DOES IT MATTER WHERE YOU KNOW THEM FROM? RACE/ETHNICITY AND THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL DOMAIN ON INTERGROUP CONTACT

Previous research generally suggests that increased racial/ethnic intergroup contact can reduce prejudice. However, most studies have examined the effects of contact within one social domain, that is, the specific context in which contact occurs. Thus, the question of how the social domain shapes the strength and direction of the contact–prejudice relationship remains underexplored. Utilizing data from a self-administered online survey (N = 637), this exploratory study examines the effects of intergroup contact on neighbor acceptance across different social domains (family, work, social media, school, neighborhood, community), paying particular attention to differences by respondent and hypothetical neighbor race/ethnicity. Findings reveal that not all domains of intergroup contact are significantly associated with neighbor acceptance and that the positive effects of intergroup contact vary by racial/ethnic group. We also find evidence that intergroup contact can reduce neighbor acceptance for same race/ethnic individuals among minority respondents. This study nuances conceptualizations of context in assessing the effectiveness of contact in reducing prejudice.

Keywords: intergroup contact, neighbor acceptance, race/ethnicity, social domain

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Racial division remains a prominent and enduring feature of the social structure in the United States. The persistent organizing power of race/ethnicity is often understood through the racial attitudes held by social actors (Jordan 1968). To combat negative racial attitudes, researchers have developed social contact theory, which posits that intergroup contact can reduce prejudice toward racial others (Allport 1954; Pettigrew 1998). As social context influences how individuals interpret and make meaning of the world, exposure to diverse perspectives, experiences, and people tends to reduce negative preconceptions about others (Paluck, Green, and Green 2019; Pettigrew et al. 2011; Yablon 2012). While contact was initially defined as "actual face-to-face interaction between members of clearly defined groups" (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006:754), scholars have expanded the concept to include indirect contact through mass media and the internet, which has also been shown to reduce prejudice (Amichai-Hamburger and McKenna 2006; Dovidio et al. 2017). Despite these general positive effects, the magnitude of the impact of contact may vary depending on the racial/ethnic group involved, the type of contact, and the setting in which it occurs[1] (Dovidio et al. 2017; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006).

Although prior research has examined how intergroup contact shapes racial attitudes, most studies have focused on a single or limited set of social domains. Few assess how variation in domain—that is, where contact occurs—shapes racial attitudes across multiple domains for a single sample. As societies and interaction modalities grow more diverse (Lee and Bean 2010; Qian, Lichter, and Tumin 2018), individuals often have

limited agency over whether intergroup contact occurs in specific domains. Furthermore, most studies have focused on how intergroup contact influences attitudes toward out-group members, overlooking its potential effects on in-group attitudes. This is notable given prior research on racial attitudes, which has shown that while all racial/ethnic groups demonstrate some preference for in-group members (Davis, Gregory, and Hartly 2023; Krysan et al. 2009), these preferences may stem from "aversion to, or fear of others far more than with group solidarity" (Charles 2003:184; see also Charles 2006). Even as Americans express greater openness to living in racially/ethnically integrated neighborhoods (Farley et al. 1994; Krysan 2021; Krysan and Bader 2007), racial/ethnic minoritized individuals have also expressed greater preferences for living in predominantly White neighborhoods (Bader and Krysan 2015; Bobo et al. 2012; Lee 2019). These dynamics underscore the importance of exploring how intergroup contact influences in-group racial attitudes, in addition to those of out-groups, particularly given the broader implications for racial/ethnic inclusion and equity.

Using data from a self-administered online survey of voting-age adults in the U.S., this study investigates whether the strength and direction of the relationship between intergroup contact and racial attitudes differ by social domain. Given that residential integration is a key indicator of the blurring of intergroup boundaries (Alba and Nee 2003; Oliver 2019), we operationalize racial attitudes in terms of neighbor acceptance. We analyze outcomes by respondent race/ethnicity, highlighting differences in attitudes toward both in-group and out-group neighbors. Based on our findings, we argue that the social domain of contact plays a critical role in shaping the generally positive relationship

between intergroup contact and reduced prejudice. However, our results also show that not all social domains foster positive outcomes—some are associated with neutral or even negative effects. These findings underscore the importance of contextual specificity when evaluating the potential of intergroup contact to reduce prejudice. Although our sample is not nationally representative, our attention to racial/ethnic variation offers insight into how group positions within the U.S. racial hierarchy may structure the malleability of racial attitudes.

SOCIAL CONTACT THEORY

First proposed by Allport (1954), social contact theory, or the "contact hypothesis," posits that engaging with individuals from other groups can reduce negative stereotypes and biases. Allport (1954) argued that intergroup interactions are most effective when they occur under optimal conditions: equal status between groups, shared goals, intergroup cooperation, and support from authorities, laws, or customs.

Expanding on this, Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) landmark meta-analytic review—based on 515 studies comprising 713 independent samples and more than 250,000 participants—strongly supports the theory. They found that 94% of studies showed that contact reduced prejudice. Specifically, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) reported: (1) a strong negative correlation between intergroup contact and prejudice; (2) although not essential, contact that occurred under Allport's optimal conditions had a stronger effect; and (3) having a diverse group of friends was a particularly strong predictor of reduced prejudice.

Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) also identified several moderating factors influencing the impact of contact, including the setting, the specific target group, the type of measure used, and whether the group was in the majority or minority. For example, contact was more effective in laboratory and recreational settings than in educational or residential contexts; more effective for groups defined by sexual orientation and ethnicity than by physical or mental disability; and stronger for affective measures (emotions and feelings) than for cognitive ones (beliefs and stereotypes). The effects also varied between majority and minority group members.

Mixed Outcomes of Social Contact

Although intergroup contact is generally associated with reduced prejudice, some studies have reported mixed results. For example, Van Laar et al. (2005) found that both voluntary and randomly assigned interracial roommate pairings reduced prejudice among students and even extended to other racial groups—for example, anti-Latine bias was reduced among Black students and vice versa (see also Camargo et al. 2010). However, the authors also found that contact with Asian American roommates led some White students to develop more negative views of other racial minorities.

Other studies have found minimal or no change in racial attitudes among White students (Byrd 2014, 2017; Markowicz 2009), and some have reported persistent feelings of racial group superiority despite intergroup contact (Denis 2015). Furthermore, negative contact experiences have been shown to increase prejudice (Dovidio et al. 2017; Hayward et al. 2017; McKeown and Dixon 2017). These findings underscore that the effects of intergroup contact are not uniformly beneficial and can vary significantly depending on the

quality, context, and nature of the interactions. They also suggest that the social domain may be particularly complex: The setting in which intergroup contact occurs may shape both the opportunities for meaningful engagement and the likelihood that such engagement will lead to either positive or negative outcomes. Understanding *where* contact happens may thus be critical in assessing its true impact on racial attitudes.

Intergroup Contact and Social Domain

Building on Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) emphasis on context, this study explores the significance of the social domain in influencing the outcomes of intergroup contact. While much research has focused on friendships, educational environments, or residential settings (Paluck et al. 2019; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006), these contexts are often studied in isolation. Few studies have directly compared different settings to assess how they may shape or moderate the effects of intergroup contact on prejudice. Yet other social domains—such as the workplace, family, and community—may also foster the kinds of interactions necessary for reducing prejudice.

Friendships have received particular attention because they are typically voluntary, flexible, emotionally driven, and egalitarian—meeting many of Allport's optimal conditions (Hewstone 2011; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). In contrast, workplace relationships are often involuntary, with group membership determined by job roles and interactions governed by organizational structures. Nevertheless, friendships can still emerge, particularly among colleagues of equal status. Family, neighborhood, and community settings, while more structured and role-bound, also involve some degree of

choice—for example, choosing marriage partners, selecting neighborhoods, or joining community organizations.

Thus, some of Allport's (1954) optimal conditions—equal status, shared goals, cooperation, and institutional support—are present to varying degrees across these social domains. Given that Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) found positive outcomes even when not all conditions were met, the degree to which these conditions exist in different social domains may still positively influence racial attitudes. We propose that the domain in which contact occurs shapes whether positive effects emerge in terms of acceptance of neighbors within and across racial and ethnic lines. Exploring these domains can help identify areas where interventions are needed to promote intergroup equity as well as contexts that may foster the "inculcation" of prejudice (Dovidio et al. 2017; Hayward et al. 2017; McKeown and Dixon 2017).

NEIGHBORHOOD INTEGRATION

The Schelling models of residential segregation are widely cited as empirical frameworks for understanding how segregation patterns develop in cities. At a basic level, these models suggest that individuals from minority racial groups may relocate due to dissatisfaction with being in the out-group in their neighborhood (Schelling 1971; Ubareviciene, van Ham, and Tammaru 2024). However, Schelling's work is more nuanced than this simplification suggests. His models include area distribution and bounded neighborhood concepts, incorporating ideas like tolerance thresholds, which influence whether individuals choose to stay in or leave a neighborhood (Ubareviciene et al. 2024;

Schelling, 1971). Schelling (1971) also introduced the idea of a "tipping point," where the increasing presence of minority group members could lead to a rapid exodus of White residents—a phenomenon known as "White flight." However, these models focus primarily on individual preferences and satisfaction, thereby reinforcing residential segregation without accounting for broader collective, economic, or discriminatory forces that shape residential patterns.

The increase in racially diverse neighborhoods in the United States has shifted the historical dynamics of residentially segregated neighborhoods. Despite the notable growth of multi-racial/ethnic neighborhoods, relatively few White and Black individuals are part of these communities (Crowder et al. 2012; Farrell and Lee 2011). This limited integration is due, in part, to the complex dynamics of neighborhood diversity. White residents are particularly sensitive to rising numbers of minority group members, while neighborhoods with minority populations tend to remain stable in terms of their White populations (Farrell and Lee 2011).

Evidence suggests that Asian and Latine individuals have played a significant role in the development of multi-racial/ethnic neighborhoods, which has indirectly increased contact between Black and White residents. Nevertheless, patterns persist in which Black and White individuals tend to reside in racially homogeneous neighborhoods, thereby reinforcing residential segregation (Crowder et al. 2012; Farrell and Lee 2011). Crowder et al. (2012) found that education and income influenced Black residents to move into racially diverse neighborhoods, while those same factors often motivated White residents to avoid racially diverse areas. Inter-neighborhood migration is further complicated by

place-specific dynamics, including social, economic, and spatial factors tied to metropolitan contexts (Crowder et al. 2012).

Urban neighborhood formation is also shaped by perceived discrimination, which influences both the decisions of neighbors and the residential preferences of minority group members. Additionally, personal networks and racial stereotypes perpetuate segregation, even as overt prejudice declines (Krysan and Crowder 2017). Exceptions do exist—some immigrant group members seeking integration may prioritize housing characteristics over neighborhood racial composition to improve their residential outcomes. Nonetheless, structural and social factors continue to shape residential integration (Ubareviciene et al. 2024). Political affiliation is another influential factor, as individuals may choose to relocate to neighborhoods that align with their political beliefs, contributing to politically segregated spaces (Jokela 2021).

The foreclosure crisis that intensified during the U.S. housing market collapse was heavily racialized and significantly exacerbated neighborhood residential segregation (Hall, Crowder, and Spring 2015). Black and Latine neighborhoods were hit the hardest by foreclosures due to long-standing social and economic disadvantages, while White neighborhoods, with greater resources, were better equipped to manage foreclosures (Hall et al. 2015). Racially diverse neighborhoods were also hit hard, reinforcing existing segregation patterns (Hall et al. 2015).

Discrimination in the housing market persists regardless of the foreclosure crisis. Quillian, Lee, and Honoré (2020) reported that housing audits conducted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development from 1977 to 2012 provide ample

evidence of ongoing discrimination against minority groups .. While there has been a decline in overt discrimination experienced by minority group members, indirect discrimination continues (Quillian et al. 2020). Due to the prevalence of subtle discrimination, residential segregation remains entrenched, as Black and Latine individuals continue to face restrictions in their housing choices (Quillian et al. 2020).

Despite these barriers to neighborhood integration, research on attitudes toward neighborhood composition reveals that most racial groups are increasingly expressing a willingness to coexist in racially integrated neighborhoods (Bobo et al. 2012; Krysan 2021; Krysan et al. 2009). However, there is often a "mismatch" between stated preferences for racial/ethnic diversity, actual search locations, and final neighborhood outcomes (Bader and Krysan 2015; Havekes, Bader, and Krysan 2016). Moreover, although all groups show some preference for living in neighborhoods where their in-group is the majority, attitudes about neighborhood racial composition are strongly shaped by aversive sentiment—particularly an aversion to Black residents (Charles 2006; Davis, Gregory, and Hartley 2023; Lee 2019; Meyers, Kim, and Kawakami 2024)—in addition to the aforementioned factors influencing residential integration.

Nonetheless, scholarship has shown that intergroup contact within neighborhoods can reduce negative racial attitudes (Merrilees et al. 2018; Schmid, Ramiah, and Hewstone 2014). For example, Merrilees et al. (2018) found that bias increased throughout adolescence. However, this increase was slower among those who reported more frequent and higher-quality neighborhood contact. In a study examining the relationship between neighborhood diversity and community trust across British neighborhoods with varying

levels of racial/ethnic diversity. Schmid et al. (2014) found some negative direct effects of diversity for the majority group. However, they also confirmed that diversity was associated with increased trust through positive contact and reduced intergroup threat. These indirect effects helped offset the negative direct effects, resulting in an overall positive impact of diversity.

PRESENT STUDY

As researchers broadly agree that intergroup contact tends to lessen prejudice (Boin et al. 2021; Pettigrew 2009; Pettigrew et al. 2011; Stern and West 2014), our central aim was to examine how the social domain influences this generalized relationship. Specifically, we investigate how respondents' race/ethnicity, the race/ethnicity of the hypothetical neighbors being evaluated, and the social domain in which contact occurs affect the strength and direction of the relationship between intergroup contact (i.e., how often individuals interact with racial/ethnic in-group and out-group members) and racial attitudes (i.e., acceptance of neighbors from these groups).

To begin, we establish a baseline relationship between the frequency of intergroup contact and neighbor acceptance, independent of social domain. We then analyze the effects of frequent intergroup contact on neighbor acceptance within each domain. These analyses also explore variations by racial/ethnic group. Figure 1 illustrates the relationships explored in our sample.

[Figure 1 about here]

This study aims to determine whether increased contact with individuals from racial/ethnic out-groups across different social domains influences participants' willingness to accept both out-group and in-group members as neighbors. Importantly, we do not focus on whether participants currently live alongside these groups but rather on their openness to doing so. Additionally, we do not assess situations where specific conditions of intergroup contact are met, as prior research suggests that such conditions are not essential to decrease prejudice (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006; Pettigrew et al. 2011).

DATA AND METHODS

Data

For our analysis, we used quantitative data collected through a 2022 exploratory online survey on racial attitudes and public opinion in the United States. The survey was designed, tested, and administered in collaboration with the Office of Research Regulatory Support (ORRS) at a university in the Midwest and Qualtrics. The questions aimed to assess attitudes and opinions related to access, mobility, perceived competence, and the perceived causes of inequality as they relate to race/ethnicity and gender. Demographic questions captured participants' social identities and sociodemographic characteristics, including sex, gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, and household income. The survey consisted of 80 core questions, most of which were close ended, with limited space for open-ended responses.[2]

Sampling

We recruited participants through respondent panels purchased and distributed via

Qualtrics. These panels were either recruited directly by Qualtrics or acquired from third-party vendors. The panel members contacted by Qualtrics remained anonymous to both the research team and the ORRS. Our target population was U.S. residents aged 18 or older. To ensure diversity, we applied quotas based on major U.S. racial/ethnic groups, resulting in a final sample size of 700 individuals. However, other demographic variables—such as gender, education, and household income—were not included in the sampling criteria. Consequently, our sample is not representative of the broader U.S. population.

Participants were first presented with an informed consent form. Only those who provided voluntary consent were granted access to the web-based survey. The one-time survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete, and participants were allowed to skip questions or exit the survey at any time. We excluded respondents who submitted incomplete responses, yielding a final sample of 637 respondents.

Measures

To capture race/ethnicity, respondents were asked to select the single category that best described their racial/ethnic background. Those who did not identify with any of the listed options or identified with multiple racial/ethnic backgrounds were categorized under "another race/ethnicity" and given the opportunity to specify further if they wished. Our sample was composed of the following self-identified racial/ethnic groups: White (N = 119), Black (N = 134), Latine[3] (N = 153), Native American (N = 41), Asian or Pacific Islander (N = 122), or some other race (N = 68). Due to smaller sample sizes among respondents who identified as Native American or with another race/ethnicity, we do not present bivariate or multivariate analyses for these groups.

To measure *frequent intergroup contact*, we used a subset of items that asked respondents the following question: *How often do you interact with people of races different from your own in the following settings*?

- At work
- At school
- Socializing with friends
- At family gatherings
- In your neighborhood
- On social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat)
- In your community

Response choices ranged from 1 to 5: 1 = daily, 2 = at least once a week, 3 = two to three times a month, 4 = a few times a year, and 5 = never. All seven items were reverse coded so that higher values indicated more frequent intergroup contact.

In addition to using individual measures of intergroup contact by social domain, we created a composite score to reflect overall intergroup contact. To do this, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of all seven items to identify whether they formed a coherent factor. The results revealed one factor with an eigenvalue of 3.388. From this factor, we generated a standardized score of intergroup interaction (Cronbach's alpha = 0.818). Our rationale for using both individual items and a standardized composite measure was to illustrate general trends in intergroup contact while also highlighting differences across various social domains. We did not ask respondents to specify which racial/ethnic out-groups they interacted with because our goal was to test whether any cross-racial

contact would reduce prejudice toward out- and in-group members in general.

Racial attitudes was operationalized as *neighbor acceptance*, using a series of items assessing respondents' acceptance of various ethnoracial groups as neighbors. The question devoted to this issue was as follows:

> *Next, we are interested in learning more about how accepting you would be of certain situations or occurrences. Below are several different groups of people. On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (very accepting), how accepting would you be to have each as your neighbor?*

Higher values indicated greater acceptance. The groups included Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans.

We assessed neighbor acceptance in two distinct ways. First, we measured acceptance of out-group members. Second, we examined acceptance of each individual racial/ethnic group, including in-group members. For *neighbor acceptance of out-group members*, we created several standardized measures corresponding to each respondent's ethnoracial identity. For example, among White respondents, the survey item asking about acceptance of White neighbors was excluded from the composite measure. The same exclusion principle was applied for respondents of all other racial/ethnic identities. Each separate measure of *neighbor acceptance of out-group members* was subjected to EFA before standardizing scores. All measures revealed a clear one-factor solution, with Cronbach's alphas ranging from 0.764 to 0.901 and means ranging from –0.009 to 0.027.

For subsequent analyses, we used neighbor acceptance of individual ethnoracial groups as separate measures. This approach allowed us to assess how the association

between intergroup contact and neighbor acceptance of Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans varied across different social domains and specific racial/ethnic groups. We specified, for each domain, which inter- and intra-ethnoracial group(s) showed reduced prejudice in response to intergroup contact and its frequency.

Several control variables were included in our statistical models. Dichotomous variables included sex (1 = female), employment status (1 = working), marital status (1 = married or in common law union), and nativity (1 = born in the United States). Age was a continuous variable, measured in years from 18 onward. To partially control for class, we included respondent's education and logged per capita household income. Education was measured on an ordinal scale ranging from 1 (less than high school) to 7 (graduate or professional degree). To measure income, we asked respondents the following question: *What is your total household income per month?* The 17-category response scale ranged from 0 (no income) to 16 (more than $42,000 USD). Each category was assigned a midpoint value, with the final category assigned a value equal to the top of the previous category plus half the value of the final category. We then divided the midpoint household income by the total number of people living in the household and logged the resulting value (e.g., Bailey, Fialho, and Penner 2016; Kelly 2022). Because previous research has shown regional variation in racial attitudes (Bobo et al. 2012), we also included a four-category variable representing U.S. Census Bureau regions: 1 = the South; 2 = the Midwest; 3 = the Northeast; and 4 = the West.

Methods

Summary statistics for all variables used in this study are presented in Table 1. We

report bivariate findings from one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) comparing means of survey items measuring *frequent intergroup contact* and *neighbor acceptance* across ethnoracial groups (Tables 2 and 3). Post hoc pairwise comparisons using Tukey's method were conducted for significant ANOVA results to further clarify ethnoracial group differences.

To establish a baseline relationship between *frequent intergroup contact* and *neighbor acceptance of out-group members*, we conducted ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analyses (Table 4). We then ran multivariate multiple regression models to examine how each social domain affected the relationship between *frequent intergroup contact* and *neighbor acceptance* of various ethnoracial groups (Table 5). All regression models included the full set of sociodemographic control variables.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Table 1 presents the frequency, mean, standard deviation, and range for each variable included in analyses. Approximately 69% of the sample was female, with a mean age of 36 years. Among respondents, 85% were native-born, of whom 45.6% resided in the South, 32% were married, and 54% were employed either full- or part-time. Approximately 28% had completed high school or obtained a high school equivalency certificate, while 30% held a bachelor's degree or higher. Additionally, 80% reported a monthly household income of $6,000 USD or less.

The approximate ethnoracial distribution of the sample was approximately 19%

White, 21% Black, 24% Latine, 6% Native American, 19% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 11% who self-identified as "racial others" (see Table 1). However, Native Americans and those categorized as racial others were excluded from subsequent analyses.

[Table 1 about here]

Bivariate Analyses

We performed one-way ANOVAs to assess the effects of race/ethnicity on responses to the individual survey items used to measure intergroup contact and neighbor acceptance. Table 2 shows statistically significant differences between racial/ethnic groups in mean responses to questions about intergroup contact in both the workplace and at school ($F(5, 623) = [2.37]$, $p < .05$ and $F(5, 625) = [5.69]$, $p < .001$, respectively). Tukey tests indicated that Latine respondents reported significantly higher rates of intergroup contact in schools than White respondents (mean difference = 0.996, standard error = 0.202, $p < .001$). However, post-how pairwise tests revealed no significant comparisons in intergroup contact in the workplace.

[Table 2 about here]

Table 3 presents the results of the one-way ANOVAs for neighbor acceptance across ethnoracial groups. The groups differed significantly in their mean acceptance of White neighbors ($F(5, 625) = [2.24]$, $p < .05$), although post hoc tests revealed no significant pairwise differences.

[Table 3 about here]

Multivariate Analyses

Table 4 displays OLS regression coefficients from models predicting neighbor

acceptance of out-group members based on a standardized measure of intergroup contact. Results indicate that frequent intergroup contact was positively and significantly associated with neighbor acceptance of out-group members among Black ($\beta = 0.315$, $p < .01$) and Latine respondents ($\beta = 0.353$, $p < .001$). In essence, the more often Black and Latine respondents interacted with individuals outside their racial/ethnic group, the more accepting they were of having out-group neighbors.

[Table 4 about here]

Table 5 presents result from multivariate multiple regression models estimating the influence of social domain on the relationship between intergroup contact and neighbor acceptance. As shown, while each social domain contributed to the association between intergroup contact and neighbor acceptance, the strength and direction of these associations varied by ethnoracial group and target group.

Work. Frequent intergroup contact in the workplace significantly predicted neighbor acceptance among Black respondents. Specifically, workplace contact was associated with increased acceptance of White ($\beta = 0.211$, $p < .05$), Native American ($\beta = 0.182$, $p < .05$), and Hispanic ($\beta = 0.224$, $p < .01$) neighbors.

School and friends. Contrary to past research, intergroup contact in schools and friendship networks did not significantly predict neighbor acceptance for any racial/ethnic group in our sample.

Family. The family domain was one of two in which frequent intergroup contact was negatively correlated with neighbor acceptance. As shown in Table 5, frequent intergroup contact within families or at family gatherings significantly reduced acceptance

of co-racial/ethnic neighbors among Black, Latine, and Asian/Pacific Islander respondents ($p < .05$). Furthermore, increased intergroup family contact was negatively associated with acceptance of Asian neighbors among Latine respondents ($\beta = -0.172$, $p < .05$) and of White neighbors among Asian respondents ($\beta = –0.261$, $p < .01$).

Neighborhood. Frequent intergroup contact in neighborhoods was associated with significantly greater neighbor acceptance among White and Latine respondents. For White respondents, such contact predicted higher acceptance of Asian neighbors ($\beta = 0.266$, $p < 0.05$). For Latine respondents, neighborhood contact was positively associated with acceptance of Black ($\beta = 0.179$, $p < 0.05$), Asian ($\beta = 0.189$, $p < 0.05$), and co-racial/ethnic neighbors ($\beta = 0.271$, $p < 0.01$).

Social media. Social media was the second domain in which frequent intergroup contact predicted increased prejudice. Specifically, for Black respondents, intergroup contact on social media platforms was associated with decreased acceptance of co-racial/ethnic neighbors ($\beta = 0.170$, $p < 0.05$).

Community. Community-based intergroup social contact had the strongest positive effect among Black respondents. For this group, frequent contact was positively associated with greater acceptance of Asian neighbors ($\beta = 0.258$, $p < .05$), Native American neighbors ($\beta = 0.267$, $p < .05$), and Hispanic neighbors ($\beta = 0.332$, $p < .001$).

[Table 5 about here]

DISCUSSION

Social contact theory posits that increased intergroup contact reduces prejudice

toward out-group members. Prior research generally supports this theory, with stronger effects typically found among majority racial/ethnic groups (Paluck et al. 2019; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). However, the significance of the social domain—that is, where intergroup contact occurs—has not been systematically examined. This study addressed that gap by analyzing data from an exploratory, self-administered online survey of U.S. adults, using a convenience sample.

We aimed to determine whether social interaction exert similarly positive effects on prejudice reduction in all domains and how these effects differ by race/ethnicity. In doing so, we also distinguished between acceptance of intergroup and intragroup members.

Before exploring the role of social domain, we established a baseline relationship between intergroup contact and racial attitudes—specifically, acceptance of out-group members as neighbors. In line with contact theory, our findings indicate that more frequent intergroup contact was associated with greater acceptance of racial/ethnic out-group neighbors. Notably, these positive effects reached statistical significance only for Black and Latine respondents.

After establishing this baseline relationship, we examined the significance of each social domain in which intergroup contact occurred on neighbor acceptance of out-group members as well as of each individual racial/ethnic group. Our findings revealed the following: (1) not all social domains of intergroup contact had a statistically significant effect on neighbor acceptance; (2) the social domains that had statistically significant effects did not do so uniformly across all racial/ethnic groups; and (3) not all social domains were positively correlated with neighbor acceptance. In sum, we found variation in both

the strength and directional impact of intergroup contact based on social domain, with additional differences depending on which racial/ethnic group was assessed and for whom neighbor acceptance was measured.

These findings align with studies that report generally positive effects of social contact, but they contrast with research suggesting that such effects are weakest among minority populations (Boin et al. 2011; Pettigrew et al. 2011; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). While researchers have yet to establish a definitive explanation for the differential effects of intergroup contact on prejudice reduction across racial/ethnic groups, several theories have been proposed. One line of reasoning posits that groups' positions within societal racial hierarchies may affect how social contact interventions are perceived. For instance, the fact that members of racial/ethnic minorities must contend with persistent group stereotypes and a continued perception of their subordinate status may erode the efficacy of such interventions (Lemmer and Wagner 2015; Pettigrew et al. 2011; Stern and West 2014). Another explanation is that minoritized ethnoracial groups may hold fewer negative attitudes toward majority ethnoracial group members, thereby limiting the measurable effect of contact on fostering more positive attitudes (Lemmer and Wagner 2015).

Although our findings indicate that the effects of intergroup contact were most pronounced among minority respondents, they do not necessarily contradict the explanations proposed by previous scholars, which largely center on minority group attitudes toward the majority and vice versa. In our study, however, the most positive outcomes were observed primarily among and for other racial/ethnic minorities. This suggests that respondents may perceive contact with out-group members as more socially

and politically consequential. In a multi-racial/ethnic and increasingly diverse society, minoritized individuals may be especially attuned to the implications of intergroup dynamics and thus more responsive to the frequency of such contact. This interpretation is consistent with the frameworks offered by Lemmer and Wagner (2015), Pettigrew et al. (2011), and Stern and West (2014). Moreover, since significantly negative outcomes of intergroup contact were found only among minoritized respondents, our findings offer further support for understanding the adverse effects of such contact, as documented in previous research (e.g., McKeown and Dixon 2017). In fact, they underscore the need for more nuanced inquiry into the contextual and group-specific dynamics that shape the outcomes of intergroup contact.

In discussing our findings based on social domain, we found that among self-identified White respondents, intergroup contact in neighborhoods was most influential in increasing the acceptance of Asians as neighbors, but not of other racial/ethnic out-groups. This may reflect the racialization of minority groups in the United States. Asians and Asian Americans are frequently characterized as the "model minority," a stereotype that attributes perceived positive qualities to this group (Kim 1999). These stereotypes may contribute to higher levels of neighborly acceptance among White respondents. This finding is consistent with previous studies showing that White Americans express less aversion to living in communities with Asian neighbors (Meyers et al. 2024). Moreover, due to residential segregation, Asian communities may have a greater likelihood of living near White residents (Logan 2011), which may increase opportunities for interaction and, in turn, neighbor acceptance.

The considerable influence of neighborhoods and communities on Latine and Black respondents, respectively, may also reflect differential access to residential spaces (Aliprantis et al. 2024; Havekes et al. 2016; Logan 2011). Additionally, frequent intergroup contact may strengthen sentiments of linked fate, thereby increasing neighbor acceptance of both in-group members (especially among Latine respondents) and other minoritized racial/ethnic groups. However, these assessments are context specific. It is also important to note that our survey did not ask respondents to identify the specific racial or ethnic groups with which they had contact, which limits the depth of our analysis.

Intergroup contact in the workplace significantly increased the acceptance of Whites, Native Americans, and Hispanics as neighbors among Black respondents. This is a notable finding, as Table 5 also shows that Black respondents who were employed at the time of the survey reported lower neighbor acceptance for these groups than those who were not employed. Further research is needed to explore this apparent contradiction. The ongoing backlash against diversity, equity, and inclusion programs (including affirmative action) may help explain these outcomes.

Interestingly, we found that frequent intergroup contact at family gatherings (the subject of our question) was associated with decreased neighbor acceptance of in-group members for Black, Latine, and Asian respondents. Additionally, Asian and Latine respondents expressed lower neighbor acceptance for Whites and Asians, respectively. One potential factor contributing to this negative association may be intermarriage. While the survey did not collect data on the racial/ethnic identity of family members or respondents' spouses/partners, it is plausible that variations in familial relationships—whether

intentional or not—shape neighbor acceptance of racial/ethnic group members.

For example, the racial/ethnic backgrounds of a spouse or partner may influence an individual's attitudes toward both out-group members and their own group. Research has shown that Asians are more likely to intermarry with Whites or other Asian co-/inter-ethnic groups than with Blacks or Latines (Lee 2023, 2024; Lee and Bean 2010). Similarly, Latine individuals show high rates of interracial marriage with Whites and among pan-ethnic group members (Lee and Bean 2010; Qian et al. 2018; Woolley, Greif, and Stubbs 2024). Such cross-racial/ethnic unions and the resulting extended families may represent a context in which negative sentiment occurs, particularly if existing group-based attitudes are deeply tied to perceptions of one's own racial/ethnic group position (see Denis 2015; Woolley et al. 2024).

Moreover, there is an increasing discourse around the emergence of a multi-racial/ethnic America, particularly given rising intermarriage rates (see Lee and Bean 2010). However, this projected shift—whether real or perceived—may prompt some minoritized individuals to develop less positive attitudes toward in-group members. In this way, intergroup dynamics within families may represent a setting in which such negative attitudes are amplified. Again, these interpretations are speculative, as our study did not examine intermarriage directly.

Notwithstanding the insights derived from this study, several limitations must be acknowledged. The data were collected from a convenience sample obtained through Qualtrics, which limits the ability to generalize findings to the broader U.S. population. The survey questions assessed the frequency of interactions with racial others but did not

specify the particular ethnoracial groups with which respondents engaged. While this approach was intended to test whether contact with diverse racial/ethnic individuals would extrapolate to attitudes toward all out-group members—and to reduce social desirability bias—it limited the depth of analysis. Specifically, we were unable to assess how contact patterns may correlate with reduced acceptance of particular racial/ethnic groups.The study did not explore the nature of intergroup interactions, preventing us from determining whether these encounters were casual, positive, hostile, or intimate—an important consideration, particularly in cases where increased contact was associated with decreased neighbor acceptance. Additionally, race was measured using a single-choice format, thereby excluding individuals who identified as multiracial. This limitation may obscure the complex experiences of multiracial individuals and has both theoretical and methodological implications for how social contact and racial dynamics are experienced and interpreted. As with all self-reported surveys, the possibility of social desirability remains, especially given the sensitive nature of questions related to racial attitudes.

Despite these limitations, the survey offers novel insights into the potentially counterintuitive effects of social contact on in-group prejudice. It provides a valuable foundation for future research to explore these dynamics in more depth and with more representative samples.

CONCLUSION

In sum, this study examined how interactions with individuals from different racial and ethnic groups influence neighbor acceptance. Overall, the findings suggest that

increased intergroup contact is generally associated with greater openness to diverse neighbors, particularly among Black and Latine respondents. However, the effects of intergroup contact varied considerably across social domains. For instance, neighborhood-based contact was linked to greater acceptance of Asian neighbors among White respondents, whereas family-based contact was associated with lower acceptance of both in-group and out-group members among Black, Latine, and Asian respondents.

Since racial attitudes reflect the racialized social system that structures institutional practices and maintains racial hierarchies, our findings highlight how these attitudes—and thus levels of neighbor acceptance—are shaped by prevailing racialized perceptions across different groups and settings. Crucially, the extent to which intergroup contact reduces prejudice appears to depend on both the social domain and the target of prejudice. While many studies have found that school-based and friendship-based contact reduces prejudice (e.g., Camargo et al. 2010; Van Laar et al. 2005), this was not the case in our study. This challenges the assumption that reductions in prejudice within one domain, such as friendships, necessarily extend to other areas of life. As Denis (2015) observed in his ethnographic study of a small town in Northwestern Ontario, even in contexts with widespread intergroup friendships and marriages, racial prejudice and discrimination can persist. Our findings similarly suggest that not all contact settings hold equal potential for broader prejudice reduction and underscore the importance of contextualizing intergroup contact within specific relational domains.

Further research is needed to understand why social contact within families—and, notably, on social media—may lead to in-group prejudice. Most studies exploring the

negative effects of intergroup contact have tended to focus exclusively on attitudes toward out-group members. Yet our results suggest the need to examine how such contact may also influence attitudes toward one's own group. While the patterns observed may be specific to our sample, replication with a more representative sample would help determine whether these dynamics are generalizable, particularly in light of the current polarized political climate in the U.S. Ultimately, understanding the nuanced ways in which intergroup and intragroup contact shape attitudes is essential. These insights are especially critical for informing efforts to foster integration, solidarity, and equity—particularly within pan-ethnic coalitions and social movements that rely on cross-group collaboration.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors report no potential conflict of interest.

ENDNOTES

[1] That is, whether in a laboratory or educational setting.

[2] It should be noted that while this present study focuses only on the US, this study forms part of a larger cross-national study.

[3] This paper uses the terms Latine and Hispanic interchangeably, as the term "Hispanic" was specifically used in the wording of our survey questions.

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