# The Contemporary United States Workplace: An Analysis of Racial Segregation Perceptions

**Richard Lewis Jr., Joanne Ford-Robertson, Chandler Greenfield**

University of Texas at San Antonio, San Antonio, TX, USA
Email: richardlewis12@sbcglobal.net

## Abstract

This study examines the perceptions of those employed regarding racial segregation in the contemporary American workplace. General Social Survey (GSS) information collected in 2016 was used to focus on perceptions of individuals who are currently working. A variety of variables including age, gender, race, educational attainment, personal income, and work status were utilized as control variables. Conflict theory, in conjunction with race relations theory, was applied for framing the dynamics between the independent variables and workplace racial segregation. Four research hypotheses were developed and examined. It was found that race was the strongest predictor of variations in perception of racial segregation in the workplace. Black employees were five time more likely to perceive workplace racial segregation in comparison to white employees. None of the other independent variables impacted the perceptions of black respondent. Three of the research hypotheses were supported by the research findings.

## Subject Areas

Politics, Sociology

## Keywords

Institutional Racial Discrimination, Differential Treatment, Inequality, Implicit Racism, Organizational Barriers to Equality, Racial Groups, Workplace Racial Composition

## 1. Introduction

Since the inception of the United States, racial segregation has been an integral part of American culture and society. Racial groups have been separated, to varying degrees, from each other throughout American history both socially and

spatially. From 1787 through 1865, de jure segregation separated blacks and whites. This formal racial segregation was reinstituted after Reconstruction in 1877 and remained legally supported until 1954. The Brown versus the Board of Topeka, Kansas Supreme Court decision eliminated segregation by law. As a result of this important court case, racial segregation evolved into one based on housing and spatial patterns. This is often characterized as de facto segregation [1].[1]

Contemporary American society has this pervasive notion that racial equality has been achieved in the United States. Federal government programs aimed at ensuring equal access are under political attack. This has become even more problematic under the Trump presidency. De facto racial segregation patterns in the workplace heavily influenced by educational attainment disparity represent serious barriers to racial equality.

This research effort explores the perceptions of those employed regarding racial segregation in the contemporary American workplace. Survey information collected in 2016 by the General Social Survey (GSS) was used to focus on perceptions of individuals who were currently working. A variety of variables including age, gender, race, educational attainment, personal income, and work status were utilized as control variables. Conflict theory, in conjunction with race relations theory, was applied for framing the dynamics between the independent variables and workplace racial segregation.

## 2. Literature Review

Throughout United States history, physical separation of races, referred to as racial segregation, was one of the most severe forms of discrimination experienced by Black Americans. From the establishment of racial slavery in Colonial America through the legal ending of Jim Crow America in 1954, residential segregation based on race bolstered other forms of racial discrimination in societal institutions such as the economy, religion, education, and government [2]. Although the workforce in the United States has become more racially diverse since the 1960's, racial segregation in the workplace continues. Studies which examined racial segregation determined that residential segregation is linked to educational inequality. Public school attendance is predicated upon housing patterns. In turn, differential job opportunities and occupational segregation occur, in large part, because of educational inequalities [3].

Historically, the Federal government played a major role in minimizing the impact of race discrimination in the workplace. For instance, it desegregated the military in 1948 using a series of executive orders aimed at eliminating discrimination in military units. This was quickly followed in the 1950's and 1960's by implementing similar executive actions minimizing employment barriers in Federal, state, and municipal organizations. Racial minorities historically encountered differential treatment resulting in restricted participation and position

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[1]The terms black and African American are used interchangeably in this research effort.

segregation in these organizations. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 along with the establishment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) supported earlier executive orders and focused on eliminating institutional practices which created differential treatment and segregation for a wide range of social groups within the Federal government. As a result, these initiatives provided for other organizations (government and non-government) a template for addressing differential treatment in the workplace. It should be noted that the aim of the legislation and executive orders was to allow more equitable entrance into the workplace across a number of social dimensions. However, changing the power distribution, resources among groups, and ending workplace racial segregation were not objectives related to equal access opportunities [4].

The study of workplace racial segregation begins with looking at residential or spatial dimension. Rothstein [2] argues that racial housing segregation was encouraged and supported by the Federal government. It continues to play a strong role in the establishment and maintenance of racial inequality in the United States. Current research shows that racial segregation has increased across urban areas [5]. Concomitant issues such as violent crime were found to be related to residential segregation. These violent crime rates are centralized in communities with poverty, ethnic isolation and institutional decay. Additionally, the percentage of people living in extremely poor conditions had risen from 15% to 34% from 1970 to 2012 respectively [6]. The racial segregation of space tends to be related to racial inequalities associated with educational attainment, occupational skills, and job market placement. Some of the research indicates that workplace racial segregation is linked to differences in educational attainment and skill acquisition. Moreover, contrasting the wage differences between black and white employees can be explained by differential educational attainment [5].

The differential availability of housing tends to result in de facto racial segregation in metropolitan areas. This may be attributed to generational predisposing, where the poor quality of education in a low-income area will inhibit a child's abilities and skills. Therefore, family structure and school systems influence a child's educational attainment. Adults with higher education tend to have a more vested interest in their child's own education and schooling environment, which in turn enhances the quality of education locally. Urban developers may cater to more affluent families by building subdivisions with better access to higher quality amenities, such as nicer schools and safer neighborhoods. Indirectly, this contributes to continued racial and social class segregation. As a result, it becomes much more difficult for poorer families to break out of a cycle of poverty [6].

Measures of cognitive skills and academic performance have been used to assess neighborhoods. The findings were that living in poor neighborhoods resulted in substantial declines in reading and language skills. Violence in African American children's environments had a direct negative influence on tests of reading, language, and problem solving by more than a third. Exposure to near-

by homicides impacted children's vocabulary assessments as well as impulse control and attention [6].

Workplace racial segregation is influenced by both race distribution difference within occupational categories and between occupational categories. Typically, Federal and state government approaches for reducing segregation focused on racial disparities *within occupational categories*. Efforts, such as Affirmative Action policies, were aimed at minimizing disparities over a prescribed time-period. These have a positive impact on racial distribution within occupational categories from the late 1960's through the middle 1980's. Addressing racial participation *between occupational categories* has been more problematic. Racial minority individuals continue to be over-represented in lower, less professional occupations in comparison to their white counterparts [7].

Segregation in the workplace appears to be influenced by both the employee's educational attainment and racial background. Several studies suggest that employment organizations separate workers by skill. In the United States labor market, position job skills are often strongly correlated with race. Job segregation, based on educational attainment, was found both across racial groups as well as within racial groups. This supports the fact that race is not the only determinant regarding workplace separation. Educational attainment is another important factor related to racial segregation in the workplace. Hellerstein and Neumark [5] found that work skills were determined by educational attainment and differences in educational attainment between blacks and white led to wage gaps in the economy.

The current composition of the United States workforce seems to support the prior discussion of racial segregation in the workplace. As of 2016, roughly 78% of the workforce was white (including Hispanic and non-Hispanic). Hispanics (across all racial categories) were responsible for 17% of the workforce. Asian Americans comprised approximately 6% of the workforce and blacks were 6% [8].

## 3. Theoretical Approach and Research Hypothesis Development

The sociological approach from a conflict theoretical perspective can be employed for understanding the social dynamics impacting racial segregation in the contemporary workplace. Conflict theory provides a foundation for the development of a conceptual race relations framework [9]. Functional conflict as presented by Coser [9] makes four assumptions concerning society. One suggests that society is comprised of components or parts. Secondly, these are interrelated and influence each other. Thirdly, a change in one component causes change in another component. Lastly, these parts often display conflict, instability, and social change. Conflict is not inherently dysfunctional but can be integrative with a potential for improving the adjustment of society. Therefore, social conflict is explained through the manifest and latent interests of loosely-formed groups [10]. These loosely-formed groups can be extrapolated to include socially con-

structed groups such as social class, ethnic group, or race.

## 3.1. Establishing Dominant and Subordinate Groups

The ability to assign individuals to a group is a critical factor for creating social inequality. Social attributes, either physically tangible or socially-created, can be used to determine group membership. Within society there must be agreement regarding these differences and the importance associated with them. As a result, group membership creates a social perception of an in-group versus an out-group orientation between people [11]. Social attributes are major components through which individual as well as group interactions occur. Access to power, authority, and resources is differential.

Relations between different social groups begin with *social differentiation*. It is the distance or separation between groups in a society as well as the degree of internal separation within organizations [11]. This is a fundamental step which establishes boundaries between groups of individuals. Therefore, social differentiation is a process whereby social units are horizontally separated according to socially defined criteria. It is important to note that no substantial social meanings are assigned to the groups created based on the socially defined criteria. Using race as an example, a socially defined criterion is established for categorizing different groupings of individuals based on social definitions of skin color. Groups are identified ranging from lighter to darker skinned individuals. No social meanings are assigned to the social distinctions made between groups.

Once social meanings are assigned to the criteria, such as whites are more intelligent than blacks or blacks are physically superior to whites and better suited for labor occupations, a critical conceptual movement is made from differentiation to ranking. *Social ranking* is a process where groups are vertically arranged based on the assignment of meaning to group distinctions. The group at the top of the vertical arrangement is considered more valuable than those located below. Social differentiation is a prerequisite for ranking. Social ranking represents the initial development of stratified relationships between groups based on differential access to social power [11].

Social differentiation and ranking are the underpinnings for viewing inter-group relations. For example, racial groups can be horizontally separated based on physical appearance. In the abstract, the social perception of physical appearance distinctions (largely skin-color) mean very little. Van den Berghe [12] argues when differences are given moral or social value, distinctions become important for social ranking groups of individuals. Once meanings are assigned to social distinctions, groups become unequal and eventually this inequality becomes institutionalized within society. This process is known as *social stratification*. Institutionalized inequality creates differential access between groups with respect to economic, educational, political, and social opportunities.

## 3.2. Conceptual Framework

The inequality that precipitates from social differentiation and ranking must be

accomplished through a legitimization process. Members of both the dominant group and the subordinate group participate in a process that rationalizes the existence of racial inequality. A conceptual framework is suggested to demonstrate how various concepts impact the legitimization of inequality.

The attitudinal component is initially formed in support of racial inequality and this is illustrated in **Figure 1**. Ethnocentrism, a key conceptual aspect of the attitudinal component, represents the way an individual interprets situations he/she encounters. Individuals and the groups they represent tend to view themselves as different from others and *in-group* and *out-group* categorizations emerge. The meanings placed on physical characteristics are shaped by ethnocentrism. Geschwender [13] emphasizes that inequality between blacks and whites was framed by the initial contact Europeans had with Western Africans. Being technologically advanced, Europeans attributed their superiority to a blend of Biblical interpretation and economic greed. Racism and prejudice are predictable by-products of ethnocentrism.

Once a dominant-subordinate relationship is formed in a society, racism is used to legitimate and rationalize it. Racism can be defined as "any set of beliefs that organic, genetically transmitted differences (real or imagined) between groups are intrinsically associated with the presence or the absence of certain socially relevant abilities or characteristics" [13]. Racism culturally sanctions the dominant group occupation of important positions in society. This contributes to the social power associated with dominant group members. As a belief system, racism spawns two other components: prejudice and stereotypes.

Prejudice is comprised of attitudes that a person has concerning members of another group. It entails an unfavorable attitude toward people because they are members of a particular racial or ethnic group. Prejudice is influenced by cultural transmission, ethnocentrism, and racism. Prejudice represents the end result of a socialization process wherein racism provides beliefs about subordinate groups in society. Racism is a belief system while prejudice is an attitude at the individual level.

Stereotyping often accompanies prejudice. These over-generalized pictures of
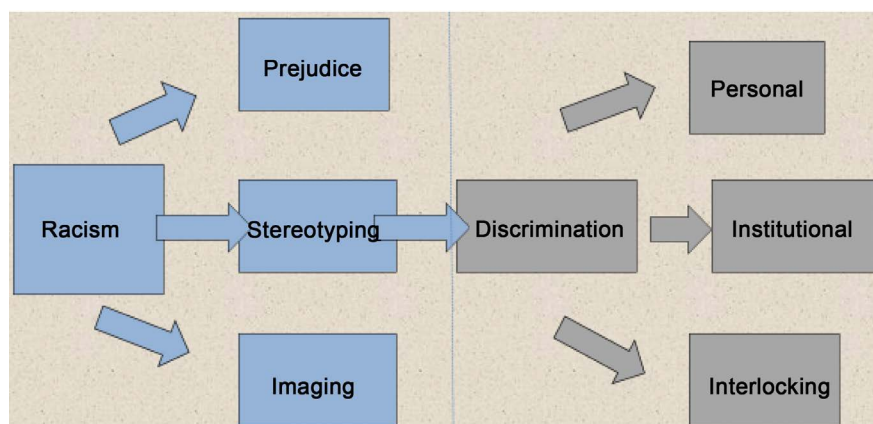


**Figure 1.** Components of contemporary intergroup relations in the United States.

members of a rival racial group provide images that assist in legitimizing negative attitudes and subsequent differential behavior. Racism, prejudice, and stereotyping together form the attitudinal component that rationalizes the use of discriminatory behavior for the maintenance of inequality.

The behavioral component of the conceptual framework, as presented in Figure 1, is composed of three types of discrimination: personal, institutional, and interlocking. Discrimination refers to actions or methods used by members of the dominant group that differentially affect members of the subordinate group. Personal discrimination refers to differential treatment by an individual against members of a subordinate group [14]. This can be extended to include any injurious or differential treatment motivated by racial group membership. Therefore, anyone can exhibit individual discrimination irrespective of group membership.

Institutional discrimination plays a critical role in differential distributional patterns between groups of people within organizations. Broadly, institutional discrimination refers to organizational policies, guidelines, or actions that adversely affect racial minorities. Institutional discrimination can be conceptually separated into two types: intentional and unintentional.

Intentional institutional discrimination refers to organizational policies, actions, or guidelines that are intentionally designed to adversely affect racial minorities. This definition is a derivative of one offered by Feagin & Feagin [14], who termed it "direct institutional discrimination" and described it as "socially prescribed actions that, by design, have a differential and adverse impact on members of subordinate groups". Jim Crow America is replete with examples of this type of discrimination to include racially separate washrooms, water fountains, public schools and transportation. A system of racial etiquette rationalized the racism, prejudice, and stereotyping which supported the differential institutional behavior.

Unintentional institutional discrimination refers to organizational policies, actions, or guidelines that adversely affect racial minorities although they were not designed to harm. Feagin [14] presents a similar term called "indirect institutional discrimination" and it refers to "actions that have a differential impact on members of subordinate groups even though they may not be intended to harm". Unintentional institutional discrimination is often the barrier remaining after society has removed intentional forms of discrimination [11].

Institutional discrimination is directly and indirectly influenced by racism, prejudicial attitudes and profit motives stemming from racism. This leads to various organizations being interlocked and influencing each other. Therefore, discrimination occurring in one organization impacts activities in other organizations [14]. For instance, discrimination that creates educational attainment inequality influences job placement in economic organizations. Institutional discrimination is complex and cumulative. It is linked to the cultural value climate in society. The assumption in American society is that a meritocracy exists,

and this is guided by the cultural value climate. For instance, standardized testing for college entrance is seen by many decision-makers as a fair, colorblind screening approach. But standardized testing represents unintentional institutional discrimination reflected by racially segregated school districts at the secondary education level. Differential placement in the economic sector is result of discrimination in the educational system.

Institutional discrimination reflects the removal of attitudes from the behavior. The impersonal nature of this type of discrimination separates the individual perpetrator from the racial ideas and attitudes that initially created the institutional policy [15]. The conceptual framework indicates that discriminatory behavior may exist in society regardless of the presence or absence of racial attitudes. Over time, the elimination of racial attitudes may not eliminate all forms of discrimination, especially unintentional institutional discrimination. There tends to be a natural tension between attitudes and behaviors. The existence of unintentional institutional discrimination (*i.e.*, housing segregation, school segregation, and workplace segregation) may in fact influence people's perceptions of racial differences. This could result in an increase in negative racial imaging and continued racial segregation.

Using institutional discrimination as a frame of reference, indicators of differential treatment based on race can be established. If nothing were impacting workplace composition, both black and white employees should be found in work settings that are composed mostly of white individuals. This follows the rationale that the majority of those in the workforce are white. From the discussion of the conceptual framework and how attitudinal and behavior elements impact structural dynamics between racial groupings, the following research hypotheses were delineated.

$H_1$: White employees are more likely to be found in work settings comprised of mostlywhite employees.

$H_2$: Black employees are more likely to be found in work settings comprised of racially diverse employees.

$H_3$: White employees, with higher educational attainment, are more likely to be found in work settings comprised of mostly white employees in comparison to higher educated black employees.

$H_4$: White employees, with higher personal income, are more likely to be found in work settings comprised of mostly white employees in comparison to higher educated black employees.

## 4. Methods

The data used to examine perceptions of racial inequality in the workplace were obtained from the General Social Survey 2016 file. These data provide a great deal of information on core demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal questions including those related to racial inequality [16]. Statistical analyses were conducted using the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

This study employed multiple logistic regression analysis utilizing a number of research variables. The sociological theory discussed earlier provided the foundation for the statistical analysis.

*Dependent Variables.* The database included one variable related to perceptions of racial segregation in the workplace. It was categorical and used as the dependent variable. How respondents were queried is displayed below.

Question. "Which best characterizes your current workplace?"

The response categories are 1 = All white, 2 = Mostly white, 3 = Half white and half black, 4 = Mostly black, 5 = All black. To conduct binary logistic regression, this variable was recoded into 0 = Mostly white and 1 = Not mostly white.

*Independent Variables.* The analysis considered six possible predictors to one's attitudes regarding racial segregation in the workplace. These include race, gender, labor force status, age, highest years of formal education completed, and annual personal income.

Three multiple binary logistic regression models, guided by theoretical underpinnings, were created for responses linked to workplace racial segregation. Three independent variables were recoded into dummy variables as well. Race was transformed into 0 = white and 1 = black, gender dummied into 0 = men and 1 = women, and labor force status was dummied into 0 = working full-time and 1 = working part-time. Participants not working were not included in the analysis.

The other three independent variables were transformed into ordinal level variables. Age became four categories; 18 - 36 years, 37 - 51 years, 52 - 70 years, and 71 - 88 years. Educational attainment was changed into four categories; less than high school, high school diploma/some college, bachelor's degree, and graduate/professional degree. Lastly, annual personal income was collapsed into five categories; less than $25,000, $25,000 - 49,999, $50,000 - 74,999, $75,000 - 109,999, and $110,000 and more.

## 5. Study Findings

A descriptive summary of the sample provides incredible insight into the individuals who are currently participating in the American workforce. For race and sex, about 82% of the sample was white and 18% black. Approximately 53% of the respondents were female. The average age of the respondent was 44 years with about 66% between the ages of 18 and 51 years of age.

The average educational attainment was 14 years of formal schooling with approximately 58% with at least a high school diploma and some college credits. Another 35% had college degrees. The average annual personal income was about $25,700. Approximately two-thirds earned less than $50,000. About 81% were currently working full-time. The majority indicated that the workplace was comprised mostly of white colleagues (see Table 1).

Perceptions of work environment composition indicated that the contemporary workplace tends to be racially segregated. Although the company or organization may have blacks and whites as employees, they were found to be generally

Table 1. Summary of study predictor variables associated with perceptions of racial segregation in the workplace, 2016.

| Variables | Mean | Standard Deviation | Percent | Number |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Race** | | | | |
| White | | | 81.7 | 804 |
| Black | | | 18.3 | 180 |
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Male | | | 47.3 | 514 |
| Female | | | 52.7 | 572 |
| **Labor Force Status** | | | | |
| Working Full-Time | | | 80.7 | 852 |
| Working Part-Time | | | 19.3 | 204 |
| **Age** | 43.9 | 13.83 | | 1081 |
| 18 - 36 years | | | 35.2 | 380 |
| 37 - 51 years | | | 31.3 | 338 |
| 52 - 70 years | | | 31.4 | 341 |
| 71 - 88 years | | | 2.0 | 22 |
| **Educational Attainment** | 14.2 | 2.91 | | 1086 |
| Less than H.S. | | | 7.4 | 80 |
| H.S./Some College | | | 57.6 | 626 |
| Bachelor's Degree | | | 21.5 | 233 |
| Graduate Degree | | | 13.5 | 147 |
| **Personal Income** | 25,724.08 | 30,869.41 | | 925 |
| Less than $25,000 | | | 32.4 | 300 |
| $25,000 - 49,999 | | | 30.9 | 286 |
| $50,000 - 74,999 | | | 18.6 | 172 |
| $75,000 - 109,999 | | | 9.8 | 91 |
| $110,000 and More | | | 8.2 | 76 |
| **"Which Best Characterizes Your Current Workplace?"** | | | | |
| All White | | | 19.3 | 210 |
| Mostly White | | | 44.5 | 483 |
| Half White and Half Black | | | 31.3 | 340 |
| Mostly Black | | | 3.9 | 42 |
| All Black | | | 1.0 | 11 |

segregated from each other (see Table 2). The majority of white employees were located in work settings that were comprised mostly of white workers. Conversely, black employees were found in workplaces where workers were more

Table 2. Perceptions of workplace racial composition by race, 2016.

| Item | White % | Black % | Chi-Square |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Workplace Composition** | | | |
| Mostly White | 71.5 | 32.8 | 96.31*** |
| Not Mostly White | 28.5 | 67.2 | |
| **Age** | | | |
| 18 - 36 years | 33.9 | 35.0 | 9.89* |
| 37 - 51 years | 28.5 | 38.3 | |
| 52 - 70 years | 35.3 | 24.4 | |
| 71 - 88 years | 2.3 | 2.2 | |
| **Educational Attainment** | | | |
| Less than H.S. | 6.0 | 8.9 | 17.57*** |
| H.S./Some College | 56.2 | 69.4 | |
| Bachelor's Degree | 23.3 | 14.4 | |
| Graduate Degree | 14.6 | 7.2 | |
| **Personal Income** | | | |
| Less than $25,000 | 28.9 | 42.8 | 22.93*** |
| $25,000 - $49,999 | 30.6 | 35.5 | |
| $50,000 - $74,999 | 20.4 | 14.5 | |
| $75,000 - $109,999 | 11.3 | 5.3 | |
| $110,000 and more | 8.8 | 2.0 | |
| **Labor Force Status** | | | |
| Working Full-Time | 81.2 | 80.8 | 0.02 |
| Working Part-Time | 18.8 | 19.2 | |

*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$.

evenly distributed by race. More specifically, Table 2 shows that in 2016, 72% of white employees stated their workplace was mostly white while 67% of blacks said their workplace was not mostly white. Age differences between blacks and whites were discovered. Generally, blacks were younger than their white counterparts. For instance, 35% of whites were 52 - 70 years of age in comparison to 24% of blacks. With respect to educational attainment, 38% of whites had a college degree in comparison to 22% of black respondents. For personal income, the findings suggest blacks earned less money than their white counterparts. Almost 41% of whites made $50,000 or more compared to 22% of blacks. There was no difference in labor force participation.

The cross-tabulation distributions were further analyzed using simple logistic regression. For their current workplaces, the findings show that employees generally perceive a racially segregated work setting (see Table 3). For the overall workforce, employees tend to indicate they work in setting comprised mostly of white employees. However, for black employees, they are nearly five times more likely to be working in a setting where racial composition is mostly not white.

Table 3. Summary of binary logistic regression models of selected independent variables on workplace racial composition, 2016.

| Regression Models | Overall | | White | | Black | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | Exp (B) | B | Exp (B) | B | Exp (B) |
| **Bivariate Model** | | | | | | |
| Constant | −0.921*** | 0.398 | | | | |
| Race | 1.639*** | 5.150 | | | | |
| Hosmer/Lemeshow Test ($X^2$) | | | | | | |
| Nagelkerke R Square | 0.123 | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| **Multiple Variable Model** | | | | | | |
| Race | 1.657*** | 5.242 | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sex | 0.101 | 1.106 | 0.153 | 1.166 | 0.819 | 0.913 |
| Personal Income | −0.090 | 0.914 | −0.068 | 0.935 | −0.325 | 0.723 |
| Educational Attainment | −0.336** | 0.715 | −0.348** | 0.706 | −0.189 | 0.828 |
| Age | −0.030 | 0.971 | −0.049 | 0.952 | −0.125 | 0.883 |
| Work Status | −0.551** | 0.576 | −0.904** | 0.405 | 0.784 | 2.189 |
| Constant | | | 0.152 | 1.164 | 1.950** | 7.028 |
| Hosmer/Lemeshow Test ($X^2$) | 7.992$^{ns}$ | | 6.530$^{ns}$ | | 8.221$^{ns}$ | |
| Nagelkerke R Square | 0.172 | | 0.048 | | 0.078 | |

ns = not statistically significant, *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, and ***$p < 0.001$.

A multiple binary logistic regression model was created using all six independent variables. Races influence on workplace segregation perceptions remained unchanged from the simple regression model. Educational attainment and work status were also found to influence segregation perceptions. Those with higher educational attainment are 1.4 times more likely to be working in an area that is mostly white. Individuals who are part-time employees were 1.7 times more likely to work in mostly white settings. This overall model explained 17% of the variation in workplace racial composition.

The final aspect of the analysis employed race as a control variable. For whites, the constant is not statistically significant and illustrates an even distribution between the two categories of workplace racial segregation. Table 3 shows that for white respondents, educational and work status influence work place racial segregation perceptions. Whites with higher education are 1.4 times more likely to work in a mostly white work environment. Additionally, those working part-time are 2.5 times more likely to work in a mostly white work environment. This model explains only 5% of the variation in workplace racial segregation perceptions.

For blacks, the constant is statistically significant indicating that they are 7 times more likely to be found in workplaces that are not mostly white. None of

the other independent variables influence their workplace location. This model explains almost 8% of the variation in perceptions of workplace racial segregation.

## 6. Discussion and Summary

This research effort clearly demonstrated that individuals in the contemporary American workforce perceived racial segregation in their work settings. Both white and black respondents indicated the existence of racial segregation in their workplace. It should be noted that white employees comprised the majority of the United States workforce. According to the United States Census Bureau, roughly 65% of the American population is white. However, over the past three decades, racial minorities have become a larger portion of the workforce. From a statistical standpoint, if nothing impacted the racial distribution found within the workplace, every work setting would be comprised of mostly white employees and this composition would not differ between black and white employees. Our findings show that perceptions of workplace racial segregation were very apparent. Multiple variables impacted workplace racial segregation. For white employees, work status and educational attainment influenced location in the work setting. White employees, who had higher educational attainment, were found in work settings comprised mostly of other white employees. A similar pattern is found for white employees who were part-time employees. Black employees tended to be found in work settings that were more racially diverse in composition. This occurred irrespective of educational attainment, age, work status, gender, and personal income. It should be noted that although black employees comprised a smaller portion of the workforce, they were more likely to work in areas where there were fewer white employees.

These findings supported three of the research hypotheses. The statistical relationships between the variables suggested that white employees are more likely to be found in work settings comprised of mostly white employees. In addition, black employees are more likely to be found in work settings comprised of a more diverse work group. Finally, the data demonstrated that higher educated white employees tended to be work in environments that were almost exclusively composed of other white employees. Educational differences among black employees had no impact on work setting composition. Irrespective of educational attainment, blacks were typically found in workplaces which were more racially diverse. Interestingly, personal income was not a factor in workplace racial composition for either black or white employees. As are result, the hypothesis regarding the influence of personal income was not supported.

A racial separation in the workplace was apparent in the analysis of respondent perceptions. Although we refer to this separation as racial segregation, the term is relative. Unlike the Jim Crow era where there was almost total separation of the workforce into black and white groupings, this does not occur in contemporary American society. However, having the workplace composition somewhat

dichotomized into mostly white and more racially diverse indicates a level of racial segregation. The separation, through interlocking institutions, works to maintain social differences between whites and blacks.

Our findings represent indirect indicators of institutional racial discrimination. They show that racial discrimination in the workplace continues in the United States but at lower levels when compared to the mid 1900's and early 2000's. This research effort did not compare study findings directly to occurrences earlier than 2016.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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