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When Harry met Meghan (got married, had a baby, and “Megxited”): Intergroup anxiety, ingroup norms, and racialized categorization as predictors of receptivity to interracial romances

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Abstract

Despite being frequently met with disapproval, interracial romantic relationships have the potential to transform intergroup relations through marriage and children. However, relatively little is known about the receptivity to these important intergroup relationships. Capitalizing on three historical events involving a world-famous interracial couple, Prince Harry and Meghan, we expand the intergroup relations literature by longitudinally and cross-sectionally examining White Briton's perceptions and receptivity to interracial romances. Study 1 ($N = 585$) showed that intergroup anxiety around the couple's wedding was longitudinally associated with less receptivity to interracial dating and less favorable intergroup attitudes a month later, even when controlling for strong autoregressive paths. Study 2 ($N = 402$), conducted around the birth of the couple's son (Archie), found that intergroup anxiety (negatively) and favorable ingroup norms (positively) were longitudinally associated with receptivity to intergroup romances and favorable intergroup attitudes a month later in statistically conservative tests. Study 3 ($N = 507$), conducted at the time of the so-called “Megxit,” cross-sectionally found that media exposure to Meghan was positively associated with favorable ingroup norms which was, again, related to positive intergroup outcomes. However, these associations were suppressed by the perception that Meghan had tainted the Royal Family which was, in turn, negatively associated with the intergroup outcomes. Moderation analyses across the studies revealed these associations were often stronger for those who categorized the biracial Royals as more Black (vs. White). Together, the novel research highlights the often-complex perceptions and longitudinal predictors of interracial romances and does so in historic social contexts.

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Romantic relationships between members of different races are often discouraged, stereotyped, and ostracized (Stillwell & Lowery, 2021). These romances are viewed by others as less satisfying (Paterson et al., 2015), receive less support than same-race relationships (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2006), and interracial partners are dehumanized because of their relationship choices (Skinner & Hudac, 2017). Considering this blatant racial discrimination toward intimate relationships (Bedi, 2015), it is unsurprising that the latest census data reveals that interracial romantic relationships account for only around 10% of marriages in the United Kingdom (Office for National Statistics, 2014) and the United States (Pew Research Center, 2017). Nevertheless, despite being relatively rare, the number of interracial romantic relationships is steadily increasing (Pew Research Center, 2017). Furthermore, these uniquely intimate relationships are crucial to understanding and influencing intergroup relations (e.g., Thai et al., 2022). For example, racial preferences in intimate relationships are said to reflect and reinforce racial hierarchies (Auelua-Toomey & Roberts, 2023; Bratter & Campbell, 2023). However, interracial relationships also have the potential to transform and transcend valued traditional group boundaries through marriage and children (Uskul et al., 2007), and may reduce prejudice in others (Paterson et al., 2015). With such significant interpersonal and intergroup implications, it is imperative to further understand the reactions and receptivity to these influential intergroup romantic relationships.

Across three studies, we investigate the perceptions and personal receptivity toward interracial romantic relationships, as well as individuals' intergroup attitudes. We do so within the context of three historic events involving a world-famous interracial couple: the wedding of Prince Harry (a White man) and Meghan Markle (a mixed-race woman; Study 1), the birth of their biracial Royal son, Archie (Study 2), and the announcement of their decision to step back from Royal duties and leave the United Kingdom (Study 3). By capitalizing on the increased awareness and public discourse about interracial relationships, we examine the roles of established intergroup variables (perceived ingroup norms, intergroup anxiety) in predicting receptivity to interracial romances and intergroup attitudes, and examine how individuals' racialized categorizations of biracial people moderate these associations across the three studies. We also extend our investigation in Study 3 to examine the role of media exposure and introduce a novel factor—the perception that outgroup partners can “taint” an ingroup family—to further examine the predictors of receptivity to interracial romantic relationships.

1.1 | Perceived ingroup norms

Fellow ingroup members are often important sources of information for how individuals should act and what attitudes they are permitted to hold (Sherif & Sherif, 1953). By watching what fellow ingroup members do (descriptive norms) and thinking about what they permit (injunctive norms, Cialdini et al., 1991), perceived ingroup norms play a pivotal role in

intergroup relations, impacting attitudes, and openness toward (non-romantic) intergroup contact (White et al., 2021). Furthermore, the interpersonal literature suggests that the approval of others is vital in developing and maintaining *any* romantic relationship (Rodrigues et al., 2017). Combining these literatures, then, suggests that perceived ingroup norms is likely to be particularly important in determining individuals' openness to interracial *romantic* relationships (Paterson et al., 2015).

Pertinently, Thai et al. (2022) recently examined the predictors of attraction to Black-White interracial relationships within four different samples (White Australians, White Americans, White Britons, and Black Britons). They revealed that the extent to which participants believed their friends would be positive about them dating interracially (i.e., perceived ingroup dating norms) was consistently, strongly, and positively associated with interracial attraction (r s ranged from 0.48 to 0.55). Similarly, Paterson et al. (2019) found that perceived ingroup dating norms was strongly associated with Catholic and Protestant participants' openness to date and marry across religious lines in Northern Ireland, as well as their general intergroup attitudes. Thus, there is existing cross-sectional evidence suggesting that perceived ingroup norms is an important factor in predicting both general (nonromantic) intergroup attitudes and receptivity to interracial relationships.

1.2 | Intergroup anxiety

Another predictor of individuals' receptivity to interracial romantic relationships is likely to be intergroup anxiety. Anxiety (in general) impedes the formation and functioning of romantic relationships, regardless of whether they are interracial or same-race relationships. For example, people who are anxious are less likely to enter into romantic relationships and experience poorer relationship quality when they do so (Feeney & Fitzgerald, 2019). Mirroring its effects in the interpersonal domain, anxiety has similar inhibitory impacts in the intergroup sphere (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Individuals who report feeling more anxiety toward meeting people from different races are more likely to attempt to avoid such contact and report awkward interactions when such contact is unavoidable (Stephan, 2014).

Together, this suggests that anxiety toward interracial romantic relationships will negatively impact individuals' receptivity to these relationships. Supporting this claim, Thai et al. (2022) found that general intergroup anxiety was consistently negatively correlated with interracial attraction. Meanwhile, anxiety specifically toward intergroup *dating* has also been shown to be negatively correlated with receptivity toward both intergroup dating and intergroup marriage (Paterson et al., 2019). Furthermore, Levin et al. (2007) found that intergroup anxiety (toward general intergroup contact) negatively and longitudinally predicted university students' engagement in interracial dating in the United States. These findings suggest that intergroup anxiety not only impacts general intergroup attitudes (Stephan & Stephan, 1985), it plays an important, longitudinal, inhibitory role in people's openness to have interracial romantic relationships.

1.3 | Racialized categorization

Considering the context of the current studies involve two world-famous biracial people (Meghan and Archie), one key factor in determining receptivity to interracial relationship in these contexts is likely to be the extent to which Meghan and Archie are considered racial outgroup members. As noted by Ho and colleagues (2020), there has been a long legal and social history of categorizing Black–White biracial individuals as Black rather than White (i.e., hypodescent), despite them belonging equally to both groups. Indeed, media reports surrounding Ms. Markle's wedding often focussed on her becoming “the first *black* royal in British history” (Waxman, 2018 [emphasis added]) which contradicts Meghan's self-identified *mixed-race* heritage (Markle, 2015). Such racialized categorizations are likely to impact intergroup attitudes. That is, for the contexts to affect intergroup attitudes, White British participants need to view Meghan and Archie as racial outgroup members (i.e., Black not White), thereby making the contexts *intergroup* events. Furthermore, the more they view Meghan and Archie as Black, the more likely the events will be considered as intergroup events, and thus the associations between the intergroup predictors (norms and anxiety) and intergroup outcomes will be magnified compared to when the biracial individuals are viewed as White ingroup members (e.g., Brown & Hewstone, 2005).

2 | PRESENT RESEARCH

Across three studies, we investigate the predictors of receptivity to interracial relationships and general intergroup attitudes in the context of three historic events involving the high-profile romantic relationship between Prince Harry and Meghan: their wedding (Study 1), the birth of their first child Archie (Study 2), and their decision to leave the United Kingdom (Study 3). Due to their novelty, social importance, and popularity, these momentous events provided unique opportunities to examine these associations. For example, the wedding was the first-ever interracial marriage involving a Senior British Royal and generated a significant amount of media coverage, with an estimated 1.9 billion people—a quarter of the world's population—watching it (Reddin, 2022). Furthermore, this coverage often referred to the interracial nature of the Duke and Duchess's relationship, as well as Meghan's and Archie's biracial heritage (BBC, 2017) and elicited strong reactions, both positive and negative, on social media (Mahfouz, 2018). Coupled with the recent finding that exposure to celebrities can impact intergroup attitudes on a large scale (Arababa'h et al., 2021), the events, along with the media's near obsession with the couple (Hyde, 2023), is likely to have made interracial romantic relationships highly salient and thus attitudes toward such romances more accessible in such contexts.

In addition, the (unforeseeable) changing nature of the relationship, together with the evolving public discourse around the couple, allowed us to examine attitudes toward different aspects of interracial romances under three different, real-life circumstances. We first examined attitudes toward interracial romantic relationships in the context of the wedding. However, reflecting the discussions

around Archie's racial categorization before he was even born (e.g., Davies, 2021), the subsequent studies also examined receptivity toward having children with outgroup members, which previous research suggests people tend to be less open to (Herman & Campbell, 2012). Reactions to the couple's decision to leave the United Kingdom (dubbed “Megxit” by some media outlets) then motivated the investigation of how outgroup partners can be perceived to taint the ingroup in Study 3. Although inspired by media discussions (e.g., Owen, 2018), this concept fits well with previous investigations around the “purity” of racial groups and how such beliefs can influence receptivity to interracial romances (Auelua-Toomey & Roberts, 2023; Skinner & Hudac, 2017).

Capitalizing on these contexts, we used a rigorous program of research, including longitudinal (Studies 1 and 2) and cross-sectional designs (Study 3), to investigate receptivity to different intergroup romantic relationships (i.e., dating, having children with outgroup members) within historic intergroup contexts. Across the studies, we hypothesized that intergroup anxiety would be negatively associated with receptivity to interracial relationships and favorable intergroup attitudes (H1). Perceived ingroup norms, meanwhile, was hypothesized to be positively associated with the intergroup outcomes (receptivity to interracial relationships and intergroup attitudes: H2). We further predicted that racialized categorization would be a significant moderator, such that those who categorized Meghan (Studies 1 and 3) or Archie (Study 2) as relatively more (vs. less) Black would show the strongest associations (positive or negative) between the proposed predictors (e.g., norms, anxiety) and outcomes (e.g., receptivity to interracial romances, intergroup attitudes; H3). Figure 1 depicts the conceptual model for the longitudinal studies (Studies 1 and 2).

3 | STUDY 1: WHEN HARRY MET MEGHAN (AND GOT MARRIED)

3.1 | Method

3.1.1 | Participants

Assuming a small effect size ($f^2 = 0.02$), using 80% power, and using the linear multiple regression option to specify two predictors and their product term, G*Power recommended a minimum of 485 participants (Faul et al., 2007). Anticipating attrition, we recruited 700 White British participants from the online participant database Prolific Academic to complete a three-part online longitudinal study (entitled *Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's wedding*) investigating attitudes toward the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. Participants completed the measures 1 month before the wedding (T1), on the day of the wedding (T2), and a month postwedding (T3). Participants were compensated £1 for each survey completed plus a 25 pence bonus for completing all three. The final sample included only those who completed all measures across three surveys and was above the recommended minimum sample size, $N = 585$ (168 males, 417 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 38$ years old, $SD = 12.15$).

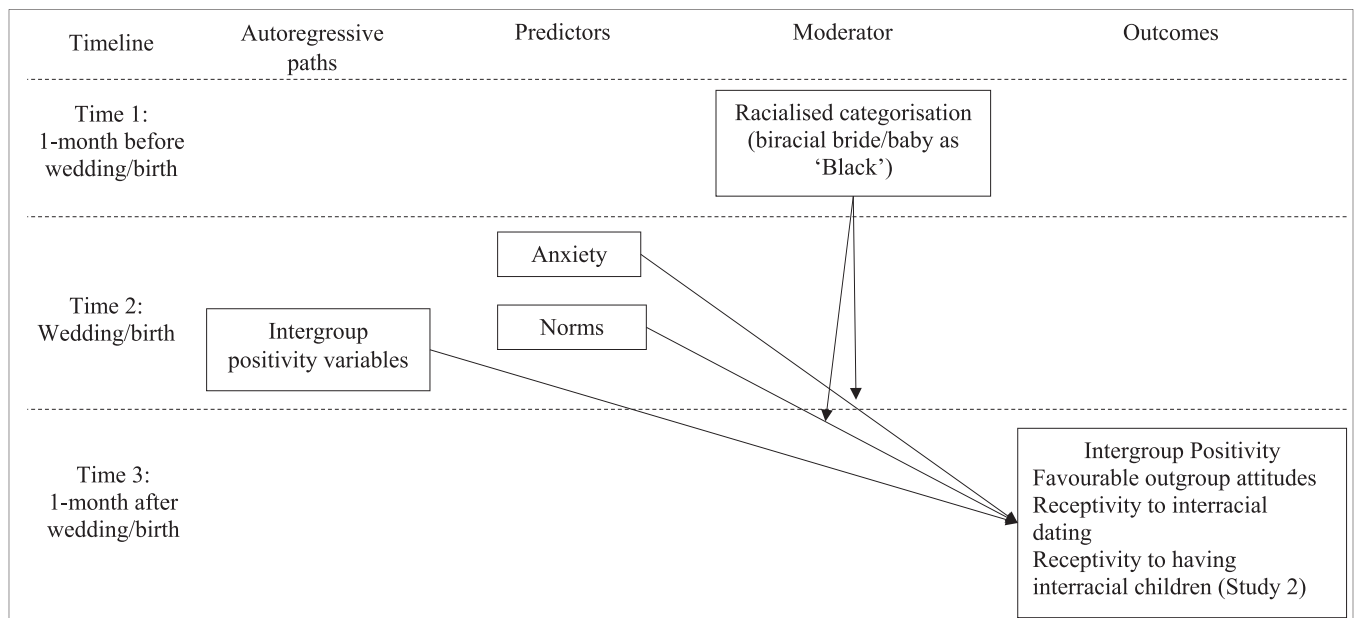


FIGURE 1 Conceptual model for Studies 1 and 2 whereby racialized categorization (T1) moderates the association between intergroup predictors (T2) and intergroup positivity (T3), controlling for intergroup positivity autoregressive paths (T2).

3.1.2 | Materials

All measures were assessed across the three timepoints of the study but only the data pertaining to the conceptual model (Figure 1) are presented below,^{1,2}. All presented data and relevant syntax for all the studies can be accessed at: https://osf.io/8q76n/?view_only=442e3139f3854080839f1df5a190e1e0.

Racialized Categorization of Meghan (T1). Participants were informed that Meghan Markle identifies as mixed-race (Black and White) and were then asked to indicate their personal perception of her ethnicity on a slider from 100% White to 100% Black. Participants were unable to see a numerical value they assigned, only the positioning of the marker from the two endpoints (0 = 100% White; 100 = 100% Black).

Interracial dating anxiety (T2) was adapted from Stephan and Stephan's (1985) general (nonromantic) intergroup anxiety measure to assess how participants would feel if they went on a date with a person who is "mixed race with Black and White ancestry." The measure consisted of six items including "awkward," "self-conscious," and "relaxed" (reverse scored) using a 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*Very much so*) scale, $\alpha = .88$.

Ingroup norms toward Harry and Meghan's relationship (T2) was adapted from Paterson et al. (2019) ingroup norm measure: "How much do you think British society, as a whole, approves of their relationship?" (1 = *Strongly disapproves* to 7 = *Strongly approves*). Drawing upon Paterson et al. (2019) scales, we operationalized dating as being romantically involved with someone for 1 month or more and, to form the scale, posed two separate items asking participants their likelihood to date someone who was mixed-race (Black and White), and someone who was Black. Participants were told that if they did not want to date anybody, they should imagine that they were single and were wanting to date. This *receptivity to*

outgroup dating scale was assessed on a 1 = *Extremely unlikely* to 7 = *Extremely likely* scale (T2 $r = .86$; T3 $r = .85$).

Favorable outgroup attitudes (T2 $r = .95$; T3 $r = .96$) were assessed using feeling thermometers whereby participants indicated how cold or warm they felt toward "Mixed-race people (Black and White) in general" and "Black people in general" (0 = Extremely cold to 100 = Extremely warm; Haddock et al., 1993).

3.2 | Results

Table 1 presents the means, SDs, and correlations across the variables. A one-sample *t*-test against the value of 50 (representing Meghan's heritage to be 50% White and 50% Black) revealed that participants perceived Meghan Markle to be significantly more White than mixed-race ($M_{\text{categorization}} = 43.30$ versus $M_{\text{t-test statistic}} = 50$: $t(584) = -11.01$, $p < .001$). Overall, respondents reported low levels of anxiety about dating someone of a mixed-race heritage, slightly positive attitudes in regard to perceived norms and receptivity of dating outgroup members, and favorable outgroup attitudes. All T2 and T3 measures significantly and positively correlated with one another, but racialized categorization was not significantly correlated with any measure, marking it well-suited as a potential moderator (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

3.2.1 | Moderation by pre-existing racialized categorization

To examine whether interracial dating anxiety and perceived ingroup norms at the time of the wedding predicted participants'

TABLE 1 Correlations, means, and SDs for royal wedding (Study 1).

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Racialized categorization of Meghan (T1)	-						
2. Interracial dating anxiety (T2)	-.02	-					
3. Norms toward Harry and Meghan's relationship (T2)	-.03	-.27***	-				
4. Receptivity to outgroup dating (T2)	.03	-.53***	.17***	-			
5. Favorable outgroup attitudes (T2)	.01	-.49***	.27***	.38***	-		
6. Receptivity to outgroup dating (T3)	.03	-.57***	.14***	.80***	.38***	-	
7. Favorable outgroup attitudes (T3)	-.00	-.44***	.19***	.38***	.74***	.34***	-
M (SDs)	43.30 (14.71)	2.58 (1.24)	5.36 (1.30)	4.72 (1.77)	76.03 (21.15)	4.81 (1.77)	75.72 (21.12)

Note: T1 = 1 month before the wedding; T2 = day of the wedding; T3 = 1 month after the wedding.

*** $p < .001$.

TABLE 2 Hierarchical multiple regression analyses predicting criterion variables after the royal wedding (Study 1).

Predictor	Criterion variables					
	Receptivity to outgroup dating T3			Favorable outgroup attitudes T3		
	ΔR^2	B(SE)	95% CI [LL, UL]	ΔR^2	B(SE)	95% CI [LL, UL]
Step 1	.66***			.55***		
Criterion at T2		0.74***(0.03)	[0.68, 0.80]		0.69***(0.03)	[0.63, 0.76]
Interracial dating anxiety (T2)		-0.14***(0.04)	[-0.22, -0.05]		-1.68***(0.55)	[-2.76, -0.60]
Norms toward Harry and Meghan's relationship (T2)		0.05(0.03)	[-0.01, 0.12]		-0.38(0.48)	[-1.31, 0.55]
Racialized categorization (T1)		0.00(0.00)	[-0.01, 0.01]		0.00(0.04)	[-0.08, 0.08]
Step 2	.00			.01**		
Criterion at T2		0.74***(0.03)	[0.68, 0.80]		0.69***(0.03)	[0.63, 0.76]
Interracial dating anxiety (T2)		-0.14***(0.04)	[-0.22, -0.05]		-1.63***(0.55)	[-2.71, -0.55]
Norms toward Harry and Meghan's relationship (T2)		0.06(0.03)	[-0.01, 0.12]		0.50(0.47)	[-1.43, 0.43]
Racialized categorization (T1)		0.00(0.00)	[-0.01, 0.01]		-0.50(0.47)	[-1.43, 0.43]
Anxiety \times racialized categorization		0.00(0.00)	[-0.01, 0.00]		-0.08*(0.03)	[-0.14, -0.01]
Norms \times racialized categorization		0.00(0.00)	[-0.01, 0.00]		0.04(0.03)	[-0.02, 0.10]

Note: Unstandardized betas (B) are presented. T1 = 1 month before the wedding; T2 = Day of the wedding; T3 = 1 month after the wedding.

Abbreviations: CIs, confidence intervals; LL, lower limit; UL, upper limit.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

receptivity to outgroup dating and their favorable outgroup attitudes one month after the wedding (H1, H2), and if racialized categorizations moderated these associations (H3), we conducted hierarchical multiple regressions for both dependent variables (Table 2). Before analyses, we centered the variables and created

interaction terms for (i) anxiety and racialized categorization and (ii) norms and racialized categorization. In Step 1 of the regressions, we added racialized categorization measured at T1, anxiety, and norms measured at T2, as well as relevant measures of receptivity and attitudes at the time of the wedding (T2).

The latter were included as autoregressive paths to their corresponding measures assessed at T3 in each model to allow a more conservative test of the longitudinal associations (e.g., receptivity to outgroup dating at T2 was used as a predictor of receptivity to outgroup dating at T3). We then added the two interaction terms (anxiety \times racialized categorization; norms \times racialized categorization) in Step 2 to examine the potential interaction effects.

Supporting H1, Table 2 reveals that interracial dating anxiety at the time of the wedding (T2) significantly and negatively predicted both receptivity to outgroup dating and favorable outgroup attitudes one month after the wedding, above and beyond strong autoregressive paths. The latter association between intergroup dating anxiety and favorable outgroup attitudes was further moderated by racialized categorization. Probing this interaction, conditional effects revealed support for H3: for people who viewed Meghan as relatively more White ($M - 1$ SD), anxiety was not a significant predictor of outgroup attitudes ($B = -0.53$, $SE = 0.71$, $LLCI -1.92$, $ULCI 0.86$). However, for those who categorized Meghan at the mean of the scale (M) or as more Black ($M + 1$ SD), anxiety was negatively predictive of favorable outgroup attitudes (M : $B = -1.63$, $SE = 0.55$, $LLCI -2.71$, $ULCI -0.55$; and $M + 1$ SD: $B = -2.74$, $SE = 0.72$, $LLCI -4.15$, $ULCI -1.32$).

Table 2 also reveals that perceived social norms toward Harry and Meghan's relationship at the time of the wedding was not significantly predictive of either outcome one month after the wedding, resulting in no support for H2. In addition, there were no further moderations by racialized categorization and so there was limited support for H3 as only one of the four associations were found to be significantly moderated. In sum, these analyses revealed that only intergroup dating anxiety, assessed in the context of the highly publicized interracial royal wedding, consistently, longitudinally and negatively predicted both receptivity to outgroup dating and favorable outgroup attitudes.

4 | STUDY 2: THE ARRIVAL OF ARCHIE (MULTIRACIAL HEIR)

A few months after the wedding, the Duke and Duchess announced they were expecting their first child. The announcement provided the opportunity to replicate and expand upon Study 1 in interesting ways. Notably, discussions began about the expected baby's racial heritage and about having a biracial individual in line for the British throne (e.g., Davies, 2021). Such discussions highlighted that having a child with an outgroup member is often perceived to be less acceptable than dating an outgroup member, perhaps because it may be more threatening for some (Herman & Campbell, 2012). Therefore, to be consistent with the context and to expand our investigation into an (arguably) even more intimate relationship, we

included questions about Archie rather than Meghan and focused on biracial children rather than interracial dating.

4.1 | Method

4.1.1 | Participants

The proposed analyses and minimum required sample size ($N = 485$) were equivalent to Study 1. However, although we expected attrition, financial constraints meant we recruited an initial 509 participants from Prolific Academic to complete a three-part online study (entitled *Royal Baby*) investigating attitudes toward the birth of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's baby (Archie). Measures were completed on March 22, 2019 (T1 $N = 509$), three days postbirth (T2: May 9, 2019, $N = 461$) and, to ensure a comparable time between surveys, T3 survey was released on June 26, 2019 ($N = 408$). Participants were compensated £1 for each survey completed. The final sample included only participants who completed all key measures across three studies, $N = 402$ (144 males, 257 females [with one unspecified]; $M_{\text{age}} = 38.54$ years old, $SD = 11.64$ [with four unspecified]). Although the sample size did not meet the recommended minimum, it is still considered large by psychology standards.

4.1.2 | Materials

As in Study 1, all measures specified below were assessed across the three timepoints but only the results pertaining to the conceptual model (Figure 1) are presented.

Racialized categorization of Archie (T1) was assessed, as in Study 1, by asking participants to indicate their personal perception of Archie's ethnicity on a "slider" with the two endpoints being 100% White (0) and 100% Black (100).

Anxiety about having biracial children (T2) was measured with three items using the stem, "If you were to have a biracial child, to what extent do you think the child's biracial heritage would" "Have a negative impact on their life," "Complicate their life," and "Confuse their life" (1 = *Not at all* to 7 = *A great deal*: $\alpha = .90$).

Ingroup norms toward the biracial royal (T2) was measured by one item created for this study asking participants to indicate how White British people, overall, will respond to having a biracial family member that is an heir to the throne, with 1 = *Extremely negatively* to 7 = *Extremely positively*.

Participants were asked about their *receptivity to dating* (T2 $r = .91$; T3 $r = .90$) and *having children with outgroup members* (T2 $r = .93$; T3 $r = .94$). In a slight amendment to Study 1, the four items asked to what extent "would you be ok with [dating/having a child] with someone who is [mixed-race (Black and White)/Black]" (1 = *Not at all* to 7 = *Very much so*).

Favorable outgroup attitudes (T2 $r = .96$; T3 $r = .95$) were assessed using the same measures as in Study 1.

4.2 | Results

Table 3 presents the means, SDs, and correlations of the variables. As in Study 1, participants reported relatively low anxiety (i.e., below the scale midpoint) and generally, but not exceptionally, positive outgroup attitudes (i.e., somewhat above scale midpoints). All variables significantly correlated with one another, except racialized categorization, which correlated only with receptivity to outgroup dating at the time of the birth and a month later (both $r_s = -.14$, $p_s < .005$). A one-sample t -test comparing the racialized categorization of Archie to the value of 25% (i.e., a quarter of his grandparents are Black) revealed that Archie was perceived to be significantly more Black than would be expected ($M_{\text{categorization}} = 36.91\%$ vs. $M_{t\text{-test statistic}} = 25\%$: $t(401) = 11.64$, $p < .001$).

4.2.1 | Moderation by pre-existing racialized categorization

As shown in Table 3, anxiety about having biracial children (negatively) and perceived ingroup norms toward having a biracial heir around the time of the birth (positively) significantly correlated with receptivity to outgroup dating, receptivity to having children with outgroup members, and favorable outgroup attitudes a month after the birth. Replicating Study 1, we

conducted hierarchical multiple regressions to examine if these relationships were moderated by the racialized categorization of Archie measured before the birth, controlling for scores on the criteria around the time of the birth (i.e., autoregressive paths). As in Study 1, we centered the variables, created interaction terms for (i) anxiety and racialized categorization and (ii) norms and racialized categorization. In Step 1, we entered the racialized categorization of Archie before the birth, anxiety and norms at the time of the birth, along with autoregressive associations from the time of the birth. We then entered the two interaction terms in Step 2.

Providing partial support for H1, Table 4 shows that anxiety about having biracial children at the time of the birth negatively predicted receptivity to having a child with an outgroup partner and favorable outgroup attitudes 1 month later, above and beyond strong autoregressive paths. However, anxiety about having biracial children did not significantly predict receptivity to outgroup dating. The racialized categorization of Archie did not moderate any of the associations, providing no support for H3.

Supporting H2, even after accounting for strong autoregressive paths, perceived ingroup norms toward having a biracial heir at the time of the birth were positively associated with greater receptivity to having a child with an outgroup partner; greater receptivity to outgroup dating; favorable outgroup attitudes, all measured a month after the birth. Providing partial support for H3, pre-event racialized categorization of Archie significantly moderated the associations between perceived norms of having a biracial heir and the two receptivity items: having a child with an

TABLE 3 Correlations, means, and SDs for royal birth (Study 2).

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Racialized categorization of Archie (T1)	-								
2. Anxiety about having biracial children (T2)	.08	-							
3. Norms to biracial heir (T2)	-.09	-.19***	-						
4. Receptivity to having child with outgroup partner (T2)	-.07	-.27***	.19***	-					
5. Receptivity to outgroup dating (T2)	-.14**	-.26***	.17***	.77***	-				
6. Favorable outgroup attitudes (T2)	-.07	-.33***	.29***	.40***	.41***	-			
7. Receptivity to having child with outgroup partner (T3)	-.09	-.29***	.25***	.74***	.71***	.37***	-		
8. Receptivity to outgroup dating (T3)	-.14**	-.27***	.21***	.70***	.81***	.34***	.80***	-	
9. Favorable outgroup attitudes (T3)	-.08	-.33***	.31***	.40***	.40***	.73***	.42***	.41***	-
M (SD)	36.91 (20.53)	3.29 (1.37)	5.17 (1.30)	5.68 (1.83)	5.80 (1.63)	76.03 (22.14)	5.72 (1.79)	5.86 (1.61)	76.25 (21.95)

Note: T1 = measured before birth (March 22, 2019); T2 = measured at the time of birth (May 9, 2019); T3 = measured after the birth (June 26, 2019). *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$.

TABLE 4 Hierarchical multiple regression analyses predicting criterion variables after the royal birth (Study 2).

Predictor	Criterion variables			Favorable outgroup attitudes(T3)		
	Receptivity to having children with outgroup partner (T3)	Receptivity to outgroup dating (T3)	Receptivity to outgroup dating (T3)	Receptivity to outgroup dating (T3)	Receptivity to outgroup dating (T3)	Receptivity to outgroup dating (T3)
	B(SE)	95% CI [LL, UL]	ΔR^2	B(SE)	95% CI [LL, UL]	ΔR^2
Step 1			.57****			.55****
Criterion at T2						
Anxiety about having biracial children (T2)	0.69*** (0.03)	[0.62, 0.75]		0.77*** (0.03)	[0.71, 0.83]	
Norms to biracial heir (T2)	-0.10* (0.05)	[-0.19, -0.01]		-0.06 (0.04)	[-0.13, 0.02]	
Racialized categorization (T1)	0.14** (0.05)	[0.05, 0.23]		0.08* (0.04)	[0.01, 0.15]	
	-0.00 (0.00)	[-0.01, 0.00]		-0.00 (0.00)	[-0.01, 0.00]	
Step 2			.01**			.00
Criterion at T2						
Anxiety about having biracial children (T2)	0.68*** (0.03)	[0.61, 0.74]		0.77*** (0.03)	[0.71, 0.83]	
Norms to biracial heir (T2)	-0.09* (0.05)	[-0.18, -0.01]		-0.05 (0.03)	[-0.12, 0.02]	
Racialized categorization (T1)	0.13** (0.05)	[0.04, 0.22]		0.08* (0.04)	[0.01, 0.15]	
Anxiety × racialized categorization	0.00 (0.00)	[-0.01, 0.00]		-0.00 (0.00)	[-0.01, 0.00]	
Norms × racialized categorization	-0.00 (0.00)	[-0.01, 0.00]		0.00 (0.00)	[-0.00, 0.01]	
	0.01* (0.00)	[0.00, 0.01]		0.01* (0.00)	[0.00, 0.01]	

Note: Unstandardized betas (B) are presented. T1 = measured before birth (March 22, 2019); T2 = measured at the time of birth (May 9, 2019); T3 = measured after the birth (June 26, 2019).

Abbreviations: CIs, confidence intervals; LL, lower limit; UL, upper limit.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

outgroup member and dating an outgroup member, though the moderation was not significant for favorable outgroup attitudes. Probing the significant interactions revealed that for people who viewed Archie as relatively more White ($M - 1$ SD), norms about having a biracial heir was not a significant predictor of receptivity to either having a child with an outgroup member ($B = 0.02$, $SE = 0.06$, $LLCI -0.10$, $ULCI 0.15$) or dating an outgroup member ($B = -0.02$, $SE = 0.05$, $LLCI -0.12$, $ULCI 0.08$). However, for those who categorized Archie at the mean of the scale (M) or as more Black ($M + 1$ SD), perceived norms toward having a biracial heir was positively predictive of both receptivity toward having a child with an outgroup member (M : $B = 0.13$, $SE = 0.05$, $LLCI 0.04$, $ULCI 0.22$; $M + 1$ SD: $B = 0.24$, $SE = 0.06$, $LLCI 0.12$, $ULCI 0.36$) and receptivity to dating an outgroup member (M : $B = 0.08$, $SE = 0.04$, $LLCI 0.01$, $ULCI 0.15$; $M + 1$ SD: $B = 0.18$, $SE = 0.05$, $LLCI 0.08$, $ULCI 0.27$).³

Taken together, Studies 1 and 2 have some notable similarities and interesting distinctions. Supporting the importance of intergroup anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985), anxieties around interracial dating and having biracial children significantly, negatively, and longitudinally predicted four of the five outcomes in statistically conservative tests across the two studies (i.e., they were still significant after controlling for scores at the previous time point). Perceived ingroup norms, however, were significantly positively related to the longitudinal outcome measures only in Study 2. This may be a consequence of the measures employed in the studies: perceived ingroup norms toward biracial children seem to be more influential than ingroup norms toward interracial dating. This may be because biracial children, due to their dual heritages, fundamentally challenge and change the exclusivity of racial group boundaries to a far greater extent than simply going on a date with someone (e.g., Uskul et al., 2007). The moderating role of racialized categorization, meanwhile, was inconsistent across both studies. However, when it was statistically significant, associations between the predictors and criteria were strongest for those who viewed the biracial Royals to be relatively more (vs. less) Black; this provides some, albeit limited, support to the importance of acknowledging the contexts as intergroup events (e.g., Brown & Hewstone, 2005).

5 | STUDY 3: “MEGXIT”

On January 8, 2020, the Duke and Duchess suddenly announced they would step back from their Royal duties and split their time between the United Kingdom and North America, a decision derogatorily dubbed “Megxit” by some media (Dale, 2020). Due to the unforeseen nature of their pronouncement, we were unable to collect pre-event racialized categorization measures. However, this negatively tinged event provided an ideal opportunity to expand upon the first two studies in novel ways. In contrast to the more celebratory wedding and birth events, the couples' emigration and relinquishing of their roles as Working Royals enabled the

examination of the consequences of a somewhat more negative event involving a high-profile interracial couple. Furthermore, unlike the wedding and birth which attracted months of continuous pervasive media attention which made direct measures of media exposure problematic, this context enabled the examination of how media exposure of Meghan, soon after the announcement, was associated with intergroup attitudes.

Adopting Vezzali et al. (2023) conceptualization of media exposure as “exposure to a social outgroup via the media” (p. 267), we assessed how the exposure to an outgroup member within an interracial relationship (i.e., Meghan) was associated with the intergroup variables previously examined in Studies 1 and 2. Drawing upon previous research showing that media exposure can significantly influence intergroup attitudes, and does so via intergroup anxiety and norms (Banas et al., 2020; White et al., 2021), we conceptualized media exposure as the predictor and norms and anxiety as the mediators to the intergroup outcomes.

Furthermore, reflecting the more negative media commentary around the couple (e.g., Owen, 2018), we proposed a new mediator—the extent to which the outgroup partner is perceived to have *tainted* the ingroup. The construct not only mirrors the media commentary, it reflects a large body of literature describing how interracial relationships are often accused of contaminating “pure” ingroup blood/ancestry (e.g., “one-drop rule” to categorize anyone with “Black blood,” Ho et al., 2020). Similarly, such a conceptualization taps into intergroup disgust (i.e., feeling repulsed by outgroup members) which is characterized by concerns with taint and the spread of stigma from marginalized groups (see Hodson et al., 2013), thereby playing a key role in shaping desires to maintain boundaries and distance between groups (Skinner & Hudac, 2017).

In sum, acknowledging the media negativity (Dale, 2020), we assumed the exposure would be perceived negatively and thus would be negatively associated with intergroup attitudes (e.g., Graf et al., 2014). Consequently, in addition to H1, H2, and H3, we further hypothesized that media exposure to Meghan in this context would be associated with less receptivity to interracial romances and less favorable attitudes (H4), and these associations would be mediated by increased anxiety (H5a), less positive ingroup norms (H5b), and a greater belief that Meghan has tainted the Royal Family (H5c). These hypotheses are depicted in Figure 2. Analyses were preregistered (<http://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=56fi3j>).⁴

5.1 | Method

5.1.1 | Participants

Assuming a small effect size ($f = 0.02$), 80% power, and $\alpha = .05$, G*Power suggested a sample size of 485 (Faul et al., 2007). We recruited 507 White-British participants (337 females, 170 males; $M_{\text{age}} = 38.66$, $SD = 12.68$ with two missing age data) from Prolific Academic for a study entitled “Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex,” receiving 87 pence for participation.

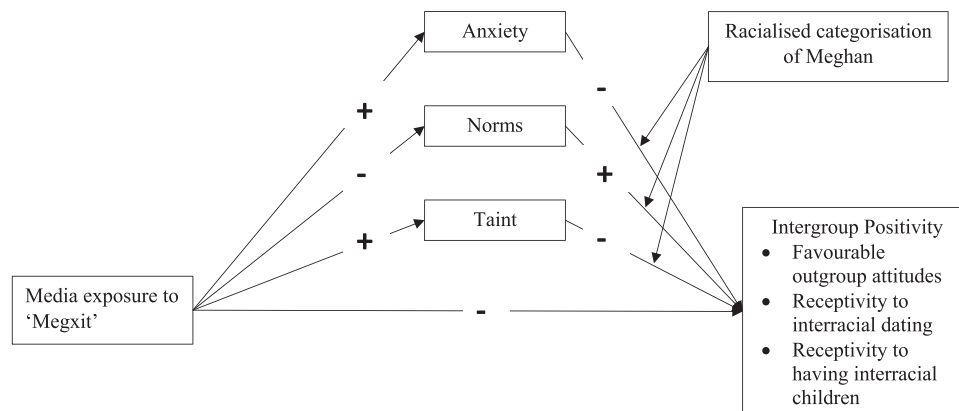


FIGURE 2 Conceptual model for the proposed moderated-mediation cross-sectional associations in Study 3 (“Megxit”).

5.1.2 | Materials

Media exposure of Meghan was measured with one item: “Over the past week, how often have you seen or heard about Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, in the news?” using a 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*All the time*) scale.

Inspired by the media narrative surrounding Meghan (Owen, 2018), we created a new scale to assess the extent to which Meghan is perceived to have *tainted* the Royal family using the stem “to what extent do you feel Meghan has ...” “tainted,” “destroyed,” and “corrupted” “the Royal Family?” (1 = *Not at all* to 7 = *A great deal*, $\alpha = .94$).

Ingroup norms toward biracial children was assessed similarly as norms in Study 2 with one item “To what extent do you think White British people, overall, respond to biracial (White and Black) children?” (1 = *Extremely negatively* to 7 = *Extremely positively*).

Anxiety about having biracial children ($\alpha = .85$), *receptivity to outgroup dating* ($r = .88$) and *having children with outgroup members* ($r = .90$), and *favourable outgroup attitudes* ($r = .97$) were assessed using the same measures as in Study 2. *Racialized categorization* of Meghan was assessed using the same scale as in Study 1.

5.2 | Results

Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics and correlations between the variables in Study 3. Meghan was perceived to be in the news extensively in the week after the announcement ($M = 6.14$ on a 7-point scale). Unexpectedly, this exposure was not significantly associated with receptivity to intimate intergroup relationships and was, in fact, significantly associated with *more positive outgroup attitudes*, contrary to our hypotheses (H4). Media exposure was also not significantly associated with anxiety and was associated with *favourable norms toward biracial children*—the opposite direction to our hypotheses (H5b). There was, however, some support for the hypotheses depicted in Figure 2: media exposure was positively associated with the

perception that Meghan has tainted the Royal family. The associations between the proposed mediators and the criteria were also significant and in the expected direction: anxiety about having biracial children (H1) and the perception that Meghan had tainted the Royal Family (H5c) were negatively associated with receptivity toward dating and having children with outgroup partners as well as favorable outgroup attitudes, while perceived norms were positively associated with the outcomes (H2).

Employing a one-sample *t*-test, we compared the mean of the racialized categorization variable (48.31) to a sample statistic of 50 (representing 50% Black and 50% White). As in Study 1, Meghan was categorized to be significantly more White than would have mathematically been expected, $t(506) = -2.76, p = .006$. Furthermore, an independent sample *t*-test indicated that Meghan was perceived to be more Black in this study ($M = 48.31, SD = 13.81$) than around the time of the wedding ($M = 43.30, SD = 14.71$), $t(1090) = 5.77, p < .001$.

5.2.1 | Mediation analyses

To examine the hypothesized mediational pathways, PROCESS Model 4 was used with 10,000 bootstraps and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) (Hayes, 2013). Because exposure was not significantly correlated with anxiety, only *ingroup norms* and *tainted* were tested as simultaneous mediators to the three criteria (receptivity to dating an outgroup member, receptivity to having a child with an outgroup member, and favorable outgroup attitudes). Table 6 presents the direct, indirect, and total effects. In all models, media exposure significantly and positively predicted perceived positive ingroup norms toward biracial children ($B = 0.11, SE = 0.05, LLCI 0.01, ULCI 0.21$), as well as significantly and positively predicting the perception that Meghan had tainted the Royal Family ($B = 0.20, SE = 0.07, LLCI 0.07, ULCI 0.33$). Contrary to expectations, media exposure directly and *positively* predicted favorable outgroup attitudes but had no direct association with the items concerning receptivity to intimate intergroup relationships.

TABLE 5 Means, SDs, and correlations (Study 3).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Media exposure	-							
2. Anxiety about biracial children	-.02	-						
3. Norms toward biracial children	.10*	-.45***	-					
4. Perception that Meghan has tainted Royal family	.13**	.07	.04	-				
5. Receptivity to having child with outgroup partner	-.05	-.29***	.17***	-.34***	-	-		
6. Receptivity to outgroup dating	-.01	-.27***	.11*	-.37***	.85***			
7. Favorable outgroup attitudes	.12**	-.33***	.27***	-.11*	.35***	.29***	-	
8. Racialized categorization of Meghan	.14**	.05	-.02	.03	-.06	-.05	.00	-
M (SD)	6.14 (1.09)	3.47 (1.33)	4.52 (1.25)	2.14 (1.64)	5.91 (1.61)	5.91 (1.53)	76.32 (20.09)	48.31 (13.81)

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 6 Total, direct, and indirect effects of the simple mediation models (Study 3).

Mediation model	Total effect B (SE) [LL, UL]	Direct effect B(SE) [LL, UL]	Total indirect effect B(SE) [LL, UL]	Specific indirect effects B(SE) [LL, UL]
Exposure → Norms/Taint → Receptivity to having a child with outgroup partner	-0.07 (0.07) [-0.20, 0.06]	-0.03 (0.06) [-0.15, 0.09]	-0.04 (0.03) [-0.10, 0.01]	Norms: 0.03 (0.01) [0.005, 0.06] Taint: 0-.07 (0.02) [-0.12, -0.03]
Exposure → Norms/Taint → Receptivity to outgroup dating	-0.01 (0.06) [-0.13, 0.11]	0.04 (0.06) [-0.07, 0.16]	-0.05 (0.03) [-0.10, -0.01]	Norms: 0.02 (0.01) [0.003, 0.04] Taint: -0.07 (0.02) [-0.12, -0.03]
Exposure → Norms/Taint → Favorable outgroup attitudes	2.23 (0.81) [0.64, 3.82]	2.09 (0.78) [0.54, 3.63]	0.14 (0.29) [-0.40, 0.73]	Norms: 0.48 (0.24) [0.07, 1.07] Taint: -0.34 (0.16) [-0.76, -0.10]

Note: Unstandardized betas (B) are presented. In all models, contact predicted norms (B = 0.11, SE = 0.05, LL 0.01, UL 0.21) and taint (B = 0.20, SE = 0.07, LL 0.07, UL 0.33). 95% Confidence Intervals and 10,000 bootstrap estimates used.

Abbreviations: LL, lower limit; UL, upper limit

The analyses, however, did reveal that media exposure was significantly and indirectly associated with receptivity to dating and having children with outgroup members, and favorable outgroup attitudes via two distinct—and opposing—mechanisms. On the one hand, media exposure was associated with perceiving more favorable ingroup norms toward biracial children which, in turn, was associated with *more* positive intergroup attitudes. On the other hand, suggesting a potential suppression effect (Rucker et al., 2011), media exposure was also associated with the perception that Meghan had tainted the Royal family which, in turn, was associated with *less* positive intergroup attitudes.

5.2.2 | Moderated mediation

As in Studies 1 and 2, in which racialized categorization was the proposed moderator between anxiety/norms and the criteria, we

next examined whether the racialized categorization of Meghan moderated these associations in this mediational model. Thus, using PROCESS Model 14 with 10,000 bootstraps and 95% CIs (Hayes, 2013), we tested racialized categorization as the moderator between the mediators (norms and tainted) and all the criteria (i.e., *b*-paths), with the expectation that those who categorized Meghan as relatively more Black would show stronger associations between the mediators and the criteria (H3).

As shown in Table 7, the categorization of Meghan did not moderate associations between perceived ingroup norms toward biracial children and any of the criteria. However, there were significant interactions between racialized categorization and perceptions that Meghan has tainted the Royal family, along with significant indices of moderated mediation on all of the criteria (though the interaction for favorable outgroup attitudes only approached significance, $p = .053$). Media exposure was also directly and positively associated with favorable outgroup attitudes.

TABLE 7 Media exposure predicting outgroup attitudes, mediated by norms and taint, with the b-paths moderated by racialized categorization (Study 3).

Predictor	B (SE) [LL, UL]	Index of moderated-mediation [LL, UL]
<i>Receptivity to have child with outgroup partner</i>		
Exposure	0.03 (0.06) [-0.15, 0.08]	-
Taint	-0.02 (0.14) [-0.29, 0.26]	-
Norms	0.02 (0.19) [-0.35, 0.38]	-
Racialized categorization	-0.01 (0.02) [-0.04, 0.03]	-
Taint × racialized categorization	-0.006* (0.003) [-0.012, -0.001]	-0.001 (0.001) [-0.004, 0.000]
Norms × racialized categorization	0.004 (0.003) [-0.002, 0.01]	0.001 (0.001) [-0.000, 0.002]
<i>Receptivity to outgroup dating</i>		
Exposure	0.04 (0.06) [-0.08, 0.15]	-
Taint	-0.05 (0.13) [-0.32, 0.39]	-
Norms	0.04 (0.18) [-0.32, 0.39]	-
Racialized categorization	0.001 (0.02) [-0.03, 0.04]	-
Taint × racialized categorization	-0.006* (0.003) [-0.01, -0.001]	-0.001 [-0.003, 0.000]
Norms × racialized categorization	0.002 (0.004) [-0.005, 0.009]	0.000 [-0.000, 0.001]
<i>Favorable outgroup attitudes</i>		
Exposure	1.96* (0.80) [0.39, 3.53]	-
Taint	1.76 (1.80) [-1.83, 5.34]	-
Norms	1.45 (2.40) [-3.38, 6.27]	-
Racialized categorization	-0.08 (0.24) [-0.56, 0.40]	-
Taint × racialized categorization	-0.07 [†] (0.03) [-0.14, 0.001]	-0.013 (0.008) [-0.033, -0.001]
Norms × racialized categorization	0.06 (0.05) [-0.04, 0.15]	0.006 (0.007) [-0.003, 0.025]

Note: Unstandardized betas (B) are presented. 95% CI = 95% CIs, using 10,000 bootstraps
Abbreviations: CI, confidence interval; LL, lower limit; UL, upper limit.

[†]*p* = .053.

**p* < .05.

Using the mean and ± 1 SD we examined the associations between perceptions of how Meghan has tainted the Royal family and the criteria at the three levels of racialized categorization. We found that the associations were consistently stronger for those who categorized Meghan as more (vs. less) Black. That is, supporting our hypotheses (H3), for those perceiving Meghan to be more Black, the perception that Meghan has tainted the Royal family was more strongly and negatively related to their *receptivity to having a child with an outgroup partner*: *M* - 1SD, *B* = -0.05, *LLCI* -0.11, *ULCI* -0.01; *M*, *B* = -0.06, *LLCI* -0.12, *ULCI* -0.02; *M* + 1SD, *B* = -0.08, *LLCI* -0.14, *ULCI* -0.03; their *receptivity to outgroup dating*: *M* - 1SD, *B* = -0.05, *LLCI* -0.11, *ULCI* -0.02; *M*, *B* = -0.07, *LLCI* -0.11, *ULCI* -0.03; *M* + 1SD, *B* = -0.08, *LLCI* -0.12, *ULCI* -0.03, and their *favorable outgroup attitudes* in general: *M* - 1SD, *B* = -0.11, *LLCI* -0.52, *ULCI* -0.14; *M*, *B* = -0.30, *LLCI* -0.69, *ULCI* -0.07; *M* + 1SD, *B* = -0.48, *LLCI* -1.03, *ULCI* -0.16.

In summary, media exposure was associated with intergroup outcomes but not always in the ways we had anticipated. The contact

was significantly associated with negative outcomes via the perception that Meghan has tainted the Royal Family. However, this overall association was suppressed as the contact was also significantly associated with positive outcomes, via positive perceived norms toward biracial children. Despite not being significantly associated with media exposure, lower intergroup anxiety was again significantly associated with greater receptivity to intimate intergroup relationships and more favorable outgroup attitudes. Meanwhile, the moderating role of racialized categorization was again somewhat inconsistent, with three of the six analyses being significant and in the expected direction.

6 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

During three historic events involving a world-famous interracial couple, we examined the links between individuals' perceptions of interracial romantic relationships and their receptivity to such

relationships, as well as their intergroup attitudes. In the context of an interracial wedding watched by over a billion people (Reddin, 2022), Study 1 (wedding) revealed that reduced anxiety surrounding interracial unions longitudinally predicted greater receptiveness to intergroup intimate relations, as well as more favorable outgroup attitudes, even when statistically controlling for initial receptivity and attitudes. Expanding upon this, and again using stringent statistical tests, Study 2 (birth) showed that reduced anxiety and perceived positive norms toward biracial children longitudinally predicted greater receptivity to intergroup romances and more favorable outgroup attitudes. Then, capitalizing on the somewhat more controversial decision to step back from the Royal Family and leave the United Kingdom, Study 3 (“Megxit”) replicated the correlational links between our proposed predictors (reduced intergroup anxiety and perceived positive ingroup norms) and intergroup outcomes (receptivity to interracial romances and favorable intergroup attitudes). In addition, mediation analyses in this study revealed that media exposure to Meghan the week after “Megxit” was associated with positive intergroup outcomes via perceived positive ingroup norms, but these outcomes were suppressed by a novel mechanism—the perception that Meghan (an outgroup member) had *tainted* the Royal Family (the ingroup). Meanwhile, the moderating role of racialized categorization was examined across all three studies. When individuals categorized the biracial individuals in the events (Meghan and Archie) as more Black than White, the links between the proposed predictors (anxiety, norms) and the intergroup outcomes (receptivity, intergroup attitudes) were sometimes stronger. However, such moderations were not consistent.

The present research makes several important contributions to the literature. First, while the majority of the intergroup relations literature continues to examine nonromantic forms of intergroup contact (e.g., friendships, roommates, etc.), here we add to the growing literature acknowledging the importance of interracial romantic relationships in understanding and shaping intergroup relations (e.g., Auelua-Toomey & Roberts, 2023; Thai et al., 2022). Furthermore, by conducting the studies during highly significant intergroup events, we expand the literature by capturing real-time attitudes toward different aspects of interracial relationships: the more celebratory events of the wedding (Study 1) and the birth (Study 2), as well as the more negatively tinged decision to step back from the Royal Family and leave the United Kingdom (Study 3). As these events generated an unprecedented amount of media coverage, including debates around interracial romances and biracial children (e.g., BBC, 2017; Davies, 2021), these contexts are likely to have heightened participants' awareness of interracial relationships, thus potentially making their attitudes more informed and accessible (e.g., Alrababa'h et al., 2021).

Capitalizing on these novel, socially important contexts, we highlight the importance of perceived ingroup norms in predicting receptivity to interracial romances and intergroup attitudes. Consistent with previous cross-sectional research (Thai et al., 2022), believing that other ingroup members were supportive of interracial

relationships was consistently correlated with greater receptivity to interracial intimacy and favorable intergroup attitudes across the three studies. Moreover, although perceived norms toward Harry and Meghan's relationship did not *longitudinally* predict the intergroup outcomes in Study 1 in statistically stringent tests, both Study 2 (longitudinal) and 3 (cross-sectional) revealed that perceived ingroup norms toward biracial children are likely to be a positive predictor of people's receptivity toward intergroup romances and more general intergroup attitudes.

The different findings concerning the longitudinal impacts of perceived norms may be attributed to the intergroup consequences of dating an outgroup member versus having children with an outgroup member. While intergroup romances can be deemed threatening to group exclusivity and are consequently disapproved of (Stillwell & Lowery, 2021), it could be argued that multiracial children have a greater impact on intergroup relations as these children can alter the very definition and exclusivity of racial groups—and can do so permanently (e.g., are the children part of the ingroup, outgroup, or a completely new racial group?) The perceived support toward having these children, then, may be more indicative of others' intergroup attitudes because it shows whether they are perceived to be open to transforming group boundaries and becoming more inclusive on the intergroup level. Thus, norms toward biracial children may have a greater impact on individuals' openness to intergroup romances and intergroup attitudes more generally, than norms toward the relatively less transformative dating relationships. Future research should explore these possibilities.

Substantiating its importance in both the interpersonal (Feeney & Fitzgerald, 2019) and intergroup literatures (Stephan & Stephan, 1985), we also found intergroup anxiety to be consistently significantly correlated with all the intergroup outcomes across the three studies. Highlighting its longitudinal impacts, reduced intergroup anxiety at the time of the wedding (Study 1) and birth (Study 2) predicted more favorable intergroup attitudes and greater receptivity to specific intergroup romances (dating in Study 1; having children in Study 2) at least one month later. While previous research has shown intergroup anxiety longitudinally predicts the interracial dating behavior of university students in the United States (Levin et al., 2007), these findings expand the literature by showing the importance of intergroup anxiety in a different country with different race relations, and in contexts which were often highly racialized (BBC, 2017; Davies, 2021) and, perhaps, more anxiety-provoking than attending a racially diverse university. Notably, to our knowledge, we are the first to examine the association between intergroup anxiety and having children with an outgroup member. As having children with an outgroup member may be more anxiety-provoking than simply dating an outgroup member, such a measure may be more informative for understanding intergroup relations (e.g., Bogardus, 1933; but see Bratter & Campbell, 2023 for a critical discussion).

Relatedly, we modified the more traditional measure of intergroup anxiety in nonromantic contact (Stephan & Stephan, 1985), to directly tap into the phenomena of interest: anxiety toward

intergroup dating (Study 1) and anxiety toward having biracial children (Study 2). This enabled us to better reflect the contexts and the associated anxiety, while also making the measures more directly relevant to the intergroup outcomes under investigation (i.e., receptivity to dating and having children with outgroup partners). Nevertheless, as measures of intergroup anxiety, they only tap into the apprehension but say nothing of the individuals' ability to overcome this anxiety. To further understand the role of intergroup anxiety in receptivity to interracial romances (and general intergroup contact, for that matter), future research could examine potential moderators of this link, such as individuals' confidence in dealing with the situations.

Complementing the more traditional intergroup variables, we introduce a novel mechanism through which intergroup romantic relationships may influence intergroup attitudes: the perception that an outgroup partner can "taint" an ingroup family. Akin to intergroup disgust (e.g., Hodson et al., 2013) and the idea that interracial romances can contaminate "pure" races (e.g., Ho et al., 2020), the perception that Meghan has tainted the Royal Family was a consistent mediator between media exposure and negative intergroup outcomes in Study 3. This suggests that being exposed to interracial outgroup partners (perhaps especially during controversial contexts such as "Megxit") can elicit the perception of the ingroup being tainted which, in turn, can negatively impact on individuals' receptivity to interracial romances and intergroup attitudes more generally. Interestingly, taint did not correlate with measures of anxiety, norms, nor racialized categorization, thus highlighting it as a distinct variable. Nevertheless, despite such promising preliminary results, the construct remains novel. Future research could help to further develop it by including both positively- and negatively-valenced items, testing it in different contexts, and differentiating it from other potentially related constructs including symbolic and realistic threat (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005).

Another avenue for future research to examine is the proposed moderating role of the racialized categorization of the biracial individuals involved in the events. We hypothesized that viewing Meghan and Archie as more Black would make the context more intergroup in nature and thus impact intergroup attitudes to a greater extent than when they were perceived as more White. We found some support for this expectation, however, only six of the possible 16 moderations were significant, and there was little consistency between which variables were moderated.

While not anticipated, these findings may reflect the complex motivations behind racialized categorizations of biracial individuals. As Ho et al. (2020) explain, for some, the racialized categorizations may have been driven by simple visual attentional biases (i.e., attending to certain phenotypes) that dictate how Black or White a person is perceived to be and have little relation to intergroup attitudes. For others, racialized categorizations may be motivated by more sociopolitical motives in which individuals attempt to maintain social hierarchies by excluding multiracial individuals from the ingroup, thereby significantly reflecting negative intergroup attitudes. Indeed, it is interesting to note that Meghan was perceived to be

more Black in the more negative context (Study 3) than the more celebratory event (Study 1) in this research, perhaps reflecting these different motives. Nevertheless, there appears to be a myriad of complex and competing motivations for racialized categorizations that may have diverse impacts on intergroup attitudes, including individuals' receptivity to interracial romances that require further understanding.

The role of media exposure as a predictor of receptivity to interracial romances could also be explored further. Although the pervasiveness of the media around the wedding (Study 1) and birth (Study 2) made measuring media exposure in these highly publicized and protracted contexts problematic, we attempted to examine media exposure in Study 3 shortly after the announcement that the family would leave the United Kingdom. Although media exposure to Meghan was associated with the perception that she had tainted the Royal Family as we predicted, we also found that contrary to our hypotheses, media exposure to Meghan was unrelated to intergroup anxiety and was, in fact, associated with *positive* intergroup attitudes and perceived *positive* ingroup norms.

The unexpected findings may be artefacts of the rudimentary measure used to tap into media exposure in the study. That is, the measure simply asked to what extent participants had seen Meghan in the news that week. Although this gives an indication of exposure *quantity*, it does not encapsulate the *quality* of the exposure (e.g., was Meghan portrayed positively or negatively). Nor does it differentiate between who else was depicted in the exposure, for example, seeing Meghan with her husband and children could be seen as positive exposure that could lead to positive intergroup outcomes. However, seeing Meghan with other Royals or ingroup members who reportedly have difficulties with one another (Johnston, 2023) could represent negative intergroup contact and so exacerbate intergroup attitudes (Graf et al., 2014). Future research, particularly experimental designs with its greater control over both the quantity and quality of media exposure, as well as the incorporation of more nuanced measures of media exposure (e.g., parasocial contact vs. vicarious contact; Banas et al., 2020) would be well placed to provide further clarity on these issues and address what specific aspects of media exposure influences intergroup attitudes.

Future research would also be well placed to address other limitations of the current research, including testing the generalizability of the findings, particularly given the sole UK focus. Assessing different compositions of intergroup romantic relationships (e.g., partners of different races, religions, nationalities, in different gender combinations, etc.), with evaluations from different group members (e.g., majority vs. minority group members), in different contexts (e.g., less famous couples, different countries), framed in different ways (e.g., positive weddings, negative divorces) would better help understand the predictors of receptivity to interracial romances. Such future research could also test additional predictors and employ a wider variety of methodologies including experimental designs and qualitative approaches to enable a more comprehensive understanding of when and why people are receptive—or not—to interracial romantic relationships.

7 | CONCLUSION

In summary, our work has captured real-time reactions to three historic events involving a world-famous interracial couple to provide cross-sectional and longitudinal evidence showing that reduced intergroup anxiety and perceived positive ingroup norms are associated with increased receptivity to interracial relationships and favorable general intergroup attitudes. Furthermore, these associations were sometimes moderated by the racialized categorization of the biracial Royals: the intergroup predictors (anxiety and norms) were more strongly associated with receptivity to interracial romances for those who categorized Meghan or Archie as more (vs. less) Black. We also provide preliminary evidence that media exposure to interracial romances is likely to impact receptivity to interracial relationships and propose a novel factor explaining this association: the perception that an outgroup member can *taint* the ingroup. Considering the growing number of interracial romantic relationships and their potential to fundamentally transform intergroup relations, our timely research highlights the importance of understanding the reactions and receptivity to these influential intergroup relationships.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in Open Science Framework at https://osf.io/8q76n/?view_only=442e3139f3854080839f1df5a190e1e0.

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ENDNOTES

- As part of a larger project, Studies 1 and 2 included other measures to be analyzed for a separate paper investigating the more interpersonal (not intergroup) aspects of the couple's relationship.
- Initially we planned to analyze across the three waves, but the autoregressive paths were particularly strong. Instead, we focused on the moderation issue and present results from the relevant timepoints for the conceptual model.
- Analyses also included an exploration of the potential moderating role of social dominance orientation, presented in the Supporting Information: materials.
- Analyses included an exploration of the potential moderating roles of social dominance orientation and perceived typicality of Meghan, presented in the Supporting Information: materials.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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