationship type as a person-centered variable to look at within-person effects. This allowed including 101 participants and 1414 observations (2 participants who had incomplete data could not be included). Sensitivity analyses using Monte Carlo simulations revealed this sample was sufficiently powered (i.e., at least 80%) to detect a small effect of  $r = .08$  at the within-person level (with  $df = 1255.43$ ).

**Do greater support and acceptance characterize same-race (vs. interracial) relationships?** There was a significant within-person effect of relationship type: consistent with Study 1, students of color reported greater support in same-race than in interracial relationships,  $b = 0.07$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [0.004, 0.13]$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $t(1255.43) = 2.06$ ,  $p = .039$ ,  $r = .06$ . In a pattern of results consistent with Study 1, there was a marginally significant within-person effect of relationship type such that students of color reported greater acceptance in same-race than interracial relationships,  $b = 0.06$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [-0.01, 0.12]$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $t(1249.34) = 1.76$ ,  $p = .078$ ,  $r = .05$ .

**Can findings be explained by relationships being familial or not?** Given that most same-race relationships reported were with family, we also tested whether same-race familial relationships differed from other relationships on support and acceptance to examine if effects were due to differences between familial vs. non-familial relationships. To test this possibility, we classified relationships in four categories (i.e., same-race family, same-race non-family, interracial family, and interracial non-family) using three

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dummy-coded variables. We then person-centered these dummy-coded variables to examine within-person differences in perceptions of support and acceptance. Participants who reported about only one type of relationship (e.g., only same-race family relationships) contributed to estimates of the model's intercept and effect of time. Hence, these analyses included 101 participants and 1414 observations.

Same-race familial relationships did not differ from same-race non-familial relationships on support,  $b = -0.0005$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [-0.15, 0.15]$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $t(1253.64) = -0.01$ ,  $p = .995$ ,  $r = .00$ , or acceptance,  $b = 0.01$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [-0.13, 0.16]$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $t(1247.78) = 0.16$ ,  $p = .873$ ,  $r = .00$ . Relative to interracial familial relationships, same-race familial relationships were lower in support,  $b = 0.57$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [0.14, 1.00]$ ,  $SE = 0.22$ ,  $t(1253.08) = 2.63$ ,  $p = .009$ ,  $r = .07$ , but did not differ on acceptance,  $b = 0.27$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [-0.16, 0.69]$ ,  $SE = 0.21$ ,  $t(1247.18) = 1.27$ ,  $p = .205$ ,  $r = .04$ . However, these results should be interpreted with caution because only seven relationships were interracial and with family members. Finally, compared with interracial non-familial relationships, same-race familial relationships were perceived to be greater in support,  $b = -0.22$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [-0.37, -0.07]$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $t(1253.36) = -2.86$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $r = .08$ , and acceptance,  $b = -0.15$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [-0.30, -0.01]$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $t(1247.48) = -2.05$ ,  $p = .041$ ,  $r = .06$ . Given these findings, it is unlikely that differences in quality between interracial and same-race relationships quality are driven by relationships with family members. Thus, we did not control for family relationship in subsequent analyses.

### *Same-Race Relationship Quality and Weekly Psychological Well-Being*

**Analytic Strategy.** Next, we tested whether weekly support and acceptance in same-race relationships predicted flourishing and depressive affect experienced from week to week. For these analyses, we included any participants who reported at least one same-race relationship ( $n_{\text{participants}} = 96$ ;  $n_{\text{observations}} = 447$ ). We then examined whether support and acceptance in same-race relationships uniquely predicted flourishing and depressive affect while controlling for interracial support and acceptance. For these analyses, we included any participants who reported at least one same-race relationship and one interracial relationship ( $n_{\text{participants}} = 55$ ;  $n_{\text{observations}} = 264$ ).

Sensitivity analyses using Monte Carlo simulations revealed that the sample was sufficiently powered (i.e., at least 80%) to detect a medium effect of  $r = .28$  at the between-person level (with  $df = 89.99$ ) and a small-to-medium effect of  $r = .15$  at the within-person level (with  $df = 348.20$ ) when examining same-race relationships only. In models that included both same-race and interracial predictors, the sample was sufficiently powered to detect a medium effect of  $r = .34$  at the between-person level (with  $df = 56.18$ ) and a small-to-medium effect of  $r = .19$  at the within-person level (with  $df = 206.25$ ).

To test these hypotheses, we conducted 2-level multilevel models with weekly diaries (Level 1) nested within participants (Level 2). For these models, we included a random intercept for each participant, allowing the average level of psychological well-being to vary between participants. Despite no apparent time trends and specific hypotheses about time, we included time as a grand-mean centered variable (i.e., values were centered around week 4, the midpoint of the diary data collection period) as a fixed linear effect to control for any variables co-varying with time. In each case, we also modeled time as a random slope to allow for different trajectories for each participant across the seven-weeks<sup>4</sup> (within-person effect; Bolger & Laurenceau, 2013).

We first created weekly scores of support and acceptance by averaging across each participant's ratings of their close relationships for that week. Support and acceptance ratings from same-race relationships were

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averaged together, and support and acceptance ratings from interracial relationships were averaged together. Because these variables varied both between- and within-person, we separated these predictors into their between- and within-person components. For the between-person component, we calculated an average for each person across all their diaries. For example, the between-person same-race support predictor is calculated by averaging all the same-race support scores one participant reports across the seven weeks. For the within-person component, we person centered each person's weekly scores using their mean. For example, using the participant's same-race support mean, we subtract each week's same-race support score from this mean. This within-person score captures the extent to which the participant deviated from their own mean for a particular week.

We entered both the between- and within-person predictors in all models concurrently to examine their separate effects. This approach allowed us to examine two things simultaneously (see Figure 2). First, it was possible to assess how people differed from each other—i.e., between-person effects; asking if people with higher quality same-race close relationships differ from those with lower quality same-race relationships. Second, it allowed us to examine how each person's experiences fluctuated from week to week compared to their own average and whether these experiences differed for interracial and same-race partners—i.e., within-person effects; asking if people experience changes in their psychological well-being when they experience changes in their same-race relationships.

To rule out the alternative explanation that results were due to support and acceptance in close relationships in general, we examined the effect of same-race support and acceptance while controlling for between- and within-person effects of interracial support and acceptance using the subset of participants who reported about both same-race and interracial relationships.<sup>5</sup> As in Study 1, interracial relationships with White people and with other people of color were analyzed together.

**Is same-race relationship support associated with more flourishing?** A significant between-person effect of same-race support revealed that participants who, on average, reported greater support in their same-race close relationships also experienced more flourishing,  $b = 0.43$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [0.24, 0.61]$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ,  $t(89.85) = 4.61$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $r = .44$ . A significant within-person effect of same-race support indicated that during weeks when participants experienced greater support than usual in their same-race relationships, they reported greater flourishing,  $b = 0.14$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [0.03, 0.25]$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $t(348.20) = 2.44$ ,  $p = .015$ ,  $r = .13$ .

These results were consistent when controlling for the contribution of interracial support. The between-person effect of same-race support remained significant,  $b = 0.32$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [0.03, 0.61]$ ,  $SE = 0.15$ ,  $t(56.18) = 2.14$ ,  $p = .037$ ,  $r = .27$ , and within-person effect of same-race support became marginally significant,  $b = 0.13$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [-0.01, 0.27]$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $t(206.25) = 1.81$ ,  $p = .072$ ,  $r = .13$ . Therefore, students of color reported more flourishing if they tended to receive more support than other students from their same-race relationships. More flourishing was also reported by all students, regardless of whether their overall level of same-race support was high or low, during weeks when they reported more support in same-race relationships than usual. Thus, these effects held when accounting for interracial support.

**Is same-race relationship acceptance associated with more flourishing?** There was a significant between-person effect of same-race acceptance,  $b = 0.36$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [0.17, 0.56]$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t(90.47) = 3.62$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $r = .36$ . Compared to students who felt less accepted in their same-race close relationships,

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students who felt more accepted in their same-race close relationships experienced greater flourishing. There was no within-person effect of same-race acceptance,  $b = 0.01$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [-0.11, 0.14]$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $t(350.90) = 0.19$ ,  $p = .848$ ,  $r = .01$ .

These results remained consistent even after controlling for interracial acceptance. A significant between-person effect of same-race acceptance revealed that students of color who felt more accepted in their close same-race relationships on average, beyond interracial acceptance, experienced greater flourishing,  $b = 0.29$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [0.01, 0.57]$ ,  $SE = 0.14$ ,  $t(50.48) = 2.07$ ,  $p = .044$ ,  $r = .28$ . There was no within-person effect of same-race acceptance,  $b = 0.05$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [-0.12, 0.22]$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $t(206.47) = 0.60$ ,  $p = .549$ ,  $r = .04$ . In sum, relative to other students, students of color who felt more accepted in their same-race relationships also experienced more flourishing, even after controlling for interracial acceptance.

**Is higher same-race relationship support associated with lower depressive affect?** A significant between-person effect of same-race support indicated that students who reported greater same-race support, on average, reported less depressive affect,  $b = -0.47$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [-0.72, -0.21]$ ,  $SE = 0.13$ ,  $t(91.88) = -3.63$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $r = .35$ . There was no within-person effect of same-race support,  $b = -0.08$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [-0.33, 0.17]$ ,  $SE = 0.12$ ,  $t(350.25) = -0.67$ ,  $p = .502$ ,  $r = .04$ .

These results remained consistent after we controlled for interracial support. The between-person effect of same-race support remained significant, such that people who had greater same-race support on average, beyond interracial support, were less depressed during the week,  $b = -0.64$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [-0.98, -0.31]$ ,  $SE = 0.17$ ,  $t(58.31) = -3.67$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $r = .43$ . There was no within-person effect of same-race support on depressive affect,  $b = -0.15$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [-0.43, 0.14]$ ,  $SE = 0.14$ ,  $t(209.28) = -1.05$ ,  $p = .294$ ,  $r = .07$ . In sum, relative to other students, students who felt more supported in same-race relationships experienced less depressive affect, even after controlling for interracial support.

**Is higher same-race relationship acceptance associated with lower depressive affect?** There was a significant between-person effect,  $b = -0.49$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [-0.76, -0.22]$ ,  $SE = 0.14$ ,  $t(94.06) = -3.63$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $r = .35$ . People who experienced greater same-race acceptance, on average, reported lower depressive affect than people who reported lower same-race acceptance. There was a significant within-person effect of same-race acceptance,  $b = -0.30$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [-0.58, -0.04]$ ,  $SE = 0.14$ ,  $t(355.11) = -2.17$ ,  $p = .031$ ,  $r = .11$ . During weeks when people experienced more same-race acceptance than usual, they reported less depressive affect.

The between-person effect of same-race acceptance remained significant after controlling for interracial acceptance,  $b = -0.55$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [-0.87, -0.22]$ ,  $SE = 0.17$ ,  $t(52.23) = -3.27$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $r = .41$ . People who experienced greater same-race acceptance than most, on average and beyond interracial acceptance, were less depressed during the week. In addition, the within-person effect of same-race acceptance became significant after controlling for interracial acceptance,  $b = -0.43$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [-0.75, -0.09]$ ,  $SE = 0.17$ ,  $t(208.91) = -2.56$ ,  $p = .011$ ,  $r = .17$ . Specifically, during weeks when people experienced greater acceptance in their same-race relationships than usual, beyond interracial acceptance, they felt less depressed than during their other weeks.

**Temporal Order.** Given that only two within-person effects are significant, the temporal order for our effects cannot be determined.<sup>4</sup> For exploratory purposes, we conducted lagged analyses that tested whether one week's support and acceptance in same-race and interracial relationships predicted the

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subsequent week's psychological well-being while controlling for that week's psychological well-being. However, within-person effects for these lagged analyses were inconsistent. No lagged effect replicated the within-effects found in Study 2: same-race support on one week was not associated with flourishing on the following week or vice-versa, and same-race acceptance on one week was not associated with depressive affect on the following week or vice-versa. Lagged analyses are reported in detail in supplementary materials.

### Discussion

Consistent with Study 1, people of color in Study 2 reported that their close same-race relationships provide greater support and marginally greater acceptance in same-race than in interracial relationships. In addition, people of color who reported the highest quality same-race relationships experienced greater psychological well-being. Analyses controlling for interracial relationship contributions suggest that these well-being increases were uniquely associated with higher quality same-race relationships, as opposed to high-quality relationships in general. Results including interracial relationships, however, need to be interpreted with caution because only a subset of participants were included in these analyses. It is possible that individuals who had both same-race and interracial close relationships differed from those with only interracial or only same-race relationships in systematic ways, limiting our ability to generalize these findings.

We also found evidence that weekly changes in same-race relationships influence people of color's psychological well-being week to week, in daily life. During weeks when people of color felt more supported than usual in their same-race relationships, they reported greater flourishing even after controlling for changes in support in interracial relationships. Moreover, during weeks when people of color felt more accepted than usual in their same-race relationships, they reported lower depressive affect even after controlling for changes in acceptance in interracial relationships. Taken together, these findings suggest people of color may be more likely to thrive when they receive greater support and acceptance in their same-race relationships.

### General Discussion

Racial stigma can profoundly transform the ties that bind people together. This is in part because support and acceptance in relationships are important antidotes to the adverse psychological and health outcomes of racial stigma. However, it may be more difficult for people to provide support and acceptance in interracial relationships. Same-race relationships may take on special importance for people of color because they may provide more opportunities for support and acceptance than interracial relationships. Yet, few studies focus on them. In two studies, we compared the support and acceptance provided by close same-race and interracial others, as an initial step to remedying this gap in the literature.

Study 1 revealed that people of color report greater support and acceptance from their close same-race relationships compared to their close interracial relationships (similar trends were found in the less well-powered Study 2). Study 1 also revealed that, compared to White respondents, Black and Latine respondents perceived greater support and acceptance in their close relationships, regardless of their loved ones' racial/ethnic identity. For them, supportive and accepting relationships may be particularly important, especially in spaces where they are underrepresented and negatively stereotyped such as college. In Study 2, we extended these findings with significant between-effects indicating that people of

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color engaged in more supportive and accepting same-race relationships reported higher flourishing and lower depressive symptoms, above and beyond interracial support and acceptance. Further, we found significant effects such that, on weeks when people of color experienced greater support than usual from their same-race relationships, they reported more flourishing than on other weeks, even after accounting for changes in support in interracial relationships. Relatedly, on weeks when people of color experienced greater acceptance than usual from their same-race relationships, they reported lower depressive affect, even after accounting for changes in acceptance in interracial relationships. Additional analyses disentangled familial relationships from same-race relationships, and suggested that family members are not driving differences between same-race and interracial relationships. Taken together, these findings emphasize the importance of same-race relationships for the well-being of people of color.

### **The Experience of Stigma and Relationships for People of Color**

For the well-being of people from stigmatized racial communities, it might be key to develop supportive and accepting relationships, particularly if they are close same-race relationships. This finding emerged for students attending almost only predominantly White institutions in the U.S., and who may be stigmatized and minoritized on a regular basis. Same-race and interracial relationships likely yield different benefits in situations where a racial group forms the majority or is not stigmatized. For example, while sharing similar experiences may be the basis for the unique benefits in same-race relationships, being part of a majority group may lower needs to be seen and understood, even if this group is stigmatized (e.g., as with Black people in South Africa). Disentangling the distinct contributions of minority status and stigma is an important avenue for future research about same-race and interracial relationships, especially as U.S. demographics shift towards becoming a majority-minority nation (Richeson & Sommers, 2016).

Stigma shapes other relationship dynamics for people of color. For instance, while same-race relationships may be more supportive on average, they can also be the source of battle fatigue (Mashburn & Campos, 2021). People of color may feel drained because they must combat racism regularly, and frequent discussions of race-related experiences may sometimes exacerbate feelings of depletion. Relatedly, while experiences of stigma vary between Black, Asian, and Latine individuals (e.g., Zou & Cheryan, 2017), interracial relationships between people of color may confer benefits when similar experiences of stigma are emphasized (e.g., Craig & Richeson, 2016). For instance, establishing shared experiences of stigma strengthens coalition building across stigmatized groups and is thus meaningful for increased solidarity in social movements and policy change (Cortland et al., 2017; Craig & Richeson, 2012; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Pérez, 2021; Vollhardt, 2015). Additional benefits of same-race relationships deserve more attention in future research, but so do challenges unique to same-race relationships for people of color, and the roles that interracial relationships can play. Future research could also explore whether increases in solidarity between stigmatized racial groups are associated with support and acceptance in interracial relationships among people of color, and whether intimacy building behaviors play a mediating role in these associations (Shelton et al., 2010; Trail et al., 2009).

### **Possible Mechanisms Explaining Roles of Same-Race and Interracial Relationships**

In addition to greater support and acceptance, same-race relationships could also be characterized by other positive relationship processes such as greater self-disclosure and understanding. Self-disclosure is a core mechanism through which relationships are built and maintained: Without initial disclosure, a



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partner cannot show responsiveness, and consequently, intimacy cannot fully develop (Laurenceau et al., 1998; Reis & Shaver, 1988). Self-disclosure in same-race and interracial relationships has not been examined extensively, but one study found that Black college students were more likely to disclose to their Black than their White friends (Shelton et al., 2010). White people may not realize that some of their Black friends held back: In the same study, White college students believed that their White and Black friends self-disclosed to the same degree. In contrast, people of color may feel more comfortable disclosing a larger breadth of their experiences, including discrimination incidents, with same-race close others, relative to White people, resulting in greater self-disclosure besides greater acceptance and intimacy.

Understanding is also critical for healthy relationship development (Auger et al., submitted; Finkenauer & Righetti, 2011; Reis et al., 2017). If people do not understand one another, they cannot coordinate or respond to each other's needs, making intimacy more difficult to build than when understanding is present. Because people from the same racial group are more likely to have similar experiences, they may face fewer barriers to understanding each other than people from different racial groups. Consistent with this possibility, one event sampling study found that for Black, Asian, and White college students, same-race interactions were associated with more understanding than interracial interactions (Mallett et al., 2016). However, much less is known about how understanding unfolds in long-term close relationships for people of color. Future research could examine whether close same-race and interracial relationships differ in other aspects critical to relationship development and maintenance, such as self-disclosure and understanding.

Relatedly, Study 1 demonstrated that Black, Asian, and Latine respondents had longer same-race relationships in comparison to White respondents. This might be related to the length of familial relationships; yet, the familial relationships could not explain same-race effects in Study 2 data (Study 1 data was too limited for analysis). Alternatively, these findings may denote relational mobility, which refers to the extent to which an environment allows individuals to choose their relationships based on personal preference rather than out of obligation or to fulfill expectations (Yuki & Schug, 2012). Relational mobility fosters different cultural norms around the world and tends to be lowest in communities whose subsistence is interdependent (Thomson et al., 2018). It is easy to imagine that relational mobility may also set different expectations between racial communities in the U.S., such as communities with high obligations towards family members. If this is the case, members of communities of color with low relational mobility may find it challenging to join new spaces. Future research could investigate the degree of relational mobility in different U.S. communities and its influence on people of color. It could also investigate more fully the different roles of close relationships with family and non-family members for communities of color.

### **Policy Implications for Institutions and Organizations**

The present research aligns with other studies suggesting that interracial contact may be beneficial under some circumstances, but not necessarily as beneficial for people of color as it is for White people (e.g., Tropp, 2006). Even when people of color willingly raise awareness about race by discussing their experience with their White friends, it may cost them to open up (Mashburn & Campos, 2021; Wout et al., 2014). While recognizing that some forms of allyship can benefit people of color in institutions and organizations (e.g., Johnson & Pietri, 2020), the present findings suggest that interracial alliances may not

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provide the same level of support and acceptance as same-race relationships. Rather, they reaffirm the importance of same-race relationships for people of color. Therefore, the present studies are in line with recommendations to develop dedicated spaces in organizations and institutions where people of color can meet to increase their opportunities for support and acceptance (Onyeador et al., 2021).

In showing differences between perceived acceptance in same-race and interracial relationships, the present findings also connect with research suggesting that people of color are not necessarily offered the same interpersonal opportunities to belong in institutions and organizations. In many organizations and institutions, prevalent norms are colorblind and center Whiteness by default. As institutional and organizational norms are increasingly recognized as centering certain groups over others (e.g., Cheryan & Markus, 2020; Stephens et al., 2012), providing additional opportunities for people of color to be accepted and supported as their authentic self is critical. Integrating cultural norms and valuing historic contributions from communities of color represent a promising step to allow them to be accepted (e.g., Gray et al., 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Future research could document the effects on perceived belonging and acceptance of attempts to integrate and value communities of color. For example, more attention may be given to affinity groups, where people in an institution or field who have a similar background meet. Indeed, these groups have potential to foster belonging and acceptance, but are sometimes met with pushback, which could reduce perceptions of support and acceptance in other ways (Bartley, 2013; Bryan, 2001).

### Limitations

Despite the strengths of the present studies, they are also limited in certain ways. The usage of single items is common in widely distributed surveys and in intensive longitudinal studies, but it limits assessments of reliability. Further, although we proposed that same-race close others would be more supportive and accepting, we did not collect information about the occurrence of stigma-related events, the choice to disclose them to loved ones, the resulting reactions of loved ones, or the salience of race for participants. This information would allow one to compare whether moments marked by stigma are associated with a greater need for or greater difficulties finding support and acceptance in relationships. Another limitation is that the present studies focused on people's three or four closest relationships and did not compare them to other relationships. Close relationships are characterized by higher levels of interdependence that are not present in other relationships; thus, the dynamics and processes of close relationships may not apply to more distant relationships such as those between co-workers or acquaintances. That said, it is revealing that differential effects of same-race and interracial were found in people's closest relationships and while examining overall perceptions of support and acceptance (rather than support and acceptance provided in response to specific stigma-related events). Because any person's closest relationships are likely to bring high levels of support and acceptance, the designs of the present studies are conservative in that they are not conducive to finding differences between same-race and interracial relationships—yet, analyses revealed differences between them. Differences generally found between same-race and interracial relationships may be more pronounced in less close relationships, and future research could examine this question more closely.

The present studies centered the experiences of Black, Latine, and Asian people, but the patterns may also be relevant in other groups, such as members of Indigenous tribes and communities. Generally, Indigenous people view themselves in an interdependent manner (e.g., Fryberg et al., 2013), which

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suggests that their relationships with others, and perhaps especially with people who identify similarly, may play a distinct role for them. The trends found in the present studies also deserve to be explored with people belonging to other groups or multiple groups. For instance, although settings with people who share their minority ethnic identity is beneficial to biracial people (Sanchez & Garcia, 2009), many biracial people have White family members and may view close relationships with White people differently than other people of color. For some biracial people, relationships with White family members possibly represent a distinct type of shared-race relationship because they share one of their component racial identities.

Other people face unique challenges due to racial stigma that likely influence the quality of their relationships. Although concealing their identity may decrease their chances of experiencing discrimination for people who can “pass” as White, concealment is also associated with lower authenticity, which may result in lower acceptance (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010; Newheiser & Barreto, 2014; see also Foster & Talley, this issue). Colorism is an additional layer of oppression that may increase stigma and lower acceptance among people with darker skin tones (Rosario et al., 2021). Finally, it is essential to consider experiences of intersecting stigmatized identities (see for example Eschliman et al., this issue). The compounding effects of intersecting stigmas sometimes leads to lower acceptance in relationships and networks where people share only one stigmatized identity than in relationships where people share more than one (Garr-Schultz & Gardner, 2021). For people facing intersectional stigmas, sharing similar racial/ethnic background may not always provide high acceptance and support.

### Conclusions

The literature on interpersonal relationships and on intergroup contact has not examined extensively how people of color experience close same-race relationships, despite reasons to believe that these relationships are experienced differently than interracial relationships. The present research addresses this gap by focusing on support and acceptance in close relationships for young people of color. In a national study and an intensive longitudinal study conducted in the U.S., we found that people of color felt more supported and accepted in their close same-race relationships than in their close interracial relationships. National study data also suggest that Black and Latine people may seek relationships characterized by higher support and acceptance, regardless of whether these relationships were established with someone with the same or a different racial/ethnic background. Moreover, diary data suggests that greater same-race support and acceptance were associated with more flourishing and lower depressive affect. Taken together, these findings emphasize the importance of same-race relationships for people of color, and their potential for nurturing opportunities for people of color to be supported and engage authentically with others.

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## Notes

1: We excluded participants who identified as multiracial if they described themselves as White. When including these participants in the analyses, results were consistent with those reported in the manuscript. Results with these participants are reported in supplementary materials.

2: The data included 102 Qualtrics diary surveys (21% of surveys). Results remained consistent when controlling for which platform was used to collect survey data.

3: We excluded two items from the Flourishing scale (i.e., “I am a good person and live a good life” and “People respect me”) because they captured more global evaluations of one's life and were less likely to fluctuate from week to week. We also aimed to keep our diary items short as possible to ease participants' burden and decrease the likelihood of attrition.

4: The model testing for whether same-race relationship support is associated with more flourishing while controlling for interracial support did not include a random slope of time because this random structure was too complex to be supported by our data.

5: For brevity, we did not report the effects of interracial support or acceptance; however, interracial support or acceptance did not consistently predict depressive affect or flourishing when same-race support or acceptance was also in the model. These results are reported in Supplementary Materials.

## Table 1

## CLOSE SAME-RACE RELATIONSHIPS FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR

*Types of relationships listed by racial group (Study 1)*

	White ( <i>n</i> = 333)	Black ( <i>n</i> = 403)	( <i>n</i> = 418) Latine	( <i>n</i> = 464) Asian	( <i>n</i> = 6452) Total
Number of close relationships:	1329	1605	1669	1849	6452
Close relationships with White people	65.69%	23.18%	40.02%	39.70%	
Close relationships with Asian people	15.43%	5.79%	8.45%	47.92%	
Close relationships with Black people	3.16%	56.39%	4.37%	3.14%	
Close relationships with Latine people	4.89%	3.55%	39.90%	3.14%	
Close relationships with other people of color	10.84%	11.09%	7.25%	6.11%	
Same-race family relationships	17.38%	22.80%	21.39%	17.09%	19.68%
Interracial family relationships	1.20%	3.74%	6.11%	2.38%	3.44%
Same-race non-family relationships	48.31%	33.58%	17.86%	30.83%	31.76%
Interracial non-family relationships	33.11%	39.88%	54.58%	49.70%	45.10%

**Table 2***Means and correlations, by respondent racial group (Study 1)*White (*n* = 333)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Same-race length	7.489	5.100	—				
2. Interracial length	3.256	3.368	.085	—			
3. Same-race support	4.723	0.461	.194**	.035	—		

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4. Interracial support	4.628	0.662	.070	.077	.489**	—	
5. Same-race acceptance	4.601	0.492	.239**	.056	.381**	.224**	—
6. Interracial acceptance	4.542	0.612	.103	.104	.276**	.353**	.428**
<hr/>							
Asian ( <i>n</i> = 464)							
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
<hr/>							
1. Same-race length	9.226	6.877	—				
2. Interracial length	3.792	3.348	.154**	—			
3. Same-race support	4.746	0.519	.097*	.058	—		
4. Interracial support	4.696	0.529	-.015	.082	.479**	—	
5. Same-race acceptance	4.618	0.562	.055	.049	.278**	.143**	—
6. Interracial acceptance	4.601	0.528	-.047	.097*	.121**	.287**	.306**
<hr/>							
Black ( <i>n</i> = 403)							
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
<hr/>							
1. Same-race length	9.820	6.427	—				
2. Interracial length	4.338	4.668	.027	—			
3. Same-race support	4.818	0.408	.163**	-.002	—		
4. Interracial support	4.741	0.528	-.029	.089	.483**	—	
5. Same-race acceptance	4.686	0.493	.071	-.014	.298**	.217**	—
6. Interracial acceptance	4.618	0.598	.029	.121*	.224**	.292**	.345**
<hr/>							
Latin American ( <i>n</i> = 418)							
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
<hr/>							
1. Same-race length	12.394	7.425	—				
2. Interracial length	4.597	3.824	.173**	—			

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3. Same-race support	4.879	0.355	.130**	-.028	—		
4. Interracial support	4.791	0.414	0.003	.076	.365**	—	
5. Same-race acceptance	4.770	0.460	.180**	.082	.238**	.101*	—
6. Interracial acceptance	4.659	0.478	-0.018	.137**	.081	.243**	.294**

**Table 3**

*Descriptive statistics by respondent racial group and bivariate correlations for whole sample (Study 2)*

	Asian ( $n = 43$ )		Latin American ( $n = 30$ )		Black ( $n = 29$ )	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>
1. Same-race length	13.355	6.248	13.629	6.272	13.751	6.489
2. Interracial length	6.223	4.465	6.280	5.806	4.357	3.476
3. Same-race support	3.770	0.127	3.860	0.160	4.032	0.155
4. Interracial support	3.500	0.174	3.7153	0.227	3.727	0.195
5. Same-race acceptance	4.030	0.134	4.053	0.118	4.200	0.145
6. Interracial acceptance	3.832	0.177	4.086	0.185	3.931	0.200

*Note.* Means for all values except relationship length reflect the intercept values from multilevel models with a random intercept to account for the nested nature of the data. For relationship length, standard deviations are reported.

Full Sample ( $n = 103$ )

	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Same-race length	13.536	6.284	—				
2. Interracial length	5.650	4.433	.15	—			



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3. Same-race support	3.865	0.083	.03	-.05	—		
4. Interracial support	3.635	0.110	-.12	.13	.48***	—	
5. Same-race acceptance	4.078	0.078	.05	.00	.81***	.40***	—
6. Interracial acceptance	3.930	0.106	.03	.13	.40***	.60***	.49**

*Note.* Means for all values except relationship length reflect the intercept values from multilevel models with a random intercept to account for the nested nature of the data. Person-means (between-person components) of each variable are used for correlations.

Figure 1

Study 1 – Relationship length by relationship type and respondents’ racial groups

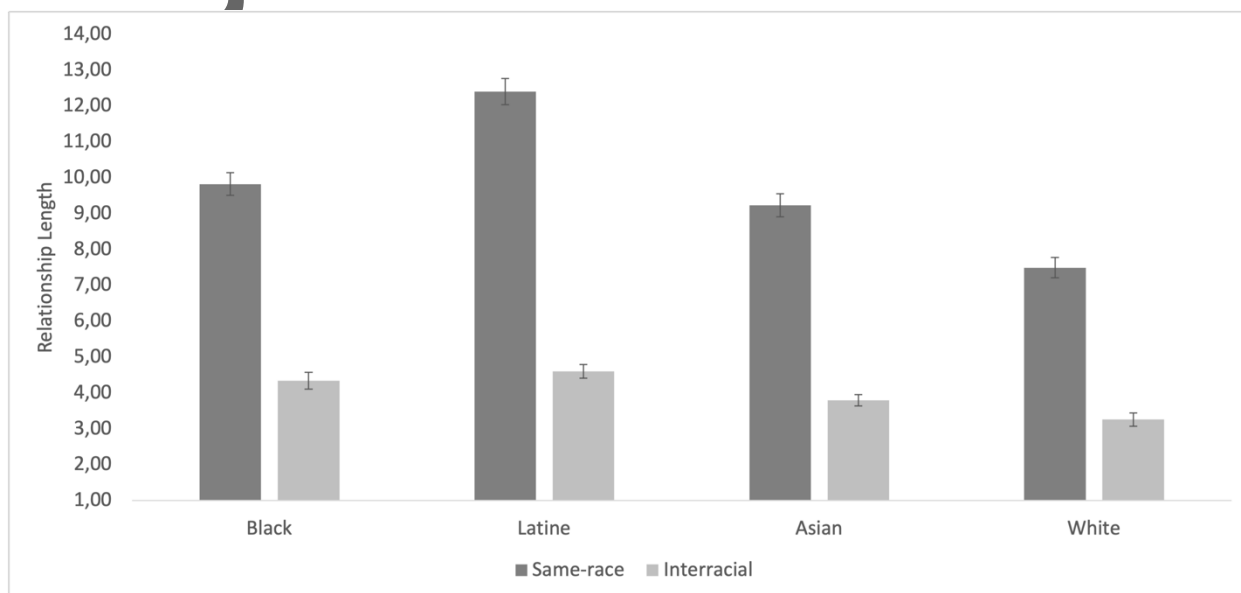


Figure 2

Study 2 – Illustration of analyses in connection with the design

## CLOSE SAME-RACE RELATIONSHIPS FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR

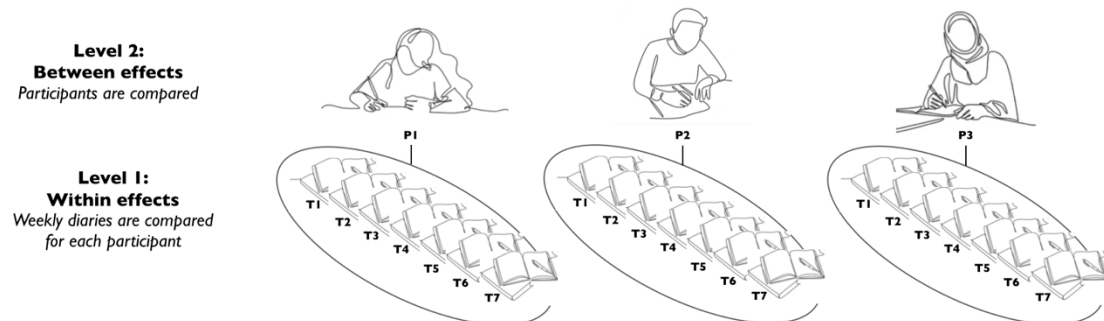
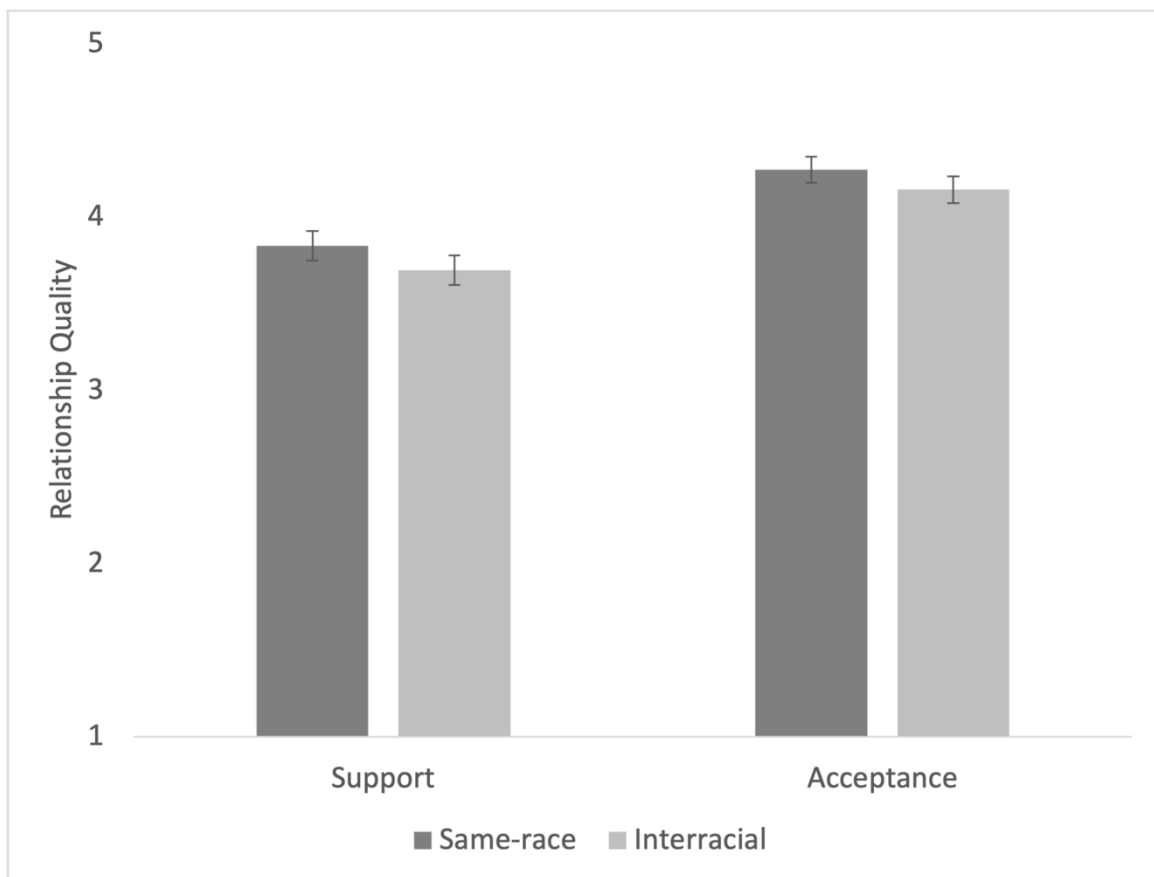


Figure 3

## Study 2 – Relationship support and acceptance by relationship type



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Tess Brieva grew up in Evanston, Illinois, in a mixed-race Latine family, before completing a bachelor's degree in Psychology and Sociology at Northwestern University. She is completing a Master of Social Work at the University of Michigan, where she specializes in interpersonal practice, particularly how identity relate to body image and sexual health.