

Fischer, Mary. 2011. "Interracial Contact and Changes in the Racial Attitudes of White College Students." *Social Psychology of Education* 14:547-574.

PRIMARY ARGUMENT: The author argues that diversity on college campuses and various types of interracial contact during college can have an effect on the racial attitudes of White students.

IMPORTANT DEFINED CONCEPTS:

- Contact hypothesis: A social psychology theory that suggests that positive interactions between people from different groups can reduce prejudice.
- Affirmative action: Active efforts to improve employment, educational, and other opportunities for members of groups that have been subjected to discrimination.
- Social distance: the level of acceptance, closeness, or interaction individuals or groups are willing to have with those from different racial or ethnic backgrounds.

PRIMARY FINDINGS:

1. White students generally express the highest relative social distance towards Hispanics, followed by Asians, and then Blacks.
2. The study supports the contact hypothesis, particularly regarding attitudes towards Blacks. Having a close friend who is Black or having a Black romantic partner is associated with significantly more positive impacts on social distance expressed towards Blacks.
3. The greater the representation of Hispanics on campus, the greater the reduction in social distance expressed by whites by the end of the senior year.
4. Students who had an Asian roommate in the sophomore year had more negative stereotypes of Asians than students who did not report having an Asian roommate. However, one unique thing to note with Asians is that white's stereotypes of them are overwhelmingly positive and often more positive than their ratings of their own group. It is therefore possible that increased interaction may disconfirm the 'model minority' stereotype to some degree, and hence result in more negative stereotypes.

KEY QUOTE: "This exposure to diversity may also have longer term benefits to students. Gurin (1999), for example, finds that students attending more diverse colleges report more diversity in their friendships, neighborhoods, and work settings nine years after college matriculation." (548)

QUESTION: How do different types of interracial interactions (academic collaboration, social friendships, extracurricular involvement) differentially impact racial attitudes over time?