Intergroup Prejudice in Multiethnic Settings

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This article examines how out-group perceptions among Asian Americans, blacks, Latinos, and whites vary with the racial composition of their surroundings. Previous research on the contextual determinants of racial attitudes offers mixed expectations: some studies indicate that larger percentages of proximate out-groups generate intergroup conflict and hostility while others suggest that such environments promote interracial contact and understanding. As most of this research has been directed at black-white relations, the applicability of these theories to a multiethnic context remains unclear. Using data that merge the 1992–1994 Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality and 1990 Census, we find that in neighborhood contexts, interethnic propinquity corresponds with lower levels of out-group prejudice and competition, although intergroup hostility is higher in metropolitan areas with greater minority populations. Further tests suggest that these results do not occur from individual self-selection; rather ethnic spatial and social isolation bolster negative out-group perceptions. These findings suggest the value of residential integration for alleviating ethnic antagonism.

Recent data from the 2000 Census are revealing what demographers have been heralding for decades: new waves of immigration from Asia and Latin America are transforming the United States from a country monochromatically divided between blacks and whites into a "prismatic" nation composed of a polychromatic range of ethnic and racial groups (Bobo 2000). By 2050, whites will comprise only 50% of the total population, a pattern already evident in many regions (Frey 1999). But even as America moves toward this multiracial plurality, it remains a nation "divided by color." Whites and blacks and, to a lesser extent, Asians and Latinos, continue to be highly segregated by neighborhood and municipal boundaries (Massey and Denton 1993; Massey 2000; Emerson, Yancey, and Chai 2001). Despite the growing suburbanization of minority and immigrant populations (Frey 1994), most ethnic groups continue to live more apart than together.

The implications of this multiracial segregation for American race relations are unclear. Previous research on the relationship between social contexts and racial attitudes are seemingly contradictory and focus mostly on white attitudes. Some studies find that larger proximate populations of African Americans correspond with greater white racial animosity (Fossett and Kiecolt 1989; Frisbie and Niedert 1977; Giles and Buckner 1993; Glaser 1984; Quillian 1996; Taylor 1998; Wright 1977). Other studies report that interracial propinquity promotes interracial contact and lessens racial antagonisms (Brewer and Miller 1988; Ellison and Powers 1994; Fitzpatrick and Hwang 1992; Sigelman and Welch 1993; Sigelman, Welch, and Bledsoe, 1996; Welch et al. 2001). The few studies to include Asian Americans and Latinos (Cummings and Lambert 1997; Hood and Morris 1998; Lee 2000; Stein et al. 1998; Taylor 1998; Welch and Sigelman 2000) have focused largely on white attitudes and are inconclusive because of limited sample sizes or poor measures of racial context. Almost no research has focused on how racial environments shape the attitudes *of* minority groups toward each other, particularly Latinos and Asian Americans. Despite a large body of related research, the theoretical and empirical relationship between racial contexts and attitudes, particularly in a multiethnic context, remains undetermined.

Part of the uncertainty also is due to the problematic way in which theories about racial environments and race relations have been operationalized in past research. Early theories on group conflict and contact (Key 1949; Allport 1954; Blalock 1967; Blumer 1958) stipulated a number of environmental conditions aside from the size of the out-group that might influence racial relations, such as economic distress and historical norms, yet most research on the environmental determinants of racial relations focuses only on superordinate group hostility as a single,

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linear function of a single out-group size (e.g., Fossett and Kiecolt 1989; Frisbie and Niedert 1977; Giles 1977; Giles and Evans 1985; Glaser 1994; Quillian 1996; Taylor 1998; Wright 1977). In addition, high levels of neighborhood and municipal racial segregation call into question whether counties or metropolitan areas, the typical contextual units of analysis, are appropriate as either arenas of interracial competition or as predictors of intergroup contact (Oliver and Mendelberg 2000; Quillian 1995). Finally, previous research has focused almost entirely on white racial attitudes. It is not self-evident that many theories, such as ones on racial threat, are applicable for relations *among* minority groups.

Bearing these issues in mind, this article examines the relationship between racial contexts and racial attitudes in multiethnic settings. We argue that the dominant hypotheses for explaining racial attitudes and racial contexts need revision when examining multiracial environments, particularly with regards to size of in-groups and the geographic unit of analysis. Using data from the 1992–94 Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality (MCSUI) and the 1990 Census, we examine how racial environments (at both the metropolitan and neighborhood level) affect racial stereotypes and perceptions of racial competition among Asian Americans, blacks, Latinos, and whites. The effects of racial context depend upon which contextual unit is examined. At the neighborhood level, we find consistent patterns: with the exception of Asian Americans, those who live amongst more out-groups have more positive attitudes toward those groups; those who live amongst more of their own racial group hold more negative views of out-groups and perceive more competition from out-groups. These differences are heightened in metropolitan contexts with larger minority populations. Further tests reveal limited evidence of self-selection as the source of these results; rather, simple exposure to out-groups through residential proximity and participation in integrated neighborhood associations may be a powerful force for reducing intergroup antagonism. These results both challenge previous assumptions about the environmental determinants of racial attitudes and reveal the dynamics of race and place in multiethnic settings.

Perceptions of Ethnic Threat and Conflict

The most widely accepted theory regarding the contextual determinants of racial attitudes is the "power-threat" or "real conflict" hypothesis (Key 1949; Blumer 1958; Blalock 1967; Bobo and Hutchings 1996). This argument is typically articulated with a very simple formula: a superordinate group (e.g., whites) becomes more racially hostile as the size of a proximate subordinate group increases, which putatively threatens the former's economic and social privilege. In the context of American black-white relations, several studies provide convincing evidence in support of this claim. Across many different datasets and time periods, there is a consistent increase in white racial antagonism as black populations increase in counties and metropolitan areas (Fossett and Kiecolt 1989; Giles 1977; Giles and Buckner 1993; Giles and Evans 1985; Glaser 1994; Quillian 1996; Taylor 1998; Wright 1977).

When thinking about multiethnic contexts, however, the applicability of the "power-threat" hypothesis is questionable. The "power-threat" hypothesis was formulated about two specific racial groups in a sharply defined historical relationship, and its suitability for explaining white attitudes toward Asian Americans and Latinos is unclear. If whites view all ethnic out-groups as similarly alien or threatening, then presumably they will respond to increasing populations of other minority groups with the same degree of animosity (for possible evidence, see Hood and Morris 1997; Quillian 1995; Stein et al. 2000; Kang 2001). But given the involuntary immigration of most African Americans and the differing cultural and economic position of Asian Americans and Latinos, perceptions of racial threat by whites may not be the same toward other groups (Bobo and Hutchings 1996). The stereotype of Asian Americans as "model minorities" may valorize them relative to blacks (Kim 1999); the racial status of Latinos is difficult to assess because the category Latino includes a broad range of racial groups (Oboler 1995; Skerry 1997); the economic power of Asian Americans may make them more of a threat to white privilege; and the large immigrant proportions of both Asian American and Latino populations raise the question of whether attitudes toward these groups arise from racial or nationalist sentiments, or both. In fact, there is little consistency in white racial attitudes toward all minority groups. Link and Oldendick (1996) find that whites are successively most hostile to blacks, less hostile to Latinos, and least prejudicial toward Asian Americans. If this dynamic also relates to the greater racial context, then larger percentages of Asian Americans and Latinos may not generate as much racial animus among white populations.

The applicability of the threat hypothesis for explaining variations in racial attitudes *among* minority groups is even less certain. Within the American racial hierarchy, the relative locations of Asian Americans, blacks, and Latinos are in flux and the economic or political threat that any one group may pose to another is not self-evident (Bobo 1999). Popular images in the media and some research

suggests that competition for jobs, housing, and political power among minority groups concentrated in urban areas contributes to greater racial hostility (Johnson and Oliver 1989; McClain and Karnig 1990), especially when this coincides with perceptions of economic distress or increasing levels of immigration (Campbell, Wong, and Citrin 1999). Among minority groups, high levels of racial stereotyping and animosity toward other minorities continue (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Cummings and Lambert 1997; Lien 2001). For instance, Johnson, Farrell, and Guinn (1997) find that a majority of Asian Americans and a large percentage of Latinos view blacks as less intelligent and more welfare dependent than their own groups; Asian Americans are also likely to view Latinos negatively in terms of intelligence and welfare dependency; and, over two-thirds of black respondents and nearly half of all Latino respondents rated Asian Americans as "difficult to get along with." But whether or how these interminority antagonisms relate to patterns of social segregation or group size is unclear.

Given these considerations, how might we understand the relationship between group size, intergroup competition, and racial attitudes in multiethnic settings? We believe that the threat hypothesis, as it was formulated in early theories (Blalock 1968; Blumer 1958; Key 1949), leads to two predictions about the relationship between the size of out-groups and racial resentment in a multiethnic environment. First, as the threat hypothesis is traditionally formulated, feelings of racial hostility will be a function of the size of subordinate out-groups. Clearly, the challenge that such groups pose to either superordinate groups or other subordinate racial groups will depend partly on their size: five out-group members may pose little threat, five million may pose a lot. The threat hypothesis would predict that as the size of a subordinate group increases, racial resentment from other groups also increases.

Second, out-group size alone will not determine animosity; rather economic and political conditions and the importance of group membership as a prerequisite for certain rights or privileges (Blumer 1958; Bobo 1999) are crucial to take into account at the same time. Perceptions of group competition may be influenced by culturally and historically defined relationships (Blumer 1958), the stability of political institutions reinforcing racial privileges, and conditions of economic distress (Quillian 1995). For example, Key (1949) found that differences in white racial antagonism across the South were less from the size of black populations (which were equally large) and more the product of white economic vulnerability, a finding echoed in other research (Oliver and Mendelberg 2000). The importance of racial privilege and the sensitivity to racial threat among superordinate group members may hinge on their own perceptions of economic and political vulnerability, factors that may interact with the effects of racial environments. Thus, we might expect that whites in poor neighborhoods in multiethnic Los Angeles to be more racially antagonistic than those in rich ones, differences that might not exist between poor and rich neighborhoods in a predominantly white New England. Perceptions of threat will also depend upon the permeability of group boundaries and the coherence of internal group membership. For example, as a group, Latinos may pose less of a "threat" to whites than other racial groups because of their own linguistic and national diversity and because many may be viewed or identify as white. When examining how social environments shape racial attitudes in multiethnic settings, the economic and cultural situation as well as the size of out-group needs to be considered.

Interracial Contact, Contextual Units of Analysis, Self-Selection

In direct contrast to the threat hypothesis, the contact hypothesis predicts that larger populations of out-groups can improve intergroup relations as individuals correct negative racial stereotypes with first-hand social experience (Allport 1954). Although past scholars have questioned the validity of the contact hypothesis, as well as the optimal conditions under which contact reduces prejudice (Jackman and Crane 1986; Pettigrew 1998), numerous recent studies purport to find strong correlations between racial contact and positive out-group sentiments (Bledsoe et al. 1995; Ellison and Powers 1994; Sigelman and Welch 1993; Stein, Post, and Rinden 1998; Welch and Sigelman 2000; Yancey 1999; Pettigrew and Tropp 2000). For instance, in their long-term study of Detroit, Welch et al. (2001) find that residential integration promotes interracial contact and reduces interracial hostility. Yet the findings produce a difficult puzzle: how can the proximity of out-groups, a necessary prerequisite for interracial contact, simultaneously promote interracial understanding yet also correspond with greater levels of interracial competition and animosity?

We see three ways to reconcile the research that supports both the threat and contact hypotheses. The first relates to the unit of analysis. Most evidence of racial threat comes from larger minority populations in relatively expansive environmental units, such as counties or metropolitan areas, but racial contact is more likely to be affected by smaller geographic units such as towns or neighborhoods. High degrees of racial segregation along

municipal or neighborhood boundaries will profoundly influence how both racial conflict and contact may occur (Oliver and Mendelberg 2000). For example, residence in a predominantly white suburb may shield residents from sharing public resources with nearby minority groups and also limit the possibilities of meaningful contact with out-groups. When comparing the impact of contact and conflict across racial environments, the racial composition of both the micro and macro contextual unit needs to be considered.

A second explanation is that the positive effects of racial diversity in microcontexts may not arise from interracial contact but from individual self-selection (Pettigrew 1998; Powers and Ellison 1995). In other words, people with more interracial contact patterns or who live in more racially heterogeneous settings may report more positive attitudes toward out-groups *not* because interracial contact causes them to be less racist but because prejudice is a strong determinant of residential and friendship choice: people with strong animosity toward out-groups will seek to live amongst in-groups, limit contact to people of their own race, and discourage other races from moving into their neighborhood.

But while self-selection is undoubtedly a factor that will need to be considered, other research suggests its effects may not be necessarily so large. Powers and Ellison (1995) report that contact is still an important determinant of racial attitudes, even when self-selection of the respondents is controlled. Other studies find that in-group racial preferences are less important than economic or other factors in driving residential location (Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996; Clark 1992; Frey 1979; Zubrinsky and Bobo 1996). Self-selection also may be less of a factor in explaining the relationship between residential location and racial attitudes for blacks and other minorities who still face limited housing choices due to discriminatory real-estate practices (Farley et al. 1994). Outside of laboratory (Brewer and Miller 1988) and experimental field methodologies, it is difficult to untangle the causal direction of the relationship between contact and prejudice.

A final explanation comes from the dynamics of interracial contact in microsettings. The sharpest criticism of the contact hypothesis is that the conditions necessary for the salutary effects of contact to occur (equal status, cooperation toward mutual goals, opportunities for socializing) are difficult to attain, particularly in highly segregated racial settings (Pettigrew 1998; Jackman and Crane 1986). But while direct interpersonal contact may not always occur in integrated neighborhoods, casual exposure to minority groups on an everyday basis may counteract negative stereotypes. Negative images promoted through the mass media, as well as those triggered by unfamiliar languages or traditions associated with particular ethnic groups, may reinforce the belief that a group is foreign or does not "belong." Such negative attitudes can be countered through increased exposure to different communities. For example, Lee (2000) finds that whites with knowledge of Asian-American history are less likely to hold anti-Asian attitudes. Residents of highly segregated neighborhoods who are never exposed to out-groups save through images in the mass media may have few opportunities to correct or disconfirm erroneous stereotypes (Dyer, Vedlitz, and Worchel 1989; Lee 2000; Hum and Zonta 2000).

In addition, residents of integrated neighborhoods are also more likely to belong to integrated civic associations, which may provide a venue that creates the ideal circumstances for interracial contact. Comparative research in India has shown that integrated civic associations are vital for alleviating ethnic conflict (Varshney 2002). The same may be true in the United States. In voluntary civic associations, members are of equal status, share goals, and form new superordinate identities—all ideal circumstances for promoting interracial understanding (Pettigrew 1998). Forthcoming research suggests that integrated civic associations may be an important link for explaining differences in racial attitudes between integrated and segregated neighborhoods (Oliver 2004).

Data and Distribution of Sample

To test these ideas, we utilize data from the 1992–1994 Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality (MCSUI).[1] The MCSUI is a stratified area probability household survey that generated over 8,900 face-to-face interviews with oversamples of blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans in the metropolitan areas of Atlanta, Boston, and Detroit, and in Los Angeles County. Adults 21 years and older were interviewed in English, Spanish, Korean, Mandarin, or Cantonese.[2] The MCSUI oversampled underrepresented minority groups whose small numbers and geographic concentration in the general population often lead to lack of sufficient sample sizes in traditional surveys. The

[1]The MCSUI data is the product of more than 40 researchers at 15 colleges and universities. Beginning in 1992 a household survey was undertaken of adults over 21 years of age, oversampling in census tracts with high proportions of poor and minority residents. Although primarily designed as a study of labor market outcomes, the extensive surveys also had questions regarding racial attitudes and neighborhood choice.

[2]Latinos are defined as respondents who affirmed a separate identification with being Hispanic that was measured separately from race and the Latino population divides between those who identify as white and "other" and a small portion who identify as black.

Atlanta sample includes 651 whites, 832 blacks, and 45 persons who identified with neither group. The Boston sample includes 469 whites, 518 blacks, and 833 Latinos. The Los Angeles sample includes 861 whites, 1119 blacks, 986 Latinos, and 1055 Asian Americans.[3] Because a large number of survey questions were not utilized in the Detroit sample, we excluded them from the sample. As these analyses are restricted to data collected in Los Angeles, Boston, and Atlanta, they should not be taken as representative of all metropolitan areas in the United States; nevertheless, the data do offer an excellent way to examine *neighborhood* dynamics across three very different metropolitan areas.

As illustrated in Table 1, the segregation patterns differ considerably according to the racial composition of the metropolitan area. Table 1 lists the average percent of each racial group in the neighborhood (defined as the block group) by the respondents' race as well as the overall racial distribution of the three metropolitan areas. On the metropolitan level, the MCSUI samples from three distinct macroracial contexts. Atlanta is largely bifurcated between whites and a relatively large black population. Los Angeles County is composed of large white and Latino pluralities of approximate size with smaller but equivalently sized black and Asian populations. The greater Boston Metropolitan Area (the area sampled in the MCSUI) is overwhelmingly white, although Suffolk County, which contains the city of Boston, has higher percentages of both blacks and Latinos.

Despite the aggregate racial differences across the metropolitan areas, most respondents' neighborhoods are similarly stratified along racial lines. Of all racial groups, African Americans are the most racially isolated. Despite only being 11% of the Los Angeles County population and only 6% of the Boston Metropolitan Area population, black respondents, on average, live in neighborhoods where at least half of the residents are black. In Atlanta, the black respondents' neighborhoods are, on average, nearly 80% black. Black respondents in Boston and Los Angeles are more likely to live among Latinos than either Asian Americans or whites. In contrast, Asian Americans, also roughly 11% of the Los Angeles County population, are much less isolated—the average percent of whites, Latinos, and Asians is near 30% each, although the black percentage is just 4%. In Boston and Los Angeles, whites and Latinos, as larger ethnic groups, are likely to have larger proportions of their own group in their neighborhood but are less isolated from nonblack minority groups than in Atlanta. White respondents live in neighborhoods where, on average, more than half of the residents are white, are roughly 20% Latino, and contain a smaller percentage of Asian Americans and blacks. Latinos tend to be in predominantly Latino neighborhoods with larger portions of whites than either Asian Americans or blacks. Neighborhoods for white respondents in Atlanta are, on average, 18% black. Although most groups are segregated by neighborhoods, not all neighborhoods are racially

TABLE 1 Average Percent of Different Racial Groups in Neighborhood By Respondents' Race in MCSUI Sample

	Percent Asian	Percent Black	Percent Latino	Percent White
Atlanta				
Blacks	.01	.79	.01	.18
	(.02)	(.25)	(.03)	(.24)
Whites	.02	.19	.02	.76
	(.02)	(.24)	(.02)	(.24)
1990 Atlanta MSA*	.02	.26	.02	.70
Boston				
Blacks	.02	.64	.17	.15
	(.03)	(.29)	(.17)	(.19)
Latinos	.02	.15	.52	.29
	(.05)	(.24)	(.26)	(.21)
Whites	.04	.08	.20	.59
	(.06)	(.15)	(.25)	(.25)
1990 Boston CMSA*	.03	.06	.05	.87
Los Angeles				
Asian Americans	.35	.04	.27	.33
	(.17)	(.07)	(.16)	(.23)
Blacks	.05	.58	.27	.09
	(.08)	(.25)	(.18)	(.15)
Latinos	.09	.13	.60	.17
	(.12)	(.19)	(.26)	(.20)
Whites	.13	.08	.23	.55
	(.12)	(.14)	(.17)	(.23)
1990 Los Angeles County*	.11	.11	.37	.41

Source: Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality, 1992–1994, standard deviations in parentheses.

*Reports the percent of each racial group across the larger metropolitan area, Source: 1990 U.S. Census.

[3] Among the 1,054 Asian Americans surveyed, the majority (nearly 80 percent) were of Chinese and Korean origin, and the remainder of the sample was made up of respondents of Japanese and South Asian decent. The majority (87.7%) of the Asian-American sample were foreign-born. Over half of the Los Angeles Latino sample (68.2%) were of Mexican origin. Central Americans, primarily from El Salvador and Guatemala, comprised the remainder of the sample. Similar to the Asian-American sample, the majority of Los Angeles Latinos included in the study (80%) were foreign-born. The overwhelming majority of Latinos in the Boston sample were either Puerto Rican or Dominican in descent.

homogeneous. The large standard deviations associated with the means presented in Table 1 indicate that the actual percent of each racial group varies a great deal across different census block groups.

TABLE 2 Negative Out-group Stereotypes by the Percent of In-Group in Neighborhood

BLACKS Variable	Anti-Asian Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Anti-Latino Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Anti-white Parameter Est. (s.e.)
Intercept	1.52 (.117)**	1.66 (.131)**	1.76 (.115)**
Percent Black	.242 (.119)**	.269 (.133)**	−.083 (.117)
Atlanta	−.416 (.139)**	−.457 (.156)**	−.494 (.137)**
Atl. x Per. Blk.	.057 (.182)	−.055 (.205)	.487 (.179)**
Boston	−.206 (.134)	−.062 (.150)	−.259 (.131)**
Bos. x Per. Blk.	−.074 (.196)	−.200 (.220)	.169 (.193)
Percent w/ H.S. Deg.	−.025 (.129)	−.164 (.144)	−.061 (.126)
R^2	.033	.050	.021
ncases = 2117			

WHITES Variable	Anti-Asian Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Anti-black Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Anti-Latino Parameter Est. (s.e.)
Intercept	1.33 (.122)**	1.25 (.165)**	1.45 (.162)**
Percent White	.126 (.145)	.627 (.196)**	.521 (.192)**
Atlanta	−.439 (.133)**	−.558 (.180)**	−.441 (.176)**
Atl. x Per. Wht.	.329 (.191)*	.222 (.257)	−.044 (.252)
Boston	−.010 (.118)	.112 (.160)	.481 (.157)**
Bos x Per. Wht.	−.034 (.177)	−.395 (.240)*	−.538 (.235)**
Percent w/ H.S. Deg.	−.266 (.149)*	−.022 (.201)	−.214 (.197)
R^2	.039	.041	.057
ncases = 2117			

TABLE 2 *(Continued)*

LATINOS Variable	Anti-Asian Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Anti-black Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Anti-white Parameter Est. (s.e.)
Intercept	.679 (.220)**	1.75 (.270)**	1.03 (.214)**
Percent Latino	.487 (.183)**	.628 (.225)**	.349 (.178)**
Boston	.146 (.116)	−.129 (.142)	.212 (.113)*
Bos. x Per. Lat.	−.375 (.186)**	−.938 (.228)**	−.280 (.181)
Percent w/ H.S. Deg.	.333 (.220)	.152 (.270)	.093 (.214)
R^2	.009	.091	.011
ncases = 1691			

ASIANS Variable	Anti-black Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Anti-Latino Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Anti-white Parameter Est. (s.e.)
Intercept	1.54 (.278)**	1.36 (.247)**	1.27 (.201)**
Percent Asian	−.611 (.232)**	−.196 (.206)	−.422 (.168)**
Percent w/ H.S. Deg.	.436 (.247)*	.271 (.219)	−.091 (.179)
R^2	.060	.052	.038
ncases = 1049			

Source: MCSUI, excluded category is Los Angeles residence, standard error in parentheses.

**p < .05, *p < .1. Equations also included individual level measures of age, education, home ownership, length of residence, immigrant status, and political ideology.

Negative Stereotypes and Social Contexts

How do these patterns of metropolitan and neighborhood racial segregation shape racial attitudes? We start our analysis by examining how perceptions of ethnic outgroups vary with the racial composition of the neighborhood. Table 2 lists the coefficients predicting changes in summary negative stereotype scores with the percent of the respondents' own racial or ethnic group within the neighborhood (as defined by the census tract).[4] To control for individual-level characteristics, such as education,

[4]The MCSUI asked respondents to evaluate on a seven-point scale the extent to which certain "characteristics" fit the description of

age, home ownership, sex, and length of residence, while estimating the distinct effect of the social context, we utilized an ordinary least squares regression.[5] To control for the economic status of the neighborhood, we included a measure of the percent of adults with a high school diploma.[6] To measure the distinct effects of the metropolitan area, dummy variables for Atlanta and Boston and interaction terms between the dummy variables and the term measuring percent white in the neighborhood were included in the equation. Because of space constraints, the individual-level control variables are not depicted.

With the exception of Asian Americans, people who live among more people of their own race or ethnicity tend to harbor greater negative stereotypes about minority out-groups.[7] Non-Asian-American respondents in Atlanta and Los Angeles were all more likely to express such sentiments as the percent of their own in-group increases in their neighborhood. For example, whites in predominantly white neighborhoods in Los Angeles and Atlanta score much higher in their negative stereotypes of Asians, blacks, and Latinos. Blacks in predominantly black neighborhoods also hold more negative impressions of Asian Americans and Latinos (and whites in Atlanta), a sentiment reciprocated by Latinos in Los Angeles in predominantly Latino neighborhoods. Asian Americans in predominantly Asian neighborhoods in Los Angeles are *less* negative in their attitudes toward out-groups than those in more racially mixed settings. And the trends in Boston are different—the effects of neighborhood racial homogeneity are attenuated, particularly for Latinos and whites. In other words, the differences in attitudes by the racial composition of neighborhoods in Boston are simply not as great as those in Atlanta or Los Angeles.[8]

These results demonstrate consistent differences occur in racial attitudes across neighborhood racial contexts and the magnitude of these differences are often quite large. In many equations the size of the coefficients for the neighborhood racial percentage are larger than those for individual-level predictors of racial attitudes such as education and age.[9] As previous research on whites' attitudes has illustrated, people's surroundings do correspond with their racial beliefs. But perhaps most interesting is the remarkable consistency of the findings. For blacks, Latinos, and whites, the trend is the almost always the same: the greater the percentage of in-group neighbors, the *greater* the animosity to minority out-groups. Furthermore, separate analyses not included in this article also demonstrate an opposite trend when differences in racial attitudes are measured relative to the out-group percentage in the neighborhood: blacks, Latinos, and whites who live amongst more of a particular out-group are less racially biased toward that particular group.[10]

Asians, blacks, Latinos, and whites. For example, for the characteristics of intelligence, a score of 1 would mean the respondent thought all members of the ethnic group were intelligent, 7 would mean that all members of the group were unintelligent, and a score of 4 is "that the group is not towards one end or the other." Although different stereotypes exist for various racial and ethnic groups, for the sake of consistency, we chose four measures for all four groups: intelligence, self-sufficiency versus welfare dependence, easy to get along with, and treats other groups equally. Each of the seven-point scale was recoded so that positive and neutral perceptions were counted as zero and any negative perception as one. The four two-point negative stereotype scores were added to produce a zero-to-four-point summary negative stereotype score.

[5]Ideally a hierarchical linear model should be used in a multilevel analysis to minimize the correlation in error terms among respondents in the same geographical unit. However, we opted to use OLS rather than multilevel models because of very small block group-level sample sizes. Because of size constraints, the coefficients for the individual level variables are not depicted.

[6]Although individual income is often used as a predictor of negative out-group stereotypes, and is related the place of residence, a significant portion of the MCSUI sample, as with most surveys, refused to answer the household-income item. In order to minimize the number of missing cases, we did not include individual income in the model. This action seems justified in two respects. First, the individual education and home-ownership items as well as the block-group education items capture a good deal about the individual's own income and social status level. Second, when the regressions were estimated with income included, the results were generally the same.

[7]These results are largely mirrored if we substitute the percent of the out-group in the neighborhood. In other words, just as whites who live in neighborhoods with a higher percentage of whites are more likely to hold negative stereotypes towards blacks, whites who live in neighborhoods with a higher proportion of blacks are less likely to hold negative stereotypes. With few exceptions, the effect of living amongst out-groups on racial attitudes towards a particular out-group is basically the opposite of living amongst only one's own racial group.

[8]Interestingly, Asians who live in more high-status neighborhoods (as measured by the percent with a high school degree) also hold more negative views toward blacks and Latinos. Otherwise there is no general trend across all races and all metropolitan areas between the economic status of the neighborhood and the negative stereotypes toward out-groups. In some cases, such as whites' attitudes toward Latinos in Boston or toward Asians in Los Angeles or blacks' attitudes toward Latinos in Atlanta, residents of higher-status neighborhoods are less likely to hold negative stereotypes. In other cases, such as Latinos' attitudes blacks in Boston, the opposite is the case. The impact of neighborhood economic status seems highly dependent on its racial composition and on particular group dynamics.

[9]When the different scaling of the variables are taken into account, the predicted differences in racial attitudes between residents of the highest and lowest ends of the neighborhood racial composition are usually greater than between the highest and lowest values for the individual-level variables.

[10]Separate analyses were conducted that substituted the percent of the in-group in each neighborhood with a measure of the percent of the particular out-group that was the object of the negative stereotype. The results largely mirror the findings in Table 2. The coefficients for the out-group percentage in the neighborhood were typically negative in their predictions of negative stereotypes.

Table 3 Perceptions of Inter-group Threat by Blacks and Whites in Atlanta, Boston, and Los Angeles Areas

WHITES Variable	Zerosum w/ Asians Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Zerosum w/ Blacks Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Zerosum w/ Latinos Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Immigrant Threat Parameter Est. (s.e.)
Intercept	.987	1.22	1.23	1.38
	(.337)**	(.234)**	(.324)**	(.178)**
Percent White	.754	.168	.188	.606
	(.363)**	(.303)	(.331)	(.207)**
Atlanta	—	−.345	—	−.256
		(.218)		(.190)
Atl. x Per. Wht.	—	.754	—	.202
		(.338)**		(.272)
Boston	.094	−.136	−.202	.257
	(.272)	(.266)	(.251)	(.169)
Bos. x Per. Wht.	−.360	−.115	.219	−.621
	(.405)	(.400)	(.369)	(.253)**
Per. w/ H.S. Deg.	−.818	−.548	−.781	−.445
	(.463)*	(.236)**	(.445)*	(.213)**
ncases	472	1145	497	2117

BLACKS Variable	Zerosum w/ Asians Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Zerosum w/ Latinos Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Immig. Threat Parameter Est. (s.e.)
Intercept	1.83	1.82	1.06
	(.306)**	(.300)**	(.165)**
Percent Black	.757	.951	.771
	(.263)**	(.256)**	(.163)**
Atlanta	—	—	−.351
			(.191)*
Atl. x Per. Blk.	—	—	−.341
			(.250)
Boston	−.549	−.720	−.197
	(.298)*	(.273)**	(.183)
Bos. x Per. Blk.	−.654	−.215	−.632
	(.405)	(.406)**	(.269)**
Per. w/ H.S. Deg.	−.470	−1.29	−.028
	(.350)	(.359)**	(.177)
R^2	.108	.127	.064
ncases	808	770	2388

Source: MCSUI/Census Dataset, standard error in parentheses, excluded category is residence in Los Angeles.

**$p < .05$, *$p < .1$. Equations also included individual level measures of age, education, home ownership, length of residence, immigrant status, and political ideology.

The exceptions to this trend are also illustrative. The differences in Asian Americans' attitudes are attributable to differences in the country of origin among the Asian sample. In separate analyses not included here, the Asian-American sample was divided by language of interview. Asian Americans interviewed in English displayed patterns similar to other groups—those who lived in more Asian neighborhoods reported higher negative stereotype

TABLE 4 Perceptions of Inter-group Conflict for Asians and Latinos in Boston and Los Angeles

ASIANS Variable	Zerosum w/ Blacks Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Zerosum w/ Latinos Parameter Est. (s.e.)
Intercept	.157	.327
	(.325)	(.285)
Percent Asian	.415	−.163
	(.260)	(.242)
Per. w/ H.S. Deg.	.015	.079
	(.281)	(.255)
R^2	.022	.027
ncases	526	522
LATINOS Variable	**Zerosum w/ Asians Parameter Est. (s.e.)**	**Zerosum w/ Blacks Parameter Est. (s.e.)**
Intercept	1.06	.477
	(.454)**	(.393)
Percent Latino	.320	.294
	(.372)	(.327)
Boston	.079	−.152
	(.229)	(.215)
Bos. x Per. Lat.	−.493	.075
	(.368)	(.342)
Per. w/ H.S. Deg.	−.005	.448
	(.448)	(.392)
R^2	.019	.041
ncases	868	822

Source: MCSUI/Census Dataset, standard error in parentheses, excluded category is residence in Los Angeles.

**p < .05, *p < .1. Equations also included individual level measures of age, education, home ownership, length of residence, immigrant status, and political ideology.

scores on average. Among Korean and Chinese interviewees, however, residence in a less Asian neighborhood corresponded with more negative stereotypes, a pattern virtually opposite of the other groups. This difference may come from the higher linguistic and cultural isolation of unincorporated Asian immigrants (Oliver 2004).

These findings also reveal the importance of the larger *metropolitan* racial context in determining the impact of the neighborhood racial composition. The effects of neighborhood racial contexts are generally less pronounced among respondents in the Boston metropolitan area, which also has much smaller minority proportions than either Los Angeles or Atlanta. Similarly, whites and blacks in Atlanta exhibit much lower rates of hostility, on average, toward Latinos than their counterparts in Los Angeles, which has a much larger Latino population. If we review the results from both units of analysis, we can conclude that interracial proximity is likely to correspond with less negative attitudes toward those out-groups on a neighborhood level (or conversely racial isolation fosters more negative attitudes) but only in metropolitan areas with large percentages of minority groups. In areas with smaller percentages of minorities, the differences in racial attitudes across neighborhoods are less significant. Although further research that includes more metropolitan areas is required to confirm these patterns, our findings strongly suggest that it is not only critical to consider the effects of local context on racial attitudes, but also how these attitudes depend to some degree on the relationship between neighborhood and larger metropolitan contexts.

Perceptions of Interracial Competition and Policy Support

The most striking aspect of these findings is how, at the neighborhood level, they seem to challenge the predictions of the threat hypothesis and so many findings from past research. Unlike earlier studies which consistently report that larger percentages of proximate minority members contribute to higher white racial animosity (Fossett and Kiecolt 1989; Quillian 1996; Taylor 1998; Wright 1977), the results in Table 2 indicate just the opposite—on a neighborhood level, whites who live amongst more of their own racial group hold more negative views of minorities. Moreover, neighborhood racial diversity does not fuel interethnic hostility among non-Asian minority groups either. It is the blacks and Latinos who are most racially isolated that harbor the most negative views of other groups. At the neighborhood level, the central pillar of the threat hypothesis does not appear to be supported.

But how much are these differences in stereotyping corresponding with actual perceptions of intergroup competition? One way to answer this question is to directly measure perceptions of competition across contexts. Starting with black and white respondents, Table 3 lists coefficients from OLS equations that regress several measures of competition with minority out-groups by the percent of the in-group in the neighborhood with the same set of controls used above. Once again, samples from all three metropolitan areas were pooled with dummy variables for Atlanta and Boston, and interaction terms between the percent in-group in the neighborhood and the dummy variables. These equations predict perceptions of zero-sum competition with specific minority

Table 5 Neighborhood Racial Preference by Actual Neighborhood Racial Composition

Variable	Prefer Asian Neighborhoods (Asians only) Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Prefer Black Neighborhoods (Blacks only) Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Prefer Latino Neighborhoods (Latinos only) Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Prefer White Neighborhoods (Whites only) Parameter Est. (s.e.)
Intercept	2.914 (.298)**	2.620 (.160)**	2.70 (.316)**	.496 (.168)**
Percent Asian	.184 (.249)	—	—	—
Percent Black	—	.693 (.163)**	—	—
Percent Latino	—	—	.703 (.263)**	—
Percent White	—	—	—	.515 (.199)**
Atlanta	—	.305 (.190)	—	−.472 (.183)**
Atl. x Per. Blk.	—	−.434 (.249)*	—	—
Atl. x Per. Wht.	—	—	—	.949 (.261)**
Boston	—	−.248 (.183)	.119 (.167)	.141 (.162)
Bos. x Per Blk.	—	−.172 (.269)	—	—
Bos. x Per Lat.	—	—	−.844 (.267)**	—
Bos. x Per Wht.	—	—	—	.053 (.243)
Per. w/ H.S. Deg.	−.236 (.265)	−.368 (.176)**	−.427 (.316)	−.464 (.204)**
R^2	.016	.030	.074	.094
ncases	1049	2390	1691	2117

Source: MCSUI, excluded category is Los Angeles residence, standard error in parentheses.

**p < .05, *p < .1. Equations also included individual level measures of age, education, home ownership, length of residence, immigrant status, and political ideology.

groups, threats to political and economic power by immigrants, and opposition to affirmative action for specific minority groups.[11]

Among blacks and whites, the findings mimic the results about group stereotypes: the greater the percentage of *in-group* members within the neighborhood, the greater the sense of zero-sum competition with minority out-groups and the greater the perception of threats from immigration.[12] According to these measures, whites in

[11]The zero-sum variables are constructed from a combination of two five-point scales asking how much the respondent agrees or disagrees with statements on whether "more good jobs for [out-group] means fewer good jobs for [the respondent's in-group]" and whether "the more influence [out-groups] have in local politics, the less influence [the respondent's in-group] will have in local politics." The sample was divided into separate groups who were asked about specific out-groups, i.e., blacks were asked about competition with Latinos and Asians, Asians with blacks and Latinos, whites with all three minority groups. The immigrant threat variable was constructed from two five-point scales asking how much "political influence" and "economic opportunity" people of the respondent's race would have if immigration continues at its current rate.

[12]In other equations, we also find that blacks and whites living among more people who share their racial background are more likely to oppose affirmative action programs for minority

predominantly white Los Angeles neighborhoods feel the greatest competition from Asian Americans while whites in predominantly white Atlanta neighborhoods feel more competition with blacks. Whites in Boston generally have lower feelings of intergroup competition and the effects of living in predominantly white neighborhoods are lower, on average, than in Atlanta or Los Angeles. For whites, the economic status of their neighborhoods is also a consistent predictor of their sense of competition with minority groups: those in higher status neighborhoods perceive less zero-sum competition with all minority groups, less threat from immigration.

The racial composition of African Americans' neighborhoods is an important determinant of their sense of competition with minority groups in Los Angeles but not in Boston.[13] Black residents of predominantly black Los Angeles neighborhoods report a greater sense of zero-sum competition with Asians and Latinos and a greater threat from immigration. Among blacks in both Atlanta and Boston, there are lower overall levels of such interminority competition and the effects of neighborhood racial composition are attenuated. The highest levels of perceived threat from other minority groups occurs among blacks in predominantly black neighborhoods but that *also* live in a metropolitan area with higher numbers of minority out-groups (i.e., Los Angeles).

These same results, interestingly enough, do not generally occur among the Asian American or Latino respondents. Table 4 lists the results from OLS equations predicting feelings of zero-sum competition among Asian Americans in Los Angeles and Latinos in Los Angeles and Boston by the percent of in-group members within the neighborhood.[14] Asian Americans who live in predominantly Asian neighborhoods express a greater sense of zero-sum competition with blacks and Latinos, although these differences are not statistically significant. Latinos also exhibit similar preferences. Latinos who live in predominantly Latino neighborhoods perceive more zero-sum competition with Asian Americans and blacks although, once again, these differences are not statistically significant.

The findings in the previous tables suggest a more complicated relationship between the racial contexts and racial hostility than traditional theories of racial threat imply. Most research posits a relatively linear relationship between the size of out-group populations and the level of racial hostility, largely because of a putative threat mechanism (Blalock 1967; Key 1949; Taylor 1998): the larger the out-group, the greater the threat, and the higher the racial animosity. It should be noted, however, that much of this past research only measures the variance of racial animosity or violence across racial contexts rather than direct perceptions of economic or political threat. At the neighborhood level, our results show no evidence that the size of minority groups promotes any perceptions of zero-sum competition or increases racial hostility. In fact, we find just the opposite. Blacks and whites who live in neighborhoods with higher percentages of their *own* group are more likely to express feelings of competition and resentment toward other minority groups. Moreover, these neighborhood differences in perceptions of interminority competition are largely limited to blacks and whites. Asian Americans' and Latinos' feelings of competition with other minorities does not vary with the racial composition of their neighborhoods.

The only area where out-group size does correspond with greater feelings of racial competition is at the metropolitan level, a finding that echoes past research (Taylor 1998). For example, black and white Los Angelenos feel more competition with Asian Americans and Latinos than their counterparts in either Atlanta or Boston, while Los Angeles Latinos feel more competition with blacks and Asians than those in Boston. Although this conclusion is limited by only sampling from three metropolitan areas, the results would suggest that proximity to out-groups increases racial conflict only when that proximity is defined relative to a larger geographic area.

Self-Selection?

Given past research, the most likely explanation for the findings above is individual self-selection. As scholars of residential segregation have pointed out, individuals with strong prejudicial feelings toward out-groups and preferences toward in-groups are most likely to locate in segregated neighborhoods (Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996; Clark 1992). Consequently, the higher instances of racial prejudice or feelings of racial competition among people who live in segregated neighborhoods may simply be the geographic distribution of racial attitudes rather than any causal factor from the environment. Although most researchers who study interracial contact acknowledge that self-selection may be at play (Welch et al. 2001), few researchers attempt to include a measure of self-selection in their analyses (for a discussion of the self-selection issues, see Pettigrew 1998).

out-group members, although this effect varies across metropolitan regions.

[13] Black respondents in Atlanta were not asked questions about zero-sum competition with other groups.

[14] Because these groups are composed of large immigrant populations, the variables on immigrant threat were not analyzed.

The MCSUI data allow us to examine the effects of one important aspect of self-selection into a particular residential area—expressed preference or comfort with living in a residentially integrated neighborhood. Respondents were given a series of five cards each depicting a neighborhood comprised of houses with different collections of racial groups. These ranged from neighborhoods composed of all of their own race to those with a few or no members of their own race.[15] Respondents were asked to prioritize the neighborhoods from most- to least-desirable and, from these choices, an index of in-group neighborhood racial preference was constructed.[16] Table 5 lists the coefficients of OLS equations that regressed the percent of in-group members in the neighborhood on the neighborhood racial preference measure for each specific group with the standard set of controls.

With the exception of Asian Americans, respondents who live amongst more in-group members are also more likely to express a preference for a predominantly in-group neighborhood. The biggest differences occur for blacks and Latinos in Los Angeles and whites in Atlanta. Compared to black residents of largely nonblack neighborhoods, blacks in predominantly black Los Angeles neighborhoods score .7 points higher on the in-group neighbor preference scale a difference that is much less across neighborhoods in Boston and Atlanta. Conversely, the relationship between neighborhood racial composition and comfort with minority neighbors for whites in Atlanta is nearly three times as great as for whites in either Boston or Los Angeles. For Latinos, the correspondence between neighborhood racial preference and actual neighborhood composition is positive in Los Angeles but attenuated to no difference in Boston. Among Asian Americans there is no statistical relationship between the in-group neighborhood racial preferences and actual neighborhood racial composition, which is partly the consequence of Asians preferring predominantly white neighborhoods to predominantly Asian ones.[17]

While these results would seem to provide strong support for the self-selection hypothesis, further tests show that self-selection does not account for the positive relationship between in-group neighborhood composition and negative attitudes toward out-groups as demonstrated above. Table 6 lists the results of OLS regressions of the measures of out-group negative stereotypes on the same set of measures used in Table 3 only adding the indicator of in-group neighborhood preference.

First, a preference for or comfort with in-group neighbors does not always correspond with hostile attitudes toward out-groups, particularly among nonwhites. Although in all equations, whites who are comfortable with only white neighbors are more likely to have negative views toward all three minority out-groups; this pattern is only replicated in black views toward Asian Americans and in Asian American views toward whites. In no other instance does an in-group neighborhood preference correspond with an out-group prejudice. To a large extent, racial self-selection occurs only for whites. Beyond this, however, even when controlling for neighborhood preference, the positive effects of in-group neighborhood composition on negative out-group attitudes remain. Although the effects of neighborhood racial composition on negative out-group attitudes diminish slightly for whites, they do not lose most of their size nor statistical significance. In the case of nonwhites, the previous coefficients for neighborhood racial composition are virtually unchanged with the new control. Residential location does correspond with neighborhood racial preferences, but this fact does not explain *why* blacks and Latinos who live amongst more of their own race hold more negative views of other groups. Although self-selection appears to account in some part for contextual differences in racial attitudes among whites, our analysis suggests that even among whites self-selection does not fully explain variations in negative attitudes toward out-groups.

[15] In Atlanta, the race of potential neighbors was limited to blacks and whites. Blacks in Atlanta were shown cards that showed neighborhoods ranging from all-black to all-white. The surveys conducted in Los Angeles and Boston utilized a split-sample design that allowed for different groups of respondents within the same racial group to be asked about their preferences for living near either blacks, Latinos, or Asians. Black, Latino, and Asian respondents were shown cards where the distribution ranged from all of the respondent's neighbors sharing the same race/ethnicity as the respondent, to where none of the respondent's neighbors were the same race/ethnicity as the respondent). For all cities, whites were shown cards that ranged from all-white neighborhoods to majority nonwhite neighborhoods.

[16] This index was constructed on a five-point scale. Note that whites were asked about their levels of "comfort" living in different types of neighborhoods, while nonwhites were asked about the types of neighborhood composition that they found "attractive." Respondents who listed the two neighborhoods with either all or most residents as in-groups were coded 5; those who listed one as a top preference were coded 4; respondents who listed neither as a top-two preference as 3; those who listed one of the two neighborhoods with the least number of in-group members as a first or second choice were coded as a 2; and those who listed both predominantly out-group neighborhoods as top choices received a 1.

[17] The MCSUI data also provide other mechanisms for testing neighborhood racial preferences including a measure of neighborhoods the respondent would not move into and a measure where respondents fill in the racial composition of their ideal neighborhood using a blank card. Similar results are derived with these alternative measures too: among non-Asian Americans, those who prefer in-group members as neighbors (or resist having out-group members as neighbors) are more likely to live in predominantly in-group neighborhoods.

TABLE 6 Negative Out-group Stereotypes by the Percent of In-group in Neighborhood Controlling for Neighborhood Preference

BLACKS Variable	Anti-Asian Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Anti-Latino Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Anti-white Parameter Est. (s.e.)
Intercept	1.44 (.123)**	1.67 (.139)**	1.73 (.121)**
Prefer Black Neigh.	.028 (.015)*	−.003 (.017)	.013 (.015)
Percent Black	.222 (.119)**	.271 (.133)**	−.092 (.117)
Atlanta	−.425 (.139)**	−.456 (.156)**	−.498 (.137)**
Atl. x Per. Blk.	.069 (.182)	−.056 (.205)	.492 (.179)**
Boston	−.199 (.134)	−.063 (.150)	−.256 (.131)**
Bos. x Per. Blk.	−.074 (.196)	−.200 (.220)	.172 (.193)
Percent w/ H.S. Deg.	−.014 (.129)	−.165 (.144)	−.056 (.126)
R^2	.035	.055	.021
ncases = 2388			

WHITES Variable	Anti-Asian Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Anti-black Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Anti-Latino Parameter Est. (s.e.)
Intercept	1.33 (.122)**	1.11 (.158)**	1.34 (.158)**
Prefer White Neigh.	.082 (.016)**	.287 (.021)**	.216 (.021)**
Percent White	.168 (.144)	.479 (.187)**	.410 (.187)**
Atlanta	−.401 (.133)**	−.422 (.172)**	−.330 (.172)**
Atl. x Per. Wht.	.252 (.191)	−.050 (.247)	−.249 (.252)
Boston	−.022 (.118)	.071 (.153)	.387 (.153)**
Bos x Per. Wht.	−.039 (.177)	−.411 (.229)*	−.549 (.235)**
Percent w/ H.S. Deg.	−.228 (.149)	.111 (.192)	−.113 (.192)
R^2	.051	.123	.105
ncases = 2117			

TABLE 6 *(Continued)*

LATINOS Variable	Anti-Asian Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Anti-Black Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Anti-white Parameter Est. (s.e.)
Intercept	.669 (.220)**	1.75 (.270)**	1.05 (.219)**
Prefer Latino Neigh.	.003 (.017)	−.001 (.021)	−.008 (.017)
Percent Latino	.485 (.183)**	.629 (.225)**	.355 (.178)**
Boston	.146 (.116)	−.129 (.142)	.213 (.113)*
Bos. x Per. Lat.	−.373 (.186)**	−.939 (.228)**	−.287 (.181)
Percent w/ H.S. Deg.	.335 (.220)	.151 (.270)	.089 (.214)
R^2	.009	.094	.011
ncases = 1691			

ASIANS Variable	Anti-Black Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Anti-Latino Parameter Est. (s.e.)	Anti-white Parameter Est. (s.e.)
Intercept	1.51 (.291)**	1.36 (.258)**	1.13 (.210)**
Prefer Asian Neigh.	−.013 (.029)	−.000 (.026)	.046 (.021)**
Percent Asian	−.614 (.232)**	−.196 (.206)	−.430 (.168)**
Percent w/ H.S. Deg.	.439 (.247)*	.271 (.219)	−.080 (.179)
R^2	.060	.052	.043
ncases = 1049			

Source: MCSUI, excluded category is Los Angeles residence, standard error in parentheses.

**p < .05, *p < .1. Equations also included individual level measures of age, education, home ownership, length of residence, immigrant status, and political ideology.

Discussion

In multiethnic contexts, the relationship between racial environments and attitudes defy simple formulations. Hostility toward another group is based not simply on that group's size, but on its relative economic position, the historical period, and the contextual unit being measured. In particular, the perception of racial competition and the likelihood of contact varies dramatically between

larger and smaller environments. Taking these factors into account, we find that some existing hypotheses derived largely from the interaction between blacks and whites are applicable in multiethnic contexts. We also believe that new ways for thinking about the relationship between racial environments and attitudes are in order.

Like past research, we find strong evidence that people's racial attitudes are influenced by their racial environments. Yet, unlike much of this research, we find that close proximity to out-groups corresponds with less racial antagonism. Among blacks, Latinos, and whites, as their *neighborhoods* become more racially diverse, negative stereotypes and competition with other racial groups drop. Negative perceptions of out-groups are higher for those who live in neighborhoods with more of their *own* racial group.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that these differences are also relative to the racial composition of the metropolitan area. The effects of neighborhood racial isolation are greatest for people in more diverse metropolitan areas. Thus in Atlanta and Los Angeles, where minority populations are large, the differences in racial attitudes across neighborhoods are quite high. In the overwhelmingly white Boston metropolitan area, the attitudinal differences between racially mixed and racially homogeneous neighborhoods are much smaller. As with past research (Taylor 1998), racial diversity at the metropolitan level coincides with higher perceptions of competition and greater animosity toward out-groups. Clearly then, the relationship between the size of out-groups and the extent of racial animosity depends on which unit of analysis is being considered. At a neighborhood level, racial diversity corresponds with less racial resentment, at the metropolitan level, diversity corresponds with more racial stereotyping and feelings of competition.

Despite the general consistency in the size and direction of these effects, several exceptions reveal the complexities of racial attitudes in multiethnic contexts. First, economic as well as racial contexts are important to consider. Both blacks and whites in low-status neighborhoods have more negative attitudes and perceive more competition with minorities than those in high status neighborhoods. Interestingly, these effects are just the opposite for Asian Americans and Latinos. Among these groups, residence in a high-status neighborhood corresponds with greater animosity toward minority out-groups (although not toward whites). These findings reflect the interaction between race, class, and immigration in American society. With fewer immigrant members, blacks and whites probably feel greater competition and vulnerability from new immigrants. Ethnic groups with more immigrant members (i.e., Asian Americans and Latinos) express their racial attitudes relative to their economic well being.

Second, the effects of neighborhood contexts for Asian Americans seem to run completely opposite to those of other groups—Asian Americans who live in largely Asian neighborhoods actually have more positive perceptions of out-groups. In addition, better-educated Asian Americans express more negative stereotypes toward out-groups, a pattern opposite of other ethnic groups. As discussed above, this Asian exceptionalism is largely attributable to differences in nationality and language of interview. Asian Americans who speak little English may have a distinct connection to residential spaces in terms of levels of their linguistic isolation and the relationship between residence, work, and community (Hum and Zonta 2000; Johnson, Farrell, and Guinn 1997). Most importantly, these surveys were conducted in Los Angeles immediately following the urban unrest when violence targeting Asian-American small business owners was high. It is unclear whether these results are largely a product of a very distinct place and time or result from the unique disjuncture between residence, workplace, and linguistic isolation.

Third, differences in racial attitudes across neighborhoods are *not* solely a case of individual self-selection. From the tests above, self-selection appears to be primarily a white phenomenon—whites are the only group whose expressed discomfort with racially mixed neighborhoods corresponds with racial antagonisms toward out-groups. Among nonwhites, neighborhood racial preferences do not correspond with contextual differences in racial attitudes. Moreover, even when taking geographic racial preferences, the higher racial antagonism toward *any* group, be they white or nonwhite, among those in racial isolation remain.

So our remaining question is why do blacks, Latinos, and whites who live in more racially diverse neighborhoods express less racial resentment? While the recent work of Welch et al. (2001) would strongly suggest that integration is promoting interracial contact and mutual understanding, the MCSUI data do not allow us to adequately test this hypothesis. Although we must remain agnostic about contact, we can still accept the benefits of racial integration. Given that the conditions in which interracial contact promotes racial understanding (e.g., equal status and goal sharing) it may simply be mere social exposure that leads to increased tolerance among whites, blacks, and Latinos. It is also quite likely that residents of integrated neighborhoods are more likely to participate in integrated civic associations that can often provide the ideal circumstances for interracial contact and may weaken negative racial attitudes (Oliver

2004). If this is the case, then the findings from these data are quite suggestive: the best way to counteract the racial conflicts that might emerge from America's growing racial diversity is to promote greater racial integration not just in its neighborhoods, but in its civic associations as well.

Appendix

Coding of the Variables

Percent Asian, Black, Latino, White: Coded from 1990 Census block group data of percent in each group (Percent Asian, Black, and White are non-Hispanic).

Percent with H.S. Degree: Calculated from 1990 Census block group data of percent of residents over 25 who have completed at least 12 years of education and have a high school degree or equivalent.

Education: 0—Less than a high school degree, 1—No more than a high school degree, 2—Some college, 3—No more than a college degree, 4—Graduate school education.

Age: Coded directly 21–97.

Length of Residence: 0—Live in current address less than 1 year, 1—Live at current address 1–2 years, 2—Live at current address 2–5 years, 3—Live at current address more than 5 years.

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