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## The National Social Distance Study: Ten Years Later<sup>1</sup>

Vincent N. Parrillo<sup>2</sup> and Christopher Donoghue<sup>3</sup>

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*The Bogardus social distance scale, which measures the level of acceptance that Americans feel toward members of the most common ethnic and racial groups in the United States, was administered six times nationally between 1920 and 2001. Replicating the most recent study with its revised list of ethnic and racial groups, the authors of this study analyzed a stratified random sample of 3,166 college students, making it the largest national social distance study ever conducted. The findings indicate an increase since 2001 in the mean level of social distance toward all ethnic groups, as well as in the spread between the groups with the highest and lowest levels of social distance. Further, a consistency between studies in group preferences reaffirms the relevance of the similarity-attraction bond in accepting those who are racially and culturally different. Mean comparisons and analysis of variance tests also showed that gender, birthplace of respondents and/or their parents, race, and year in college are all significant indicators of the level of social distance toward groups.*

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**KEY WORDS:** Bogardus; diversity; intergroup contact theory; similarity-attraction; social acceptance; social distance.

### INTRODUCTION

Social distance studies have had a long, informative, and influential history. Conceived by Emory Bogardus, the social distance scale was a simple but effective research tool that became a widely used and powerful instrument in the study of intergroup relations. It has been called “one of the most celebrated historical social psychological tools in American intellectual history” (Wark and Galliher 2007: 391).

After Emory Bogardus (1925, 1933) conducted the first national study on social acceptance levels for various minority groups, five subsequent national studies were performed (Bogardus 1947, 1958, 1967; Owen et al. 1977; Parrillo

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and Donoghue 2005). Utilizing this measurement scale to determine the level of social distance for 30 ethnic and racial groups, researchers were able to track the changes and continuities in intergroup attitudes among U.S. college students.

Sometimes external events affected the social distance outcomes, as these researchers reported. For example, in the aftermath of World War II, both Germans and Japanese had a lower level of social acceptance than previously, with the latter dropping to the lowest ranking in the 1946 study. The next study, conducted in 1956 during the Cold War era, reported that the Russians dropped significantly into the lowest tier. A half century later when such conditions were less vivid in people's memories, subsequent social distance studies showed improvement in the acceptance of Germans and Russians. Similarly, Arabs and Muslims received the lowest social distance in the 2001 study, conducted on the heels of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Even though times have changed since the first national study in the 1920s, with overt notions of racial superiority yielding to covert forms of racial insensitivity, the Bogardus scale remains relevant today. Evidence lies in its continued use in the United States (Ayers et al. 2009; Ellison et al. 2011; Fee and Nusbaumer 2012; Lee et al. 2002; Randall and Delbridge 2005; Weaver 2008; Yanovitzky et al. 2006) and internationally (Dkirpvoe 2002; Panina 2004; Rysavy 2003; Tacchi 2008), where it still provides a comparative measurement of how groups fare with one another in terms of social acceptance.

In smaller studies with a tighter focus, other researchers utilized the social distance scale as well. These studies gauged the social distance between doctors and nurses in a mental hospital (Pearlin and Rosenberg 1962); health professionals and dying patients (Kalish 1966); immigrants and their rates of naturalization (Walsh 1990); whites and Asians, blacks, or Hispanics (Wilson 1996); whites attending interracial churches and African Americans (Yancey 1998); middle school teachers and the 30 Bogardus groups (Kleg and Yamamoto 1998); blacks or whites and Jews (Raden 1998).

A common finding among all of the above studies was that individuals typically are more comfortable with others of perceived similarity and so maintain a closer social distance in interactions with them. Conversely, by evaluating their in-group more favorably, they also tend to express a self-serving bias against out-groups (Mayhew et al. 1995; Parrillo 2011: 4).

The Parrillo and Donoghue (2005) study was different than its predecessors in that the researchers deleted some groups—no-longer-visible minorities—to make room for other contemporary minority groups. Deleted were the Armenians, Czechs, Finns, Norwegians, Scots, Swedes, Turks, and the double-listed Japanese Americans—but not Japanese, and Mexican Americans—but not Mexicans). Added were the Africans, Arabs, Cubans, Dominicans, Haitians, Jamaicans, Muslims, Puerto Ricans, and Vietnamese.

Such modifications reflected the changed demographics of U.S. society since the 1977 study. Those societal changes naturally impacted also upon the demographics of the college population, from which all of the social distance surveys have been drawn. Thus, of interest to Parrillo and Donoghue (2005) was

whether increased ethnic and racial diversity, both in society and among the college student respondents, would generate similar or dissimilar patterns in the levels of social acceptance for the 30 minority groups on the survey form.

Among the findings in that study were the much stronger social acceptance scores for Italians and African Americans in comparison to previous national studies. Also significant was the reduction in the “spread” of scores between the mean social distances for the highest- and lowest-ranked groups. Although that spread had steadily dropped in each successive study, the 37% decrease in 2001 was substantially greater than the 11% decreases in the 1967 and 1977 studies. Because it indicated the overall level of tolerance toward all groups covered in the study, this finding pointed to a dramatic improvement in out-group attitudes, at least among college students.

Parrillo and Donoghue (2005) suggested that these findings might be indicative of a “unity syndrome,” the coalescing of Americans of all backgrounds in the aftermath of 9/11, because that survey began just 1 month after the attacks of September 11th, 2001. They concluded that with the passage of time, a replication of the social distance study would reveal how lasting that unity syndrome would be, and “how tolerant Americans remain in their ever-growing multi-racial, multi-cultural society” (Parrillo and Donoghue 2005: 268).

Relevant to any study examining attitudes toward out-group members is Aristotle’s observation that we like “those like ourselves...of our own race or country or age or family, and generally those who are on our own level” (Roberts 2004). That thought eventually found its way into social science research. Ever since Byrne (1961a, 1961b) first suggested a positive relationship between similarity and attraction, hundreds of subsequent studies have reaffirmed it, leading Berger (1975: 281) to call the similarity effect “one of the most robust relationships in all of the behavioral sciences.” Significantly, the *perception* of similarity appears to be an even more powerful determinant than actual similarity, a finding supported by both U.S. and cross-cultural studies (Montroy et al. 2008; Singh et al. 2007).

This interpretation of the similarity-attraction paradigm provides an interesting perspective when utilized within the U.S. social structure, where seemingly sharp perceptual distinctions between whites and blacks remain, despite the false euphoria following the 2008 election of President Obama that a “post-racial America” had come into existence (Billups and Sands 2008; Rodgers 2010; Valentino and Brader 2011). Moreover, the growing Hispanic presence in the United States adds another dimension to prevailing racial attitudes, given that the color line is not drawn as sharply in Latin America (Flores 2005; Lee and Bean 2007). Spanish words like *moreno*, *mulatto*, *pardo*, and *trigueño* illustrate a broader range of color designation beyond the standard U.S. black–white dichotomy (Rodriguez 2001). Perceptions of first- and second-generation Hispanics attending college, therefore, in comparison to non-Hispanic college students, may differ through contact with out-group members.

In formulating his intergroup contact theory, Allport (1954) predicted that group contact could reduce prejudice if the groups 1) enjoyed equal status within

the situation, 2) shared common goals, 3) cooperated interdependently, and 4) benefited from the support of authorities, law, or custom. Pettigrew (1997, 1998) suggested that the quality of contact also affected prejudice. With these four conditions embedded in the structure and processes of higher education institutions, negotiated order theory (Strauss 1978) becomes another helpful theoretical framework to wrap around a study examining college student attitudes about ethnic and racial groups. The interaction patterns and lines of communication within a campus setting exist within a social order negotiated by adjustments and redefinitions that flow from dialectic relationships.

With these perspectives in mind, this study sought answers to several research questions. As implied above, we wanted to know if there were further positive results in social acceptance due to perceived similarities among those functioning in an environment where Allport's preconditions existed. Or did the passage of 10 years result in a lessening of the unity syndrome and thus generate less positive results? Did the greater social acceptance in 2001 of African Americans hold up 10 years later? Did the even greater diversity in 2011 among college students generate further changes in social distance?

## METHODS

A stratified random sample of sociology programs in the United States determined the study sites for this research. Drawing from a nationwide list of 440 sociology programs at 4-year colleges and universities, we began by sorting the programs into the same four geographical regions sampled in the most recent national social distance study (Parrillo and Donoghue 2005). The Northeast region consisted of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. The Midwest region comprised Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, and Iowa. The South region encompassed Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana. The West region included Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, and Hawaii. The selection of every ninth program yielded 52 schools, or 13 in each of the four regions, about twice as many potential participants as we anticipated actually securing.

In fall 2011, we e-mailed letters explaining the purpose of the study to the chairpersons of the departments housing these programs, and inviting them to participate by administering up to 200 questionnaires at their institutions and returning the responses by U.S. mail. In keeping with past practices for the social distance survey, we asked them to survey classes of students taught by faculty members in their department, with a preference for freshman and sophomore students, and a request that they not select classes on minorities or race and ethnic relations for this survey.

After receiving an initial positive response rate of 30% from invited schools, follow-up phone calls increased that percentage to 42%, or 2,183 students from 21 schools. We obtained the remainder through a second wave of requests for participation from our sample of institutions in the East which was underrepresented in the original sample. This yielded a total response rate of 47% and a total sample of 3,166 students from 26 four-year colleges and universities, making it the largest national social distance study ever conducted. The additional students led to a slight decrease in the average social distance score ( $-.04$ ) and a slight increase in the social distance spread ( $.03$ ). No other differences were observed in the main study findings.

The questionnaire consisted of the Bogardus Social Distance Scale and several demographic questions. The scale contained seven possible levels of acceptance that the respondents could feel toward each of the 30 ethnic and racial groups listed in the most recent social distance study (Parrillo and Donoghue 2005). These levels permitted respondents to give multiple answers about accepting a person from a particular group as 1) a family member by marriage, 2) as a close friend, 3) as my neighbor, 4) as my coworker, 5) as a speaking acquaintance only, 6) as visitors only to my country, and 7) bar from my country. The instructions requested that the respondents complete the scale quickly, identifying their initial feelings and selecting as many of the levels that apply for each group.

With a score from 1 to 7—with 1 representing the closest distance and 7 representing the farthest distance—only a respondent's closest level of acceptance toward individual ethnic or racial groups counted in our analysis of each group's acceptance level, as was the case in all previous studies. By averaging all social distance scores toward the 30 groups, we calculated a mean score to establish the overall level of social distance toward all groups. To determine the spread between most and least favorable groups, we subtracted the lowest social distance score from the highest social distance score. *T*-tests enabled mean comparisons by dichotomous independent variables (e.g., gender) and analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests allowed for measuring differences by multicategory variables (e.g., race). In addition, conservative Tamhane *post hoc* tests, not assuming equal variances, facilitated the examination of intracategory differences for multicategory variables.

## RESULTS

In many ways, the demographic characteristics of the respondents were similar to those in the 2001 study (see Table I). However, there was a drop in the proportion of blacks (10.1% to 6.9%) and Asians (6.4% to 3.8%), and a rise in the proportion of Hispanics (8.6% to 15.5%). In comparison to 2010 national statistics on students in 4-year colleges, our sample included a much lower percentage of blacks (15.1% to 6.9%), a somewhat lower percentage of Asians

(5.8% to 3.8%), and a similar percentage of Hispanics (14.4% to 15.5%) (NCES 2012).

In our sample, 88.4% reported that they were native born and 70.8% reported that both of their parents were also born in the United States. More than half of the students reported living in a suburban area and nearly two-thirds described themselves as middle class. Catholic and Protestant were the two most common religious preferences, representing approximately 56% of the sample. More than 32% reported having no religion or a religion other than Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, or Muslim (e.g., Hindu, Wiccan). Nearly 64% of the students were freshman or sophomores at the time of the survey.

Table II displays the mean social distance score and the social distance spread for the current study, in comparison to the prior six national social distance surveys. The first six surveys (1926–2001) showed a consistently downward trend in mean social distance, beginning at 2.14 in 1926 and ending at 1.45 in 2001. Similarly, the spread between the group with the largest social distance and the closest social distance fell at each data point from a high of 2.85 in the first study to 0.87 in 2001. The current study shows the first reversal in these scores ever recorded. The mean social distance toward all groups in 2011 was 1.68 and the spread was 1.08. The data in Table III show that all four geographical regions increased in both their mean social distance and spread, with the

**Table I.** Participant Data (2011: N = 3,166; 2001: N = 2,916)

Percentages	2011	2001		2011	2001
Gender			Geographic Region		
Female	62.1	62.0	East	31.1	27.3
Male	37.1	38.0	South	27.5	27.3
			Midwest	16.6	22.7
Place of Birth			West	24.7	22.7
United States	88.4	88.2			
Outside U.S.	10.4	11.8	Social Class		
			Lower Class	4.0	NA
Parents Place of Birth			Working Class	22.5	NA
Both in U.S.	70.8	71.4	Middle Class	63.5	NA
1 or Both Outside U.S.	20.0	22.7	Upper Class	6.8	NA
Race			Religion		
White	73.8	70.0	Catholic	30.2	37.7
Black	6.9	10.1	Protestant	25.7	23.2
Asian	3.8	6.4	Jewish	3.5	5.1
Other and Biracial	12.9	13.5	Muslim	0.6	1.2
			None	19.9	18.6
Hispanic Origin			Other	12.3	12.1
Non-Hispanic	82.2	91.4	Year in School		
Hispanic	15.5	8.6	Freshman	38.9	45.8
Type of Residence			Sophomore	24.8	26.2
Rural	20.2	15.2	Junior	17.8	15.1
Suburban	52.4	60.7	senior	12.0	11.2
Urban	23.2	24.1	Graduate	0.0	1.7



**Table II.** Mean Social Distance Score and Spread by Year of Survey

	Mean SD	SD Spread	Sample Size
Bogardus, 1926	2.14	2.85	1,725
Bogardus, 1946	2.12	2.57	1,950
Bogardus, 1956	2.08	1.75	2,053
Bogardus, 1966	1.92	1.56	2,605
Owen et al., 1977	1.93	1.37	1,488
Parrillo & Donoghue, 2001	1.45	.87	2,916
Current Study, 2011	1.68	1.08	3,166

*Note:* Mean SD = average social distance toward all groups; SD Spread = difference between highest social distance group score and lowest social distance group score.

exception of the East where social distance rose but the spread shrunk by .02. As in 2001, the differences in the mean social distance and spread by region were small.

As in 2001, Table IV shows that Americans, Canadians, and most Northern and Western European groups held the lowest social distance scores. African Americans climbed from a ranking of 9th in 2001 to 5th in 2011. Most Hispanic and Central American groups rose in their rankings between 2001 and 2011, as seen in the cases of Puerto Ricans from 18th to 14th, Filipinos from 16th to 15th, Dominicans from 21st to 16th, Cubans from 23rd to 20th, and Mexicans from 25th to 24th, although Other Hispanics/Latinos and Haitians dropped slightly. Asian groups remained in similar ranks as in 2001, as did Arabs and Muslims who again were in the final two. Jews dropped the most in rank between 2001 and 2011, from 11th to 21st. The social distance score for all 30 groups increased at least somewhat, with Jews (+.36) and Muslims (+.35) rising the most.

In Table V, the results of the independent sample *t*-tests for gender show that females had lower social distance scores toward all 30 groups, and significantly lower scores toward 18 of them ( $p < .05$ ). Students with two native-born parents reported significantly lower social distance scores toward 17 groups (mainly European groups and African Americans), and significantly higher social distance toward two groups (Mexicans and Other Hispanic/Latinos). Native-born students held significantly lower scores toward 15 groups. Hispanics showed significantly greater social distance than Non-Hispanics toward 25 groups, but significantly smaller social distance toward Cubans, Mexicans, Other Hispanic/Latinos, Puerto Ricans, and Japanese. Overall, female students, students with two native-born parents, native-born students, and non-Hispanics held significantly lower social distances toward all groups.

The race of the respondent correlated with significant social distance scores for nearly all groups, as displayed in Table VI. *Post hoc* tests for intragroup differences indicated that whites had significantly lower social distance scores ( $p < .05$ ) than blacks for British, Canadians, Dutch, French, Germans, Greeks, Irish, Italians, Jews, Polish, and Russians. Whites also reported significantly



**Table III.** Mean Social Distance Score and Spread by Region and Year

	Mean SD	SD Spread
Parrillo & Donoghue, 2001		
East	1.51	1.12
South	1.43	0.72
Midwest	1.40	0.79
West	1.39	0.74
Current Study, 2011		
East	1.65	1.10
South	1.68	1.46
Midwest	1.65	1.02
West	1.72	1.14

*Note:* Mean SD = average social distance toward all groups; SD Spread = difference between highest social distance group score and lowest social distance group score.

**Table IV.** Mean Social Distance Rankings in 2011 and Comparisons to 2001

	Mean	(SD)	+/- vs. 2001	Rank in 2001	
1.	Americans	1.15	(.57)	+ .08	1
2.	Italians	1.32	(.80)	+ .17	2
3.	Canadians	1.35	(.89)	+ .15	3
4.	British	1.36	(.91)	+ .13	4
5.	African Americans	1.42	(.78)	+ .09	9
6.	Irish	1.46	(.94)	+ .23	5
7.	French	1.50	(1.03)	+ .22	6
8.	Germans	1.51	(1.01)	+ .18	8
9.	Greeks	1.52	(1.01)	+ .19	7
10.	Indians (American)	1.57	(.94)	+ .17	12
11.	Africans	1.61	(.93)	+ .18	13
12.	Dutch	1.62	(1.09)	+ .27	10
13.	Polish	1.64	(1.08)	+ .19	14
14.	Puerto Ricans	1.64	(1.09)	+ .17	18
15.	Filipinos	1.68	(1.08)	+ .22	16
16.	Dominicans	1.71	(1.14)	+ .20	21
17.	Chinese	1.72	(1.04)	+ .25	17
18.	Other Hispanics/Latinos	1.72	(1.14)	+ .27	15
19.	Russians	1.73	(1.17)	+ .23	20
20.	Cubans	1.74	(1.20)	+ .21	23
21.	Jews	1.74	(1.11)	+ .36	11
22.	Jamaicans	1.74	(1.08)	+ .25	19
23.	Japanese	1.80	(1.14)	+ .28	22
24.	Mexicans	1.80	(1.29)	+ .25	25
25.	Vietnamese	1.85	(1.11)	+ .16	28
26.	Koreans	1.87	(1.24)	+ .33	24
27.	Indians (India)	1.89	(1.22)	+ .29	26
28.	Haitians	1.91	(1.27)	+ .28	27
29.	Arabs	2.16	(1.55)	+ .22	30
30.	Muslims	2.23	(1.52)	+ .35	29
	All Groups		1.68	(.80)	

lower social distance ( $p < .05$ ) than Asians toward African Americans, Africans, Americans, British, Canadians, Cubans, Dominicans, Dutch, French, Germans, Greeks, Haitians, American Indians, Irish, Italians, Jamaicans, Jewish, Puerto

**Table V.** Independent Sample *T*-Tests for the Differences in Social Distance by Gender, Foreign-Born Parent, Foreign Born, and Hispanic Origin

Group	Gender		Foreign-Born Parent		Foreign Born		Hispanic Origin	
	Mean Difference (Males - Females)	<i>t</i> -values	Mean Difference (One or both parents foreign born - both parents U.S. born)	<i>t</i> -values	Mean Difference (Foreign born - U.S. born)	<i>t</i> -values	Mean Difference (Hispanic - Non-Hispanic)	<i>t</i> -values
Africans	.129	3.661***	.100	2.258*	.004	.075	.143	3.077**
African Americans	.074	2.501*	.149	3.881***	.127	2.373*	.122	3.159**
Americans	.048	2.214*	.132	4.573***	.202	4.489***	.067	2.53*
Arabs	.083	1.425	.001	.015	.062	.688	.212	2.709**
British	.079	2.267*	.191	4.272***	.210	3.446***	.338	6.806***
Canadians	1.470	4.168***	.135	3.254**	.181	3.150**	.234	4.863***
Chinese	.099	2.449*	.022	.471	.094	1.418	.133	2.488*
Cubans	.151	3.29**	-.037	-.702	.078	1.079	-.168	-3.071**
Dominicans	1.45	3.346**	-.049	-.957	.011	.172	-.100	-1.89
Dutch	.054	1.313	.205	3.974***	.227	3.245**	.355	6.148***
Filipinos	.162	3.86***	.077	1.564	.120	1.727	.150	2.804**
French	.220	5.31***	.134	2.83**	.142	2.212*	.206	4.000***
Germans	.080	2.088*	.161	.347**	.262	3.726***	.332	6.112***
Greeks	.048	1.266	.241	4.853***	.317	4.519***	.296	5.460***
Haitians	.132	2.701**	.058	2.711**	.233	2.946**	.199	3.029**
Indian	.097	2.074*	.193	1.68	.124	1.70	.262	3.974***
Indians (American)	.098	2.710**	.187	4.195***	.190	3.118**	.161	3.399***
Irish	.006	1.62	.294	6.359***	.218	3.511**	.313	6.208***

Table V. (Continued)

Group	Gender		Foreign-Born Parent		Foreign Born		Hispanic Origin	
	Mean Difference (Males - Females)	t-values	Mean Difference (One or both parents foreign born - both parents U.S. born)	t-values	Mean Difference (Foreign born - U.S. born)	t-values	Mean Difference (Hispanic - Non-Hispanic)	t-values
Italians	.046	1.510	.205	5.164***	.205	3.580***	.132	3.343**
Jamaicans	.033	.799	.158	3.173**	.073	1.137	.232	4.290***
Japanese	.035	.808	.037	.727	.071	1.038	.160	2.921**
Jews	.057	1.32	.233	4.311***	.250	3.261**	.283	4.778***
Koreans	.087	1.825	.002	.028	.071	.949	.212	3.226**
Mexicans	.132	2.645**	-.127	-2.385*	.048	.649	-.420	-8.228***
Muslims	.125	2.122*	.036	.523	.134	1.473	.229	2.88**
Other Hispanics	.104	2.359*	-.115	-2.399*	.071	1.104	-.393	-9.169***
/Latinos								
Polish	.011	.275	.193	3.705***	.174	2.591*	.312	5.408***
Puerto Ricans	.089	2.146*	-.015	-.314	.070	1.171	-.270	-5.882***
Russians	.041	.930	.116	2.215*	.159	2.193*	.230	3.815***
Vietnamese	.036	.844	.043	.834	.135	1.941	.223	3.770***
All Groups	.090	2.975**	.096	2.663**	.152	3.146**	.151	3.814***

\*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001.

Table VI. One-Way ANOVA Results for Race Differences in Social Distance

Group	Means				F
	Whites	Blacks	Asian	Other	
Africans	1.603 <sup>b</sup>	1.349 <sup>bcd</sup>	1.974	1.692	12.716***
African Americans	1.418 <sup>b</sup>	1.110 <sup>bcd</sup>	1.867	1.478 <sup>b</sup>	25.651***
Americans	1.115 <sup>bc</sup>	1.252	1.356	1.233	13.576***
Arabs	2.162	2.092	2.370	2.180	.857
British	1.280 <sup>abc</sup>	1.747	1.641	1.536	28.652***
Canadians	1.286 <sup>abc</sup>	1.556	1.597	1.524	16.055***
Chinese	1.725	1.774	1.633	1.731	.457
Cubans	1.753 <sup>b</sup>	1.693 <sup>b</sup>	2.120	1.610 <sup>b</sup>	5.628**
Dominicans	1.727 <sup>b</sup>	1.519 <sup>bd</sup>	2.147	1.639 <sup>b</sup>	8.45***
Dutch	1.549 <sup>abc</sup>	1.934	1.932	1.783	15.370***
Filipinos	1.669	1.767	1.761	1.671	.758
French	1.442 <sup>abc</sup>	1.716	1.821	1.652	12.278***
Germans	1.432 <sup>abc</sup>	1.855	1.871	1.687	22.314***
Greeks	1.434 <sup>abc</sup>	1.862	2.009	1.723	28.903***
Haitians	1.883 <sup>b</sup>	1.869 <sup>b</sup>	2.339	1.313	5.682**
Indians	1.868	1.867	2.086	1.972	1.880
Indians (American)	1.540 <sup>b</sup>	1.583 <sup>b</sup>	2.009	1.628 <sup>b</sup>	9.826***
Irish	1.358 <sup>abc</sup>	1.939	2.017	1.624 <sup>a b</sup>	47.362***
Italians	1.251 <sup>abc</sup>	1.605	1.793	1.446 <sup>b</sup>	32.437***
Jamaicans	1.719 <sup>b</sup>	1.613 <sup>b</sup>	2.200	1.828 <sup>b</sup>	9.069***
Japanese	1.789	1.958	1.774	1.805	1.464
Jews	1.672 <sup>ab</sup>	2.108	2.106	1.833	15.897***
Koreans	1.864	2.071	1.821	1.867	1.879
Mexicans	1.831	1.825	2.071	1.565 <sup>b</sup>	6.427***
Muslims	2.222	2.282	2.478	2.260	1.121
Other Hispanics/Latinos	1.771 <sup>b</sup>	1.532 <sup>bd</sup>	2.082	1.490 <sup>bd</sup>	12.285***
Polish	1.563 <sup>abc</sup>	1.956	2.125	1.781	19.609***
Puerto Ricans	1.676 <sup>b</sup>	1.425 <sup>bd</sup>	2.053	1.467 <sup>bd</sup>	12.308***
Russians	1.670 <sup>ab</sup>	2.000	2.098	1.782	9.750***
Vietnamese	1.838	1.985	1.893	1.913	1.481
All Groups	1.644 <sup>b</sup>	1.788	1.945	1.736	7.876***

Note: <sup>a</sup>significantly lower than blacks ( $p < .05$ ); <sup>b</sup>significantly lower than Asians ( $p < .05$ ); <sup>c</sup>significantly lower than Others; <sup>d</sup>significantly lower than whites ( $p < .05$ ); \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Ricans, Other Hispanics/Latinos, Polish, Russians, and in their mean score for all groups. In comparison to those who reported another race, or a mixed race, whites reported lower social distance ( $p < .05$ ) toward Americans, British, Canadians, Dutch, French, Germans, Greeks, Irish, Italians, and Polish.

Blacks had a significantly lower social distance ( $p < .05$ ) than whites toward African Americans, Africans, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, and Other Hispanics/Latinos. Blacks also showed significantly lower social distance ( $p < .05$ ) than Asians toward Africans, African Americans, Cubans, Dominicans, Haitians, American Indians, Jamaicans, Puerto Ricans, and Other Hispanics/Latinos. Relative to those with another race, or a mixed race, blacks showed a lower social distance ( $p < .05$ ) toward Africans and African Americans.

Respondents who reported another race, or a mixed race, held significantly lower social distance ( $p < .05$ ) than whites toward Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Other Hispanics/Latinos. Respondents with another race or a mixed race reported significantly lower social distance than Asians toward African Americans, Cubans, Dominicans, American Indians, Irish, Italians, Jamaicans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Other Hispanics/Latinos. They also held a significantly lower social distance ( $p < .05$ ) than blacks toward the Irish. Asians did not show a significantly lower level of social distance ( $p < .05$ ) than whites, blacks, or Others toward any of the 30 groups.

Most of the other variables in Table I did not show consistent relationships with social distance. Notable exceptions, however, can be found in religion and year in school. On average, those professing no religion had the lowest social distance scores toward all groups, while Catholics and Jews had the highest. Muslims ( $N = 19$ ) also reported high social distance scores toward out-groups, but their low representation negated any significant findings for this study. Catholics had significantly higher average social distance scores toward all groups than did Protestants, those with no religion and those with an "other" religion. Students with senior-level status in school held significantly lower social distance toward all groups averaged than freshman, sophomores, and juniors.

## DISCUSSION

Before interpreting this attitudinal evidence, we must give a cautionary note. As other social scientists have long warned, a discrepancy often exists between expressed attitudes and real-life actions (De Fries and Ford 1969; Frideres and Warner 1980; Jackman 1976; Laing 1969; La Piere 1934; Longest and Smith 2011; Perry et al. 1976; Tarter 1969; Ungar 1998; Warner and DeFleur 1967; Wicker 1969). Do attitudinal responses in this article reflect a tendency to meet expectations of "political correctness" instead of actual views? One cannot completely rule out this possibility. However, the variations in social distance scores, including how they compare to previous studies, suggest that many students did express their true feelings.

We must also speak to the respondents' self-identification by race. In our use of the racial categories from Census 2010, we encountered the same difficulty as did the U.S. Census Bureau, when 18 million Hispanics checked the "other" box, indicating a "sharp disconnect between how Latinos view themselves and how the government wants to view them" (Navarro 2012). In our study, 77% of those who selected the "other" race option also identified themselves as Hispanic, thereby dominating that category. However, 41% of all our Hispanic respondents identified themselves as white alone, and so a white/black/Hispanic comparison was not feasible.

For the most part, the findings reveal a remarkable consistency with the 2001 study. Then, as now, the rankings of groups should not be given too much importance, given the narrow gaps in many social distance scores and possible

sampling variability. However, most groups did remain in the same top, middle, or bottom tier as before. Almost all groups that moved into a different tier were near the new one in 2001, except for Jews, who dropped from the top of the second tier to the top of the third. A partial explanation for their decline may lie in the smaller percentage of Jewish respondents in this study and thus the limited strength of the similarity-attraction bond in gathering better social acceptance scores. With that notable exception, the tier similarities suggest the maintenance of similar racial and ethnic attitudes from one generation of college students to the next. Generally speaking, racial *and* cultural differences (particularly non-Western) were the dual combination that relegated many such groups to the bottom tier, not only in 2001 but also in earlier national studies.

The further upward movement of African Americans over many white ethnic groups is noteworthy for several reasons. First, it reaffirms their strong acceptance level in 2001 and this may again reflect—as we suggested in 2005—students' ease in racial interactions on their more diverse campuses and/or the growing presence of a black middle class that prompts wider acceptance (Parrillo and Donoghue 2005: 268). Furthermore, the Africans that many college students encounter are often on their campuses and thus are fellow students, mostly from middle-class backgrounds, factors that may also explain their stronger level of acceptance than that for other nonwhite groups (e.g., Jamaicans, Haitians) who are less visible at schools nationwide.

Making the strong level of social acceptance for African Americans all the more striking is the fact that blacks were underrepresented among respondents. In the current study, only 6.9% of the sample was black, lower than in all previous national studies, yet African Americans attained the best-ever social distance ranking. Furthermore, Asians and Hispanics expressed greater social distances than did whites toward African Americans. We must conclude that it is not the greater presence of people of color among respondents that explains the strong showing of blacks, but rather a much greater receptivity among white college students.

These findings on interracial acceptance are somewhat contradictory in other respects. On the one hand, many whites apparently overcame the racial barrier as shown in their high social acceptance of African Americans, while nonetheless also exhibiting a greater preference for white ethnic groups than for other nonwhite ethnic groups. Perhaps the greater interaction with American blacks in college—an application of intergroup contact and negotiated order theories—accounts for a perceived similarity that transcends racial distinctions. Yet, race—possibly mixed with culture—was an apparent factor in their wider acceptance levels for ethnic blacks. In contrast, African Americans seemed not to find that strong a cultural barrier, as expressed in their social acceptance scores for culturally different but racially similar Africans, Dominicans, Haitians, and Jamaicans. Given these findings, it would appear that, whatever changes in interracial relations are occurring in U.S. society, they have not yet reduced racial distinctions to an insignificant level in terms of social acceptance preferences.

Furthermore, race did play a role in other instances. In an analysis of additional choices by race, the similarity-attraction bond manifested itself in whites expressing stronger acceptance preferences than did blacks for non-ethnic white Americans, Canadians, and European-origin groups. Conversely, blacks conveyed closer receptivity than whites for people of color, notably African Americans, Africans, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, and Other Hispanics/Latinos. Both Asians and Hispanics were significantly less accepting of out-groups than were blacks and whites, but this finding requires further explanation.

First, 17% of Hispanic respondents and 47% of Asian respondents were born outside the United States compared to 8.7% of non-Hispanic respondents. Second, 53% of Hispanics and 89% of Asians had one or both parents born elsewhere, far less than the 15.8% of non-Hispanic respondents. These background variables most likely were a major cultural influence on one's comfort zone in intergroup relations.

Because social distance measurement includes marriage into one's family as the closest level of acceptance, it is not surprising that scores show greater distance toward out-groups among foreign-born respondents and those with foreign-born parents. Endogamy is a common pattern among first- and second-generation Americans, and therefore that practice would manifest itself in the responses. In other words, these higher social distance scores by Asians and Hispanics toward out-groups may well reflect ethnocentric cultural norms about marriage rather than focused group prejudices. At the very least, these data reaffirm the long-known preference of minority group members to marry their own kind.

As in previous studies, females expressed significantly greater levels of social acceptance than males for other groups. However, because female ratios were similar when controlling for race, ethnicity, country of birth, or parental place of birth, gender did not skew the results in our comparative analyses. With regard to social class, two-thirds of all college student respondents identified themselves as middle class, but no significant differences were found in the mean social distance toward all groups for this variable.

For the most part, regional differences did not exist in acceptance levels for racial and ethnic groups, with a few exceptions. The East had a significantly higher social distance score toward Mexicans than the South, Midwest, and West, which all were significantly closer. However, the East was closer to the Polish than were the South and West, while the East was also closer to Russians than the South. The greater concentrations of such groups in regions reporting their closer acceptance levels might be an explanation for these findings, except for the fact that the East, where the greater proportion of Puerto Ricans live, also displayed significantly lower social distance scores for that group than did the South and Midwest. The fact that the South and West—areas where recent political rhetoric and legislation aimed at excluding immigrants took place—did not differ significantly from the other two regions, would suggest that, at the college level at least, such comments and actions did not have an effect.



That seniors expressed significantly greater receptivity toward out-groups, in comparison to freshmen and sophomores, is a particularly hopeful sign for those who believe that openness is one of the most important attributes of higher education (Cole 2010). This improvement seems to lend credence to the claims of intergroup contact theorists and negotiated order theorists. Although no cause-and-effect claim can be made, a positive association was found between years of college and students' level of tolerance. The college experience—that dynamic combination of campus life social interaction and interactive classroom learning—appears to have had a cumulative positive impact on student attitudes about the “other.”

The differences in social distance among Christians may result from the fact that 28% of all Catholic respondents were Hispanic, and only 45% of all Hispanic Catholic respondents had both parents born in the United States, compared to 71% overall. With nearly five times more Hispanic Catholic respondents than Hispanic Protestants, it would appear that the tendency toward endogamy within the first two generations is the key determinant and not one's faith in and of itself.

As an aside, about 9% of Protestant respondents rejected “Protestant” as their category and instead wrote down “Christian” or one of the Protestant denominations. For the purposes of our study, we reclassified them as Protestant, but the frequency of this refusal to identify with the label “Protestant”—a fairly common pattern that occurred in all four geographic regions—might be an intriguing subject for future research.

With respect to the suggested possibility in the 2001 study of a limited duration for the “unity syndrome” in the aftermath of 9/11, there may be some merit to that observation. Certainly, the individual group scores, the overall mean score, and the social distance spread all worsened this time.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The Bogardus scale has its strengths and weaknesses. It does provide some measurement of social acceptance among groups in comparison to one another. However, as mentioned earlier, concerns about the veracity of attitudinal responses versus actions give food for thought. Some critics also question the relevance of the Bogardus scale today. The replacement of nine groups in Parrillo and Donoghue (2005) and in the current study, updated the scale's value for twenty-first-century usage, but perhaps the last two response choices (accepting as visitors only to my country and barring from my country) are too extreme for these times. Notably, only Arabs and Muslims exceeded 5% in the category of acceptance only as a visitor, and 4% in the category of bar from country. Perhaps the Bogardus scale would be improved by changing the choices. One possibility could be as follows: 1) marrying into my family; 2) close friend; 3) my neighbor; 4) classmate or coworker; 5) speaking acquaintance only; 6) working in a store where I shop; 7) living in my country. A conversion to these relationship choices or some

similar variation might give clearer indications of out-group attitudes, even if it meant the end of further longitudinal comparisons with previous studies.

The current study cannot precisely be considered a longitudinal one in comparison with its 2001 predecessor because of the effect of an extraordinary event then occurring but none this time. Subsequent studies will place the current study in a wider context. However, this study may still have longitudinal relevance when compared to the other surveys prior to 2001. Social distance scores continue to decline among college students, even with increased diversity in society and college campuses. We believe a combination of multiculturalism-embedded curricula at all grade levels and realization of the intergroup contact hypothesis, especially at the college level, provides not only a growing recognition of diversity but more importantly a liberalization of views about the "other."

The underrepresentation of Asians and blacks in comparison to the 2001 study and to national college enrollments is disappointing and may have had some small effect. However, we did have sufficient numbers to analyze both groups' responses and these were consistent with previous findings. Moreover, as stated earlier, the underrepresentation of blacks and yet their strong social acceptance by whites may dispel the notion of race alone as the attraction bond. On another note, the overrepresentation of females in comparison to the national figure (62% to 56%), may also have been a factor, but it was exactly the same proportion as in the 2001 study. Nevertheless, females, as in previous studies, were more tolerant than males in their social acceptance of out-groups and so their higher numbers may have impacted somewhat on the overall results.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, some regression in social distance scores occurred in the 10-year interval of the two national social distance studies, but little changed in the preferential order of social acceptance for groups. Gender, place of birth of respondents and of their parents, race, and ethnicity were significant variables in social distance ranking. To a lesser degree, region, class level, and religion also affected responses. Generally speaking, college students of the twenty-first century are more receptive to out-groups than their twentieth-century counterparts, but their level of social acceptance of others still appears dependent on the similarity-attraction bond. That bond is multifaceted, sometimes linked to race, sometimes to culture, and at other times simply to perceived similarities among college students pursuing their education.

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