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### Authors

Pearce, Jone L

Wang, Carrie

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**Favoritism in the Federal Workplace:  
Are Rules the Solution?**

**Jone L. Pearce and Carrie Wang  
University of California, Irvine**

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## **Favoritism in the Federal Workplace:**

### **Are Rules the Solution?**

#### **Abstract**

We develop and test a more comprehensive theory of the sources and effects of workplace favoritism by drawing on a large, agency-wide sample of U.S. Federal Aviation Administration employees. We report how members of various underrepresented groups differ in their perceptions of a variety of sources of favoritism. We find that their perceptions of friendship favoritism are an important source of perception of workplace favoritism for all employees. We show that perceptions of favoritism are negatively associated with employee trust in their organizations and coworkers, commitment to their organizations, willingness to speak up, and pay satisfaction, with friendship favoritism significantly dominating over most other sources. Further, we find that team leaders, supervisors, managers, and executives, with their greater knowledge of organizational processes, report less favoritism. This and previous research provide practical guidance on how greater transparency may reduce employee perceptions of favoritism in the federal workforce while avoiding discredited formalistic constraints.

## **Favoritism in the Federal Workplace:**

### **Are Rules the Solution?**

#### **Introduction**

In recent years, scholars have questioned the neutrality of formal bureaucratic practices purporting to provide an unbiased assessment of an employee's merit (HR) (e.g., Portillo, Bearfield, & Humphrey, 2020) and have called for less biased human resources practices (e.g., Brewer, & Walker, 2013; Hays, & Sowa, 2006; Kearney, & Cogburn, 2016) in order to foster an equitable workplace. These scholars have been joined by policy makers who have called for less cumbersome and more flexible HR practices in federal employment. Thus, the traditional formal government HR practices are changing in response, reflecting Mengistu and Vogel's (2003) claims that bureaucratic practices necessarily shift as societal preferences and values change. As government employees consider equity to be a central value in how they construct meaning in their workplaces (Sowa, 2016; Cogburn, Daley, Jameson, & Berry-James, 2020), these ongoing changes potentially foster uncertainty about important human resources management (HRM) practices and whether the changes do in fact reflect more equity in HR decision-making. Al-Aiban and Pearce (1993) argued that meritocracy is also a core value for Americans, and citizens expected their governments to represent their core values more than businesses do. Furthermore, governments do critical life and death work that requires competence. Both are important reasons why governments took the lead in seeking ways to have merit, not favoritism, govern equitable personnel decisions (Inghram, 1995).

The importance of fostering equity and competence by limiting favoritism in federal employment is evident in the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), which oversees policies to "consider current and former federal employees for positions on the basis of personal merit," which

is defined as “their experience, education, skills, and performance record” (<https://www.dol.gov/general/jobs/understanding-the-federal-hiring-process>). Recently, the definition of merit in U.S. federal employment has shifted from an early focus on eliminating political interference in the hiring and promotion of employees to now include the goal of “provid[ing] a federal workforce reflective of the Nation’s diversity” (PL95-454, section 3, 2301 (b)(1)) and providing equitable access to job opportunities for everyone. However, there is evidence that this goal is undermined by many traditional formal HR practices (see Bishu & Kennedy, 2019, for a review).

Federal employment practices have a long history rooted in traditional formal policies and practices such as competitive examinations, which on the surface seemed to promote merit but research demonstrated otherwise. While the goal of unbiased merit remains a central value in government service (Cogburn, et al., 2020), recent scholars have documented how a history of racism (Portillo et al., 2020) and gender bias (Smith-Doerr, et al., 2019) was built into formal practices in promotions and pay that had only the veneer of unbiased objectivity. Evidence presented in court cases has demonstrated that practices, such as standardized tests, were shown to not be predictive of job performance, but instead advantaged White applicants (e.g., *Griggs v. Duke Power Company*, 1971). Further, Johnson and Lewis (2020) found that traditional competitive examinations are no better at predicting subsequent employee performance and promotions than managerial direct hire authority, outstanding scholar programs, and veteran recruitment practices, all of which give more discretion to managers. Yet, the formal traditional practice of competitive examinations has long been the cornerstone of insuring that government employees believe they are hired and promoted based on merit (Poocharoen & Brillantes, 2013).

Simultaneously, due to the cumbersome nature of formal bureaucratic policies and practices, policy makers have demanded more flexibility to improve speed and efficiency,

introducing practices that can inherently increase managerial discretion. Such discretion can inadvertently introduce yet more opportunities for favoritism (see Castilla, 2008). This is reflected in Smith-Doerr et al.'s (2019) finding that despite standardized pay scales in federal employment, men were more likely than women in the same jobs to be paid off grade and so, had higher salaries. In addition, Scoppa (2009) found substantial managerial discretion that led the children of public employees in Italy to be more likely to be hired there, especially if they were of "low ability." With formal HR policies being questioned and eliminated at the local and federal levels (DiIulio, 1994; Johnson & Lewis, 2020), the increase in managerial discretion creates uncertainty that has the potential to exacerbate actual and suspected workplace favoritism.

A more comprehensive theory of the sources of workplace favoritism suggesting a fresh approach to HRM that reduces favoritism and suspicions of favoritism for all employees is needed. Drawing on a large study of US Federal Aviation Administration employees at all levels, we combine evidence from the existing literature to study employee perceptions of differing sources of workplace favoritism in order to demonstrate how perceptions of favoritism can negatively impact employee trust in their organizations and their coworkers, commitment to their organizations, willingness to speak up, and pay satisfaction in an environment of increasingly less formal traditional HRM systems. We propose that employees' perceptions of favoritism are influenced by their uncertainty about why personnel decisions are made, especially as the movement away from formal HR practices towards managerial discretion results in less information about why the decisions were made. Further, we pay particular attention to a less-studied type of workplace favoritism, friendship favoritism, suggesting that because it is less visible than more commonly studied sources of favoritism, it is particularly subject to favoritism perceptions when employees are uncertain about why decisions were made. Then, we directly examine the presence and effects of perceptions of workplace favoritism among employees in a

wide range of ethnicities and at all hierarchical levels. Our central research questions are first, what are the dominant sources of workplace favoritism? Second, what are the implications of perceptions of workplace favoritism for employee attitudes? Finally, we employ our theorizing and evidence to suggest an alternative to formalistic approaches that have the potential to reduce actual and perceived workplace favoritism.

## **Theoretical Background and Hypotheses**

### *Perceptions of Favoritism*

The study of favoritism is quite recent and is primarily found in the general management literature. Balliett, Wu, and De Dreu (2014) defined favoritism as the policies or decision-makers in the workplace favoring and rewarding certain others more, perceiving that they work harder, and using criteria other than merit to hire, assign tasks, and promote. Employees' assessments of favoritism in their workplaces could be based on generalizing from one event or from over time observations of practices, rumors, or reputations; perceived workplace favoritism is a gestalt of all of these. Favoritism is a form of bias and in some cases, the terms bias and favoritism are used interchangeably, as by Sutter and Kocher (2004) and DiTomaso (2015).

Another line of favoritism research is Hennessy and West's (1999) focus on what they called in-group favoritism, in which intergroup competition and weak organizational identification lead to more in-group favoritism. However, our focus is broader than groups and includes other sources of workplace favoritism. In addition, there has been substantial research on perceived workplace injustice. Our definition of perceived workplace favoritism is distinct from the concept of injustice because of the ways injustice has been defined and studied in the literature. Distributive justice is the perception that allocations, such as pay, have not been just (Adams, 1965), without specifying why individuals might see them as unjust, since workers might feel they deserved more. Procedural

justice is the perception that the procedures used in organizational allocations are judged as just, distinct from the outcomes of those procedures (Leventhal, Karuza, & Fry, 1980), such as when some believe experience should be weighted more heavily than prior education in setting salaries. Lastly, interactional injustice is the perception that the ways the allocation procedures have been enacted were done without respect for the individuals (Bies & Moag, 1986); however, powerful individuals may bestow rewards on their favorites without disrespect for the non-beneficiaries. Taken together, favoritism is distinct from injustice and is more narrowly defined concept.

Workplace favoritism perceptions can arise from the use of non-merit criteria that include political favoritism, in which decisions are based on the employee's political views or connections; homophily or similarity-attraction bias, in which preferences are given to employees who are similar to the decision maker (Byrne, 1971); status threats, in which those in dominant groups seek to limit those in other groups to maintain their own higher status (Pearce & Xu, 2012); and the effects of friendships or "the buddy system" (Bridge & Baxter, 1992). However, while scholars have explored many possible reasons for perceptions of workplace favoritism (e.g., Pearce & Wang, 2019; Solomon, Hall, & Muir, 2021), they have not systematically addressed the effects of perceptions of differing favoritism in workplaces or tested theory about how that may be addressed without now-discredited and constraining formal practices.

In this study, the growing research on diversity and favoritism in the federal workforce is extended by testing arguments that perceptions of favoritism are not confined to the widely studied demography-based favoritism but include other sources of workplace favoritism that potentially have been underplayed due to a (legitimate) focus on more visible demographic characteristics. Our database and measures allow us to take a more fine-grained perspective on the issue of workplace favoritism in federal employment based on a census administered to all United States



Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) employees.<sup>1</sup> We have a large sample of employees in numerous underrepresented groups that have been neglected in previous diversity research, no doubt due to their small numbers in most samples, as well as detailed reports of differing sources of favoritism. In addition, we can test our proposal that it is a lack of transparency in HRM decision-making that can account for employees' persisting perceptions of favoritism. Thus, we contribute to the nascent literature on alternatives to traditional formal approaches to insuring equity, indeed and in perception, in public sector employment.

### *Demography and Friendships*

With attention to develop more representative government workplaces, favoritism based on the demographic characteristics of race, ethnicity, and gender in federal employment has been growing. However, it is our contention that perceptions of workplace favoritism in the public sector are not confined to perceptions of favoritism based on demographic characteristics alone but can be attributed to other sources. These differences in perceived sources of favoritism have important implications for policies and practices to foster equity. Examples of non-demographic favoritism can include political, homophily, status threats, and the buddy system, as mentioned above. First, while the political favoritism of the spoils system still exists in pockets of U.S. local governments, it is now rare in federal workplaces like the FAA with its life-or-death responsibilities, and so are not addressed here. For favoritism based on homophily and status threat, Foley and Williamson (2019) found that Australian managers and executives in the public-sector reported cultural-fit favoritism. For favoritism based on friendships, Bridge and Baxter (1992) found that friendships at work led coworkers to perceive more favoritism in their workplaces. Further, Pillemer and Rothbard's (2018) wide-ranging review of research in all sectors found that workplace friendships

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<sup>1</sup> The agency requested to be identified in all publications.

were seen as undermining formal policies intended to suppress favoritism. This growing body of research on the sources of favoritism suggests that we need to better understand perceptions of different sources of workplace favoritism in the federal workplace.

We expect that federal employees in underrepresented ethnic and gender groups will likely attribute their perceptions of favoritism to demographic differences such as national origin, race, color, and gender due to their past experiences. For example, Foschi (2000) found that people infer competence based on demographic characteristics, such that the performance of employees in racial and ethnic minority groups were not rated as highly. In a meta-analysis of ten field studies, Martocchio and Whitner (1992) found that Black/African-American employees were rated lower than White employees on both objective and subjective performance criteria; a similar but smaller differential was found for Hispanic employees (Roth, Huffcutt, & Bobko, 2003). Finally, drawing on a random sample of the Central Personnel Data File from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Lewis (1997) found that Black/African-American, Native American, Hispanic, and Asian men received lower performance appraisal ratings than did White men. We also draw from studies that have shown gender discrimination. Nelson and Piatak (2021) found that women from underrepresented ethnic and racial minority groups were less likely to see their workplaces as fair, open, and supportive. None of these studies could determine whether there were any actual performance differences among these groups and thus, could suggest that there is genuine ethnic or gender favoritism in the federal workplace.

Moreover, under uncertainty, members of underrepresented groups may develop explanations based not only on their own observations and past experiences but also on the experiences of family and friends. Throughout their careers, members of ethnic and gender minority groups will have experienced, seen, and heard family and friends describe demography-based favoritism in ostensibly merit-based organizations. All these reactions to uncertainty can be

exacerbated by the increasing use of HR policies such as direct hire authority, in which it is less clear why someone was hired than it is with the traditional formal procedures which, despite their ethnic and gender biases, made it clear why someone was hired or promoted. Therefore, consistent with previous research, we expect that these underrepresented employees will more likely attribute the favoritism they perceive to be based on visible demographic reasons than would White men.

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Native American<sup>2</sup>, Asian, Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and Black/African-American employees will perceive significantly more national origin, race, and color favoritism than will White men, and White women will report more gender favoritism than will White men.

The nascent research in multiple sectors on favoritism has focused on workplace friendships as a source of perceptions of favoritism. Support for this argument can be found in research findings that friendships between supervisors and subordinates can lead to perceptions of favoritism, because people assume supervisors will help their friends rather than those whose work is the most meritorious (Methot, LePine, Podsakoff, & Christian, 2016; Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018). Note that this is an assertion based on uncertainty about why decisions were made. Previous research has shown that friendships form in the workplace for several reasons and have implications in the workplace. One is propinquity, or because those who are physically near each other interact more frequently (e.g., Sacerdote & Maramaraos, 2005). Second is homophily, or attraction to those who are more like us (Byrne, 1971; Leonard, Mehra, & Katerberg, 2008; Ertug, et al., 2022), resulting in the widespread observation that employees who are like their supervisors receive higher performance appraisal ratings (Pulakos & Wexley, 1983; Bauer & Baltes, 2002). Public service employees value equity, and so we expect that favoritism based on friendships

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<sup>2</sup> The survey offered the option “American Indian or Native Alaskan” which here we call “Native American.”

would be seen as a violation of employees' core values. When employees are uncertain about why HR decisions were made, we suggest that their primary focus will be to assume these were made based on friendships<sup>3</sup> with decision makers.

Of course, homophily overlaps with ethnicity and gender, and so, there is a risk that friendship favoritism could account for the previously documented race, ethnicity, and gender favoritism perceptions in the literature. Research on homophily has assumed that mere similarity can account for the well-documented higher performance ratings supervisors give to those who are demographically similar to themselves (see also, Robertson, Galvin, & Charles, 2007; Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989). However, given the recent research that documents the concerns employees have about the impact of friendship favoritism at work, it could be that various other kinds of homophily lead to friendships. Certainly, demographic characteristics are not the only reasons people may be similar to one another. They may have come from the same region, enjoy the same television shows and sports teams, and any other number of possible similarities that may attract people to one another. Thus, friendships could be at least a partial explanation for the race, ethnicity, and gender effects on employee assessments. If this is so, it has several theoretical and practical implications.

Especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century federal employment, demography favoritism in HRM systems is a serious violation of the values of federal employment. However, if the real source of favoritism is the less visible homophily-based friendships, a focus on demography favoritism alone not only avoids directly addressing an important source of workplace favoritism, but it also risks blowback and resentment among the very people whose behavior we wish to change (Gooden, 2014; Leslie, 2019), it also can detract from solutions that can address workplace favoritism broadly. While members of underrepresented ethnic and gender minority groups may have reasons

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<sup>3</sup> The survey offered the option "Buddy System" which here we call "Friendship" consistent with the literature.

to attribute decisions that were perceived as unclear and wrong to their demographic characteristics, we propose that their perceptions of national origin, race, color, and gender favoritism will significantly overlap with perceptions of friendship favoritism.

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** Perceptions of friendship favoritism will correlate significantly with perceptions of other types of workplace favoritism.

### *Transparency Matters*

There are increasing opportunities for favoritism in reforms that allow more managerial discretion, fostering more potential employee uncertainty about why decisions were made. A lack of transparency fosters rumors and speculations (Rosnow & Fine, 1976). Uncertainty can foster perceptions of favoritism independently of any actual favoritism. We know people seek to make sense of what is happening around them (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005) and will assign reasons to ambiguous actions regardless of whether the reasons are right or wrong. The fundamental attribution error states that people tend to attribute unclear actions to other people (e.g., that managers play favorites) rather than to situations (Jones, 1974). Lind and van den Bos (2002) found that when faced with uncertainty, people preferred reasons based on interpersonal justice rather than the more abstract, rules-based procedural justice. The authors posited that this is because people seek to establish a sense of personal control in uncertain situations by turning to more concrete “people” rather than abstract “procedures.” Indeed, Castilla (2008) found that ostensibly meritocratic promotion evaluations significantly disadvantaged members of racial minority groups if the procedures had “limited transparency and accountability.”

If uncertainty is driving these perceptions of workplace favoritism, we would expect those in supervisory and managerial positions to perceive less favoritism than non-supervisors. We expect managers to perceive less workplace favoritism because they are less uncertain about why a decision was made. Supervisors and managers have had more briefings on personnel matters,

and so, they have more information about the decision-making. They have heard the arguments and seen the evidence, and thus, more HRM decisions are simply more transparent to supervisors and managers. Our database includes employees in all hierarchical ranks, allowing us to test whether the lack of knowledge of why HR decisions are made may be one source of favoritism perceptions. If this is the case, it could suggest practical approaches to addressing employees' perceptions of workplace favoritism.

**Hypothesis 3 (H3):** Non-supervisory employees will perceive more favoritism in their workplaces than will team leaders, supervisors, managers, and executives.

#### *Effects of Perceived Favoritisms*

We conclude by testing whether perceptions of the sources of favoritism differentially matter for employees' attitudes. Coggburn, et al. (2020) found that merit-based decisions are a fundamental value of federal employment. Therefore, we would expect such a fundamental violation of public employees' values such as favoritism to have effects on a wide-ranging number of employee attitudes toward their organizations and coworkers. Here we test five workplace attitudes that have long been associated with employee well-being and behavior. First, we expect perceptions of workplace favoritism to be associated with employees' psychologically distancing themselves from their organizations. Equity is a universal value, and an organization that is seen as inequitable is one that employees would not want to associate with, and so an apparent violation of such an important value would lead to a distancing of the self from the organization. This psychological distancing is particularly worrisome in public services because many employees are motivated to take government jobs to serve the public and want to work for an organization that shares their values (see Perry, 2000; Asseburg & Homburg, 2020). This psychological distancing may be manifested in two different ways that are tested here. We propose that employees seeing more favoritism would be less committed to their organization. Organizational commitment has

been associated with stronger employee effort and conscientiousness (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Lee & Lee, 2021). This also is consistent with Hur and Perry's (2020) finding that a breach in government employees' psychological contracts resulted in less organizational commitment, and we would consider favoritism in these workplaces to be perceived as such a breach.

Another way employees may psychologically distance themselves from their organizations is by having less trust in it. If favoritism in government workplaces is a violation of employees' trust in their organizations, the literature suggests that trust violations result in less trust in the violator (Folger & Konovsky, 1989; Pearce & Klein, 2017). Because merit is a core value of federal employment, we expect that a violation of this value via favoritism will be associated employees having less trust in their organizations.

Second, we expect favoritism perceptions will be reflected in less inclination to speak up about issues that employees believe should be addressed. The more employees perceive favoritism in their workplaces, the more they will be motivated to become "favorites" and be less willing to exercise voice to correct errors, as was found by Pearce, Branyczki, and Bigley (2000) in Hungarian state-owned organizations. In these organizations, when employees believed favoritism was responsible for who received promotions and resources, they focused their attention on currying favor with managers and were reluctant to make an enemy of the powerful by speaking up (see also, Pearce, 2001).

Third, because uncertain employees tend to attribute decisions to people rather than more abstract causes (Lind & Van den Bos, 2002), when they believe there is workplace favoritism, they may suspect their coworkers have received non-meritorious advantages. Such resentment can easily reduce their trust in those coworkers, as was found by Carnevale and Wechsler (1992). Following Pearce's (2001) findings that workplace favoritism breeds distrust in coworkers in her large sample of organizations studied in three different countries, we would expect to find it here

in the FAA as well. Distrust of coworkers can be particularly worrisome in government workplaces because collaboration and trust are central to providing critical services.

Finally, we have long known that pay satisfaction is largely driven by social comparisons with what others receive (e.g., Bloom, 1999; Card, Mas, Moretti, & Saez, 2012). This suggests that if employees feel that others are receiving opportunities or promotions based on favoritism, they will become less satisfied with their own pay (Andrews & Henry, 1963). Taken together, favoritism is not only a violation of strongly held values but also can drive negative effects of unfavorable attitudes toward their organizations, reluctance to correct errors via speaking up, distrust towards their coworkers they feel are possible beneficiaries of favoritism, and negative social comparisons affecting pay satisfaction.

What is more, if friendship favoritism is a core violation of employees' sense of their public service values, we would expect these hypothesized negative associations to be significantly stronger for perceptions of friendship favoritism than for the other sources of favoritism. If workplace friendship favoritism is indeed a more widely seen and disliked source of workplace favoritism, we would expect it also to have significantly stronger negative relationships with organizational commitment and trust, exercising voice, coworker trust, and pay satisfaction than the other sources of workplace favoritism, even after accounting for the perceptions of demography-based favoritism of underrepresented ethnic minorities and women.

**Hypothesis 4 (H4):** Perceived favoritism based on friendship will have stronger negative associations with organizational commitment and trust, a willingness to voice concerns, pay satisfaction, and coworker trust than will any of the other perceived sources of workplace favoritism, controlling for employee ethnicity and gender.

## **Method**



### *Sample and Data*

While many professions are represented in this 2006 census of FAA employees, most of the employees are air traffic controllers; all are U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Overall, 18,762 employees responded to the survey distributed to all FAA employees, constituting a response rate of 42%. Because not all surveys were fully completed and given that we are trying to study perceptions of favoritism, there is a concern that people who perceive favoritism might not answer all the questions, and so pairwise deletion was used. This initially resulted in a total of 14,598 observations for our analyses. Respondents were free to select more than one ethnicity (e.g., Hispanic and White). Rather than double counting these samples in the different ethnicity groups, we separated them in a Mixed group, because we expect the Mixed group to experience the workplace differently compared to one ethnicity or another. However, the Mixed group had a very low sample size with only 417 employee responses. So, we decided to drop this group, resulting in a final sample size of 14,181 for our hypotheses testing. Table 1 presents the raw total numbers of respondents, and percentages of employees by ethnicity, gender, and rank, all of which were self-reported.

--- Insert Table 1 about here ---

### *Measures*

The data used in this report were created from a commercial employee morale survey originally designed to assess employee attitudes, perceptions, and opinions regarding a variety of organizational issues that affect work performance and quality of work life.

*Sources of Workplace Favoritism.* The question used part of the measure of perceived sources of workplace favoritism is presented in Table 2. Each perceived source of favoritism is a nominal item for each source of favoritism. The participant can disagree or agree and select more than one of the listed sources. For coding, each source was created as its own dummy variable. If

the participant initially chose the response, “No,” for not having been unfairly denied a career opportunity because of factors not related to job performance, all the dummy variables were coded zero. If participants initially chose “Yes” and selected one or more sources as the reason for being denied a career opportunity, each of the dummy variables for the selected sources was coded one. For sources not selected, those dummy variables were coded zero.

---Insert Table 2 about here---

Note that not all sources of favoritism listed in Table 2 are present in the Tables nor in the rest of our analyses, namely, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, religion, and political affiliation. We dropped these variables due to their low standard deviations, which were all below 0.1 unit. Comparisons of correlation or beta coefficients of variables with high standard deviations and those with variables of low standard deviations introduce distortions in the analyses needed to test Hypothesis 4. Specifically, the same effect size of a unit increase in a coefficient will seem five times larger in a variable with high standard deviation ( $SD=0.5$ ) compared to a variable with low standard deviation ( $SD=0.1$ ). To address this illusion, we chose to drop these five variables with low standard deviations. Note that this also means that, other than friendship favoritism, only the visible sources of favoritism remain, something that could account for the substantially lower reporting of these dropped sources of favoritism.

*Attitudinal Measures.* All attitudinal scale items were created using exploratory principal component analyses. We refined the scales by dropping items based on three principles: 1) single items were dropped if they loaded as the only item of a component; 2) items belonging to components that were uninterpretable scales were dropped; and 3) items that cross loaded heavily in other components (loadings of more than 0.4 in more than one component) were dropped. We reverse coded the two items that constituted Voice, such that a higher value indicates employees' inclination to voice their concerns to management. The principal component analyses, final scale

items, and the inter-item reliability coefficients are presented in Table 3; they all show strong convergent and discriminant validity. The intercorrelations between the sources of favoritism, self-reported gender and ethnicity, and attitudes, along with their means and standard deviations, can be found in Table 4. This table also presents the percentages, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of the different sources of favoritism. For example, the mean of total responses to whether there is friendship favoritism is 0.132, which means that 13.2% of the employees perceived friendship favoritism in their workplace.

--- Insert Tables 3 and 4 about here ---

## **Results**

### *Demography and Friendships*

Hypothesis 1 stated that self-identified Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and Black/African-American federal employees will perceive significantly more national origin, race, and color favoritism, and White women will perceive more gender favoritism than will White men. Table 5 presents the linear regressions (OLS) that tested for differences in perceptions of different sources of favoritism between the various demographic groups and White men using a nominal dummy variable. As White men was the reference group, it was coded 0 for the nominal dummy variable. The regression coefficient for each demographic group is then interpreted as the difference in perception of a source of favoritism between that particular demographic group and White men.

--- Insert Table 5 about here ---

As presented in Table 5, we find that this hypothesis was strongly supported. Native American, Asian, Hispanic, and Black/African American employees did indeed perceive significantly more national origin and race workplace favoritism as expected, as indicated by the

positive and significant regression coefficients. White women did report significantly more gender favoritism as predicted, as indicated by the positive and significant regression coefficient. However, Pacific Islander employees see only significantly more national origin favoritism than White men but not the predicted racial favoritism. Moreover, only Black/African American employees perceived workplace favoritism based on color. Overall, these results are consistent with our hypothesis that when uncertain, members of underrepresented groups will attribute workplace favoritism to visible characteristics than will White men.

For Hypothesis 2, we proposed that employees' perceptions of friendship favoritism will correlate significantly with perceptions of other sources of favoritism in their workplaces. In Table 4, we can see that perceptions of friendship favoritism are significantly correlated with perceptions of all other sources of workplace favoritism. Friendship favoritism has the highest correlation with union affiliation favoritism, which is consistent with propinquity and homophily driving friendships given that union gatherings are places where people interact and have a common interest. These significant correlations are consistent with our argument that perceptions of friendship favoritism are at least partially confounded with much of the documented racial, ethnicity, and gender bias in the literature. This has implications for addressing workplace favoritism as noted in the Discussion.

### *Transparency Matters*

Hypothesis 3 proposed that non-supervisory employees will perceive more of all sources of favoritism in their workplaces than will team leaders, supervisors, managers, and executives. Controlling for demographic characteristics, we used OLS to test differences in perceptions of non-supervisors, which were the reference group, against perceptions of team leaders, supervisors, managers and executives. Evident in Table 6, Hypothesis 4 was largely supported; those with access to more personnel information were less likely to see all sources of workplace favoritism, with

national origin favoritism the only exception. This points to the possibly important role of decision information to perceptions of workplace favoritism.

--- Insert Table 6 about here ---

### *Effects of Perceived Favoritism*

In our final Hypothesis 4, perceived friendship favoritism was proposed to have significantly stronger negative associations with organizational commitment, organizational trust, coworker trust, exercising voice, and pay satisfaction than would any of the other perceived sources of workplace favoritism. We used multiple linear regressions (MLR) to better show the expected differences in the associations between, for example, organizational commitment and friendship versus organizational commitment and other sources of favoritism. We also controlled for demographic characteristics in these regressions. The results are presented in Table 7a. We then tested for significance in the differences in the associations with employee attitudes by comparing the regression coefficients of friendship favoritism with other sources of favoritism in Table 7b.

--- Insert Tables 7a and 7b about here ---

As can be seen in Tables 7a and 7b, this hypothesis was partially supported. First, friendship favoritism had the predicted negative associations with organizational commitment and trust, coworker trust, exercising voice, and pay satisfaction (see Table 7a). Second, to test Hypothesis 4, after controlling for ethnicity and gender, friendship favoritism was, overall, a significantly stronger predictor of organizational trust, a willingness to exercise voice, coworker trust, and pay satisfaction. However, for organizational commitment, gender and union affiliation were stronger predictors, while friendship favoritism was not stronger than the other sources of favoritism. Moreover, for organizational trust and pay satisfaction, friendship favoritism was not

more strongly associated than union affiliation favoritism. These findings are discussed in the next section.

Taken together, these results suggest that friendship favoritism is a concern. Perhaps because it has been masked by a focus that is on the more visible demographic characteristics, friendship favoritism has not received the attention it merits. This preliminary evidence suggests that non-supervisors' lack of information about why HR decisions have been made could be a contributor to their greater perceptions of favoritism. These issues are discussed in the next section.

## **Discussion**

There is no question that workplace favoritism contributes to the persistence of inequity in government employment. Despite a long history of traditional formal policies to increase equity and suppress workplace favoritism in public sector employment, we found that substantial proportions of employees still believe there is workplace favoritism in the federal agency studied, the FAA. Given the increasing pressures from policy makers to provide more discretion to public sector managers, it is likely that employee suspicions (and the actual practice) of workplace favoritism could get worse. Perceptions of favoritism do exist in this organization and are associated with negative attitudes toward their organization, their coworkers, their willingness to express their voice about workplace problems and their pay satisfaction. This is of particular concern because the dominant employee group in the FAA (air traffic controllers) have few alternative employment options and so, would be unlikely to leave the organization. As Krackhardt and Porter (1985) found, the presence of unhappy employees spreads unhappiness to their coworkers and uncertainty is fertile ground for suspicions of favoritism. Drawing on a large diverse sample, we were able to identify different sources of workplace favoritism, the perceptions of

members of ethnic minority groups who have not received much attention in the literature, and perceptions of favoritism with regards to an employee's supervisory or managerial status. We found that White men were more likely to see union affiliation favoritism but were blind to the national origin, race, and gender favoritism that those underrepresented minorities see. Further, friendship favoritism was the most common source of favoritism reported by these employees and that overall, it had significantly stronger negative relationships with organizational trust, willingness to exercise voice, coworker trust, and pay satisfaction compared to other sources of favoritism. Finally, consistent with our argument that perceptions of workplace favoritism may in part be driven by a lack of transparency in HR decisions, we found that team leaders, supervisors, managers, and executives saw significantly less friendship favoritism than did employees who did not hold decision-making managerial positions. These findings form the basis for a more comprehensive homophily and transparency-focused theory of workplace favoritism.

### *Limitations*

The primary limitation of this study was our need to use data from a commercial morale survey rather than developing a survey that might have allowed us, for example, to test more sources of workplace favoritism and additional possible associates of perceptions of workplace favoritism. However, this large sample did allow us to sample a sufficiently large number of less studied underrepresented minority-group employees and those at all federal grades that would not have been possible with a survey administered in one or two offices of an organization. For example, we found that Pacific Islander employees did not see any more racial favoritism than did White men, something that deserves further attention. An additional limitation is that all measures came from one instrument at one point in time. This should not have had an impact on the demographic, hierarchical rank, and comparative correlation tests. However, it does mean that we cannot draw any causal inferences about the relationships between perceptions of favoritism and

the attitudinal variables, i.e., does coworker distrust lead employees to suspect favoritism or does observing workplace favoritism lead employees to have less trust in their coworkers. Finally, all the employees came from one US federal agency that is dominated by White men, and we cannot know if their perceptions are representative of other governmental workforces, where the workforce and work may be quite different.

### *Theorizing Workplace Friendship Favoritism*

We found that perceptions of friendship favoritism were the most widely seen and were more strongly associated with most employee attitudes. Although other sources of favoritism also were associated with more negative employee attitudes in this White dominated workplace (Tables 4 and 7ab), they were not as influential as friendship favoritism, for all but organizational commitment. For the latter, as we noted earlier that most of the employees are air traffic controllers who would not have many other places to practice their profession. This suggests that organizational commitment (which here includes a measure of behavioral commitment, or the lack of alternatives) may not be the most appropriate measure of the effects of perceptions of workplace favoritism on employee attitudes. Nevertheless, the strong effects for trust, pay satisfaction, and particularly for voice do suggest that perceptions of workplace favoritism can have wide-ranging negative effects on employees and their organizations.

If we take a theoretical focus on homophily as a prominent reason for workplace favoritism, this explanation drives attention to solutions for what has been the stubbornly intractable problem of workplace favoritism. Of course, we cannot and would not want to try to eliminate workplace friendships; people spend a lot of time at work, share common problems, and gain crucial psychological support from coworkers (see for example Le Blanc, et al., 2007), all of which are particularly important among underrepresented minorities in high-stress jobs like those of air-traffic controllers. This poses a particular challenge for HR professionals seeking to reduce both



perceptions of and actual workplace favoritism in their organizations. Friendship is less visible than demographic characteristics and so, may be particularly difficult to monitor using traditional centralized systems. In addition, if any sources of favoritism are better seen as homophily-based friendship favoritism, focusing on demography alone risks blowback. Nevertheless, we believe we can build on existing policies that address equally less visible romantic relationships at to workplace to better address any kind of workplace favoritism: transparency (Pierce & Aquinis, 2009).

We have proposed that uncertainty in why certain HRM and task assignment decisions are made is one potential reason for why perceptions of favoritism can grow. Here, we found higher perceptions of favoritism among non-supervisors than those with more decision-making information. This supports our theory that perceptions of favoritism may be driven, at least in part, by the greater information that those at increasingly higher ranks have about why decisions were made. Of course, it is possible that those at higher ranks would not see their promotions to their current positions as the result of favoritism, if for no other reason than to protect a positive self-image as people who does not violate the core meritocracy value of public service (Sedikides & Strube, 1995; Kunda, 1999). So, this is another possible reason why perceptions of workplace favoritism are lower the higher an employee's rank. Nevertheless, Castilla (2008) found that the less the transparency in why some receive better performance evaluations, the more disadvantaged members of ethnic minority groups were. So, we would expect that employees left in the dark about why some HRM decisions may reasonably assume workplace favoritism of some kind. Employees will assign reasons to actions and events that are unclear to them (Weick et al., 2005), and when faced with uncertainty, people tend to see the problem as other people to build a sense of personal control (Lind & van den Bos, 2002). With a homophily focus, and the undesirability

(and impossibility) of removing workplace friendships, this suggests a way to address perceptions of favoritism without increasing now-discredited and inflexible formal practices.

Traditionally, the federal government has sought to remove workplace favoritism by adding more rules and other formal procedures. However, we are all aware that the rigid rules, colloquially called “red tape,” make it difficult for organizations to perform well and responsively; so, adding more formal constraints on hiring, task assignment, and promotion decisions would likely harm an organization’s performance and as well as damaging to employees’ public service motivation (DiIulio, 1994). Further, as we saw from Castilla (2008), Martocchio and Whitmer (1992), and Smith-Doerr, et al. (2019)’s work, formal systems can be poor predictors of subsequent performance and be manipulated to mask racial, ethnic, and gender favoritism. Because the study of friendship favoritism is so new, we cannot know if those rules-based practices can be manipulated and used to hide friendship favoritism, but that seems likely. Friends can informally brief their friends on the criteria that will be used, and steer conversations in decision-making meetings toward their friends’ candidacies. Traditional formal systems would not necessarily be any better at eliminating friendship favoritism than they have been at eliminating racial, ethnic, or gender favoritism.

There is an alternative to more rules and constraints that both supports merit as well as reduces perceptions of favoritism: transparency. If the reasons for actions are communicated and explained, there is no reason for employees to assume that the actions were driven by favoritism. A policy of transparency has been shown to help rehabilitate transgressors in a military academy (Frey, Bernstein, & Rekenhaller, 2022) suggesting that transparency in HRM decision-making could reduce perceptions of workplace favoritism. It would have the advantage of limiting the discretion of those in the workplace who do play favorites, for friendship or any other reason. Secrecy is often justified as protecting privacy, but how often is it the privacy of decision-makers

to act as they please? Even if decision-makers are acting based on merit, if the reasons are hidden from other employees, there is space for them to interpret decisions as driven by favoritism rather than by merit. This suggests that some of the policies mandating secrecy in human resource management decisions should be studied to see which necessarily protect employees' privacy and which unnecessarily hide workplace favoritism.

## **Conclusion**

In this study, we found that friendship favoritism was the dominant form of favoritism employees perceived, and that the homophily it is based on could be masking ethnic and gender workplace favoritism. Further, the more HR decision-making information that team leaders, supervisors, managers, and executives possess could account for their significantly lower perceptions of workplace favoritism. Particularly in light of the increasingly less constrained human resource management decisions, the current study suggests that more transparency in human resource decision-making can reduce both employees' perceptions of workplace favoritism and actual favoritism in such decision-making. It is our hope that HR scholars and professionals might take a deeper look at the benefits of the greater trust in employees that transparency reflects.

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**Table 1.** Sample Descriptive: Percentage Distribution of FAA Employees' Ethnicity and Gender in Each Rank

	<b>Non-Supervisor</b>		<b>Team Leader</b>		<b>1st Level Supervisor</b>		<b>2nd Level Supervisor</b>		<b>Manager</b>		<b>Executive</b>	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Native Ameri.	1.2	.40	1.2	.33	1.2	.19	1.7	.00	1.7	.84	.00	.00
Asian	1.8	.57	2.2	.89	1.5	.48	1.1	1.7	1.9	.63	2.0	.00
Black/Afr. Amer.	3.1	3.6	4.2	3.8	4.9	2.6	3.3	3.9	7.5	3.6	2.0	2.0
Hispanic	3.2	1.3	3.4	.81	3.9	1.2	2.8	.00	4.0	1.3	2.0	4.0
Pacific	.33	.20	.33	.00	.39	.00	.00	.00	.21	.00	.00	.00
White	66	19	66	17	67	17	70	17	59	20	59	29
Total <sup>a</sup>	11,152		1,231		1,037		184		478		99	

<sup>a</sup>N = 14,181

**Table 2.** Perceived Sources of Workplace Favoritism

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In the past 12 months, have you been unfairly denied a career opportunity because of factors not related to job performance?

No, I have not been unfairly denied a career opportunity

Yes, I have been unfairly denied a career opportunity based on [Mark all that apply]:

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| a. National origin | h. Disability   |
| b. Race            | i. Sexual orientation                                   |
| c. Color           | j. Religion   |
| d. Gender          | k. Political affiliation                                |
| e. Age             | l. Union affiliation                                    |
| f. Marital status  | m. Who you know (“buddy system”) <sup>a</sup>           |
| g. Parental status | n. Other characteristics not related to job performance |
- Please specify:

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<sup>a</sup>This source of workplace favoritism has been relabeled as “friendship” in our analyses.

**Table 3.** Final Scale Items and Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>

<b>Organizational Trust (<math>\alpha = .93</math>)</b>					
FAA executives are honest when communicating with employees.	<b>.85</b>	0.17	0.23	.18	.07
I trust FAA management.	<b>.84</b>	0.17	0.27	.21	.10
The FAA is committed to employee concerns.	<b>.82</b>	0.19	0.28	.16	.07
My organization has a real interest in the welfare and satisfaction of those who work here.	<b>.77</b>	.16	.26	.26	.16
The FAA has kept me informed about compensation system changes.	<b>.68</b>	.29	.22	.05	.02
<b>Pay Satisfaction (<math>\alpha = .82</math>)</b>					
How satisfied are you with your pay?	.05	<b>.82</b>	.09	.08	.05
How satisfied are you with your latest pay increase?	.16	<b>.79</b>	.16	.12	.03
How satisfied are you with your current pay system?	.17	<b>.76</b>	.12	.08	-.03
How satisfied are you with your benefits?	.24	<b>.65</b>	.17	.02	.12
How satisfied are you with your retirement system?	.16	<b>.64</b>	.02	.01	.18
<b>Organizational Commitment (<math>\alpha = .89</math>)</b>					
Do you care about the fate of the FAA?	.18	.11	<b>.82</b>	.07	.10
Are you willing to put in additional effort beyond that normally expected to help the FAA succeed?	.21	.10	<b>.82</b>	.06	.05
Do you feel loyalty to the FAA?	.45	.17	<b>.77</b>	.11	.03
Are you proud to work for the FAA?	.43	.22	<b>.70</b>	.13	.10
<b>Voice<sup>b</sup> (<math>\alpha = .79</math>)</b>					
It is generally safer to say that you agree with management even when you don't really agree.	.21	.11	.10	<b>.87</b>	.09
Some employees may be hesitant to speak up for fear of retaliation.	.29	.10	.13	<b>.83</b>	.09
<b>Coworker Trust (<math>\alpha = .62</math>)</b>					
I trust my coworkers.	.04	.05	.00	.05	<b>.89</b>
How satisfied are you with your workgroup?	.19	.22	.23	.12	<b>.74</b>
<b>Eigenvalues</b>	<b>7.46</b>	<b>2.02</b>	<b>1.43</b>	<b>1.24</b>	<b>.97</b>

<sup>a</sup>Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation Method: Varimax<sup>b</sup>Voice is reverse coded.

**Table 4.** Correlation Matrix of Perceptions of Differing Sources of Favoritism, Gender, Rank, and Attitudes

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<i>Sources of Favoritism</i>											
1 Friendship	.132 <sup>a</sup>	.339									
2 National Origin	.011	.105	.182								
3 Race	.033	.179	.290	.335							
4 Color	.021	.114	.234	.314	.608						
5 Gender	.042	.200	.312	.209	.475	.452					
6 Age	.052	.222	.347	.202	.292	.268	.357				
7 Disability	.009	.960	.144	.115	.100	.092	.133	.185			
8 Union Affiliation	.045	.207	.330	.171	.219	.218	.234	.288	.106		
<i>Ethnicity and Gender</i>											
9 Native Amer.	.016	.124	.039	.063	.031	-.003	.011	.025	.053	.030	
10 Asian	.024	.153	-.004	.036	.022	.009	-.010	-.012	-.006	-.012	-.020
11 Black/ Afri.-Amer.	.070	.255	.012	.013	.122	.098	.012	-.003	.002	-.022	-.034
12 Hispanic	.045	.208	.017	.099	.035	-.011	.004	.007	.011	.003	-.027
13 Pacific	.005	.069	.000	.022	-.007	-.003	-.009	.002	.004	.005	-.009
14 White	.840	.366	-.030	-.105	-.123	-.064	-.008	-.006	-.024	.007	-.288
15 Gender <sup>b</sup>	.246	.430	-.004	-.016	-.015	-.010	.033	-.026	.016	-.065	.000
<i>Organizational Attitudes</i>											
16 Org. Commitment	3.56	1.20	-.121	-.073	-.090	-.092	-.116	-.113	-.050	-.178	.009
17 Org. Trust	2.30	1.10	-.212	-.077	-.121	-.105	-.151	-.156	-.065	-.194	-.004
18 Voice	2.51	1.13	-.239	-.067	-.120	-.101	-.143	-.151	-.079	-.160	-.017
19 Coworker Trust	3.75	.916	-.235	-.104	-.138	-.119	-.154	-.156	-.104	-.147	-.031
20 Pay Satisfaction	3.36	1.02	-.210	-.100	-.139	-.129	-.149	-.166	-.069	-.186	-.024
<i>Rank</i>											
21 Rank <sup>c</sup>	.214	.410	-.024	-.003	-.022	-.024	-.025	-.03	-.017	-.061	.001

<sup>a</sup>A mean of .132 for friendship means that 13.2% of the employees perceived friendship favoritism.

<sup>b</sup>Self-reported gender; coded 0 for male, 1 for female.

<sup>c</sup>Coded 0 for non-supervisors, 1 for team leaders, supervisors, managers, and executives.

$|r| > .016$  is significant at  $p = .05$ ;  $|r| > .022$  is significant at  $p = .01$ .

	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
<i>Sources of Favoritism</i>												
1	Friendship											
2	National Origin											
3	Race											
4	Color											
5	Gender											
6	Age											
7	Disability											
8	Union Affiliation											
<i>Ethnicity and Gender</i>												
9	Native Amer.											
10	Asian											
11	Black/ Afri.-Amer.	-.043										
12	Hispanic	-.034	-.06									
13	Pacific	-.011	-.019	-.015								
14	White	-.360	-.63	-.499	-.159							
15	Gender	.002	.164	.019	.013	-.128						
<i>Organizational Attitudes</i>												
16	Org. Commitment	.033	.099	.057	.013	-.121	.152					
17	Org. Trust	.057	.126	.031	.017	-.131	.168	.661				
18	Voice	-.002	.031	.011	-.011	-.019	.052	.343	.498			
19	Coworker Trust	.010	-.042	-.002	-.002	.037	-.032	.295	.326	.260		
20	Pay Satisfaction	-.005	.030	-.004	-.006	-.007	.108	.389	.462	.269	.297	
<i>Rank</i>												
21	Rank	.005	.023	.003	-.014	-.018	-.018	.249	.312	.176	.098	.150

**Table 5.** Test for Favoritism Perception Differences Between White Men and Underrepresented Minorities and White Women

	<b>Friendship</b>		<b>National Origin</b>		<b>Race</b>		<b>Color</b>		<b>Gender</b>		<b>Age</b>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
<i>Ethnicity and Gender</i>												
Intercept <sup>a</sup>	.129**	.003	.007**	.001	.027**	.002	.020**	.001	.038**	.002	.055**	.002
Native Amer.	.107**	.023	.057**	.007	.050**	.012	-.002	.010	.021	.014	.041**	.015
Asian	-.006	.019	.028**	.006	.031**	.010	.010	.008	-.009	.011	-.019	.012
Black/Afr.-Amer.	.018	.011	.009**	.003	.085**	.006	.053**	.005	.012	.007	-.005	.007
Hispanic	.030*	.014	.052**	.004	.035**	.007	-.006	.006	.007	.008	.005	.009
Pacific	.003	.041	.041**	.013	-.013	.022	-.005	.017	-.024	.024	.004	.027
White Female	-.007	.007	-.003	.002	-.018**	.004	-.012**	.003	.011*	.004	-.015**	.005
<i>F</i>	5.00		41.0		48.8		25.5		2.13		3.54	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.002		.017		.020		.010		.000		.001	

	<b>Disability</b>		<b>Union Affiliation</b>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
<i>Ethnicity and Gender</i>				
Intercept	.008**	.001	.053**	.002
Native Amer.	.042**	.007	.043**	.014
Asian	-.002	.005	-.023*	.011
Black/Afr.-Amer.	.002	.003	-.024**	.007
Hispanic	.006	.004	.004	.008
Pacific	.007	.012	.006	.025
White Female	.003	.002	-.031**	.004
<i>F</i>	7.52		11.4	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.003		.004	

<sup>a</sup>White male is the reference, such that a positive coefficient indicates that White men see less of that source of favoritism.

\**p*<.05, \*\**p*<.01.



**Table 6.** Test for Favoritism Perception Differences Between Non-Supervisors and Team Leaders, Supervisors, Managers, and Executives

	Friendship		National Origin		Race		Color		Gender		Age	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
<i>Ethnicity and Gender</i>												
Native Amer.	.109**	.023	.057**	.007	.054**	.012	.001	.010	.018	.014	.045**	.015
Asian	-.004	.019	.029**	.006	.036**	.010	.013	.008	-.012	.011	-.015	.012
Black/Afr.-Amer.	.022	.011	.011**	.003	.094**	.006	.058**	.005	.006	.007	.003	.007
Hispanic	.032*	.014	.053**	.004	.040**	.007	-.003	.006	.003	.008	.009	.009
Pacific	.004	.041	.038**	.013	-.008	.022	-.002	.017	-.029	.024	.008	.027
Gender	-.006	.007	-.006**	.002	-.016**	.004	-.009**	.003	.015**	.004	-.014**	.004
<i>Rank</i>												
Intercept <sup>a</sup>	.133**	.004	.008**	.001	.030**	.002	.021**	.002	.040**	.002	.058**	.002
Upper Management	-.021**	.007	-.001	.002	-.011**	.004	-.010**	.003	-.012**	.004	-.017**	.005
<i>F</i>	-5.52		35.9		43.22		22.8		4.25		4.97	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.002		.017		.020		.011		.002		.002	

  

	Disability		Union Affiliation	
	B	SE	B	SE
<i>Ethnicity and Gender</i>				
Native Ameri.	.042**	.007	.051**	.014
Asian	-.003	.005	-.015	.011
Black/Afri.-Ameri.	.001	.003	-.008	.007
Hispanic	.005	.004	.005	.008
Pacific	.006	.012	.014	.025
Gender	.003	.002	-.031**	.004
<i>Rank</i>				
Intercept	.008**	.001	.059**	.002
Upper Management	-.004*	.002	-.031**	.004
<i>F</i>	7.12		18.9	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.003		.009	

<sup>a</sup>Non-supervisor is the reference, such that a negative coefficient indicates that non-supervisors see more of that source of favoritism.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table 7a.** Multiple Linear Regression Analyses for the Effects of the Independent Variables on Employee Attitudes

Variables	Organizational Commitment		Organizational Trust		Voice		Coworker Trust		Pay Satisfaction	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
<i>Ethnicity and Gender</i>										
Native Amer.	.236**	.079	.134	.071	-.031	.075	-.125*	.060	-.088	.067
Asian	.303**	.064	.444**	.057	-.019	.060	.043	.049	-.041	.054
Black/ Afri.- Amer.	.408**	.039	.488**	.035	.126**	.037	-.117**	.030	.072*	.033
Hispanic	.386**	.047	.230**	.043	.087	.045	.020	.036	.001	.040
Pacific	.264	.141	.309*	.127	-.184	.133	-.018	.107	-.099	.119
Gender <sup>a</sup>	.361**	.023	.364**	.021	.113**	.022	-.066**	.018	.232**	.019
<i>Sources of Favoritism</i>										
Friendship	-.159**	.033	-.440**	.029	-.600**	.031	-.452**	.025	-.383**	.028
National Origin	-.304**	.101	-.097	.091	.061	.095	-.273**	.077	-.213*	.085
Race	-.080	.074	-.184**	.066	-.132	.069	-.102	.056	-.121	.062
Color	-.123	.089	-.007	.080	-.008	.084	-.037	.068	-.162*	.075
Gender	-.300**	.060	-.314**	.053	-.258**	.056	-.213**	.045	-.218**	.050
Age	-.136**	.050	-.206**	.045	-.211**	.047	-.176**	.038	-.261**	.042
Disability	-.219*	.104	-.214*	.093	-.370**	.098	-.502**	.079	-.198*	.088
Union Affiliation	-.712**	.051	-.543**	.046	-.371**	.048	-.239**	.039	-.471**	.043
<i>F</i>	81.9		128		81.7		83.5		89.2	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.074		.111		.074		.075		.080	

<sup>a</sup>Self-reported gender; coded 0 for male, 1 for female.

<sup>b</sup>Coded 0 for non-supervisors, 1 for team leaders, supervisors, managers, and executives.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table 7b.** Testing for Differences Between Regression Coefficients of Friendship Favoritism and other Sources of Favoritism

	Organizational Commitment	Organizational Trust	Voice	Coworker Trust	Pay Satisfaction
National Origin	1.83 <sup>a</sup>	12.72**	42.68**	4.82*	3.51
Race	.91	11.75**	35.61**	30.54**	13.85**
Color	.15	26.03**	44.28**	33.25**	7.69**
Gender	-3.90* <sup>b</sup>	3.90*	25.99**	19.49**	7.50**
Age	.12	16.16**	40.52**	31.39**	4.67*
Disability	.29	5.21*	4.87*	.36	3.94*
Union Affiliation	-68.95**	2.95	13.39**	17.65**	2.41

<sup>a</sup>Reported in the table are *f* statistics.

<sup>b</sup>Although *f* statistics are absolute values and so non-negative, we included a negative sign to significant results to indicate the direction of the difference between friendship and other sources, i.e., gender is stronger predictor of organizational commitment than friendship.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .