

Assessing Color-Neutral Racial Attitudes of Faculty at Hispanic-Serving Institutions

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The purpose of this exploratory quantitative study was to assess the color-neutral racial attitudes of faculty at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and to investigate the connection to knowledge and skills for teaching minoritized students. HSIs enroll a large percentage of racially minoritized students, and faculty must be able to assess their attitudes about institutional discrimination and blatant racial issues, which may affect how they teach students of color. We used The Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale and Multicultural Teaching Competency Scale to collect data from faculty at 10 HSIs across the United States. Results show that faculty in our sample have low levels of color-neutral racial attitudes, meaning they are aware of racial issues facing students, with slight differences by race, gender, and academic discipline. Moreover, higher color-neutral racial attitudes are associated with lower knowledge and skills for teaching minoritized students. Implications for enhancing “servingness” at HSIs are offered.

Keywords: *descriptive analysis, diversity, faculty development, higher education, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, postsecondary education, race*

THE increase in the number of Latinx college students entering postsecondary institutions has led to a growth in the number of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), which are federally designated, nonprofit colleges and universities that enroll at least 25% Latinx and 50% low-income undergraduate students. Beyond these enrollment criteria, the federal government has not defined “servingness,” or what it means to educate and graduate racially and economically minoritized students in ways that center and value their ways of knowing and being, and with the goal of justice and liberation for these groups (Garcia, 2018, 2019; Garcia et al., 2019). Moreover, the federal government has not mandated a complete overhaul of the organizational structures of these colleges and universities that lack the history and infrastructure to effectively serve Latinx and low-income students. Institutions that become HSIs must figure out what servingness looks like in practice, with little oversight by the federal government (Garcia & Koren, 2020). Scholars have been actively conceptualizing the idea of servingness, with this study contributing to this understanding.

Garcia et al. (2019) contend that servingness is a complex, multidimensional construct inclusive of “structures for

“serving” and “indicators of serving.” They argue that HSIs must actively change their structures for serving, including the curriculum, pedagogy, and faculty composition (which remains predominantly White) to better serve racially minoritized students. Yet they claim that regardless of the race of the faculty member, faculty must actively enhance their knowledge and skills for teaching racially minoritized students at HSIs. This is supported by decades of research on multicultural teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy within urban schools, which stresses that predominantly White educators who work with racially minoritized students must access and utilize multicultural and culturally relevant practices (e.g., Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012).

Scholars have noted that teachers (and faculty) must question their preconceived assumptions about racially minoritized students (e.g., Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012) as part of enhancing their pedagogy, which includes their color-neutral racial attitudes. In this study, we explored faculty color-neutral racial attitudes and, specifically, attitudes toward institutional discrimination and blatant racial issues. While this study is guided by



the theoretical foundation of *color-blind racism*, we use the term *color-neutral* as a way to avoid ableist language in our own research. Exploring color-neutral racial attitudes is important because studies have shown that faculty's racial attitudes can facilitate or impede the adoption of culturally relevant and inclusive pedagogical practices (e.g., Aragón et al., 2017; Quinn, 2017), which is essential to servingness at HSIs.

The purpose of this exploratory quantitative study was to first examine the color-neutral racial attitudes of faculty at HSIs and then explore the connection of their racial attitudes to their knowledge and skills for teaching minoritized students. The goal was to extend the HSI literature with the hope of discovering malleable factors (pedagogy) for increasing servingness. The study was guided by the following two research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the color-neutral racial attitudes of faculty teaching at HSIs?

Research Question 2: Is there a connection between color-neutral racial attitudes of faculty at HSIs and their knowledge and skills for teaching minoritized students?

Background: Faculty and Students at HSIs

HSIs are some of the most compositionally diverse institutions in the United States, enrolling a large number of Latinx, Black, and Asian American students, as well as low-income students (Espinosa et al., 2019; Núñez & Bowers, 2011). HSIs enroll some students who are underprepared for college-level courses and with lower than average standardized test scores (Cuellar, 2019; Núñez & Bowers, 2011), which may impede their persistence on matriculation. Knowing the basic characteristics of students who enroll in HSIs is essential for faculty, as they must assess their pedagogical approach for teaching these students, who may need additional support (Garcia et al., 2019). Studies have shown that some faculty within HSIs are accessing and incorporating cultural relevant pedagogy in their classrooms (e.g., Castillo-Montoya, 2019; Ching, 2019; Garcia, 2016; Núñez et al., 2010); however, to date, no study has explored color-neutral racial attitudes of faculty teaching in HSIs or the connection of these attitudes to their knowledge and skills for teaching minoritized students.

Despite the lack of research, there is scholarship that highlights the perceptions of faculty at HSIs, which suggests that they view racially minoritized students through a deficit lens, “blaming the students” for their own struggles. For example, Hubbard and Stage (2009) reported that faculty teaching at Hispanic-serving community colleges felt less satisfied with the quality of students they teach. De los Santos and Cuamea (2010) found that, based on survey responses from 86 presidents and chancellors of HSIs, student preparedness was a major challenge reported, with respondents focusing on

students’ “need for remedial work in math/English” rather than on the necessity of their institutions to develop the capacity to better serve these students. In interviewing STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) faculty at three 4-year HSIs, Ching (2019) discovered that participants felt preparation was a major challenge, blaming students’ high schools and families, and expecting them to “transform themselves into self-managing and self-motivated learners” (p. 10). This perception places the burden of success on the students rather than on the faculty. In some cases, however, Ching (2019) discovered that STEM faculty are taking action to better support Latinx students, but there were differences in ability to do this based on faculty member’s own background, experiences, and race.

In addition to these faculty perceptions and seemingly deficit views, students continue to have racialized experiences at HSIs, and often within classrooms at HSIs. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) observed faculty teaching in three Hispanic-serving community colleges committing racialized microaggressions within the classroom (in addition to gendered and intersectional microaggressions), with White faculty and those teaching in developmental classrooms committing the greatest number of microaggressions. The microaggressions ranged in type from intelligence-related microaggressions intended to demean the student’s intellectual competence to cultural/racial microaggressions, which disparage the race and culture of the victim (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Although Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) found that peers also committed these microaggressions, faculty were more likely to be the perpetrators.

Sanchez (2019) similarly found that students at two HSIs and an emerging HSI (colleges and universities that enroll 15% to 24% Latinx students) reported that racialized experiences were more likely to happen inside the classroom than outside. This included racial stereotyping and assumptions about Latinxs, with students being the perpetrators in some cases and faculty being the perpetrators in other instances. Yet participants in the study stated that faculty often failed to address the blatant microaggressions, which was just as harmful. Specific examples included assumptions about Latinxs not being born in the United States, about Latinx families belonging to drug cartels, and about Latinx students being admitted because of affirmative action rather than merit or intellect (Sanchez, 2019). These findings coincide with another study at an emerging HSI where some Latinx students encountered racialized microaggressions with faculty and staff as well as observed racial segregation in the classroom that reflected external racialized patterns (Cuellar & Johnson-Ahorlu, 2020).

Conceptual Framework: Color-Neutral Racial Attitudes

To make sense of color-neutral racial attitudes, we turned to the concept of *color-blind racism*, which Bonilla-Silva (2014) calls “new racism” and Neville et al. (2013) call

“ultramodern racism.” Color-neutral racism is covert, subtle, and institutionalized, meaning it is embedded in the social, political, historical, and economic structures of the United States (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). The subtle nature of color-neutral racism reinforces racial stereotypes and prejudices held by White people and may lead to the adoption of internalized racism by people of color (Neville et al., 2013). It essentially allows White people to claim that they do not see color, to stress that they reject White racial superiority, and to tout fairness and equal opportunity for all (Neville et al., 2013). Yet it is false, dismissing the idea that race reproduces racial inequalities within politics, law, real estate, education, and most other social settings in the United States (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Color-neutral racism necessitates a belief in equal opportunity, meritocracy, and individualism, thus placing the onus of educational success on students themselves, while minimizing the structural nature of inequities in educational outcomes (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2010). For example, faculty may blame students of color for their lack of preparedness for college rather than recognizing that “educational outcomes for students of color are much more a function of their unequal access to key educational resources, including skilled teachers and a high-quality curriculum, than they are a function of race” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 300).

As the literature on color-neutral racial attitudes emerged across multiple fields, psychological researchers developed scales to assess the cognitive components of these attitudes. Neville et al. (2000) developed the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) to explore the ideological components of color-neutral racial attitudes, emphasizing that attitudes may not reflect a belief in racial superiority but, instead, may reveal an unawareness of the subtle and covert nature of post-Civil Rights racism. Neville et al. (2000) found that color-neutral racial attitudes include an unawareness of racial privilege, a lack of understanding of institutional discrimination, and a lack of consciousness about blatant racial issues. A lack of understanding of institutional discrimination would lead a person to believe that race does not play a role in inequitable access to health care, educational outcomes, incarceration rates, and death rates, to name a few, while a color-neutral attitude also includes a lack of consciousness of blatant racial issues such as the need to talk about race and racism and teach kids in schools (and students in colleges and universities) about the racial history of the United States (Neville et al., 2000).

Faculty Color-Neutral Racial Attitudes

To inform our first research question, we turned to the literature on color-neutral racial attitudes of faculty but found few studies that have examined attitudes toward racial issues among faculty and that have examined differences by demographics. Quinn (2017) found that educators, including P-12 and postsecondary, expressed fewer racial stereotypes

in comparison to noneducators. This suggests that faculty, as educators, may have more positive racial attitudes. Yet there were also concerning views among faculty. For example, 20% of postsecondary faculty blamed Black students for social inequities, thereby reinforcing deficit views of these students (Quinn, 2017). In another study examining color-neutral attitudes using CoBRAS measures among dental school faculty and students at the University of Florida, researchers found that faculty generally expressed moderate levels of color-neutral racial attitudes with no significant differences by gender or race (Su & Behar-Horenstein, 2017); however, faculty of color were less aware of institutional discrimination than students of color. Conversely, White students expressed more color-neutral attitudes on racial privilege than White faculty (Su & Behar-Horenstein, 2017). These findings imply that while there might not be significant differences in color-neutral racial attitudes by race or gender, there may be differences by age or occupation.

Multicultural Knowledge and Skills

To inform our second research question, we turned to the literature on the connection between color-neutral racial attitudes of faculty and multicultural knowledge and skills for teaching minoritized students. Again, we found few studies but conceptualized multicultural teaching further in this section and cite the few studies we found. Spanierman et al. (2011) argue that multicultural teaching competence is

an iterative process in which teachers continuously (a) explore their attitudes and beliefs about multicultural issues, (b) increase their understanding of specific populations, and (c) examine the impact this awareness and knowledge has on what and how they teach as well as how they interact with students and their families. (pp. 444–445)

They contend that multicultural teaching competence is inclusive of attitudes, knowledge, and skills for teaching minoritized students.

Some scholars have examined the connection between color-neutral racial attitudes and multicultural knowledge and skills. Burden et al. (2015) found a statistically significant negative relationship between color-neutral racial attitudes and perceived multicultural teaching skills of physical education teacher education students, although the association was weak. These findings echoed earlier findings by Neville et al. (2006) who discovered a statistically significant negative, albeit also small relationship between color-neutral racial attitudes and multicultural awareness and knowledge among mental health workers. Moreover, they found no significant difference between White people and people of color on their multicultural awareness and knowledge (Neville et al., 2006). Despite this seemingly weak connection between color-neutral racial attitudes and little differences by demographics, Aragón et al. (2017) surveyed STEM faculty who participated in a summer institute to

enhance their ability to include inclusive practices in their classroom and found that if they had higher levels of color-neutral ideologies, they were less likely to incorporate inclusive teaching practices in their classrooms, and vice versa.

With so little literature on the connection between color-neutral racial attitudes and multicultural knowledge and skills for teaching, and such inconclusive findings about differences by demographics, we sought to explore these connections with a population of faculty who remain predominantly White, despite the racial and economic diversity of their students. As suggested by the literature, faculty at HSIs still hold deficit views of racially minoritized students, which may increase the number of racial microaggressions in the classroom. And while educators may have more positive racial attitudes than noneducators, there does not appear to be strong differences by race or gender. To enhance servingness at HSIs, faculty must grapple with their own understanding of self as it pertains to educating racially minoritized students, with this study being one attempt to explore the malleable factors (pedagogy) that contribute to servingness.

Method

Data were collected using a web-based survey that was distributed to faculty at 10 HSIs between September 2018 and April 2019 as part of a larger study used to explore faculty knowledge and skills for teaching minoritized students at HSIs. We employed an exploratory quantitative design guided by the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the color-neutral racial attitudes of faculty teaching at HSIs?

Research Question 2: Is there a connection between color-neutral racial attitudes of faculty at HSIs and their knowledge and skills for teaching minoritized students?

Given the lack of prior research on faculty color-neutral racial attitudes at HSIs, an exploratory approach was most appropriate for presenting preliminary findings before generating further hypotheses about faculty color-neutral racial attitudes at HSIs (Streb, 2010).

Data Collection

Faculty were surveyed at two time points using cluster random sampling, which is appropriate when seeking a random sample of participants within a given group (Agregi & Finlay, 2009). During the first data collection, faculty were randomly selected at each of the 10 institutions within four major disciplines (STEM, social sciences, humanities, and professional schools) and across all faculty categories (full-time and part-time, tenure stream and nontenure stream). Approximately 400 faculty were chosen at each institution

to receive the survey, with approximately 100 from each of the four disciplines. Across the 10 institutions, the initial total faculty sample size was $n = 3,755$; within institution sample sizes ranged from 289 to 401. Of the 3,755 faculty who were invited to participate, 566 completed the survey. Data were collected a second time as part of a consulting project between Institution G (also part of the first round of data collection) and the Principal Investigator (the first author). The provost at Institution G distributed the survey via email to all faculty at Institution G. The second distribution of the survey received 124 additional responses. The complete Institution G sample represents 26% ($n = 165$) of total survey respondents (see Table 1).

Institutional Sample

All 10 HSIs were public 4-year institutions that had met the 25% enrollment criteria to be designated as HSIs at the time of data collection. These HSIs were purposefully selected by the research team to be similar by size (medium to large), institutional type (master's and doctoral granting), and control (all public institutions). All 10 HSIs are in different regions of the United States (four in the Southwest, two in the Midwest, two in the Southeast, and two in the Northeast). Seven institutions are doctoral granting institutions and three are master's granting institutions. The 10 institutions are most closely aligned with Núñez et al.'s (2016) classification of Big Systems Four-Year HSIs, which, in addition to generally being large, public, comprehensive universities, also have lower average graduation rates than other types of HSIs. Table 1 presents institutional profiles for the HSIs included in the study.

Faculty Sample

The total faculty sample was 631 after removing cases that were missing values on the dependent variables ($n = 59$; the cases that were missing values on the dependent variables exhibited a high degree of missingness overall). Faculty of color constituted 36% ($n = 226$) of the sample, and 62% ($n = 396$) identified as White. Fifty-seven percent of faculty ($n = 353$) identified as women, 42% ($n = 261$) identified as men, and fewer than 1% ($n = 5$) indicated "other." Approximately one third (30%; $n = 190$) of faculty were from humanities, 25% ($n = 157$) from social sciences, 22% ($n = 140$) from professional schools, and 19% ($n = 119$) from STEM. Table 2 shows more detailed demographic characteristics of the faculty in our sample.

Measures

Demographics. Race was a dichotomous variable including faculty of color (e.g., Black, Latinx, Native American, one or more race) who represented the reference group and were coded as "1," and White faculty. Gender was

TABLE 1
Institutional Profiles of HSIs Included in This Study (n = 10)

Institution	Regional location	Campus ^a	FTE UG ^b	FTE UG Latinx ^b	Percentage Latinx ^b	150% Graduation rate (2011 cohort) ^a				HSI since ^a	N	Percentage
						White	Latinx	SOC	All			
A	Southwest	Urban	17,038	14,060	82.5	47%	40%	38%	41%	Before 1980	89	14.10
B	Midwest	Urban	19,871	6,674	33.6	60%	50%	51%	57%	2014	41	6.50
C	Southwest	Urban	29,261	12,551	42.9	73%	66%	64%	69%	2004	46	7.29
D	Southeast	Urban	19,640	5,250	26.7	49%	52%	60%	51%	2015	30	4.75
E	Southwest	Urban	31,096	8,172	26.3	65%	60%	56%	64%	2016	63	9.98
F	Southwest	Suburban	17,472	4,830	27.6	79%	74%	82%	77%	2012	48	7.61
G	Midwest	Urban	4,750	1,772	37.3	37%	19%	22%	23%	1997	165	26.15
H	Southeast	Urban	36,345	24,062	66.2	45%	61%	64%	57%	Before 1980	32	5.07
I	Northeast	Suburban	15,882	4,625	29.1	66%	64%	58%	65%	2015	55	8.72
J	Northeast	Urban	11,781	6,180	52.5	47%	48%	46%	47%	2009	51	8.08
Unknown											11	1.74
										Total	631	100

Note. FTE UG = full-time equivalent undergraduate; SOC = students of color; HSI = Hispanic-Serving Institution.

^aCampus and HSI data are from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System; HSI status is defined as the year the university enrolled at least 25% Latinx students.

^bEnrollment data are from *Excelencia in Education* for academic year 2018–2019, <https://www.edexcelencia.org/research/publications/hispanic-serving-institutions-hsis-2018-19>.

TABLE 2
Demographic Characteristics for Survey Respondents (n = 631)

Participant characteristic	n	Percentage
Gender		
Nonbinary/other	5	<1
Men	261	42
Women	353	57
Race/ethnicity ^a		
Pacific Islander/Hawaiian	4	<1
Native American	10	2
Multiracial	13	2
Other	24	4
Black/African American	37	6
Asian/Asian American	49	8
Latinx	127	20
White	396	62
Disciplinary area		
Unknown	25	4
STEM	119	19
Professional	140	22
Humanities	157	25
Social science	190	30

Note. STEM = science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

^aFaculty were permitted to indicate multiple racial/ethnic identities, so the total is greater than 631.

represented as a dichotomous variable: women and men, with women representing the reference group and coded as “1.” We included faculty academic discipline as an

independent variable, represented as four dichotomous variables: STEM (e.g., biology, engineering, chemistry, physics, computer science), social sciences (e.g., psychology, criminal justice, political science, economics, family studies), humanities (e.g. English, art, American studies, women’s studies, Latino studies, African American studies), and professional schools (e.g., education, law, business, social work, nursing, public health).

Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale. For the dependent variables, data were collected via two of the three subscales of the CoBRAS (Neville et al., 2000), which are validated scales used to assess color-neutral racial attitudes. The first subscale is inclusive of seven items designed to assess attitudes toward institutional discrimination, with items such as “Social policies, such as affirmative action, discriminate unfairly against White people,” and “White people in the U.S. are discriminated against because of the color of their skin.” The institutional discrimination item “Due to racial discrimination, programs such as affirmative action are necessary to help create equality” was reverse-coded. The second subscale includes six items used to assess faculty attitudes toward blatant racial issues, with sample items such as “Racial problems in the U.S. are rare, isolated situations,” and “Talking about racial issues causes unnecessary tension.” Three items from this subscale were reverse-coded: “Racism is a major problem in the U.S.,” “It is important for colleges and universities to teach about the history and contributions of people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds,” and “It is important for political leaders to talk about racism to help work through or solve society’s problems.”

These subscales allowed us to explore two primary dependent variables, institutional discrimination and blatant racial issues. Items from both scales were asked using a Likert-type scale, with answers ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) through 6 (*strongly agree*). Lower scores indicate higher levels of racial awareness and, thus, low levels of race-neutral attitudes (Neville et al., 2000). The initial validation of the CoBRAS was conducted in a higher education setting; the alpha coefficient for this measure was .86; the alpha coefficient for our study was also .86 (Neville et al., 2000). The interitem correlations were significant and ranged from .42 to .54 (Neville et al., 2000). Neville et al. (2000) assessed desirability bias and found the instrument to be reliable.

Multicultural Teaching Competency Scale. The two secondary dependent variables used in this study were derived from the Multicultural Teaching Competency Scale (MTCS) developed by Spanierman et al. (2011) and initially validated with pre- and in-service teachers. The MTCS consists of two subscales, multicultural teaching knowledge and multicultural teaching skills (Spanierman et al., 2011). Multicultural teaching knowledge refers to faculty understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy as well as the historical experiences and communication styles among different racially and ethnically minoritized students; example items include “I have a clear understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy” and “I am knowledgeable about particular teaching strategies that affirm the racial and ethnic identities of all students” (Spanierman et al., 2011). Multicultural teaching skills include faculty competency for promoting diversity through behavior (e.g., “I often promote diversity by the behaviors I exhibit”), examining instructional materials for racial and ethnic bias (e.g., “I integrate the cultural values and lifestyles of racially and ethnically minoritized groups into my teaching”), and integrating the cultural values of racially and ethnically minoritized groups (Spanierman et al., 2011). The MTCS items used a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) through 6 (*strongly agree*). The alpha coefficient for the initial validation of the MTCS was .88, and for our study the alpha coefficient was .90 (Spanierman et al., 2011).

Analysis

To prepare the data for analysis, we first conducted a missing values analysis to understand the degree of missingness across the sample and concluded that no variable exceeded a missingness of 4%. We used Little’s (1988) test to determine that our data were missing completely at random and therefore retained all faculty responses with observed outcomes (Dong & Peng, 2013). Next, we ran descriptive analysis of the data to understand the distribution of faculty by demographic characteristics/independent

variables. Finally, we employed confirmatory factor analysis to evaluate model fit for the CoBRAS and MTCS data (Netemeyer et al., 2003). Confirmatory factor analysis was appropriate given previous validation and use of CoBRAS to assess color-neutral racial attitudes (Neville et al., 2000; Neville et al., 2013; Schreiber et al., 2006).

To explore faculty color-neutral attitudes, we developed two fixed-effects multiple linear regression models, one for each of the two primary dependent variables (institutional discrimination and blatant racial issues). Fixed-effects models allowed us to “treat unobserved differences between individuals as a set of fixed parameters” (Allison, 2009, p. 2). Both models included institution fixed effects, meaning that we relied on variation *within* each institution to observe differences in faculty color-neutral racial attitudes among faculty who teach at the same institution (Allison, 2009). As our focus was the variation within each institution, we did not use multilevel models to account for cross-institutional differences. Using a fixed-effects approach allowed us to explore how observed differences in faculty color-neutral racial attitudes vary when controlling for differences by race, gender, and discipline. Although we could have used *t* tests to look at differences, we felt *t* tests would not account for the structure of our data, consequently the standard errors would be too small and we would be assuming precision where we don’t have it. The fixed-effects regression, instead, was a useful test for demonstrating statistical differences by group given our data, accounting for other differences at the same time (Allison, 2009).

In our final analysis, we explored how faculty color-neutral attitudes are related to faculty knowledge and skills for teaching minoritized students, our secondary dependent variables. We conducted correlational analyses between the CoBRAS and MTCS constructs and ran two additional fixed-effects multiple linear regression models using faculty multicultural teaching knowledge and faculty multicultural teaching skills as the dependent variables. These models included the faculty race-neutral attitudes variables (institutional discrimination and blatant racial issues) as independent variables and controlled for race, gender, and discipline to show statistically significant differences. We checked basic assumptions and found that the data were normally distributed and homoscedastic. We also checked for multicollinearity among our variables using variance inflation factors (Agresti & Finlay, 2009) and found that multicollinearity was not an issue (Alin, 2010).

Results

Since the study was exploratory in nature, we did not seek to confirm or refute formal hypotheses, but rather establish a foundational literature base on faculty color-neutral racial attitudes at HSIs and their connection to knowledge and skills for teaching minoritized students, with the results supporting this goal.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CoBRAS and MTCS)

Confirmatory factor analysis indicated good overall fit for the CoBRAS constructs of institutional discrimination and blatant racial issues ($\alpha = .86$; Neville et al., 2000). Full fit statistics for this exploratory study improved after slight modification of the CoBRAS, which involved dropping two items from each subscale; the items that were dropped are identified in Table 3 by the dagger (†) symbol after the item description (TLI [Tucker-Lewis index] = .83, CFI [comparative fit index] = .86, RMSEA [root mean square error of approximation] = .09 for the original model; TLI = .94, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .06 for the modified model).

Confirmatory factor analysis for the MTCS showed adequate model fit (TLI = .91, CFI = .92, RMSEA = .091; Hu & Bentler, 1999); however, the modification indices specified that the fit could be improved; as a result, two knowledge items and four skills items were dropped (Jackson et al., 2009). Our final baseline model included 10 of the original 16 MTCS items and showed good overall fit (TLI = .98, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .047; see Table 3).

Faculty Color-Neutral Racial Attitudes

Descriptive results show that faculty respondents indicated low levels of color-neutral racial attitudes, as evidenced by low scores on both subscales. This means that overall, they have a high awareness of institutional discrimination and blatant racial issues (see Table 3). Out of the 13 CoBRAS items on the survey, faculty scored the lowest on the blatant racial issues item “It is important for colleges and universities to teach about the history and contributions of people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds,” meaning they generally agree with this statement. Faculty respondents scored highest on the institutional discrimination item “Immigrants should try to fit into the culture and values of the U.S.,” indicating moderate levels of racial awareness for this item.

We also found that 85% ($n = 536$) of faculty respondents disagreed that English should be the only official language in the United States, and 90% ($n = 568$) disagreed with the statement “Social policies, such as affirmative action, discriminate unfairly against White people.” Among all faculty respondents, 89% ($n = 562$) believe that racism is a problem, and 96% ($n = 606$) think that political leaders should discuss racism to solve societal issues. Faculty respondents do not feel that racial problems in the United States are rare, isolated events (97%; $n = 612$), nor do they feel that talking about racial issues causes unnecessary tension (83%; $n = 524$).

Differences by Race. Faculty of color reported lower levels of color-neutral racial attitudes, as indicated by lower scores, and therefore higher awareness of institutional discrimination and blatant racial issues than White faculty (see Table 4).

The results of our fixed-effects regression indicate that being a faculty of color is associated with higher levels of awareness of institutional discrimination when controlling for gender and discipline ($\beta = -.05$), though the difference was not statistically significant. Being a faculty of color was associated with higher levels of awareness of blatant racial issues when controlling for gender and discipline and was also not significant ($\beta = -.07$). Table 5 shows the fixed-effects regression results for both models, which explain 15% of the variation in color-neutral attitudes about institutional discrimination ($R^2 = .15$) and 16% of the variation in color-neutral attitudes about blatant racial issues ($R^2 = .16$).

Differences by Gender. Women in our sample reported lower color-neutral racial attitude scores (and therefore higher awareness) than men on both subscales (see Table 4). Relatedly, our fixed-effects regression models show that being a woman is associated with lower color-neutral racial attitudes and is statistically significant ($\beta = -.12$, $p < .002$ for institutional discrimination; $\beta = -.16$, $p < .001$ for blatant racial issues), even after controlling for race and other independent predictors (see Table 5). Since only five respondents indicated “other” for gender, we did not run analysis for this category.

Differences by Faculty Disciplines. The analysis also revealed differences in color-neutral racial attitudes by faculty disciplinary area. STEM faculty reported higher color-neutral racial attitudes (and therefore lower awareness) than faculty in humanities, social sciences, and professional schools. More specifically, STEM faculty reported moderate color-neutral racial attitudes toward institutional discrimination, whereas faculty in social sciences, humanities, and professional schools reported low color-neutral racial attitudes on this subscale. STEM faculty, however, reported low color-neutral racial attitudes toward blatant racial issues; yet their scores were still higher than those of faculty from each of the other disciplinary areas (see Table 4). Similarly, the fixed-effects regression models show that when controlling for race and gender, teaching in social sciences ($\beta = -.23$), humanities ($\beta = -.27$), and professional schools ($\beta = -.12$) is associated with lower color-neutral racial attitudes than teaching in a STEM discipline, meaning that faculty who teach in social sciences, humanities, and professional schools report higher levels of racial awareness (see Table 5).

Faculty Color-Neutral Racial Attitudes and Multicultural Teaching Competencies

As a final step in our exploratory study, we wanted to see if faculty race-neutral attitudes predict faculty knowledge and skills for teaching minoritized students. The relationship among the CoBRAS and MTCS constructs revealed significant negative correlations between each of the key constructs (institutional discrimination, blatant racial issues, knowledge,

TABLE 3

Descriptive Statistics for the CoBRAS and MTCS Scales Used in Our Study (n = 631)^a

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
CoBRAS: Institutional discrimination		
Social policies, such as affirmative action, discriminate unfairly against White people.	1.78	1.14
White people in the U.S. are discriminated against because of the color of their skin.	1.58	1.00
English should be the only official language in the U.S.	1.92	1.39
People of color in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.	1.92	1.42
It is important that people begin to think of themselves as American and not African American, Mexican American, Italian American, etc.	2.08	1.37
Due to racial discrimination, programs such as affirmative action are necessary to help create equality. ^{b,†}	0.96	1.17
Immigrants should try to fit into the culture and values of the U.S. [†]	2.65	1.45
CoBRAS: Blatant racial issues		
Racial problems in the U.S. are rare, isolated situations.	1.30	0.78
Talking about racial issues causes unnecessary tension.	2.23	1.28
Racism is a major problem in the U.S. ^b	0.80	1.17
It is important for colleges and universities to teach about the history and contributions of people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. ^b	0.48	0.86
It is important for political leaders to talk about racism to help work through or solve society's problems. ^{b,†}	0.63	0.99
Racism may have been a problem in the past, but it is not an important problem today. [†]	1.32	0.82
MTCS: Skills		
I integrate the cultural values and lifestyles of racially and ethnically minoritized groups into my teaching.	4.13	1.51
I plan campus events to increase students' knowledge about cultural experiences of various racial and ethnic groups.	3.32	1.71
I make changes within the general campus environment so that racially and ethnically minoritized students will have an equal opportunity for success.	4.44	1.35
I rarely examine the instructional materials I use in the classroom for racial and ethnic bias. ^b	3.43	1.51
I often include examples of the experiences and perspectives of racially and ethnically minoritized groups during my classroom lessons.	4.59	1.51
I often promote diversity by the behaviors I exhibit.	4.88	1.05
I plan many activities to celebrate diverse cultural practices in my classroom. [†]	3.72	1.66
My curricula integrate topics and events from racially and ethnically minoritized populations. [†]	4.56	1.51
I consult regularly with other instructors or administrators to help me understand multicultural issues related to instruction. [†]	3.72	1.47
MTCS: Knowledge		
I am knowledgeable about particular teaching strategies that affirm the racial and ethnic identities of all students.	4.14	1.32
I have a clear understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy.	4.41	1.24
I am knowledgeable of how historical experiences of various racial and ethnic groups may affect students' learning.	4.79	1.17
I understand the various communication styles among different racially and ethnically minoritized students in my classroom.	4.27	1.25
I am knowledgeable about racial and ethnic identity theories. [†]	4.44	1.35
I am knowledgeable about the various community resources within the city that I teach. [†]	4.08	1.16

Note. CoBRAS = Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale; MTCS = Multicultural Teaching Competency Scale.

^aAdapted from Neville et al. (2000) and Spanierman et al. (2011). Items from both scales were asked using a Likert-type scale, with answers ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) through 6 (*strongly agree*).

^bThis item was reverse-coded.

[†]This item was included in survey but not in final fixed-effects regression model.

skills; see Table 6). This reveals that higher color-neutral attitudes (and therefore lower awareness of racial issues) are associated with lower multicultural teaching knowledge ($\beta = -.14$ for institutional discrimination; $\beta = -.13$ for blatant

racial issues) and skills ($\beta = -.13$ for institutional discrimination; $\beta = -.14$ for blatant racial issues), even after controlling for other predictors (see Table 5). The fixed-effects regression results explain 25% ($R^2 = .25$) and 29% ($R^2 = .29$) of the

TABLE 4
Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Variables by CoBRAS Subscale (n = 631)

Variables	n	CoBRAS subscale	
		Institutional discrimination	Blatant racial issues
		M (SD)	M (SD)
All respondents	631	1.85 (0.90)	1.20 (0.73)
Faculty of color	226	1.81 (0.85)	1.19 (0.68)
White faculty	396	1.88 (0.92)	1.21 (0.76)
STEM	119	2.23 (0.99)	1.50 (0.80)
Humanities	190	1.69 (0.81)	1.04 (0.72)
Social science	157	1.60 (0.73)	1.05 (0.64)
Professional	140	1.97 (0.91)	1.29 (0.67)
Women	353	1.69 (0.80)	1.09 (0.67)
Men	261	2.06 (0.97)	1.34 (0.79)

Note. Items from both scales were asked using a Likert-type scale, with answers ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) through 6 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores are related to higher levels of color neutrality and therefore lower awareness of racial issues. CoBRAS = Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale; STEM = science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

TABLE 5
Standardized Regression Results for the CoBRAS Subscales (n = 631)

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Institutional discrimination	Blatant racial issues	MTCS knowledge ^a	MTCS skills ^a
Institutional discrimination			-0.14** (0.05)	-0.13** (0.05)
Blatant racial issues			-0.13* (0.05)	-0.14** (0.05)
Faculty of color	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.07 (0.04)	0.19** (0.04)	0.17** (0.04)
Women	-0.12** (0.04)	-0.16** (0.04)	0.02 (0.04)	0.05 (0.04)
Humanities	-0.27** (0.06)	-0.25** (0.06)	0.33** (0.05)	0.41** (0.05)
Social science	-0.23** (0.05)	-0.27** (0.05)	0.24** (0.05)	0.34** (0.05)
Professional	-0.12* (0.05)	-0.10 (0.06)	0.26** (0.05)	0.29** (0.05)
Constant	<.0001 (0.04)	<.0001 (0.04)	<.0001 (0.04)	<.0001 (0.03)
Observations	631	631	631	631
R ²	0.15	0.16	0.25	0.29

Note. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Regressions include institution fixed effects. Based on our descriptive analyses, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) faculty reported higher color-neutral racial attitudes than faculty in the other disciplinary areas (humanities, social sciences, and professional schools). Therefore, the responses of STEM faculty are omitted and serve as the reference category.

^aMTCS refers to the Multicultural Teaching Competency Scale adapted from Spanierman et al. (2011). For Model 3 with only demographic variables R² = .21; Model 4 with only demographic variables, R² = .20.

*p < .05. **p < .01.

TABLE 6
Bivariate Correlations Among CoBRAS and MTCS Constructs (Neville et al., 2000; Spanierman et al., 2011)

Variable	Institutional discrimination	Blatant racial issues	Knowledge	Skills
Institutional discrimination	—			
Blatant racial issues	.59*	—		
Knowledge	-.25*	-.24*	—	
Skills	-.29*	-.28*	0.79*	—

Note. CoBRAS = Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale; MTCS = Multicultural Teaching Competency Scale.

*p < .001.

variance for the multicultural teaching knowledge and skills models, respectively; however, 21% of the variance in the knowledge model and 20% of the variance in the skills model is explained by the demographic variables (see Table 5). Additionally, results from our regression show that faculty of color have higher MTCS scores compared with their White peers ($\beta = .19$ for knowledge; $\beta = .17$ for skills; see Table 5). While our primary focus was the association between the CoBRAS and MTCS constructs, this finding is relevant given that higher color-neutral attitudes is associated with lower multicultural teaching knowledge and skills.

Discussion

Garcia et al. (2019) claim that servingness at HSIs must be enhanced through the “structures for serving.” In this article, we assessed pedagogy as one structure for serving by looking specifically at how color-neutral racial attitudes influence knowledge and skills for teaching minoritized students. Scholars claim that educators who teach minoritized populations must first have a strong understanding of self (e.g., Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995, Paris, 2012). At a basic level, educators must understand their own privileges and positioning in society to work toward a more socially just pedagogy (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). In this exploratory study, we assessed faculty color-neutral racial attitudes, which is one aspect of understanding self. Furthermore, we tested the conceptual link between color-neutral racial attitudes and faculty knowledge and skills for teaching minoritized students.

While faculty at HSIs remain predominantly White (Vargas et al., 2020), and HSIs must work harder to change the composition of its faculty, all faculty within these institutions must grapple with issues of race and racism in the United States and shift their teaching practices to better serve racially and economically minoritized students affected by systems of oppression (Garcia, 2018). There must also be an increased expectation placed on HSIs to recruit and retain faculty who are committed to equity and justice, as the federal government does not mandate this as a requirement to become an HSI (Garcia & Koren, 2020). Moreover, there must be an increased effort to provide professional development for faculty at HSIs to support their efforts to transform their pedagogical approach. The results from this study contribute to the growing literature on pedagogy within HSIs, making an important contribution, despite the limitation of the sample, which is not representative of the entire population of faculty at HSIs or the entire population of HSIs. HSIs are extremely diverse, including public and private, 2-year and 4-year, and a range of sizes from very small to very large (Núñez et al., 2016), with these institutional characteristics presenting a number of pedagogical challenges for faculty (Umbach, 2006).

First, we found that faculty respondents generally had low levels of color-neutral racial attitudes, meaning they had

a high awareness of institutional discrimination and blatant racial issues. We recognize that the small sample of faculty who participated in our study self-selected into the study. As such, we suspect that faculty who participated are more likely to be racially aware and, therefore, have lower color-neutral racial attitudes. Moreover, based on Quinn’s (2017) findings that educators hold fewer negative racial stereotypes than noneducators, we are not surprised that our sample of faculty had low levels of color-neutral racial attitudes. Quinn (2017) found that educators were more likely than noneducators to believe that inequities in outcomes between White and Black people are structural in nature and due to discrimination rather than the result of innate biological traits or lack of motivation. Similarly, in our study, faculty had low beliefs in the myth that White people experience discrimination based on the color of their skin and low beliefs in the idea that people of color receive benefits as a result of their skin color.

Neville et al. (2000) contend that high levels of color-neutral racial attitudes are significantly related to higher levels of racial prejudice; therefore, we can conclude that faculty in our sample have lower levels of racial prejudice, which is a good thing. Yet research suggests that faculty at HSIs continue to hold deficit views of students’ academic ability (Ching, 2019; de los Santos & Cuamea, 2010; Hubbard & Stage, 2009) and continue to commit racial microaggressions in the classroom (Cuellar & Johnson-Ahorlu, 2020; Sanchez, 2019; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Although it was beyond the scope of this study to examine how deficit views of students and the perpetration of racial microaggressions are connected to color-neutral racial attitudes, we suspect that changing racial attitudes is insufficient for changing behaviors. Rochmes et al. (2017), for example, found that even when educators are committed to addressing educational inequities, they continue to hold deficit views of minoritized students and struggle to enact strategies that actually disrupt these inequities. Moreover, although Neville et al. (2000) assessed desirability bias and found the instrument to be reliable, it is possible that faculty in our sample self-reported based on their sense of a “right” answer, and therefore, their color-neutral racial attitudes could actually be higher.

Similar to Su and Behar-Horenstein (2017), who did not find statistically significant differences between color-neutral racial attitudes of White faculty and faculty of color, the differences between White faculty and faculty of color in our sample were statistically insignificant for the awareness of institutional discrimination and blatant racial issues scales. A larger sample, though, may have yielded differences, as statistical significance was almost reached on the blatant racial issues scale. Our focus on faculty at HSIs may account for similarities in these lower color-neutral attitudes among faculty of color and White faculty. Researchers have noted that compared with peers at non-HSIs, slightly more faculty at HSIs conduct research with and about racial-ethnic groups

(Hurtado & Ruiz Alvarado, 2015). Moreover, research has documented that faculty at HSIs are in fact making changes to their pedagogical practices in response to the changing demographics in their classrooms (e.g., Castillo-Montoya, 2019; Ching, 2019; Garcia, 2016; Núñez et al., 2010). Although research has not explored the reasons why faculty choose to work at an HSI, faculty of color and White faculty, alike, may be drawn to teach in an HSI where they can consistently engage with minoritized student populations. Finally, Su and Behar-Horenstein (2017) found that there were significant differences on all three scales of the CoBRAS for faculty when compared with students, suggesting that age, experience, and/or educational attainment may account for more differences in color-neutral racial attitudes than race.

The data also revealed potential differences in color-neutral racial attitudes by gender. Although we recognize that women are slightly overrepresented in our sample compared with the overall compositional diversity of the institutions in our sample, our results support previous studies that found women to be more responsive to societal inequities than men as evidenced by their color-neutral racial attitudes (Hughes et al., 2016; Neville et al., 2000); however, more recent studies using the CoBRAS to examine beliefs about affirmative action found no differences in racial awareness between women and men (Oh et al., 2010). Neville et al. (2000) posit that women may have lower color neutrality (and higher awareness of race) as a result of their experiences with discrimination on the basis of gender. This is an important finding, as we must consider that systems of oppression often work in concert with one another to create cacophonous (and often dangerous) environments that support dominant ideologies such as color neutrality (Apfelbaum et al., 2012; Stewart & Nicolazzo, 2018). Since women in our sample had higher racial awareness than men, gender might be considered one salient identity that can be used to combat color neutrality (Apfelbaum et al., 2012).

To our knowledge, previous studies have not used the CoBRAS to examine faculty color-neutral racial attitudes by disciplinary area. Yet there are studies that show that discipline of the faculty does affect things such as assessment of student learning outcomes (Swarat et al., 2017), suggesting that exploring disciplinary differences on other pedagogical practices are appropriate. Our findings show that disciplinary areas may be predictors of faculty racial awareness. The color-neutral racial attitudes of the STEM faculty in our sample were moderate for racial attitudes toward institutional discrimination and low for racial attitudes toward blatant racial issues, yet they still had lower awareness of these issues than faculty in other disciplines. Scholars have found that STEM faculty express less commitment to promoting racial understanding compared with other fields and posit this may be due to a lower representation of students of color and less immediate connection to diversity in STEM (Park & Denson, 2009). It is also possible that STEM research and

academic training do not actively challenge faculty conceptions of racial prejudice. Our findings may also be partially explained by the overrepresentation of men in STEM, who express higher color-neutral attitudes.

Finally, we explored the connection between color-neutral racial attitudes and faculty self-perception of knowledge and skills for teaching minoritized students. This was exploratory, knowing that researchers contend that educators must first understand the challenges that racially minoritized students face as a result of institutional discrimination and blatant racial issues before they can enact culturally relevant pedagogies (e.g., Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012). Like previous research (e.g., Burden et al., 2015; Neville et al., 2006), the results showed that having lower color-neutral attitudes, and therefore higher awareness of racial issues, is associated with greater knowledge and skills for teaching minoritized students. This supports the notion that faculty at HSIs must grapple with their color-neutral racial attitudes as a part of their process for enhancing their pedagogy for teaching at an HSI.

Implications for Research and Practice

Given the limited research on faculty racial attitudes, particularly at HSIs, our study provides several implications for research and practice. With a growing number of institutions becoming HSIs, and a continued effort to understand the structural changes that are necessary to enhance servingness (Garcia, 2018, 2019; Garcia et al., 2019), scholars should continue to examine faculty's color-neutral attitudes in this institutional context.

Future studies should account for a range of individual and institutional characteristics that may uncover differences in faculty's racial attitudes. Specifically, future studies should target a larger sample, which may yield more variability in responses, such as more moderate and higher color-neutral attitudes. These larger samples should also include a greater representation of minoritized faculty from various racial groups and other social identities. The sample size of transgender and nonbinary faculty in our study, for example, was too small for analysis, but this is an area for future research. Similarly, additional exploration of disciplinary differences is warranted. While the exploratory nature of this study does not enable us to conclusively attribute lower racial awareness to STEM faculty, we offer this association as a guide to future research on faculty racial awareness. There must also be a greater effort to understand pedagogy across different types of HSIs, such as community colleges and liberal arts institutions, as teaching practices do vary by institutional type (Umbach, 2006).

Building on our cross-sectional design, future studies should examine faculty's color-neutral racial attitudes over time to determine the stability or malleability of these attitudes. Related to this point, scholars should explore possible connections between other variables that may explain

changes in faculty's initial racial attitudes and how these may change over time. For instance, studies should consider how professional development changes color-neutral racial attitudes along with other variables to identify influential factors that may enhance or impede more race-conscious perspectives. Refusing to acknowledge the racialized experiences of students of color can contribute to microaggressions that alienate and harm minoritized individuals who are already subject to an unequal power dynamic as a consequence of their student status (Neville et al., 2013). Further exploration of the connection between color-neutral racial attitudes and negative perceptions and experiences in the classroom, such as deficit narratives and microaggressions, must also be explored, as we were unable to make these connections with our analysis. This type of analysis would require the collection of student experiences within the classroom, which was beyond the scope of our study. More advanced analysis, including multilevel modeling, should also look at the connection of faculty color-neutral racial attitudes to student outcomes in the classroom, which would also require the collection of student-level data, including students' demographics and their academic outcomes.

Our study also offers insights for practice. Although Garcia (2018) argues that HSIs must support faculty as they rethink their pedagogical approaches for teaching minoritized students, faculty development must be more complex. For example, institutions should provide space for faculty to explore their own racial attitudes, as these can either facilitate or hinder the adoption of more inclusive teaching practices (Aragón et al., 2017). Garmon (2005) underscores the importance of understanding predispositions in attempts to shift pre-service teacher's attitudes about diversity, which is likely true for postsecondary faculty as well. The extent to which preservice teachers, and in this case faculty, are self-reflective and committed to social justice will shape how much learning they will have about all forms of diversity (racial, gender, religious, etc.; Garmon, 2005). As such, individuals involved in creating faculty development opportunities must recognize faculty's initial racial attitudes to cultivate learning opportunities that effectively challenge color-neutral perspectives.

Our findings also suggest the importance of implementing varied approaches to better support faculty development by fields of study. The development of multidisciplinary faculty learning communities is one way to help faculty in various disciplines support each other in their process of becoming more race conscious. Efforts should thus be made to encourage and incentivize faculty participation in various types of professional development (Garcia, 2018).

Conclusion

As HSIs grapple with servingness, enhancing the pedagogy of faculty is a core element. Faculty racial attitudes are

integral to multicultural, culturally relevant, and social justice pedagogies, as these attitudes can either enhance or impede the adoption of these teaching practices. Faculty must be critically aware of the ways in which racially minoritized students continue to encounter institutional discrimination and racial bias in order to effectively teach them. By understanding these individual-level attitudes, HSIs can more effectively develop approaches to support faculty in order to achieve the type of pedagogical transformation that reflects servingness.

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