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“They Were Just Making Jokes”: Ethnic/Racial Teasing and Discrimination Among Adolescents

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Abstract

Objectives—The effects of peer-based discrimination are especially harmful for adolescents given the heightened role of social feedback during this period. The current study aimed to understand the unique expressions of discrimination that adolescents experience between close peers and friends, as well as the daily influence of such experiences.

Method—Study 1 included semistructured interviews (10 interviews, 2 focus groups; M_{age} = 17.3) with an ethnic/racially diverse sample of adolescence. Study 2 (n = 79; M_{age} = 15.72) used a 21-day daily diary study with a different sample of ethnic/racially diverse adolescents.

Results—Study 1 found that, among close peers and friends, adolescents experienced “ethnic/racial teasing,” a unique form of discrimination characterized by humor. Additionally, adolescents consistently dismissed the negative messages as innocuous based on the supposedly humorous nature of such interactions. Study 2 found that when adolescents were targeted for ethnic/racial teasing, individuals who were already anxious experienced increased daily anxiety, and that increases in social anxiety persisted across days.

Conclusions—The current study suggests that among peers, ethnic/racial teasing is a common way that adolescents interact around ethnicity/race. Further, this study points to the complexity of these experiences; though they were largely considered normative and harmless, they also had negative psychological effects for some adolescents. Implications for our conceptual understanding of discrimination and teasing during adolescence are discussed.

Keywords

adolescence; discrimination; ethnic/racial teasing; friendship

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Although it may occur in nuanced and subtle ways, discrimination permeates the lives of ethnic/racial minorities in the United States (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009; Sue, 2009; Sue, Capodilupo, Nadal, & Torino, 2008). For adolescents, such adverse experiences may be a particularly heavy load to bear, as navigating their social landscape can already be a challenge (Spencer, 1995). In particular, the social influence of peers becomes increasingly heightened during adolescence (Erikson, 1968). However, there is little knowledge about the ways that adolescents experience ethnic/racial discrimination among close peers (e.g., peers with whom one has an existing relationship) and friends. Therefore, in two independent samples of diverse adolescents, the current study examined whether experiences of ethnic/racial discrimination occur between close peers and friends. The primary goals of the study were to consider how such experiences may differ from traditional conceptualizations of discrimination, and psychological outcomes associated with these experiences.

Subjective Experiences of Discrimination: A Theoretical Framework

Ethnic/racial discrimination is a pervasive stressor that increases the risk for maladaptive developmental outcomes (Spencer, 1995). Although discrimination is perpetrated by individuals, institutions, and policies, the current study focuses on interpersonal forms of discrimination. The Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST; Spencer, 1995) articulates the importance of individuals' processing of their experiences, particularly experiences of discrimination (Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997). Spencer and colleagues argue that "subjective self-perceptual processes increase in complexity because of the character and content of high risk environments associated with ethnicity and visibility for American minorities" (1997; p. 818). That is, for ethnic/racial minorities, interpretation of and subsequent coping with adverse experiences such as discrimination are particularly complicated. Consistent with PVEST, we examined subjective experiences of discrimination across two studies using an emerging mixedmethods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Study 1 examined experiences of discrimination qualitatively, as gathering these experiences in the adolescents' own words allowed us to capture their subjective experiences. Using an independent sample, Study 2 quantitatively explored the experiences of discrimination that participants reported in Study 1, taking into account individual differences in anxiety that would likely influence their subjective experiences. Together, the two studies provide complementary approaches to understanding the subjective experiences of ethnic/racial discrimination between close peers and friends, and the influence of such experiences on a daily basis.

Ethnic/Racial Discrimination: Considering the Source

Empirical evidence has documented the negative effects of discrimination across a broad range of outcomes, including increased anxiety (e.g., Gaylord-Harden & Cunningham, 2009) and depressive symptoms (e.g., English, Lambert, & Ialongo, 2014; Seaton & Douglass, 2014), decreased self-esteem (e.g., Armenta & Hunt, 2009), and lower academic outcomes (e.g., Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008). Amid evidence of these negative effects, attention in the literature has considered the source of discrimination for adolescents, with particular attention paid to discrimination from peers

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versus adults (Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000). The effects of peer discrimination may be particularly pernicious during adolescence given developmental tendencies to place increased emphasis on peer feedback and acceptance (Erikson, 1968; Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990). Indeed, research finds that adolescents internalize negative messages about their ethnicity/race from peers differently than from adults. For example, Rivas-Drake, Hughes, and Way (2009) found that among a diverse group of adolescents, discrimination from peers, but not from adults, was associated with personal views about their ethnic group (i.e., private regard). Similarly, Greene and colleagues (2006) found that peer discrimination had greater mental health implications than did adult discrimination among Black, Latino, and Asian American adolescents. Other research has suggested that the influence of peer- versus adult-based discrimination may be domain-specific; among Black, Latino, and Asian American adolescents, peer discrimination was associated with psychological maladjustment, whereas discrimination from school personnel was associated with poor academic performance (Benner & Graham, 2013). In sum, it appears that peers can constitute a unique and meaningful source of discrimination for adolescents.

Although close relationships such as friendships do not seem like the most obvious context for discrimination, perspectives from social cognition suggest that they may, in fact, be prime settings for adolescents to explore intergroup dynamics. Adolescents often rely on stereotypes and generalizations of others to lessen their cognitive load (Selman, 1980) as they are concurrently struggling to figure out their own identity and how it is related to those around them (Quintana, 1998). Adolescents' attempts to navigate their own emerging identities and those of others take place largely within relationships (Phinney & Tarver, 1988; Swann, 1987), and thus may result in experiences of discrimination between close peers and friends, particularly in diverse settings where ethnic/racial identities are highly salient (Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004).

Research on power dynamics (e.g., Rosenbloom & Way, 2004) and intimacy (e.g., Shelton, Trail, West, & Bergsieker, 2010) suggest that if discrimination occurs within existing relationships, the nature of such experiences may be unique. Discrimination paradigms are typically framed within a power imbalance, in which dominant group members direct differential treatment toward subordinate group members (Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003). Indeed, research on peer discrimination supports the notion that individuals from ethnic/racial groups with greater social capital are more likely to direct discrimination toward members of less valued groups (Fisher et al., 2000; Greene et al., 2006; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). However, power dynamics become more ambiguous in the presence of existing relationships and friendships (De Goede, Branje, & Meeus, 2009; Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro, & Bukowski, 1999) and such relationships are likely transactional in nature (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995). Additionally, close peers and friendships lend a degree of intimacy to interpersonal interactions that may not be present among general peers (Reis & Shaver, 1988), and existing frameworks of discrimination are largely incompatible with the notion of intimacy. Based on these fundamental differences, it is likely that discrimination in existing relationships would be qualitatively different from discrimination between general peers.

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One way that discriminatory experiences may manifest among close peers and friends is through teasing. Teasing is a typical social interaction for adolescents (Sanford & Eder, 1984) in which an "[i]ntentional provocation [is] accompanied by playful markers that together comment on something of relevance to the target" (Keltner, Capps, Kring, Young, & Heerey, 2001, p. 229). A basic premise of teasing behaviors is that they only occur in relationships that have achieved a minimum level of intimacy (Baxter, 1992), and research indicates that individuals hold lay theories in which teasing is understood as an act of solidarity between two people (Tragesser & Lippman, 2005). Indeed, teasing is a common and socially acceptable form of interaction within social relationships, and research on teasing suggests that individuals are more likely to direct negative messages through teasing comments to their friends than their nonfriend peers (Keltner, Young, Heerey, Oemig, & Monarch, 1998). Despite the fact that teasing typically takes place between close peers and friends, research has documented its negative psychological impacts (Faith, Storch, Roberti, & Ledley, 2008; McCabe, Miller, Laugesen, Antony, & Young, 2010; Storch et al., 2003). For example, research on weight-based teasing demonstrates that for obese children, the frequency of weight-based teasing from peers negatively impacts mental health, including increased loneliness and incidence of bulimia (Hayden-Wade et al., 2005). Taken together, this research suggests that teasing may be one way in which adolescents interact with their close peers and friends about ethnicity/race, and that such experiences may have harmful individual effects that are consistent with general discriminatory experiences. However, research has not examined teasing experiences around ethnicity/race specifically.

The Dynamic Nature of Roles

Peer relationships, interpersonal discrimination, and teasing are often considered in the context of dyads. For example, experiences of discrimination and teasing are contingent on the presence of at least two people: the victim (i.e., the person who is being targeted), and the perpetrator (i.e., the person who is targeting someone). Existing research, as reviewed above, has extensively documented the adverse effects of discrimination and teasing for the victim (e.g., Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009; Keltner et al., 2001). Separate but conceptually complementary bodies of research have examined discrimination and teasing from the perpetrator's perspective (see Kowalski, 2001; Quillian, 2006;). Research on peer victimization, which once reflected a similar distinction in the understanding of victims and perpetrators, has since shown the benefits of considering how one individual may play both roles at different points in time (Schwartz, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1997; Unnever, 2005). For example, one study found that 21% of bullying instances included individuals who reported being both a target and a perpetrator frequently (Nansel et al., 2001). Recognizing the dynamic role that adolescents play in close relationships and the interactions that occur within these relationships, the current study inquired about both victim and perpetrator experiences of ethnic/racial discrimination.

Aside from taking on the role of perpetrator or victim, adolescents may be involved outside of a dyad, in the form of vicarious experiences, by bearing witness to discrimination (Harrell, 2000). Vicarious racism has been considered as a potential source of stress for children (e.g., watching a parent being racially victimized; Quintana & McKown, 2008), and vicarious teasing experiences have been conceptualized as a mechanism by which

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adolescents come to understand and internalize peer norms (Jones & Crawford, 2006). Indeed, social learning theory suggests that adolescents would be affected by ethnic/racial discrimination that they witness within their peer networks even if they are not the perpetrator or victim (Bandura, 1986). In Study 1, we consider the many dynamic ways that an adolescent may be involved in experiences of discrimination within their peer networks. In Study 2, we consider how these various roles alter the meaning of such experiences. Together, this approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of adolescents' experiences.

Study 1

Aims

Study 1 employs a qualitative approach to examining experiences of discrimination between close peers and friends for adolescents living in a diverse urban area and attending diverse high schools, where opportunities for intergroup friendships would be high. The first research aim was to examine whether experiences of discrimination were taking place between close peers and friends, and if so what these experiences looked like. We hypothesized that adolescents would report discrimination between close peers and friends, but that the nature of such experiences would be different from how traditional discrimination is represented in existing research. Further, we hypothesized that teasing might be one potential avenue by which close peers and friends interacted around ethnicity/race. The second research aim was to explore multiple roles in discrimination, asking adolescents about victim, perpetrator, and vicarious experiences of discrimination to capture the dynamic nature of such interactions (i.e., the multiple roles that an individual may play) within these relationships. We hypothesized that adolescents would be able to identify experiences in which they had been both victims and perpetrators of discrimination, as well as instances where they experienced discrimination vicariously as a third party.

Method

Participants—Participants were 23 adolescents in two public high schools in New York City (M_{age} = 17.3, SD_{age} = .46, 62% female). Participants were asked to self-identify their ethnicity/race by responding to the question "What race or ethnicity do you see yourself as?" Responses were diverse, and many represented multiple ethnic/racial backgrounds (see Table 1).

Procedure—Participants were recruited for the current study from two of five schools involved in the Youth Experiences Study (YES), a longitudinal study of adolescent development. Schools included in the larger YES study were of comparable size and were all ranked as top-performing schools by the New York City Department of Education (DOE). Schools were selected for inclusion based on the ethnic/racial composition of the students; for this study, participants were recruited from a predominantly Hispanic school (School A) and a heterogeneous school (School B). Because of the inherent diversity of NYC, "predominantly" was defined as 40% or more of the student body; in the heterogeneous school, no group made up more than 40% of the student body.

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School guidance counselors facilitated recruitment of 11th and 12th grade participants comfortable enough to discuss sensitive topics included in the interview protocol, and to avoid cross-participation in the larger study (which included 9th and 10th grade participants). There were five private interviews and one focus group conducted in each school. For the interviews, recruitment was not targeted at specific ethnic/racial groups. For the focus groups, recruitment targeted a group whose ethnic/racial identification was parallel to the larger ethnic/racial composition of the school. Consistent with previous research (Moore, 2006; Smith & Belgrave, 1995), a combination of interviews and focus groups was used to provide triangulation of information (Willig, 2013), and capture both personal experiences and information on group norms (Seal, Bogart, & Ehrhardt, 1998).

A semistructured interview technique was used in the interviews and focus groups to probe participants' experiences of discrimination between friends. Discrimination was discussed in terms of "unfair treatment" and "judgment" to diminish the demand characteristics of the questions. Experiences between friends were captured in both direct and indirect ways; they were captured directly by asking participants whether they had ever been treated unfairly or badly by their friends because of their ethnicity or race (i.e., the role of friends was embedded in the question). They were also captured indirectly when participants responded to any question by explaining or sharing an experience they had with their friends (i.e., the role of friends was embedded in the response). The protocol also included various other questions relevant to participants' experiences of ethnicity/race in school, including salience, peer dynamics (i.e., "cliques"), and teacher–student relationships. All interviews took place in a private room at the participants' school, and lasted approximately one hour; audio tapes of the sessions were transcribed and transferred to NVivo8. All names included in the transcripts were changed.

The first author (a White female) conducted all of the interviews and focus groups, and explicitly acknowledged her race in 58% (7 of 12) of the interviews when participants appeared to struggle sharing their own ethnic/racial experiences, particularly their experiences with other White people. To promote the trustworthiness of the data the auxiliary coders (second and third authors, an Asian female and a White male) were trained with the coder guide (developed by the first author), and any questions or issues were addressed among the group. As with all qualitative research, despite the training and coder agreement, the sociodemographic characteristics and personal views of the researchers undoubtedly affected the way data were collected, viewed, and interpreted (see Finlay, 2002). As an example, each of the coders approached analysis believing that adolescents experience discrimination.

Results

Analytic plan—Results reported in this article are based on a subset of the coding scheme developed using elements of a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Open coding, in which each line of data was examined, was first used to identify major themes in the data. A secondary round of axial coding, in which conceptual themes within the open coding structure were identified and organized hierarchically, was then conducted to link the initial themes. Finally, a round of selective

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coding, in which each coding structure was specified as closely as possible, was conducted to identify subthemes. Once the coding scheme was developed, all transcripts were then independently coded in Dedoose (Dedoose Version 4.5, 2013) by the second and third authors (k = .74 for all analyses used in the current study).

Within each interview and focus group, all instances of each code were considered; subsequently, both event- and person-level analyses were undertaken. By examining all of the instances of a code, regardless of source, event-level themes could be considered. By examining instances of a code by source, person-level themes could be considered. Both levels of analysis are presented throughout the results. When examining person-level themes, focus groups were treated as one data point, unless conflicting themes were presented.

Aim I: Experiences of discrimination between close peers and friends—To address the first aim, we examined whether and how participants experienced discrimination between friends. To capture these specific experiences, all reports of discrimination were first screened. These results indicated that all participants (100%; n = 12) could identify a time when they had been treated differentially based on their ethnicity/race from any source. In total, 137 experiences were recounted across the participants, and these were coded most broadly as "ethnicity/race-based treatment." Across participants, these stories were raised in response to every question in the protocol; that is, although every participant did not tell a story of ethnicity/race-based treatment in response to every question, even the supposedly benign questions (e.g., "Tell me about your closest group of friends") raised a story of ethnicity/race-based treatment for at least one participant, underpinning the relevance and frequency of such experiences in adolescents' lives. Next, reports of ethnicity/race-based treatment were screened based on the contexts in which they occurred (i.e., friends or close peers vs. nonfriends or strangers); 18% (n = 25) of all ethnicity/race-based treatment accounts included discrimination with nonpeers, such as being stared at on the subway, or being stopped unnecessarily by a police officer. Given that these experiences were not the focus of the current study, they will not be discussed further.

The majority (82%; n = 112) of experiences that participants recounted occurred between close peers (e.g., classmates, acquaintances) or friends. Consistent with the overall experiences of ethnicity/race-based treatment, all participants could recall at least one incident that occurred between friends in particular. Throughout these reports, we identified two clear themes which could be reliably used to classify these accounts: *discrimination* and *ethnic/racial teasing*. These two themes were identical on two key dimensions; namely, (a) occurring between close peers or friends, and (b) a reference to ethnicity or race that carried some stereotypical content or meaning. There was, however, a clear distinction between discrimination and ethnic/racial teasing based on the subjective experiences of participants, and the way that they recounted these experiences. Ethnic/racial teasing, as told by participants, was always marked by the use of language to connote humor (e.g., "just kidding!" "totally joking," "I'm just teasing you!", or laughter while explaining the situation). Discrimination experiences, however, were consistent with the generally accepted paradigm of discrimination in that they lacked humor and were recounted in a serious way by participants. Discrimination accounted for 24% (n = 27) of ethnicity/race-based treatment

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experiences, while ethnic/racial teasing accounted for 76% (*n* = 85); given that the distribution of experiences was heavily skewed toward ethnic/racial teasing, and the lack of information available on such experiences in the literature, we further analyzed them to examine *perceived experiences* and *content*.

Perceived experiences: The defining feature of ethnic/racial teasing was that it co-occurred with the use of humorous markers, as relayed by participants. It is also notable that in every interview and focus group, participants raised the topic of ethnic/racial teasing without being directly asked about it; indeed, questions about ethnic/racial teasing were not a part of the interview protocol. Given that participants spontaneously offered instances of ethnic/racial teasing, the contexts in which they were offered within the interviews are informative about perceptions of the experiences. First, 42% of participants (*n* = 5) offered examples of ethnic/racial teasing when asked whether their friends had ever treated them negatively based on their race or ethnicity; in such instances, however, participants unanimously rejected the notion that discrimination occurred between their friends, and instead offered examples in which they "playfully" exchanged comments about their ethnicity/race. Here a 17-year-old participant who identified as Native American and Black talks about an experience that she witnessed:

Interviewer: Can you think of a time when a student here was treated differently or unfairly because of race or ethnicity?

Participant: Um I wouldn't say unfair … like they made fun of him.

Interviewer: For what?

Participant: For being Mexican. You know how they … I don't know, you know how they. … I don't think they took it seriously or anything. They were just making jokes like, 'cause the whole swine flu thing, yeah.

Although participants often raised ethnic/racial teasing in response to questions about discrimination from their friends, it is very telling that they did so by offering what they saw as a counterfactual to such an experience, clearly showing a perceived distinction between experiences of discrimination and ethnic/racial teasing.

In addition, 35% of participants (*n* = 4) described ethnic/racial teasing when asked about the *salience* of their ethnicity/race over the course of their school day, giving examples of how such interactions increased awareness of their own ethnicity or race. For example, in response to the question on certain times of heightened racial awareness, one participant, a 16-year-old female who identified as British Black, relayed:

> When it's dark outside? …. Yeah they're like 'I can't see you Shauna, where are you Shauna?' [laughing] I mean it's funny but, and I like wear all black so they really can't see me sometimes. Plus I'm small like….

While giving this example about how her friends' actions make her aware of her ethnicity/race, the participant not only self-labeled the experience as funny, but she also gave justifications for her friends' behavior. Regardless of how ethnic/racial teasing was raised,

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100% of participants (n = 12) initially reported that ethnic/racial teasing was harmless; that is, no participants acknowledged negative or hurtful aspects of such experiences of their own accord. As a follow-up to these initial justifications of the experiences, participants were then directly asked about the potentially harmful nature of such behaviors (i.e., all participants were asked whether they could think of *any* time that such an experience was harmful). Even after direct probing, only 17% (n = 2) could recall an instance in which ethnic/racial teasing did not come across as humorous, or caused someone to become upset. In response to this question, an18-year-old participant who self-identified as Dominican, Haitian, and Native American described the following:

Participant: 'Cause my um White friend, Julia, she makes fun of me 'cause I'm Black.

Interviewer: And what does she say?

Participant: She always says like 'what up, Nigger,' like she talks about the slaves too.

Interviewer: And how do you react to something like that?

Participant: Um one time I got really mad at her, I got offended and I wanted to punch her in the face. But I just let it go. … It's just because like, I don't know like that's a touchy subject to me, like slaves. Because like what happened to them. So it's just like, like I don't, maybe I was having a bad day that day but I remember I just got so mad.

A more common response to questions about the potentially harmful nature of the experiences was a defense of them (83%; n = 10). In one focus group, a 17-year-old male who identified as Puerto Rican and Sicilian explained: "We have Hispanic friends, but we can say to one person 'Okay, you're a Spic,' but we're playing around, but we're not saying 'Every Hispanic person is a Spic.'" Although the overwhelming majority of participants did not acknowledge the negative aspects of these interactions, their defense was often coupled with an awareness of how others (particularly the researcher), might perceive such behaviors. One participant said, "It's kind of hard to explain. It sounds terribly racist, but it's really not." Participants largely appeared to be aware that their exchanges could be perceived as racist or discriminatory, but they did not necessarily interpret them that way. Given this insistence on the nonharmful nature of these experiences, we chose to further examine the content of the ethnic/racial teasing experiences that participants offered.

Content: Given participants' subjective reports of these experiences as explicitly not negative, we analyzed the content to consider whether the reported ethnic/racial teasing interactions were different from a typical discrimination paradigm in which stereotypes and prejudices are the underlying mechanisms. Analyses indicated that three themes captured all experiences of ethnic/racial teasing offered by participants: (a) the *presence of an explicit stereotype*, (b) the *absence of an explicit stereotype*, and (c) the *presence of an implicit stereotype.* All three themes were identified in all interviews, so experience-level data are reported.

The presence of an explicit stereotype included those instances in which an ethnic/racial term was paired with an expectation that commented directly on that given term. One

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participant, a 16-year-old male who identified as Hispanic and Dominican explained interactions with his bandmates: "Yeah I play around with them, like 'Stop being a lazy Mexican and get on the drums.' It's just like that." In this statement, the individual blatantly offered the meaning ("lazy") of a given ethnic term ("Mexican") within the framework of humor ("I play around with them"). This was the most common form of ethnic/racial teasing experiences (55%; n = 47).

The absence of an explicit stereotype included experiences in which an ethnic/racial term was given without direct contextual meaning, and no meaning was superficially obvious. One 18-year-old participant who identified as Latino described: "If we give her something last, if she just so happens to get I don't know the last freakin' sip of soda, [she's like] 'Why because I'm Black?,' but it's just all in fun." These were instances in which ethnic/racial teasing seemed most irrelevant to the apparent situation, to the extent that they had no immediate grounding in the explicit aspects of the context; a racial label was offered ("Black"), but its meaning was not directly given by either the offender or the choice of term. This theme captured 31% (n = 26) of ethnic/racial teasing examples.

The presence of an implicit stereotype referred to instances of ethnic/racial teasing in which the ethnic/racial term used was meaningfully biased in its own right, such that the use of a derogatory term implied stereotyping or bias. This was clear in the following statement, also offered by the 18-year-old participant who identified as Latino:

> We'll be on the bus and they'll be Black people on the bus and … one of my other friends will say like, Nigga or whatever … [laughter]. … Yeah we use it with people who are Black, who are not Black. Yeah cause you know Black peoples kind of get offended.

The use of this slur is anchored in historical significance which offers obvious meaning to the situation without any blatant statement; arguably, such comments are meaningful in even the most decontextualized settings because of their larger implications. These were the least commonly reported (14%; n = 12) ethnic/racial teasing experiences.

Aim II: Dynamic experiences—To address the second aim of Study 1, we explored the dynamic nature of these experiences by considering multiple roles that an individual may play. Therefore, data at the level of the specific experience of ethnic/racial teasing (n = 85) are reported. We purposefully assessed three different roles, including target, perpetrator, and vicarious roles, through three separate questions used in all interviews. First, participants were asked about their own victim experiences (i.e., target). Second, participants were asked to think about a time when they may have treated someone differently based on their ethnicity/race (i.e., perpetrator); this question was placed toward the end of the interview protocol so that the interviewer could develop a rapport with the participant prior to posing such a sensitive question. Third, participants were asked whether they had seen other friends or classmates treated badly because of ethnicity or race (i.e., vicarious). Despite only asking about these three different roles, an additional and unexpected role of self-directed ethnic/racial teasing was consistently reported during interviews. This fourth role was not expected a priori and therefore not directly probed

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during interviews; however, given the consistency with which it appeared during interviews, it was included in the coding and reported herein.

Target experiences accounted for 42% (*n* = 36) of all ethnic/racial teasing interactions reported. In this example, a 17-year-old participant who identified as Hispanic and White described a common experience with her friends: "They'll be just like 'oh, you're such a Colombian drug smuggler' like there's just nothing else to say, and they'll just say it. I'm like 'but … that doesn't have anything to do with it!'" Perpetrator roles accounted for 47% (*n* = 40) of all ethnic/racial teasing interactions reported. An example is offered by a 17-year-old participant who identified as Native American and Black here:

> Once I get to know you or whatever and then I'll, I'll say little jokes too. Yeah of course I will. I'll say jokes too like, 'You loud Dominican you' to my friend 'cause she is SO loud. And then there's that stereotype that they're loud so I'll joke about it.

Vicarious experiences of teasing were the least mentioned roles, comprising 5% (*n* = 4) of ethnic/racial teasing reported. Here, a 16-year-old participant who identified as Hispanic and White explains an interaction between two peers:

> One week we were talking about nominating who we want for student speaker and everyone's like 'Oh, nominate Brittany she'll do such a good job' and this kid Mark goes like, 'Oh, is she the other Black girl who isn't Alyssa?' … and Alyssa just turns to him and she's like 'Mark, are you the other Asian boy who isn't Dave?', who's the other Asian boy in our advisory. And then everyone laughed and like neither of them were upset, they were like 'Oh, that was a good joke.'

Surprisingly, participants also reported instances of self-directed ethnic/racial teasing, in which individuals made fun of themselves. Self-directed ethnic/racial teasing made up 6% (*n* = 5) of reports. One participant, a 17-year-old male who identified as Colombian and Ecuadorian shared an example in which a friend was teasing him about matters unrelated to his race or ethnicity, and he responded by saying: "You're picking on me 'cause I'm [Hispanic] right? [laughter]." These roles were unexpected, as they refer to experiences where someone has chosen to call attention to or make publicly disparaging comments about his or her ethnicity/race intended to evoke humor. A 17-year-old participant who identified as African American provided some insight into this particular form of ethnic/racial teasing when she explained:

> So I think making a joke about yourself is a lot easier than having someone else make a joke because what else can they say now? If they're saying a joke to hurt you and you've already said it, then … there's nothing else they can say.

This explanation suggests that self-directed ethnic/racial teasing may be a form of self-protection when individuals are worried about being the target of such a comment from another person. Overall, the experiences participants reported could be uniquely classified by these four roles (target, perpetrator, vicarious, and self-directed); however, all participants reported occupying multiple roles, and therefore these roles could not reliably distinguish between participants.

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Discussion

Our results indicate that experiences of ethnic/racial discrimination occur between friends, but that such experiences are qualitatively different than typical conceptualizations of discrimination. Based on the results of Study 1, we define ethnic/racial teasing as *a social interaction surrounding one's ethnicity or race in which explicit or implicit prejudices are delivered under the guise of humor*. The reports of ethnic/racial teasing that emerged from participants in this study were remarkably consistent, and the ease with which such experiences came to mind for adolescents (despite a lack of direct probing) suggests that ethnic/racial teasing experiences are salient for adolescents. Indeed, although it was not the explicit aim of Study 1 to examine experiences of ethnic/racial teasing per se, these were the most consistently reported experiences of adolescents in response to questions regarding ethnic/ racial discrimination among close peers and friends. The ability to explore themes that were not hypothesized a priori is a strength of the semistructured interview (Patton, 2005), and this inductive approach allowed us to explore experiences that youth provided on their own. Although psychological experiences of ethnic/racial teasing have not been examined or acknowledged within discrimination paradigms, it is perhaps not surprising that teasing is one way that youth are interacting around their ethnicity/race; indeed, teasing experiences have been recognized as a common yet difficult experience for youth to navigate (Eder, Evans, & Parker, 1995; Mooney, Creeser, & Blatchford, 1991).

These reports are consistent with research on colormuteness (Pollock, 2004). In her anthropological work examining high school students' dialogues around race and ethnicity, Pollock provides examples of students engaging in what she calls "race teasing" (Pollock, 2004, p.46). For example, she describes instances of students reading their own poems modeled on a famous Chicano power manifesto and shouting their race at the end (e.g., "I'm black! I—am—black!" or "Filipino!") while thrusting their fists in the air and laughing or smirking, behaviors which are reminiscent of the self-directed roles described in the current study. Throughout this ethnographic study Pollock also describes students dismissing instances of racism as "just a joke" (p.71), suggesting that there are significant contradictions between the ways that adolescents discuss the salience of race and stereotypes, yet simultaneously declare them irrelevant. This conclusion is resonant with inconsistencies in participants' reports in the current study, in which they shared experiences that contained biased messages and derogatory words, yet declared that discrimination does not occur among their close peers by dismissing such experiences as teasing. Despite the rich qualitative data gathered and consistencies with previous anthropological work, the current study does not assess how often ethnic/racial teasing occurs for adolescents. Therefore, the frequency with which adolescents experience ethnic/racial teasing remains an empirical question.

In addition, these qualitative findings suggest that adolescents draw significantly different meaning from ethnic/racial teasing experiences than they do from traditional forms of discrimination. Adolescents were unanimous in their initial subjective reports, arguing that such interactions were not harmful or malicious, despite the negative ethnic/racial messages that were sometimes being delivered through them. Even when directly asked, only a small minority of participants admitted to the potentially harmful nature of these experiences.

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These reports are consistent with a general teasing framework; teasing is a common and socially acceptable form of interaction in social relationships (Keltner et al., 1998; Kowalski, 2001, 2003). Teasing behaviors are largely dictated by social norms, such that they only occur between individuals with an existing relationship, and researchers have suggested that teasing is in fact a way to take stock of or index intimacy between two people (Baxter, 1992); by engaging in teasing, individuals acknowledge a bond that is strong enough to tolerate such behavior (Roberts, Bell, & Murphy, 2008). These findings raise an important empirical question regarding whether ethnic/racial teasing is qualitatively different from discrimination not only in its form, but also perhaps in its impact; are ethnic/racial teasing experiences really innocuous teasing experiences, as participants' subjective assessments in Study 1 would suggest, or are they associated with negative outcomes? To address these questions, we turn to Study 2.

Study 2

Aims

Based on these qualitative reports of ethnic/racial teasing, a quantitative study was designed to examine ethnic/racial teasing in adolescents' everyday lives. The first goal of Study 2 was to quantitatively assess the frequency of ethnic/racial teasing for adolescents. Therefore, a daily diary method was used to capture potential experiences of ethnic/racial teasing as they were happening on a daily basis (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1987); diary methods have been highlighted as a best practice for collecting accurate measurements when particular behaviors or events are being considered (Moskowitz & Russell, 2009). Based on the results of Study 1, it was expected that ethnic/racial teasing would be a common experience for adolescents, with multiple reports of such interactions occurring each week. Similarly, Study 1 suggests that ethnic/racial teasing would be largely occurring between close peers and friends given the nature of the interactions; however, in Study 2 we aimed to sample all ethnic/racial teasing interactions that adolescents experience for a comprehensive assessment. It was further expected that across a number of days, participants would report engaging in ethnic/racial teasing in a variety of different ways (e.g., each participant would report multiple roles). By having participants repeatedly report their experiences (i.e., on a daily basis), these differing roles could be captured.

The second goal of Study 2 was to assess the association between daily ethnic/racial teasing and mental health indicators of general anxiety and social anxiety to consider whether such experiences were as innocuous as participants' reports suggested in Study 1. Consistent with discrimination perspectives, it was expected that individuals would have higher levels of general anxiety and social anxiety on days when they were the target of ethnic/racial teasing or when they experienced ethnic/racial teasing vicariously (Gee, Walsemann, & Brondolo, 2012; Ong, Burrow, Fuller-Rowell, Ja, & Sue, 2013; Spencer, 2006). That is, it was expected that despite the supposedly humorous masking, ethnic/racial teasing would have adverse effects for youth who were targeted directly by the comments, or who witnessed another being targeted. Contrastingly, self-directed and perpetrator experiences were not expected to be related to daily anxiety symptoms, as adolescents can control whether or not

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to engage in such experiences, thereby minimizing the associated anxiety around such experiences (Chorpita & Barlow, 1998).

The third goal of Study 2 was to assess how individual differences in stable anxiety would influence the meaning of ethnic/racial teasing interactions for adolescents. Daily diary methods are uniquely poised to address such person (i.e., individual differences in anxiety) by context (i.e., experiences of ethnic/racial teasing) interactions (Magnusson & Stattin, 1998). Given the reports in Study 1 that ethnic/racial teasing was not negative, we considered whether some adolescents may interpret the "humorous" component of such experiences differently than others. Experimental research suggests that individual differences in anxiety influence how threatening information is processed (Mathews & MacLeod, 1986); individuals with high anxiety are more likely than individuals with low anxiety to interpret stressors in their environment as threatening (Bar-Haim, Lamy, Pergamin, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & van IJzendoorn, 2007). Given the ambiguous nature that the use of supposed humor lends, it was expected that adolescents with high stable anxiety would interpret ethnic/racial teasing as more threatening than their peers with low stable anxiety, and subsequently display more negative outcomes.

Method

Participants—Participants were 79 adolescents (M_{age} = 15.72, SD_{age} = .68, 64.6% female) who self-identified as Hispanic or Latino/a (43%), White or European American (24%), Asian or Asian American (19%), Black, African American, or West Indian (8%), or Other (including American Indian, Native American, and not listed; 6%).

Procedure—Although participants were recruited from the same two high schools as in Study 1, the samples were selected from different grades to prevent overlap between the two studies. Parental consent and assent forms were distributed to all 10th grade students two weeks prior to the study. Participants took part in an orientation session on Day 1 where they completed presurvey measures. On Day 1 participants also began the daily diary portion of the study, completing brief measures online prior to going to bed for 21 days. On average, participants completed 15 of 21 daily surveys (*SD* = 5.87); across the sample, 28.6% of daily diary surveys were missing. Participants completed daily surveys in an average of 11.5 minutes. After three weeks, participants returned for a final debriefing session and were compensated $50.00 for their participation; 100% of participants returned for the final debriefing session.

Person-level measures: Trait anxiety—Trait anxiety was assessed as part of the presurvey using the trait anxiety subscale of the State–Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; Spielberger, Gorsuch, & Lushene, 1970). This subscale conceptualizes anxiety as a personality trait, and includes 12 items (e.g., "I feel like a failure"). Responses ranged from 1 (*almost never*) to 4 (*almost always*) (*M* = 2.04, *SD* = 0.50, = – .90), with higher scores indicating higher anxiety symptoms.

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Daily measures

Ethnic/racial teasing frequency: Participants were prompted to "Think of any teasing interactions you witnessed today, including any you made yourself or heard someone else say" and were then asked to indicate the subject of these interactions from a given list including *politics, gender, race or ethnicity,* and so forth. If participants did not self-select "Race or ethnicity" they were asked "Did you hear or were you involved in any jokes about race or ethnicity today?" as a secondary measure. Participants then described the content of the interaction in an open-ended response. Screening of these responses resulted in three cases (<1%) being excluded from analyses, as they did not meet the criteria for ethnic/racial teasing (i.e., did not include either explicit or implicit references to race or ethnicity).

Ethnic/racial teasing role: When participants indicated experiencing ethnic/racial teasing, they also indicated their role by identifying "Who was the person who made the teasing comment?" (*I did/Someone else did*) and "Who was the comment directed at?" (*Myself/ Someone else*). Based on the different constellation of responses to these two questions, the four targeted roles (i.e., target, perpetrator, self-directed, vicarious) were uniquely assessed for each reported experience of ethnic/racial teasing.

State anxiety: A 4-item abbreviated version of the 8-item State Anxiety subscale from the STAI was used to assess daily anxiety (Spielberger et al., 1970). Participants responded to items that had been altered to the past tense and referred to the given day (e.g., "I felt like a failure today" vs. the standard form of "I feel like a failure"). Responses ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*all the time*; $M = 1.90$, $SD = 0.42$, $= \alpha$ .84).

Social anxiety: A 3-item abbreviated version of the 8-item Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) subscale of the Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SAS-A; La Greca & Lopez, 1998) was used to assess social anxiety. Once again, items were altered to the past tense and referred to the past day (e.g., "I worried about what others said about me today"). Responses ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*all the time*; $M = 1.75$, $SD = 0.81$, $= \alpha$ .89).

Results

Analytic plan—To address the first study aim, the prevalence of daily ethnic/racial teasing was assessed by examining average experiences reported across individuals and the distribution of roles (i.e., target, perpetrator, self-directed, vicarious). To address the second study aim, the associations between same-day ethnic/racial teasing and anxiety outcomes were examined using two-level intercepts-and-slopes-as-outcomes models using hierarchical linear modeling techniques in HLM (Raudenbush, Bryk, & Congdon, 2004). Correlations among daily general anxiety and social anxiety were modest (average $r = .44$; $SD = .06$, range .34 –.56), and therefore daily general anxiety and social anxiety outcomes were modeled separately.

First, main effects of daily ethnic/racial teasing roles on same-day anxiety and social anxiety were modeled at level 1, controlling for trait anxiety at level 2. Missing data at Level 1 were handled in HLM by weighting individual estimates according to empirical Bayes theory. Next, interactions between trait anxiety at level 2 and ethnic/racial teasing roles at level 1

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were considered. To probe significant cross-level interactions, simple slopes analyses examined results at ±1 *SD* around the mean for trait anxiety. Finally, time-lag models were used to examine the association between previous-day ethnic/racial teasing ($d = 1$) and anxiety outcomes (d) to assess whether such experiences had carry-over effects. Main effects and moderation models used to examine the same-day associations were replicated for the cross-day associations. For clarity, results from the same-day and time-lag models are presented concurrently.

Control variables—Gender, school of recruitment, day type (weekday, weekend), and day of study (1–21) were examined as possible control variables. Gender was unrelated to daily ethnic/racial teasing and schools accounted for less than 1% of the variance in ethnic/racial teasing so they were not retained in the models. Day type (weekday vs. weekend) and day of study (1–21) were significantly related to daily ethnic/racial teasing; adolescents were more likely to report ethnic/racial teasing on weekdays than weekends, $\chi^2(1) = 14.68$, $p < .001$, and were less likely to report ethnic/racial teasing as the study progressed ($b = -.12$, $SE = .02$, $p < .001$). Day type and day of study were therefore retained as control variables at level 1.

Aim I: Prevalence—Adolescents reported an average of 3.49 ethnic/racial teasing experiences ($SD = 2.58$) over three weeks, with a range from 1 to 14 reported experiences across participants. Across the course of the study, a total of 396 experiences of ethnic/racial teasing were reported by all participants. There was high variability in the frequency of roles; of all ethnic/racial teasing experiences reported by participants, vicarious roles were the most frequently reported (58.6%; $n = 232$), followed by target roles (22.2%; $n = 88$), perpetrator roles (12.1%; $n = 48$), and finally self-directed roles (7%; $n = 28$).

Aim II: Ethnic/racial teasing and daily anxiety

Main effects of roles: Results indicated marginal differences in the relationships between roles in ethnic/racial teasing and same-day anxiety, with the trend indicating that adolescents felt slightly higher anxiety on days when they were targets of ethnic/racial teasing compared to days when they experienced no teasing ($b = .12$, $SE = .06$, $p = .07$). Time-lag results indicated that this marginal effect was not significant across days.

Results also indicated significant differences in the relationships between roles and same-day social anxiety, such that adolescents felt higher social anxiety on days when they were targets of ethnic/racial teasing compared to days when they experienced no teasing ($b = .35$, $SE = .15$, $p < .05$). Time-lag results confirmed these findings, as adolescents also felt higher social anxiety when they had been a target of ethnic/racial teasing on the previous day compared to when they had experienced no teasing on the previous day ($b = .20$, $SE = .09$, $p < .05$).

Trait anxiety moderation: Next, trait anxiety was examined as a moderator of the relationship between roles in ethnic/racial teasing and daily anxiety and social anxiety.

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Daily anxiety: Trait anxiety significantly moderated the relationship between self-directed ethnic/racial teasing and same-day anxiety ($b= -.58$, $SE = .21$, $p < .01$; see Figure 1A). Individuals with low trait anxiety felt more anxious when they made a self-directed ethnic/racial teasing comment than on days when they did not experience ethnic/racial teasing ($b = .39$, $SE = .14$, $p < .01$). There was no effect, however, for individuals with high trait anxiety ($b = -.18$, $SE = .21$, $p < .39$). Secondary analyses indicated that on days in which no ethnic/racial teasing was reported, adolescents with high levels of trait anxiety reported feeling more anxious on a daily basis than their peers with low trait anxiety ($b = .48$, $SE = .09$, $p < .001$). When they engaged in self-directed ethnic/racial teasing, however, there were no differences in daily anxiety between high and low trait anxiety adolescents ($b = -.10$, $SE = .23$, $p < .69$). Time-lag results indicated that this effect was not significant across days. Further, trait anxiety did not moderate the same-day or time-lag associations between target, victim, or vicarious roles with daily anxiety.

Daily social anxiety: Trait anxiety significantly moderated the relationship between self-directed ethnic/racial teasing and same-day social anxiety ($b = -1.41$, $SE = .31$, $p < .001$; see Figure 1B). Results indicated that individuals with low trait anxiety felt more socially anxious when they made a self-directed ethnic/racial teasing comment than on days when they did not experience ethnic/racial teasing ($b = .99$, $SE = .14$, $p < .001$). Individuals with high trait anxiety, however, felt less socially anxious when they made a self-directed ethnic/racial teasing comment ($b= -.41$, $SE = .20$, $p < .05$). Secondary analyses indicated that adolescents with high trait anxiety reported feeling more socially anxious than their peers with low trait anxiety on days when they experienced no ethnic/racial teasing ($b = .51$, $SE = .18$, $p < .01$). When they engaged in self-directed ethnic/racial teasing, however, individuals with high trait anxiety reported feeling less socially anxious than their peers with low trait anxiety ($b = -.90$, $SE = .36$, $p = .01$). Time-lag results indicated that trait anxiety significantly moderated the relationship between previous-day self-directed ethnic/racial teasing and social anxiety ($b= -6.43$, $SE = 1.24$, $p < .001$), and the nature of these findings was consistent with the same-day associations.

Trait anxiety also significantly moderated the relationship between target roles ($b = .84$, $SE = .36$, $p < .05$) and social anxiety. Individuals with high trait anxiety experienced more social anxiety when they were targeted for ethnic/racial teasing than on days when they did not experience ethnic/racial teasing ($b = .57$, $SE = .20$, p .01). There was no effect for individuals with low trait anxiety, ($b = -.27$, $SE = .14$, $p < .07$). Secondary analyses indicated that adolescents with high trait anxiety reported feeling more social anxious than their peers with low trait anxiety when they were the target of ethnic/racial teasing ($b = 1.35$, $SE = .41$, $p < .001$). Time-lag results indicated that trait anxiety significantly moderated the relationship between previous-day target roles and social anxiety ($b = .60$, $SE = .14$, $p < .001$), and the nature of these findings was consistent with the same-day associations. Trait anxiety did not moderate the same-day or time-lag association between perpetrator or vicarious roles with daily social anxiety.

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Discussion

Employing quantitative methods, Study 2 indicated that general ethnic/racial teasing experiences are relatively frequent for adolescents, and the roles they play in such interactions can vary. These results also suggest that ethnic/racial teasing experiences can be negative for adolescents in terms of anxiety and social anxiety, but that these experiences depend on (a) the role the individual plays in the experience (i.e., situational differences), and (b) stable levels of anxiety (i.e., individual differences). The lack of findings for vicarious roles is consistent with previous research on vicarious discrimination, which suggests that such experiences do not negatively affect the third party (Tynes et al., 2008). However, as targets of ethnic/racial teasing and when making self-directed comments, adolescents felt more socially anxious both on that day and the following day, and these negative outcomes are consistent with general experiences of discrimination (e.g., Cassidy, O'Connor, Howe, & Warden, 2004). In turn, this suggests that despite the supposed humor, experiences of ethnic/racial teasing may in fact be harmful. Though this study is the first to our knowledge to directly examine social anxiety in the framework of discrimination, it is consistent with previous research indicating that youth who are verbally victimized report social anxiety (e.g., Storch, Brassard, & Masia-Warner, 2003), and consistent with hypotheses that the nature of ethnic/racial teasing makes it particularly relevant to anxiety about interpersonal experiences.

Contrastingly, the effects for general anxiety did not appear to be strong enough to last beyond the daily experience. In line with past stress models (e.g., Selye, 1973), it is possible that participants experience an initial alarm stage following an ethnic/racial teasing interaction, characterized by a spike in anxiety symptoms that lasts 24 hours or less and remits as the participants resist the effects of the stress. Contrastingly, the effects for social anxiety did appear to last across days, suggesting that these interactions are particularly salient for youths' concerns about their social appearance. Although there is literature that has tracked the long-term effects of accumulated race-related stress (Brody et al., 2014), the stress process associated with day-to-day racial stress is still an empirical question.

This research also demonstrated that target and self-directed roles are very different experiences for adolescents depending on the individual characteristics that they bring to the interaction. In the current study, adolescents with high levels of anxiety who were targeted for ethnic/racial teasing reported feeling more socially anxious, whereas their low anxiety peers were not affected by such experiences. These findings are consistent with research on selective processing biases which has shown that individuals with high trait anxiety automatically process threatening information at a higher rate than others than their low trait anxiety peers (MacLeod & Rutherford, 1992), as well as research documenting individual differences in reactivity to stressful events (Bolger & Schilling, 1991). Further, the role-based differences are not surprising given the differing agency between them; an individual cannot control whether another person makes fun of him/her, but that individual can decide whether or not to make fun of him/herself. Overall, these quantitative results suggest that ethnic/racial teasing experiences are generally negative for adolescents, though their implications are complex and vary across people and situations.

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General Discussion

Although there is an abundance of research exploring ethnicity/race-based discrimination and general teasing experiences, this study is the first to empirically consider the meaning and impact of those unique instances in which the two occur simultaneously. Using an emergent, exploratory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), we identified previously unexamined experiences of ethnic/racial teasing among adolescents, and investigated daily experiences of them. That ethnic/racial teasing was discussed in all interviews in Study 1 without being explicitly prompted suggests that ethnic/racial teasing may be one way that adolescents are regularly interacting with each other about ethnicity/race. In addition, that these Study 1 participants asserted experiences of ethnic/racial teasing were innocuous within their peer networks indicates such interactions are considered normative and harmless by adolescents. However, the results of Study 2 suggest that frequent general ethnic/racial teasing experiences are associated with increased daily anxiety and, as such, can be negative experiences for adolescents.

Considering the Meaning of Ethnic/Racial Teasing

The reports of ethnic/racial teasing in Study 1 are consistent with previous research indicating that general teasing experiences are common during adolescence (Jones, Newman, & Bautista, 2005; Sanford & Eder, 1984) and may even be an "essential part of the adolescent culture" (Jones et al., 2005, p. 421). Based only on participants' subjective reports gathered in Study 1, one could conclude that ethnic/racial teasing reflects typical teasing behaviors that are common in adolescence, and thus adolescents, parents, teachers, school administrators, and other stakeholders should not be concerned with such interactions. However, decades of research on discrimination indicate that negative messages such as those included in the examples of ethnic/racial teasing in Study 1 may, in fact, be detrimental (see Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009).

Study 2 offers evidence that ethnic/racial teasing experiences can be negative for youth. Through quantitatively assessing experiences of ethnic/racial teasing, it became clear that there were negative implications of such interactions for adolescents' daily anxiety and social anxiety; specifically, for youth who did not have agency over the interactions (i.e., target and vicarious experiences), and for youth who were anxious. The results of Study 2 highlight the complexity of meaning-making around ethnic/racial teasing, as the implications of ethnic/racial teasing appear to vary based on the specific way in which the individual is involved in the interaction, and the individual differences that they bring to situations. This variability in how adolescents experienced ethnic/racial teasing from day to day and from person to person highlights one of the paradoxical aspects of teasing: it contains both prosocial and antisocial components (Jones et al., 2005; Keltner et al., 1998). As a result, the meaning-making of such experiences is complicated. If ethnic/racial teasing is understood as a form of discrimination, it perhaps fits best within a microaggressions framework in that the intent of the perpetrator may be ambiguous, and as a result the meaning-making experience for the victim becomes complex, depending on individual and contextual variables (Sue et al., 2008). Although ethnic/racial teasing experiences may not always be subtle, the friendly settings in which they are occurring and the use of humor may

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allow adolescents to superficially deflect the meaning, but leave them wondering about the underlying intention and meaning of such interactions. These results suggest that such interactions should not be dismissed as normative or harmless, but should be considered with other subtle forms of discrimination.

Developmental Implications

That ethnic/racial teasing occurs during adolescence raises compelling developmental considerations. Adolescence is an active period of identity development (Erikson, 1968) during which ethnic-racial identity in particular is being negotiated (Phinney, 1989). Further, the influence of friendships and peer feedback is particularly strong during adolescence. The social experiences adolescents have regarding ethnicity/race become embedded in how they view themselves and their peers (Selman, 1980). These developmental considerations may have implications for both the frequency and implications of ethnic/racial teasing. That is, ethnic/racial teasing may be a form of discrimination unique to adolescence, and the prevalence among friend groups may indicate that ethnic/racial teasing is a normative form of socializing. This has potentially serious consequences, given that peer discrimination may have greater mental health impact than adult discrimination (Greene et al., 2006).

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study has limitations that can inform future inquiry. First, the way that friends and friendship was defined throughout Study 1 and Study 2 does not represent a finite or exhaustive operationalization of close peer relationships. In Study 1, the term "friends" was not explicitly defined for participants, so it is possible that some participants interpreted this term differently than others. For example, some participants may have included acquaintances in their own definition of friends, whereas some participants may have only considered their best friends. Although this limits our scholarly understanding of the exact parameters of intimacy in which ethnic/racial teasing is taking place, we believe that such an approach is consistent with the PVEST framework (Spencer, 1995) by placing priority on individuals' perspectives and processing of their own experiences. In Study 2, we examined experiences of ethnic/racial teasing without specifying that the interactions took place within friendships. Therefore, it is not the case that Study 2 extends the findings of Study 1 to examine the impact of ethnic/racial teasing among friends, but rather complements it. Given descriptions of these experiences provided in Study 1 and previous research on the form and nature of general teasing interactions, it was expected that such interactions would in fact be taking place between close peers or friends. However, this study does not address whether ethnic/racial teasing *only* occurs among friends. Previous research on general teasing experiences suggests that the nature of teasing interactions varies based on the type of relationship between two people (i.e., closeness, social status; Pawluk, 1989), and future research should consider whether ethnic/racial teasing occurs outside of friendships and existing relationships. If ethnic/racial teasing interactions are taking place within and beyond friendships, ratings of relational quality such as closeness and intimacy may be an important moderator.

Additionally, the current study examined adolescents' experiences in two high schools in a large urban area, where diversity of the student body and surrounding communities is very

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high, particularly relative to the rest of the United States. Given this limited context and the relatively small number of adolescents whose experiences are represented in the study, the present research cannot address the ubiquity of ethnic/racial teasing during adolescence. One important avenue for future research is to replicate the findings that ethnic/racial teasing experiences occur for adolescents on a regular basis in other contexts. A second avenue for future research is to consider how diversity of the school context may play a role in the frequency and meaning of ethnic/racial teasing. Indeed, ethnic/racial teasing may be more likely to occur in highly diverse settings, and may have different implications than in more homogeneous schools. Unfortunately, there was not enough variability between the two high schools included in the current study to systematically investigate the influences of such contexts. Future studies can sample from multiple schools with a range of student diversity and examine students' experiences of ethnic/racial teasing within these school environments. Relatedly, the frequency and meaning of ethnic/racial teasing experiences are likely influenced by the way in which an individual is situated within such contexts, including whether they are a numerical minority or majority in both friend groups and school contexts. Although White participants were included in the current study, there were not enough White participants included to consider how their experiences may have been unique from their ethnic/racial minority peers.

Relatedly, the ethnic/racial composition of the immediate contexts in which ethnic/racial teasing experiences are occurring may have implications for the frequency and meaning of these experiences (Graham, Munniksma, & Juvonen, 2014; Vervoort, Scholte, & Overbeek, 2010). For example, whether an adolescent is the only minority in the friend group may create a different dynamic than an adolescent in a group of ethnically diverse friends. The current study did not consider the ethnic/racial composition of friendships, and, thus, future research should incorporate this consideration as a potential moderator. Finally, in-group and outgroup membership may also play a role; if an individual experiences a vicarious interaction, for example, in which an in-group member is the target, he or she may feel more affected by the experience than if the target is an out-group member. The current study did not consider this nuance, which future research should consider with regards to all of the roles.

Summary

In sum, this work suggests that ethnic/racial teasing experiences are salient among close peers and friends during adolescence. Taken together, these studies suggest that ethnic/racial teasing experiences are a common way that adolescents communicate among their peers about ethnicity/race, offering the first empirical evidence that potentially negative messages around ethnicity/race are being exchanged in such "friendly" spaces. Further, the results from Study 2 suggest that when ethnic/racial teasing experiences occur, they may not be as innocuous as adolescents' reports of such experiences suggested in Study 1. Although the results of these two studies offer an initial understanding of ethnic/racial teasing, there are still many empirical questions regarding what these experiences mean for adolescents. As such, future research should consider the specific types of relationships in which ethnic/racial teasing occurs, as well as other positive and negative psychological effects for

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adolescents, to more comprehensively understand the conceptual similarities and distinctions between ethnic/racial teasing and discrimination.

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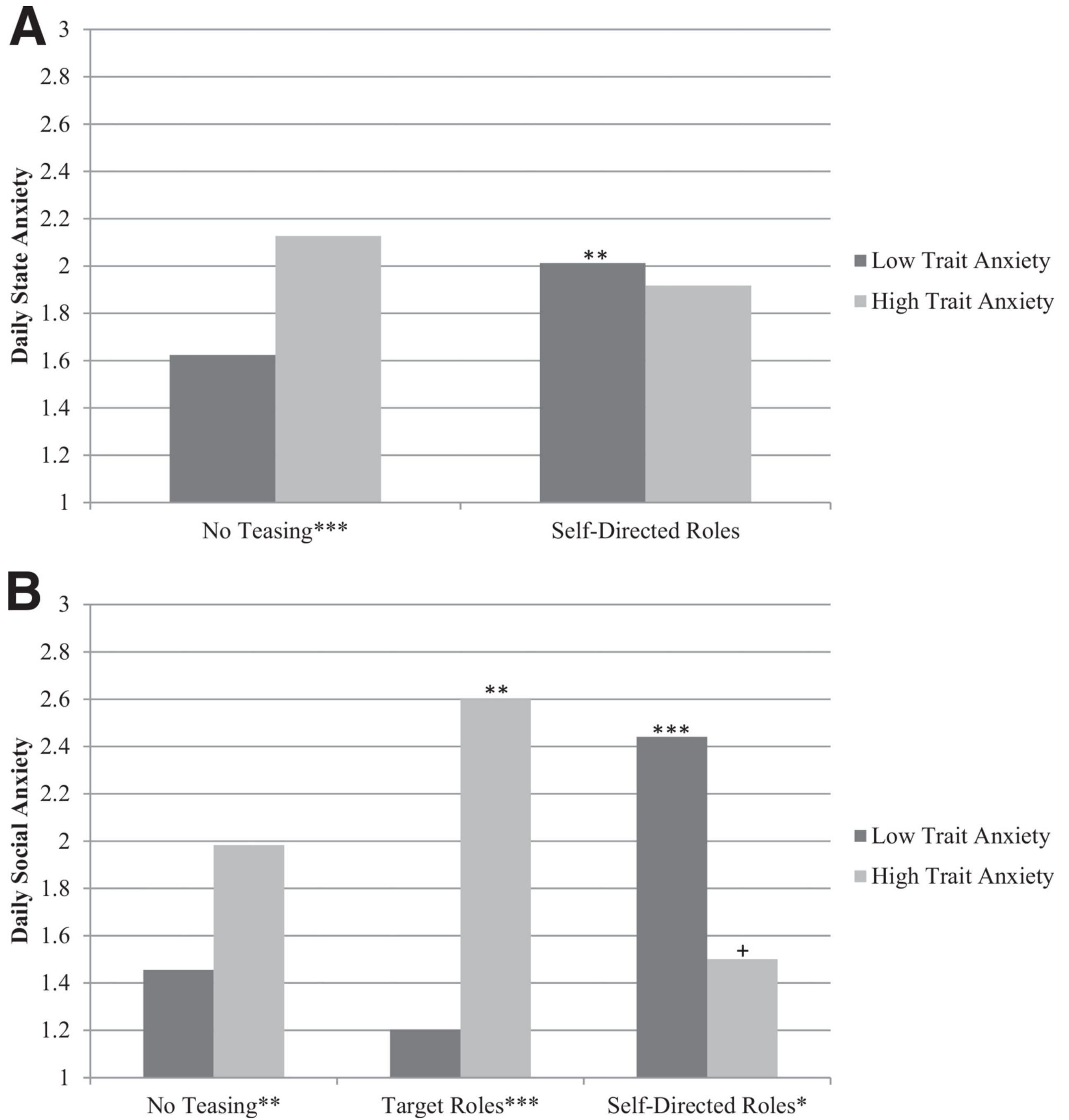

Figure 1.

A, The relationship between daily ethnic/racial teasing roles and daily anxiety moderated by trait anxiety. ** p <.01, ***p < .001. Significant differences noted on the axis labels indicate between-person differences for that role. Significant differences noted on the graph indicate within-person differences from no teasing experiences. B, The relationship between daily ethnic/racial teasing roles and daily social anxiety moderated by trait anxiety. + p < .05, *p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001. Significant differences noted on the axis labels indicate

between-person differences for that role. Significant differences noted on the graph indicate within-person differences from no teasing experiences.

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Table 1

Ethnic/Racial Self-Identification of Participants in Study 1 by School and Interview Type

Interviews	
School A	**School B**
British Black	African American
Native American and Black	African American
African American and Black	Dominican, Haitian, and Native American
Puerto Rican and Irish	Hispanic and White
Black and Hispanic	Black and Hispanic (Nigerian and Panamanian)[a]
Focus groups	
Latino	Hispanic (Dominican)
Hispanic (Peruvian)	Hispanic
Hispanic and Dominican	Chinese
Hispanic and Ecuadorian	White
Puerto Rican and Sicilian	Greek
Colombian and Ecuadorian	Russian
	French

Note. Self-identification was indicated in response to an open-ended question.

[a]Labels in parentheses indicate where participants clarified their group membership, but said they identified with the larger group(s) initially identified.