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Neighborhood Characteristics and Expectations of Racially Discriminatory Experiences Among
African American Adolescents

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Abstract

This study examined how youths' neighborhood characteristics informed their expectations of racial discrimination concurrently and longitudinally. Secondary analyses were conducted on data from Waves 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 of the Maryland Adolescent Development in Context Study (MADICS), which permitted the examination of neighborhood influences among a socioeconomically diverse sample of African American parents and adolescents ($n = 863$; $M_{age}=12.29$). Youth exposed to more neighborhood disadvantage in 7th grade reported more negative concurrent neighborhood perceptions, which in turn, predicted greater expectations of racial discrimination in 8th grade; youths' expectations remained stable into adulthood. Thus, support was found for the mediating role of youths' subjective neighborhood perceptions in the longitudinal relation between neighborhood structure and expectations of racial discrimination.

Keywords: racial discrimination, neighborhood, structural characteristics, subjective perceptions, African American, adolescents, MADICS

Neighborhood Characteristics and Expectations of Racially Discriminatory Experiences among African American Adolescents

Racial discrimination is an unwanted yet pervasive reality for African American youth (Seaton, Caldwell, Sellers, & Jackson, 2008). Several studies demonstrate the ubiquitous nature of racial discrimination for youth of color, who are likely to have experiences across multiple contexts (e.g., Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006; Niwa, Way & Hughes, 2014). In addition, many African American youth understand that they may be exposed to differential treatment or opportunities in the future due to their racial group membership (e.g., Carter, 2005; Grossman & Porsche, 2014; Mickelson, 1990). This is problematic, as youths' exposure to racially discriminatory experiences has clear and negative consequences for adolescents' physical and mental health (e.g., Brody et al., 2014) and academic adjustment (e.g., Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008).

Although research examining the impact of racial discrimination on minority youth development has increased, there is less empirical knowledge elucidating the role of neighborhoods in youths' expectations of racially discriminatory treatment they may encounter. The present study examines how neighborhood characteristics inform youth's expectations of racial discrimination. The neighborhood context is an important setting during adolescence, as

youth have increasingly more autonomy to experience the neighborhood and interact with its residents (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000) and thereby create their own impressions of the neighborhood social milieu. The neighborhood context exposes youth to race-based institutional patterns (e.g., racial segregation, intergroup relations, vicarious discrimination) that they may utilize when assessing racism in their lived experiences (Carter, 2005).

Theoretical Framework

Using the Integrative Model, we examined how multiple neighborhood indicators influenced African American adolescents' expectations of racial discrimination from early adolescence to adulthood. The Integrative Model articulated by García Coll and colleagues (1996) provides a framework for examining the association between neighborhood characteristics and racial discrimination among Black youth. The Integrative Model proposes that American society stratifies individuals on the basis of social position variables, such as race, ethnicity, social class, and gender (García Coll et al., 1996). Racial discrimination is proposed to operate at the macro level through the creation of racially segregated contexts, which includes residential, social, and psychological dimensions that directly influence developmental pathways for youth of color (García Coll et al., 1996). Accordingly, racial segregation influences the multiple environments (e.g., school and neighborhood) that children and youth of color experience on a daily basis (García Coll et al., 1996). Racial stratification and the resulting segregated contexts are posited to increase negative outcomes and reduce positive outcomes for children and adolescents of color (García Coll et al., 1996), though the mechanisms by which these patterns arise are unclear.

African American youths' perceptions of racial discrimination may be influenced by the environments in which they are embedded, especially their neighborhood contexts (Benner & Graham, 2013; White, Zeiders, Knight, Roosa, & Tein, 2014). The neighborhood context is a salient and important environment during adolescence and adulthood (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). The structural and social components of neighborhoods have been shown to effect psychosocial, behavioral, and mental health outcomes (Murry, Berkel, Gaylord-Harden, Copeland-Linder, & Nation, 2011). Social disorganization theory (i.e., Kingston, Huizinga, & Elliott, 2009; Sampson & Groves, 1989; Shaw & McKay, 1942) posits that structural indicators of poverty and racial-ethnic heterogeneity increase negative outcomes due to stymied positive social relationships and limited mutual trust among neighbors. Structural indicators may be

associated with greater perceptions of negative neighborhood characteristics (e.g., physical and social disorder), which may increase psychosocial stressors (e.g., daily hassles and racial discrimination) and negatively influence mental health (Wandersman & Nation, 1998). In this sense, the neighborhood context can be considered an inhibiting environment (García Coll et al., 1996) that may limit youth's successful development due to poverty and diversity related indicators of structural disadvantage.

Alternatively, other scholars propose that neighborhoods may be a promotive environment that fosters wellness through positive social interactions among neighbors and that these perceptions of the social environment are important for positive youth development (Aber & Nieto, 2000). Specifically, neighborhoods confer benefits to residents through their positive characteristics (e.g., cohesion, trust). Also, residents (i.e., adult and youth) have varying perceptions of the same environment and demonstrate multiple developmental trajectories (Aber & Nieto, 2000). Examining adolescents' neighborhood perceptions are important to consider given their opportunity for increased exposure to the environment, which allows them to form their own, independent ideas about neighborhood social dynamics. Together, social disorganization and pluralistic theories offer a conceptual model that demonstrates how structural characteristics of the neighborhood (i.e., poverty and diversity indicators) can impact the way individuals experience and perceive their neighborhoods, which in turn, have implications for their psycho-social and behavioral outcomes.

The current study examined the relation between structural and perceived neighborhood characteristics and African American youths' expectations of racially discriminatory treatment. Specifically, we examined the direct association between neighborhood characteristics based on race and socioeconomic status (i.e., structural disadvantage) with African American youths' expectations of racial discrimination. We also examined whether the association between neighborhood structural characteristics and expectations of racial discrimination were mediated by youths' subjective perceptions of their neighborhood. Given that most African American children grow up in racially segregated neighborhoods (Williams & Collins, 2004), the present study examined objective and subjective neighborhood characteristics as antecedents that inform expectations of racial discrimination among African American youth.

Racial Discrimination

Racial discrimination consists of dominant group members' actions that are systematic

and result in differential and negative effects on subordinate racial-ethnic groups (Williams et al., 2003). The empirical research examining racial discrimination among African American adolescent populations has illustrated two key findings. The first is that racial discrimination is a normative and pervasive experience for Black youth. Prior research using survey methods has shown that perceptions of discriminatory treatment are quite prevalent among Black adolescents. For example, the majority of Black youth report experiencing racial discrimination within the past three months (Prelow, Danoff-Burg, Swenson, & Pulgiano, 2004), within the previous year (Seaton et al., 2008), and within their lifetime (Gibbons et al., 2007). Using the experiential sampling procedure, previous research indicates that the majority of Black youth experienced racial discrimination on a daily basis with a daily average of 2.5 discriminatory events (Seaton & Douglas, 2014).

The second key finding is that racial discrimination is detrimental to the mental health and development of African American adolescents. A recent review of the racial discrimination literature among minority children and youth indicated a positive relation between racial discrimination and negative mental health outcomes such as anxiety, depression and psychological distress (Priest et al., 2013). The review also indicated a consistently negative relation between racial discrimination and positive mental health outcomes such as self-esteem, self-worth, and psychological adjustment (Priest et al., 2013). Longitudinal research has also indicated a link between racial discrimination and increased conduct problems and substance use among African American adolescents (Brody et al., 2006; Fuller-Rowell et al., 2012). Thus, racial discrimination is pervasive and harmful to the mental health and development of African American youth.

Neighborhoods and Racial Discrimination

When examining the link between neighborhood characteristics and racial discrimination, neighborhood racial composition has been the most studied indicator given the assumption that there will be more incidents of racial discrimination in diverse neighborhoods with more opportunities for intergroup contact (English, Lambert, & Ialongo, 2014). Martin and colleagues (2011) reported that a greater proportion of residential Blacks was associated with less reports of racial discrimination among African American adolescents. A similar association between racial-ethnic density and racial discrimination from peers was reported among Mexican-origin adolescents (White et al., 2014). However, two studies have shown no association between racial

composition and racial discrimination. Riina and colleagues (2013) reported that the percentage of Blacks in the neighborhood was unrelated to African American adolescents' reports of racial discrimination within and outside of the neighborhood. Seaton and Yip (2009) showed that neighborhood racial-ethnic diversity was not significantly associated with racial discrimination among African American adolescents.

Prior research has also examined the relation between neighborhood socioeconomic status (SES) and racially discriminatory experiences. Previous research with Māori adults in New Zealand (Bécares, Cormack, & Harris, 2013) and African American adolescents (Martin et al., 2011) indicated that individuals living in more disadvantaged neighborhoods (e.g., high poverty and unemployment rates, more female-headed households) reported more incidents of racial discrimination. Yet, one study conducted among African American adolescents reported no association between neighborhood SES characteristics and racial discrimination (Riina et al., 2013). These studies highlight the lack of insight regarding the relation between neighborhood characteristics and racial discrimination. One way to shed light on this topic is to consider multiple structural characteristics simultaneously.

Moreover, subjective neighborhood characteristics are important to consider as they may begin to explain how neighborhoods matter for youth outcomes (Sharkey & Faber, 2014; Witherspoon & Hughes, 2014) by elucidating the theoretical link between neighborhood structural characteristics and youth outcomes (Shaw & McKay, 1942). Previous research suggests that perceptions of neighborhood risk (Benner & Graham, 2013) and social capital (Cooper, Brown, Metzger, Clinton, & Guthrie, 2013) are associated with adolescent reports of racial discrimination such that perceptions of neighborhood risk (e.g., crime and racism) increased youths' reports of racial discrimination, whereas perceived neighborhood supports decreased reported racial discrimination. However, it is important to note that some of these studies did not account for neighborhood structural characteristics such as socioeconomic status or racial composition. Additionally, previous research (e.g., Behnke et al., 2011; Nair et al., 2013; White et al., 2014) was conducted with Latino samples, and it is unclear if similar relations are evident for African American youth.

The Current Study

Although extant literature provides evidence that neighborhood structural characteristics (e.g., racial composition and socioeconomic status) are associated with racial discrimination,

there is a dearth of literature that examines the influence of multiple neighborhood indicators (i.e., structural disadvantage and residents' neighborhood perceptions) with racial discrimination among African American adolescents. This gap in the literature limits our understanding of how adolescents' early experiences may impact their later expectations of racial discrimination. Therefore, the current study seeks to address the following research questions using a longitudinal study of socioeconomically diverse African American youths' experiences from early adolescence to young adulthood: 1) Do African American youths' expectations of racial discrimination change from adolescence to young adulthood; 2) Are neighborhood structural characteristics (at early adolescence) associated with African American youths' expectations of racial discrimination over time (from early adolescence to young adulthood); and 3) Do youth's perceptions of their neighborhoods mediate the association between neighborhood structural characteristics (at early adolescence) and African American youth's racial discrimination over time? Thus, the current study examined if expectations of racial discrimination changed over time and how multiple, theoretically informed neighborhood indicators (i.e., neighborhood structural disadvantage, neighborhood racial composition, and adolescent perceptions of neighborhoods) are associated with adolescents' expectations of racial discrimination from early adolescence into young adulthood.

Extant research with African American youth from adolescence to young adulthood (Brody et al., 2014; Seaton et al., 2008) shows that racial discrimination experiences increase throughout these developmental periods; therefore, we hypothesize a similar pattern for racial discrimination expectations. Based on previous research with adults (Bécares et al., 2013) and adolescents (Martin et al., 2011), we hypothesized that neighborhood disadvantage would be positively associated with expectations of discrimination. Although intergroup contact theory would suggest that there may be more expectations of discrimination in a racially diverse neighborhood, extant research with adolescents provides mixed findings such that there is no association (Seaton & Yip, 2009) or a negative relation (Martin et al., 2011; White et al., 2014) between ethnic concentration and racial discrimination. Therefore, given the variability in samples (i.e., urban [Seaton & Yip, 2009] vs. rural [Martin et al., 2011] and race-ethnicity [i.e., White et al., 2014, Latino]), we provide no specific hypothesis and treat the examination of this relation concurrently and over time as exploratory.

We also assessed whether adolescents' early neighborhood perceptions mediate the

relation between neighborhood structural characteristics and expectations of racial discrimination among African American adolescents. Rather than focusing exclusively on negative neighborhood structural features, pluralistic neighborhood theory (Aber & Nieto, 2000) emphasizes the importance of individuals' positive perceptions of their neighborhoods and proposes that the meaning associated with their neighborhood experiences may impact their outcomes. This logic suggests that youths' neighborhood perceptions may explain the link between neighborhood disorganization and perceived discrimination. Further, social disorganization theory (Kingston et al., 2009; Shaw & McKay, 1942) offers that neighborhood structural characteristics are associated with youths' outcomes through their impact on the social fabric or experience of residents in their neighborhoods. This rationale implies a mediational model for neighborhood effects on youth outcomes. Riina and colleagues (2013) suggest that the lack of association between neighborhood structural characteristics and African American youths' perceived discrimination may be because of the mediating effect of one's neighborhood perceptions. Therefore, based on tenets of social disorganization and pluralistic neighborhood theory, we hypothesized that the way in which neighborhood disadvantage matters for racial discrimination expectations is through youths' perceptions of the neighborhood environment.

Method

Data Source and Sample

Secondary analyses were conducted on data drawn from Waves 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the Maryland Adolescent Development in Context Study (MADICS; Eccles, 1997), which permitted the examination of neighborhood influences among a socioeconomically diverse sample of African American families residing in Prince Georges County, Maryland; MADICS data collection began in 1990. The present sample includes 863 African American youth who self-identified as African American and who were between 11-14 years old at Wave 1 (98% of the full sample) and their parents. At Wave 1 of the study, youth were twelve years old, on average (age range = 11-14; $M = 12.29$, $SD = .56$; 47% girls). The mean pretax family income for this sample was approximately \$40,000-\$44,999. As a point of reference, the national mean family and Black family incomes during this same year were \$43,803 and \$28,659, respectively (Census, 1990a, 1990b). At Wave 1, families lived in 130 census tracts (i.e., neighborhoods); the number of families per census tract ranged from 1 to 23 (mode = 1 family per census tract; 20% of census tracts had 10 or more families; 80% of tracts had 9 or less families). Data at Waves 3,

4, 5, and 6 were collected when youth were in 8th grade, 11th grade, 1 year post-high school, and 3 years post-high school, respectively. Further details regarding the larger study and its sample and procedures can be found at <http://www.rcgd.isr.umich.edu/pgc/>.

Measures

Neighborhood structural disadvantage. Neighborhood structural socioeconomic disadvantage was assessed with census tract information from the 1990 United States Census to best correspond to the year in which Wave 1 data were collected. Addresses were geocoded and linked to participants' survey records. Specifically, we included percent unemployment (range = 1 – 13%), percent female-headed households (range = 6% – 58%), and percent families in poverty (range = 0 – 27%).

Neighborhood racial-ethnic diversity. Employing methods described in Juvonen and colleagues (2006), the racial-ethnic diversity of the neighborhood at Wave 1 was computed based on information about the percentage of African American, Hispanic, White and Asian residents (based on information from the United States Census for that year). Using information about the number of different racial-ethnic groups (g) and the proportion of individuals (p) who are members of each group (i), the index (D_C) provides an estimate of the relative probability

that two randomly selected adolescents are from different racial-ethnic groups: $D_C = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^g p_i^2$

Higher scores indicate more racial-ethnic diversity (range = 0 to 1).

Youths' neighborhood perceptions. Youths' subjective experiences of their neighborhoods were assessed at Wave 1 (7th grade) with six items ($\alpha = .61$) adapted from the National and Denver Youth Studies (Elliott, Menard, Rankin, Elliott, Wilson, & Huizinga, 2006; see <http://www.rcgd.isr.umich.edu/pgc/>). Sample items include, "There are a lot of adults in this neighborhood that you would like to be like when you grow up," and "You want to get away from this neighborhood as soon as you can." The responses range from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), and all items were coded such that higher values indicate more positive neighborhood perceptions.

Expectations of racially discriminatory treatment. Youths' expectations of racially discriminatory treatment were assessed with 4 items developed by the MADICS researchers at Wave 3 (8th grade), Wave 4 (11th grade), Wave 5 (1 year post-high school), and Wave 6 (3 years post-high school). Sample items include, "There is little you can do to avoid racial

discrimination by your peers," and "Because of your race, no matter how hard you work, you will always have to work harder than others to prove yourself." The responses range from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*) and internal reliability was adequate (Wave 3 – Wave 6 $\alpha_s = .72 - .78$).

Covariates. Parental socioeconomic status indicators (i.e., education and income) (Brody et al., 2014), as well as adolescent gender and age (Seaton et al., 2008) were included in the model to account for the potential influence of these characteristics in the links between neighborhood characteristics and expectations of racial discrimination.

Analysis Plan

As a preliminary analytic step, we examined the census tract Intraclass Correlation Coefficients (ICCs) for discrimination at each wave to assess the proportion of between-group (i.e., census tract) variability to total variability; the ICCs were relatively small (Wave 3 - Wave 6 Discrimination Expectations = .00 - .03), suggesting more within- rather than between-group variability. Therefore, we proceeded with our substantive analyses without further decomposing the variance in discrimination experiences with multi-level models. Mplus 7.0 was used to estimate a latent growth curve model including latent variable mediation in an SEM framework (e.g., Kline, 2005; Little, 2013). This approach was used to estimate neighborhood disadvantage as a latent construct indicated by structural characteristics and to model the intercept and slope of racial discrimination expectations; neighborhood perceptions were modeled as a manifest variable (see Figure 1). Neighborhood, parent, and child variables at Wave 1 were modeled as antecedent covariates of the intercept and slope of expectations of racial discrimination. The intercept of the latent growth curve thus represents expectations of racial discrimination at Wave 3, or 8th grade. The reference group in all analyses was male. Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) was used to handle missing data. The proposed model employed expectations of racial discrimination at Waves 3 (intercept), 4, 5, and 6 to generate the intercept and slope of this construct; waves were coded to reflect their uneven spacing as noted earlier (i.e., Wave 3 = 0; Wave 4 = 3; Wave 5 = 5; Wave 6 = 7). Two indirect paths were assessed from Wave 1 neighborhood disadvantage: one to the intercept and one to the slope of racial discrimination expectations. To do so, we inspected the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals (with 5000 resamples); if they did not contain zero then there was support for mediation.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for primary study variables are presented in Table 1. Neighborhood percent unemployment, percent female-headed households, and percent families in poverty were all negatively and significantly associated with youths' neighborhood perceptions. Neighborhood diversity was positively and significantly correlated with youths' neighborhood perceptions.

The hypothesized model yielded a good fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 108.44$, $df = 46$, $p < .001$; CFI = .97; TLI = .96; RMSEA = .04 [.03, .05]). We note that the χ^2 information should be interpreted with caution given the large sample size; however, the CFI, TLI, and RMSEA all suggest the model is a very good fit to the data. The results of the hypothesized model suggest that exposure to more neighborhood disadvantage in 7th grade was concurrently and significantly associated with more negative adolescent neighborhood perceptions ($b = -.21$, $se = .05$, $p = .000$). Adolescent neighborhood perceptions were significantly and negatively associated with greater expectations of racial discrimination in 8th grade ($b = -.13$, $se = .05$, $p = .009$). A non-significant slope indicated that expectations of racial discrimination remained stable between adolescence and young adulthood (estimate = .00, $se = .01$, $p = ns$). A test of the mediation indicated a significant indirect association of 7th grade neighborhood disadvantage with expectations of racial discrimination in 8th grade (intercept) via adolescents' neighborhood perceptions, estimate = .03 [95% CI: .0, .05]. Thus, support was found for the hypothesized mediating role of youths' subjective neighborhood perceptions in the longitudinal relation between neighborhood structure and expectations of racial discrimination. Figure 1 summarizes the model using standardized coefficients.

Discussion

A growing literature suggests that racial discrimination is a pervasive reality for Black youth and that these experiences are associated with negative physical and mental health outcomes (Priest et al., 2013). This study is one of the first to examine how both neighborhood structural characteristics (i.e., neighborhood socioeconomic disadvantage and racial composition) and adolescents' neighborhood perceptions are associated with youths' racial discrimination expectations from adolescence into young adulthood. Using a socioeconomically diverse sample of African American youth, we sought to identify multiple neighborhood indicators that were associated with youths' expectations of racial discrimination from adolescence to young adulthood and the mediating effect of adolescents' neighborhood

perceptions on expectations of racial discrimination. The results indicate that expectations of racial discrimination do not change as adolescents mature into adulthood, which is inconsistent with previous research indicating that racial discrimination experiences increase during the adolescent period (Seaton et al., 2008) and into adulthood (Brody et al., 2014) for African American youth. Future research should examine how and why African American youths' expectations for racial discrimination remain stable into adulthood, yet, have similar negative impacts on the mental health of African Americans as do racial discrimination experiences (Taylor, Wright, & Porter, 1993). Relatedly, scholars should explore how expectations for racial discrimination impact African American youths' racial discrimination experiences. For example, do youth who expect more racial discrimination based on their contextual circumstances actually experience more racial discrimination? Future research should also consider the perpetrators of racial discrimination in neighborhood contexts since previous research indicates that African American adolescents repeatedly describe hostile relations with police officers and shopkeepers (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). Lastly, future research should consider how school and neighborhood contexts simultaneously influence racial discrimination expectations, as prior research indicates that African American adolescents in minority contexts were most affected by racial discrimination experiences (Seaton & Yip, 2009).

Whereas previous research indicates that African Americans in neighborhoods characterized by greater proportions of their in-group reported less racial discrimination (Martin et al., 2014; White et al., 2014), we neglected to find an association between racial composition and adolescents' awareness of discrimination concurrently or over time. This pattern of findings is consistent with other studies among urban African American adolescents (Riina et al., 2013; Seaton & Yip, 2009). Consistent with previous work by Seaton and Yip (2009) and Riina and colleagues (2013), the adolescents in the present study were living in predominantly African American neighborhoods; the restricted range of neighborhood racial composition may have suppressed any association between racial composition and racial discrimination. Additional research is needed to explore whether there is a threshold at which neighborhood racial composition affects racial discrimination, especially within neighborhoods that have varying socioeconomic status indicators.

Research on the link between neighborhood disadvantage and racial discrimination has been somewhat mixed. Some studies show that in more economically disadvantaged

neighborhoods, residents report more racial discrimination (Bécares et al., 2013; Martin et al., 2011). Other researchers find no association between neighborhood socioeconomic status and racial discrimination (Riina et al., 2013). The differences in the studies' results may be attributed to developmental period (adult v. adolescent), geography (urban v. rural), and other neighborhood characteristics. Further, based on tenets of social disorganization theory (Kingston et al., 2009), structural disadvantage may indirectly, rather than directly, affect youths' outcomes and assessments of the likelihood that they will encounter racial discrimination, specifically. As suggested by pluralistic neighborhood theory, youths' neighborhood perceptions may be the key mechanism. For example, as youth age, they have more opportunities to engage with people and institutions in their neighborhoods. These interactions may shape their future orientation and perspectives on what the possibilities are for youth of color as well as the potential for racial discrimination experiences. If adults and role models interact in more racially and socioeconomically diverse settings, they may experience more discrimination (English et al., 2014) and share these experiences with youth. Youth then may expect similar experiences for themselves. Alternatively, in more cohesive and safe environments with additional supports, youth may feel insulated and protected from potential racial discrimination. As discussed further below, we found that the way residents experience their neighborhoods may be an important link in any association between neighborhood SES and discrimination.

Neighborhood Perceptions as a Mediator

We demonstrated that, after adjusting for neighborhood diversity, parental SES, and child characteristics, neighborhood disadvantage indirectly affected later expectations of racial discrimination through youths' perceptions of the neighborhood. Our findings, which are consistent with Riina and colleagues (2013), demonstrate that the association between neighborhood disadvantage at 7th grade and expectations of racial discrimination at 8th grade is partially mediated by youth's positive neighborhood perceptions at 7th grade. This finding suggests that African American youth make meaning of their environments and interpret the interactions among neighbors and the resources available to them in ways that are implicated in their understanding of how racial discrimination may operate in their own lives (Chen & Yang, 2014; Lewin, Mitchell, Rasmussen, Sanders-Phillips, & Joseph, 2011).

Identifying this indirect association lends further evidence for pluralistic neighborhood theory by demonstrating the importance of youths' positive neighborhood perceptions for

understanding their psychological well-being. Also, this finding simultaneously supports pluralistic neighborhood theory and the Integrative Model's hypothesis that a neighborhood context can be simultaneously inhibiting and promoting. Even though economically disadvantaged neighborhoods are inhibiting because they lack economic resources linked to healthy developmental outcomes, they are promoting if they allow youth of color to process racially discriminatory experiences in a safe, cohesive environment (Garcia Coll et al., 1996). These contextual interpretations, whether positive or negative, may serve to reduce (Chen & Yang, 2014; Cooper et al., 2013) or increase (Behnke et al., 2011; Benner & Graham, 2013) daily stressors such as perceived racial discrimination. These findings illustrate that the neighborhood context is a salient setting for expectations of racial discrimination during adolescence and young adulthood. Further, these findings begin to illustrate *how* or *why* (Sharkey & Faber, 2014) neighborhoods matter for African American youths' outcomes: youths' neighborhood perceptions are important in translating the impact of structural, sociodemographic neighborhood characteristics, which may be the result of segregation (García Coll et al., 1996), on youths' beliefs about the role of racial discrimination in their life chances.

Limitations and Future Directions

There are a few limitations in the present study that need to be considered. The neighborhood characteristics were measured at one time point only, preventing the assessment of change, which is an important caveat given that neighborhoods are not static entities. It is possible that economic indicators of neighborhood disadvantage and neighborhood racial composition may change over time (Kurbin & Weitzer, 2003). A related point is that adolescent perceptions of their respective neighborhoods may change over time, particularly as youth mature through adolescence into adulthood. African American youth may perceive their neighborhoods distinctly during different developmental periods. For example, White and colleagues (2014) illustrated that changes in neighborhood racial composition impacted youths' perceptions of peer racial discrimination. Therefore, it is important for future studies to consider youths' potentially evolving neighborhood perceptions and how fluctuations in their perceptions may influence their discrimination experiences.

An additional limitation to be considered is that people may select to live in certain neighborhoods (Anderson, Leventhal, & Dupré, 2014; Leventhal, Dupré, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009) and those choices may spill over into or be associated with the likelihood of perceiving,

experiencing, or expecting discrimination; we cannot know for sure if there are additional characteristics that may account for the relations found in this study. Future studies should not only consider these socio-demographic characteristics (e.g., race, income, education, age, etc.), but also additional contextual correlates that may explain these associations between the neighborhood context and expectations of racially discriminatory experiences. For example, there is a growing literature that has established a link between parental racial socialization and racial discrimination (Hughes et al., 2006; Riina & McHale, 2012), and the messages parents communicate about race may be shaped by the broader environment in which they live. Further, families and schools are nested within the broader neighborhood context so future studies should examine these more proximal contextual processes as well as the interactive influence of school and neighborhood characteristics (Benner & Graham, 2013) on expectations of racial discrimination.

An additional limitation of the current study concerns the lack of assessment of racial discrimination from multiple sources. Previous research indicates that racial discrimination has a differential impact on various outcomes depending on the source (Benner & Graham, 2013); the current study did not account for expectations of racial discrimination that might occur from various perpetrators. Future studies should examine whether there are differential relations between neighborhood characteristics and youths' expectations of racial discrimination; that is, if youth anticipate discrimination from various perpetrators (e.g., adults, author figures, peers), given the neighborhood context. For example, do neighborhood characteristics matter more for discrimination from neighborhood peers, community authorities (e.g., police officers), or school personnel?

In addition, although this study benefitted from its longitudinal design, we are not able to establish causality. Specifically, we cannot assert that seventh grade neighborhood perceptions caused expectations for racial discrimination, one year later. Youths' prior expectations for racially discriminatory experiences may shape their views of their neighborhoods. This competing hypothesis suggests reverse causality and is not an issue that we address with the current analyses and dataset. Youths' expectations of racially discriminatory experiences are only available beginning in eighth grade, after the assessment of seventh grade neighborhood perceptions. Future studies would benefit from including concurrent measurement of both neighborhood and racial discrimination perceptions to tease apart the underlying processes.

Relatedly, neighborhood structural disadvantage and youths' neighborhood perceptions (i.e., mediator) were measured concurrently. Maxwell, Cole, and Mitchell (2011) suggest that cross-sectional estimates for longitudinal mediators are biased; thus, our mediation results should be interpreted with caution. With this caveat, we note that this potential mediator was associated with later (not concurrent) expectations of discrimination, and this may help to allay concerns about bias. Future studies will benefit from assessment of predictors, mediators, and outcomes at discrete, sequential time points.

Lastly, although the study benefitted greatly from having a socioeconomically diverse sample, it was nonetheless a community sample of African American adolescents, so the present results may not be generalizable to African American youth in other settings or in the U.S. more broadly. Our understanding of the link between neighborhood characteristics and African American youths' expectations of racial discrimination would be enhanced by replication of the study's results with a national sample of African American youth. Such a sample would also permit exploration of heterogeneity in the experiences of African American (e.g., Caribbean Black, African immigrant, etc.) youth.

Conclusion

With these caveats in mind, the current findings extend the racial discrimination literature with a longitudinal examination of the impact of neighborhood characteristics on African American adolescents' expectations of racial discrimination. Though the integrative model of youth development argues that minority youth develop in a racialized society that segregates individuals into particular contexts that may be promotive or inhibitive (García Coll et al., 1996), there is little in-depth empirical examination of such mechanisms. Further, with five waves of data, we were able to examine expectations of discrimination from adolescence to young adulthood and provide more evidence on the pervasiveness of this stressor throughout development. One of the strengths of the present study is a focus on neighborhood structural characteristics and youths' neighborhood perceptions as longitudinal predictors of expectations of racial discrimination among African American youth. The current study contributes to existing theoretical formulations and empirical research documenting the importance of neighborhoods as an important context that is pertinent to racially discriminatory experiences among African American adolescents. Though the findings suggest that there is a complex relation among objective and subjective neighborhood characteristics with expectations of racial

discrimination among youth, it is hoped that future research will further illuminate these complex processes.

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Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics for Primary Study Variables*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Neighborhood % Unemployment	--								
2. Neighborhood % Female-Headed Households	.60***	--							
3. Neighborhood % Families in Poverty	.65***	.73***	--						
4. Neighborhood Diversity	-.62***	-.73***	-.66***	--					
5. Wave 1 Youth Neighborhood Perceptions	-.21***	-.28***	-.26***	.22***	--				
6. Wave 3 Racial Discrimination Expectations	.00	.01	.01	-.01	-.08	--			
7. Wave 4 Racial Discrimination Expectations	-.14**	-.06	-.07	.08	-.05	.26***	--		
8. Wave 5 Racial Discrimination Expectations	-.08	-.10	-.10*	.12*	.07	.28***	.30***	--	
9. Wave 6 Racial Discrimination Expectations	-.13*	-.05	-.12*	.12*	-.05	.20***	.28***	.30***	--
Mean	4.80	27.58	4.74	.35	3.58	2.25	2.29	2.62	2.70
SD	(2.37)	(13.92)	(4.99)	(.18)	(.57)	(.69)	(.62)	(.61)	(.60)

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

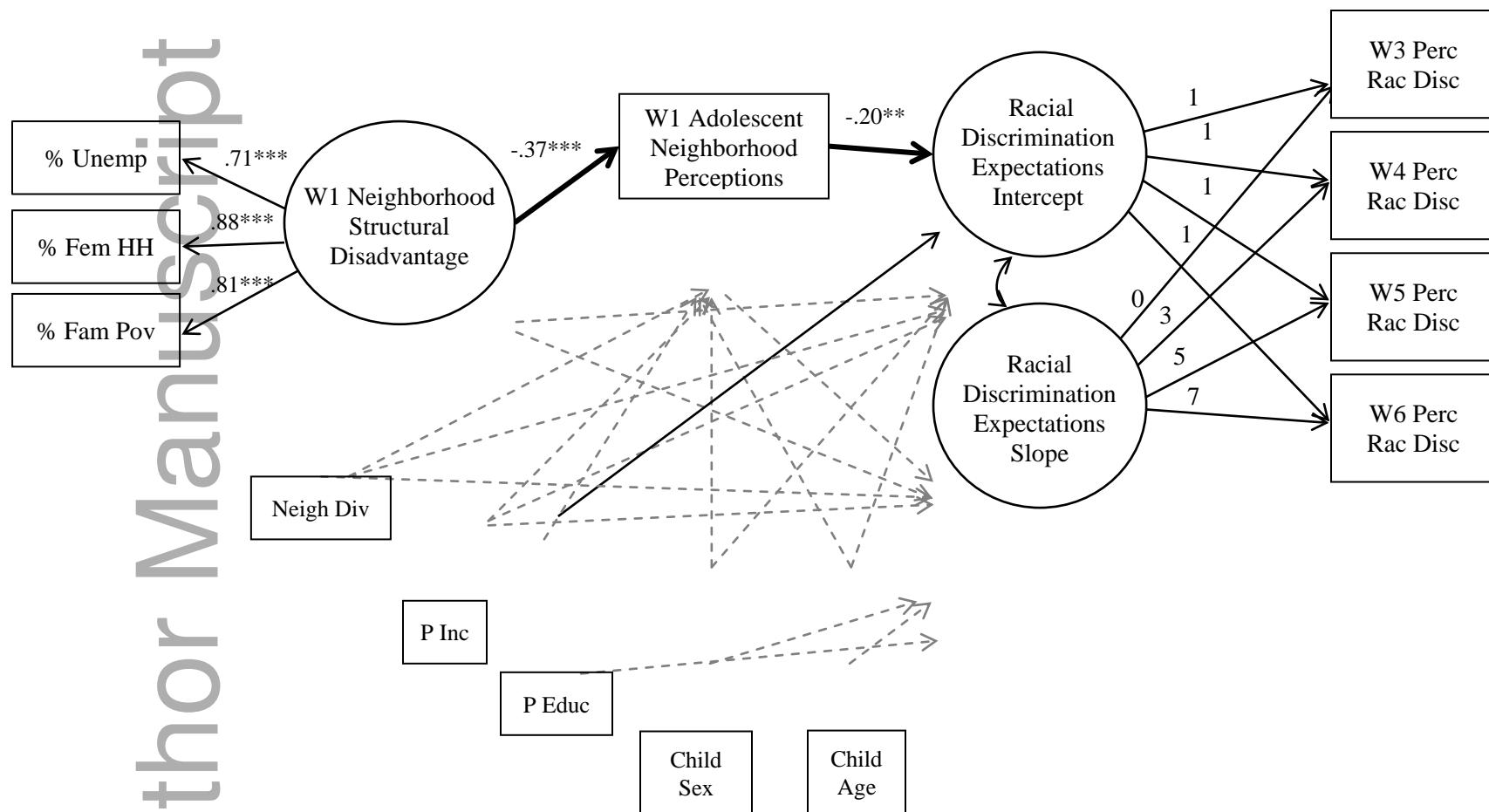


Figure 1. Neighborhood Influences on Perceived Racial Discrimination Over Time ($N=863$)

Note. Standardized coefficients shown. Bolded arrows signify a significant indirect path, and dashed lines indicate non-significant paths. Adjusted

for parent income, parent education, child gender, child age, and neighborhood racial diversity. Unemp = Unemployed. Fem HH = Female-headed household. Fam Pov = Families in Poverty. Neigh Div = Neighborhood Diversity. P = Parent. Educ = Education. Inc = Income. Perc Rac Disc = Perceived Racial Discrimination. Covariances among exogenous variables and of neighborhood diversity, parent income, and parent education with neighborhood disadvantage are not shown for ease of presentation.

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

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