

Racial Attitudes of University Faculty Members: Does Interracial Contact Matter?

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Using primary data from a Midwestern university, this study examines racial attitudes of white faculty members. Contact theory is used to understand the variation in the number of racial minority students that white faculty members advise, independent of individual characteristics and social organizational factors. Findings indicate that white faculty members rate Asian/Asian American college students most favorably overall. In general, faculty then ranked white, African American, Latino, and Native American college students in descending order with respect to a host of characteristics. Finally, supporting contact theory, white faculty members who went to high schools with more racial minorities and who work with more colleagues who are racial minorities are significantly more likely to advise racial minority students. One implication of these outcomes is that greater interracial contact between white faculty members and racial minority colleagues and students is likely to have a positive impact on campus climate race relations.

Keywords: faculty attitudes, racial attitudes, higher education, campus climate, contact theory

The demographics of the United States have been changing for several years (Center for Public Education 2016), particularly in terms of racial and ethnic diversity. In 2014, for the first time, 50.2 percent of children under 5 years old where racial or ethnic minorities (US Census Bureau 2015). Corresponding to these changes in the national population, colleges and universities across the U.S. have also experienced a rise in the percentage of racial and ethnic minority students. At the same time that the student body is becoming more diverse, the vast majority of faculty members remain native-born white. The National Center for Education Statistics (2013) reports that 79 percent “of all full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions” self-identifies as white. The gap in diversity between faculty and students poses questions about the reality of universities’ commitments to diversity and promises of inclusion (Paul 2016). For example, over the past six years, Inside Higher

Ed and Gallup have collected annual survey data on college and university presidents and examined a variety of topics, including campus race relations. In the 2016 Gallup-Inside Higher Ed survey, findings showed that “college and university presidents take a generally positive view of race relations on their own campuses, with 84 percent describing them as excellent or good” (p. 7). Yet, they were significantly more likely to rate their own campus in positive terms compared to their ratings of U.S. campuses in general, with only 24 percent rating race relations in other colleges and universities across the country as “excellent or good” (2016:7). When confronted with the amount of college campus protesters related to racial issues, the majority of respondents were surprised (2016:7), indicating that there might be a gap between faculty members’ perceptions of campus race relations and the campus environment.

This interpretation is further supported when looking at the increase in demonstrations across the country related to racial issues, such as the

demand for the resignation of the President of University of Missouri (Haidt and Lee 2016), or more spending on diversity issues at universities such as Yale and Brown (Jaschik 2015; New 2016). Among the most common demands from campus protesters is an increase in diversity among both the student and faculty populations on campus (Haidt and Lee 2016; The Demands 2015).

Some argue that the demand for more diversity in the faculty population is not unreasonable as the student body continues to become increasingly more diverse. Faculty members play important roles in terms of making decisions that influence students directly through choices related to curriculum, classroom materials, teaching methods, and mentoring of students (Comeaux 2013; Quaye 2012). In addition, a range of indirect faculty decisions also impacts students, such as their research focus and departmental and university decisions (Valentine et al. 2012). Thus, understanding faculty members' racial attitudes is crucial at a time when student populations are becoming increasingly more diverse while faculties across the country continue to be predominantly white.

Given the current demographic growth of racial minority students, the prevalence of white faculty and staff members, and the university commitments to racial diversity and acceptance, it is of particular interest to assess and examine attitudes faculty members hold toward major racial groups residing in the U.S. One of the major theories in the race relations literature is contact theory. It posits that whites who interact more frequently with racial minorities under productive conditions, such as having equal status along a variety of other social statuses and support by authority for intergroup interaction, whites will develop more sympathetic and positive attitudes toward other racial groups. Because universities across the nation are diversifying, one question arises: Does interracial contact affect white faculty members positively in terms of their racial attitudes and their behavior toward racial minorities?

Accordingly, we have collected data from faculty members in a Midwestern university in order to assess their attitudes toward Asian / Asian Americans, whites, African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans. The pattern of demographic change that has occurred at this Midwestern university is similar to the overall United States. The University reports that 21 percent of its 2014-2015 student body self-identified as a racial minority, which is a 75 percent increase from 10 years ago. In contrast, only about 10 percent of the faculty and staff members self-identified as a racial minority, that is, 90 percent self-identified as white. In the following sections, we review the literature regarding racial attitudes and highlight the explanatory power of contact theory. Afterward, we cover the methods and present the findings. Finally, we discuss some of the implications of having predominantly white faculty and a growing minority student body.

Literature Review

As campuses across the nation have become more diverse, campus racial climate has developed into a widely discussed topic (Reid and Radhakrishnan 2003; Ward and Zarate 2015). Recent news articles about student demonstrations and demands (e.g., Jaschik 2015; Haidt and Lee 2016), as well as previous research (e.g., Reid and Radhakrishnan 2003; Cole 2007), illustrate how minority students continue to say that their colleges and universities do not do enough to help support diversity.

In this scenario, faculty members have an important role on campus in their interactions with students, especially since they have been found to be "...key institutional agents, [who] must become more aware of the types of interactions they have with students and the subsequent impact on students' intellectual self-concept" (Cole 2007:277). In addition, previous research has found a need for more sensitivity among faculty and staff in regards to the needs of their minority students, such as "making

instructors aware of how specific behaviors (e.g., jokes, criticisms) might be affecting students of color differently compared with White students” (Reid and Radhakrishnan 2003:272-273).

Although predominantly white campus institutions (PWI), such as in the present study, are becoming more diverse, this does not necessarily mean that faculty are prepared for the implications of this diversity or that campuses no longer face racial conflicts (Chavous 2005). A problem among faculty has been that they lack knowledge about how to handle race-related discussions with their students (Valentine, et al. 2012) and even professors with many years of teaching experience “are anxious about and ill prepared to productively and successfully facilitate difficult dialogues on race in classrooms” (Sue et al. 2009:1108). In addition, white faculty members have been found to be “unsure what role they can play in making their campuses places where American racial minority students want, and are able, to learn” (Gordon 2007:337). In addition to the difficulties faculty members face, there are also other diversity-related issues that impact campuses today, such as discrimination of minority student and faculty members (Williams 2004) and minority students who continue to perceive that they are “being treated differently than their White peers” (Reid and Radhakrishnan 2003:272).

The lack of faculty members’ preparation for discussions regarding race and race-related issues is especially troublesome as faculty members, along with the overall campus, have potential for both enabling and hindering students’ development (Comeaux 2013). In fact, the college campus and environment can also impact students’ views on diversity, attitudes, and stereotypes (Ward and Zarate 2015) and it is important for universities and campuses to be aware of faculty attitudes and perceptions if they wish to create campus climates that support diversity (Valentine et al. 2012). Past research has argued that it is crucial for faculty members to “support students in discussing racial issues in order for students to develop the requisite skills

to participate in a diverse democracy” (Quaye 2012: 542).

Although faculty members’ attitudes have been found to have important impacts on campus climate (Comeaux 2013, Quaye 2012, Valentine et al. 2012), fewer studies have focused directly on the influence of faculty members’ racial attitudes or their interactions with students. In their study on faculty mentoring of minority students, McCoy, Winkle-Wagner, and Luedke (2015:225) found that white faculty members had a tendency to interact with students using a “race-neutral, colorblind language (to avoid racial terms but implying them)...[enabling them] to describe their students as academically inferior, less prepared, and less interested in pursuing graduate studies while potentially ignoring structural causes.” McCoy and colleagues (2015) also found that white faculty members in their study believed that they were treating minority students no differently than they were treating their white students, but at the same time they held contradictory beliefs such as minority students being academically underprepared. Because “college campuses are riddled with overt and covert forms of discrimination that affect minority students and minority faculty members” (Williams 2004:340) and “...institutions have an important role in influencing attitudes about diversity in the way they promote diversification efforts” (Ward and Zarate 2015:613), an essential first step is to assess the racial attitudes of faculty members, especially ones who self-identify as white.

Theory

In many instances, faculty members interact with students more frequently than campus staff. Thus, their racial attitudes are especially important when they interact with students in classrooms and other places, locations that are becoming increasingly more diverse. As seen in past research, however, not all faculty members are aware of the impact of their attitudes and the impact it can have on students and the overall

campus climate. In order to better examine racial attitudes of faculty, the present study employs contact theory as a framework for understanding the findings of this study. This theory has been found to “provide a relevant conceptual frame for studying racial climate” and interaction (Chavous 2005:241).

Contact theory, or the contact hypothesis, was popularized by Allport (1954) and assumes that the prejudice and stereotypes people hold about a certain group can be reduced through interaction with members of the outgroup. Since Allport’s initial contact hypothesis (1954), a range of studies have tested the hypothesis and found support for the idea that interracial contact reduces prejudice and increases positive attitudes, particularly for whites (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006).

These studies indicate that negative attitudes, bias, and prejudice can be reduced through interaction and contact across racial and ethnic groups (e.g., Brown et al. 2007; Vezzali and Giovanni 2012). In addition, more recent studies have found that it is not necessary for the quality of contact to be optimal to generate favorable attitudes, but rather the amount of contact (Brown et al. 2007). This is especially pertinent to faculty members, as they are likely to have more frequent than perhaps in-depth contact with their students. Accordingly, the more interactions they have with racially diverse students and colleagues, the more likely it is that they will hold positive racial attitudes.

In a meta-analysis of contact theory, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) found as a result of contact between groups “not only do attitudes toward the immediate participants usually become more favorable, but so do attitudes toward the entire outgroup, outgroup members in other situations, and even outgroups not involved in the contact” (p. 766). Although the contact has the highest likelihood of resulting in a positive intergroup exchange when it happens under certain conditions, such as equal status, common goals, cooperation, and support by authorities (Allport 1954), current research finds that even

contact under less than ideal conditions often leads to majority group members taking on comparatively positive attitudes (Pettigrew 1998). Thus, if faculty member attitudes become more positive when interacting with racially diverse others, it is likely that their intergroup relations will improve. These ideas lead to the first hypothesis:

H1: White faculty who have comparatively more contact with non-white campus community members will hold more positive attitudes and engage in pro-minority behaviors.

In addition to immediate interaction with diverse others, previous contact and experiences also impact current racial attitudes. In their study on prior racial contact, Emerson, Kimbro, and Yancey (2002) found that experiences such as having attended schools with diverse student bodies or having lived in neighborhoods with diverse others has a significant impact on the racial diversity of one’s social relationships as an adult. This is consistent with other studies that have found that individuals who grow up in racially homogeneous neighborhoods, thus having less contact with diverse others, have more negative views and attitudes toward outgroup members (Oliver and Wong 2003; Bohmert and DeMaris 2015). Other studies have emphasized that having friends with different racial backgrounds than one’s own leads to positive attitudes toward minorities (Bohmert and DeMaris 2015) and that overall contact with members of other groups predicts favorable attitudes toward such groups (Brown et al. 2007). Consequently, prior interracial contact as well as current interracial contact is expected to predict white faculty members’ racial and ethnic attitudes, leading to the second hypothesis.

H2: White faculty who were surrounded by more racial minorities in the past will currently hold comparatively positive attitudes and engage in pro-minority behaviors.

Methods

The data for this study come from a survey of fulltime and part-time faculty members who work for a Midwestern research university. The survey was conducted over the internet during August and September of 2014. The response rate was 27 percent, leaving a sample of 81 faculty members. Despite the relatively low response rate, the demographic characteristics of the sample, such as faculty rank, discipline, race, gender, and political party affiliation, among other attributes, mirror the University's faculty profile. After constraining the data to non-Hispanic whites, the sample size consists of 63 individuals. Consequently, due to the small sample size, we consider the statistical outcomes to be preliminary in nature.

Dependent Variables

We examine white faculty members' attitudes toward college students from five racial groups: white, Asian, black, Latino, and Native American. We ask the faculty members about their opinions regarding 11 attributes and have them rate on an 11-point scale whether they strongly agree = 5 to neither agree nor disagree = 0 to strongly disagree = -5 that, in general, college students from each of these separate racial backgrounds: 1) work very hard to get good grades, 2) are intelligent, 3) spend a lot of time studying for their courses, 4) spend a lot of time practicing or playing sports, 5) attend class consistently, 6) join campus activities or clubs that support the university, 7) get undeserved special treatment from the university, 8) are easy to teach, 9) are easy to advise, 10) are students I feel comfortable being around, and 11) are students that I feel will make a positive difference in society after graduation. Responses regarding these 11 attributes serve as dependent variables that measure the extent to which white faculty members hold racial stereotypes. Although all of the statements may not appear to reflect racial stereotypes in the abstract, such as "attend class

consistently," prior research finds that whites hold different opinions about different racial groups, such as Asians being the model minority. Consequently, even positive or apparently neutral statements are applied to some racial groups and not others. Accordingly, we asked all questions regarding every racial group in the study in order to see the differences rather than attempting to ask only certain questions for certain racial groups.

We also created indices for each racial group, combining all questions, except for sports practice because it was not clear whether that activity would be viewed positively or negatively. Using factor analysis, each index for the separate racial groups loaded onto one factor with all but three factor loadings registering above .40. Two factor loadings for Native Americans registered at .33 and .36 and one factor loading for Asian Americans registered at .32. For each index, the alpha reliability coefficients were all .90 or above. These results indicate that the grouping of questions work well as indices for each racial group.

Additionally, in order to assess pro-minority behaviors, we further analyze the extent to which white faculty members advise minority students, with the question: "Approximately, what percentage of students that you advise in a typical school year would you say falls in the category of racial minority?" This question measures perceptions rather than actual numbers of minority advisees, and is another dependent variable.

Independent Variables

In particular, we tested the theoretical idea of intergroup contact—where it would be expected that white faculty members that had interracial contact prior to working at the university or while currently working at the university would hold comparatively favorable attitudes toward racial minorities and have a greater chance of being the type of faculty member who would be willing to advise minority students and be the type of

faculty member who would be seen by minority students as a potential advisor—with the following questions: “To the best of your memory, approximately what percentage of your high school would you say fell in the category of racial minority?” and “approximately, what percentage of your colleagues, including administrative staff, would you say fall in the category of racial minority?” Again, these questions measure perceptions and awareness rather than actual numbers of minorities in a high school or in various departments, and represent the primary independent variables. Given the cross-sectional nature of the data, causal direction is assumed based on contact theory. Furthermore, due to data limitations, these questions do not represent actual intergroup contact, nor assess under which conditions the contact occurred. Rather, based on contact theory and prior research that has also used percentages of racial minorities in an area, contact is more likely with a greater number of racial minorities in the location of interest.

Control Variables

To isolate the effects of interracial contact, we control for a number of other factors: Rank (0=Dk/Ref, 1=Other, 2=Assistant Professor, 3=Associate Professor, 4=Full Professor); Discipline Area (dummy variables for Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Humanities, and Other, with Natural Sciences as the reference group); Teach (“Approximately, how many students do you teach in a typical school year [e.g., in your courses and independent studies]?); Teach Minorities (“Approximately, what percentage of students that you teach in a typical school year would you say falls in the category of racial minority?”); Years Teach (“How many years have you been teaching courses at the college level, including non-tenure track positions?”); Advise (“Approximately, how many students do you advise in a typical school year [e.g., academic advising and master’s and doctoral committee work]?”); Discrimination

(“Do you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement? Racial discrimination is no longer a serious obstacle for racial minorities with respect to being able to advance in the U.S. today”); income (11-point scale from less than \$20,000 to \$200,000 or more); political party affiliation (Republican=-1, independent/other=0, Democrat=1); political ideology (very conservative=-2 to very liberal=2); gender (1=female, 0=male); age (in years); and education (7-point scale from less than high school to PhD).

Analytic Strategy

To get a sense of white faculty members’ racial attitudes, we conduct the analysis in several steps. First, we compare group averages with means and t-tests to see which racial group fares best in the minds of white faculty members and if they have a racial rank order. Then, we examine the averages of each characteristic for each racial group and run a large number of t-tests to compare group perceptions. Finally, we use OLS regression to test the explanatory strength of contact theory regarding racial attitudes toward college students from each racial group and also the likelihood of white faculty members advising racial minorities.

Results

Of the faculty members surveyed, approximately 48 percent were female and the average age was 50 years old. Politically, they leaned toward being liberal. There were similar percentages among faculty rank, from non-tenure track to full professors, ranging from 15 percent to 32 percent, which was associate professors, and there were similar percentages of faculty from the physical sciences, social sciences, humanities, and other disciplines, between 20 and 27 percent for each. On average, faculty estimated that 9.65 percent of their colleagues, including administrative staff, were racial

minorities, and they estimated that about 10.35 percent of their advisees were racial minorities, on average.

Before assessing the effect of intergroup contact, we identify white faculty members' racial attitudes. As Table 1 indicates, white faculty members rate Asian / Asian American college students more positively than any other racial group along a majority of characteristics, with white college students being ranked highest in two categories ("Join Campus Activities" and "Students I feel Comfortable Around") and African Americans being ranked highest in one category ("Are Easy to Teach"). White and

were averaged, facilitating overall group comparisons, white faculty members ranked Asian / Asian American college students above the other racial groups, as presented in Table 2. Based on t-tests, white faculty members also view Asian / Asian American college students statistically different from each of the other racial groups. At this group level, the other racial groups were not statistically different from one another. ($p < .10$). Given the limited number of significant coefficients, model outcomes are not shown but are available upon request. Yet, importantly, in terms of predicting pro-minority behavior rather than attitudes, the model which

Table 1. Means of White Faculty Members' Opinions of Five Racial Groups

| Variable | White | Asian | Black | Latino | Native American |
|--|-------|-------|-------|--------|-----------------|
| Work very hard to get good grades | 0.97 | 1.36 | 1.00 | 1.02 | 0.97 |
| Are intelligent | 1.14 | 1.24 | 0.98 | 0.94 | 1.03 |
| Spend a lot of time studying | 0.76 | 1.29 | 0.79 | 0.67 | 0.78 |
| Spend a lot of time playing sports | 0.36 | 0.13 | 0.36 | 0.11 | -0.03 |
| Attend class consistently | 0.75 | 1.43 | 0.87 | 0.90 | 0.68 |
| Join campus activities and clubs | 0.54 | 0.32 | 0.29 | 0.35 | 0.27 |
| Get special treatment from University | -1.56 | -1.97 | -1.68 | -1.70 | -1.38 |
| Are easy to teach | 0.73 | 0.68 | 0.76 | 0.68 | 0.68 |
| Are easy to advise | 0.79 | 0.78 | 0.71 | 0.60 | 0.67 |
| Students I feel comfortable with | 2.06 | 1.98 | 1.90 | 1.81 | 1.89 |
| Students will make a positive difference | 1.35 | 1.49 | 1.30 | 1.17 | 1.36 |

Source: Racial and Immigration Attitudes Survey, 2014. N=63.

African American college students were also ranked equally, and above the rest, for the characteristic "Spend A Lot of Time Playing Sports." On average, Latino and Native American college students did not rank highest in any category. When all of the characteristics

predicted the percentage of minority student advisees that white faculty members believed that they had, showed the contact theory predictors to be statistically significantly independent of other factors (See Table 3).

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of White Faculty Members' Opinions of Five Racial

| Group | Mean | S.D. |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Asian | 1.14* | 1.49 |
| White | 0.97 | 1.40 |
| Black | 0.94 | 1.37 |
| Latino | 0.89 | 1.35 |
| Native American | 0.88 | 1.30 |

Source: Racial and Immigration Attitudes Survey, 2014. N=63. *Notes:* T-tests reveal a significant difference between Asian / Asian American college students and each of the other racial groups (* $p < .05$).

With respect to specific characteristics, white faculty members see a significant difference between Asian / Asian American college students and college students from each of the other racial groups in terms of the attributes of work ethic, time spent studying, and class attendance, based on the t-test results. White faculty members also view Asian / Asian American college students to be significantly different from African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans when it comes to being intelligent and not receiving special treatment from the University, but no different from white college students with respect to these two attributes. At the same time, white faculty members consider white college students to be significantly different from African American, Latino, and Native American college students in terms of intelligence, at the 10 percent probability level, but no different from them in terms of receiving special treatment. In only a couple comparisons did African American college students fare better. White faculty members thought they were significantly different from Latino and Native American college students regarding time spent playing sports. In no comparison did Latino and Native American college students get ranked higher than any other racial group on any attribute, on average. Due to the large number of t-tests, none of them are presented but are available upon request.

Overall, these descriptive analyses suggest that white faculty members view Asian / Asian American college students positively, especially along classical academic characteristics, and white college students no different from them in a couple of important ways, such as intelligence and not receiving special treatment from the University. Simultaneously, it is noteworthy that white faculty members did not rank Latino and Native American college students as significantly better in any of the eleven characteristics. With respect to predicting white faculty members' racial attitudes, the OLS regression models offered very few statistically significant factors toward any of the racial groups. That is, for example, rank did not matter, nor did teaching or advising percentages, or various sociodemographic characteristics, such as age or political party affiliation, and none of the contact theory predictors were influential. Yet, a couple of items mattered. White faculty members from disciplines that fell under an area "other" than natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities were significantly less likely than the sciences and humanities faculty members to express positive racial attitudes, all else equal, when it came to judging Asian, white, and African American college students ($p < .10$). That is, they held comparatively worse racial attitudes. At the same time, female faculty members were more likely to express positive attitudes toward African American and Native American college students compared to their male counterparts

Table 3. OLS Model Predicting the Percentage of White Faculty Members' Advisees who They Believe are Racial Minorities

| | | |
|------------------------------|-----------|--------|
| Intercept | 233.40 | 73.530 |
| Rank at University | 7.31* | 3.033 |
| Social Sciences | .043 | 5.394 |
| Humanities | -5.702 | 5.815 |
| Other sciences | 11.323* | 5.128 |
| # of Students Teach in Year | -.003 | 0.017 |
| % of Students Racial Min. | -.379 | 0.356 |
| Years Teaching College | -.130 | 0.310 |
| # of Students Advise in Year | .043 | 0.065 |
| % of Colleagues Racial Min. | .541* | 0.222 |
| % of High School Racial Min. | .327* | 0.120 |
| Rac. Discrim. Not Problem | -2.122 | 2.307 |
| Logged Income | -11.961* | 5.421 |
| Political Party (GOP to Dem) | -2.855 | 3.871 |
| Conservative to Liberal | 2.530 | 2.695 |
| Female | 4.546 | 4.494 |
| Age | .066 | 0.247 |
| Education | -16.806** | 4.680 |
| F Statistic | 3.25** | |
| Adjusted R ² | .43 | |

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests). Source: Racial and Immigration Attitudes Survey, 2014. N=52. Reference group: Natural Sciences

White faculty members who estimated that they went to high schools with comparatively more minorities and who currently have comparatively more racial minority colleagues, were likely to report advising more racial minority college students. For each percentage increase in the percentage of racial minorities that white faculty members believed went to their high schools, they had a half a percent increase in the percentage of racial minority advisees. That is, for example, white faculty members who reported more racial minorities in their high school by 10 percent were predicted to have five percent more racial minority advisees, all else equal. A similar 10 percentage point increase in

racial minority colleagues was associated with a three percentage point increase in racial minority advisees, among white faculty members, while holding constant other factors. In support of contact theory, these results suggest that prior and current exposure to racial minorities influences white faculty members to be more open to advising racial minority students or be a type of instructor who racial minority students would be comfortable having as an advisor.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study looked at racial attitudes among faculty members at a Midwestern research

university. Specifically, attitudes toward college students from five racial groups: white, Asian, black, Latino, and Native American, were examined. First, group averages were compared to examine which racial group white faculty members viewed in the most favorable light and whether they have a racial rank order. Second, faculty members' group perceptions were compared for individual characteristics, and lastly OLS regression models were run to test the idea that intergroup contact predicts attitudes and behavior.

Overall, faculty attitudes toward Asian/Asian American college students were more positive than any other racial group. Statistically, faculty considered this group of students to be different from the other racial group in terms of having a better work ethic, spending more time studying, and attending class more often than the other racial groups. They were also perceived as significantly more intelligent than African Americans, Latinos, and Native American students, but no different from white students who were also perceived as significantly different from African American, Latino, and Native American students.

White faculty ranked white students higher than the four other racial groups when asked about students they felt comfortable around and students who join campus activities. Only in one area, students who are easy to teach, were African American students ranked highest. White and African American college students were ranked equally, and higher than the other groups, when asked about students who spend a lot of time playing sports. Also, it is worthwhile to note that Latino and Native American college students did not rank highest in any category or higher than any other racial group on any attribute.

Surprisingly, very few of the items in this study significantly predicted white faculty

members' racial attitudes toward any of the racial groups, with two exceptions. The first relates to the discipline of the faculty members. Those whose discipline was in an area outside of the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities held comparatively worse racial attitudes. Second, compared to the male faculty members in this study, female faculty members were more likely to hold positive attitudes toward African American and Native American college students. Consequently, the contact hypotheses were not supported with respect to racial attitudes.

However, important for the discussion on contact theory, white faculty members who reported having attended high schools with comparatively more minorities and who



currently have comparatively more racial minority colleagues, were likely to report advising more racial minority college students. In support of the hypotheses and contact theory, these results suggest that prior and current exposure to racial minorities influences the behavior of white faculty members to be more open to advising racial minority students or be a type of instructor who racial minority students would be comfortable having as an advisor. This finding is consistent with prior research that has found that previous contact and experiences with

diverse others impacts racial attitudes (e.g., Emerson et al. 2002; Oliver and Wong 2003; Brown et al. 2007; Bohmert and DeMaris 2015).

One of the limitations of this study, however, is that we did not have measures that assessed specific contact experiences and whether the contact experiences were positive, neutral, or negative. We used the proximity measure of percentages of racial minorities in the workplace and at school. At the same time, these indirect measures are commonly used when testing contact theory (e.g., Chavous 2005; Bohmert and DeMaris 2015). Stein, Post, and Rinden (2000) also find that non-Latinos actually do interact more frequently with Latinos when they reside in areas that have a greater percentage of Latino residents, suggesting proximity percentages offer valid indirect measures of contact on a comparative basis. Nonetheless, future research could further clarify the contact effect when more direct measures are used, as well as the type of conditions under which the intergroup contact occurred. Another limitation of the study is the small sample size from one Midwestern university. At best, we can generalize the outcomes only to this university. However, we argue that because the sociodemographics of the faculty are similar to others across the U.S., that the findings offer preliminary evidence on a broader scale that future research may build on.

In conclusion, the results suggest that faculty members' attitudes of the overall student population differ by racial group. This finding is important because past research indicates that at predominantly white campuses, such as the one in the present study, racial issues impact both academic and social areas, further impacting the overall campus climate (Chavous 2005). In addition, although attitudes of all campus members are important, unlike students who leave after they graduate, faculty members' attitudes are of special importance as they have the ability to support and create change over longer periods of time (Park and Denson 2009). As argued by Chavous in his study on racial climate on predominantly white college

campuses, "...fostering learning environments and communities where all students feel included and valued is an important outcome in itself" (2005:255). Thus, having faculty members who hold inclusive racial attitudes are not only good, but crucial in order to facilitate positive campus climates. "Racial climate is composed of students' observations of their experience as racial minorities on campus. These include everything from students' experiences with racism to the belief that the university is not doing enough to support diversity" (Reid and Radhakrishnan 2003:264-265). Thus, "the experiences and perceptions of members of different groups should be included in efforts to understand and improve the climate" (Chavous 2005:255). With conscious and strategic effort that is evidenced-based, the future of university and college race relations are likely to improve over time.

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