
Effects of Perceived Discrimination on Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, and Grievances

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This study of 366 ethnically diverse operating-level employees examined how their perceptions of discrimination from a variety of sources—including supervisors, coworkers, and the organization itself—affect their work-related attitudes and behaviors. The results suggest that all three types of perceived discrimination have an effect on organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior. Contrary to predictions, however, there was no relationship with grievances.

The increasing diversity of the workforce presents myriad opportunities and challenges to U.S. organizations. Those organizations that manage diversity effectively reap a number of positive benefits, such as increased productivity, higher rates of retention, and greater ability to recruit high-potential candidates (Loden and Rosenor, 1991; Morrison, 1996). It is a challenge for organizations not only to manage diversity effectively by implementing fair policies and reinforcing appropriate managerial behaviors but also to pay attention to their employees' perceptions of discrimination. This is important because employees' beliefs, whether or not they are consistent with reality, affect their behaviors (Barak, Cherin, and Berkman, 1998; Eisenberger, Fasolo, and Davis-LaMastro, 1990). The purpose of this study is to examine how employees' perceptions of discrimination from a variety of sources, including

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coworkers, supervisors, and the organization itself, affect their work-related attitudes and behaviors.

Employee Perceptions and Human Resources

It is important to study employee perceptions of discrimination because they affect key areas of human resource management and development, such as recruitment, compensation, organizational culture, and employee relations. For example, perceived similarity between recruiters and applicants has been found to relate to decisions to hire a candidate (Graves and Powell, 1995), which may place women and minorities at a disadvantage. Skewed perceptions can affect hiring, performance appraisals, and ultimately, level of compensation (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995).

One human resource development practice that affects an organization's culture and relations with its employees is its approach to managing diversity. Barak, Cherin, and Berkman (1998) examined the responses of 2,686 employees at an electronics company and found significant differences in perceptions of diversity and discrimination between whites and nonwhites as well as between men and women. White men in this study perceived the organization to be more fair and inclusive than white women or people of color. Other studies have found that white men usually perceive less value in diversity training than white women or minority men and women (Rossett and Bickham, 1994; Thomas, 1994). Varying perceptions of discrimination among an organization's employees can affect the degree to which its members create an integrated culture or share common values, which in turn can affect its policies, procedures, and day-to-day life.

Differences in perception of discrimination can even affect legislative decisions and ultimately have a financial impact on organizations. For example, men and women's varying perspectives on sexual conduct was the impetus for a new standard used by state and federal courts to determine whether there is sexual harassment at work. The new "reasonable woman standard" holds that the determination of behavior as sexual harassment is based on whether a reasonable woman—rather than a reasonable person—would find an individual's behavior offensive (Gutek and O'Connor, 1995). The application of this standard may result in greater financial liability for supervisors and organizations (Thacker and Gohmann, 1993). In sum, it is increasingly important for organizations and human resource professionals to consider employee perceptions of harassment or discrimination at work, because these perceptions can affect their attitudes, behavior, and even the financial health of the organization.

Theoretical Background

Several theoretical approaches from social psychology and organizational behavior (Alderfer, Alderfer, Tucker, and Tucker, 1980; Cox, 1993; Tajfel and Turner, 1985) provide useful perspectives from which to understand the

phenomenon of perceived discrimination. One main approach, social identity theory, maintains that individuals categorize themselves and others into distinct groups based on shared salient characteristics, such as personal demography (Tajfel and Turner, 1985). Perceived discrimination is an individual's perception that he or she is treated differently or unfairly because of his or her group membership (Mirage, 1994; Sanchez and Brock, 1996). Furthermore, when individuals feel they are mistreated because of their group membership, they often feel alienated and angry, which can result in negative work-related behaviors.

Social identity theory is a useful framework for defining perceived discrimination, but it is important to recognize that an individual's identification with a particular group is not limited to demography and does not occur in isolation. Additional aspects of group membership and the environmental context (that is, the organization) must be considered as well. Intergroup theory (Alderfer, Alderfer, Tucker, and Tucker, 1980) and embedded intergroup theory (Thomas and Alderfer, 1989) take into account these considerations. Intergroup theory suggests that two types of groups exist in organizations: identity groups and organizational groups. For example, one's identity group may include individuals with similar demographic characteristics, such as race, gender, or age, whereas one's organizational group may include individuals who share similar tasks, hierarchical status, or function. According to this perspective, individuals are constantly trying to balance the competing demands and expectations based on membership in their identity and organizational groups. Intergroup theory, and more specifically embedded intergroup theory, suggests that it is important to consider a constellation of organizational relationships, such as individuals and their relationship with their coworkers, their supervisors, and the organization itself, in assessing the impact of perceived discrimination.

Cox (1993) presents a human resource development model that builds on the concept of embedded groups (Alderfer and Smith, 1982) and interactional research (O'Reilly, Chapman, and Caldwell, 1991). He suggests that the impact of diversity involves interaction between individuals and their environment. This conceptual model, the interactional model of cultural diversity (IMCD), is based on the idea that an employee's group affiliations, such as gender or race, can be analyzed on three levels—individual, group-intergroup, and organizational—which are consistent with the units of analysis suggested by embedded intergroup theory. Taken together, these factors form the diversity climate of an organization. A recent study by Barak, Cherin, and Berkman (1998) successfully used this framework to examine the employees' perceptions of diversity at a large electronics company. The authors suggested that future research should examine employees' perceptions of discrimination and the impact on their organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

Thus, past research has suggested that employees can experience discrimination at multiple levels (Waters, 1994; Watts and Carter, 1991). Racism and

sexism can be manifested at the individual level by words and actions of coworkers and supervisors. In addition, institutional or “everyday” racism refers to an environment in which racism is inherent, and racist policies and procedures may be manifested in subtle and even unintentional ways (Essed, 1991; Shull, 1993). Institutional racism can be more detrimental than isolated incidents or individual interactions because of its sustained and pervasive nature (Cox, 1993; Essed, 1991). A conceptual framework that includes multiple levels of racism has been discussed in past research; however, there is little empirical research that examines these levels concurrently. In this study we examine the effects of three levels of perceived discrimination on work-related attitudes and behaviors.

Effects of Perceived Discrimination on Work Attitudes and Behavior

Past research has explored the effect of general employee perceptions and their impact on human resource concerns. However, the phenomenon of perceived discrimination has only recently attracted attention (Guttek, Cohen, and Tsui, 1996; Mays, Coleman, and Jackson, 1996; Sanchez and Brock, 1996). For example, Guttek, Cohen, and Tsui (1996) contrasted the experiences of perceived sex discrimination of male managers and psychologists and of female managers and psychologists, all of whom were primarily white. Both the men and the women perceived that women experienced greater sex discrimination overall than men. However, among women, perceptions of discrimination were associated with negative outcomes, such as more work conflict and more hours spent on paid work activities, whereas men perceived little relationship with these same outcome variables.

Job satisfaction and commitment to an organization are critical components of employee attitudes that are likely to be affected by perceived discrimination. Job satisfaction can be defined as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences (Locke, 1976). Jayaratne (1993) provided an extensive review of the literature on job satisfaction and found that although a plethora of research exists on this phenomenon, there is little research on the effect of race in general and differences in perceived discrimination in particular. Perhaps because of this dearth of research related to race, perceived discrimination, and job satisfaction, there is a lack of consensus among researchers on the effects of these variables on job satisfaction (Cox and Nkomo, 1993; Jayaratne, 1993).

Organizational commitment refers to an individual’s feelings about the organization as a whole. It is the psychological bond that an employee has with an organization and has been found to be related to goal and value congruence, behavioral investments in the organization, and likelihood to stay with the organization (Mowday, Porter, and Steers, 1982). Sustaining organizational commitment among employees, particularly women and minorities, is a

challenge for companies today. It has been suggested that one of the reasons for the recent exodus of women and minorities from large corporations and the subsequent proliferation of women- and minority-owned businesses is these groups' perceptions of organizational discrimination (Dickerson, 1998; Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995).

Sanchez and Brock (1996) examined the effects of perceived discrimination on work outcomes among 139 Hispanic male and female employees. They found that perceived discrimination contributed to higher work tension and decreased job satisfaction and organizational commitment, above and beyond other common work stressors, such as role conflict and ambiguity. They also found that employees with higher levels of acculturation, salaries, and job experience perceived less race-based discrimination than their counterparts who scored lower in these areas. Similarly, Gutek, Cohen, and Tsui (1996) found that perceived discrimination among women was related to lower feelings of power and prestige on the job. Shellenbarger (1993) reported that more than one-fifth of minorities perceived discrimination on the job, which resulted in lowered organizational commitment, as seen in their greater likelihood to change jobs than their white counterparts and their lower willingness to take the initiative while on the job.

An aspect of interpersonal work relationships related to taking initiative on the job is organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), which refers to informal, prosocial behavior that employees engage in voluntarily to help others at work (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Fetter, 1993). Such behaviors include helping another employee finish a project, providing helpful advice or suggestions, and offering positive feedback on work tasks (Organ and Ryan, 1995; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Hui, 1993). Although the relationship between OCB and perceived discrimination has not been examined directly, some research examines the effects of discrimination on interpersonal relationships.

For example, in a study of black females from a cross section of households, Mays, Coleman, and Jackson (1996) found that although perceived race-based discrimination did not hinder their entry into the labor market, it did detract from their level of participation and likelihood of rising in the ranks of the companies they worked for. Specifically, their perceptions of racial discrimination increased black women's job stress, limited their advancement and skill development, and was related to less effective interpersonal work relationships with coworkers and supervisors. Organizational citizenship behavior seems more likely to occur in environments where employees feel they are treated fairly and where there are intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for performing such acts. Therefore, it seems likely that when workers feel that a discriminatory environment exists, they may have less effective interpersonal relationships with others overall and be less likely to engage in OCB in particular.

A decreased exhibition of desirable behaviors is not the only negative impact of perceptions of discrimination. It seems likely that perceived discrimination is also related to more extreme work withdrawal behaviors,

such as employee grievances. Employees who perceive that they are being treated unfairly when it comes to compensation, job assignment, promotion, overtime assignments, disciplinary actions, or layoffs are more likely to file grievances than those who believe they are being treated fairly (Allen and Keaveny, 1985).

The high number of claims filed for sex-based and race-based discrimination suggests that there is likely a positive relationship between employees' perceptions of racial and sexual discrimination and their propensity to file grievances. For example, in 1997, 29,199 race-based discrimination claims and 24,728 sex-based discrimination claims were filed with the Equal Opportunity Commission (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1998).

The multilevel theoretical framework and research related to perceived discrimination, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, OCB, and grievances suggests the following hypotheses:

- H1. *Supervisor and coworker discrimination will predict job satisfaction after controlling for gender, ethnicity, income, and social desirability bias.*
- H2. *Discrimination at the organizational level will predict job satisfaction after controlling for gender, ethnicity, income, and social desirability bias.*
- H3. *Supervisor and coworker discrimination will predict organizational commitment after controlling for gender, ethnicity, income, and social desirability bias.*
- H4. *Discrimination at the organizational level will predict organizational commitment after controlling for gender, ethnicity, income, social desirability bias, and supervisor and coworker discrimination.*
- H5. *Supervisor and coworker discrimination will predict organizational citizenship behavior after controlling for gender, ethnicity, income, and social desirability bias.*
- H6. *Discrimination at the organizational level will predict organizational citizenship behavior after controlling for gender, ethnicity, income, and social desirability bias.*
- H7. *Supervisor and coworker discrimination will predict employee grievances after controlling for gender, ethnicity, income, and social desirability bias.*
- H8. *Discrimination at the organizational level will predict employee grievances after controlling for gender, ethnicity, income, and social desirability bias.*

Method and Procedure

This study is unique in several respects. We examined multiple levels of perceived discrimination from coworkers, supervisors, and the organization itself, thereby increasing the likelihood of representing employees' full range of experiences with discrimination. We explored the effect of multiple levels and their relationship to important employee attitudes. Finally, we increased the generalizability of our understanding of the effects of perceived discrimination by using a diverse sample that included Asian, black, Hispanic, and white men and women from a wide variety of organizational settings and roles.

Participants. Study participants were part of a larger study, Project WORKWELL, funded by the National Institute of Mental Health. Data on the effects of employees' lifestyles and work environments on personal and organizational outcomes were collected twice at six-month intervals. Measures of perceived discrimination were used at the second data point only. Of the 366 participants, the majority were women (70 percent) and the average age was thirty-four. Ethnically, 45 percent were Latino, 15 percent African American, 10 percent Asian, 22 percent of European descent, and 3 percent other. Participants were nonprofessional employees who worked in a wide range of companies, industries, and occupations. Most had high school diplomas and almost half reported that they had completed some junior college. Only 10 percent had attended a four-year college.

Procedure. Data for Project WORKWELL were collected by a team of researchers at University of Southern California, Institute for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Research. In order to attract individuals from a wide range of industries in the Los Angeles area, a variety of recruitment strategies were used. Fliers were displayed in local workplaces and advertisements were placed in newspapers and community publications. Recruitment materials offered participants \$50, a free lifestyle assessment, and copies of research findings. Before being selected for the study, individuals who contacted the research office were screened for a variety of related requirements. Specifically, they had to be employed a minimum of twenty hours per week and *not* hold a four-year college degree. When participants arrived at the institute, data were collected from them through a series of written questionnaires.

Measures

A total of nine items were developed to measure perceived discrimination. Exploratory factor analyses, with varimax rotation, of the nine items revealed three distinct factors. Three items loaded on the organizational discrimination (factor loadings ranged from .54 to .82). Four items loaded on the coworker discrimination (factor loadings ranged from .80 to .87) and four items loaded on the supervisor discrimination (factor loadings ranged from .77 to .84). Thus, three subscales (coworker discrimination, supervisor discrimination, and organizational discrimination) were created. Although there were moderate correlations between these factors (as seen in Table 1), it was decided to keep three separate factors because conceptually they measure different aspects of perceived discrimination and could possibly have different outcome effects. Perceived discrimination items were measured on a four-point scale that reflected the extent to which subjects agreed with each item, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Perceived Coworker Discrimination. Four items were developed to assess employees' perceived level of racial discrimination and sexism of coworkers.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelational Matrix for All Control, Predictor, and Outcome Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Income	3.47	1.80	—							
2. Social desirability	1.55	.18	.01	—						
3. Perceived supervisor discrimination	1.92	.67	-.01	-.15**	—					
4. Perceived coworker discrimination	2.03	.70	.01	-.11	.53**	—				
5. Perceived organizational discrimination	2.21	.62	.01	-.17**	.43**	.38**	—			
6. Organizational commitment	2.57	.53	.15**	.17**	-.27**	-.21**	-.42**	—		
7. Job satisfaction	2.34	.56	.17**	.23**	-.42**	-.21**	-.42**	.61**	—	
8. Grievances	2.16	1.87	.07	-.22**	.08	.03	-.15**	-.22**	-.27**	—
9. Organizational citizenship behavior	2.99	.45	.10	.24**	-.12*	-.18**	.08	.15**	.15**	2.03

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

A sample item was, "My coworkers sometimes make sexist statements." This scale had an alpha coefficient of .88.

Perceived Supervisor Discrimination. Four items were developed to measure the extent to which an employee's supervisor made sexist and racist decisions and statements. For example, "My supervisor sometimes makes racist decisions." These four items had a high alpha level ($\alpha = .90$).

Perceived Organizational Discrimination. Organizational discrimination was measured with three items. These items were, "I feel that some of the policies and practices of this organization are racist/sexist." This scale had acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .65$).

Organizational Outcomes. Organizational outcomes measured were job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and grievances.

Job Satisfaction. Items from the Job Content Questionnaire were used as a measure of job satisfaction (Karasek, 1985). These items have been used extensively in past research and have been found to be reliable (Karasek and Theorell, 1990). This measure included five items, such as, "How satisfied are you with your job?" and was found to have high internal consistency ($\alpha = .81$). All items were measured on a four-point scale.

Organizational Commitment. This outcome variable was assessed with the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Mowday, Steers, and Porter, 1979). This scale included five items, such as, "This organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me," which were measured on a four-point scale (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The alpha level suggested high internal consistency ($\alpha = .80$). This scale has been used extensively in organizational research and has been demonstrated to have good psychometric properties.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior. Organ's (1988) Organizational Citizenship Behavior Questionnaire was chosen as a measure of employees' OCB in the workplace. The conscientiousness and altruism scales have been used in numerous studies and this instrument has been found to have good psychometric characteristics (Organ and Ryan, 1995). Nine items were used as a measure of conscientiousness at work, such as, "I give advanced notice if I am unable to work," and seven items were used to measure altruism at work, such as, "I volunteer to do things not required by my job." Both had acceptable reliability estimates (conscientiousness: $\alpha = .79$; altruism: $\alpha = .77$).

Grievances. An item was developed to measure the employees' number of grievances with their organization during the past three months. The question was, "Please estimate how many grievances (for example, complaints about your job or working conditions) you had about work-related matters during the past three months." The response scale was a seven-item choice that ranged from none to more than five grievances. Most respondents (58 percent) reported no grievances in the last three months; however, 30 percent of

employees reported between one and four grievances and 12 percent reported more than four grievances.

Control Variables. Background characteristics and social desirability bias were measured as controls.

Background Characteristics. All participants were asked to note their sex and ethnicity. Four main ethnic group categories were included in the analyses: Hispanic, African American, Asian, white, and other. A third control variable was employees' income level. Employees were asked to note their level of income on an eleven-category response scale; ratings ranged from 1 (under \$10,000) to 11 (more than \$80,000).

Social Desirability Bias. The Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (SDS) was used to measure socially desirable responding (that is, the extent to which employees respond in ways that make them look more favorable). This scale consists of thirty-three true or false items that describe culturally approved behaviors with a low probability of occurrence (Crowne and Marlowe, 1960).

Results

Results of the study were as follows.

Overview of Perceived Discrimination. Overall levels of discrimination for the sample were examined first. Approximately one-third of the employees felt that the policies and practices of their respective organizations were sexist (31 percent) or racist (27 percent). As for coworker behaviors, one-third of the respondents agreed that their coworkers made racist statements and 32 percent disagreed that their coworkers were generally supportive of people from diverse backgrounds. A smaller percentage felt that their supervisor made sexist (20 percent) or racist decisions (19 percent). These findings suggest that moderate levels of discrimination were apparent for these employees, especially at the coworker and organizational levels.

Second, ethnic and gender groups were compared on perceived coworker, supervisor, and organizational discrimination. There were no significant differences between the ethnic groups on perceived levels of discrimination. Similarly, there was no difference between males and females on perceived supervisor or organizational discrimination, although males reported higher levels of perceived discrimination from coworkers ($t = 2.82, p < .01$). It is important to note that the majority of male respondents were ethnic minorities.

Control Variables. Differences between ethnic and gender groups on all outcome variables (that is, OCB, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment) were also examined. Consistent with past research (for example, Cox and Nkomo, 1993), there were significant differences between minority and white employees and between males and females on several of the outcome variables. In order to control for the effects of these demographics, these

variables were used as control variables in subsequent analyses. Because income was correlated with job satisfaction and commitment, it was also used as a control variable in analyses.

Previous research has shown that social desirability bias is likely to influence many self-report measures in organizational settings (for example, Moorman and Podsakoff, 1992). In order to explore social desirability responding in this study, the relationship between social desirability bias and all predictor and outcome variables was examined. Participants who reported high levels of social desirability also reported lower levels of discrimination and higher levels of satisfaction, commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior. As shown in Table 1, social desirability bias was significantly correlated with all variables except for perceived coworker discrimination. Thus, it is clear that social desirability had an influence on the organizational constructs examined in this study so it was entered as a control variable in all subsequent analyses.

Hypotheses Testing

All hypotheses were tested with regression analyses in the following consistent fashion. As a first step, the demographic variables (sex, ethnicity, and income) were entered into the regression equation. The variable ethnicity (with five levels) was dummy-coded. Thus, ethnicity was represented with four independent variables (Hispanic, African American, Asian, and white). In addition, in order to control for social desirability response bias it was also entered on the first step. Based on a multilevel framework, perceived supervisor and coworker discrimination were entered on the second step of the regression equation. Finally, in order to determine the effects of organizational discrimination over and above individual discrimination, perceived organizational discrimination was entered into the regression equation on the last step.

Regression analyses were used to test the strength of the relationship between each predictor and criterion variable. The increments in R^2 obtained at each step of the hierarchical regression analyses were used to analyze the unique contribution of that set of variables. Thus, the R^2 change was determined for each step of the analyses. In addition, the overall R^2 was analyzed for each model.

Perceived Discrimination and Job Satisfaction. In partial support of the first hypothesis, there was a significant incremental change in R^2 when supervisor and coworker discrimination was entered into the regression equation ($\Delta R^2 = .09$, $F = 17.18$, $p < .001$). However, when beta values were examined perceived discrimination from a supervisor was a significant predictor (beta = $-.28$; $t = -4.65$, $p < .01$), whereas coworker perceived discrimination was not related to job satisfaction.

The second hypothesis—that organizational discrimination would predict job satisfaction over and above the control variables and supervisor

and coworker discrimination—was supported. There was a significant incremental change in R^2 when perceived organizational discrimination was entered into the regression equation ($\Delta R^2 = .07$, $F = 30.56$, $p < .001$). Overall, the model explained a significant amount of variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = .25$, $F = 10.84$, $p < .001$), with organizational discrimination being the strongest predictor (beta = $-.32$; $t = -5.53$, $p < .001$) in the final equation. Thus, after social desirability was controlled for, supervisor and organizational discrimination significantly predicted job satisfaction. Table 2 shows the results of regression analyses for job satisfaction.

Perceived Discrimination and Organizational Commitment. The third hypothesis—that perceived discrimination from coworkers and supervisors would predict organizational commitment—received partial support. There was a significant incremental change in R^2 when supervisor and coworker discrimination was entered ($\Delta R^2 = .06$, $F = 10.90$, $p < .001$). However, when beta values were examined, only perceived supervisor discrimination (beta = $-.20$; $t = 3.32$, $p < .01$) was significant in predicting organizational commitment.

Table 2. Regression Analyses for Perceived Discrimination Predicting Organizational Commitment and Job Satisfaction

Variables	Org Commitment			Job Satisfaction		
	R^2	ΔR^2	β	R^2	ΔR^2	β
Step 1						
Income			.15**			.17**
Gender			-.07			.04
Ethnicity (Asian)			-.01			-.02
Ethnicity (White)			.04			.08
Ethnicity (African American)			-.05			.05
Ethnicity (Hispanic)			.09			.14
Social desirability	.07	.07***	.16**	.09	.09***	.21***
Step 2						
Perceived supervisor discrimination			-.20**			-.28***
Perceived coworker discrimination	.13	.06***	-.07	.18	.09***	-.04
Step 4						
Perceived organizational level discrimination	.21	.08***	-.33***	.25	.07***	-.32***

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

The fourth hypothesis—that organizational discrimination would significantly predict commitment over and above supervisor and coworker discrimination—was supported. Organizational discrimination explained 8 percent of the variance over and above the control variables and supervisor and coworker discrimination. In the final regression equation, the model explained a significant amount of the variance in organizational commitment ($R^2 = .21$, $F = 8.47$, $p = .01$). Organizational discrimination was the strongest predictor ($\beta = -.33$; $t = -6.55$, $p < .001$). In summary, even after controlling for social desirability bias, both supervisor and organizational discrimination account for a significant amount of variance in organizational commitment. Table 3 shows regression analyses for the third and fourth hypotheses.

Perceived Discrimination and Organizational Citizenship Behavior. The fifth hypothesis—that perceived supervisor and coworker discrimination would predict organizational citizenship behavior—received partial support. For conscientiousness, there was a significant incremental change in R^2 when supervisor and coworker discrimination was entered after the control variables ($\Delta R^2 = .02$, $F = 4.11$, $p < .05$). However, only coworker discrimination was significant in the final equation ($\beta = -.16$; $t = -2.67$, $p < .01$).

Table 3. Regression Analyses for Perceived Discrimination Predicting Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Variables	Altruism			Conscientiousness		
	R^2	ΔR^2	β	R^2	ΔR^2	β
Step 1						
Income			.08			.06
Gender			-.04			-.12*
Ethnicity (Asian)			-.04			.20**
Ethnicity (White)			.05			.27**
Ethnicity (African American)			-.23**			-.05
Ethnicity (Hispanic)			-.13*			.10
Social desirability	.05	.05	.10	.16	.16***	.31***
Step 2						
Perceived supervisor discrimination			.07			.04
Perceived coworker discrimination	.07	.02*	-.10	.19	.02*	-.16**
Step 4						
Perceived organizational level discrimination	.08	.01*	.13*	.19	.001	-.02

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

For the altruism scale, there was a modest yet significant change in R^2 when supervisor and coworker discrimination was entered into the regression equation ($\Delta R^2 = .02$, $F = 3.34$, $p < .05$). But when the final regression equation was examined, neither type of discrimination was a significant predictor of altruism. Thus, discrimination from coworkers was a significant predictor of only one type of citizenship behavior, conscientiousness at work. See again Table 3 for results of regression analyses for supervisor and coworker perceived discrimination predicting both types of organizational citizenship behavior.

The sixth hypothesis—that organizational discrimination would predict organizational citizenship behavior over and above the control variables and other types of discrimination—received partial support. There was not a significant incremental change in R^2 when organizational discrimination was entered into the regression equation after the control variables for conscientiousness. However, organizational discrimination was a significant predictor of altruism at work. In the regression equation, perceived organizational discrimination was found to be a modest predictor of employee altruism ($\Delta R^2 = .01$, $F = 4.27$, $p < .05$) over and above the control variables and social desirability bias. Organizational discrimination was a significant predictor in the final regression equation (beta = $-.13$; $t = -2.07$, $p < .05$). The final model was significant for predicting conscientiousness ($R^2 = .43$, $F = 7.43$, $p < .001$) and altruism ($R^2 = .28$, $F = 2.77$, $p < .01$). See again Table 3 for results of regression analyses predicting employee organizational citizenship behavior.

Perceived Discrimination and Grievances. The seventh and eighth hypotheses were not supported. Neither supervisor, coworker, nor organizational discrimination were related to the number of grievances filed by employees.

Discussion

Overall, moderate levels of discrimination were reported by the participants in this study. They reported higher levels of organizational discrimination than supervisor discrimination. In addition, it is important to note that there were no significant differences between ethnic or racial groups on perceived discrimination. This suggests that discrimination creates an overall negative work environment for all employees and does not simply reflect the negative perceptions of underrepresented groups such as women or minorities. Although not all employees perceived high levels of discrimination, there were negative outcomes for those who did.

The results of this study suggest that all three aspects of perceived discrimination—coworker, supervisor, and organizational—were related to employees' attitudes and behaviors. Perceived supervisor discrimination was a significant predictor of participants' level of organizational commitment and job satisfaction. In addition, the greater discrimination that employees perceived from their coworkers, the less likely they were to engage in informal,

prosocial behaviors (OCB). Employee grievances were not affected by perceived discrimination. Overall, however, organizational discrimination was the most consistent predictor of the dependent variables. Employees who perceived greater organizational discrimination reported less organizational commitment, less job satisfaction, and less OCB at work, even after controlling for supervisor and coworker discrimination as well as social desirability bias.

This study makes several theoretical contributions and suggests several directions for future research. First, each of the levels of discrimination was related to different organizational outcomes, thus indicating that it is important for future researchers to use an expanded conceptual framework. The typology suggested here (perceived coworker, supervisor, and organizational discrimination) may be useful as a starting point to examine the full spectrum of employees' experiences of discrimination. Although this study examined outcomes of perceived discrimination, it is critical to examine antecedents of perceived discrimination at all three levels as well. In addition, although this study was limited to perceptions of racism and sexism, future research could also include ageism, homophobia, or physical ability, among others.

The few existing prior studies related to perceived discrimination have focused primarily on attitudinal aspects of employee work experiences, such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, perceived power, work tension, and stress. This study was unique because it examined previously unexamined variables related directly to employees' behavior: organizational citizenship behavior and grievances. Contrary to predictions, the number of employee grievances was not found to be related to perceived levels of discrimination. The measure of grievances used in this study provided limited information because it did not specifically query for type of grievance. Although 42 percent of the respondents indicated at least one grievance in the last three months, which is a sufficient sample size, the type of grievances may have been unrelated to perceptions of discrimination, thus reducing the power to detect effects. Future research needs to examine specific types of grievances as well as other behavior-related indices that affect HR practices and organizational financial health, such as absenteeism and turnover.

The racial-ethnic diversity of the study participants is an important contribution because it increases the generalizability of our knowledge of the effect of perceived discrimination on employee attitudes and behaviors. Hispanics are one of the least researched groups of employees as demonstrated by a recent review of the literature, which found that out of 201 articles examined, only 17 included Hispanics in their sample (Cox, 1990; Knouse, Rosenfield, and Culbertson, 1992). This is ironic considering that Hispanics are among the fastest-growing segments of the labor force (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). The dearth of research on black and Asian employees' experiences is also dismaying (Cox and Nkomo, 1990). Indeed, recent work has called for more research that incorporates the experiences of diverse men and women, rather than using them merely as a comparison group to whites

(Hall, 1997). For this diverse group of nonprofessional employees, perceived discrimination has several implications for key organizational outcomes. Future research that continues to build on the generalizability of these findings would be a significant contribution.

The study has important practical implications for individual employees, HR practitioners, and managers as well. The results suggest that employee perceptions are powerful and that HR professionals can play an instrumental role in managing these perceptions. The consistent use of assessment tools such as employee opinion surveys, focus groups, exit interviews, and an analysis of patterns of employee grievances are some of the ways in which perceptions can be assessed and addressed. If employee perceptions of discrimination appear to be problematic, then incidents can be investigated and steps taken to resolve any gaps in perception.

A commitment to addressing employees' perceptions of discrimination can be emphasized early on and communicated to new employees and managers in orientation sessions. In addition, regular training and development of supervisory skills could be expanded to offer practical suggestions on how to manage employee perceptions of diversity and discrimination. In fact, when Wentling and Palma-Rivas (1998) recently interviewed twelve diversity experts, they found that 50 percent identified the integration of diversity into existing training and development curricula as a key trend.

Diversity awareness is being incorporated into existing training programs, and many organizations are implementing specialized diversity training as well (Rynes and Rosen, 1995). Although diversity training has received mixed reviews from some (Kaufman, 1994; Thomas, 1994), more recent empirical evidence suggests that it can be very effective in changing employee attitudes, such as their perceptions of discrimination, as well as their behaviors (Hanover and Cellar, 1998). Nemetz and Christensen (1996) provide a useful typology of training related to an individual or organization's beliefs about multiculturalism. They highlight the importance of congruence between an organization's stated culture and informal power processes, because an incongruence between these two factors may negatively affect employee attitudes and perceptions.

Mentoring is another HRD intervention that can be useful in changing employee perceptions. Both formal mentoring programs and informally developed relationships have been found to be very useful in enhancing employees' careers and increasing their job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior (Donaldson, Ensher, and Grant-Vallone, 2000; Ensher, Thomas, and Murphy, 2000). Research suggests that protégés with powerful mentors may perceive and actually experience less discrimination than those with less influential mentors (Dreher and Cox, 1996)

Both diversity training and mentoring programs can be important HRD interventions in changing employee attitudes and perceptions, but they must be part of an integrated approach or organizational change effort to manage

diversity in order for attitudes to change over the long term and ultimately for behaviors to change. Leaders in diversity change management provide a number of consistent guidelines for HRD practitioners to incorporate into their organizational change efforts. These guidelines include, but are not limited to, top management support and role models, a business-driven imperative to manage diversity, and a systemwide change effort that rewards diversity-friendly behaviors (Colvin, 1999; Cox, 1993). In sum, assessment of employees' perceptions, an integration of diversity into the existing training and development curriculum, the establishment or support of mentoring, and the implementation of organizational change efforts are some of the important ways in which HRD practitioners can influence their employees' perceptions of discrimination and subsequently affect their attitudes and behaviors.

Although this study makes a number of important theoretical and practical contributions, its limitations cannot be ignored. Perhaps the greatest limitation is its reliance on self-report data, which seems to be a perennial problem for studies in this area. Self-report data are problematic because the results can be vulnerable to common method or social desirability bias (Howard, 1994). However, recent researchers have suggested that in cases where the variables of interest are attitudinal or related to self-perceptions, as several of the variables measured here are, then it is appropriate to use self-report data (Maurer and Tarulli, 1994; Spector, 1994). Although this study is consistent with the limited past research on perceived discrimination in its design and methodology (Gutek, Cohen, and Tsui, 1996; Mays, Coleman, and Jackson, 1996; Sanchez and Brock, 1996), it does not make any new contributions to addressing this thorny issue of measurement. It is important to note that we controlled for social desirability bias in all of our analyses, which did decrease this problem.

Another aspect of this study that may be viewed as both a strength and a limitation is its diverse sample. We relied on operating-level employees from a wide range of organizations, settings, and positions, thus increasing the cultural validity of our findings to a degree. However, because study participants were limited to nonprofessionals in one geographic area, additional research is needed to validate these findings among other populations.

One drawback related to examining perceived discrimination and its deleterious effects on individual and organizational outcomes lies in determining the causality of the effect; the issue here is primarily the cross-sectional nature of the design. For example, does perceived discrimination cause decreased job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior, or could the reverse be true? In conducting cross-sectional research, the opposite conclusion is also a possibility: perhaps in environments in which job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and OCB are low, perceptions of discrimination flourish. Future studies using more stringent experimental designs, such as longitudinal, would be a contribution to this area of research.

In conclusion, this study makes an important contribution to the growing literature on perceived discrimination by examining multiple aspects of it. The results suggest that employees' perceptions do indeed influence key work-related behaviors and attitudes. HRD practitioners and researchers need to recognize the adage that "perception is 99 percent of reality" in that if employees perceive that discrimination exists, that is their reality. HRD professionals can play an important role in empowering employees, supervisors, and the organization to manage and address both the realities of negative perceptions and subsequent deleterious effects of these perceptions.

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