

# Perceived Discrimination and Neighborhood Racial Composition among Black, White and Latino Young Adults in Chicago

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## **Abstract**

This study explores the relationship between perceived discrimination and neighborhood racial context among black, white and Latino young adults using the Project for Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods. Results indicate that all groups perceive discrimination in their everyday lives. These perceptions are reduced as the proportion of coracial neighbors increases following predictions based on the contact hypothesis. Among blacks and Latinos these reductions are moderate to non-existent, suggesting that neighborhood racial context may not be as important for minority populations as suggested by previous literature. Surprisingly, whites' perceptions are the most sensitive to fluctuations in neighborhood racial composition. Whites also perceive more discrimination than blacks or Latinos when whites are small minorities in their neighborhoods (less than 25%). Findings suggest that perceptions of discrimination among whites may constitute an additional obstacle for residential racial integration on top of the more often studied racial prejudice.

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Events like the election of Barack Obama as the first black president of the United States may contribute to the popular belief that racial prejudice and discrimination are a thing of the past in the United States. It adds credibility to the post-Civil Rights neoconservative notion that the U.S. is now a “color-blind” society (Omi and Winant 1986). However, a growing body of literature indicates that blacks continue to face racial prejudice and discrimination in their everyday lives (Feagin 1991; Feagin and Sykes 1994; Kessler, Mickelson and Williams 1999; Seller and Shelton 2003). This literature focuses on the extent of perceptions of discrimination, the psychological consequences for the victim and the individual-level predictors of feeling victimized, among mostly African American respondents. However, this literature rarely considers the effects of neighborhood racial context, in particular the relative size of the black or white population. Even rarer is consideration of the perceived discrimination of groups other than African Americans, such as whites and especially Latinos.

The current study attempts to improve our understanding of the relationship between perceived discrimination and neighborhood racial context with sample of black, white and Latino young adults in the city of Chicago. In doing so I hope to contribute to the literature on perceived prejudice and to help shift the research from one solely focused on African Americans’ perceptions of victimization to one that considers the multiple racial and ethnic groups that reflect the realities of contemporary American society. I do so through a series of logistic regression models predicting three items related to perceived discrimination from the Project for Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN).

## **Theoretical Basis and Review of Literature**

### *Perceptions of Racial Discrimination*

Most of our empirical knowledge regarding racial and ethnic prejudice comes from a literature that focuses on negative attitudes held by whites with little indication that respondents have or will ever act on these feelings (Bobo 1983; Fosset and Kiecolt 1989; Taylor 1998; Wilson 2001 among many other examples). However, an alternative literature focuses on respondents' perceptions that they have been the victims of racial prejudice or discrimination. Rather than focusing on internal feelings, this literature assumes that someone has acted on their prejudice, resulting in respondents feeling victimized in some way.

These studies often begin by identifying high levels of perceived discrimination in everyday life (D'Augelli and Hershberger 1993; Landrine and Klonoff 1996; Kessler et al. 1999; Sellers and Shelton 2003). Sellers and Shelton (2003) find that more than 70 percent of their African American respondents report having been ignored, treated rudely, treated suspiciously and followed in public places sometime in their life. Similarly Landrine and Klonoff (1996) find that over 80 percent of their sample of 153 African Americans report experiencing discrimination from strangers and from service employees, such as waiters, store clerks, bank tellers and mechanics. Researchers generally classify these types of events as everyday forms of discrimination. Perceiving more serious forms of discrimination that have direct physical or socio-economic consequences is not as common, but continues to occur in contemporary society. For example, Kessler et al. (1999) find that about 49% of African Americans experienced at least one of form of major, "lifetime events" discrimination, including being denied a job, promotion, scholarship, bank loan, rental or purchase of a home or being forced to leave a neighborhood because of their race.

Often, these authors are concerned with linking such experiences with emotional and psychological distress. Dealing with discrimination constitutes an additional and unique stressor

with which minorities must cope that can have damaging social, psychological and emotional consequences (Landrine and Klonoff 1996; Sellers and Shelton 2003; Klonoff, Landrine and Ullman 1999; Williams, Yu and Jackson 1997; Brown, Williams, Jackson, Neighbors, Torres, Sellers and Brown 2000; Burgess, Ding, Hargreaves, van Ryan and Phelan 2008, Lambert, Herman, Bynum and Ialongo 2009). For example, using the longitudinal National Survey of Black Americans Brown et al. (2000) find that perceptions of racial discrimination were positively associated with future psychological distress, controlling for demographic factors and mental health. Similarly, in a sample of 520 African American adults, Klonoff et al. (1999) find perceived racist discrimination to be positively related to several psychosomatic symptoms including anxiety, depression, obsessive compulsions, somatization and interpersonal sensitivity, net of demographic controls.

This literature also focuses on what factors drive the likelihood of perceiving discrimination. Researchers frequently test the predictive power of gender, age, marital status, education and socioeconomic status. Kessler et al (1999) in a sample of black, whites and a third group identifying in other racial categories find that male, non-married, more educated and younger respondents are generally more likely to perceive discrimination. They also find that those with less income perceive more discrimination, but the qualitative work of Feagin (1991) demonstrates that discrimination is perceived by African Americans of all income levels. The results of Kessler et al (1999) are generally confirmed by other researchers (Welch, Sigelman, Bledsoe and Combs 2001; Sellers and Shelton 2003; Gabbidon and Higgins 2007).

Kessler et al (1999) stand out as one of the rare examples that explore differences in perceptions of discrimination across racial groups, rather than just focusing on African Americans. They find that non-Hispanic blacks are 11.8 times more likely to experience day to

day discrimination compared to non-Hispanic whites. The difference is smaller for more serious types of discrimination, but is always statistically significant. Further, the authors also control for an “other” racial category (presumably containing Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans and all other categories) and find that they too are more likely to perceive discrimination compared to whites, but not nearly as much as blacks. Using a nationally representative sample, Harris (2004) provides a look into the perceptions of discrimination among Latinos and Asians specifically and finds similarly that Latinos perceive more discrimination than whites, but not as much as blacks. He also finds that Asians actually perceive more discrimination than blacks, but is left uncertain about the finding since it does not reflect the results of previous literature (Kluegel and Bobo 2001).

### *Neighborhood Racial Composition*

For several decades the manner in which neighborhood and community context shape individual outcomes net of individual characteristics have been the focus of many researchers. Most attempt to link context to health, academic and delinquency outcomes, especially among adolescents (see Sampson, Morenoff and Gannon-Rowley 2002 and Dietz 2002 for reviews). However, only two other studies have considered neighborhood effects on perceptions of discrimination (Welch et al 2001; Hunt, Wise, Jipguep, Cozier and Rosenberg 2007). The racial makeup of one’s neighborhood is a particularly important contextual variable for such an outcome because it captures the racial context in which the respondent resides, which can work to shelter or expose residents to instances of discrimination. Consideration of this variable can therefore provide insight into the benefits or consequences to racial residential integration.

Since there is such a dearth of research considering the topic of perceived discrimination and neighborhood context, it is necessary to consult the literature on feelings of prejudice in order to inform my analysis. Researchers have considered the effects of minority population size on anti-minority attitudes for several decades. Blalock (1967) hypothesized that as the proportion of minorities in a particular area increases, negative attitudes toward minorities will also increase. Several researchers have studied this relationship empirically and confirm Blalock's assertions (Giles 1977; Fossett and Kiecolt 1989; Quillian 1995; 1996; Oliver and Wong 2003). For example, Using General Social Survey data, Taylor (1999) finds that the percent Black in a particular 'locality' increases traditional prejudice among white respondents net of demographic controls and measures of economic and political threat. At the same time, the author also finds that White Americans' negative attitudes toward Latinos and Asians are unaffected by the proportions of Latinos and Asians in their locality respectively.

The positive relationship between negative attitudes and the size of the target population is generally understood through theories of group threat in which the larger minority population constitutes a threat to the privileges of the majority (Blumer 1958; Bobo 1983). Negative attitudes subsequently develop to protect those threatened interests. However, another series of studies has found the opposite relationship in which a larger minority population actually decreases negative attitudes toward minorities (Oliver and Mendelberg 2000; Wagner, van Dick, Pettigrew and Christ 2003; Wagner, Christ, Pettigrew, Stellmacher and Wolf 2006). These disparate findings are generally understood through the contact hypothesis (Allport 1979; Pettigrew 1988). This theory sees personal contact with members of the minority group as fostering understanding between groups and reducing prejudice. A larger minority population in a particular area is viewed as providing increased opportunities for such contact, which should

reduce negative attitudes at the individual level. Whether group threat theory or the contact hypothesis does a better job explaining remains an unresolved issue in the literature (see Branton and Jones 2005; Dixon 2006; for attempts to resolve the competing theories).

Only two studies to date (Welch et al. 2001; Hunt et al. 2007) have focused on the effects of neighborhood racial composition on my dependant variable of interest, the perceptions of being a victim of racial or ethnic discrimination. Both come to slightly different conclusions about the relationship between perceived discrimination and the proportion of black neighbors. Welch and her colleagues explore a sample of 1,124 black and white residents of the Detroit metropolitan area and find a curvilinear relationship between neighborhood percent black and perceived discrimination among African Americans, net of demographic and socioeconomic factors. Discrimination increases from 0 percent black until it reaches a tipping point of about 50% black and 50% white when perceptions of discrimination begin to decrease. From a group threat perspective, they understand the tipping point as a condition in which perceptions of threat are maximized. However, they do not find the same pattern among perceptions of discrimination among white respondents, as there was no effect for the proportion black in the neighborhood or its quadratic term.

The more recent study of Hunt and his colleagues (2007) explores the neighborhood level correlates of perceived discrimination among a national sample of 42,445 African American women. The authors find that an increasing proportion of blacks at the block group level decrease the frequency of perceived discrimination, controlling for several individual level demographic and block group level socio-economic variables. They find no indication of a curvilinear trend. This finding holds for both “everyday” discrimination, such as being treated unfairly or viewed as dishonest or unintelligent, and “lifetime” occurrences such as in the areas

of jobs, housing or by the police. At least in terms of perceptions of discrimination in neighborhoods that are less than 50 percent black, this finding seems to line up more with the contact hypothesis. When blacks are proportionally smallest, they are more vulnerable to prejudice because their small numbers preclude a sufficient amount of interracial contact. However, as their population grows in size, more opportunities for contact are possible, thus reducing the level of perceived discrimination.

Hunt's et al. (2007) inverse linear relationship between perceptions of discrimination and the neighborhood proportion black lies in contrast to Welch et al's (2001) curvilinear finding. These differences may result from the vastly different samples used (Detroit versus a national sample; men and women versus women only). Regardless of the reasons, I consider both possibilities in the current study.

These two studies reveal a great deal about the relationship between neighborhood racial composition and perceived prejudice, but they do not capture the whole picture. First, since their focus is African Americans, they do not control for the proportions of other racial groups. For example, Welch et al. (2001) do not take into account the proportion of white residents in their analyses of white respondents' discrimination perceptions. Second and most importantly, their focus on black and white respondents only (blacks only in the case of Hunt) fails to take into account the multi-racial character of America that has been developing throughout recent decades. In particular, both studies omit consideration of Latinos, a group whose population now exceeds African Americans (US Census 2000). It is unknown if Latinos' perceptions of discrimination are triggered in the same manner by the racial makeup of their neighborhoods. I attempt to fill these gaps in the literature by exploring the effects of an increasing proportion of coracial residents (rather than simply percent black across all other groups) on discrimination



perceptions in a sample of white, black and Latino young adults. I focus first on the sample as a whole and then determine the extent to which the effects differ across racial groups with an analysis of interaction terms. As a final analysis, I continue to explore the differences across groups by considering how discrimination perceptions are influenced by the size of racial out-group populations, such as how the proportion of Latino residents influences blacks' and whites' discrimination perceptions.

### **Hypotheses**

Given the existing theories and literature cited, there are two possible patterns for the effects neighborhood racial composition on perceptions of discrimination. First, from a group threat perspective, within a neighborhood, an increasing minority group size should be related to greater conflict with members of the majority group, which should lead to increased instances of both actual and perceived discrimination. However, once the proportion of same race neighbors exceeds 50 percent they no longer constitute a minority in the neighborhood and will become more likely to feel threatened, rather than pose a threat to members of another group. Therefore, as one's racial group increases in size beyond 50 percent, perceptions of discrimination should decrease. This is the curvilinear pattern found by Welch et al (2001).

The second possibility follows the findings of Hunt et al. (2007) and the assertions of the contact hypothesis. When a minority group is its smallest in a neighborhood they are most vulnerable to discrimination because opportunities for contact between them and the majority are least likely. As a minority population increases, so will the number of opportunities for prejudice-reducing contact. Therefore, as the population of a particular group increases perceptions of prejudice will decrease. The pattern beyond 50 percent coracial, should continue

to decrease as well. This follows Halpern and Nazroo's (1999) ethnic density hypothesis, which predicts benefits, especially for mental health outcomes, when there is a larger concentration of one's own ethnic group. The same protective factors should be at work against perceptions of prejudice when the respondent lives in a neighborhood where most residents share his or her race.

I test these hypotheses in a sample of black, white and Latino young adults in the city of Chicago through a series of logistic regression models. I focus first on the sample as a whole and then on interaction terms between individual race and each neighborhood coracial proportion. This allows me to determine how perceived discrimination is affected by the proportion of the coracial population in the sample as a whole as well as explore the differences across racial groups.

### **Data and Methods**

I explore the relationship between perceived discrimination and neighborhood context through use of the Project for Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN), which is a sample of children, adolescents and young adults in the city of Chicago collected with a focus on neighborhood effects. I utilize data from the Longitudinal Cohort Study, which is a stratified random sample of block groups from which children, young adults and their primary caregivers were selected for interview. Respondents come from seven different age cohorts ranging from infants to 18 year olds between the years 1994 and 1997. I also use the Community Survey, a stratified random sample of 8,782 adult Chicago residents in 343 neighborhood clusters. Questions were designed to measure key neighborhood dimensions

between the years 1994-1995. Responses to items from the larger community sample can be aggregated within neighborhoods and used as neighborhood-level variables in the cohort study.

I focus on young adults from the 18 year old cohort (ages actually range from 16 to 20) because they constitute the only portion of the sample that responded directly to the questions about perceptions of discrimination. For all other cohorts, the primary caregivers provided the responses to those questions about their own experiences. Additional sample cuts were made to eliminate Asian (n=15) and Native American (n=13) respondents due to their very low numbers in the sample, resulting in a total of 605 observations.

### *Dependent Variables*

My main dependent variables measure *perceptions of discrimination*. I focus on three variables, which I code as dummy variables indicating that the respondent perceives that he or she has been victimized either sometimes or often versus never. The first constitutes a more mild form of victimization, closer to the everyday discrimination from previous analyses, asking simply if the respondent has ever felt disliked because of his or her race or ethnicity. The second is more serious and is similar to the lifetime discrimination events from previous studies as it asks if the respondent has ever been treated unfairly in school or work because of his or her race or ethnicity. Finally, I consider another variable that asks respondents if they have ever witnessed a friend being discriminated against because of their race or ethnicity. The exact wordings of these variables and their means, as well as those from all other variables used in this analysis are included in Table 1.

[Table 1: Variable Descriptions and Sample Means/Proportions]

### *Independent Variables*

My main independent variables are race of the respondent and the racial makeup of the respondent's neighborhood. *Race of the respondent* is measured with three mutually exclusive responses (black, white and Hispanic) to a question measuring racial identification. The *proportions of blacks, whites and Hispanics* at the neighborhood level are operationalized in the same way but are drawn from the Community Survey sample. I aggregated the responses within each neighborhood to construct proportions of whites, blacks and Latinos. I collapse the neighborhood proportions co-racial into quartiles (0 to 25%, 25-50%, 50-75% and 75-100%) to avoid estimating interaction terms with very small cell sizes<sup>1</sup>. In order to test for the hypothesized curvilinear pattern, I follow Welch et al. (2001) in controlling for a proportion coracial quadratic term. Finally, I control for race and proportion coracial interactions to determine if the neighborhood effects differ across race.

In addition, I consider several demographic and socioeconomic controls. I include a dummy variable indicating that the respondent is *female*, a continuous measure of *age* and a dummy variable indicating *foreign born status*. My socio-economic controls include *parents' education level*, which measures the highest level of education for the most educated parent as well as *logged household income* measure in dollars.

## *Methods*

I utilized single level logistic regression models to predict variation in my perceived discrimination dependent variables (Long 1997). I chose this method over a multi-level model mainly because of sample size concerns. There are only 605 observations spread across more

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<sup>1</sup> My results are similar when using a 5-category and fully continuous version of the proportion co-racial variable (not shown, but available on request). Given my small sample size I present the 4-category version which has a larger number of observations per race and neighborhood quartile.

than 79 neighborhoods, which results in within group sample sizes of less than 10 observations per neighborhood on average. This approach is similar to that employed by Welch et al. (2001). I replace missing observations through multiple imputation methods.

### **Analysis**

I begin my analysis by exploring the extent of perceptions of being a victim of discrimination across the three race categories. The first column of Table 2 displays the percentages of each racial group that report perceptions of discrimination operationalized as having felt disliked, treated unfairly and witnessing a friend being treated badly because of race or ethnicity. Across all groups, it is more common to feel disliked than to perceive unfair treatment because of race or ethnicity. This follows the differences between everyday and lifetime discrimination events from previous research. African American young adults are the most likely to report being disliked and treated unfairly at 57.07 and 34.99 percent respectively. Similar to Harris (2004), Latinos report being disliked slightly less, but perceive unfair treatment about as often African Americans. Whites report being disliked or treated unfairly because of their race/ethnicity less often than both African Americans and Latinos, but they still perceive a large amount of discrimination. The data indicate that 46.26 percent of white respondents perceived being disliked, while 27.01 percent report experiencing unfair treatment because of their race. These percentages are roughly 10 and 8 points less than blacks respectively, which are much smaller differences than found in previous studies (Kessler et al. 2009).

[Table 2: Percentages Perceiving Discrimination in the Entire Sample and across Neighborhood Proportions of Coracial Residents]

Across all groups it is most common to witness a friend being treated badly because of his or her race or ethnicity. While Latinos and blacks feel that they have witnessed discrimination at

roughly the same rate, whites actually report witnessing discrimination more often. The race of the victim in this variable is unknown, but this suggests that the vast majority of white young adults in Chicago are aware that racial discrimination persists in their city.

I divide the levels of perceived discrimination across the neighborhood proportion coracial quartiles for each race in the remainder of Table 2. White respondents show a clear pattern of steadily decreasing perceptions of discrimination as the proportion of whites in the neighborhood increases for both feeling disliked and being treated unfairly. This follows the inverse linear pattern supported by the contact hypothesis. Interestingly, according to the sample, whites in neighborhoods with between 0 and 25 percent coracial are actually more likely than both Blacks and Latinos to report being disliked or treated unfairly because of their race. This relationship flips as neighborhoods become more than 25 percent coracial. Black respondents show a similar pattern in feeling disliked except for a spike in perceived discrimination among those living in neighborhoods that are between 75 and 100 percent black. However, black respondents feeling they have been treated unfairly seem to display the hypothesized curvilinear pattern with perceptions increasing until 25-50 percent coracial and then decreasing after 50-75% coracial. The trends among Hispanics also seem to show initially increasing perceptions of discrimination followed by decreases as the neighborhood proportion Hispanic increases. This is true especially among those who feel disliked. There is no discernable pattern for any racial group across neighborhoods for perceiving that a friend has been the victim of discrimination

I begin my multivariate analysis in Table 3 in which I present slope coefficients and z-statistics estimated from separate logistic regression models for each of my three perceptions of racial discrimination outcomes. In the first model I control for sex, age, immigrant status, race and socio-economic status. Next I control for the neighborhood proportion coracial. Finally I

control for the proportion coracial squared to test the hypothesis that the relationship between discrimination perceptions and neighborhood racial composition is curvilinear.

[Table 3: Logistic Regression Models Predicting Perceptions of Discrimination]

Beginning with perceptions of being disliked because race, we see that male, foreign born and African American respondents whose parents have greater education levels are more likely to perceive prejudice. Controlling for the other variables in the model, African Americans are .82 times more likely than whites to perceive that they have been disliked because of their race. This effects follows previous research, but at a much smaller magnitude, partially because of the high levels of discrimination perceptions among whites in this sample. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of discrimination between Latino and white respondents.

The effects are similar for perceiving unfair treatment, except that there is no difference between foreign born respondents and those born in the United States. Also, household income seems to matter more than parents' education as those with greater household incomes are more likely to perceive discrimination. African American respondents are .89 times more likely to perceive unfair treatment compared to whites, net of the included controls. Once again, Latinos are equally as likely as whites to perceive such discrimination.

There are few significant predictors of witnessing a friend being treated poorly. Similar to the first regression, those with more educated parents are more likely to perceive discrimination in this manner. However, unlike the other models blacks are significantly less likely than whites to claim that they have seen such an occurrence. African Americans are 1.14 time less likely than whites to have witnessed a friend being the victim of discrimination or prejudice. This follows the bivariate distribution presented above and demonstrates that whites in Chicago are very much aware of the existence of racial discrimination.

I control for the proportion coracial in the next model of each regression. The effect is similar for the perceiving dislike and unfair treatment analyses. There is a negative relationship between the proportion of same race neighbors and the likelihood of perceiving discrimination. Those living in a neighborhood where 75-100 percent of the residents share the respondent's race are about .80 times less likely to perceive discrimination compared to those living in 0-25 percent coracial neighborhood. This follows the predicted linear inverse relationship. I find no effect for the proportion coracial in the model predicting perceptions that a friend has experienced discrimination.

I test for the potential curvilinear relationship between perceptions of discrimination and the neighborhood proportion coracial using a quadratic term in the final model of each regression. I do not find any statistically significant curvilinear relationship for any of the outcomes despite the descriptive analysis in Table 2 that suggests their existence<sup>2</sup>. The non-significant coefficients in the perceiving unfair treatment model are in the directions expected, with a positive proportion coracial effect and a negative quadratic effect. However, their failure to reach statistical significance suggests that the linear effect from the previous model, which was also found by Hunt et al. (2007), is a better fit for these data.

So if a linear relationship best describes these data, do all of the racial groups follow the same trajectory? In Table 4 I test the possibility of different trajectories across racial groups by controlling for interaction terms between the respondent's race and the proportion coracial in his

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<sup>2</sup> I repeated this regression with models excluding whites (the group that does not appear to show a curvilinear trajectory in Table 2), black only models, Hispanic only models and models when I use the continuous proportion coracial as well as dividing it into quintiles (not show but available on request) and nowhere did I find a significant curvilinear relationship.



or her neighborhood.<sup>3</sup> The first model under each dependent variable is the same as the second model in Table 3, which I include for comparison purposes. In the second models I control for black and Hispanic interactions with the proportions coracial. In the model predicting perceptions of being disliked I estimate the strongest interactions. Here the proportion coracial main effect represents the predicted relationship for white respondents, while the interaction terms are the additional positive or negative effects experienced by blacks and Hispanics. The two interactions are significant and negative, but not quite as large as the proportion coracial effect. This suggests that all racial groups experience a general downward trend in discrimination perceptions, but the trajectories for blacks and Latinos will be flatter than whites.

[Table 4: Logistic Regression Models Predicting Perceptions of Being Disliked Because of Race and Neighborhood Racial Proportion Interactions]

I present this relationship graphically in Figure 1. Here we see that the perceptions of discrimination among whites drop precipitously as the percentage of whites in the neighborhood increases. Also, following the descriptive finding from Table 2, whites in neighborhoods with the least amount of coracials are predicted to be more likely to perceive discrimination relative to blacks and Latinos. Latinos also experience a noticeable decline in their discrimination perceptions as the proportion of Latino neighbors grows, but the slope is not nearly as steep as it is for whites. On the other hand, the slope for African Americans, while declining slightly appears almost flat. This appears despite the emergence of a downward trend in discrimination perception in Table 2 suggesting that net of my controls, the perceptions of discrimination among blacks are independent of the proportion of black residents in their neighborhood. This finding is counter to both of the predicted trajectories as well as previous literature on the subject

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<sup>3</sup> All of these models control for the age, sex, foreign born status, parents' highest education level and household income variables from Table 3. I omit their presentation to save space and to highlight the variables involved in the interaction. The effects of these variables are available on request.

and may be a result of African Americans experiencing discrimination at such a high degree outside of their neighborhoods that racial makeup of where they reside simply does not matter.

[Figure 1: Race and Neighborhood Proportion Coracial Interactions Predicting Perceptions of Being Disliked]

While there are no significant interactions for the witnessing a friend's discrimination model, I do find another significant interaction for Latinos in the treated unfairly model. Here we see a negative Hispanic and proportion coracial interaction that almost fully counteracts the coracial main effect. This suggests a flat trajectory for Hispanic respondents, suggesting that net of my controls, perceptions of being treated unfairly are independent of the proportion of coracial neighbors. There is no significant interaction for African Americans, suggesting that the slope for blacks and whites is changing at the same rate. I present these relationships graphically in Figure 2. Here we see that black and white respondents both experience the inverse linear relationship between discrimination perceptions and their neighborhood proportions of coracial residents.<sup>4</sup> However, Latinos perceptions that they have been given unfair treatment because of their race appear to be unaffected by the percentage of Latinos in their neighborhood. As with African Americans in the dislike model, this may suggest that Latinos experience most of their discrimination outside of their own neighborhoods, making neighborhood characteristics mean less for the development of their perceptions.

[Figure 2: Race and Neighborhood Proportion Coracial Interactions Predicting Perceptions of Being Treated Unfairly]

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<sup>4</sup> Note that the non-significant black/proportion coracial interactions suggest that the black and white trajectories are decreasing at the same rate.

I further explore the interactions between individual race and neighborhood racial makeup and their effects on feeling disliked,<sup>5</sup> through estimation of three separate regression models similar to those presented in Table 3. However, in each analysis I replace the proportion coracial control with controls for proportion white, black and Latino respectively (not show, but available on request). Rather than focusing on the effects of same race neighbors for all groups at once, for two of the groups in each regression I am focusing on increasing proportions of a racial out-group. I present the results of the interactions graphically in Figure 3. The top right-hand quadrant shows the interaction between race and proportion white, in which both interactions reach statistical significance at the  $p < .05$  level. Following the proportion coracial models, whites become less likely to feel disliked as the neighborhood proportion of whites increases. Blacks' likelihood of feeling disliked increases steadily as the proportion of whites in the neighborhood increases, which one would expect given the contact hypothesis. Here blacks are most vulnerable to discrimination when they are proportionally smallest relative to whites. Latinos on the other hand seem unaffected by the proportion of whites in their neighborhood.

[Figure 3: Probability of Feeling Disliked: Individual Race and Neighborhood Proportions White, Black and Hispanic Interactions]

In the upper white quadrant, we see that whites' perceptions rapidly increase as blacks and Latinos remain unaffected as the proportion of black respondents increases. However, none of the interactions in this regression reach significance. Finding no effect for whites as the proportion black increases actually follows Welch's et al. (2001) results, but the lack of an effect for blacks does not.

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<sup>5</sup> Similar regression models were estimated for feeling treated unfairly (not shown, but available on request) but none of the interactions reached statistical significance.

Finally, in the proportion Latino analysis, presented in the bottom right-hand quadrant, whites' perceptions of being disliked rapidly increase as the proportion of Latino neighbors increases. Both blacks and Latinos show slight declines in their likelihoods of feeling disliked, but are much flatter in trajectory relative to whites. All of these interactions are statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level. This series of analysis highlights the earlier finding that white respondents' perceptions of discrimination seem to be the most sensitive to fluctuations in neighborhood racial makeup. Blacks and Latinos, who on average perceive more discrimination than whites, are less affected neighborhood racial makeup.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

This analysis set out to determine the effects of increasing levels of coracial neighbors on perceptions of discrimination. Using a sample of young adults from the city of Chicago I determined that blacks, Latinos and whites all experience discrimination. Blacks are the most likely to feel that they are disliked and treated unfairly because of their race while Latinos follow closely behind. Whites also perceive that they have been victims of racial discrimination at levels that are only about 10 points lower than African Americans as demonstrated by my regression analysis. This contrasts with previous work that finds that blacks are more than 10 times more likely to feel victimized by discrimination (Harris 2004). Whites are also the most likely to claim to have witnessed a friend being victimized by discrimination. This suggests that while they are the least likely to experience discrimination themselves, most whites are fully cognizant that discrimination still exists.

As suggested by the contact hypothesis and the findings of Hunt et al. (2007) I find an inverse relationship between the proportion of coracial residents in one's neighborhood and

perceptions of being disliked and treated unfairly because of one's racial or ethnic background. I find no evidence for a curvilinear pattern, which is in contrast to the trajectory suggested by group threat theory and the findings of Welch et al. (2001). My failure to yield a significant quadratic term may be related to my smaller sample size relative to Welch and her colleagues since a curvilinear pattern seems to appear in my bivariate analysis among blacks and Latinos. Therefore the possibility of such a relationship should not be fully rejected and should be tested further with larger samples.

I also took the analysis a step further than previous literature and determined that the degree to which neighborhood racial composition effects perceptions of discrimination differs across racial groups. Surprisingly, whites' perceptions of discrimination appear to be the most sensitive to fluctuations in neighborhood racial composition. As the number of whites in a neighborhood increases the white respondents' perceptions of being disliked because of their race drops dramatically relative to blacks and Latinos. Also, as the proportion of Latinos in a neighborhood increases the likelihood of whites perceiving dislike increases dramatically. These effects are counter to Welch's et al. (2001) finding that whites' perceptions of discrimination were unaffected by neighborhood racial composition.

The degree to which whites perceptions of discrimination are tied to neighborhood racial composition is interesting given the research identifying residential segregation as the linchpin of racial inequality in the US (Massey and Denton 1993). Perceptions of discrimination among whites may constitute another obstacle yet to be considered widely by researchers that is preventing racial integration. Often the reasons cited for white flight and whites aversion to moving into racially heterogeneous neighborhoods center the stereotypes and negative attitudes toward minorities that they hold (Bobo and Zubrisky 1996; Emerson, Chai and Yancey 2001;

Harris 1999; 2001). However if white residents feel disliked or are made uncomfortable in their own neighborhoods because of their racial background it may provide further incentive for white flight or avoidance of racially mixed neighborhoods, in addition to any racial prejudice that they may hold. My findings in this regard are potentially important and should be considered in future analyses of residential segregation.

The neighborhood proportion of blacks and Latinos have much smaller effects, compared to whites, on the discrimination perceptions of blacks and Latinos respectively. In particular Blacks' perceptions of being disliked and Latinos perceptions of being treated unfairly appear virtually independent of the neighborhood proportion coracial. This may be a result of the groups facing frequent discrimination outside of their neighborhoods regardless of the racial makeup within in their neighborhoods. I also find that blacks do not see much of a change across the proportion Latino, while Latinos see virtually no difference across the proportion black. Taken together this suggests that neighborhood racial composition is not as important for perceptions of discrimination among minority groups as previous research suggests.

If the findings presented here reflect the truth, then a focus solely on African Americans, which describes a majority of the perceptions of discrimination literature, does not capture the entire picture. This is true especially of the small group of studies linking perceptions of discrimination to neighborhood racial context. Based on my results, future research should consider perceptions of discrimination of not only minority groups, but also whites.

This being said, the current study is not without limitations. The obvious flaw is that this is not a nationally representative sample. It is a random sample of residents of the city of Chicago and therefore the results may be driven by historical and political circumstances unique to the

city. Further, due to the format of the survey I was only able to consider young adults, which may cause the findings to be unique to one particular age cohort. The extent to which these factors bias my results relative to the truth on a national or city level is unknown.

Also, as with all studies utilizing neighborhood-level controls, there is always the possibility of selection bias. Individuals have a certain amount of agency when it comes to the neighborhood in which they live and certain individual characteristics may drive a person to choose one neighborhood over another. One factor may be that respondents choose to settle in neighborhoods where they know they will be safe from racial discrimination. Such a scenario would result in neighborhood effects that may be downwardly biased relative to a situation where they have no control over where they can settle.

Nevertheless, this study contributes a great deal to our understanding of perceptions of discrimination. First, given the high level of discrimination perceived among all groups in my young sample it is unlikely that discrimination or its consequences will disappear in the near future. Second, my findings support a linear inverse relationship between perceptions of discrimination and the proportion of coracial neighborhood residents. Essentially, one is less likely to perceive discrimination in neighborhoods with more coracial neighbors. Third, I find that when racial groups are considered separately, significant differences in the trajectories of the relationship between perceived discrimination and neighborhood racial makeup emerge. This highlights the need for the perceived discrimination literature to consider groups other than African Americans more often. Finally, I find that blacks' and Latinos' perceptions of being a victim of discrimination are not affected greatly by the racial makeup of their neighborhood. Surprisingly, whites' perceptions of being victimized by discrimination are by far the most sensitive to the neighborhood racial context. This finding in particular highlights the fact that

perceptions of discrimination among white respondents are another potential obstacle for racial residential integration that could constitute new focus for future researchers of residential segregation.



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**Table 1: Variable Descriptions and Sample Means/Proportions**

Variables	Question Wordings/Description	Sample Means			
		Total	Whites	Blacks	Latinos
<b>Dependent Variables</b>					
Disliked Because of Race	<i>How often do people dislike you because of your ethnic group or race? (0=Never; 1=Sometime/Often)</i>	0.539	0.463	0.35	0.703
Treated Unfairly Because of Race	<i>How often are you treated unfairly at school or work because of your ethnic group or race? (0=Never; 1=Sometime/Often)</i>	0.334	0.27	0.349	0.709
Witness Friend Treated Badly Because of Race	<i>How often have you seen friends treated badly because of their ethnic group or race? (0=Never; 1=Sometime/Often)</i>	0.73	0.833	0.270	0.833
<b>Neighborhood Proportion Coracial</b>	<i>Aggregated proportions of respondents race in the community survey (1=0-25%; 2=25-50%; 3=50-75%; 4=75-100%)</i>	2.87	2.56	3.32	2.56
<b>Independent Variables</b>					
Female	<i>Gender if respondent (1=Female)</i>	0.509	0.443	0.528	0.523
Age	<i>Age of respondent (continuous ranging from 16.5175 to 19.7563)</i>	18.14	18.15	18.15	18.11
Foreign Born	<i>Was the respondent born in the United States? (1=Foreign Born)</i>	0.38	0.25	0.024	80.91
Parents Highest Level of Education	<i>Education level of the highest achieving parent (1= Less than High School; 5=More than College)</i>	3.19	3.84	3.58	2.48
Household Income (Logged)	<i>Total Household Income (Logged ranging from 4.727 to 11.793)</i>	8.08	8.68	7.86	8.02
<b>Sample Size</b>		605	115	249	241

**Table 2: Percentages Perceiving Discrimination in the Entire Sample and across Neighborhood Proportions of Coracial Residents**

		Neighborhood Percentage Coracial				
		Total	0-25%	25-50%	50-75%	75-100%
<b>Disliked</b>						
	<i>Black</i>	57.07%	61.11%	57.57%	50.54%	57.11%
	<i>Hispanic</i>	53.80%	53.85%	63.63%	49.46%	46.35%
	<i>White</i>	46.26%	72.29%	55.00%	39.22%	23.08%
<b>Treated Unfairly</b>						
	<i>Black</i>	34.99%	37.50%	45.45%	41.94%	32.27%
	<i>Hispanic</i>	34.85%	30.77%	45.45%	28.81%	32.81%
	<i>White</i>	27.01%	44.59%	30.00%	25.49%	7.69%
<b>Witnessed Friend Treated Badly</b>						
	<i>Black</i>	70.25%	73.61%	57.58%	73.11%	70.88%
	<i>Hispanic</i>	70.86%	73.08%	87.88%	62.02%	60.42%
	<i>White</i>	83.34%	80.74%	82.50%	80.39%	100%

**Table 3: Logistic Regression Models Predicting Perceptions of Discrimination (Slope Coefficients and Z-Statistics)**

	Disliked			Treated Unfairly			Witness Friend Treated Badly		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
<b>Demographics</b>									
<i>Female</i>	<b>-0.338*</b>	<b>-0.334†</b>	<b>-0.334†</b>	<b>-0.370*</b>	<b>-0.367*</b>	<b>-0.371*</b>	-0.044	-0.041	-0.041
	<b>-1.98</b>	<b>-1.95</b>	<b>-1.95</b>	<b>-2.09</b>	<b>-2.07</b>	<b>-2.09</b>	-0.23	-0.22	-0.21
<i>Age</i>	-0.4	-0.391	-0.393	-0.341	-0.335	-0.316	-0.345	-0.34	-0.344
	-1.60	-1.56	-1.56	-1.30	-1.28	-1.20	-1.20	-1.19	-1.20
<i>Foreign Born</i>	<b>0.445†</b>	0.417	0.418	0.317	0.289	0.278	-0.364	-0.389	-0.386
	<b>1.73</b>	1.61	1.61	1.16	1.06	1.01	-1.20	-1.27	-1.26
<b>Race (White = Reference)</b>									
<i>Black</i>	<b>0.597*</b>	<b>0.697**</b>	<b>0.687*</b>	<b>0.641*</b>	<b>0.731**</b>	<b>0.842**</b>	<b>-0.759*</b>	<b>-0.699*</b>	-0.721
	<b>2.4</b>	<b>2.73</b>	<b>2.56</b>	<b>2.35</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>2.89</b>	<b>-2.44</b>	<b>-2.20</b>	-2.18
<i>Latino</i>	0.294	0.302	0.296	0.465	0.47	<b>0.544†</b>	-0.173	-0.16	-0.175
	1.03	1.06	1.01	1.5	1.52	<b>1.73</b>	-0.50	-0.46	-0.49
<b>Socio-Economic Status</b>									
<i>Household Income (Logged)</i>	-0.029	-0.39	-0.39	<b>0.147†</b>	0.137	0.135	0.035	0.027	0.27
	-0.34	-0.45	-0.45	<b>1.65</b>	1.53	1.50	0.35	0.27	0.28
<i>Parents' Highest Education Level</i>	<b>0.174*</b>	<b>0.173*</b>	<b>0.173*</b>	0.108	0.107	0.108	<b>0.253**</b>	<b>0.252**</b>	<b>0.252**</b>
	<b>2.19</b>	<b>2.16</b>	<b>2.16</b>	1.32	1.30	1.30	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.89</b>	<b>2.89</b>
<b>Neighborhood Racial Composition</b>									
<i>Proportion Coracial</i>		<b>-0.148†</b>	-0.210		<b>-0.140†</b>	0.511		-0.095	-0.228
		<b>-1.74</b>	-0.41		<b>-1.65</b>	1.00		-1.02	-0.40
<i>Proportion Coracial Squared</i>			-0.012			-0.126			0.025
			-0.12			-1.29			0.24
<b>Intercept</b>									
	6.72	7.037	7.145	3.554	3.909	2.822	6.76	6.981	7.201
	1.46	1.52	1.52	0.74	0.81	0.58	1.26	1.31	1.33
Pseudo R-Squared	0.02	0.04	0.04	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.03
Log Likelihood	-408.945	-406.274	-407.252	-377.481	-376.117	-375.279	-341.458	-340.908	-340.879
Chi-square	17.041	20.384	20.429	15.404	18.131	19.808	22.573	23.674	23.732
Observations	605	605	605	605	605	605	605	605	605

\*\*\* p<.001; \*\* p<.01; \* p<.05; † p<.10 (two-tailed test)

**Table 4: Logistic Regression Models Predicting Perceptions of Being Disliked Because of Race and Neighborhood Racial Proportion Interactions (Slope Coefficients and Z-Statistics)**

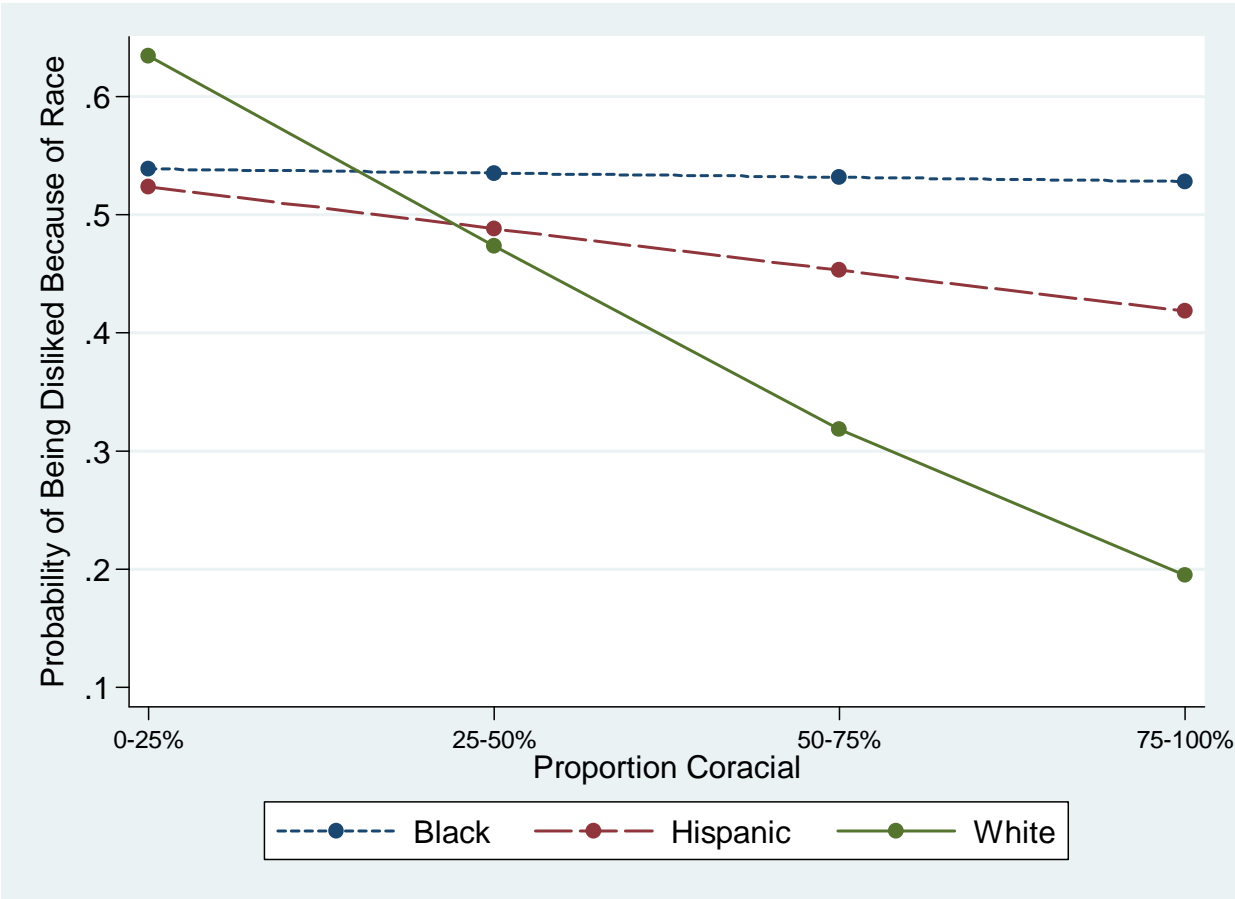
	Disliked		Treated Unfairly		Witnessed Friend Treated Badly	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<b>Race (<i>White = Reference</i>)</b>						
<i>Black</i>	<b>0.697**</b>	-1.035	<b>0.731**</b>	-0.138	<b>-0.699*</b>	-0.324
	<b>2.73</b>	1.25	<b>2.64</b>	-0.17	<b>-2.20</b>	-0.34
<i>Latino</i>	0.302	-0.969	0.470	-0.747	-0.16	1.200
	1.06	-1.29	1.52	-0.97	-0.46	1.33
<b>Neighborhood Racial Proportions</b>						
<i>Proportion Coracial</i>	<b>-0.148†</b>	<b>-0.655**</b>	<b>-0.140†</b>	<b>-0.535*</b>	-0.095	0.253
	<b>-1.74</b>	<b>-2.58</b>	<b>-1.65</b>	<b>-1.97</b>	-1.02	0.81
<b>Interactions</b>						
<i>Black X Proportion Coracial</i>		<b>0.641*</b>		0.364		-0.195
		<b>0.289</b>		1.21		-0.57
<i>Latino X Proportion Coracial</i>		<b>0.513†</b>		<b>0.513†</b>		-0.559
		<b>1.81</b>		<b>1.71</b>		-1.62
<b>Intercept</b>						
	7.037	<b>8.190†</b>	3.909	4.517	6.981	6.769
	1.52	<b>1.75</b>	0.81	0.93	1.31	1.25
<b>Observations</b>						
	605	605	605	605	605	605

\*\*\*p<.001;\*\*p<.01;\*p<.05;†p<.10(two-tailed);

All models control for age, sex, immigrant status, parents' education and logged household income

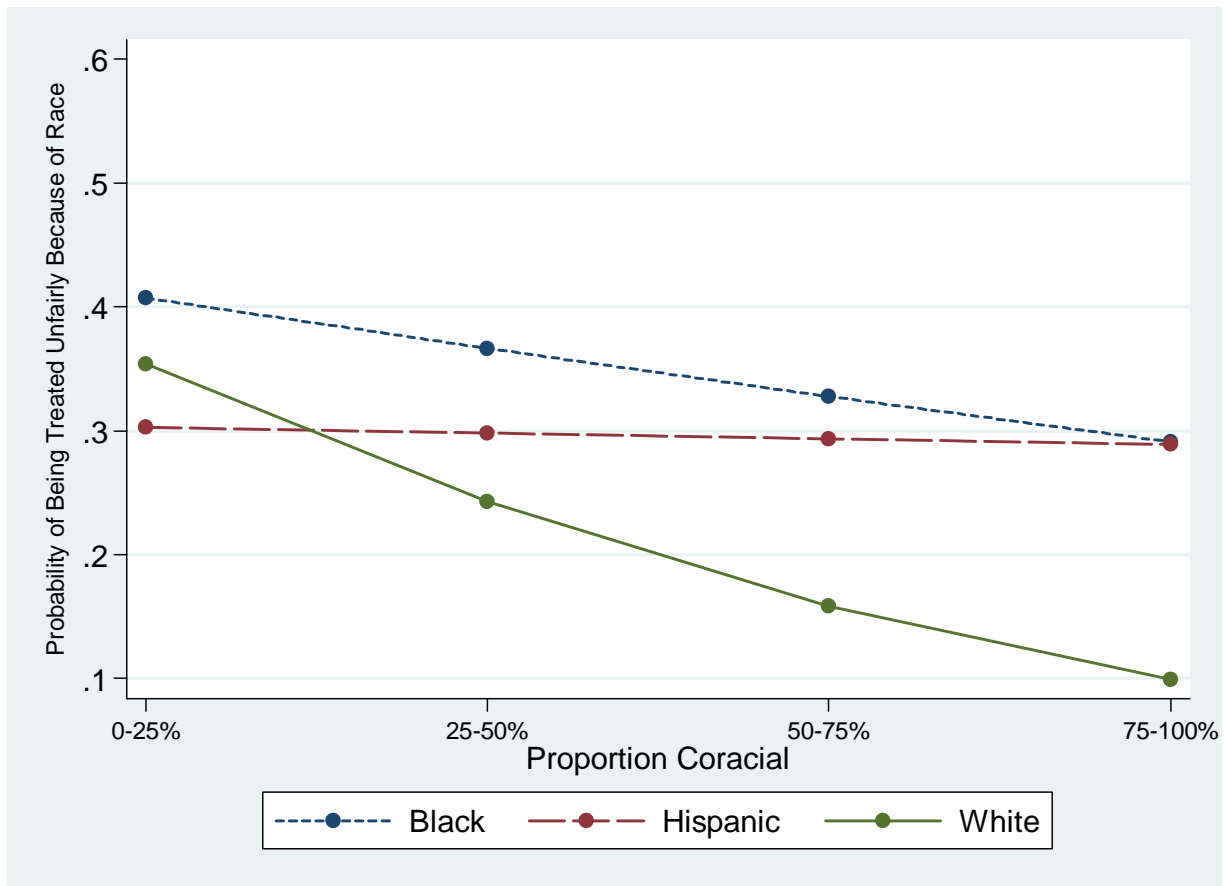


**Figure 1: Race and Neighborhood Proportion Coracial Interactions Predicting Perceptions of Being Disliked (Model 2 from Table 4)**



All models control for age, sex, immigrant status, parents' education and logged household income

**Figure 2: Race and Neighborhood Proportion Coracial Interactions Predicting Perceptions of Being Treated Unfairly (Model 4 from Table 4)**



All models control for age, sex, immigrant status, parents' education and logged household income

**Figure 3: Probability of Feeling Disliked: Individual Race and Neighborhood Proportions White, Black and Hispanic Interactions**

