

PRISMATIC METROPOLIS

INEQUALITY IN LOS ANGELES

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SURVEYING RACIAL DISCRIMINATION: ANALYSES FROM A MULTIETHNIC LABOR MARKET

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THE DEBATE over the extent, nature, and consequences of modern racial-ethnic discrimination continues to grow. Social science research has not yielded simple answers to the question of the current potency of race-based discrimination in the workplace. On the one hand, the growth of the black middle class (Landry 1987), significant affirmative action and antidiscrimination enforcement efforts (Bursstein 1985, Jaynes and Williams 1989), and more positive racial attitudes (Firebaugh and Davis 1988, Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo 1985) all point toward a potentially diminishing problem of labor market discrimination (Wilson 1978). On the other hand, systematic social science investigations of actual forms of discrimination have become a surprising new area of active inquiry (Reskin, forthcoming).¹ Research over the past decade spanning auditing studies (Turner et al. 1991), in-depth interviews (Feagin and Sikes 1994, Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991), organizational surveys (Braddock and McPartland 1987), as well as social psychological (Pettigrew and Martin 1987) and sociopolitical analyses (Carnoy 1994, Waltinger and Bailey 1991), all tend to suggest that racial-ethnic discrimination remains a common problem, especially for African Americans.

Attitude studies complicate the picture further by partly confirming positions on both sides of the discrimination debate. Many sample surveys suggest that blacks and other minorities generally perceive high rates of collective or group discrimination (Jaynes and Williams 1989, 131-36, Kluegel and Smith 1986). Nonetheless, many of these same studies tend to elicit very low levels of personal reports of experiences with discrimination (Sigelman and Welch 1991). For example, national

surveys from the mid-1980s showed that 61 percent of blacks felt that blacks as a group faced discrimination in wages and 68 percent felt that blacks faced discrimination in gaining managerial positions. Yet, only 39 percent of black respondents to the same survey reported that they had personally faced discrimination in the labor market (Sigelman and Welch 1991, 55-57).

Our broad objective is to examine the utility of general population surveys for illuminating personal reports of labor market discrimination. Our specific analytical purposes in this chapter are threefold. First, we analyze data expressly designed to contain multiple-item measures of possible encounters with racial discrimination in the workplace, as well as a detailed open-ended description of one of these encounters. We suspect that the relatively low rates of reported personal encounters with discrimination found in many surveys reflect reliance on responses to one question or a small number of general items. Second, we analyze data from a multiethnic labor market. The great bulk of social research on the problem of racial discrimination has focused on the black experience. Although important in its own right, this focus is constraining in at least two ways. The U.S. population is far more racially diverse. But also, given the concentration of many recent Asian and Hispanic-Latino immigrants in major urban centers with large black populations (Waldinger 1989), even those primarily interested in the status of African Americans must increasingly pay attention to the altered dynamics of workplaces and larger labor markets in the newly multiethnic social context. Third, we also assess the impact of personal encounters with discrimination on a broader sense of racial-ethnic identity and attachment. What constitutes discrimination can be a matter of judgment. It thus seems important to determine how closely connected the personal reporting of discrimination is to other indicators of ethnic awareness.

Background

There is no uniformly accepted definition of *discrimination* in the social sciences. The social processes involved in discrimination are enormously complex. It may take direct and indirect forms, involve blatant or subtle acts, have both immediate and longer-term effects on individuals and on broader social relations between groups. Students of the criminalization also differ in the research questions they examine, the levels of analyses they conduct (for example, interpersonal versus macrosocial), and the political values they hold. All these considerations have made arriving at a single conceptualization of discrimination difficult (see Pettigrew and Taylor 1990).

Our interest is in learning what individuals can relate to us about

their own encounters with discrimination. For this purpose a serviceable definition conceives of discrimination as "involving actions that serve to limit the social, political, or economic opportunities of particular groups" (Fredrickson and Knobel 1982, 31). Our focus is thus on the interpersonal, observable experience of discrimination. We are concerned with discrimination that individuals are aware of and can thus potentially relate to an interviewer when asked about it.

Even when the term is defined in this manner, however, many researchers remain skeptical of the utility of general population surveys (and possibly any quantitatively oriented methodology) for illuminating processes of discrimination. Writing two decades ago, Joe Feagin and Douglas Lee Eckberg argued that: "By emphasizing census data, survey data, laboratory settings, and the mathematical analysis of existing data, social science will not deal with phenomena such as discrimination that might occur in natural settings" (1980, 18). This reservation doubtless played a part in the reliance on 209 snowball sample in-depth interviews in a major study of the black middle class conducted by Joe Feagin and Melvin Sikes, who emphasize that such data provide a "richness of material unavailable in surface-level analyses based on surveys and opinion polls" (1994, xi). An element of this skepticism is hinted at in the important analyses of surveys of employers that have largely stressed patterns derived from in-depth interviews (Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991, Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991).

To our knowledge, Lee Sigelman and Susan Welch (1991) provided the only in-depth survey-based effort to map and model personal reports of discrimination. Analyzing national data on African Americans, they found that 60 percent reported at least one encounter with discrimination spanning the life domains of work, housing, and education. The main determinants of reports of discrimination were sex, age, education, subjective class identification, and subjective feelings of economic insecurity. Men were slightly more likely to report discrimination than women, older blacks more than the young, the highly educated more than the poorly educated, and those identifying with the working class and feelings of economic insecurity.²

Previous research points to a number of workplace characteristic and dynamics that are likely to influence the odds of encountering discrimination. Public-sector employment is often seen as a site of less discrimination at point of entry and a generally more hospitable climate for minorities than the private sector (Bean and Tienda 1987, Farley 1984). Smaller firms often have less formal recruitment and hiring procedures than do large firms, which may open the door wider to processures of discrimination (Waldinger 1986). The racial-ethnic background of a individual's coworkers and supervisors can also influence the likelihood

of encountering discrimination in the workplace (Pettigrew and Martin 1987).

Previous research suggests that one of the principal mechanisms of discrimination is informal social networks (Feagin and Sikes 1994). Within larger industrial sectors (Waldinger and Bailey 1991) and within specific work sites or locations (Braddock and McPartland 1987), it is the patterns of interaction, association, and information sharing that play a critical role in who gets extended opportunities for employment, pay raises, and promotions. If this is true, we should find that when called upon to describe discriminatory experiences, respondents identify exclusion from important information and decision-making networks as a key factor.³

Results

Reports of Discrimination

In interviews with respondents to the Los Angeles Study of Urban Inequality, we asked four questions about personal experience with racial-ethnic discrimination in the labor market. The percentage answering yes to each possible form of discrimination is shown by race of respondent in table 14.1. With only one exception, African Americans and Latinos were the most likely to report direct personal experience with discrimination in the workplace. White and Asian American respondents were usually less likely to report such experiences. The one exception occurs for reports that a supervisor has used racial or ethnic slurs during the past year, where we find that whites (11.5 percent) reported a higher rate of hearing such comments than did blacks (7.9 percent) or Asian Americans (3.5 percent). This instance, however, may deviate from the pattern observed for the other items because white subordinates were hearing their white supervisors use racial epithets or slurs directed against other racial minorities and not at themselves.⁴

In general, the reported rates of experience with discrimination were low. None of the four individual items yields as much as 50 percent of the respondents of any race indicating that they experienced a particular form of discrimination. The single most frequently cited form of discrimination involves perhaps the most extreme form: refusal of employment. Reports of having been refused employment were given by more than two out of five African Americans, 16 percent of Latinos, and approximately one in ten white and Asian American respondents.

The relatively low rates of response to any single item, however, would surely underestimate the likelihood that any given individual has

TABLE 14.1 *Personal Experience of Racial Discrimination in the Workplace, by Respondent Race*

Type of Discrimination	Respondent Race and Percentage "Yes"			
	White	African American	Asian American	Latino
Supervisor used racial slurs	11.5%	7.9%	3.5%	12.0%*
General racial discrimination	8.5	22.6	6.9	13.3*
Pay or promotion slower	6.2	16.7	2.8	8.6*
Refused a job	11.0	44.7	11.6	16.0*

QUESTION WORDING: (1) During the (past year/last year you worked) has/did your supervisor or boss ever use racial slurs; (2) During the (past year/last year you worked) have/did you experience racial or ethnic discrimination at your place of work because of your race or ethnicity?; (3) Have you ever felt at any time in the past that others at your place of employment got promotions or pay raises faster than you did because of your race or ethnicity?; and (4) Have you ever felt at any time in the past that you were refused a job because of your race or ethnicity?

Source: Los Angeles Study of Urban Inequality 1994.

Note: Base Ns for whites range from 531 to 790; for African Americans, from 765 to 1,055; for Asian Americans, from 459 to 821; and for Latinos, from 692 to 900. These ranges reflect different skip patterns for each question asked.

* $p < .001$

encountered discrimination in the workplace. A somewhat more robust gauge of its overall likelihood can be obtained by examining the cumulative frequency of discrimination (see table 14.2). Far and away, African Americans were the most likely to report encountering racial discrimination. Just under 60 percent (58.9 percent) responded positively to at least one of the personal experience of discrimination items. In addition, African Americans were the most likely to encounter multiple forms of discrimination. Approximately 30 percent reported experiencing two or more forms of discrimination, with one in ten responding positively to three or more of the four items. Latinos followed blacks in the personal experience of discrimination queue, with 30.9 percent reporting encounters with at least one type of discrimination. One in four whites reported encountering some form of discrimination, while Asian Americans reported the least, at 21.6 percent. Asian Americans, should be noted, are the minority group most likely to have supervisors of the same race (56.2 percent; see table 14A.2). Hence, the relatively low rates of personal discrimination reported by Asian Americans may be partly attributable to their greater immersion in an ethnic economic enclave.

TABLE 14.2 Cumulative Frequency of Personal Experience of Racial Discrimination in the Workplace, by Respondent Race

Cumulative Frequency	White	African American	Asian American	Latino
0	74.9%	41.1%	78.4%	69.1%
1	15.4	30.4	13.5	18.8
2	6.0	20.1	6.8	6.1
3	3.6	6.8	1.1	4.4
4	0.1	1.6	0.1	1.5
Percentage reporting any discrimination	25.1	58.9	21.6	30.9*
Mean	.39	.97	.31	.50*

Source: Los Angeles Study of Urban Inequality 1994.

* $p < .001$

Social Background and Workplace Factors

Table 14.3 shows the percentage of respondents reporting any experience of racial discrimination by respondent race and the social background factors of nativity, sex, age, education, occupation, and income. The largest and most consistent effects are found for level of education. As education levels increase, so do the percentages reporting discrimination among both African American and Asian American respondents. The gradient for both groups is quite sharp, with a 50-plus percentage point difference separating those who did not finish high school from those with postgraduate training. The importance of postgraduate training emerged sharply for both blacks and Asian Americans. Virtually all African Americans (98 percent) in the highest educational category reported experiencing at least one form of racial discrimination in the workplace. Sixty-four percent of the most highly educated (postgraduate training) Asian Americans did so, a rate nearly three times that for Asian respondents who had only completed college.

Aside from the education effects observed among the African American and Asian American respondents, the social background variables do not have strong connections to the likelihood of encountering workplace discrimination. Among the black and Asian American respondents, there is a tendency for the reported experience of discrimination to rise with increasing occupational standing, but this presumably reflects the strong effect of education. The weak or nonexistent effects of occupation and income strongly suggest that the experience of discrimi-

TABLE 14.3 Percentage Reporting Any Personal Experience of Racial Discrimination in the Workplace, by Social Background Factors and Respondent Race

	White	African American	Asian American	Latino
Nativity				
United States	24.9	62.4***	21.8	25.5
Foreign	26.3	28.8	21.6	33.1
Sex				
Male	29.2*	58.2	28.4**	35.0**
Female	21.0	59.5	17.0	25.7
Age				
Twenty-one to thirty-five	27.5	53.8**	19.2*	29.0
Thirty-six to fifty	26.8	68.4	28.7	31.5
Fifty-one to sixty-five	17.3	58.5	17.0	38.1
Sixty-six or more	20.4*	49.3	—	46.3*
Education				
Zero to eleven years	15.7*	46.8***	2.6***	32.7
Twelve	28.0	53.4	16.3	31.9
Thirteen to fifteen	25.9	51.6	18.3	28.1
Sixteen	23.1	79.9	23.1	21.3
Sixteen plus or more	24.1	98.0	63.6	51.1*
Occupation				
Lower-blue-collar	25.1*	58.2	5.2***	32.6
Upper-blue-collar	38.4	56.0	5.8*	33.7
Lower-white-collar	26.3	56.5	35.4	28.2
Upper-white-collar	20.5	67.3	23.9	24.5
Income				
< \$5,999	27.9	56.4	17.4***	30.8
\$6,000 to 16,999	34.6	56.5	9.2*	34.4
\$17,000 to 31,999	24.5	58.5	12.4	21.9
\$32,000 or more	22.9	64.3	46.8	36.4

Source: Los Angeles Study of Urban Inequality 1994.

Note: Base Ns for whites range from 515 to 517; for African Americans, from 757 to 758; for Asian Americans, from 442 to 446; and for Latinos and Latinos, from 675 to 679.

*Cell count less than 10.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

nation in the workplace tends to occur across the class spectrum. There is also a tendency among the African American and Asian American respondents for reports of discrimination to be highest in the prime working-age category of thirty-six to fifty years old. White, Latino, and Asian American males are slightly more likely to report discrimination than are their female counterparts. Native-born blacks are substantially

more likely to report discrimination than are foreign-born blacks. Surprisingly, there is little evidence of an effect of nativity on reports of discrimination among Latino or Asian American respondents.

It is important to determine whether certain types of workplace characteristics contribute to the likelihood of reporting discrimination. Hence, table 14.4 reports the experience of any discrimination by the workplace characteristics of type of employment (public or private sector), size of firm, race of supervisor, sex of supervisor, and racial mix of coworkers. In general, workplace characteristics that bring increased chances of interethnic contact, especially contact with other-race authority figures, appear to be associated with higher rates of reported discrimination. Race of supervisor and race of coworkers most consistently affect the likelihood that a respondent will report having encountered discrimination. Indeed, the relative rates of reported discrimination closely parallel the likelihood of having a supervisor of another race. The two groups most likely to report discrimination, African Americans and Latinos, are also the two groups most likely to have other race supervisors (69.7 percent and 57.1 percent, respectively; see table 14A.2). Likewise, the significant affect of public-sector employment among black and Asian respondents, for the latter in particular, suggests that movement out of private and presumably co-ethnic-owned enterprises increases the chances of experiencing discrimination.

In order to better understand the likely social processes involved with reports of discrimination, we estimated a series of multivariate logit models predicting the log-odds of reporting any experience of discrimination using both the social background variables and workplace characteristic measures. The results are shown separately by race in table 14.5 for the full model. We estimated the logit models in a three-step process. At the first stage, the models fit only a constant term. At the second stage, we introduce all the social background variables. At the third stage, we introduce all the workplace characteristic variables. With the exception of white respondents, two patterns hold: introducing the set of social background variables always brings a significant improvement in fit for the model, and introducing the workplace variables always brings an improvement in fit over a model including only the social background variables. Only the latter pattern holds among whites.

The odds of reporting discrimination by whites does not hinge to a significant degree on nativity, age, education, occupation, or income, although there is a borderline effect in the full model for men as contrasted to women. As a result, the second-stage model including only these variables is not a significant improvement over the constant model (difference chi-square = 23.42, d.f. = 15, ns). Although the third stage, or full model, which introduces the workplace variables is a sig-

TABLE 14.4 Percentage Reporting Any Personal Experience of Racial Discrimination in the Workplace, by Characteristics of the Workplace and Respondent Race

	White	African American	Asian American	Latina or Latino
Type of company				
Private	25.4	56.5*	19.9**	31.6
Public	23.4	66.1	39.2	22.2
Size				
very small (<10)	25.4	46.1**	7.8***	30.6
small or mid (10 to 49)	24.4	59.1	15.5	34.6
medium (50 to 499)	28.0	65.6	37.0	30.1
large (500 +)	20.5	54.7	31.0	25.1
Race of coworkers				
White	22.2*	73.0***	31.0***	31.4
African American	46.3*	53.7	90.2	41.4
Asian American	38.3*	86.2	10.0	29.6*
Latino	33.4	65.7	16.7*	29.5
Race of supervisor				
White	22.3**	57.5*	25.9**	35.6*
African American	35.6*	53.2	54.1*	18.2*
Asian American	53.0	70.4	16.9	34.0
Latino	34.0	73.2	23.7*	26.4
Sex of supervisor				
Male	27.2	67.2***	23.4	33.1
Female	20.7	48.4	16.4	25.5

Source: Los Angeles Study of Urban Inequality 1994.

Note: Base Ns for whites range from 510 to 515; for African Americans, from 752 to 756; for Asian Americans, from 436 to 446; and for Latinos, from 665 to 679.

Cell count less than ten.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

nificant improvement in fit (difference chi-square = 21.48, d.f. = 9, $p < .05$), only one variable has a significant effect: whites with Asian American supervisors were more likely to report discrimination. It is worth noting that there is an effect of borderline significance for having African American coworkers ($b = 1.20$, s.e. = .68, $p = .075$).

Among African Americans we found a significant curvilinear effect of age, with discrimination highest in the middle age ranges and lower for younger and older blacks. In addition, there are clear education effects, with reports of discrimination increasing in monotonic fashion with increasing education. Although adding the workplace variables brought a significant improvement in fit of the model (difference chi-

TABLE 14.5 *Logit Models of Reports of Personal Experience of Racial Discrimination in the Workplace, by Respondent Race*

Independent Variables	Race of Respondent							
	White		African American		Asian American		Latino	
	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Constant	-1.09	(1.43)	2.15	(1.24)	-3.05	(2.22)	-1.22	(1.52)
Background variables								
Nativity	.15	(.34)	-.73	(.57)	-.35	(.47)	.86**	(.27)
Sex	.47	(.27)	.05	(.24)	.84*	(.39)	.43	(.23)
Age	<-.01	(.07)	.10*	(.05)	.12	(.11)	-.17**	(.06)
Age squared	<-.01	(<.01)	<-.01*	(<.01)	<-.01	(<.01)	<.01**	(<.01)
Education								
Zero to eleven years	-.88	(.94)	-4.48***	(1.02)	-2.59*	(1.02)	1.25	(.97)
Twelve	-.36	(.52)	-4.61***	(.99)	-.74	(.66)	1.40	(.97)
Thirteen to fifteen	-.43	(.46)	-4.36***	(.97)	-1.74***	(.52)	1.24	(.99)
Sixteen	-.55	(.46)	-3.44***	(1.00)	-1.56**	(.52)	.94	(1.03)
Occupation								
Lower-blue-collar	.27	(.46)	.06	(.38)	-2.06*	(1.02)	.38	(.40)
Upper-blue-collar	.66	(.39)	-.07	(.29)	-1.08	(.64)	.56	(.39)
Lower-white-collar	.18	(.30)	.03	(.26)	.29	(.38)	.47	(.38)
Income								
\$6,000 to \$16,999	.45	(.39)	.23	(.28)	-.68	(.62)	.14	(.25)
\$17,000 to \$31,999	.09	(.36)	.44	(.27)	-.88	(.50)	-.49	(.32)
\$32,000 or more	-.19	(.38)	-.24	(.32)	-.22	(.50)	.74	(.41)
refused to answer	-1.04	(.75)	-.29	(.38)	-1.79*	(.78)	-1.02	(.70)
Workplace variables								
Sector	-.40	(.36)	.38	(.23)	-.13	(.58)	-.10	(.40)
Firm size	<-.01	(<.01)	<.01	(<.01)	<-.01	(<.01)	<-.01	(<.01)
Coworkers' race								
White	—	—	.30	(.23)	1.12	(.60)	.38	(.27)
African American	1.20	(.68)	—	—	4.43***	(.99)	1.54**	(.58)
Asian American	.94	(.59)	1.06	(.59)	—	—	.69	(.57)
Latino	.27	(.39)	.12	(.30)	.51	(.61)	—	—
Supervisor's race								
White	—	—	.18	(.23)	-.71	(.58)	.44*	(.22)
African American	.33	(.69)	—	—	-.80	(1.19)	-.87	(.69)
Asian American	1.34**	(.48)	.44	(.64)	—	—	.18	(.44)
Latino	.61	(.47)	.73	(.41)	-.24	(.89)	—	—
Supervisor's sex	.25	(.29)	.62**	(.21)	.61	(.47)	.44	(.25)
Model chi-square	21.48		29.22		42.39		19.34	
Base Ns	(442)		(576)		(380)		(581)	

Source: Los Angeles Study of Urban Inequality 1994.

Note: Cell entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Figures in parentheses are standard errors.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

square = 29.21, d.f. = 9, $p < .001$), only sex of supervisor (male) significantly increased reports of discrimination.

Among Asian Americans, we found that the most highly educated group reported substantially more discrimination than did those with less education. Likewise, Asians in upper-white-collar occupations reported more discrimination than did those in blue-collar occupations. Both of these patterns suggest that high-status Asian Americans are striving to assimilate and move out of the ethnic enclave economy but encountering greater discrimination when they do so. Men reported more discrimination than women. And those with African American coworkers reported very high levels of discrimination.

For our Latino respondents, we found that the foreign-born were more likely to report discrimination than the native-born. There is also a significant effect of age, with younger and older Latinos reporting more discrimination than those in the middle age range. In addition, those with African American coworkers or white supervisors tended to report more discrimination.

It is worth noting that size of firm never has a significant effect on the odds of reporting discrimination. Similarly, the public- versus private-sector distinction does not influence the odds of reporting discrimination.⁵ To the extent that workplace factors matter for personal reports of discrimination, they seem largely to involve something about the mix and characteristics of coworkers and supervisors.

Open-Ended Descriptions

In order to develop a richer sense of what the experience of discrimination involves, we asked one open-ended question seeking a fuller description of the discrimination experience. This question, which asked "What happened that made you feel that way?" followed the item on whether the respondent had ever faced racial discrimination in terms of rates of pay or promotion. Generally, we think, the open-ended responses substantially clarify and flesh out the closed-ended reports of discrimination, though it is important to emphasize that the open-ended question followed the item on pay and promotion differences. This probably somewhat narrows the base of possible reports of discrimination, and as a result may point to dynamics a bit different from those suggested when analyzing overall rates of exposure to discrimination. Table 14.6 shows the distribution of responses among white respondents, while table 14.7 shows the responses of African American, Asian American, and Latino respondents. It was necessary to separate responses in this fashion due to the largely nonoverlapping character of the answers given by white as contrasted to racial minority respondents.

TABLE 14.6 Distribution of Open-Ended Descriptions of Pay or Promotion Discrimination Among White Respondents

Major Reasons (and Subcategories)	Percentage	Frequency
Reverse discrimination (more promotion chances) (minority quotas) (general minority favoritism) (higher minority pay)	71.4 (26.5) (20.4) (14.3) (10.2)	(35)
Other white ethnicity favored	10.2	(5)
Gender discrimination	8.1	(4)
Other nonracial (for example, age nepotism, favoritism)	10.2 2.0	(4) (1)
Not ascertained		

Source: Los Angeles Study of Urban Inequality 1994.

On the whole, recall that fewer than one in ten white respondents reported experiencing pay or promotion discrimination. As table 14.6 shows, of this number, nearly three-fourths (71.4 percent) complained of some form of reverse discrimination involving a preference for racial minorities over whites (though only one respondent actually used the phrase "reverse discrimination"). The table also shows a more detailed specification of the reverse discrimination complaints into assertions that minorities have easier chances for promotion (26.5 percent), the use of minority quotas (20.4 percent), wage differentials (10.2 percent), or general remarks about favoritism toward minorities (14.3 percent).

Multiple Ethnic Cleavages One of the immediately striking qualities to the open-ended comments is the extent to which whites reported experiences of discrimination in relation to Latinos and Asians and not merely in relation to blacks. For example, a thirty-six-year-old white woman who worked as a clerk explained that: "I went on jury duty in November and returned demoted and a Hispanic got my job. Also a lady two people above me is Hispanic. She promotes Hispanics to higher position pay raises over whites who have seniority and are also very qualified for those jobs." According to a thirty-two-year-old white woman who worked as a stationary engineer in a plant: "My supervisor was a Filipino man and when a Filipino girl came [she] got a lot of privileges and he didn't blame her for anything. But me! I was blamed."

Specificity of Accounts Sometimes these descriptions of the discrimination experience, though usually brief, spoke directly to a particular

lar incident. For example, a thirty-six-year-old white man who worked as a computer systems analyst explained that: "Another Hispanic employee was promoted ahead of me. He had less experience with the company." Likewise, a thirty-nine-year-old white woman who worked as a manager in a food service establishment claimed that: "There were all Hispanics. During promotion the supervisor gave promotions to every Hispanic, but not me. That's the reason I quit." "They preferred a black woman because they need racial balance in the office where I worked," according to a thirty-four-year-old white female account auditor. Or, in the case of a twenty-seven-year-old white woman who worked in an office support capacity: "Another girl who arrived at the same time [I did] [was] Filipino and most of the people at higher levels are either of different origin, Filipino or Asian men. She's in line for a promotion."

General Resentments Many of the comments, however, were less concrete or did not seem to speak to a direct personal experience of discrimination at all. Sometimes respondents spoke of a general perception of how the work situation in their field was operating. For instance, a forty-nine-year-old white man working as an electrician in the entertainment industry said: "Different types of shows that are happening. With black television series, they prefer you to hire black employees if you can. When I first started on this job, you'd rarely see women working or Asians or Latinos." These more generalized perceptions often involve negative references to affirmative action or quotas, such as the response of a twenty-six-year-old white man who works as a guard: "Courtappointed standards make unfair standards for different races."

Similar remarks were made by a sixty-two-year-old white man who worked as an educational administrator: "Race and gender preference in civil rights legislation. Blacks and females got jobs faster and got promoted more." One respondent simply stated: "The politics." When asked, "Can you be more specific?" by the interviewer, she responded: "Just general perception." And when asked if there was "anything else," the forty-year-old who worked in the clergy simply said: "No." The one instance among white respondents of using the phrase "reverse discrimination" also was a vague reference to general conditions rather than a description of a direct personal experience: "A case of reverse discrimination. Universities are in the main 'race-sensitive.' Preter minorities over whites," explained a forty-six-year-old white male office supervisor. Thus, in a number of cases, the claim of experiencing direct personal discrimination among our white respondents appears to involve a more generalized discontent or grievance against at least affirmative action pressures if not also against minorities more broadly.⁶

A few respondents pointed to instances of discrimination among

whites based on religion or national origin. Some also took the question as an opportunity to speak to other forms of discrimination involving gender, sexual preference or orientation, or age. A few respondents spoke to such other factors as nepotism or playing to personal favorites.

The distribution of responses among racial minority respondents is shown in table 14.7. The overwhelming fraction of African American (82.6 percent), Asian American (86.8 percent), and Latino (78.6 percent) respondents reported that the pay or promotion discrimination they encountered involved a form of white preference. Among the black and Asian respondents, the bulk of these open-ended accounts dealt squarely with pay or promotion preferences for whites. The responses more evenly covered other possible forms of discrimination, such as lower starting salaries or demotions, among our Latino respondents.

As was true of the white respondents, our minority respondents frequently recounted fairly concrete situations of discrimination:

TABLE 14.7 *Distribution of Open-Ended Descriptions of Pay or Promotion Discrimination Among African American, Asian American, and Latino Respondents*

Major Reasons (and Subcategories)	African American	Asian American	Latino
White preference (more promotion chances)	82.6% (40.3)	86.8% (39.5)	78.6% (15.5)
(more pay raises)	(12.8)	(18.4)	(15.5)
(general white favoritism)	(12.1)	(23.7)	(23.8)
(higher starting salary)	(11.4)	(2.6)	(17.9)
(preference in hiring)	(5.4)	(2.6)	(4.8)
(demotions)	(0.7)	—	(1.2)
Other nonwhites favored (Latinos and Latinas; Asian Americans)	22.8 (13.4) (9.4)	15.8 (10.5) (5.3)	23.8 (17.9) (6.0)
Other ethnicity favored (same race as respondent)	1.3	5.3	2.4
Gender discrimination	3.4	13.2	1.2
Other nonracial	4.3	—	1.2
Not ascertained	2.0	5.3	1.2
Base N	(149)	(38)	(84)

Source: Los Angeles Study of Urban Inequality 1994.

I had worked at a job for three years already and when an English guy came after a month he got promoted. Although he always wanted for me to help him out. This was at a clinic. I felt that this was very unfair. The guy didn't know anything about the job, yet he had preference over the others and myself.—thirty-two-year-old Latina, property manager

I was more experienced. I was on the job longer and I trained a white male for the job. He was promoted before me.—forty-three-year-old African American woman, legal assistant

You see one white nurse who doesn't have the experience that other Asian or Hispanic nurses have! but she got promoted to charge nurse job.—thirty-six-year-old Asian American woman, registered nurse

Five years ago I had a prejudiced white female supervisor. Others got a pay raise, while I did not. So I went to her supervisor and complained and later I received a raise comparable to the others.—forty-year-old African American woman, licensed practical nurse

Although minority respondents were significantly more likely to offer concrete descriptions of discrimination than were white respondents, there are a number of accounts that are less concrete.⁷ Unlike the vague explanations offered by some white respondents, however, the vague accounts offered by minority respondents did not involve broad resentments of affirmative action pressures. Instead, they involved general reference to favoritism toward specific groups, disadvantages confronted by members of the respondent's racial group, or a blunt assertion of discrimination:

They have special preferences to [whites]. They get more money.—thirty-four-year-old Latino, drafting technician

I feel the whites got promoted more often because they were white.—seventy-year-old African American man, tool and die maker

Whites get promoted faster.—fifty-year-old Asian American man, civil engineer

The Generality of Ethnocentrism and Bias A common thread linking the responses of our white, African American, Asian American, and Latino respondents was the perception of general ethnocentric bias. If the ranks of supervisory positions and/or owners were filled by members of a different racial-ethnic group, there was a possibility of ethnic favoritism:

Supervisors seem to push/promote their own kind.—thirty-seven-year-old African American man, distribution clerk

Hispanics are always paid the lowest wages. Others get more on any jobs.—thirty-two-year-old Latino, real estate manager

In [the] sixties and seventies at [my] former job, all white people got promotions and very few Asians got promotions.—sixty-eight-year-old Asian American man, truck driver

The suggestion of general ethnocentrism comes through as well in reference to a great variety of bases of preference other than race, such as the national origin or religion. The apparent universal sensitivity to the prospect of ethnocentric bias in the workplace may signal an important part of the processes by which groups come to specialize in particular economic niches and act to achieve "occupational closure" (Waldinger 1986).

Many respondents offered only brief descriptions. Some of the brevity in the remarks of minority respondents in answer to our request to describe the discrimination they had experienced appeared to reflect genuine exasperation at having to explain repeatedly experienced problems of discrimination that to them seemed obvious. For example, when asked the open-ended follow-up question, a forty-year-old African American man who worked as a machinist initially refused to answer the question. But then he asserted: "It's obvious. People with less time come in and get promoted over you because they are white."⁸

The Importance of Networks Many of the open-ended comments from minority respondents strongly suggest that the process of discrimination is played out through networks of information sharing and interaction. From the vantage point of many of our minority respondents, the crucial decision-making ranks are overwhelmingly staffed by whites who come to favor other whites at pay or promotion time, either through greater trust, comfort and familiarity, or friendship, or direct family ties:

All the higher positions are white.—twenty-nine-year-old Asian American woman, registered nurse

Supervisor usually promote[s] relative or somebody he knows. One time, [a] white male supervisor said, "I hate men and Orientals," and told me, "You'll never make it." He promoted [a] white woman he was seeing.—thirty-two-year-old Asian American man, postal worker

There were positions with the organization that have never been filled by a Hispanic. I was qualified but denied the position.—fifty-one-year-old Latino, manager in a service organization

Because my boss gets along better with people of his own race.—thirty-three-year-old Latina, food preparer

The most clear-cut descriptions of network connections working in a discriminatory fashion tended to come from the African American respondents:

Hispanics promoted other Hispanics because they were Hispanic. Blacks were not informed on what was available for promotion.—twenty-seven-year-old African American woman, billing clerk

I see some people that are not qualified for the job get promoted, and I feel they have a stronger support group.—forty-seven-year-old African American man, social worker

People under me, after my date of hire, got promoted faster and their pay increase was higher than mine, and I did more than they did. They was white and they were family members.—thirty-one-year-old African American man, order clerk

When I worked as a programmer at a manufacturing plant, whites were promoted faster and received pay raises faster than I did. I found out by talking with people and discussing their salaries.—forty-nine-year-old African American woman, elementary school teacher

I found out that the white employees were making more money than I was, and I found out from these same white employees.—forty-two-year-old African American woman, dental hygienist

Group-Specific Experiences There are also some types of complaints of discrimination revealed in the open-ended accounts that are unique to specific groups. Blacks are the main group to complain of bilingual ability as a factor that sometimes disadvantages them in the workplace relative to Latinos. Latinos complained of restrictions they face because they lacked citizenship (which led to advantages for whites and for African Americans) or because they are monolingual Spanish speakers. A number of Latinos, consistent with the results of our earlier focus group research, complained of confronting a general expectation that they would work for less and have no aspirations for upward mobility in the workplace (see Bobo et al. 1995).

Also consistent with our earlier focus group research, Latinos and Asian Americans voiced grievances against one another in the workplace that did not arise with the same degree of frequency relative to African Americans (Bobo et al. 1994). For example, a thirty-four-year-old Latino production checker stated: "I used to work with Koreans and I noticed that as soon as they got their job they gave them a raise and not to me." Or, as a forty-four-year-old Latino who worked as a textile sewing machine operator puts it: "Korean owners give the best jobs to Koreans than to us. If someone comes and is the same race, they give them

the best-paid jobs." In contrast, a thirty-nine-year-old Asian American woman who worked as a cook complained: "Overtime is paid to Hispanics, but not to Koreans." Or, as a thirty-three-year-old Asian American male secretary said: "[The] manager is Hispanic. For new jobs she can advertise only in *La Opinion* [the largest Spanish-language paper in Los Angeles]. Hispanics are allowed to work overtime for one hour but paid for the whole day on Saturdays."

Emotional Impact One of the concerns of recent research on discrimination is the emotional impact it may have on those who experience it. At one level, any claim of experience with discrimination denotes an encounter with perceived unfair treatment and is thus potentially upsetting. At another level, however, review of the open-ended accounts suggested considerable variability in the explicitness of emotional upset or anger. The overwhelming fraction of respondent remarks reflect some degree of emotional upset.⁹ Nonetheless, by a slight margin, signs of emotional upset were more often manifest in the comments of our African American (87.7 percent), Asian American (75.0 percent), and Latino respondents (89.2 percent) than among white respondents (57.4 percent, chi-square = 26.51, df. = 3, $p < .001$).

The Connection to Ethnic Awareness

Interpreting experiences in the workplace as discrimination may be bound up with or contribute to a broader sense of ethnic awareness. We conceive of ethnic awareness as concerning the degree of feelings of attachment and significant subjective involvement with others sharing a common racial-ethnic background. We employ two indicators of the degree of ethnic awareness: a measure of "common fate ethnic identity," and a measure of the degree of perceived labor market discrimination against members of one's racial-ethnic group generally. A sense of common fate is a critical element of group identity formation (Tajfel 1982) and powerfully affects the political attitudes and behaviors of African Americans (Guin, Harchett, and Jackson 1989; Tate 1993; Dawson 1994). Perceptions of discrimination, likewise, are regarded as core elements in a potentially politicized sense of group awareness (Guin Miller, and Guin 1980). Distributions by race for these two items are shown in table 14.8.

In general, the ethnic awareness measures suggest that African Americans and Latinos, the two groups most likely to report personal experiences of discrimination in the labor market, were also the most ethnically aware. To be sure, most respondents expressed some degree of common fate identity with their racial group as a whole. But this ten-

TABLE 14.8 *Ethnic Awareness by Respondent Race*

	White	African American	Asian American	Latino
Common fate ethnic identity				
A lot	20.2	39.5	20.3	27.0
Some	43.2	34.8	46.3	35.9
Not much	9.2	5.4	11.8	5.6
None	27.3	20.3	21.7	31.5
Totals	99.9%	100.0%	100.1%	100.0%
N	(855)	(1,111)	(1,050)	(983)
Collective labor market discrimination				
A lot	3.7	67.1	3.0	57.0
Some	27.8	29.4	49.7	30.0
Only a little	39.0	2.8	37.4	9.2
None	29.5	0.7*	9.9	3.8
Totals	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
N	(850)	(1,112)	(1,005)	(986)

QUESTION WORDING: (1) Do you think what happens generally to [respondent's race] people in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life? [If yes,] Will it affect you . . . ?; and (2) In general, how much discrimination is there that hurts the chances of [Hispanics, blacks, Asians, women, whites] to get good-paying jobs? Do you think there is a lot, some, only a little, or none at all?

Source: Los Angeles Study of Urban Inequality 1994.
*Cell count less than ten.

dency was strongest among the African American and Latino respondents, where 39.5 percent and 27.0 percent, respectively, felt the strongest possible ("a lot" response) connection between their circumstances as individuals and the fate of the group as a whole. In terms of collective perceptions of discrimination, we again found that African Americans and Latinos, by lopsided margins compared to whites and Asian Americans, saw their own groups as tending to face "a lot" of discrimination in getting jobs. In contrast, nearly a third of white respondents (29.5 percent) said their group faced no labor market discrimination versus less than 5 percent of Latinos and less than 1 percent of African Americans who gave such responses.

In tables 14.9 and 14.10 we examine the connection between reports of personal discrimination and each of the ethnic awareness measures separately by race in a multivariate framework. There is usually a significant positive association between reporting any workplace experience of discrimination and ethnic awareness, net of controls for respondent social background and workplace characteristics. In six of the eight

tests, the impact of personal discrimination was significant. Both of the exceptions came when predicting the ethnic common fate identity measure. One of these exceptions occurred among white respondents, where the effect of personal discrimination was in the right direction but barely of borderline significance ($b = .16$, $s.e. = .11$, $p = .11$). The other occurred among Latinos ($b = .14$, $s.e. = .10$, $n.s.$).

Personal discrimination is associated with increasing strength of common fate ethnic identity among blacks ($b = .40$, $s.e. = .09$, $p < .001$) and among Asians ($b = .37$, $s.e. = .13$, $p < .01$). With respect to perceived discrimination against one's group, we find a significant net association, regardless of race. Among the white ($b = .21$, $s.e. = .09$, $p < .05$), African American ($b = .22$, $s.e. = .05$, $p < .001$), Asian American ($b = .30$, $s.e. = .09$, $p < .01$), and Latino respondents ($b = .33$, $s.e. = .07$, $p < .001$), as personal reports of discrimination increased so too did the likelihood of perceiving one's group as collectively facing discrimination.

Given the cross-sectional nature of the data it is, of course, impossible to specify in which direction the causality flows. For that reason we are careful to discuss the effects observed in tables 14.9 and 14.10 as "associations" rather than as cause-and-effect relations. Over the life-course there are almost certainly reciprocal effects between an individual's interpretation of direct personal experiences of discrimination and his or her sense of ethnic awareness. Greater ethnic awareness, all else equal, probably increases the chances of interpreting certain workplace experiences and conditions as constituting discrimination based on race. Conversely, concluding that one has experienced racial discrimination at work probably deepens a sense of ethnic awareness.

We are reassured about the likely flow of effects as we have specified them by the significant impact of personal discrimination on ethnic awareness *net of respondent education* among our African American and Asian American respondents. It seems clear that the highly educated are unusually well adept at interpreting certain experiences as constituting racial discrimination, at least among blacks and Asians (see tables 14.3 and 14.5). But education is not the whole story. There appears to be something about interpreting an experience as involving discrimination that carries over for measures of ethnic awareness above and beyond whatever it is that greater education does to increase sensitivity to discrimination.

We took one further step to verify our specification of the models that assume that personal discrimination is likely to contribute to a sense of ethnic awareness. Each of the models in tables 14.9 and 14.10 involving significant effects for personal discrimination were re-estimated, including either the group discrimination variable when pre-

(Text continues on p. 548.)

TABLE 14.9 *Multivariate OLS Models of the Relation of Ethnic Awareness and Reports of Personal Discrimination by Respondent Race*

Independent Variables	Race of Respondent						
	White		African American		Asian American		Latino
	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B
Constant	1.85***	(.28)	2.16***	(.30)	1.87	(.34)	1.94***
Background variables							
Nativity	-.06	(.14)	.01	(.20)	.22	(.15)	.43***
Sex	-.04	(.11)	.10	(.10)	.47***	(.11)	-.14
Age	<.01	(<.01)	<-.01	(<.01)	-.02***	(<.01)	<-.01
Education							
Zero to eleven years	-.45	(.37)	-.90***	(.25)	-.11	(.24)	-1.02*
Twelve	-.30	(.22)	-.66***	(.20)	-.28	(.22)	-1.02*
Thirteen to fifteen	-.17	(.19)	-.70***	(.18)	-.30	(.18)	-.78
Sixteen	-.17	(.18)	-.61**	(.20)	-.15	(.18)	-.79
Occupation							
Lower blue-collar	-.34	(.20)	.16	(.18)	.23	(.21)	.45*
Upper blue-collar	-.16	(.17)	.08	(.13)	-.29	(.17)	.55**
Lower white-collar	-.05	(.12)	.15	(.11)	-.26*	(.12)	.31
Income							
\$6,000 to \$16,999	-.26	(.17)	.47***	(.13)	.77***	(.15)	.29*
\$17,000 to \$31,999	<.01	(.14)	.30*	(.13)	.61***	(.14)	-.11
\$32,000 or more	.07	(.14)	.41**	(.15)	.72***	(.15)	.21
refused to answer	.63**	(.23)	.76***	(.18)	.56**	(.20)	.82**
Workplace variables							
Sector	.26	(.13)	.10	(.10)	-.13	(.17)	.35*
Firm size	<.01	(<.01)	<.01	(<.01)	<.01	(<.01)	<.01
Different race							
Coworkers	.08	(.13)	-.10	(.10)	.29*	(.14)	-.03
Different race							
Supervisor	.09	(.14)	-.05	(.10)	-.10	(.14)	-.05
Supervisor's sex	-.18	(.11)	-.19	(.09)	-.04	(.12)	.10
Personal discrimination	.16	(.11)	.40***	.09	.37**	(.13)	.14
Model R ²	.085		.148		.348		.094
Base N	(461)		(617)		(403)		(615)

Source: Los Angeles Study of Urban Inequality 1994.

Note: Cell entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Figures in parentheses are standard errors.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

TABLE 14.10 *Multivariate OLS Models of the Relation of Group Discrimination and Reports of Personal Discrimination, by Respondent Race*

Independent Variables	Race of Respondent						
	White		African American		Asian American		Latino
	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B
Constant	.95***	(.23)	2.56***	(.16)	1.61***	(.25)	2.50***
Background variables							
Nativity	-.34**	(.11)	-.33**	(.11)	-.03	(.11)	.25**
Sex	-.14	(.09)	-.08	(.05)	-.03	(.09)	-.26***
Age	<.01	(<.01)	<.01	(<.01)	<.01	(<.01)	<-.01*
Education							
Zero to eleven years	<.01	(.30)	.08	(.13)	-.36	(.19)	-.41
Twelve	-.13	(.18)	-.07	(.10)	-.26	(.16)	-.44
Thirteen to fifteen	.12	(.15)	-.15	(.09)	-.45***	(.13)	-.48
Sixteen	-.04	(.15)	-.21*	(.10)	-.04	(.13)	-.31
Occupation							
Lower blue-collar	.11	(.16)	-.26**	(.09)	-.05	(.16)	.64***
Upper blue-collar	.22	(.14)	-.10	(.07)	-.29*	(.12)	.58***
Lower white-collar	.04	(.10)	-.06	(.06)	.08	(.09)	.32**
Income							
\$6,000-\$16,999	-.04	(.14)	-.01	(.07)	.16	(.13)	.04
\$17,000-\$31,999	-.04	(.12)	-.02	(.07)	.11	(.11)	-.19*
\$32,000 or more	.06	(.11)	.02	(.07)	-.12	(.12)	.01
refused to answer	.11	(.19)	.16	(.09)	.06	(.15)	-.06
Workplace variables							
Sector	<-.01	(.11)	-.02	(.05)	.28*	(.13)	.19
Firm size	<.01	(<.01)	<-.01	(<.01)	<.01*	(<.01)	<.01*
Different race							
Coworkers	.26*	(.11)	-.03	(.05)	-.28**	(.10)	<-.01
Different race							
Supervisor	.11	(.12)	-.02	(.05)	.13	(.11)	.01
Supervisor's sex	-.17	(.09)	.13**	(.05)	-.10	(.09)	-.12
Personal discrimination	.21*	(.09)	.22***	(.05)	.30**	(.09)	.33***
Model R ²	.090		.107		.223		.201
Base N	(464)		(621)		(380)		(619)

Source: Los Angeles Study of Urban Inequality 1994.

Note: Cell entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Figures in parentheses are standard errors.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

dicting common fate ethnic identity or the common fate identity variable when predicting group discrimination. In every instance, the personal discrimination variable continued to have a significant net association, and the size of the coefficient changed only trivially. Taken as a whole, then, these results suggest that personal reports of discrimination are not merely the interpretive product of ethnic awareness. Experimenting discrimination personally seems to reinforce or enhance common fate ethnic identity (net of education and general perceptions of group discrimination) and to increase perceptions of group discrimination (net of education and of common fate ethnic identity).

Conclusion

Examinations of racial attitudes are among the most enduring topics of survey-based research in the United States (Converse 1987; Hyman 1991, Smith 1987). The issue of race was an important concern in the classic *American Soldier* studies (Stouffer 1949) and was the subject of a series of pioneering surveys conducted by NORC in the 1940s (Hyman and Sheatsley 1956; Taylor, Greeley, and Sheatsley 1978). Despite this distinguished and ongoing tradition of research (Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo 1985; Niemi, Mueller, and Smith 1989), Feagin and others are right to note the lack of sustained survey-based research on discrimination per se. Our aim has been to begin to fill this critical lacuna and to stem the growing impression that general population samples cannot meaningfully illuminate actual social processes of discrimination. We believe that they can and in ways that allow one to exploit the other strengths of large systematic sample surveys.

These analyses support five noteworthy conclusions about the personal experience of racial discrimination in a major multiethnic labor market. First, there were substantial group differences in levels of reported experiences of discrimination. In general, minority respondents reported more encounters with discrimination than did whites. Minorities were also more likely to relate concrete instances of discrimination when asked an open-ended follow-up than did whites and more often did so in a fashion suggestive of emotional distress or upset. African Americans clearly reported the highest levels of encounters with discrimination in the workplace. Latinos followed blacks in the discrimination queue, though the two are separated by an order of magnitude difference. This discrimination can take strong forms, with the most frequently cited type involving the denial of employment. We found little evidence that the experience of discrimination in the workplace was concentrated at a particular place in the class hierarchy. Save for the

substantial differences by level of education, discrimination appears to occur across the class spectrum.

Our analyses are based on respondent reports of personal experiences, neither controlled experiments or auditing methodology nor based on an observer's judgments of actual behaviors or situations.¹⁰ That is, we measured the subjective individual salience of workplace racial discrimination. This is a different type of outcome than probabilities of employment, wage rates, or occupational standing and mobility. It is thus not surprising that personal discrimination of this type may have roots in a somewhat different mix of individual and workplace characteristics than do these other types of outcomes (for example, the relative lack of importance of the public- versus private-sector distinction).

We take any claim of having experienced discrimination seriously. Feagin (1991) rightly reminds us that the experience of discrimination is painful and rarely an eagerly embraced interpretation of one's experiences. More important, in some respects what individuals believe about the experiences of discrimination is of great social consequence. As we have shown, personal discrimination reinforces a sense of common fate ethnic identity and increases the perception of collective discrimination against members of one's group. It may also affect other workplace and labor market-relevant behaviors (such as job change and job search behavior), though this is a matter for future research.

In addition, the overall levels of discrimination we found are best regarded as lower-bound estimates of the likelihood that individuals of any given race encounter discrimination in the workplace. Some types of discrimination are difficult to observe by the individual and thus could not be taken into account in a self-report. Most important, we asked only four questions, and could have addressed a number of other potential forms of bias. The weight of both considerations, we believe, leans in the direction of regarding our reported levels of discrimination as lower- rather than upper-bound estimates.

Second among our major conclusions: across race-ethnicity there was a strong expectation and reported experience of ethnocentric bias in the workplace. The thread that most strongly connects the open-ended responses of our white, African American, Asian American, and Latino respondents is mutual sensitivity to in-group favoritism that may occur when coworkers, supervisors, those with decision-making authority, or owners are of a different racial-ethnic background.

One immediate implication of these results is that there are a number of points of potential racial-ethnic group conflict in the workplace, as opposed to one great overwhelmingly salient divide. That is, there are as many potential sources of conflict as there are possible pairings of

workers of different racial-ethnic group backgrounds. Two that bear close watching in the future are the Latino and Asian American case and the white and Asian American case. These two types of pairings are increasingly common and, our results indicate, far from free of feelings of racial discrimination, competition, and conflict.

Third among our major conclusions: many of the African American, Asian American, and Latino respondents who reported discrimination share a perception of the current ubiquity of white privilege in the workplace:

[It's a] race problem. Whites get promoted faster—thirty-three-year-old Asian American man, financial manager

What happens is that they favor white people.—forty-five-year-old Latino truck driver

Whites are always over blacks. They got promotions and I didn't.—forty-three-year-old African American man, social worker

White guys always receive higher wages and more jobs than the Latinos and blacks.—thirty-nine-year-old Latino carpenter

Well, ah, whites just get special treatment.—twenty-nine-year-old African American woman, police officer

As discussed, our open-ended responses suggest that the ubiquitous perception of white advantage rests in the subtle operation of informal networks of communication and interaction among whites in the workplace. African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos frequently feel excluded from these networks. Whites may well feel equally excluded from minority social networks. But minority social networks are a good deal less likely to include supervisory personnel, business owners, or others with workplace authority. The ubiquity of this perception among those minority respondents who had reported discrimination may also be traced to the observation of few minorities in positions of authority, and to repeated observation of promotions and pay raises going to whites with less seniority or less apparent qualification.

Fourth, and perhaps most important, it is often the case that what constitutes discrimination is a complex interpretative process. This is most immediately indicated by the powerful impact of level of education on the likelihood of reporting discrimination among our African American and Asian American respondents. The impact of education points up one possible danger in generalizing too broadly from samples of well-educated minorities (compare Feagin and Sikes 1994). Without questioning the validity of any claim of discrimination, it is clear that the less well educated among African Americans and Asian Americans

reported far less discrimination than did the well educated. Indeed, among blacks virtually every respondent with postgraduate training reported experiencing at least one form of workplace racial discrimination, as did nearly two-thirds of comparably well educated Asian Americans. Reports of experience of workplace discrimination would appear far less common among a sample composed exclusively of poor and working-class respondents.

Fifth and last among our major conclusions, our results suggest that the gap in levels of discrimination between survey-based reports of personal encounters (low) and those obtained from in-depth interviews (high), or even within surveys when comparing questions concerning the individual (low) versus the group (high), may be more apparent than the real (compare Schuman 1972). That is, the disjuncture may reflect the limited number and often vague character of the questions typically used in surveys to tap personal encounters with discrimination. Questions referring to concrete types of situations and, critically, multiple-item measures of possible forms of discrimination can produce quite high overall rates of reported encounters with discrimination. In this regard, the ubiquity of the experience of discrimination suggested in several recent nonsample survey studies of the black middle class is directly mirrored in results for our highly educated black and Asian respondents (see, for example, Cose 1993; Feagin and Sikes 1994; Zweghaft and Domhoff 1991).

If surveys are to better measure and provide a basis for systematic research on the relative frequency, form, and processes of modern racial-ethnic discrimination, then our research suggests that it is important to draw on multiple-item measures of discrimination. Our questions dealt exclusively with discrimination in the workplace, yet we found an overall rate of encounters with discrimination among African Americans equivalent to that reported by Sigelman and Welch for measures that covered, in addition to the workplace, the domains of education and housing (Sigelman and Welch 1991, 55–56). Multiple-item measures spanning a number of major life domains, especially when supplemented by open-ended questions, may go even further toward erasing the apparent gap between survey-based assessments of discrimination and those obtained through in-depth interview and other procedures.

Future survey-based research should do more on several fronts. It is essential to collect fuller open-ended accounts about the discrimination experience. Direct probes for the impact of perceived discrimination on the individual's emotional state and work productivity need to be examined. Likewise, explicit examination of the types of responses to discrimination, including the possible pursuit of formal grievances, needs to be undertaken (see Bobo 1992, 170–71). In all of this, the design and

execution of surveys will surely be improved by a constant dialogue with research based in other methodologies, whether it be auditing studies, in-depth interviews, laboratory experiments, or case studies of particular industries.

This research bears on matters of much broader scope as well. These results have implications for the intensifying debate over affirmative action and antidiscrimination efforts. Like an accumulating body of work using a variety of methods, our data call into question the popular assumption that racial discrimination against minorities is now a relatively infrequent problem in the workplace. The data also cast strong doubt on the validity of the perception of widespread minority preference over whites in the workplace.

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Appendix

TABLE 14A.1 *Background Variables, by Respondent Race*

	White	African American	Asian American	Latinas and Latinos
Nativity				
U.S.-born	84.0%	92.4	11.5	26.3
Foreign-born	16.0	7.6	88.5	73.7
Total N	(863)	(1119)	(1055)	(988)
Sex				
Male	45.1	43.0	46.7	47.8
Female	54.9	57.0	53.3	52.2
Total N	(863)	(1119)	(1055)	(988)
Age				
Twenty-one to thirty-five	33.3	44.9	34.9	53.3
Thirty-six to fifty	34.2	28.6	35.4	29.8
Fifty-one to sixty-five	20.3	16.4	15.3	14.0
Sixty-six or more	12.3	10.1	14.4	3.0
Total N	(862)	(1118)	(1054)	(987)
Education				
Zero to eleven years	4.9	11.7	15.1	50.1
Twelve	23.5	32.7	20.9	23.9
Thirteen to fifteen	35.5	40.0	19.8	17.5
Sixteen	25.6	9.1	32.0	6.7
Over sixteen	10.5	6.5	12.2	1.8
Total N	(863)	(1117)	(1054)	(988)

TABLE 14A.1 *Continued*

	White	African American	Asian American	Latinas and Latinos
Occupation				
Lower blue-collar	7.6	9.6	7.4	35.3
Upper blue-collar	13.7	25.9	19.6	31.8
Lower white-collar	32.6	40.4	33.0	20.9
Upper white-collar	46.1	24.1	40.0	11.9
Total N	(711)	(882)	(748)	(837)
Income				
< \$6,000	21.3	22.6	24.7	27.9
\$6,000 to \$16,999	13.3	21.0	18.0	41.5
\$17,000 to \$31,999	26.2	29.1	29.5	21.4
\$32,000 or more	39.2	27.4	27.8	9.1
Total N	(659)	(787)	(591)	(804)

Source: Los Angeles Study of Urban Inequality 1994.

TABLE 14A.2 *Characteristics of the Workplace, by Respondent Race*

	White	African American	Asian American	Latino
Type of company				
Private	85.6%	76.7	94.0	91.6
Public	14.4	23.3	6.0	8.4
Total N	(711)	(883)	(754)	(839)
Size				
very small (<10)	27.3	19.9	43.4	26.4
small or mid (10 to 49)	25.8	24.4	28.7	33.2
medium (50 to 499)	32.5	33.2	21.5	33.0
large (500+)	14.4	22.5	6.5	7.2
Total N	(700)	(875)	(723)	(820)
Race of coworkers				
White	83.5	34.5	22.0	18.4
African American	2.2	46.7	3.1	3.0
Asian American	3.4	4.1	61.5	2.6
Latino	10.8	14.7	13.3	76.1
Total N	(673)	(789)	(728)	(814)
Race of supervisor				
White	86.3	58.7	37.8	46.4
African American	2.9	30.3	2.9	4.6
Asian American	4.8	2.2	56.2	6.1
Latino	5.9	8.7	3.1	42.9
Total N	(518)	(747)	(457)	(683)

(Table continues on p. 554.)

TABLE 14A.2 *Continued*

	White	African American	Asian American	Latino
Sex of supervisor				
Male	67.8	55.5	73.6	71.7
Female	32.2	44.5	26.4	28.3
Total N	(529)	(766)	(459)	(690)

Source: Los Angeles Study of Urban Inequality 1994.

Notes

1. The most prominent research on discrimination has involved analyses of large-scale quantitative data sources. In such analyses, for example, models of income determination are compared for blacks and whites who have been equated on major human capital and labor force experience variables. The remaining black-white gap in earnings (or occupational status or probability of employment or job authority), after holding the other relevant variables constant, is typically interpreted as evidence of discrimination. Mary Corcoran and Greg Duncan (1978) and Reynolds Farley (1984) provide excellent examples and reviews of such research (but see also Duncan 1969, Featherman and Hauser 1978, Kluegel 1978, Lieberman and Fuguitt 1967, Siegel 1970). Some research in this vein is beginning to pursue multiethnic comparisons (Tienda and Lii 1987) or to examine how discrimination confronts Latinos (Telles and Murguia 1990) and Asian Americans (Duleep and Sanders 1992, Kim and Lewis 1994, Tang 1993). Unfortunately, multiethnic analyses remain the exception rather than the rule, and we know of no other research examining direct reports on the experience of discrimination.
2. The conceptual and theoretical reasons for a connection between personal reports of discrimination and both subjective social class identity and subjective economic insecurity are unclear. For that reason we do not pursue analyses using such measures here. However, the effects of such factors reinforce the important interpretative aspect of any reported experience of discrimination. We take up this issue by examining the connection between reports of discrimination and other measures of subjective ethnic awareness (see rest of chapter, especially the discussion of tables 14.7 and 14.8).
3. Several other variables, most notably length of time in the United States and English language mastery, have been found to affect labor market outcomes for immigrant groups (Bean and Tienda 1987). We chose to examine those factors likely to operate among each of the four racial-ethnic groups.
4. As can be seen in appendix table 14A.2, 86.3 percent of our white respondents had white supervisors and 83.5 percent had mainly white coworkers, leaving a comparatively small fraction of whites in work settings where they were likely to hear racial epithets directed at them by minorities.
5. We were surprised by the absence of an effect of the public- versus private-sector distinction. One possible reason for this may be that we have pooled the "refused a job" item, which assesses point of entry discrimination, with the other three items that assess on-the-job discrimination. A separate analysis of the "refused a job" item, however, still shows no significant effect for the public- versus private-sector distinction at the bivariate level or in the full multivariate models for white, African American, and Latino respondents. Among Asian Americans, we do find a significant bivariate association, but it shows greater discrimination in the public sector and does not survive controls in the multivariate model. We discuss in the conclusion how the subjective personal salience of discrimination of the type we measure here differs from more routinely studied labor market outcomes of employment probabilities, earnings, and occupational standing.
6. Despite the considerable media attention given to claims of "reverse discrimination" (Gans and Modigliani 1987) and the perception that blacks and other minorities receive significant preferential treatment (Kluegel and Smith 1982), the vague character of the claims of discrimination from many of our white respondents is consistent with a growing body of evidence challenging the claim of significant bias against whites (Reskin 1998). For example, data from the 1990 General Social Survey found that 70 percent of whites believed it "very likely" or "somewhat likely" that due to affirmative action whites lose out to "equal or less well qualified" blacks. However, when asked why they felt this way, only 6.9 percent spoke in terms of a direct personal experience; the great bulk of responses fell into the "heard about from others" (35 percent) or "heard about it in the media" (42 percent) categories (Davis and Smith 1990). Along the same lines, a major study found that "reverse discrimination" complaints were an extremely small fraction of all discrimination claims filed, and that only a handful of these were found to have merit ("Reverse Discrimination Complaints were found to have merit," *New York Times*, March 31, 1995, p. A10). Similarly, the Urban Institute employer auditing study found three times as much discrimination against blacks as they did preference in favor of blacks over whites (Turner et al. 1991, 62-63).
7. We classified all the open-ended comment in terms of the presence or absence of a direct, personally experienced event or action. Gen-

8. This sense of exasperation was hinted at in our earlier focus group research. It was sometimes difficult, especially among the African American participants, to initiate discussion of personal encounters with discrimination. Once the moderator made it clear that we were seriously interested in obtaining detailed reports, the participants were far more forthcoming. One reason for the initial hesitance seemed to be an assumption that the pervasiveness of discrimination was obvious. "The experience of discrimination was considered so common, especially among the Blacks, that one person joked 'Where do you want me to start?'" (Bobo et al. 1995, 82).
9. We defined signs of emotional upset as the explicit use of charged terms such as "unfair," "get away with," "not qualified," "discriminated," "forced" (as in "forced to quit" or "forced to implement quotas"), or the use of extreme words to describe promotion or raise practices by race, such as "always" and "never." For these purposes, responses that are not racial in nature are counted as lacking emotional content.
10. There is no single best way to gauge discrimination in the labor market. Other methodologies have weaknesses as well when it comes to judging the extent of discrimination. For example, even in cases where trained observers judge a behavior, there can be substantial ambiguities of interpretation and judgment (see Schuman et al. 1983). And the degree of "control" achieved in auditing studies is seldom perfect. Indeed, the closer such research comes to perfect experimental control, the more artificial the test may become. For instance, black and white job applicants with absolutely no apparent difference in taste in clothing, spoken English, hairstyle, and other subtle cultural attributes that might become salient in the course of self-presentation in a job interview (that is, ability to engage in everyday conversation about favorite musicians) would be virtually impossible to find. The more the research pressed toward an exactly identical stimulus save for race, the greater the problem of external validity would become.

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