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ABSTRACT

The effect of job candidates' race on employers' job placement decisions was examined through an experiment in which white personnel officers were presented with a vignette describing a particular candidate, told that their company had employed that person, and asked what sort of position that person is likely to be hired in. The results suggest that white personnel officers tend to assign black male high school graduates to lower paying positions than those assigned to white male high school graduates. Similar patterns were observed for black female college graduates. However, these patterns of apparent bias in job placement were found to be offset to some degree in firms with strong affirmative action policies. These findings do not indicate whether a particular placement officer's racial bias reflects a personal distaste for blacks ("old fashioned prejudice") or what Lester Thurow has called "statistical discrimination" --using the color of the respondent as a source of information based on actual or putative correlations between race and job-related skills and attitudes. In either case, however, the job applicant is being responded to only as a member of a racial minority group. (KH)

How Race Affects Job Placement Decisions: Results Of A Vignette Experiment With A National Sample Of Employers

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of job candidates' race on employers' job placement decisions. Analyses are based on data gathered through the randomized vignette technique as part of the Johns Hopkins University Survey of American Employers. The results suggest that, net of controls for educational credentials, recommendations, age, high school quality, employment sector, firm size and region, white personnel officers tend to assign black male high school graduates to lower paying positions than those assigned to white male high school graduates. Similar patterns are observed for black female college graduates. These patterns of apparent bias in job placement are found to be offset to some degree in firms with strong affirmative action policies. The findings are discussed in the context of Thurow's (1975) theory of statistical discrimination.

The often hotly debated question of whether blacks continue to be victims of labor market discrimination is important for several reasons. First, major differences in black-white unemployment and average earnings persist despite a dramatic closing of the racial gap in educational attainment over the last quarter-century. Darity and Myers (1980) point out that young white high school dropouts have lower unemployment rates (16.7 percent) than black youth with some college training (21.4 percent) and about the same unemployment rate as blacks who have completed college (16.5 percent). Using the Census Bureau's Current Population Surveys from 1968 to 1978, Darity and Myers also show that annual relative earnings for black males in the 16-24 and 25-34 age groups have actually fallen since 1968.

Second, affirmative action practices and youth job training programs ostensibly aimed at providing equal employment opportunities are now being questioned as appropriate public policy. Some officials argue that the "intent" to discriminate must be proven in each specific instance before any considerations for minority hiring be extended.

Third, in the realm of public opinion, black perceptions and white perceptions of equal employment opportunities for blacks in America differ sharply. For example, in 1978, 73 percent of whites responding to a Gallup poll thought blacks had as good a chance as whites of obtaining any job in their community for which they were qualified while only 38 percent of black respondents concurred.

Thus, a better social science understanding of persisting occupational inequities, more informed public policy debates, and

mor enlightened public opinion requires additional research on the ways in which minorities may face special barriers or may encounter different processes than white males in finding career opportunities. Similar research is needed concerning the problems of women.

Most research on the concept of "discrimination" has been indirect, non-specific and static (McPartland and Crain, 1980). Studies estimating the extent to which discriminatory factors create major gaps between the attainments of blacks and whites have typically measured discrimination indirectly, as the residual gap between the occupational success of blacks and whites after individual differences in job credentials or competencies and labor market locations have been statistically controlled (See, for example, Siegel, 1965; Duncan, 1969; Ashenfelter, 1972; Griliches and Mason, 1972; Jencks et al., 1972; Weiss and Williamson, 1972; Welch, 1973; Porter, 1974; Masters, 1975; Wright, 1978; Braddock, 1980). Thus these studies estimate the impact of discrimination without directly measuring the forms that discrimination may take, and we do not learn about the specific barriers that minorities may face.

This study investigates racial discrimination in job placement by examining survey responses of a national sample of personn l officers or other executives responsible for hiring decisions when they are dealing with job candidates who differ by race and sex. Three broad employment equity-related questions are addressed: Does a job candidate's race influence employers' job placement decisions?

Do human capital and labor market variables influence occupational outcomes differently for blacks and whites? What role does affirmative action play in reducing racial inequities in labor market outcomes?

Survey Sample and Survey Procedures

Our sample of firms was obtained from data provided by employees who had at least a high school diploma and were in their mid-twenties. In 1972, 20,000 high school seniors in a nationally representative sample of public and private secondary schools were surveyed. This survey, called the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972 (NLS-72), repeatedly resurveyed these same students after graduation to develop a longitudinal portrait of their post-high school careers. Our Johns Hopkins University Survey of American Employers (SAE) constructed a sample of firms by selecting all black and Hispanic NLS-72 respondents and a sample of the remaining respondents and recording the type of jobs they held and the names of their employers in the third follow-up survey (in 1976, four years after they finished high school) and the fourth follow-up survey (in 1979, seven years after high school). The survey sample is thus a group of firms which employed a national sample of American 22-year-old high school graduates in 1976 and 25-year-old high school or college graduates in 1979. The employers range in size from the very largest corporations to a variety of small businesses.

Each employer was contacted by telephone to obtain the name of the person who would be typically responsible for hiring employees

holding positions like those held by the respondents of the National Longitudinal Study. The employer was not told that an employee of the firm had been surveyed. If the NLS respondent was employed in a branch office of a national or international firm, that branch office was contacted, so for most large corporations a variety of different personnel officers in different locations around the United States were surveyed. In cases where the employer was a service station, grocery store, or other very small business, it was often the owner who made employing decisions.

The person responsible for employment was surveyed with a mailed questionnaire in the summer of 1983 that asked a variety of questions about how the firm went about recruiting and employing personnel, including questions about a hypothetical hiring situation presented in a vignette. The original sample consisted of 5493 employers. Of these, 1912 (34%) returned their mail questionnaires. The present study is limited to analyses of a subsample of nonminority-owned firms (n=1101) who completed the vignette portion of the mailed questionnaire and who provided sufficient usable information on the demography of their workforce. (An additional 41% cases from the original sample were interviewed by telephone or completed a shorter mailed questionnaire after failing to complete the questionnaire initially sent to them. Those respondents are not included in this analysis, because the vignette items of particular interest to us were omitted from the shorter mail questionnaire and the telephone survey).

Our analyses compare how personnel officers in nonminority-owned

firms react to black and white high school graduates and how they react to black and white college graduates. However, no single respondent was asked to directly compare black and white college graduate applicants or black and white high school grad applicants. Instead, job placement information was gathered through a technique called the randomized vignette questionnaire (Nosanchuk, 1972, Rossi et al., 1974, Alexander and Becker, 1978; Cook, 1979).

The mail questionnaire primarily asked questions about the ways in which employers recruit and hire employees for a particular "sample job;" namely the position held by the (NLS) respondent who had worked for this firm. Later in the questionnaire, we switched to a different series of questions, which comprise the vignette, as follows:

A TYPICAL HIRING EXPERIENCE

> Earlier, we asked about one particular sample job which may not be a typical job in your organization. In this section, we would like to ask you about a job position of your own choosing. Consider the following person, who has just been hired by your organization:
>
> Mr. William Foster was a walk-in applicant. He is a high school graduate who attended an inner-city high school. He is 27-years old and white. Now please suggest a typical position in which this person might be employed and answer the following questions about how he was hired for this position.

The client was then asked for 21 brief responses about the kind of position this person might hold and what the process to hire him might have entailed.

In fact, this hiring scenario is one of 40 different scenarios.

Other respondents were offered a different description of Mr. William Foster (or a Ms. Mary Foster). Vignettes varied along six dimensions:

SEX: female (0) vs. male (1);

RACE: black (0) vs. white (1);

SOURCE: walk-in (0) vs. someone recommended by another employee (1);

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL: high school (0) vs. college (1);

and for high school graduates only

AGE: 19-years (0) vs. 27-years old (1);

QUALITY OF HIGH SCHOOL: an "inner-city high school" (0) vs. a "suburban school with a good reputation" (1).

Figure 1 shows the 40 possible vignettes generated by this design.

Figure 1 about here

Because the vignettes were randomly assigned to employers, the employers who received any one version of the vignette are no different (except for random errors of sampling) from those who received any other version. None of the respondents were aware that their responses would be compared to other employers who received a different vignette, so there is no reason to believe that they would be sensitive to the issue of racial discrimination in job placement.

On its face, the questionnaire was not about equity issues but about how firms make personnel decisions in general.

In this report we rank occupations in two ways. We use the conventional Socioeconomic Index (SEI), but are aware that this scale assigns much higher rankings to women's occupations than to men's occupations, despite the fact that women's earnings are generally much less then men's. Following a convention used by some others, we call this "prestige." We also use a second and more appropriate two-facet ranking based simply on the average annual wages of all employees in the nation who hold that particular occupation. One facet of the ranking is based on the wages of male occupants of these jobs, the other based on women's wages. We call this ranking simply "status." The status measure seems to show clearer and more easily interpreted effects than does the prestige index.

Status estimates were derived for each occupation assigned to vignette job candidates based on 1980 U.S. Census statistics reflecting average annual earnings of all male or female workers in detailed census job categories. Prestige scores for each occupation were assigned using a socioeconomic index (SEI), a scale from 0 to 100 based upon the mean income and the mean educational attainment of persons holding these positions. Each occupation assigned by employers was also coded to reflect its racial (percent black) and gender (percent female) composition also based on 1980 U. S. Census national statistics.

In addition, several firm level variables obtained in other parts of the questionnaire were included as controls in this analysis: Firms were catagorized on the relative size of their workforce, sector (public or private), and region (South or North). A firm's commitment to affirmative action was measured with a summated index based on personnel officers responses to three Likert-type items reflecting their company's equal employment policies: "We believe that employers in this city have a social responsibility to make strong efforts to provide employment to blacks and other minority groups"; "We have tried to go out of our way to hire black and other minority groups whenever possible"; and "We refer to a written Affirmative Action Plan to guide the recruitment and hiring of minority group workers at this place of work."

Table 1 shows the characteristics -- status, prestige, racial and gender composition -- of occupations assigned by employers according to the type of vignette they received -- whether the vignette described a white or black male or female and whether the person was a college graduate or a high school graduate.

Table 1 about here

Do Employers Assign Blacks to Less Rewarding Jobs?

Table 2 presents the results of regression analysis examining the effect of the vignette job candidate's race on job status and job prestige separately for male and female high school and college

graduates. The upper panel of Table 2 shows that among high school graduates, race is a significant determinant of male job status (b=.12). Female job status (b=-.03) and job prestige among both sexes (b=.02 and b=-.08 for males and females respectively) are not statistically significant differences by race among high school graduates.

Table 2 about here

For high school males, the jobs assigned to black vignette employees pay a lower median annual wage than jobs assigned to white vignette employees. This statistically significant net $1009 difference in status associated with differential job assignment by employers holds even after taking into account the impact of other important correlates of earnings including age, high school reputation, internal employee recommendations, employment sector, firm size and region. In fact, the only factors in our model for high school males more strongly correlated with status than race (b=.12) are age (b=.18) and firm size (b=.14): older male high school graduates are assigned to jobs paying about $1501 more in wages than jobs assigned to 19-year-old high school males and high school males in small firms are assigned to jobs earning about $304 more than their counterparts in large firms. These findings are consistent with our expectations. We would expect to find a higher job status return among older workers who are likely to have more labor market experience and possess greater stability and maturity

in work habits and attitudes. In regard to firm size, it is reasonable to expect that larger firms simply have a greater number of openings at the bottom in lower status jobs usually open to male high school graduates.

We also find for high school graduates that, for job prestige, firm size is negatively significant for males; and firm sector and high school location are positively significant factors for females. Suburban female high school graduates and female high school graduates in public sector firms are assigned higher prestige jobs. These findings seem reasonable: we might expect that suburban female high school graduates might be viewed by employers as potentially more skilled and better trained job applicants than their inner-city counterparts, and a higher proportion of white collar jobs are located in the public sector.

The lower panel of Table 2 shows that among college graduates, race is found to be a significant determinant of female job status (b=.14). Among college females, the jobs assigned to black vignette employees pay less in median annual wages than the jobs assigned to white vignette employees. This net $786 difference is statistically significant and holds even after controlling for the effect of internal employee recommendations, employment sector, firm size and region. The net effect of race on college female income is exceeded only by the effect of firm size (b=.26): female college graduates in larger firms earn roughly $375 more than their counterparts in smaller firms.

Male job status (b=-.07) and job prestige among both sexes (b=-.05 and b=.11 for males and females respectively) are not statistically significant race differences among college graduates.

We also find that college males who are recommended by current employees are assigned to jobs averaging five and two-thirds points higher in prestige than their counterparts without recommendations. Such internal employee recommendations only seem to matter at the top -- for college jobs. For high school jobs, employers may perceive such recommendations as attempts to help an unemployed relative or friend find work, whereas for college trained jobs recommendations may be viewed as reasonably valid indicators of an applicant's ability to effectively perform the job. We also note in the bottom right panel that male college jobs in the South carry higher prestige. This rather suprising finding may reflect macro-level shifts of high-tech industries and financial centers to the South, leaving the North with declining blue-collar industries.

Do Employers Assign Whites and Blacks to Different Jobs?

Table 3 presents the results of our regression analysis examining race-typing and gender-typing of job assignments in the vignette experiment. The general question is whether minorities or women are steered toward same-race or same-sex occupations.

Table 3 about here

We find that race does not appear to be a major factor in determining the race or gender type of job assignment except among female college graduates, for whom race of the hypothetical vignette candidate was a significant factor when considering race-typing in job assignment (b=-.16). As shown in the first column of the bottom panel of Table 3, employers place black females in jobs which on the average have a higher concentration of black incumbents than the jobs in which white females are placed. Among college males this relationship is trivial and nonsignificant.

Race has no direct effect on gender-typing in job placement of either male (b=.03) or female (b=-.01) college graduates. Moreover, no other factors (internal employee recommendations, employment sector, firm size, region) are significantly related to the gender composition of jobs assigned to college graduates. In fact, the entire set of variables accounts only for a small amount (2 percent) of the variance in percent female of jobs assigned to either college males or females.

Among both male and female high school graduates, race is unrelated to either the percent black or the percent female of the jobs to which the hypothetical vignette candidates were assigned by this national sample of employers.

In contrast, firm characteristics do appear to significantly influence race- and gender-typing of job assignment. Both high school and college males and females employed in the private sector are likely to be assigned to jobs with fewer blacks than are public sector empolyees. High school females and males in large firms are

more likely to be assigned to jobs with higher proportions of blacks than are their counterparts in small firms. In general, these relationships between the structural characteristics of firms and firm racial demography are consistent with existing theoretical and empirical literature noting higher demographic concentrations of black workers in the public sector than in the private sector and in larger firms than in smaller firms. These patterns are typically attributed to factors such as more egalitarian and formalized employment practices in the public sector and greater interest and responsiveness to equity concerns among public sector employers. A similar rationale exists in regard to firm size: larger firms are characterized by more formalized, if not centralized, employment practices and perhaps greater discretionary resources to commit to equal employment programs (Szafaran, 1982; Braddock, 1984)

Suburban high school males are somewhat more likely to be assigned jobs with higher female representation than inner-city high school males. This may reflect the fact that suburban male graduates are more likely to be placed in office rather than factory jobs. This interpretation is consistent with the data in Table 2 showing that male suburban high school graduates are assigned to jobs roughly three and two-thirds points higher in prestige than are male inner-city high school graduates.

Considering the findings in Tables 2 and 3 jointly, it might be argued that black female college graduates in this experiment earn less than white female college graduates, in part, because employers seem to steer them into racially isolated -- traditionally black --

occupations. Racial steering, however, does not explain why black male high school graduates are assigned to jobs which pay less in median wages than jobs assigned to white male high school graduates. We can only speculate that other unmeasured factors -- such as negative racial stereotypes (statistical discrimination) -- may operate more strongly to the disadvantage of black male high school graduates. We will discuss the issue of statistical discrimination in greater detail later in the paper.

- Do Personal Credentials and Employer Characteristics Operate Differently for Blacks and Whites?

If race serves as a negative or "aversive signal" to employers or if personnel officials exercise a "taste for discrimination" in the hiring process, as the preceeding analyses suggest in some instances, it may be beneficial for black applicants to provide extra information about themselves -- good references, school credentials or previous experience -- to employers in order to receive equal consideration for good jobs. We expect that extra sources of information provided by the applicant may be more important for blacks than for whites. For example, additional information about the applicant's age, the reputation of the applicant's school or whether the applicant is known and recommended by a current employee of the firm may counterbalance negative racial stereotypes. Knowledge that an applicant is 27-years old instead of 19-years old may suggest to an employer that the older job candidate may have more labor market experience or that the older candidate possesses greater maturity and stability, either of which could

influence productivity. Similarly, a job candidate recommended by a current employee is likely to be considered a better risk than a candidate for whom work or character evaluations are unknown. And knowledge that the job candidate graduated from a suburban school with a good reputation rather than an inner-city school is likely to signal to employers that the quality of education was better in the suburban school, and for blacks it may also suggest to employers that the job candidates are likely to be more experienced in functioning in interracial situations. We expect that such specific information to broaden the basis of employer evaluations will typically be more beneficial to blacks than whites. In this section we test this hypothesis by assessing the influence of three types of information on job placement decisions.

Tables 4 and 5 show the relative effect of personal credentials and employer characteristics on job placement outcomes for blacks and whites, separately for females (Table 4) and males (Table 5).

Table 4 about here

Considering females first, we see in Table 4 that the entire set of variables accounts for only a small fraction of the variance in job status among black and white high school females (5 percent and 2 percent). Among black high school females, age is the only statistically significant factor, with 27-year-olds being assigned to jobs paying an average of $623 more in annual income than jobs

assigned to their 19-year-old counterparts. Among white high school females, however, neither personal credentials nor employer characteristics contribute significantly to job status determination. From a human capital perspective, this finding suggests that employers may attribute to older black females either greater stability/maturity or more extensive labor force experience, which they value and reward with higher status jobs. Such a view appears consistent with traditional patterns of higher labor force participation rates among black women than among white women.

Among college graduates, the model accounts for three times more of the variance in white female job status (Multiple R2 = .19) than in black female job status (Multiple R2 = .06). Firm size influences white college female job status, with larger firms paying roughly $508 more than smaller firms. The corresponding large firm income advantage to black female college graduates is only $172, however.

For job prestige, employment sector is the only important factor among white female high school graduates; public sector employees hold jobs roughly eight and one-half prestige points higher than private sector employees. This difference is nearly twice a great as that among black females. And, among black female high school graduates, firm size is the strongest determinant of job prestige in our model; black high school females in larger firms hold positions roughly one and one-half points lower in prestige than jobs held by their counterparts in smaller firms. Neither of the individual predictors contributes significantly to job prestige for either

blacks or whites among college females.

For job racial composition, the model has stronger explanatory power for black females (Multiple R2 = .21 and .09 for high school and college graduates respectively) than for white females (Multiple R2 = .03 for both high schoool and college graduates). Among black female high school graduates, younger women and those who attended inner-city schools, worked in the public sector, or worked for large firms are more likely to be assigned to jobs with higher concentrations of other black incumbents. Among white female high school graduates, the only significant predictor of assignment to jobs with higher proportions of black workers is public sector employment. Similarly, public sector employment is the major determinant of black female college graduates' assignment to jobs with high black representation.

For job gender composition, firm size is the only significant correlate of the sexual makeup of the jobs assigned to women: white female college graduates in large firms are less likely than their counterparts in small firms to be assigned to jobs with higher concentrations of other females. Considering the overall pattern of results for female college graduates it might be argued that the wage advantage held by white women is, in part, a consequence of large firms assigning them to less traditionally female jobs than those assigned to black women.

Table 5 about here

Table 5 shows that our model is better in accounting for job status among white males (Multiple R2 = .10 and .07 for high school and college graduates, respectively) than among black males (Multiple R2 = .03 for both high school and college graduates). Among white high school males, age and firm size are the major explanatory variables; older white males and those employed in smaller firms are assigned to higher paying jobs. Here the race differences are rather striking. Employers assign 27-year-old white male high school graduates jobs paying roughly $2000 more in annual wages than the jobs that are assigned to 19-year-old white male high school graduates. In contrast, similarly qualified 27-year-old black male high school graduates are assigned to jobs paying only about $800 more in annual wages than jobs assigned to their 19-year-old counterparts. This pattern contrasts with that observed among high school females (Table 4) where age was more highly rewarded among blacks than among whites. Apparently, employers assume that older black high school males are less likely than white high school males to have accumulated highly valued labor market experience -- an assumption that could be based on traditionally higher unemployment rates among young black males than among young white males at all educational levels. Nevertheless, negative attributions based on either perceived or actual subgroup norms can form the basis for statistical discrimination in employment decisions and lead to potentially unfair treatment in job placement.

We also find that white male high school graduates in smaller firms earn roughly $500 more than their white male counterparts in larger firms, while black male high school graduates in larger

versus smaller firms earn about $125 more. This racial differential in returns to age and employment in large firms may, in part, explain why on the average black male high school graduates are placed in lower paying jobs than their white counterparts.

For job prestige among male high school graduates, school reputation is the major predictor for blacks; among whites, employment sector and firm size are the most significant factors. Black male graduates of suburban high shcools are assigned jobs averaging nearly six and one-half prestige points (B=6.45) higher than those of black male graduates of inner city schools. However, the corresponding suburban advantage to white male high school graduates is just one and one-quarter points (B=1.27). Moreover, white male high school graduates in public sector jobs are assigned to positions which average nearly seven and one-half points (B=-7.45) higher than jobs assigned to their white male counterparts in the private sector. In contrast, the employment sector difference for black male high school graduates, is nonsignificant and much smaller, favoring private sector workers by only about one-half point (B=.58) on the prestige scale. White male high school graduates also receive a one and one-half point (B=-1.47) prestige advantage from employment in small firms, while the corresponding advantage to black high school males in small firms is nonsignificant -- roughly one-half point.

For job racial composition, the only significant predictors of occupational integration are firm size among white male high school graduates and employment sector among black male college graduates.

White male high school graduates in large firms are more likely to be assigned to jobs held by more blacks in the nation than are white male high school graduates in small firms. Black male college graduates employed in the public sector are likely to be placed in jobs more often held by blacks than their black male counterparts located in private sector jobs.

For job gender composition, the right panel of Table 5 shows that none of the variables exert a significant influence for either black or white male high school or college graduates.

Do Employer Affirmative Policies Counterbalance The Impact of Race on Labor Market Outcomes?

The analyses presented above show that racial considerations play a part in channeling black high school males and black college females into lower paying and (in the case of black college females) racially segregated occupations. We now examine how employers' affirmative action policies might mediate the impact of race on labor market outcomes.

Table 6 presents the results of regression analyses estimating the impact of a stronger commitment to affirmative action (race equity) on job status, job prestige, job racial composition and job gender composition by sex and education level. The results are direct or net effects of stronger employer commitment to affirmative action on labor market outcomes, controlling for the job candidate's age, school reputation, internal employee recommendations, public v. private sector employment, region and firm size. Unstandardized

(metric) regression coefficients are presented to facilitate comparisons across race groups.

Table 6 about here

These results suggest that a stronger commitment by employers to affirmative action accounts for a modest but significant increment ($206) in the annual wage status of jobs assigned to black male high school graduates. A similar pattern is also observed for job prestige. Stronger employer commitment to affirmative action results in a one prestige point increment for black male high school graduates. Although the effect of strong affirmative action policies on job status and job prestige is positive for the other groups its effect is statistically significantly among black male high school graduates only. These results suggest that strong employer affirmative action policies may serve to offset some of the negative impact of race on wages for black male high school graduates who, as the data in Table 2 suggest, appear to be most adversely affected by employer discrimination in job placement.

These findings further suggest that while affirmative action policies may help ameolierate racial inequities by promoting the placement of blacks in jobs with higher pay and prestige levels, it is not a zero-sum game. White workers also receive higher, though not statistically significant, pay and prestige increments as a result of strong employer commitment to affirmative action.

Regarding the race and gender composition of job placement, it appears that employers with strong affirmative action policies are more likely to assign white female college graduates to more gender balanced (e.g., less female dominated) jobs than are employers without such policies. A strikingly similar pattern also operates for black female college graduates, although this difference is significant at a lower statistical level ($p<.10$).

Discussion

The vignette experiment it is not a study of the actual employment of real people. It is an experiment that assesses the predispositions and behavioral orientations of one central figure involved in the employment process -- the personnel officer responsible for hiring. Our analyses are limited to white personnel officers working in firms whose employees are mostly white.

When a personnel officer is presented with a vignette describing a particular candidate, told that his firm has employed that person, and asked what sort of position that person is likely to be hired in, we can interpret his or her response in either of two ways: It can be viewed as his/her perception of what the firm is likely to have done. If most of the black male high school graduates employed had been hired for semi-skilled positions and most white applicants hired for skilled positions, his/her decision to assign a low status occupation if presented with a black vingette and a higher status position if presented a white vingette is probably an objective reporting of the likely reality. Let us call this the perceptual interpretation. Alternately we can view the response as indicating

a snap personal judgment, an "affective response." If, confronted with the words black male high school graduate, the respondent instinctively thinks "semi-skilled" then we have identified a stereotyped emotional response.

If we view the assignment of low status positions to blacks by the respondent as a perceptual response, an objective reporting of the experience of a firm, we do not know whether it is a report of occupational discrimination on the part of the firm or a report of the results of a fair hiring system which tends to place less-qualified blacks into lower status positions. There may or may not be discrimination present. If we view the assignment of blacks to low status positions in the questionaire as an affective response, then this must be viewed as a prejudiced act. If the personnel officer instinctively stereotypes black candidates as suitable only for low status positions, this is likely to lead to the creation of a process of occupational discrimination in the firm because the personnel officer is one of the important actors in the hiring and job placement process. Whether this reflects a personal distaste for blacks ("old fashioned prejudice") or what Thurow (1975) called "statistical discrimination" -- using the color of the respondent as a source of information based on actual or putative correlations between race and job-related skills and attitudes -- makes no difference to the individual who is being responded to only as a member of a racial minority group.

We believe the questionnaire triggered an affective response more than a perceptual response. In fact, it is highly unlikely that the

firms have been routinely placing black male college graduates into higher status positions than white male college graduates. Thus the (nonsignificant) reverse discrimination pattern observed for black male college graduates is probably wishful thinking -- a desire to put blacks into higher positions because this will be a "good thing to do". Or, it may reflect an objective response to prevailing market forces -- black male college graduates are in short supply relative to white male college graduates thus the small numbers in the pool are able to command premium wages, at least at the point of job entry. But it that response is affective rather than perceptual, then should we not assume that the other responses to the questionnaire are also affective? Future analyses can test this by looking at personal characteristics of the respondents to see if they are associated in predictable ways with the amount of discrimination revealed.

The clearest case of occupational discrimination revealed here is among 27-year-old male high school graduates. Table 2 shows white males being assigned higher status jobs -- occupations which typically pay $1,009 more in annual salary. Combining data in Table 2 with Table 5, which shows the effect of age on black and white status separately, we find that the mean difference in status for a 19-year-old high school graduate is about $383 while the difference for 27-year-olds is $1,634. Because the design is randomized, these numbers are very close to those shown in Table 1, which gives simple differences, without controls, of $330 and $1,651. Table 1 also shows that the standard deviation of the status of 27-year-old white males is much higher than for black males: $5486 versus $2807.

Apparently there are a number of cases where employers, confronted with a 27-year-old white male applicant, assumed that the candidate would have been hired for a very high status skilled position.

Evidence of race discrimination does not appear when we use the Socioeconomic Index of job prestige. Table 2 shows white males being assigned to positions a non-significant three-quarters of a point higher in SEI than black male high school graduates. Table 5 shows that the SEI gap is actually smaller for 27-year-olds than for younger blacks. Table 5 also shows little indication that employers are affected by the other information provided. Being recommended by another employee of the firm benefits whites more than blacks. Interestingly enough, the data suggest (although the differences are not significant) that blacks fare better in the South than in the North. The status gap for all high school graduates is $899 greater in the North than it is in the South. School desegregation -- attending suburban desegregated schools -- is helpful to black males; graduates of suburban schools have positions that are significantly higher in prestige. Table 5 also shows that black male graduates of suburban schools are placed in jobs which have more female occupants, suggesting that desegregated schooling encourages the employer to find an office position rather than a position in the plant for the candidate. Suburban high school attendance shows an opposite effect for white males; white male suburban high school graduates (Table 5) receive $346 less than white inner-city high school graduates. Although this difference is not statistically significant it implies that employers may have "reservations" about the qualifications or character of white

suburban males who possess only high school credentials when their group norms suggest high rates of college attendance.

The fact that 19-year-old black candidates receive positions whose status is only $383 lower than that given to white 19-year-olds is not necessarily an indication that there is no discrimination at this level. It may be that black salaries are no lower than they are simply because white 19-year-olds are offered the worse jobs in the firm, and blacks cannot be given even lower jobs.

However, the critical issue for 19-year-olds is the decision to hire, more than the type of position in which they are placed after hiring. Given the very high unemployment rate of black teenagers, especially males, it may well be that the major source of occupational discrimination in this age group is simply the refusal to hire blacks. Given the wording of the questionaire, we cannot determine how likely it is that the personnel officer would have viewed the black high school graduate applicant as unemployable and hired the 19-year-old white applicant instead.

It seems reasonable that the greatest amount of discrimination in job placement should occur with older high school graduates. The high status positions for male high school graduates are in the skilled trades, positions which have traditionally not been open to blacks. Firms need skilled reliable workers in these positions, for they represent the backbone of the production staff. They also represent positions where there is often a great deal of on-the-job training invested in each candidate. Here the fear that older black

high school males may be unstable or unreliable employees potentially encourages statistical discrimination on the part of white employers.

In contrast, there seems to be very little discrimination against black female high school graduates. Table 1 shows black 19-year-olds being assigned positions whose status is $338 lower than that of whites but black 27-year-olds being given positions $443 higher. Neither difference is significant. (Table 2 and 4 can be used to estimate the status differences net of other factors at $358 and $456.) Because neither difference in status is significant, the correct interpretation is that there is no evidence of discrimination for or against black women high school graduates. However, Table 4 shows a significant impact of age on job status for black women and no age effect at all for white women. Age is more important for black women because references from previous employers are considered more valuable for black high school graduate women than for whites (Crain, 1984, Table 3). Thus having a history of work is more valuable for black women than for white women. Employers may be accustomed to hiring white women who have no labor force experience because of childrearing. This may explain why empoloyers do not assign a higher status position to older white candidates; they may assume that they have no more experience and are no more likely to remain with the firm than are their 19-year-old counterparts.

Why should there be no discrimination in the hiring of black women high school graduates while there is considerable

discrimination in the hiring of black men high school graduates? One reason is that some of the problems white employers associate with blacks are male problems -- problems of criminal behavior or aggression, for example. A second reason is that employers may feel that the hiring of women can be done more objectively (with typing tests, for example), so that the interviewer has less need to rely on statistical discrimination. They may also assume that white and black women can work together more comfortably than can white and black men. Finally, it may be that sex segregation in occupations and sexist attitudes in the firm may lead personnel officers to place less value in the hiring decisions of women. Typists are interchangeable parts, supposedly requiring little investment in training and having high turnover. All these explanations are only speculative and require more research.

Although the race effects for male college graduates observed in Table 2 are not statistically significant, trends in the data demonstrate what appears to be reverse discrimination in this case: black male college graduates are offered higher level positions. Male college graduates are a seemingly reasonable place for reverse discrimination to appear; if a firm is anxious for its affirmative action to succeed, it should be looking for candidates to fill visible and high-status postions, and these are typically held by male college graduates. And as already noted, black male college graduates are in short supply. We should stress that the evidence in this report may indicate a predisposition to discriminate for or against blacks, it cannot be taken as firm evidence that employers practice either discrimination or reverse dicrimination. And in any

case, we must stress that this study has not observed any statistically significant finding of reverse discrimination, although statistically significant indications of potential direct discrimination against black male high school graduates and black female college graduates have been noted.

The final and most provocative finding is evidence of a propensity to discriminate against black women college graduates. The data show black women college graduates having lower status positions, with average salaries $700-800 lower than white women college graduates. Their positions also have higher concentrations of black incumbents; black women college graduates are assigned to low paying jobs which have traditionally been held by blacks. Black and white women compete, both qualifying for minority status. Despite the two-for-one argument so often associated with opportunities for black women, an employer presented with a white woman may see this as an opportunity to move a minority (woman) candidate into a low- or middle-management position previously held by a white male; he has no additional incentive to bring a black woman into that position, so there is nothing to offset any resistance to doing so. White personnel officers may practice statistical discrimination, feeling the black female college graduate to be less talented than a white; or they may worry that breaking down barriers by bringing women into traditionally male positions may be more difficult if there is a race as well as a sex barrier to overcome; or they may be under greater pressure from white female interest groups than black interest groups. The problem may be more serious in large organizations; the strong

relationship between firm size and the status of white women college graduates (the Beta is .38 in Table 4) suggests that large organizations are agressively searching for white women to fill higher-status positions. The correlation is much lower for black women, suggesting that large employers are a major source of what seems to be occupational discrimination. There is also a slight tendency for the problem to be more serious in the South, although the data are not significant; Table 4 indicates that the status of white women college graduates is lower in the North, and that this is less true for blacks, so that the racial gap is smaller in the North. (Table 5 shows a similar pattern for males, so that reverse discrimination among male college graduates may be greater in the North; again, the data are not significant.)

It is widely assumed that black women have an advantage in the labor market compared to black men. This may be true only for high school graduates, however. The data here indicate that in the eyes of personnel officers, the advantages among college graduates go to white women and to a positive but nonsignificant degree to black men.

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Figure 1: The 40 Vignettes in the Employer Questionnaire

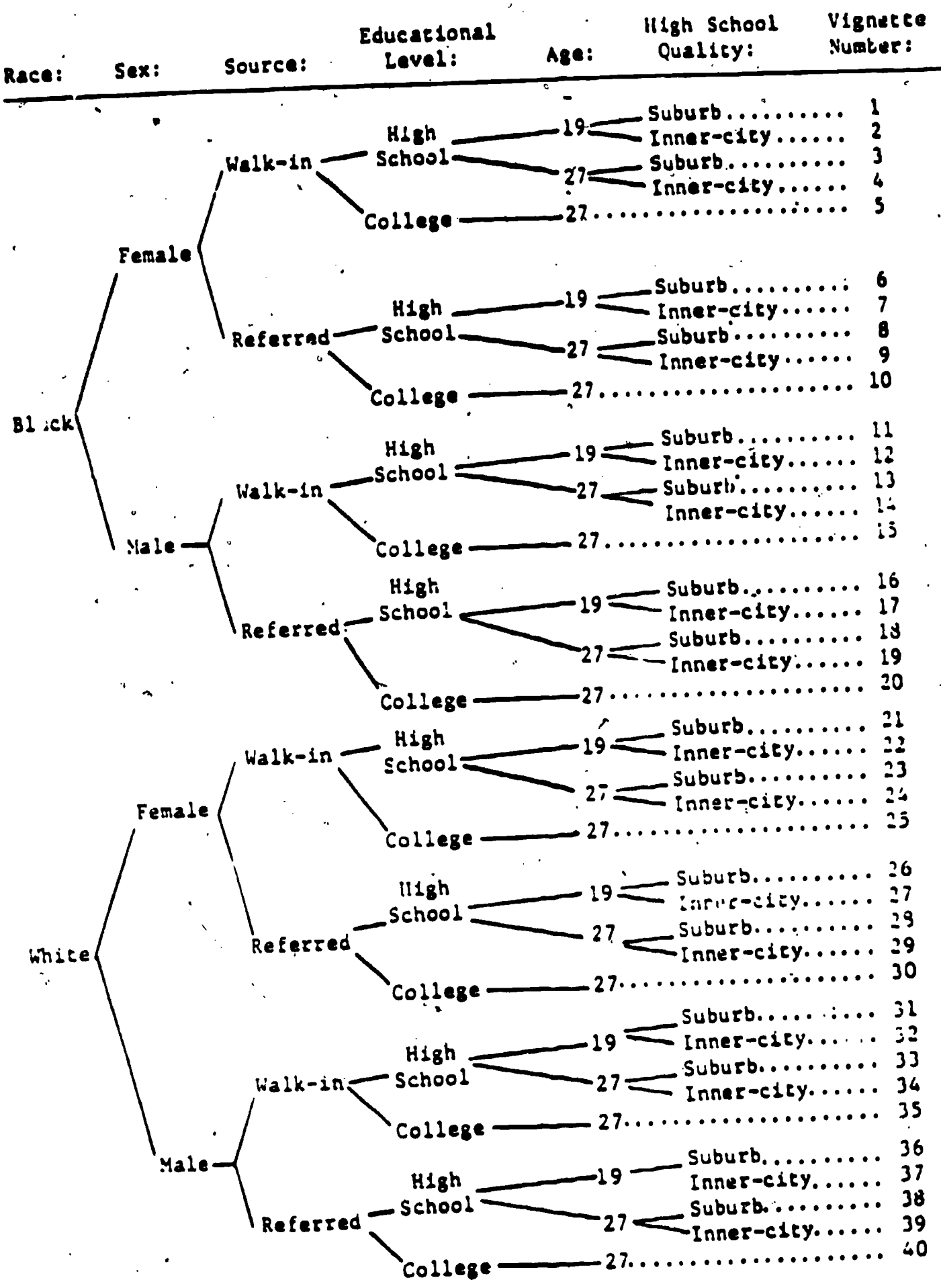

Table 1

Characteristics of Jobs Assigned to Vignette Candidates by Race, Age, Sex and Education Level

Age and Education	Job Status	Job Prestige	Job Percent Black	Job Percent Female	N
HIGH SCHOOL					
19 Year-Olds					
Black Males	11,389.13 (3,457.98)	29.94 (16.97)	14.25 (6.45)	46.90 (31.46)	97
White Males	11,718.70 (3,991.48)	30.50 (17.81)	14.20 (6.70)	45.41 (30.34)	92
Black Females	7,164.97 (1,970.62)	42.79 (16.95)	12.49 (5.33)	70.74 (27.86)	88
White Females	7,503.43 (1,729.37)	42.39 (16.81)	11.72 (5.07)	71.68 (29.31)	93
27 Year-Olds					
Black Males	12,214.53 (2,806.95)	34.58 (18.13)	12.68 (5.54)	48.46 (33.34)	81
White Males	13,865.53 (5,485.80)	35.27 (20.39)	13.02 (7.62)	44.65 (29.10)	91
Black Females	7,824.94 (1,834.27)	45.70 (16.51)	10.41 (6.01)	69.60 (29.61)	95
White Females	7,382.26 (1,854.08)	41.77 (16.27)	12.15 (5.16)	71.83 (26.23)	102
COLLEGE					
27 Year-Olds					
Black Males	18,594.91 (5,538.54)	60.50 (17.97)	8.14 (4.98)	42.72 (23.22)	100
White Males	18,239.00 (5,230.75)	59.46 (17.85)	7.18 (4.05)	42.47 (25.46)	79
Black Females	9,769.12 (2,881.24)	54.97 (19.20)	9.31 (5.36)	56.57 (28.06)	89
White Females	10,501.46 (2,717.37)	58.67 (17.30)	7.60 (4.87)	56.27 (29.05)	96
					1101

* Standard Deviations in Parentheses

Table 2

Prestige and Status of Jobs Assigned to Vignette Candidates by Non-Minority Employers by Sex and Education of Vignette Job Candidates

Education	Job Status: Females ($\bar{X}$ = 7472.72)			Job Status: Males ($\bar{X}$ = 12292.57)			Job Prestige: Females ($\bar{X}$ = 43.15)			Job Prestige: Males ($\bar{X}$ = 32.49)		
HIGH SCHOOL	b	B	F	b	B	F	b	B	F	b	B	F
Race	-.03	-99.21	.27	.12	1009.25	5.54*	-.08	-2.64	2.44	.02	.76	.16
School	.09	325.58	2.90	.00	-37.39	.01	.12	3.88	5.28*	.10	3.67	3.50
Age	.07	250.56	1.71	.18	1501.10	12.26***	.02	.77	.21	.13	4.70	5.99*
Recommended	-.09	-341.58	3.17	-.01	-62.44	.02	-.07	-2.28	1.81	-.04	-1.64	.71
Firm Sector	-.06	-228.70	1.13	-.05	-436.85	.72	-.18	-6.68	12.30***	-.09	-3.83	2.77
Firm Size	.01	9.87	.04	-.14	-304.27	7.51**	-.05	-.38	.77	-.11	-.99	3.95*
Region	.00	6.81	.00	.02	170.71	.15	.02	.84	.23	-.01	-.35	.03
Multiple R^2		.03			.07			.06			.04	
COLLEGE		($\bar{X}$ = 10145.30)			($\bar{X}$ = 18437.83)			($\bar{X}$ = 56.87)			($\bar{X}$ = 60.04)	
Race	.14	786.31	3.89*	-.07	-764.88	.84	.11	3.96	2.17	-.05	-1.74	.41
Recommended	.10	562.90	1.98	.11	1166.16	2.11	.08	3.06	1.28	.16	5.67	4.64*
Firm Sector	-.05	-357.44	.53	.10	1247.39	1.91	-.14	-6.19	3.51	-.09	-3.54	1.44
Firm Size	.26	375.28	12.76***	.12	329.01	2.42	.04	.37	-.27	.10	.94	1.85
Region	-.11	-631.67	2.47	-.12	-1307.73	2.39	-.05	-1.94	.51	-.16	-5.68	4.21*
Multiple R^2		.11			.05			.04			.07	

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

CODES: Race (white=1)
School (suburban=1)
Age (27 year-old=1)
Firm Sector (private=1)
Firm Size (1-9=1; 10-19=2; 20-49=3; 50-99=4; 100-249=5; 250-999=6; 1000 +=7)
Region (nonsouth=1)

Table 3

Racial and Gender Composition of Jobs Assigned to Vignette Candidates by Non-Minority Employers by Sex and Education of Vignette Job Candidates

Education	Job Percent Black						Job Percent Female					
	Females ($\bar{X}$ = 11.69)			Males ($\bar{X}$ = 13.57)			Females ($\bar{X}$ = 70.98)			Males ($\bar{X}$ = 46.30)		
HIGH SCHOOL	b	B	F	b	B	F	b	B	F	b	B	F
Race	.02	.002	.17	.00	.000	.00	.02	.009	.10	-.04	-.025	.58
School	-.07	-.008	1.97	-.01	-.002	.07	.05	.026	.80	.11	.066	3.96*
Age	-.07	-.007	1.85	-.10	-.013	3.65	-.01	-.003	.01	.01	.003	.01
Recommended	.08	.009	2.49	-.01	-.001	.02	-.06	-.031	1.12	-.06	-.039	1.35
Firm Sector	-.17	-.020	11.02***	-.12	-.019	5.22*	-.06	-.039	1.43	-.02	-.013	.10
Firm Size	.19	.005	13.79***	.17	.006	10.16**	.04	.006	.58	.04	.006	.58
Region	-.05	-.006	1.19	.04	.006	.61	-.04	-.024	.61	-.02	-.010	.08
Multiple R^2		.09			.06			.02			.02	
COLLEGE	($\bar{X}$ = 8.43)			($\bar{X}$ = 7.22)			($\bar{X}$ = 56.42)			($\bar{X}$ = 42.62)		
Race	-.16	-.017	4.86*	-.06	-.006	.63	-.01	-.006	.02	.03	.013	.11
Recommended	-.05	-.005	.49	-.13	-.012	3.29	-.02	-.013	.09	-.02	-.008	.05
Firm Sector	-.19	-.023	6.38*	-.27	-.028	13.63***	.04	.024	.22	-.01	-.002	.00
Firm Size	-.03	-.001	.21	.06	.001	.64	-.12	-.017	2.33	.00	.000	.00
Region	-.04	-.004	.30	.10	.010	1.97	.05	.031	.53	.15	.075	3.80
Multiple R^2		.07			.12			.02			.02	

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

CODES: Race (white=1)
School (suburban=1)
Age (27 year-old-1)
Firm Sector (private=1)
Firm Size (1-9=1; 10-19=2; 20-49=3; 50-99=4; 100-249=5; 250-999=6; 1000 +=7)
Region (nonsouth=1)

Table 4

Regression Results Predicting Female Vignette Candidates Job Status, Job Prestige, Job Racial Composition and Job Gender Composition by Race and Education Level

	Job Status				Job Prestige				Job Percent Black				Job Percent Female			
	Blacks		Whites		Blacks		Whites		Blacks		Whites		Blacks		Whites	
Education																
HIGH SCHOOL	b	B	b	B	b	B	b	B	b	B	b	B	b	B	b	B
School	.10	338.17	.06	222.67	.12	3.83	.11	3.70	-.14	-.016*	.02	.002	.02	.013	.07	.038
Age	.16	623.39*	-.03	-91.12	.05	1.68	-.01	-2.24	-.16	-.018*	.04	.004	-.02	-.014	.01	.008
Recommended	-.11	-408.81	-.07	-245.97	-.07	-2.36	-.07	-2.27	.08	.009	.06	.007	-.04	-.025	-.07	-.040
Firm Sector	.01	44.77	-.11	-409.54	-.11	-4.42	-.24	-8.63***	-.20	-.027**	-.15	-.016*	-.04	-.026	-.09	-.051
Firm Size	.01	7.50	.02	21.76	-.19	-1.61*	.10	.82	.31	.009***	.04	.001	-.01	-.002	.09	.012
Region	-.04	-170.86	.04	158.93	.02	.58	.03	1.14	-.07	-.008	-.04	-.004	-.04	-.023	-.04	-.025
Multiple R^2	.05		.02		.07		.09		.21		.03		.01		.03	
COLLEGE																
Recommended	.20	1159.32	.01	79.15	.18	7.04	-.01	-2.69	-.01	-.001	-.08	-.008	.10	.057	-.16	-.090
Firm Sector	-.06	-436.48	-.06	-429.41***	-.13	-5.71	-.18	-7.55	-.28	-.036*	-.09	-.010	.14	.090	-.09	-.065
Firm Size	.11	171.80	.38	507.61	-.13	-1.40	.17	1.44	-.13	-.004	.03	.001	.06	.010	-.23	-.032*
Region	-.07	-389.52	-.13	-725.78	.04	1.54	-.11	-3.75	.03	.003	-.09	-.009	-.14	-.076	.19	.112
Multiple R^2	.06		.19		.05		.09		.09		.03		.05		.12	

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

CODES: Race (white=1)
School (suburban=1)
Age (27 year-old=1)
Firm Sector (private=1)
Firm Size (1-9 1; 10-19 2; 20-49 3; 50-99-4; 100-249 5; 250-999 6; 1000 +-7)
Region (nonsouth=1)

Table 5

Regression Results Predicting Male Vignette Candidates Job Status, Job Prestige, Job Racial Composition and Job Gender Composition by Race and Education Level

	Job Status				Job Prestige				Job Percent Black				Job Percent Female			
	Blacks		Whites		Blacks		Whites		Blacks		Whites		Blacks		Whites	
Education																
HIGH SCHOOL	b	B	b	B	b	B	b	B	b	B	b	B	b	B	b	B
School	.06	352.70	-.04	-345.79	.18	6.45*	.03	1.27	.00	.000	-.02	-.003	.14	.091	.07	.042
Age	.13	818.38	.21	2069.14**	.13	4.75	.11	4.33	-.13	-.015	-.09	-.012	.03	.017	-.02	-.009
Recommended	-.06	-381.91	.04	413.90	-.10	-3.57	.01	.30	.09	.011	-.09	-.013	-.05	-.035	-.08	-.046
Firm Sector	.03	253.90	-.08	-875.10	.01	.58	-.17	-7.45*	-.11	-.015	-.13	-.020	-.03	-.020	-.01	-.008
Firm Size	-.08	-127.61	-.20	-508.39**	-.06	-.55	-.15	-1.47*	.11	.002	.23	.008*	.03	.005	.06	.009
Region	-.04	-268.04	.06	630.74	-.01	-.53	.00	-.01	.02	.003	.04	.005	.01	.009	-.05	-.028
Multiple R^2	.03		.10		.06		.06		.06		.09		.03		.02	
COLLEGE																
Recommended	.06	685.01	.16	1678.09	.14	4.95	.21	7.47	-.17	-.017	-.05	-.004	.03	.014	-.04	-.021
Firm Sector	.11	1283.74	.11	1428.79	-.13	-5.07	-.01	-.22	-.28	-.029**	-.22	-.021	-.03	-.012	.04	.023
Firm Size	.13	361.84	.09	271.49	.15	1.30	.03	.26	.11	.003	-.04	-.001	.13	.015	-.17	-.024
Region	-.08	-317.43	-.15	1534.17	-.15	-5.96	-.15	-5.15	.08	.009	.16	.013	.09	.048	.17	.088
Multiple R^2	.03		.07		.08		.07		.15		.07		.03		.07	

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

CODES: Race (white=1)
School (suburban=1)
Age (27 year-old=1)
Firm Sector (private=1)
Firm Size (1-9=1; 10-19=2; 20-49=3; 50-99=4; 100-249=5; 250-999=6; 1000 +=7)
Region (nonsouth=1)

Table 6

Effects of Firms' Affirmative Action Policies on Job Status, Prestige, Racial Composition and Job Gender Composition by Vignette Candidates Race, Sex and Educational Level

Education	Females		Males	
	Blacks (N=199)	Whites (N=209)	Blacks (N=196)	Whites (N=197)
HIGH SCHOOL				
Job Status	69.17 (50.89)	85.03 (45.30)	205.51* (85.89)	115.00 (127.81)
Job Prestige	.21 (.44)	.39 (.42)	.96* (.47)	.50 (.51)
Job % Black	.001 (.001)	.002 (.001)	.001 (.002)	-.002 (.002)
Job % Female	.004 (.008)	-.001 (.007)	.006 (.009)	.004 (.008)
COLLEGE	(N=97)	(N=102)	(N=108)	(N=84)
Job Status	192.94 (118.61)	114.67 (92.84)	254.97 (207.10)	286.96 (212.71)
Job Prestige	1.19 (.79)	.46 (.63)	.96 (.65)	.80 (.73)
Job % Black	.000 (.002)	.000 (.002)	.002 (.002)	-.002 (.002)
Job % Female	-.020 (.012)	-.021* (.010)	.007 (.009)	-.006 (.010)

[a]Controlling for: age, school reputation, recommendations, public-private employee, firm size and region

[b]Values reported are metric coefficients (standard errors in parentheses)

*Metric coefficient at least twice its standard error