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Abstract

What can spur prosocial behavior across ethnic divisions? A host of studies focus on the potential power of deep contact between group members. I instead focus on the capacity of casual contact. While most research finds that a higher volume of casual contact with outgroup members augments divisions between groups, I center my analysis on the under-theorized effect of repeated casual contact with the same outgroup members. I use a survey experiment in Accra, Ghana to show that repeated casual contact can increase prosocial behavior towards non-coethnics because it shifts individuals' expectations about sanctioning, reciprocity, and findability. By exploring the space between social embeddedness and social anonymity, these findings add a consideration of the consequences of repeated casual contact to the inter-ethnic relations literature.

1 Introduction

Sub-Saharan Africa is a rapidly urbanizing region. The United Nations projects Africa's urban population to nearly triple between 2018 and 2050, and many of these urban centers differ significantly from the rural communities where many of these new migrants are from. Where rural communities are generally sparse, spread out, and homogeneous, urban communities are dense, melding together various social groups and economic classes, often beholden to different norms and customs. Rural communities are built on generations of families supporting one another and abiding by the same informal order, but these long-standing, insular communities are much less common in urban centers where ethnic heterogeneity is commonplace, and ties to rural homelands often overshadow attachments to urban homesteads.

Urban conditions consequently disrupt the strong social institutions that support much of rural politics. As a result, many authors and practitioners worry that these weakened social institutions may impair democratic governance by undermining social cohesion (Durkheim 1893, Simmel 1997, Putnam 2000). The predominant role that ethnicity plays in society and politics in many of these countries augments these worries. Population intermixing may hinder development and destabilize democracy by creating competition between ethnic groups (Bates 1983) and weakening local social institutions (Alesina & La Ferrara 2000, Putnam 2007) that are critical to co-producing state public goods (Alesina et al. 1999, Habyarimana et al. 2009, Miguel & Gugerty 2005).

Though in the minority, those who argue that population intermixing in urban settings can actually be good for democracy generally argue that contact between different social groups can help break parochial ties and build understanding between these groups (Lipset 1959, Robinson 2014). However, more recent revisions of this general theory emphasize that this intermixing requires *deep* contact between these groups because only deep contact can decrease prejudice, build trust, and support prosocial behavior towards outgroup members. This has led to substantial research on deep contact, spanning sociology, economics, psychology, and political science.¹

Yet, deep contact is quite rare in practice (Dixon et al. 2005, Enos 2017). In the course of our everyday lives, we come across a variety of individuals, but we rarely have meaningful connections or conversations with them. Instead, we passively absorb their presence and perhaps exchange a few words or pleasantries. These sorts of fleeting encounters are the most common association that individuals have outside of their home (Lofland

¹Despite this large research program, a recent meta-analysis by Paluck et al. (2020) shows that there is little consistent empirical support for deep contact's positive effect on intergroup relations.

1998), and are particularly common in urban areas (Simmel 1997, Lofland 1998). Recent work uses cell phone data records to empirically demonstrate that individuals come across a variety of social and economic groups during their daily routines (Kwan 2013, Athey et al. 2020). Casual contact is therefore much more common between members of different social groups, particularly in urban areas.

Casual contact (Allport 1954, Enos 2017, Condra & Linardi 2019) refers to encounters that are short-lived, are not formalized, and do not require any spoken exchanges. Though the modal form of contact, most work in political science suggests that it has adverse effects by increasing outgroup animosity (Condra & Linardi 2019, Hangartner et al. 2019, Dinas et al. 2019). However, these studies focus on an increase in the *volume* of casual contact with outgroup members without considering the implications of *repeated* casual contact with the same outgroup members.² The frequency of contact with the same outgroup member(s) is critical because, just as urban environments facilitate a large number of casual encounters, these contexts can also support *frequent* encounters between the same set of individuals. The built environment combined with routinization of much of our movement can facilitate frequent casual contact between the same two individuals (Hagerstrand 1970, Schwanen & Wang 2014, Leng et al. 2018). Frequent contact, in turn, can build familiarity, transforming perfect strangers into familiar ones (Milgram 1970, Milgram et al. 1992).

Familiar strangers lie between social anonymity and social embeddedness and, to date, have been mostly overlooked in the political science literature on inter-ethnic relations. Instead, most of these theories focus on either an increased volume of contact with unfamiliar members of outgroups or an increase in thick contact with outgroup members that occurs under optimal, but not often realistic, conditions. Though the former is theoretically linked to an increase in outgroup hostility and the latter is theorized to improve inter-ethnic relations, there is still an active empirical debate in when and why contact between groups leads to antipathy or affinity. Most authors cite either the scale (neighborhood-level) or the measure (segregation versus ethno-linguistic diversity) as the culprit behind these divergent results, noting that the scale and type of measure likely capture different depths of contact.

I highlight instead that the *frequency of contact with the same set of outgroup members* might be able to better explain these contradictory results. Because our measures mostly neglect individuals' mobility, we can only estimate the frequency of contact by considering their residential proximity. I argue that this omission is important because the fre-

²Enos (2014, 2017) is an exception, and provides some preliminary evidence on the possible effect of repeated interactions with an outgroup member at a transit stop.

quency with which one encounters the same outgroup member is likely to influence behavior towards that outgroup member. In this paper, I reason that repeated casual contact with an ethnic outgroup can increase individuals' prosocial behavior towards that outgroup member because it increases the likelihood that individuals' believe that they will see this person again, thereby increasing the threat of sanctions for anti-social behavior and opportunities for future reciprocity. Together, these beliefs shift both individuals' incentives and their perceptions of non-coethnics' incentives.

I use a survey experiment in Accra, Ghana to test my argument, providing respondents a vignette in which a non-coethnic needs help to fix his bike and asking them whether they would give or loan the money. Critically, all respondents are told they do not know the non-coethnic well. What is varied is how frequently they see the non-coethnic; respondents are told that is either a neighbor, a neighbor they see frequently, or provided no more information about that person.

I find strong, significant effects supporting my hypotheses – respondents are over 15 percentage points more likely to loan and are over 10 percentage points more likely to give a non-coethnic the money to fix his bike if they are told that they see him often around their community. When I test the proposed mechanisms, I find similar results. Respondents are much more likely to believe that there is an expectation that they should provide the money to the non-coethnic in need and are much more likely to believe that the non-coethnic will pay them back when they see him frequently.

Taken together, these results provide support for the power of repeated, casual contact on inter-ethnic relations. Repeated, casual contact, can create familiar strangers, which are a type of social relation that is common in urban centers, but remains under-explored in the political science literature. My results thus help advance research on the power of familiar strangers by testing their effect on prosocial behavior towards ethnic outgroups and inter-group relations more broadly.

2 Theory

Many theories of ethnic politics hinge on the idea that individuals are more likely to engage in prosocial behavior towards those inside of their ethnic groups than outside. Authors provide a number of explanations for why this dynamic exists, citing both sentimental and instrumental motives. Sentimental motives encompass attitudinal forces, and often include theories built around prejudice and social identity theory. Under this logic, individuals engage in more prosocial behavior because they attach greater psycho-

logical utility to providing for in-group as compared to outgroup members (Tajfel 1974). Their social exclusion preferences also create psychological incentives to discriminate against outgroup members, even when it is personally costly (Enos & Gidron 2018).³

Instrumental motives, in contrast, include those explanations based on expectations about the costs and benefits of engaging (or not) in prosocial behavior. Trust, social norms, social sanctioning, and expectations of future reciprocity are key inputs influencing this calculus, all of which are greatly impacted by individuals' social networks. Individuals often engage in more prosocial behavior toward those within or a few steps removed from their social network (Leider et al. 2009, Branas-Garza et al. 2010, Goeree et al. 2010). That coethnics are more likely to share social networks is a commonly cited as a central reason why coethnics are more likely to engage in prosocial behavior, as well as why there is more cooperation within ethnic groups than across them (Miguel & Gugerty 2005, Larson & Lewis 2017, Eubank et al. 2019, Fearon & Laitin 1996).

But why do shared social networks matter in determining prosocial behavior? As the logic goes, individuals' social networks capture their direct and indirect relationships, and thus with whom they have had and are likely to have contact. Previous and anticipated contact, in turn, help determine beliefs about others' incentives and motives. Axelrod (1984), for example, classically argues that cooperation can emerge where future interaction is anticipated because it makes would-be cooperators incorporate future cooperation, reciprocity, and sanctioning into their cooperation calculus. This basic argument has been replicated in both computer simulations and survey and experimental research. For instance, Baldassarri (2015) uses lab-in-the-field experiments, survey interviews, and social network data to show that repeated interaction rather than altruism or group solidarity supports cooperation in Ugandan Producer Organizations.

Social interdependence also influences perceived anonymity. Anonymity decreases social responsibility because that person cannot be readily identified, providing no social impetus to obey behavioral norms (Zimbardo 1969). It thus discourages abiding by collective norms and engaging in helping behavior (Li & Zhao 2019, Solomon et al. 1982). Previous and expected contact counters perceived anonymity by building familiarity.

Shared social networks thus increase the costs for anti-social behavior and benefits for prosocial behavior precisely because they imply previous and future contact. It is the contact then that the social association implies that increases the threat of sanctions, the possibility of future reciprocity, and the diffusion of social norms.

³Enos & Gidron (2018) find that the effect of exclusionary attitudes are not tempered by contact with outgroups, as measured using self-reported levels of contact and neighborhood composition measures.

Yet, social networks are not the only determinant of the likelihood of encounters between two individuals. In fact, they likely capture instances of *deep contact* through their focus on social embeddedness. Individuals' patterns of mobility and the spatial networks in which they are rooted also determine with whom they are likely to come into contact and how frequently (Roberts 2015). Advances in big data collection and analysis have provided researchers with the opportunity to document the common existence of repeated encounters in public transit settings (Farber et al. 2013, Sun et al. 2013, Zhou et al. 2020) and more generally Leng et al. (2018). Crucially, these analyses show that frequent encounters can and do often occur with those outside of one's social network. I therefore shift my analysis from individuals' social networks to their encounter networks. In so doing, I highlight that encounter networks influences prosocial behavior because they dictate the frequency of previous contact and the likelihood of future contact.

These instances of contact, however, are not likely deep; instead they are more likely to capture *casual contact* between individuals. Casual contact may not advance strong social ties but, when frequent, can build familiarity and create an expectation of future encounters. These networks of casual encounters, in turn, help diffuse collective behavioral norms (Morgan 2009) by impeding anonymity and influencing understandings of acceptable behavior (Bourdieu 1996), thereby increasing their social responsibility (Li & Zhao 2019). Familiarity can thus shift individuals' behavior: bystanders are more likely to help a person in need when the victim is familiar (e.g., (Milgram 1970, Reynald 2011)), and more recent research has shown that there is less crime at public transportation stations where there is a higher concentration of familiar strangers (Zahnow et al. 2021). In neighborhood settings, frequent encounters between neighborhood residents can support social cohesion and efficacy (Grannis 2009, Hipp et al. 2014, Jacobs 1961, Henriksen & Tjora 2014, Browning et al. 2017).

I build on and apply these insights to inter-group relations. While most of the political science literature focuses on how to foster deep contact as a means to create cooperation and tolerance across ethnic divisions, these works suggest that the threshold to cooperation depends less on the depth or nature of the contact and more on its frequency. I theorize that frequent, sustained contact (even if superficial) with the same outgroup members can increase prosocial behavior towards ethnic outgroups by decreasing anonymity and increasing the shadow of the future. By decreasing anonymity, frequent contact can increase one's willingness to abide by collective norms. By amplifying the shadow of the future, frequent contact can increase the threats of sanctions and the likelihood of future interactions and exchanges. Frequent contact thus provides the basis for particularized

trust and thereby effects willingness to engage in prosocial behavior towards an ethnic outgroup.

3 Survey Experiment in Accra

I test the implications of my argument using an online survey in Accra, Ghana conducted in the fall of 2021.⁴ At 2.5 million people, Accra is the largest Ghanaian city, and is characterized by ethnic heterogeneity. According to the 2010 census, the average ELF index for Enumeration Areas, the lowest level of aggregation, is 0.57, suggesting that, on average, the probability that a community member is of a different ethnicity is 57%. It thus provides an ethnically heterogeneous urban context in which to test the implications of my theory.

I rely on the Facebook platform to recruit respondents and offer 3 cedis (roughly \$0.50) of airtime for completing the survey. Access to the Internet has been rapidly increasing across Ghana and is among the best in Africa, with 48% of the population having access as of January 2020 (Kemp 2020). Ghana ranks ninth in the world in the amount of time that its citizens spend on social media, with Facebook being the most popular platform.⁵

Even though an increasing number of Ghanaians are using Facebook, recruiting respondents using Facebook does not yield a representative sample because it excludes potential respondents who are either not on Facebook or do not have reliable access to online platforms. Table 1 shows that there are disparities in age, gender, and education between the survey and census sample. The survey sample is more educated, more male, and younger than the general population. Despite these imbalances, the Facebook survey sample still provides an important population in which to test the theory, and I can control for these imbalances in my regressions.⁶

The survey includes 1175 respondents that I recruit using a Facebook ad asking users in Accra to take a survey about their community for 3 cedis. Once they provide their consent to participate in the survey, I ask respondents a few demographic questions. I then present respondents with a vignette experiment that randomly varies the amount of contact the respondent is told they have had with a hypothetical person in need and then asks whether they would loan or give that person money to help them with a problem. In addition to my survey experiment, I also ask respondents about their anonymity in their

⁴This research has been determined to be exempt by the MIT IRB, ID: E-3506.

⁵See report of Ghanaian Ministry of Communication at <https://moc.gov.gh/ghana-places-9th-global-social-media-rankings>. Accessed in March 2021.

⁶Appendix C shows the treatment effect controlling for these imbalances.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics From the Online Experiment in Accra. The Census Proportions are Based on a 10% Sample of all of Greater Accra.

	Experiment	Census (2010)
Age (Mean)	27	36
Share Male	58%	48%
Share w/ BA degree	39%	7%
Share Akan	40%	39%
Share Ga	16%	25%
Share Ewe	25%	20%
N	1175	244,398

neighborhood, how frequently they come into contact with their neighbors, their (particularized) trust in coethnics and non-coethnics, and the threat of sanctions if they fail to engage in a community activity.⁷ I outline the results from each of these components below.

3.1 Survey Experiment

I use a vignette experiment to test whether frequent casual contact can encourage prosocial behavior towards ethnic outgroup members. I introduce a non-coethnic person-in-need to each respondent, and then ask them whether they would help that person. I present the following situation:

Name delivers food on his motorcycle to make money. **Relationship to person in need**

One day when you were walking around your neighborhood, you see **Name** trying to fix his motorcycle. He says that the engine stopped working while he was riding it.

Name needs **cedi amount** cedis more to fix his motorcycle. **Loan or Give cedis**

I randomize a few components of the vignette. Most importantly, I randomize how frequently the respondent knows and sees this hypothetical person (**Relationship to person in need**). In the first condition, respondents are told that they “don’t know him.” In the second condition, respondents are told that they “don’t know him well, but he lives in your neighborhood”. Finally, in the last condition, respondents are told that they “don’t know him well, but he lives in your neighborhood and you see him a lot around your

⁷Appendix A contains the exact wording of the survey questions.

neighborhood.” The treatments are meant to build upon each other; while in all of them *respondents do not know the person in need well*, the first condition gives no other information, the second adds that he lives in their neighborhood, and the third condition adds that the respondent sees him frequently around her neighborhood. My theory predicts that the latter condition will have the strongest effect, though we might also expect that learning that the person in need lives in their neighborhood may also shift their expectation in the frequency that they *will* see that person in the future. The treatment appeared to work well, with 76% of those respondents who were told that they see the non-coethnic in need frequently later reporting that they saw the non-coethnic in need frequently when asked in a manipulation check.

I then randomize whether respondents are in the loan or donate cedis condition (**Loan or Give cedis**). In the **donate condition**, respondents are asked: “Would you give him the cedis?” In the **loan condition**, respondents are asked: “He asks you whether you would loan him the cedis. He promises to pay you back. Would you loan him the the cedis?” This randomization helps test the independent effect of frequency of contact on the “shadow of the future” in the loan condition and prosociality in the donate condition. This design also allows me to assess whether or not frequency of contact matters more for one than the other. I also randomize the amount that the person in need requires – either 20 (\$3) or 30 (\$5) cedis. This randomization was meant to test the resilience of the effect to higher values but is not central to testing my hypotheses.

Finally, I randomize between ethnically identifiable names that are a non-coethnic to the respondent. Respondents say their ethnic group before the vignette (along with 9 other demographic questions). I then use this to make sure that the ethnically-identifiable name of the neighbor is not in the same ethnic group as the respondent. I randomize between three (two) names – Naa (Ga), Elorm (Ewe), and Akwasi (Akan) – depending on the respondents’ ethnicity.⁸ I do not, however, have any theories about heterogeneous effects by the ethnicity of the neighbor in need, and instead theorize solely about the fact that they are non-coethnics to the respondent. This treatment also seemed to work well – 95% of the respondents believed that the person in need was from a different ethnicity than theirs. I subset the sample to just those who were effectively treated, restricting my sample to those who correctly got the frequency with which they saw the non-coethnic and those who thought the hypothetical person was a non-coethnic.⁹

⁸I extensively piloted these names to make sure that they were ethnically identifiable. A large proportion of respondents successfully identified the neighbor’s ethnicity from the name: 87%, 95%, and 89% of respondents got the ethnicity correct for the Akan, Ewe, and Ga names, respectively.

⁹Appendix B shows that the results are robust to the inclusion of the entire sample.

I include an open-ended question after respondents note whether or not they would donate or loan the person in need money which asks them to explain their decision.¹⁰ I also include closed-response questions that probe potential mechanisms, asking those in the loan condition their confidence that the person in need will pay them back¹¹ and those in the loan condition whether there is an expectation that they should help the person in need¹². These help me assess how frequency of contact influences expectations of others behavior and the strength of collective norms.

3.2 Experimental Results

I start by showing the effect of frequency of contact on the likelihood that respondents say they would give the person in need the money. Figure 1 illustrates the different distributions across treatment groups, and shows that there is a substantively and statistically significant difference in the likelihood that respondents say they will donate money to the person in need based on how frequently they see that person. Specifically, respondents are 16 percentage points more likely to donate to a non-coethnic neighbor they see frequently than just a non-coethnic neighbor (pval = .0008) and 17.5 percentage points more likely to donate to a non-coethnic neighbor they see frequently than a non-coethnic stranger (pval = .0004). There is no discernible difference between a non-coethnic stranger and non-coethnic neighbor, suggesting that frequency of contact rather than shared identity as a community member is key to shifting the probability that a respondent says that they would engage in prosocial behavior towards a non-coethnic neighbor.

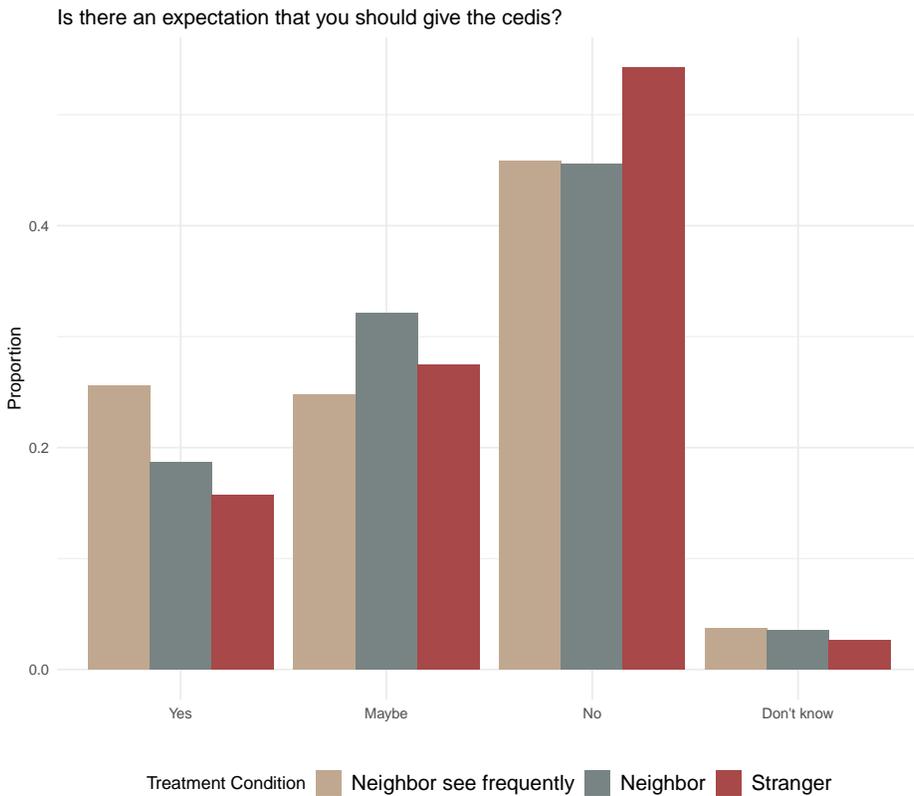
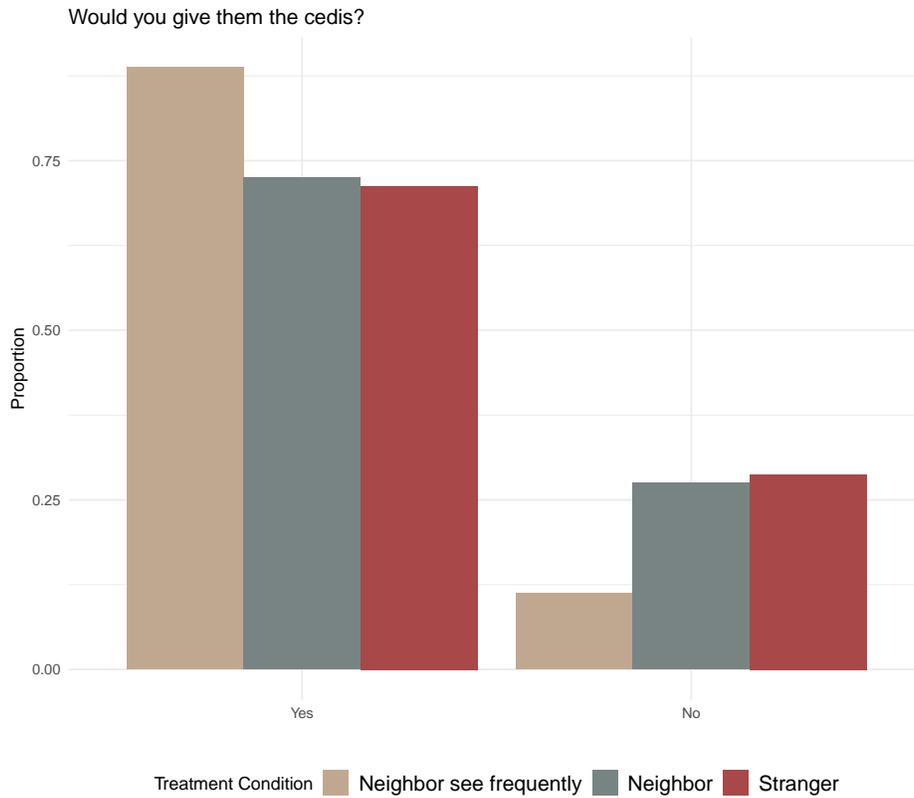
We can also see that there are substantively and statistically significant differences in whether respondents report that an expectation that they *should* provide help to the non-coethnic in need. Respondents are 9.9 percentage points more likely to say that there is an expectation to give the money to the non-coethnic in need when it is a neighbor they see frequently, rather than a non-coethnic stranger (pval = .036) and 6.9 percentage points more likely than a non-coethnic neighbor (pval = .13). Though the difference between the “neighbor seen frequently” and “neighbor” conditions does not reach statistical significance, I hypothesize that this might be because respondents were not told whether they see the neighbor often, and some respondents assumed that because they are neighbors, they see that person frequently. When I subset to just those that answered

¹⁰“Why you did (or did not) loan / give the person the cedis.”

¹¹“How confident are you that **Name** will pay you back”

¹²“Is there an expectation that you should give **Name** the cedis?”

Figure 1: Effect of the Frequency Treatment on Respondents' Willingness to Give the Non-Coethnic in Need the Money to Fix His Bike and Their Perception of an Expectation That They Should Give Him the Money.



the question of how frequently they were told that they see their non-coethnic in need to just those that answered that they either “they were not told”, “did not know”, or “no” for the stranger and neighbor conditions, the differences between treatment groups become larger and more significant. Respondents are 11 percentage points more likely to say that there is an expectation to help in the “neighbor you see frequently” condition than the “neighbor” condition ($pval = .03$) and 15 percentage points more likely than in the “stranger” condition ($pval = .003$). Frequent contact then seems to have an effect on respondents’ perceptions of the expectations surrounding their behavior in this situation.

The open-ended responses help further probe the mechanisms linking frequent contact with a non-coethnic to more prosocial behavior. Many of the respondents in the frequent contact treatment condition cite future reciprocity when justifying their decision to help. For example, one respondent explained, “I just feel moral obligation to be a good neighbor as someday I could need [his] help too,” and another one noted, “Because I might need his help in the near future.” Both of these quotes suggest that these respondents would help the non-coethnic neighbor that they frequently see now because they expect that they will come into future contact with that neighbor, creating more opportunities for future reciprocity.

Social sanctions are also brought up as a reason to provide the money when respondents were told that they see the non-coethnic in need frequently. As one respondent explained, “I see him around. I’m guessing likewise for him too. Ignoring his request, except in the case where I don’t have the capacity to, will make me feel uneasy when I see him again.” In fact, a number of respondents used the word “familiar” or cited the frequency with which they see the neighbor in their explanations, saying things like, “Because I see him in the neighborhood a lot even though I know little about him,” “Because he’s familiar,” and “Because he’s from my community and I see him all the time.” Not only do these types of answers support my hypotheses, they also suggest that respondents understood and were affected by the frequency treatment.¹³

Finally, those who said they were unwilling to give the money in the non-coethnic stranger condition often cited a lack of knowledge about that person and thus lack of trust in them. For example, one respondent noted, “This is because I don’t know Naa, neither do I know his state (as in how much he possesses in terms of money). And giving him [money] will bring me no satisfaction.” Another respondent said: “1. I do not know him 2. I don’t know if it is true. 3. I don’t know if the 30 cedis is for free or [if] he will pay

¹³Note here also that the open-ended responses do not suggest that respondents assume that they know the neighbor better just because they see him more frequently.

[it] back.” These sorts of explanations are much less likely in the neighbor condition and even less likely in the neighbor seen frequently condition. The open-ended responses thus suggest that frequent previous contact provides important information to individuals about the likelihood of future contact, shifting perceptions about the likelihood of future reciprocity and potential sanctions or discomfort at refusing the request.

3.3 Loan

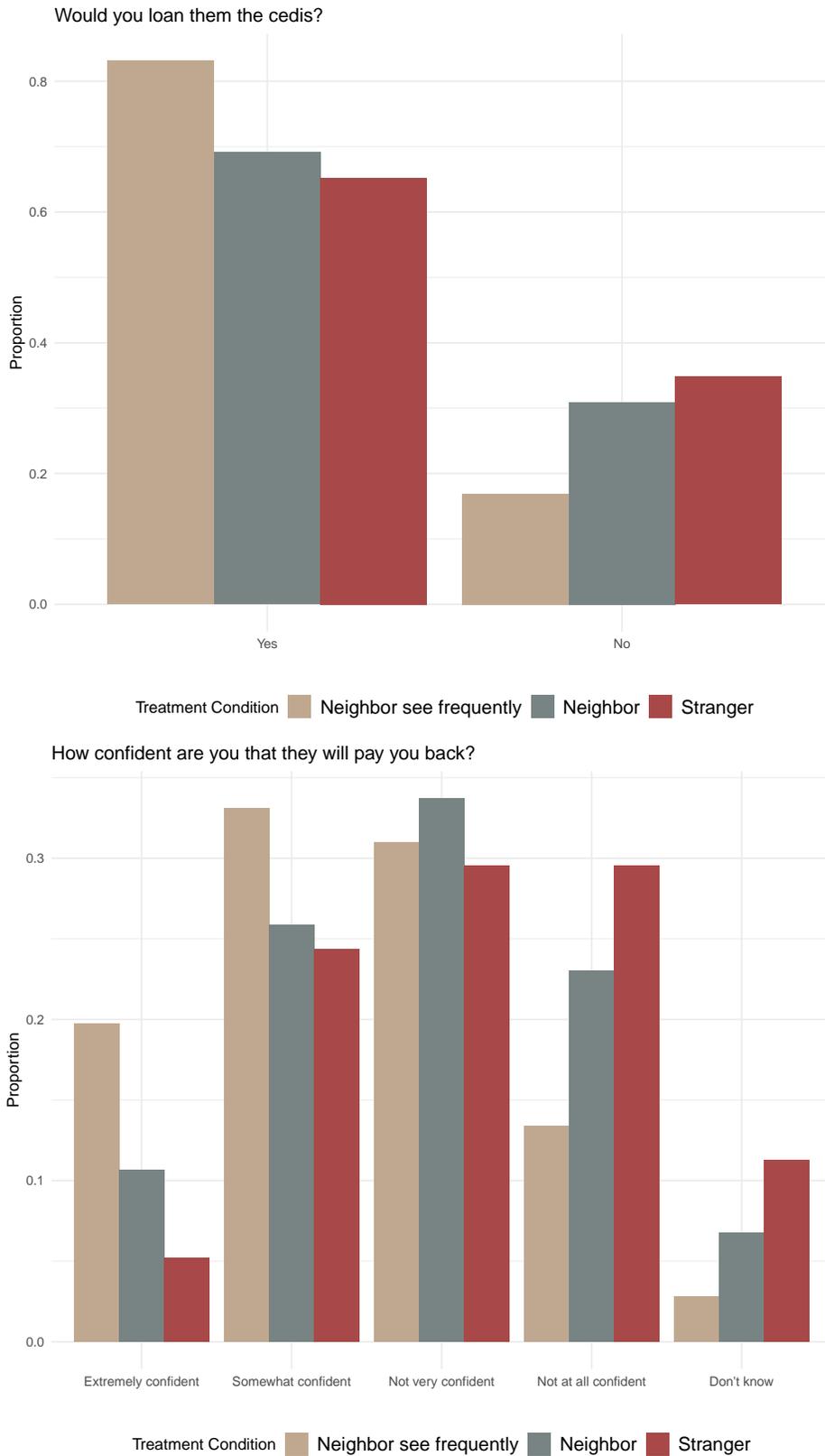
In the loan condition, respondents were asked whether they would **loan** the money to the non-coethnic in need. This is meant to assess how frequency of contact influences the strength of the shadow of the future, and the repercussions of the respondents’ behavior, as well as expectations of the behavior of the non-coethnic in need.

Figure 2 again shows a large variation based on the frequency with which respondents are told they see the non-coethnic in need. Respondents are 17.9 percentage points less likely to give the loan to a non-coethnic stranger than a non-coethnic neighbor they see frequently. That is substantively large and statistically significant with a p-value of .001. Respondents are also 14 percentage points less likely to give the loan to a non-coethnic neighbor than a non-coethnic neighbor they see frequently, which is also significant with a p-value of .005. Again, the survey experiment shows the power of frequent, even if superficial, previous contact on the likelihood that respondents engage in prosocial behavior towards those outside their ethnic group.

I combine the open-ended question on why respondents would (not) provide a loan to the non-coethnic in need with a question about their confidence in him paying them back to explore the viability of my proposed mechanisms. The second row of Figure 2 shows the impact of the frequency treatment on confidence in the non-coethnic returning the loan. The proportion of people who are extremely confident that he will pay them back in the “frequent contact” condition is more than double that of those in the “neighbor” and “stranger” conditions, and those in the “neighbor with frequent contact” condition are also much more likely than those in the “neighbor” or “stranger” condition to be somewhat confident that the non-coethnic will pay them back. Specifically, those in the neighbor condition are 15 percentage points (p-value = .007) less likely and those in the “stranger” condition are 21 percentage points (p-value = .001) less likely to be at least somewhat confident that the non-coethnic will return the money he borrowed. These differences suggest that trust in repayment is conditional on frequency of contact.

I look to the open-ended responses which asked why respondents did (not) give the loan to further explore their reasoning. Again, respondents cite future reciprocity as a

Figure 2: Effect of the Frequency Treatment on Respondents' Willingness to Loan the Non-Coethnic in Need the Money to Fix His Bike and Their perception of the Likelihood That He Would Pay Them Back.



reason why they will provide a loan now, especially for those in the “neighbor with frequent contact” condition. One said “Because I wouldn’t have wanted to be in his situation and probably he’d return the favor some day,” and another mentioned “Because we are in the same neighborhood and I [could] also be in this situation anytime.” We also see that respondents note those they see more frequently are more likely to be “findable,” saying things like “I loaned Elorm the money because I have seen him somewhere in the neighborhood and I’m sure I will be able to find him so he can [repay] the loan.” Someone else stated, “Because I can easily chase him for my money if he refuses to pay.”

People who did not provide a loan also cite the lack of ability to find the person if he did not pay them back, especially for those in the “stranger” condition, noting that “I do not know him and did not know how to trace him later for the money.” Another commented that “First of all I don’t know Akwasi and secondly where will I see him again for him to pay the loan.” These insights into respondents’ reasoning imply that frequent previous contact, even casual, is enough to shift respondents’ calculus of the likelihood of future reciprocity and their ability to find and sanction the non-coethnic if he reneges on his repayment of the loan.

It is important to recall here that in each condition the respondent is told that they do not know the non-coethnic in need well; what varies is that they are either told that he is a neighbor or a neighbor who they see frequently. It thus does not vary social embeddedness; rather it varies embeddedness within encounter networks. Moreover, it does not imply that the contact is particularly deep, and instead notes only that respondents see this neighbor around the area often.

We may worry, however, that respondents might infer that they know the non-coethnic neighbor better because they see them more frequently. While the treatment specifies that the respondents do not know the neighbor well right before they are told the frequency of contact they have with the neighbor, we may still worry that respondents are making inferences about their social embeddedness with the neighbor. If this were the case, then we would expect respondents to cite their social connection with the neighbor more than the frequency of contact with the neighbor in the open-ended responses. I do not find that this is the case. Instead, many respondents note the lack of a social relationship with the respondent and highlight the rate of contact as a determinant of their choice to loan or give money to their non-coethnic neighbor.

Taken together, these results seem to suggest that frequent contact encourages prosocial behavior, even when holding the relationship of the respondent to the hypothetical non-coethnic in need constant. Strikingly, this dynamic exists when comparing a non-coethnic neighbor that one sees frequently and just a non-coethnic neighbor as well as a

non-coethnic neighbor that one sees frequently and a non-coethnic stranger. These patterns suggest that living in the same neighborhood may not be enough; instead, neighbors must have, at the very least, frequent casual contact to support prosocial behavior.

The open- and close-ended questions probing mechanisms further imply that this relationship exists because frequent contact diminishes anonymity and creates an expectation about the likelihood of future contact, increasing the possibility of sanctions for anti-social behavior, the potential for future reciprocity, and the findability of the non-coethnic in need. All of these mechanisms help encourage prosocial behavior.

Though these results represent respondents' hypothetical responses to a hypothetical situation, they still capture, at the very least, how social norms and expectations of behavior respond to information about the frequency of encounters with a particular person. Given that my argument's mechanism precisely targets these norms and expectations, I take the results of this survey as evidence that the frequency of casual contact can shift expectations and social norms about appropriate behavior in situations involving a non-coethnic.

3.4 Observational Results

I complement these experimental results with observational analyses related to respondents' experience in their own community. I asked respondents a number of questions about the frequency that they see their coethnic and non-coethnic neighbors, the nature of the interactions they have with their neighbors when they see them, their trust in coethnic and non-coethnic neighbors, their perception of their anonymity within their community, and the consequences they would face if they did not participate in a community development project.

My theory suggests that we should see the following relationships: First, respondents in urban neighborhoods are likely to have casual relationships with their neighbors and that frequent contact still occurs between neighbors even when they do not know each other well. Second, respondents who see their non-coethnic neighbors more frequently should be more likely to have a smaller difference between their trust in coethnic and non-coethnic neighbors (ethnic trust gap), especially as it relates to community outcomes. Third, respondents who see their neighbors more frequently should be more likely to report that those in their community know who they are. And finally, respondents who report that those in their community know who they are should be more likely to believe that they will be sanctioned for non-participation in community development activities.

3.4.1 Social Embeddedness and Rates of Contact

First and foremost, I confirm my basic contentions that most contact between urban neighbors is casual rather than deep and that frequent contact can occur between community members who are not socially embedded using questions that ask respondents how frequently they see their neighbors and the nature of the contact with their neighbors. The first row of Figure 3 shows that the most common associations respondents have with their neighbors are relatively casual. The vast majority of respondents either say a quick hello to community members or recognize but do not talk to community members when they see them. In contrast, around 11 percent of respondents talk to other community members for a few minutes when they see them and around 14 percent of respondents do not recognize their community members. The former suggests social embeddedness while the latter implies anonymity. Neither is common. Instead, most respondents have weaker, casual contact with their neighbors.

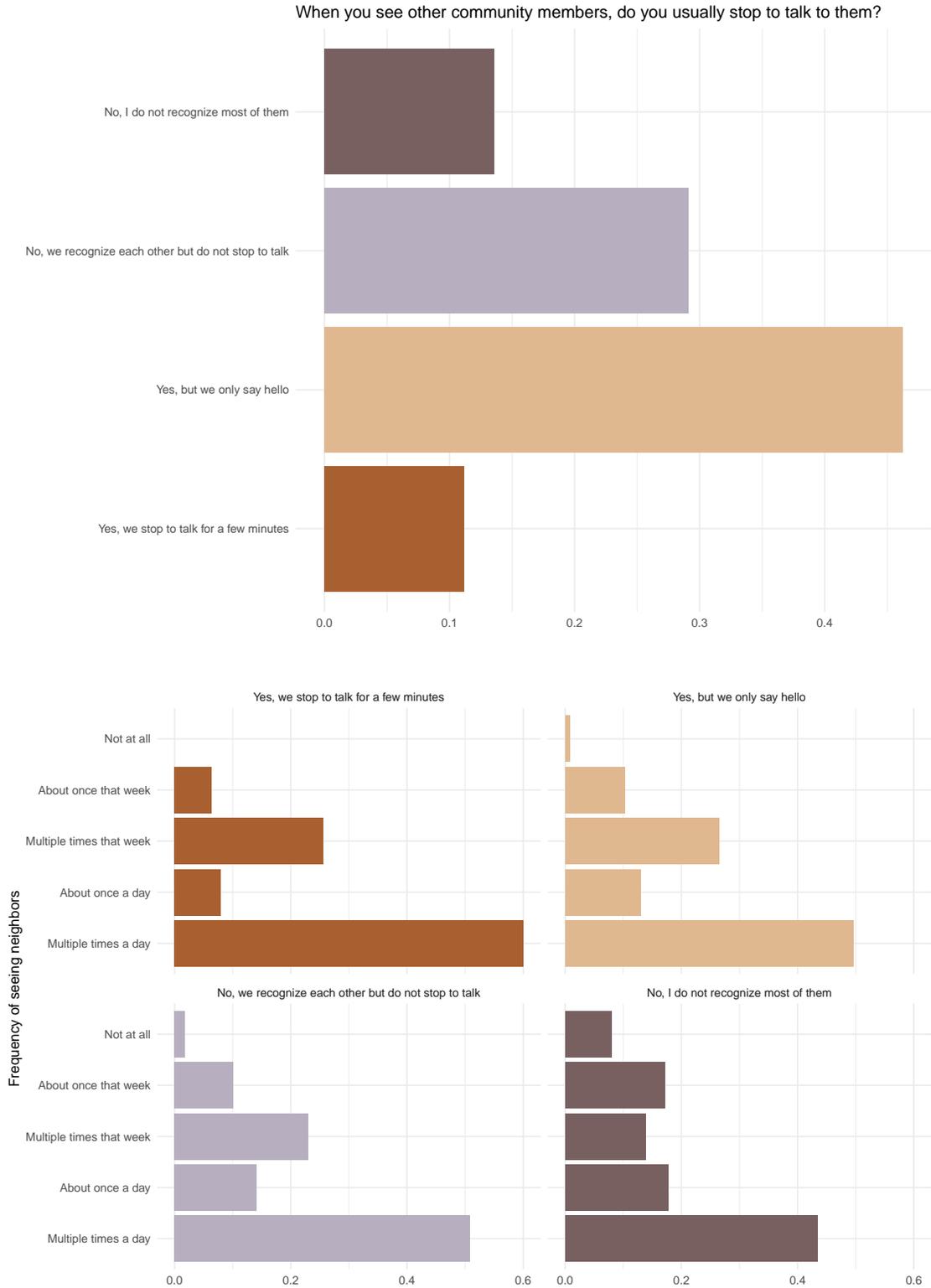
The second row of Figure 3 shows how the frequency of contact varies among respondents who cite certain types of interactions with their neighbors that varies by the frequency of contact. If we expect higher rates of contact where neighbors are more socially embedded, then we should see high rates of contact only when respondents report having deeper contact. Figure 3 shows that this is not the case; we see high rates of contact between neighbors regardless of the nature of this contact.

3.4.2 Ethnic Trust Gap

I next assess the relationship between frequency of contact with non-coethnic neighbors and the ethnic trust gap. I ask each respondent about their trust in coethnic neighbors and non-coethnic neighbors, but randomly vary whether the trust is general or specific. The general trust questions simply ask “How much do you trust your [non-coethnic] neighbors?” The specific trust questions vary what respondents are asked they trust their neighbors to do, and includes things such as keeping the community clean, repaying their loans, and participating in community development projects. To be clear, each respondent is only asked one question related to their trust in coethnic and non-coethnic neighbors, but whether it is general or one of the specific options is randomized. I then also ask respondents at the end of the survey how much they trust coethnics and non-coethnics more broadly to create a global ethnic trust gap variable.

For each respondent, I subtract their trust in non-coethnic (neighbors) from their trust in coethnic (neighbors). If the trust gap is positive, then they trust their coethnics

Figure 3: The Nature and Frequency of the Contact Between Neighbors.



more than non-coethnics. I take the mean ethnic trust gap by the frequency with which respondents see their non-coethnic neighbors.

Figure 4 presents these averages. First, the difference in the ethnic trust gap between coethnics and non-coethnics and between coethnic and non-coethnic neighbors shows that the global ethnic trust gap is less responsive to the rate at which respondents see their non-coethnic neighbors. In contrast, the ethnic trust gap between neighbors is much more responsive to the frequency of contact with non-coethnic neighbors, with the ethnic trust gap for neighbors being much lower when respondents see their non-coethnic neighbors at least daily and higher when they see them about once a week.

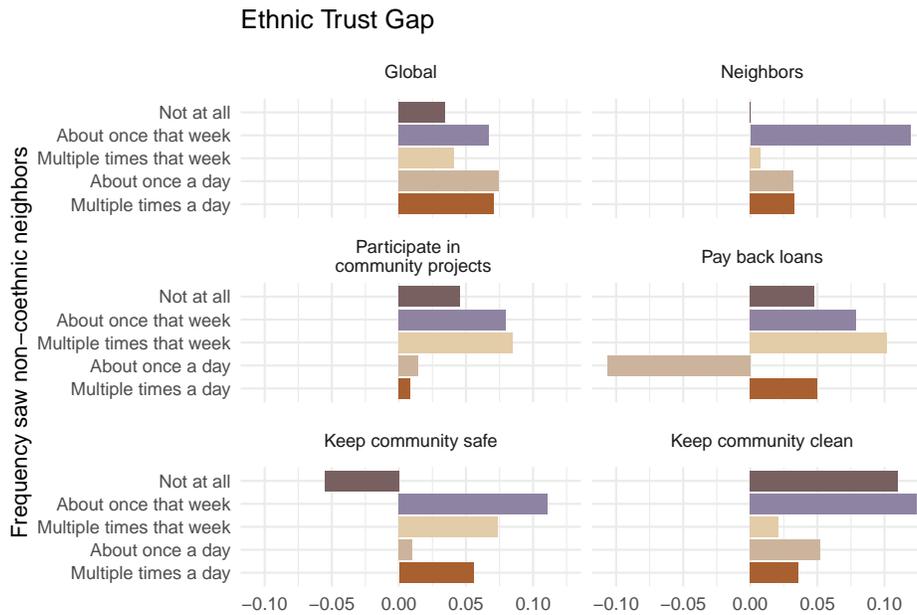
This relationship suggests that increased trust in non-coethnic neighbors does not necessarily imply more general trust in non-coethnics. Pro-social behavior towards a non-coethnic based on frequent casual encounters then does not necessarily shift more general perceptions of non-coethnics. The disparity between the local and global ethnic trust gap also helps alleviate concerns about selection issues. We may worry that those who have more tolerant attitudes toward non-coethnics will select places with more frequent contact with non-coethnics. If more tolerant individuals choose to live in communities with higher contact rates with non-coethnics, then we would expect the global ethnic trust gap to be lower in areas with more frequent contact with non-coethnics. Figure 4 shows that this expectation does not bare out in the data, providing some evidence against the contention that these patterns are an artifact of more tolerant individuals wanting to have higher rates of contact with non-coethnics.

We can further explore how the ethnic trust gap varies by the question of what respondents trust them to do. Overall, the trend seems to suggest that the more respondents see their non-coethnic neighbors the more likely they are to trust them to participate in community development projects, repay their loans, keep their community clean, and keep their community safe.¹⁴

Combined, these results suggest that frequency of contact with non-coethnic neighbors influences the relative trust that respondents have in their non-coethnic neighbors. This dynamic is especially present when considering particularized trust related to behavior in the community.

¹⁴Though for the keep community safe outcome there is an odd outcome for respondents who don't see their non-coethnic neighbors at all.

Figure 4: Ethnic Trust Gap Between Coethnics and Non-Coethnics for General and Particularized Trust.



3.4.3 Frequent Contact, Anonymity, and Sanctions

I then turn to looking at the relationship between respondents' perceived anonymity within their neighborhood and frequency of contact with coethnic and non-coethnic neighbors. The point estimates in Figure 5 suggest that there is a statistically significant relationship between frequent contact with respondents' neighbors and perceived anonymity within their neighborhood. Importantly, this relationship exists for both frequency of contact with non-coethnic and coethnic neighbors, suggesting that contact with both coethnic and non-coethnic neighbors matters for perceived anonymity.

The bottom panel of Figure 5 also shows the relationship between perceived anonymity and sanctions. In the survey, I ask respondents what would happen if they did not participate in a community development project, and provide them with 10 options.¹⁵ They include whether a community leader or member would fine them, a community leader or member would come to their house, a community member would confront them when they saw them, community members would gossip about them, community members would point and stare at them, or nothing. I look at the relationship between the threat of these sanctions and perceived anonymity.

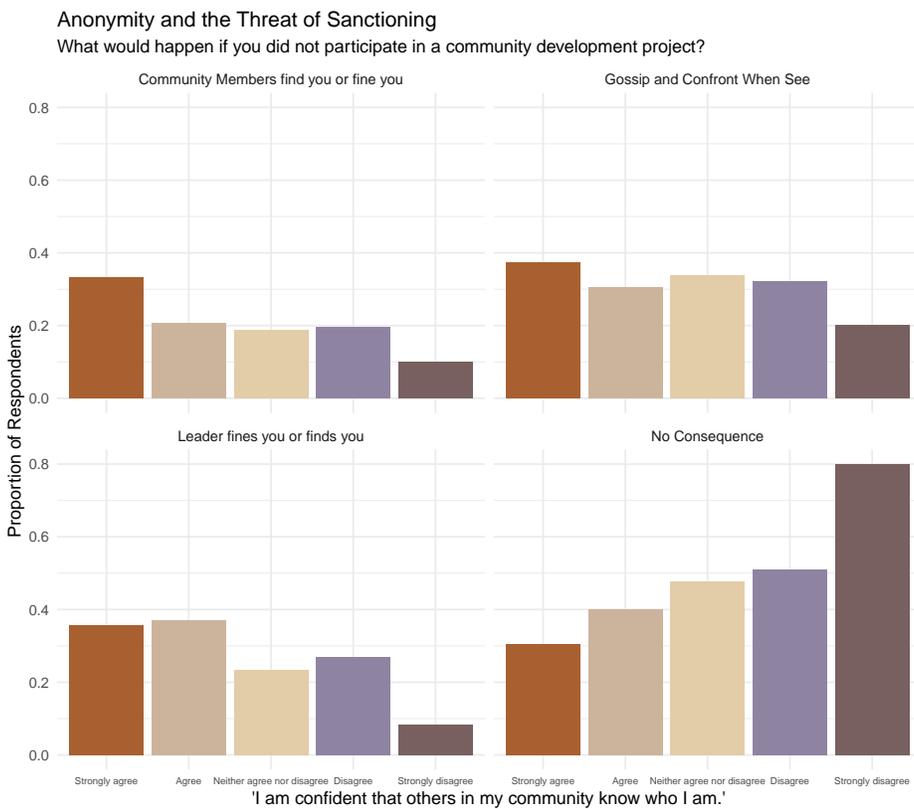
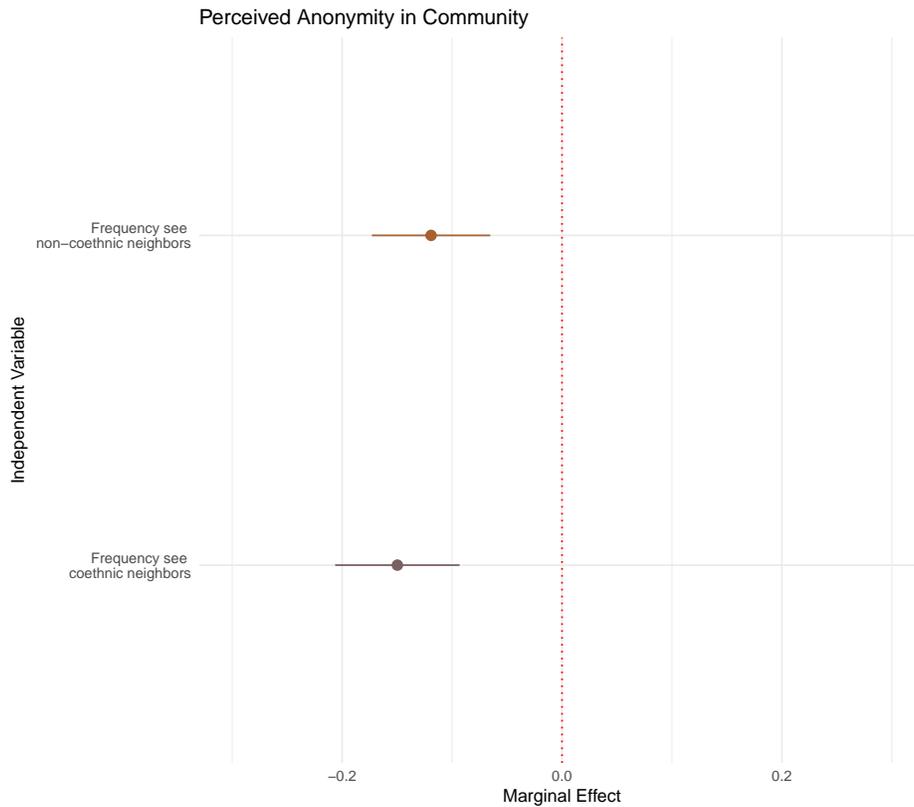
Figure 5 illustrates that perceived anonymity impacts beliefs about the strength of sanctions for non-cooperation. Particularly stark is the difference in the belief that there

¹⁵These 10 options were based on pilots where this question was open-ended.

would be no consequences for non-participation – moving from being totally known to being totally unknown increases the likelihood respondents say there would be no consequences for non-participation by 37 percentage points (p-value <.000000001). Additionally, anonymity influences both vertical and horizontal sanctions, especially as it relates to finding or fining people who do not participate. Anonymity thus seems to have an important influence on perceptions of the likelihood of sanctions for non-cooperation in community-related activities.

The relationships between frequency of contact with coethnic and non-coethnic neighbors and perceived anonymity, on the one hand, and perceived anonymity and the likelihood of sanctions on the other, both provide additional evidence supporting the proposed theoretical mechanisms. Frequently encountering neighbors heightens the threat of social sanctions precisely because it makes respondents less anonymous. These results thus complement those in the survey experiment by showing that frequently encountering coethnic and non-coethnic neighbors in respondents' communities can shift actual expectations of the likelihood of social sanctions.

Figure 5: The Effect of Frequency of Contact, Perceived Anonymity, and the Likelihood of Sanctions.



4 Conclusion

What can spur prosociality across ethnic divisions? A host of studies focus on the potential power of deep contact, and its capacity to shape inter-ethnic relations. I instead focus on casual contact. Rather than focus on an increase in volume of casual contact with a variety of outgroup members, I center my analysis on the effect of repeated casual contact with the same outgroup members and the familiarity this breeds, two inter-related phenomena that have been mostly overlooked in the political science literature.

I show the power of repeated casual contact using a survey experiment in Accra, Ghana. I find that repeated contact increases respondents' willingness to give or loan money to a non-coethnic in need. Critically, the relationship of the respondent to the non-coethnic remains fixed across these conditions, with the respondent being told that they do not know the non-coethnic well. The only thing that varies is whether they are told that they have seen him often in their neighborhood. This casual repeated contact is enough to shift their expectations about sanctioning, reciprocity, and findability. I complement these experimental results by descriptively showing that frequency of contact with non-coethnic neighbors in respondents' everyday lives also predicts lower perceived anonymity in their community. This, in turn, increases respondents' perceptions that there would be sanctions if they did not participate in a community development project and particularized trust.

As the world continues to rapidly urbanize, rural migrants are diversifying established communities and creating a host of new communities on the outskirts of cities. How these communities adapt and respond to global challenges is thus of critical importance to not only our theories of society and politics but also whether these communities can live peacefully and work together to meet common goals. These urban communities often have different patterns of contact, not necessarily prioritizing deep contact or singular casual contact, the two forms of contact most commonly studied. By situating my project between those two forms, I add to the literature a consideration of familiar strangers and their effect on everyday politics.

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Appendix A: Survey Questions

Survey questions for the vignette:

1. Loan condition:

- (a) Why did you (not) loan {Name} the cedis?
- (b) How confident are you that {Name} will pay you back?

2. Give condition:

- (a) Why did you (not) give {Name} the cedis?
- (b) Is there an expectation that you **should** give {Name} the cedis?

3. Full Sample:

- (a) In this story, does {Name} live in your neighborhood?
- (b) Do you see {Name} around your neighborhood a lot?
- (c) To which ethnic group does {Name} belong?

Other survey questions:

1. Think about your neighborhood. Over the last week, about how often did you see community members who are not {respondents' ethnic group} around your neighborhood?
2. Think about your neighborhood. Over the last week, about how often did you see community members who are {respondents' ethnic group} around your neighborhood?
3. Say that your community organized a cleanup campaign. If you did not go to it, what would happen? Select all that apply.
4. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "I am confident that others in my community know who I am."
5. How much do you trust community members who are not {respondents' ethnic group} {*particular or general trust*}
6. How much do you trust community members who are {respondents' ethnic group} {*particular or general trust*}

Appendix B: Full Sample Results

Figure 6: Effect of the Frequency Treatment on Respondents' Willingness to Loan the Non-Coethnic in Need the Money and Their Perception of the Likelihood That He Would Pay Them Back. Results Are for the Full Sample.

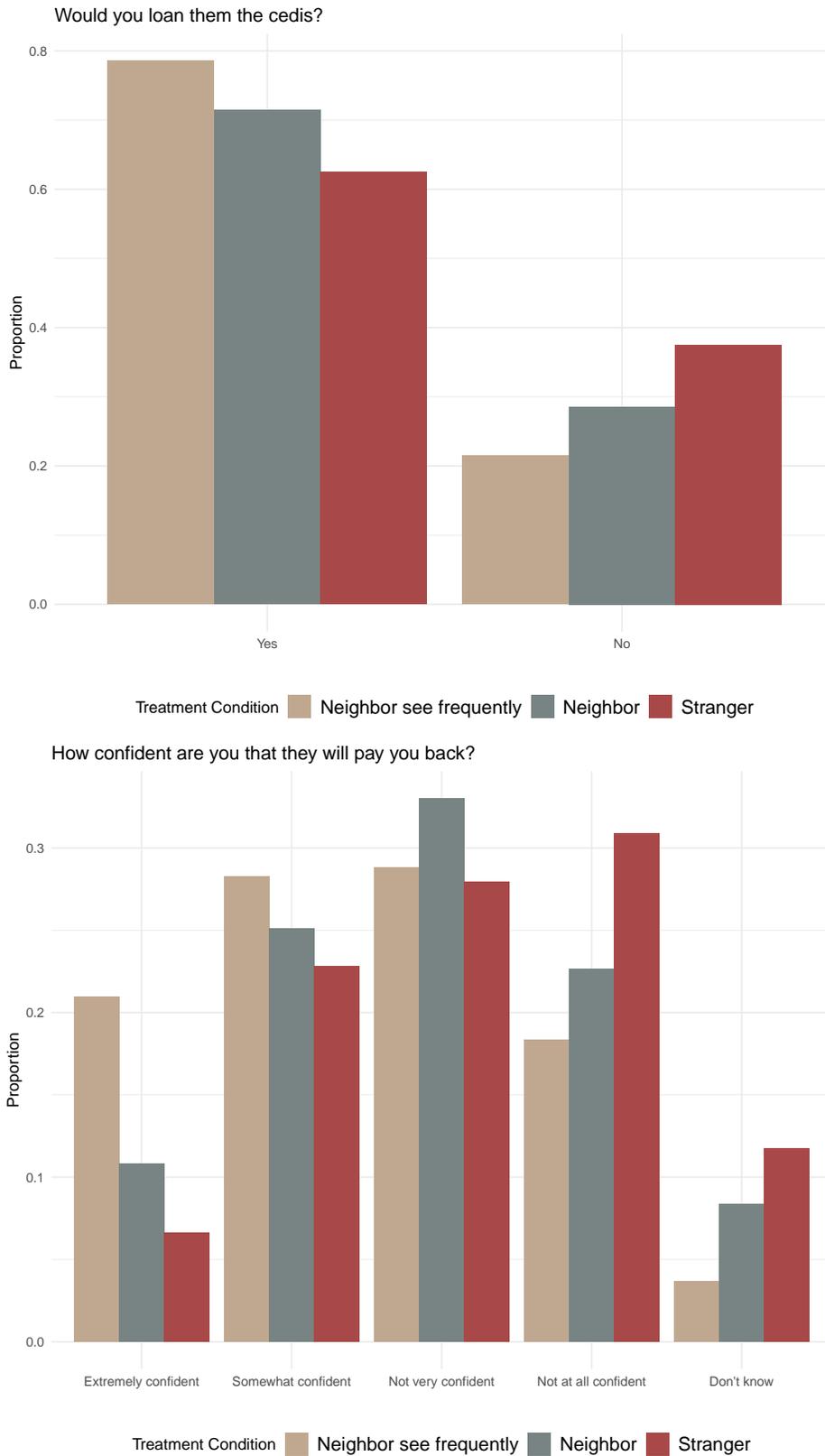
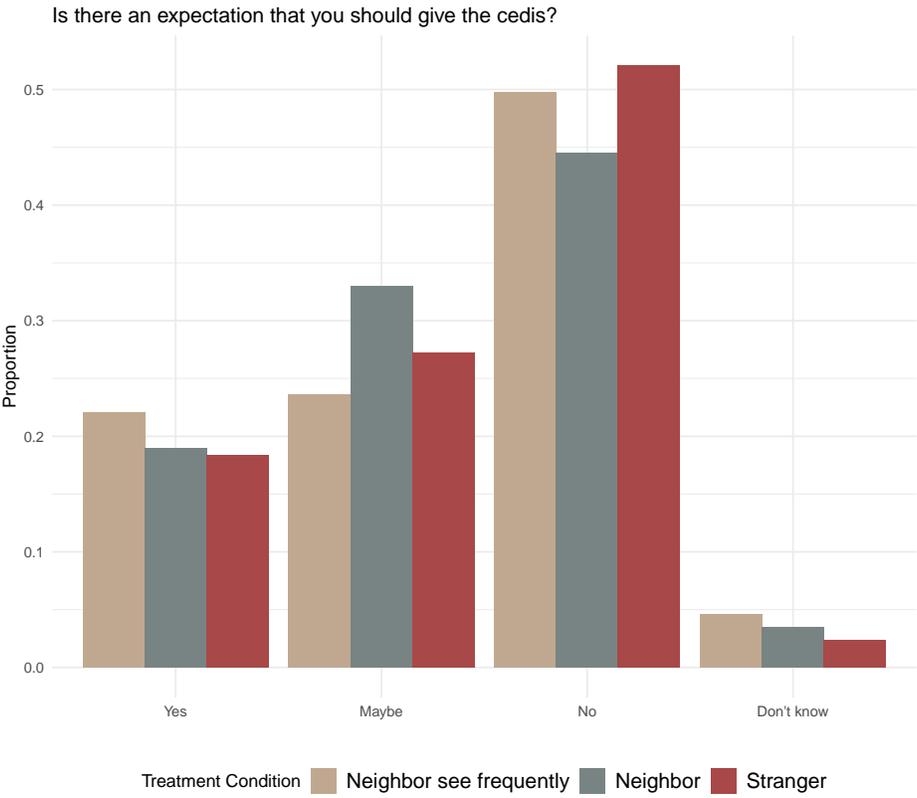
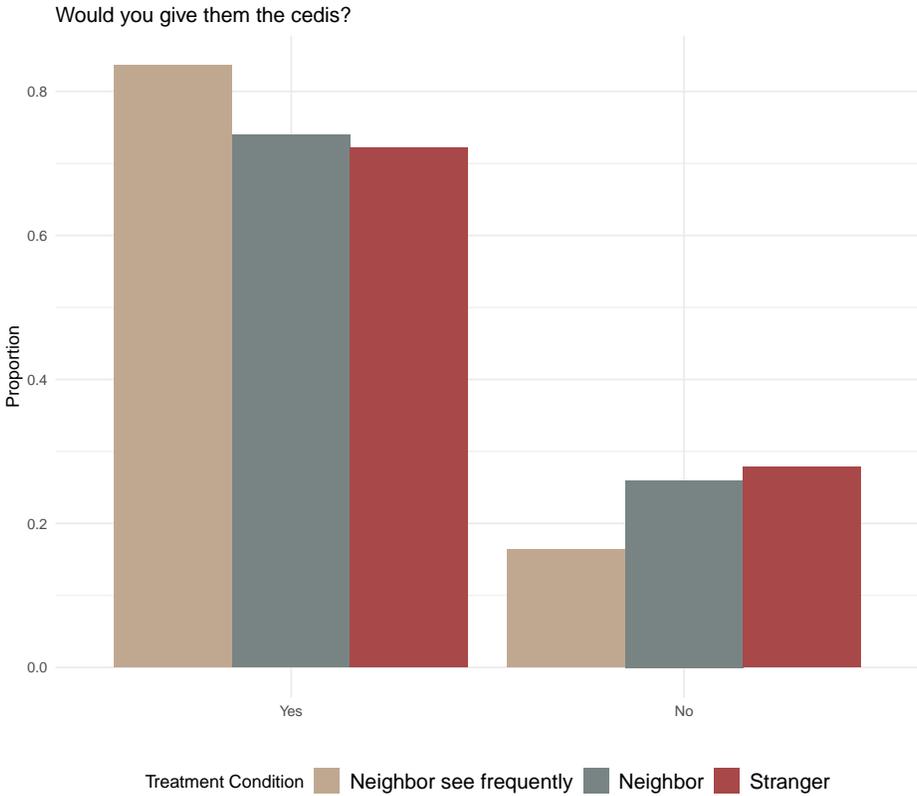


Figure 7: Effect of the Frequency Treatment on Respondents' Willingness to Give the Non-Coethnic in Need the Money and Their perception of an Expectation That They Should Give Him the Money. Results Are for the Full Sample.



Appendix C: Table of Results with Controls

Table 2: Effect of Frequency Treatment Controlling for Imbalances.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Give (1)	Expectation to Give (2)	Loan (3)	Return Loan (4)
Treatment: Neighbor	-0.166*** (0.049)	-0.105** (0.050)	-0.141*** (0.050)	-0.155*** (0.056)
Treatment: Stranger	-0.177*** (0.050)	-0.151*** (0.049)	-0.185*** (0.056)	-0.218*** (0.064)
Yrs lived in Accra	0.0002 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.0004 (0.003)
Part-time Employment	0.013 (0.053)	0.001 (0.055)	0.024 (0.062)	0.075 (0.070)
Unemployed	-0.008 (0.048)	0.035 (0.049)	0.055 (0.055)	0.086 (0.063)
Education	0.002 (0.017)	-0.041** (0.018)	-0.002 (0.018)	-0.023 (0.021)
Female	0.048 (0.041)	0.007 (0.042)	-0.050 (0.044)	-0.074 (0.050)
Age	-0.002 (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)	0.007** (0.003)
Constant	0.909*** (0.123)	0.373*** (0.127)	0.734*** (0.137)	0.444*** (0.156)
Observations	451	353	433	404
R ²	0.040	0.050	0.037	0.054
Adjusted R ²	0.020	0.025	0.018	0.035
Residual Std. Error	0.419 (df = 441)	0.379 (df = 343)	0.442 (df = 424)	0.487 (df = 395)
F Statistic	2.034** (df = 9; 441)	2.006** (df = 9; 343)	2.015** (df = 8; 424)	2.835*** (df = 8; 395)

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01