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INTRODUCTION

It is well-documented that despite recent gains both Black and White women professionals and managers still earn far less than White men and remain segregated into segments of the workforce with limited advancement opportunities and "glass ceilings" (c.f., McGuire and Reskin 1993). Further, Black women professionals and managers earn less than Whites (Higginbotham 1987, 1994; Reskin and Roos 1990; Sokoloff 1992; Woody 1992). Yet our knowledge of how race and gender systems of inequality are experienced and understood by Black and White women is far less systematic and largely based on anecdotal evidence and qualitative studies of small, racially homogeneous groups of women. Understanding the ways women perceive race and gender inequity in the workplace is important for many reasons, one of the most important being the quest for common ground on which to forge collective action to redress inequities. Efforts to forge multiracial coalitions among women have often failed when women of color are expected to buy into a women's political agenda that doesn't reflect their sense of the problems (Baca Zinn et al. 1986; Spelman 1988). Thus, understanding the nuances in the ways that Black and White women--especially in the same structural locations and/or workplaces--perceive and respond to race and gender inequality is a critical project for social change.

This research seeks to contribute to that project by directly assessing three basic questions about the nature of Black and White professional and managerial women's experiences with discrimination in the workplace. First, we assess the extent to which Black and White women professionals and managers perceive discriminatory treatment in key dimensions of their work including the reward
structures of rank, pay, and promotions as well as everyday interactions where they confront controlling images of women. Second, we identify similarities and differences in the ways that Black and White women professionals and managers perceive both race and gender discrimination. And finally, we examine the ways that different racial experiences with gender inequality shape future career plans.

Two major types of studies which address race and gender discrimination in the workplace are reviewed below. First, studies of structural inequality, typically based on quantitative analyses of census data or large scale surveys, control factors like experience and credentials and document race and gender differences in rewards like pay, rank, and promotions. Second, experiential studies explore women's perceptions of equity, discrimination, rewards, and opportunities. These studies are typically based on in-depth interviews with small racially homogeneous samples. Unlike the quantitative studies, they do not typically control or analyze other factors like class, credentials, etc. which influence workplace perceptions.

Structural Discrimination in Rank, Pay, and Promotion. Survey and census-based research consistently documents that professional-managerial women's authority and wages are lower than White men's (cf., McGuire and Reskin 1993; Sokoloff 1992; Woody 1992). Two processes are implicated. First, women have lower credentials (i.e., education and experience) than White men. Most of the gap, however, is due to the fact that women receive lower wages and less authority (rank) even when they have the same education, experience and work in the same industries; that is, they face discrimination (cf., McGuire and Reskin 1993; Sokoloff 1992; Woody 1992). This latter outcome is largely achieved through channeling and clustering women into sectors of the labor force that pay the least and restrict advancement opportunities (Higginbotham 1987, 1994; Reskin and Roos 1990; Sokoloff 1992; Woody 1992). Reskin and Roos (1990)
highlight one aspect of this process by documenting wage declines which occurred as White men left and women and people of color entered certain occupations including book editing, pharmacy, and bank management. Further, they demonstrate that women are channeled into sectors like customer service banking which generate no profit and restrict opportunities to move to top management. Across the labor force, Morrison and Von Glinow (1990) report that the majority of women in management hold staff not the line positions from which promotions take place.

Although recognizing that Black women experience even greater disadvantage than White women on both credentials and returns to them (McGuire and Reskin 1993), feminist scholars are often reluctant to directly compare the status of Black or other women of color with White women. As McGuire and Reskin (1993) caution, comparisons between Black and White women are diversionary and divisive since the gap between either group and White men is far larger and more significant.

On one hand, in a political sense, their cautions are surely well-taken. For example, on October 31, 1994 the New York Times (Roberts 1994) reported the results of an analysis of census data which showed the following: among recent college graduates with one to five years on the job, Black women earned $11.41/hour, Black men earned $11.26, White women earned $11.38, and White men earned $12.85. The article highlighted the 15 cent gap between Black men and women and completely ignored the $1.44 gap between White men and the best off of the remaining three groups. The two headlines in the article reporting these results read: "Black Women Graduates Outpace Male Counterparts" and "Income Disparity Seen as Marriage Threat." Experts, including noted sociologists and economists, were eager to interpret the fifteen cent difference between Black men and Black women (and not the $1.44 difference between them
and White men) and they uniformly claimed that this gain by Black women would presage a much bigger problem—men would not marry them. No empirical evidence of women's or men's positions in the labor force or perceptions of interpersonal relationships and wages formed a basis for the discussion. Thus, census data are often used to drive a political wedge between oppressed groups while White male privilege goes unexamined.

Ironically, failure to fully analyze the dimension of race also leaves women politically vulnerable. This is precisely because without understanding the commonalities and differences in the processes that produce race and gender oppression as well as perceptions of those processes, we cannot begin to work effectively together for social change. One need only review the history of racial divisions in the women's movement to see the significance of this point (cf., Baca Zinn, et. al 1986).

Because of their generalizability, quantitative nature, and claims to scientific validity, these studies and others like them that rely on analyses of surveys or census data receive greater media attention and they are much more likely to become the basis for public debate and social policy. However, what these studies cannot address is how the aggregate differences in statistical indicators are perceived, interpreted, and acted upon—a critical dimension in assessing the potential for collective resistance among oppressed groups.

**Perceptions of Race and Gender Discrimination.** Qualitative, in-depth studies give us a much greater sense of the interpretations, texture, and meanings and their connection to the actions that people take from their structural locations. In these studies lies the potential for understanding whether wage gaps are produced, experienced and interpreted in the same way for White women and women of color. Yet studies of professional-managerial women's perceptions of
oppression have also avoided direct comparisons of White women with women and men of color.

Both popular personal narratives (Carter 1991; Nelson 1993; Williams 1991) and qualitative research studies describe Black middle class men's and women's everyday encounters with racial discrimination in the workplace. They vividly detail African American professionals and managers experiences of: repeatedly having to "prove" their competence, failure to move up due to discrimination in evaluation and promotion processes, exclusion from critical networks, lack of mentoring, feelings of marginality and isolation, and an unpleasant environment created by racist and sexist remarks (Bell 1990; Davis and Watson 1982; Denton 1990; Feagin and Sikes 1994; Fulbright 1986).

Most Black professional-managerial women see sexism as well as racism implicated in the discriminatory treatment that they face (Bell, Denton and Nkomo 1993; Hochschild 1993). But how do their perceptions compare to those of White women? Are Black women equally as likely as White women to perceive sexism in professional-managerial work? Do Black and White women define the obstacles they encounter in the same ways? Certainly, lack of mentoring, feelings of marginality, and glassceilings have been identified as obstacles by White women professionals and managers (Morrison and Von Glinow 1990; Northcraft and Gutek 1993) but do White women in the same structural locations in the workforce perceive their constraints similarly to Black women? While Black women see sexism as restricting their opportunities, do White women see the ways that racism oppresses their African American counterparts, or do they hold negative images of Black women? How pervasive are these varied views?

Recent scholarship on Whites and race indicates that the dominant racial ideology in the U.S. today is a "color-blind" ideology in which Whites not only
fail to perceive racism but believe that to acknowledge racial difference is to be racist (Frankenberg 1993; Omi and Winant 1994). Thus, White women with a color-blind ideology who perceive gender discrimination may be unlikely to perceive race discrimination in their same work environment. Other White people adhere to "color-conscious" recognition of racial discrimination. These form the basis for coalitions with people of color to redress injustices (Collins 1990; Frankenberg 1993). Still others are bound to "color-conscious" racist ideologies, and some now see Whites as racial victims in a process labeled reverse discrimination. In professional-managerial workplaces where anti-discrimination has broader support, but Affirmative Action much less (e.g., Tickameyer, et al. 1989), we know little about the extent or character of such views and men's experiences have formed the basis for the images we do have (e.g., Bakke).

The literature addressing the questions of perceptions of discrimination listed above is by characterized parallel studies of racially homogeneous groups (Weber Cannon, et al. 1988) which, given the segregation of workplaces, leave us questioning whether racial differences that appear across studies are based on the different social locations of White and African American women, different treatment in the same locations, different perceptions of the same treatment, or some combination of these. Similarly we cannot know from the existing literature whether issues like mentoring, promotion obstacles, etc. that appear in the discussions of both Black and White women are as frequent in each group, are interpreted similarly in each group, and have the same or different effects on career plans.

The present research combines features of both structural and experiential research by looking at the interpretations and meanings attached to workplace structures by African American and White women in a study where other key structural factors affecting workplace rewards, treatment, and perceptions are
controlled. We compare the perceptions of global race and gender discrimination, equity in specific reward structures, and career plans of same-aged African American and White women who are situated in the labor force in the same occupations and industries and who share educational credentials, experience, economic standing, and social class histories.

The goal of these comparisons is twofold. First, we seek to provide the texture, interpretation, and meaning not present in large scale demographic comparisons of salaries and labor force studies which indicate that African American women receive similar although slightly lower levels of job rewards than White women. Second, we seek to provide this interpretive picture in a qualitative study that eliminates, by a combination of controlling and matching subjects, a series of structural factors beyond race which typically confound qualitative studies based on small samples. They include: age, education, direct route to college, employment status, occupation, industrial sector, and social class background. To do so we employ a sample of 200, far exceeding the 20-50 subjects typical in qualitative studies.

**METHODS**

**Research Design.** The data for this study were taken from a larger exploratory project examining the relationships between race, class background, gender composition of occupation, on a wide range of family, work and health issues among a sample of 200 full-time employed women professionals, managers and administrators in the Memphis, Tenn. metropolitan area. The research instrument contained closed- and open-ended questions which elicited a general life history of the women focused on family history, schooling experiences from elementary school through higher education, current employment, family/personal
life, general well-being and health. Data were collected in 1985-1987 in face-to-face interviews lasting 2 1/2 to 3 hours each.

**Sample.** We selected a sample of Black and White women who were matched on other important characteristics affecting workers experiences and perceptions. The sample was restricted to: women of the "baby boom" cohort (i.e., 25 to 40 years of age at the time of the study); college graduates who went directly from high school to college or did so within two years of graduation; currently working full-time as professionals, managers, or administrators, (i.e., in "middle class" occupations, Vanneman and Weber Cannon, 1987). (For a discussion of the rationale for selecting these groups and selection procedures, see Weber Cannon et al. 1988). All subjects were defined as currently "middle class" by virtue of their employment in either a professional, managerial or administrative occupation as specified in Braverman (1974), Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich (1979), and Vanneman and Weber Cannon (1987) (see Vanneman and Weber Cannon 1987 for exceptions). Classification of subjects as either professional or managerial-administrative was made on the basis of the designation of occupations in the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1983) Detailed Population Characteristics: Tennessee. Managerial occupations were defined as those in the Census Categories of managers and administrators, and professionals were defined as those occupations in the professional category excluding technicians (Braverman 1974). At the time of the study, the majority of the Black and White women had advanced degrees (Masters degrees: 57 Black women, 55

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1Subjects were defined as upwardly mobile (from a working-class background) if neither of their parents worked in a professional or managerial occupation before the subject was thirteen years old. Subjects were defined as stable middle class if either of their parents worked in a professional or managerial occupation before the subject was thirteen years old.
White women; law degrees: 7 Black women, 8 White women; doctorates: 3 Black women, 8 White women).

We employed quota sample which was stratified by three dimensions of inequality: race, social class background of the respondent, and the gender composition of her occupation. Each dimension was operationalized into two categories: Black and White; raised-working class/upwardly mobile and raised-middle class/middle class stable; and female-dominated and male-dominated. Twenty-five cases were selected for each of the 8 cells of this $2 \times 2 \times 2$ design.²

To avoid confounding race, class background, and occupation, subjects were selected so that the different race and class-background categories contained women from the same or closely related occupations. Subjects were also sorted into three age groupings defined by birth cohort (1956-60, 1951-55, and 1945-50) to prevent over representation of any age group in a race, class background, or specific occupational category.

**Procedures.** Every few weeks, volunteers who met all study parameters (25-40 years of age; full-time employed professionals, managers, or administrators; and college graduates who went directly to college) were sorted according to all of the stratifying variables (race, class, sex composition of occupation, professional vs. managers and administrators; specific occupation; and age

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²Within each of these cells, subjects were selected to reflect the proportions of professionals, managers and administrators in the Memphis SMSA (60 percent professionals and 40 percent managers and administrators in the male-dominated occupations, and 76 percent professionals and 24 percent managers and administrators in the female-dominated occupations). Within each gender composition category, particular occupations were selected for inclusion in the sample based on their proportions among professionals, managers, and administrators in the SMSA.
category). Subjects to be interviewed were then randomly selected from each pool.

Measurement. Subjects perceptions of global race and gender discrimination, reward structures, and future career plans were assessed in a series of open-ended questions. Categories were developed from responses and the frequencies are presented in tabular form for Black and White women. Exact question wordings are presented in the section where they are discussed below. All analyses are presented by race only. Separate analyses including class background and gender composition of occupation did not explain any of the racial differences reported here and are not presented.

GLOBAL PERCEPTIONS OF SEXISM AND RACISM

Sexism. We asked: "Do you feel women are treated differently in any ways than the men in your workplace?" and if yes, "In what ways?" While a majority of respondents indicated that women are treated differently, Black women were far more likely to do so. Roughly three-fourths of the Black women (73.7%, N=70) and slightly over one-half of the White women (56.1%, N=55) stated that they perceived different treatment of women (See Table 1). Among those who perceived different treatment, however, Black and White women were equally likely to mention the same four major areas of concern: treatment as inferior/subordinate, soft, emotional, helpless, etc. based on sexist stereotypes (N=30); hiring and promotion discrimination (N=26); necessity of "proving" themselves, working harder, needing more qualifications (N=16); and lower salaries and other compensation (N=12). Other areas mentioned by a few respondents included: exclusion from the "good ole boy" network, sexual harassment, and preferential treatment of males. Finally, four women indicated
that women were treated in stereotypic ways, like having the door opened for them, but they interpreted this behavior as preferential, not inferior treatment.

The comments of Lynn Johnson, an African American health administrator in a major hospital, typify the way that many Black and White women described their daily struggles against traditional stereotypes of women:

You can't be just a normal woman in that environment. They take you too much for granted and they want to treat you like you're helpless. You've got to be very aggressive, which they consider abrasive. ... They still promote men because men "need" it and women don't "need" it. You're still fighting the same old isms. When I'm upset, they say it's because I need a husband. When John's upset it's because John's got so many important things on his mind. When my disposition ain't right, I'm on my menses or something. I'm serious, you go through all that!

Although wage equity has been a cornerstone of the struggle for women's rights, wages per se were not the first thing mentioned by these women--Black or White. In addition to struggling against limiting stereotypes, Black and White women most often saw barriers to hiring and promotions as the crux of the inequities they faced. These barriers are especially troublesome in professional-managerial work where expectations are that careers will be characterized by steady progress up the ladder of success (Vanneman and Weber Cannon 1987). These women's perceptions validate recent work (McGuire and Reskin 1993; Reskin and Roos 1990) which finds that women's wages are most often depressed through ghettoization in lower paying job titles and sectors of the workplace, and less through unequal pay in the same jobs, a practice explicitly prohibited by Civil Rights legislation. Furthermore, in many public sector work settings

\[\text{All names employed in this paper are pseudonyms.}\]
salaries are set for entire categories of workers, like teachers or attorneys, and the main way to achieve a significant salary increase is through a promotion. Finally, one of the features of professional-managerial work is relatively high wages and research has demonstrated that job satisfaction is affected more by subjective job rewards than salary related factors among professional-managerial women and men (Phelan 1994). As we shall see later, there was considerable dissatisfaction about wages, especially among the African American women, but it was not the first thing they mentioned when asked about inequities.

Awareness of structural barriers to advancement were typified in the comments of Wendy Robinson, a White lawyer and bank trust officer:

It's obvious that the top echelon at the bank is all male. There are a lot of vice-presidents and a lot of them are female, but nonetheless, there are so many it's almost a meaningless title. All the people who have the lowest jobs are female. And, all the people who have the highest jobs are male. It's just obvious.

Comments about barriers to promotions were also common in female-dominated occupations. Blair Monroe, an African American nurse supervisor said:

Men tend to advance rapidly. They're promoted into management positions often when they don't have as many management skills, or haven't mastered the skills as well as many females. But because they are men, and it's predominantly a female organization, they seem to just move right up the ladder.

Black women also identified a subtle process of limiting women's advancement. Eleven Black and only two White women identified differences in work assignments and responsibilities as a part of the process which ultimately prohibits promotions. Specifically, they mentioned that women were given token jobs, less challenging, and more "secretarial" types of jobs, kept off committees
and boards, and excluded from tough work which often serves as the "proving ground" for further advancement. The comments of Shirley Dayton, an African American educational specialist working in the military, are typical:

My supervisors don't expect as much from the women as they do from the men. They'll even assign the men special projects because they don't want to "put us through it," or tax our minds too much. You just don't know the sexism that exists!

Patricia Moore, an African American journalist states:

A lot of women aren't given some of the 'primo' assignments like City Hall. They think that somehow we're not as astute politically as men since it's mostly men in the city and county administration, they figure that men would understand them better I suppose.

In short, Black women were significantly more likely to perceive gender inequities in the workplace and to provide a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of gender inequities. Yet among those who perceive inequity, both Black and White women focused on the same arenas: the limitations imposed by stereotypical images of women and discrimination in hiring and promotions. Salaries per se were much less frequently mentioned.

Racism. There were 30 women (nine Black and 21 White) who worked in racially homogeneous workplaces. Of the remaining 170 respondents, we asked, "Do you feel Blacks are treated differently in any ways than Whites in your workplace?" Sixty-eight percent (N=62) of the Black and 44.3% (N=35) of the White women indicated that Blacks were treated differently, but one-third (34.3%, N=12) of those Whites stated that Blacks receive preferential treatment and some contended that Whites face "reverse discrimination." Thus, among the White women, 44 (55.7%) perceived no differences in treatment, 12 (15.1%) perceived preferential treatment for Blacks, and 23 (29.1%) perceived discriminatory
treatment. Taken together, close to three-fourths (70.9%) of the White women perceived no negative treatment of Blacks while 68.1% of Black women perceived negative treatment—a striking contrast.

Interestingly, both the Black women and the White women who did perceive discriminatory treatment described the discrimination as occurring in the same two areas most commonly mentioned when discussing women's treatment. Those areas were: hiring and promotions (N=31); and treatment based on stereotypes of Black people as inferior, incompetent, and less able, and disrespectful treatment by co-workers, and clients (N=27). A few women also mentioned salary, exclusion from social networks, and tokenism—being put in positions which lack power.

Black Women. Racial discrimination in hiring and promotions were commonly cited by Black women. Cheryl Waddell, a Black medical social worker at a private hospital said:

I think the Blacks are confined to the lower positions—lower status positions—promotional opportunities are not as available to them as the Whites. It's not easy ... it's definitely there.

Lynn Johnson, the health administrator, said:

Oh yeah! Most definitely! Go in there and look! You know. Every last one of the maids is Black. You gonna tell me that's the only fools that applied? That's the only fools who can clean the floor? And go look around at the nursing staff. All you got to do is look...The time comes for a promotion, the White lady can have half the skills the little Black lady has. She'll get it!

Finally, Janice Freeman, a Black 36 year-old associate professor in a community college described Black women's confrontations with negative stereotypes:
Yes, I do and I hope that I'm being objective but I think that they're treated differently because of their color and because of that other person's personal expectation of what this person can do that's ingrained in them culturally over the years or over the decades so that we have to prove more, be twice as good, and be damned near flawless to meet even their mediocre standards. And that to me is not right!

White Women and the Color-Blind Perspective. In contrast with these Black women's views, the majority of the White women (55.7%), even though they work in integrated environments, simply don't perceive that Black people are treated any differently in the workplace. If most of the White professional-managerial women in this sample who work in all-White environments (21%) are even less likely to perceive racial discrimination, then we see the profound extent of middle class White women's unawareness of racism. The position of these women represents the color-blind racial ideology that defines the dominant culture discourse on race in the U.S. today (cf. Omi and Winant 1994; Frankenberg 1993). This stance has proven to be a powerful force for the preservation of the racial status quo, and a persistent barrier to a unified women's movement.

The vast majority of these White women perceived no racial discrimination and simply responded "No" to the query if Blacks are treated differently in their workplaces. No further comment or elaboration appeared necessary when no differences exist. Among those who elaborated on their response, several explicitly presented a "color-blind" perspective, claiming not to notice race. Some women went so far as to acknowledge the difference in their perceptions with those of Blacks in their workplaces. Sharon Anderson, an occupational therapist said "No, but I know some Blacks who do." And a few women overtly evoked the language of "color-blindness," saying "We try to be color-blind," or "I forget that Ethel is Black."
Another interesting variant on the "color-blind" perspective is reflected in a group of women's responses who claim that people in their workplace hold prejudicial attitudes, but do not discriminate on the basis of race. These women tended also to implicate Blacks and Whites equally in holding prejudicial attitudes. In so doing, they minimize the significance of stereotypic attitudes and power differences across races by highlighting what they see as a balance of views. Donna Latimer, a manager at a utility said, "A good part of the company has an attitude that the majority of Blacks are inferior to Whites and some of the Blacks feel that the Whites are inferior. Yet, policywise, there can be no discrimination." By equating Blacks and Whites, such practices sends the message captured in the words of Alice Norwood, a public relations marketing professional: "In the final analysis, I believe it is very equal and it all comes out the same in the wash, but in the process of hiring and firing, that's (race) always a big topic of conversation."

White Women and Color-Consciousness. When they are conscious of the existence of racial discrimination, as over one-fourth of the White women in this sample were, they were often in a unique position to observe the everyday practice of racism. Barbara Worthington, a White 40 year old college professor, was one of the White women who clearly saw racism in her environment. She discussed the way racially exclusionary practices were carried out in the Science Department at her university:

First, we have no Blacks in this department. The few that have applied while I've been here have been automatically eliminated from consideration. Part of the reason was that they told in their original application that they were Black. There is a standard equal opportunity form ... and some people make a big point of saying, "I'm a Black applicant." And this does not confer a special advantage, especially to many of my colleagues it's a
disadvantage, because they feel that if this person were adequately trained, competitive, etc. with similar qualifications, they would not need to declare themselves a Black candidate up front. So they feel that by doing that, they are asking for special consideration. That's a kind of backlash and that's not something you can take to court.

Mary Ellen Madsen, a public school teacher said:

The one Black assistant principal we have is on a regular basis called incompetent in front of others. I think it's really because he's Black. I don't think he's incompetent at all. I think he has not been given the opportunity to prove extreme competence. When you're only in charge of the buses. ...On occasion, I've heard remarks made [about a teacher] like "Well, she's Black, what do you expect?" No, I don't think they're treated fairly. There are some excellent Black teachers in my school and no one will ever know it purely because they're Black.

And Toni McKenna, a librarian, mentioned more structural concerns:

So many Blacks in the organization are in the lower levels of the spectrum. So many more clerks are Black than are White. They have lower salaries, they have lower positions and rank, and all that other stuff.

Finally, the comments of the twelve White women who thought Black people received preferential treatment are also revealing. Two of the women, indicated that their workplace gave advantages to Black workers, but they saw the need for the perceived advantage. Nicole Osborne, a legal aid attorney, said:

Legal aid is a different type of practice of law. ... In legal aid we go overboard in trying to provide opportunities because our clients are Black and I think that is important. I think we are sensitive to the needs for minorities to have opportunities in the professions and it has been a good opportunity for many minorities to get a job and get good experience
practicing law. But I think there has been some concern that it has worked against Whites who also were sensitive to the needs of legal representation for poor people and want that opportunity too. ... Sometimes color is a factor.

The remaining ten White women expressed varying degrees of dissatisfaction with the preferences they observed. Perhaps the most vociferous in her response was Jeannette Wilson, a 36 year old senior marketing consultant at a radio station, said:

They [Blacks] are given opportunities that most of them are not ... maybe I better rephrase that. They are given opportunities ... people that apply that are White would be better qualified, but because of the fact that there is a Black quota that has to be met, they have to take the inferior persons and that really chaps me!

Nell Jordon, a 26 year-old zone manager for an auto company, stated:

This is a personal opinion, and I don't even know if it's justified. They put so much emphasis on hiring Blacks, that women are still the second-rate citizens that we've always been. I understand that, and I'm not griping about it, but I think it's about time we got as much attention.

And Katherine Davis, an administrator with a youth agency for girls, said: "There has been some reverse discrimination. There were some opportunities given to Black staff members that were not given to White staff members."

These comments do not reflect the rantings of crazed White supremacists, but rather the views of middle-class White women, who are conscious of race and see Black people as advantaged. They represent about 15% of our sample, a sizable enough group to be a force to be reckoned with in the workplace, and yet only one-half the size of the group of White women who clearly perceived racial discrimination. If these two groups captured the bulk of the perceptions of White
professional managerial women, anti-racist movements would have achieved far more than they have. Instead, the larger obstacle to achieving White women's support for Black people's struggles against racism is the pervasive belief in a "color-blind" ideology and practice, a set of beliefs which minimizes the importance of race by not seeing it or by recognizing race while denying power differences among races and thereby treating any observed differences in stereotyped negative attitudes or behaviors as "balancing out," as unimportant.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH SEXISM AND/OR RACISM.

General Assessment of Discriminatory Treatment. We next asked the women about any personal experiences of unfairness: "Do you feel you have received any unfair treatment at work because you are a (Black) woman?" Forty-two percent (N=42) of the Black women, and only 25% (N=25) of the White

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4We asked Black women, "...because you are a Black woman?" To White women we said, "...because you are a woman?" We used different question wordings to more closely approximate the ways that Black and White women think about their race/gender status. As noted above in our study, and in the recent literature on Whites and race, the most common view of race among White people is a "color-blind" view, where the race of Black people is not viewed as significant in everyday life and Whites are not viewed as having a race. In that context, had we used the phrase "White woman," we think that many women would have thought we were asking about their experiences of "reverse discrimination," which was not our intent. Ruth Frankenberg (1993) describes a similar negative reaction when she sought subjects for her study of White women and race--many women thinking she was looking for White racists--since to acknowledge race from the dominant "color-blind" perspective is to be racist. In contrast, Black women most commonly experience both their race and gender simultaneously as real and significant (cf. Collins 1990). So we sought not to ask Black women to dissociate their race from their gender in thinking of their experiences of unfair treatment. In a few cases, Black respondents did discuss incidents of discrimination and talked about whether they thought of them as more based on gender or race, but most made no attempt to separate the two.
women felt that they had been treated unfairly because of their gender or race/gender status. Further, eight of the White women, and only two of the Black women indicated that the unfairness had happened to them on a previous job—not in their current workplace.

When discussing their personal experiences with inequities, both Black and White women most often discussed the subtle, indirect, and informal ways they are treated—racist and sexist jokes, exclusion from networks, subtle put-downs, sexual innuendoes, etc. Twelve Black women and only one White woman made specific reference to overt sexual harassment, or used the terms sex or race discrimination. Hiring and promotions were also frequently mentioned, although less often than the informal mechanisms mentioned above. These subtle and informal mechanisms of control were captured by Sandra Maxwell, a 28 year old African American corporate attorney:

Basically I feel like there are periods where colleagues feel very threatened by you. They feel that you move faster, that your work is better and is noted more by some of the senior people. So things are done to bring you down. They are done to "put you back in your place" so they say. And I have run into that more than a number of times. And you feel--maybe I should wait until my time—*or* you come to the feeling that I want to fight it all the way.

Joan Harden, a Black associate news producer at a television station, said, "They tell a lot of racial jokes. They're always categorizing people differently, especially Blacks. They seem to be quite prejudiced." Margaret Ford, a private attorney, described pay and the job ceiling: "Well, the initial compensation that I received (*was low*), and the fact that there's no partnership track or any real interest in making me a partner."
The comments from White women were not only less frequent than among the Black women, but they were even more likely to focus on the subtle and indirect nature of the inequality. Julie Townsend, an elementary school principal said:

I think I receive subtle sexual harassment. For example, yesterday I was meeting with a male professor, who used to meet with the assistant director and me and she couldn't be there, so he said, "Well, at least I get to meet with one good looking dame." The stuff that is totally inappropriate because it has nothing to do with what you are doing.

Barbara Worthington, the college science professor, was atypical of the White women in that she described in great detail the overt sex discrimination that was pervasive in her department. Recall that she was also quite aware of the way racism operated to exclude African American candidates from her department. As her comments indicate, a lawsuit surely heightened her awareness.

I don't think that I have received the same amount of opportunities as men--the same amount of research support which is monetary support, travel money to attend professional meetings, for professional advancement ... I was hired here primarily because they saw this as a woman's job. They had a sex discrimination suit in this department which the department lost, and when the lawyer called on me to testify, I asked not to because I needed the job and I was not willing to perjure myself to keep the job and he said he understood. ... I hope the experience will make me a little more sensitive to people's feelings about professional status, promotion, pay, etc.

Far fewer women, both Black and White, said they personally experienced unfair treatment than identified global racism and/or sexism in their workplaces. Faye Crosby (1993) reports that denial of personal disadvantage, even when people recognize broad patterns of discrimination, is quite common and that is
likely the case with some of these women. These people feel they are generally treated fairly in a system which they recognize as unfair. The comments of Darlene Hooks, a Black woman librarian, are instructive. Darlene recognizes that the sexism in the system constitutes a "glass ceiling" for all women:

Women are not given the same employment opportunities. The men hold the top management levels in my business and the women are all the subordinates. So there is no way women have the same opportunities, because men hold all the top levels and the women will hold the second level positions.

When asked about personally being treated unfairly, Darlene says no, because "there are not many Black librarians in the field, so people seek me out." Yet, in reality there will still be a glass ceiling that Darlene knows she will not penetrate. The issue of age and job tenure can be a factor in shaping women's likelihood of experiencing treatment which they consider discriminatory. For women at early career stages, the denial of promotions, and impact of informal differential treatment may not yet be felt.

**Specific Assessment of Discriminatory Treatment in Rank, Pay, and Promotion Opportunities.** All the women in our study were college graduates and many had advanced degrees. As McGuire and Reskin (1993) note, however, women do not receive the same pay, authority or other returns to education as their male counterparts. Research on job satisfaction has long documented a positivity bias in response to global questions about job satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) which is less common when respondents are asked about specific aspects of the job, for example, pay, promotions, benefits, etc. Therefore we asked specific questions about the women's perceptions of equity in their rank, pay, and promotion opportunities.
Rank. We asked: "Is the position you currently occupy what you feel you deserve based on your training and experience?" and "Why do you say that?" The majority of women, 74.7% of the Black women and 80.2% of the White women thought they deserved the position they currently held (see Table 1). Toni McKenna, a White woman heading a branch of the public library, is typical of the Black and White women in both traditionally male and female occupations who felt as if their careers were on track.

I spent my early years in librarianship in reference and public service. My most recent job to this one [branch head] was being a first assistant to someone in a branch, and it was there that I learned more about the nitty gritty details of how to run a branch: the paper work that is required, the maintenance kinds of things, security issues and the like. And I think the combination of the two has served me well.

Most of the Black and White women who answered that their current positions did not match their training and experience felt they were overqualified for the positions they currently held, 24% and 12%, respectively. The perceptions of women in this study run counter to myths which depict Black people, especially Black women, in jobs for which they are not adequately prepared. For example, Carolyn Blackman, an account executive for a private corporation, responded:

At this point, no. It's time to go higher. Because with this company and with certain companies you have so many years that you do this, then you move on and you try not to become stuck in one [position] over a period of years. So really, three or four years or three to five years is the most in this job title. It's time for another job title. It's time to move.
Some White women also voiced these complaints, but they were twice as common, and represented one-fourth of the Black women. While they may have been hired and even welcomed into their workplaces, these women have not been able to advance in their careers as they had planned.

Finally, seven of the White women and only one Black woman thought they were under-qualified for their positions based on their training and experience. For example, Wendy Johnson was in the trust department of a bank. She noted: "I'm not particularly well-trained for this job. And, I feel I could do more of what I was trained to do in another part of the bank." Sally Faulkner, a White woman manager, knew that she did not get her position because of training or experience. She explained:

The president of the company, whose primary background is as a salesman, is very intelligent but lacks managerial skills, as do I. I think one of the main reasons that I got this job wasn't because of my management skills, because I had none, but it was more my dedication. He [the president] made this comment to many people many times. "I can always count on Sally to get things done no matter what." I think a combination of the fact that I am a hard worker and get things done and the fact that I was so talented in other areas that I think he felt that I could adapt and learn what I needed on my own in the management field--which is exactly the case.

In sum, although the majority of women thought they were in jobs appropriate for their educational attainment and training, some felt overqualified and a few felt under-qualified. Contrary to popular myths, it was the Black women, who were twice as likely to feel overqualified and White women who were more likely to feel under-qualified for their jobs.
Pay. When asked, "Relative to your co-workers, do you think you are adequately paid for the work you do?" and "Why do you say that?" the answers again reveal substantial racial differences. Fully 71.4% (N=65) of the White women and only 51% (N=50) of Black women thought their pay was adequate. Jamie Larson, a White branch head in the public library system, expressed a common sentiment when she said: "I am making three times as much as I started out at nine years ago and I think that is pretty good. I hear a lot about people not getting enough money for what they do, but I am very satisfied."

In contrast, 48.9% (N=48) of the Black women and 28.6% (N=26) of the White women indicated that they were not adequately compensated relative to their co-workers. Even though the question only asked them to compare their situations with their co-workers, seventeen Black women and nine White women added that they and their co-workers were all underpaid.5

Twenty-six Black women and twelve White women spoke of a variety of unfair compensation practices such as: inconsistent pay practices, and failure to be compensated for things like additional schooling, extra effort, more work, longevity, experience, and competency. For example, Wilma Davidson, an African American information analyst working in City Government, was not rewarded for her additional schooling. She remarked: "I think if you make an extra effort to go to graduate school, that you should be compensated. Not everyone here has a masters degree."

Finally, five Black women and four White women specifically mentioned race and/or sex discrimination as an issue in compensation. Karen Williamson, a

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5In the population at large as well as in our sample, women in male-dominated occupations (X= $32,015) earned more than women in female-dominated occupations (X=$23,420). However, there were no differences between these groups in responses to this question, probably because the question asked respondents to compare their salaries with their co-workers.
bank branch manager, commented: "I really believe that men make more. I think overall, that Whites make more." Michele Addison, a White woman attorney in the public defenders office was concerned about her own salary and the treatment of women and Black people in her office. She remarked:

I am the highest paid non-white male in the office and I make $10,000 less than a [White] man who started two years after me. There is a large discrepancy due in part to past discrimination that has not been rectified. There was a change in the salary schedule right about the time when more Blacks and women were being hired. And that is partly responsible for the disparity. And Blacks and women do not stay long. There is a large turnover as a result of pay differences.

Some women, like Eleanor Hillerman, a White social worker, discussed structural problems with pay. Eleanor noted: "There are a couple of people who have been there a year who are making the same salary (as me) and I've been here five years. We've got 'compression' real bad."

A substantial minority, 40% of the sample, indicated that they were not adequately compensated relative to their co-workers. This suggests a rather pervasive feeling of inadequate compensation in the professional-managerial women's workforce. But it is also clear that the Black women were significantly more likely to experience dissatisfaction with their pay than their White counterparts. The Black and White women in this study were the same ages, worked in the same occupations, in the same industrial sectors, earned the same average wages, had the same levels of education, and came from the same class backgrounds. Yet, Black women were more likely to feel overqualified and undercompensated--a perception which can reflect both greater sensitivity to
inequality among Black women and also a greater likelihood that they are located in less remunerative sections of the same workplaces.

*Promotion Opportunities.* As noted in their discussions of racism and sexism in the workplace, the most common concern expressed was not about salary, although there is considerable discontent with salaries. Rather women most often spoke about restrictions on promotions and career advancement possibilities. We asked directly about this area: "Do you think your chances for promotion or advancement in your workplace truly reflect your talents or abilities?" And then we asked, "Why do you say that?"

Unlike the other areas, White women were equally likely to express discontent with advancement opportunities as Black women. About promotions, White women expressed their highest levels of discontent. About one-half of both White women (52.6%, N=50) and Black women (55.1%, N=54) felt their chances were not based on ability or talent. Furthermore, both Black and White women expressed similar reasons for their beliefs in the fairness or unfairness of the promotion possibilities in their workplaces—the single exception being that eight Black women identified racism as affecting their chances. In this light, it is interesting to note that none of the White women mentioned reverse race discrimination as *limiting their promotion opportunities*—even those who previously mentioned reverse racism in their workplaces.

Forty-seven percent of the White women and 44.9% of the Black women felt their chances for promotion were fair. When asked to elaborate, the women referred to the fairness of policies; to their beliefs in their own abilities and talents; to statements that they had the support of their supervisors (often in the form of positive evaluations); and for some, to the fact that they had already been promoted or advanced.
On the other hand, there were 54 Black women and 50 White women who did not think that their chances for promotion or advancement reflected their talents or abilities. Upon elaboration, 20 Black women and 17 White women indicated that ability was not the deciding factor, instead who you knew and the internal politics of the firm or agency were primary. For example, Josephine Franklin, a Black public school teacher, talked about what she saw as key for advancement in her system: "You can be the best and never get to do a supervisor's job because you're not married to the right person or your not anybody's wife. First of all, you're not anybody's wife. They prefer settled people over single people."

Black and White women also acknowledged the need to be "in" with a small circle to gain promotions. Cassandra Adams, a Black psychiatric social worker working in a private hospital, acknowledged that there were few opportunities for advancement, "unless you were very familiar with the people who run the organization. You have to have a personal relationship with them. They do not tell you that, but that's the ways it is."

Eight Black women indicated that racism was a primary barrier to their advancement. For example, while she was clearly on a social work career ladder and currently the director of a unit in a hospital, Cheryl Waddell did not think she could move very far. She noted, "I think certain individuals get type-cast and it would be very difficult for a Black to move into a vice presidency [in the hospital] in my lifetime." Her comments echo a common theme in research on women and minorities in management, which suggests that membership in a historically disadvantaged group works against individuals when supervisors, co-workers, and subordinates view such membership as incongruent with holding key management positions (Bell et al. 1993; Morrison and Von Glinow 1990).
Karen Williamson talked about the slow progress of Black people involved in banking. Currently a branch manager, she spent six years as an assistant manager. She remarked:

We [African Americans] have to be "super people" to get the recognition that other people get just by association. I think I had to do some super things to get this position as branch manager and I've only been here four months. I was under the impression that I would not get promoted until I got my degree [MBA]. Whereas there are [White] people here in management positions and who are branch managers that do not have their degrees. They may have experience, but they do not have the degree.

Sexist practices were also explicitly referenced by one Black women and three White women. Myra Jackson, a White woman currently in management, noted the sexism in the banking industry: "I think the banking industry has a very tight "good ole' boy" club atmosphere that's very difficult to break into. I don't think I'd get promoted any higher than I am at State Bank. I think I'd have to go outside the bank [for advancement]." Rigid corporate structures are often cited by women and minorities as reasons for relocating to other firms or starting their own businesses (Morrison and Von Glinow 1990).

Twenty-one Black women and 26 White women in both male and female dominated occupations indicated that their mobility was blocked by systemic/structural obstacles. For example, some noted that their location in a branch office of a national firm worked to their disadvantage, since few people from the Memphis office were promoted. Others said management employed inflexible criteria, such as hours of additional education or scores on tests that determined promotions, regardless of any individual's ability to do the job.
Structural arguments also included the inability of a company to develop career tracks for employees. For example, Phyllis Tyler, a White respondent employed as a computer systems analyst, was having trouble moving up within her firm. She indicated that at her company, upper level managers failed to assess skills and consider internal advancement. Phyllis has even talked with the personnel manager about the issue. She said: "Unfortunately the company I work for tends to put you in a nice slot and leaves you there. They don't necessarily have a fast track or a program to keep track of the skills and abilities of the people that work for them." Phyllis' management skills were not seen as transferable to another division of the company, so she is expected to remain in her slot.

Sometimes, it is hard to identify where structural reasons end and individual discrimination begins. Etta Washington, a Black woman professor in a community college, said: "Promotions are given here based on longevity or number of years you have been on the job as opposed to your credentials or your performance as such." She thought there were "racial overtones" to the decisions because White men and women have been in the occupations longer and are therefore more likely to get promoted.

**CAREER GOALS, FUTURE PLANS**

Having explored their perceptions of obstacles and opportunities in the workplace, we sought to understand what the women might plan to do in the future. As we have seen, the opportunity to advance is central to the thinking of professional managerial women, and planning for one's career is expected. Assessing career plans can also give us a sense of the behavioral consequences of differing experiences of Black and White women in the workplace as well as how they might choose to deal differently with the same experiences. What women do
when they see opportunities for advancement is quite different from what they do otherwise.

We asked: "What career goals do you currently have for yourself?" The responses confirm that this is a group of women with a long term commitment to employment and many women had advancement on their agendas (See Table 1). Roughly equal percentages of Black and White women (57% and 51.5%, respectively) were currently seeking a new job. About one-fourth of each racial group voiced an interest in securing a promotion and/or advancement in their same agency, firm or company, as their current career goal. Nancy Fitzgerald, a White women who is a training specialist gave a typical response: "I want to be training director at 40, then at 45 to 48, I'd like to be vice president of the human resource area. At 55, I want to retire and go into business for myself or go into education and do something part time."

Some Black women also voiced such sentiments. Cheryl Waddell, who was directing a social work division in a hospital, anticipated moving up in hospital or public administration. These are women who were more likely to see the opportunity structure as open or already had evidence that they were on an appropriate career track.

Eighteen percent of the Black and 15.5% of the White women planned to change employers. A few mentioned relocating to a new city or finding a position which had greater flexibility or was more challenging. An additional 15% of the Black women and 11.3% of the White women wanted to be self-employed. This is a common response on the part of women and racial minorities in management, where many desire self-employment as a reaction to negative experiences in their work settings (Morrison and Von Glinow 1990).

Some of the women were considering alternative careers, especially in the service area. Kimberly Joyner, a Black woman employed as a program director of
a social service agency, wanted to get a masters and doctorate and then become self-employed to consult and develop curricula in the same field.

There is a strong racial difference in the number of women interested in continuing their education or training to improve their employment prospects. Even though there were no differences in the number of Black and White women with advanced degrees, Black women were two and one-half times as likely to plan to continue their education as White women. Such plans were common for women in education, teachers and counselors, but also in social services, and in business.

Donna Oliver, a Black woman employed as a day care center director, was typical of many of the Black women. She noted: "Right now I am attending Regional University and I'm trying to get a degree in management. I'm planning on switching over to some type of business profession." Women like Donna did not think that they could make the move to the careers they had in mind without additional educational credentials.

Three times as many White (34%) as Black women (12%) were content with their current positions. Connie Baxter, a White woman, said "I want to teach for 20 to 25 years and then retire." Debbie Armstrong, another White respondent, was also content with her position as an administrator in a public school system. She said, "I'm pretty satisfied right now to stay where I am. I might have some aspirations in five years, but no immediate ones."

On the whole, these women held strong mobility aspirations and expectations. They had well-defined plans for advancement even in the face of structural obstacles. For Black women, those plans more often included further education, for White women they more often involved staying put in the current job. For both, their current contexts clearly shaped their future plans.
CONCLUSIONS

The women in this study have much in common, they are full-time professionals and managers who display strong commitment to their careers. They share workplaces, occupations, credentials, experience, age, industrial locations, and even class backgrounds. These many similarities form the backdrop against which we can more clearly assess the ways that race shapes professional-managerial women's work experiences.

The majority of White women (56%) and a much greater proportion of Black women (74%) believed that women are subject to differential treatment in their workplaces. When asked about the treatment of Black people, a large majority of Black women perceived differential treatment, while White women's perceptions of discriminatory treatment declined precipitously. The vast majority of White women perceived no discrimination in a stance that affirms the pervasive extent of a color-blind ideology, and a significant minority (about 15%) felt that Black people were advantaged and Whites disadvantaged in their workplaces. Only about 30% of White women saw Black people as disadvantaged in their workplaces. The range of perceptions of racism among White women indicates both potential obstacles for their Black co-workers and the potential for White women to work in coalitions with Black colleagues against racial injustice in the workplace. It is only in comparative studies which document the meaning of race to White and Black women where we can begin to assess the foundation for such coalitions.

Both Black and White women were far more likely to identify group than personal disadvantage, affirming Crosby's (1993) contention that people deny personal disadvantage even when they know it affects their group. Still, 42% of the Black and 25% of the White women identified personal experiences of discriminatory treatment. When speaking of the types of discrimination they
faced, whether group or individual, the women repeated common themes. Lack of promotional opportunities, treatment based on stereotypes and having to work harder and to "prove" themselves were most often cited, while salary differentials were less often mentioned.

Lack of promotion opportunities and lack of fairness in the process was the issue that united the Black and White women, and where they expressed their greatest discontent. Over one-half of both groups felt their promotion chances were not related to their talents or abilities. This is particularly significant for these women who are in relatively early career stages (ages 25-40) and like most professional people, they entered careers where upward mobility is expected. Blocked mobility could become increasingly problematic as these women enter mid-career stages.

Differential experiences of unfair treatment relate to different career plans for Black and White women. Although significant numbers of Black and White women planned to leave their current jobs, Black women were much more likely to be planning additional education to get ahead, a process which may only partly resolve their dilemma since the returns they receive to education are less than White men or women.

This study reveals that Black women experience more and different forms of discriminatory treatment in the workplace as well as some of the same forms that White women face. Blocked mobility, the sense that merit doesn't matter, and continuous struggles against controlling images of Black and White women are critical elements in the personal experience of discrimination and in shaping women's immediate career plans. Leaving their current employer and pursuing further education are individual career strategies which may obviate individuals' immediate needs but cannot alter the structure of the race gender system that is producing the blocked opportunities for them. Collective actions are critical to
system change and the color-blind perspective of most White women may represent the most significant deterrent to those actions. Simply noting the structural similarities in Black and White women's positions relative to White men will not itself overcome the different ways these barriers are experienced and interpreted by Black and White women. Our data suggest that effective coalition building may also require increased awareness of racial discrimination among White women.

REFERENCES


**Table 1.** Perceptions of Treatment, Opportunities, Rewards and Career Goals by Race.

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<td>* No</td>
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<td>28.6% (26)</td>
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<td>52.6% (50)</td>
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7. Current career goals

- Seeks new job through:
  -- promotion: 24.0% (24) vs. 24.7% (24)
  -- new employer: 18.0% (18) vs. 15.5% (15)
  -- self-employment: 15.0% (15) vs. 11.3% (11)

- Continued education/training: 20.0% (20) vs. 8.2% (8)

- Remain in current job: 12.0% (12) vs. 34.0% (33)

- No career goals, unsure: 11.0% (11) vs. 6.2% (6)