

I. Executive Summary

In the Fall of 2006, the perceptions and experiences of people of color and white people who work in nonprofit organizations were collected through an on-line survey that was completed by 569 individuals who work for nonprofit organizations in Colorado. The survey included questions regarding perceptions of race-related discrimination and conflict in the workplace; perceptions of how well the organizations the respondents work for manage and value diversity; personal experiences with discrimination in the workplace; and job satisfaction levels.

The survey was completed for The Denver Foundation, a community foundation whose programs include the Inclusiveness Project. The Inclusiveness Project engages with Metro Denver nonprofit organizations, including funders to become more inclusive of people of color.

The research results indicate that there are statistically significant differences in how whites and nonwhites perceive that their workplaces deal with issues related to race/ethnicity and their job satisfaction levels. Further, these data show that the differences are accentuated depending on a.) One's level in the hierarchy of the organization, and, b.) The percentage of staff people at the organization who are people of color.

The findings from this study, coupled with a relative lack of data on race/ethnicity and nonprofit organizations, underscore the need for greater understanding and research on this subject, research that ultimately will help contribute to the development of a more diverse, inclusive and effective nonprofit sector.

II. Project Purpose and Research Questions

This study compares the perspectives and experiences people of color¹ and white people² who work in nonprofit organizations regarding job satisfaction levels and perceptions of race-related issues in the workplace. The research questions that guided the design of the study fall into three areas: job satisfaction, perceptions of the organizations the respondents work for regarding race and ethnicity, and the impact of other variables that impact the outcomes from the research.

¹ The term people of color includes individuals who self-identify as African American/Black, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, and/or of mixed racial background

² The term white is often used in the literature on race and ethnicity and is sometimes used interchangeably with the term Caucasian. There is no conclusive decision on a better term within the literature. However, the client prefers the term white so this paper will use the term white rather than Caucasian.

III. Methodology

The study was conducted in the Fall of 2006. A link to an on-line survey was sent to people in the nonprofit sector throughout the state of Colorado. E-mail messages with a link to the survey were sent to over 9400 individuals whose names are on the lists of major nonprofit and public sector organizations. Using an electronic variation of the snowball methodology, people who received an e-mail with a link to the survey were encouraged to forward the e-mail to others in the nonprofit sector. Once the results were compiled, they were analyzed using t-tests and frequencies. Unless otherwise noted, t-tests were conducted using a 95 percent confidence interval.

Twelve questions using a Likert scale were asked to ascertain respondents' perceptions of discrimination related to race/ethnicity as well as their perceptions of the effectiveness of the organization's proactive management of diversity. Further, five questions regarding personal experiences with discrimination were asked.

To measure job satisfaction, the Abridged Job Descriptive Index was employed. The full Job Descriptive Index (JDI) is the most frequently used and widely measured scale measuring job satisfaction). The JDI examines job satisfaction based on six scales: Work on Present Job, Pay, Opportunities for Promotion, Supervision, People on Present Job and Job in General.

IV. Response Rates and Characteristics

Five hundred and sixty-nine (569) individuals completed the survey. A majority of respondents (87 percent) were female. Most (75.3 percent) worked in nonprofit organizations with staffs of between two and fifty employees. More than half of the organizations (55.2 percent) had budgets of between \$50,000 and \$1 million, while only 3.3 percent had budgets of less than \$50,000.

The largest group of respondents was whites/Caucasians (75.6 percent). The second largest group was Hispanic/Latino (8.3 percent), and the third largest group was African American/Black (6.9 percent). The remainder, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Native American, Multi-racial, and Other, comprised the other 9.2 percent. With the exception of Hispanics/Latinos, the percentages of respondents mirrored the percentages of the racial/ethnic composition of the Colorado population within three percentage points. For example, 2.6 percent of respondents were Asian American/Pacific Islander, while 2.5 percent of Coloradoans were Asian American/Pacific Islander in 2004 (*2004 U.S. Census Data*). The greatest disparity was in

the Hispanic community where only 8.3 percent of respondents identified as Hispanic, while 19.1 percent of the Colorado population was Hispanic in 2004. However, in a 2003

report published by The Denver Foundation, nonprofit organizations in Metro Denver with budgets of over \$500,000 reported that only 12.5 percent of employees were Hispanic; thus, the discrepancy between the current research and the population somewhat mirrors the discrepancy in Hispanics in the population at-large in Colorado and those who work at large Metro Denver nonprofit organizations.³

Fifteen (15) percent of respondents indicated that their organizations had no people of color working for them.⁴ Another 28.1 percent of respondents had fewer than 10 percent people of color, while 42.4 percent had between 11 and 50 percent people of color on staff.

V. Results

Race-Related Conflicts and Discrimination

Six of the 12 likert scale questions that looked at perceptions of race-related discrimination and issues related to race in the workplace showed that people of color are significantly more likely than others to perceive there to be race-related discrimination and conflict in the workplace⁵. For example, there was a difference in the average scores of nonwhites⁶ and whites of .6 (using a five-point likert scale) ($p = .000$) when asked to agree or disagree with the statement "People of color in the organization have to work harder than white people for their contributions to be recognized," **indicating that people of color agree with the statement significantly more than white people do.**

³Pease, Katherine, *Inside Inclusiveness*, The Denver Foundation, 2003.

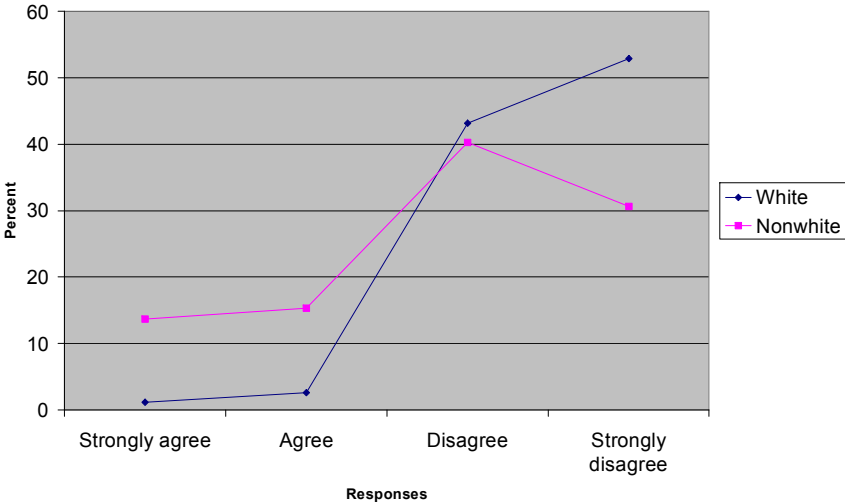
⁴ As a result of the number of individuals with no people of color working in their organizations, there were multiple "don't know" or "N/A" responses to many of the likert scale questions that solicited opinions about discrimination based on race/ethnicity.

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, p. values were calculated using a 95 percent confidence interval.

⁶ Nonwhite includes all respondents who identified as African American/Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, Latino/Hispanic, Native American, or Multi-Racial.

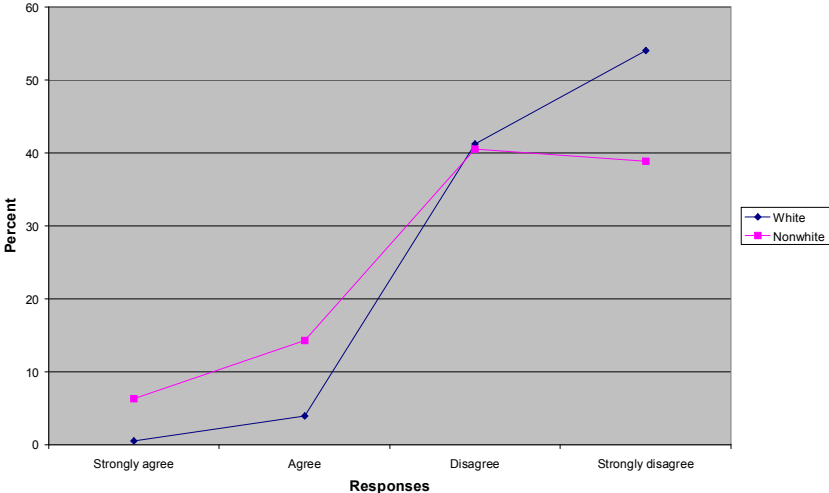
Job Satisfaction and Perceptions of Race-Related Discrimination and Conflict in Nonprofit Organizations by Katherine Pease, 2006 University of Colorado at Denver, Graduate School of Public Affairs, Capstone Project Final Paper

Chart 1: POC Have to Work Harder than Whites



When asked whether respondents had “witnessed overt discrimination on the basis of race/ethnicity in the organization,” there was a mean difference of .373 ($p = .000$) **indicating that people of color agree with the statement significantly more than white people do.**

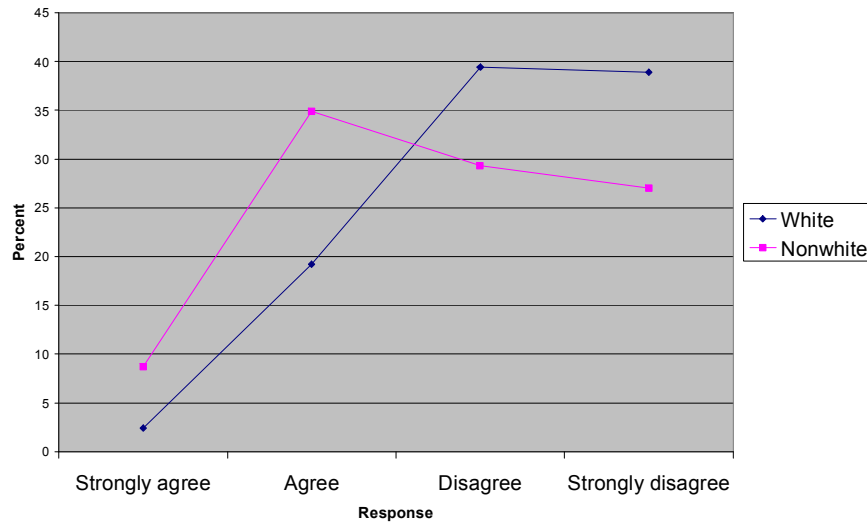
Chart 2. Witnessed Overt Discrimination on Basis of Race/Ethnicity



When asked whether they had “witnessed subtle discrimination on the basis of race/ethnicity in the organization,” the difference was higher at .403 ($p = .000$) **indicating that people of color agree with the statement significantly more than white people do.**

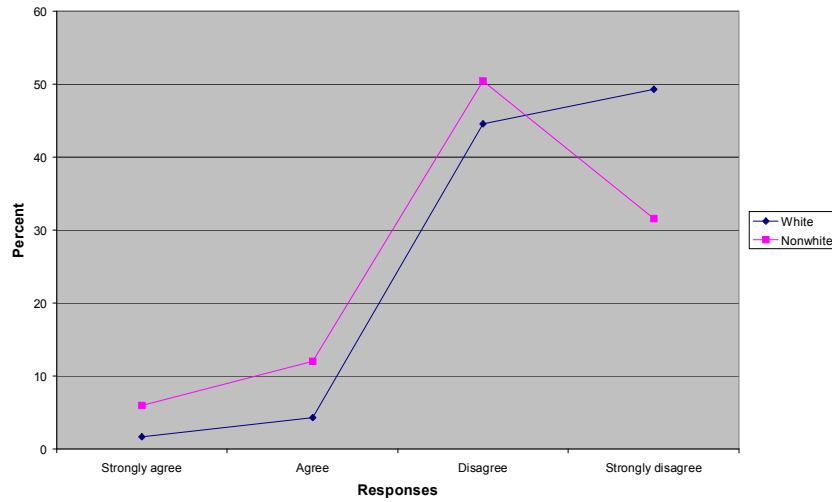
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Chart 3. Witnessed Subtle Discrimination on Basis of Race/Ethnicity



When asked whether “white people in the organization receive privileges in the organization that people of color do not receive (e.g. promotions, training opportunities, etc.),” there was a mean difference in scores of .341 ($p = .000$) **indicating that people of color agree with the statement significantly more than white people do.**

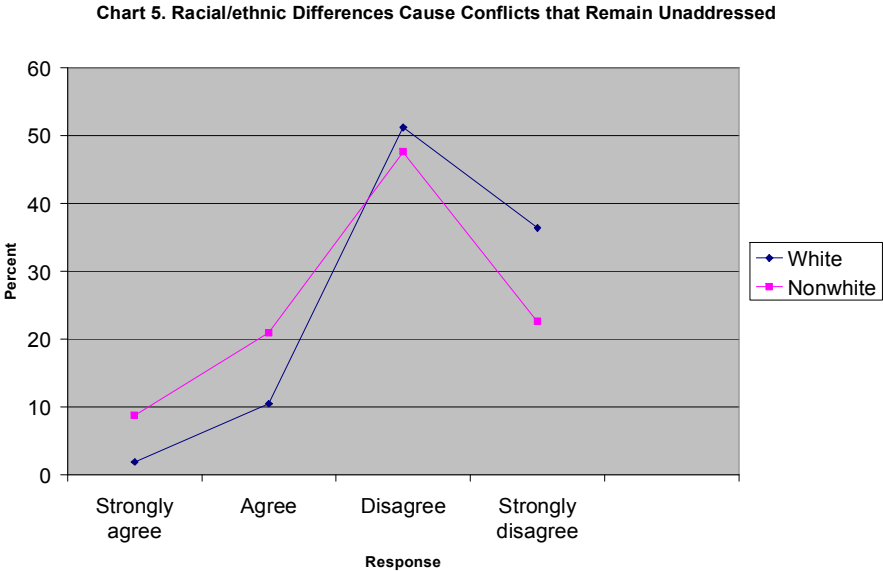
Chart 4. White People in the Organizations Receive Privileges



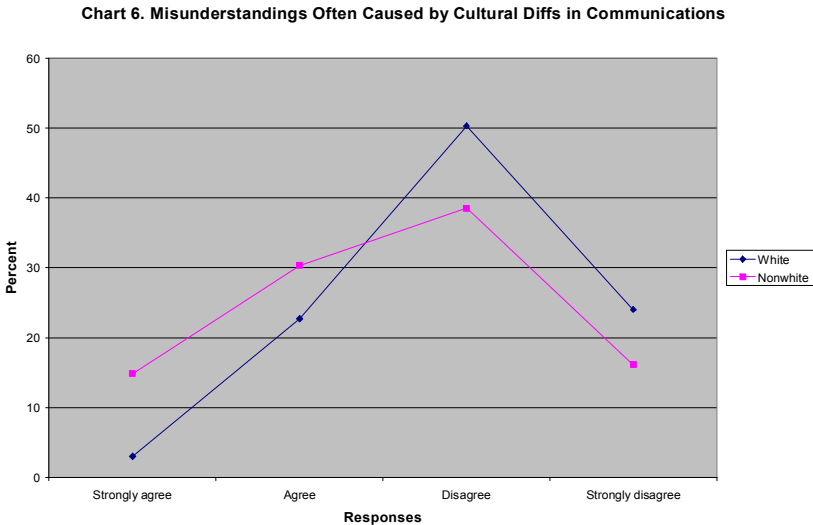
There were also significant differences between whites and people of color with regard to perceptions of race as a factor in communications and interpersonal conflicts. People of color felt that race is a bigger factor in the workplace than did whites. For instance, when asked whether “Race/ethnic differences cause conflicts that often remain unaddressed in the organization,” there was a mean difference of

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.382 (p = .000) indicating that people of color agree with the statement significantly more than white people do.



When asked whether “Misunderstandings in the organization are often caused by cultural differences in communication style,” there was a significant difference of **.387 (p = .000) indicating that people of color agree with the statement significantly more than white people do.**



RELEVANCE OF POSITION IN ORGANIZATION

Importantly, there are significant differences in perceptions of race-related conflict and discrimination, depending on one's position in the organization. Among executive directors, there are no significant differences in perceptions between whites and nonwhites. Similarly, there are no significant differences in perceptions between whites and nonwhites among support staff. However, there are significant differences between senior-level staff who are white and nonwhite, and mid-level staff who are white and non-white. For example, there is a mean difference of .847 ($p = .000$) between mid-level whites' and nonwhites' perceptions of people of color having to work harder than whites, and a mean difference of .631 ($p = .002$) in response to the same question when posed to senior-level staff. Yet, the difference between white executive staff and people of color executives is statistically insignificant (.065) ($p = .595$). This pattern showing significant differences in perceptions of conflict and discrimination between senior-level and executive-level staff is consistent in all of the six Likert-scale questions. **The pattern indicates that people of color who are senior-level or mid-level staff are significantly more likely to perceive that there is race-related conflict and discrimination as compared to their white counterparts.** The same cannot be said of executive staff and support staff.

RELEVANCE OF PERCENTAGE OF STAFF PEOPLE OF COLOR IN ORGANIZATION

The differences between whites and nonwhites regarding perceptions of race-related conflict and discrimination appear to be somewhat dependent on the percentage of people of color working within the organization; in general, **in organizations with a lower percentage of people of color on staff, the more likely it is that people of color will perceive there to be race-related conflict and discrimination as compared to their white counterparts.** (The inverse also appears to be true: when there is a large percentage of people of color, i.e. 76 – 100 percent, white people may be more likely to perceive racial/ethnic differences to be an issue of concern; however, due to small sample sizes, statistical significance cannot be established.) In organizations with fewer than ten percent staff of color, there is a mean difference of .851 ($p = .000$) between whites and nonwhites when asked whether people of color have to work harder than whites in their organization; in organizations with 11 – 25 percent staff of color, the mean difference is .872 ($p = .003$); with 26 – 50 percent staff of color, the mean difference drops to .447 ($p = .002$); and with 51 – 75 percent staff of color, the mean difference drops even more to .389 ($p = .025$). Similar patterns exist with the other five questions that examine race-related discrimination and conflict,

although statistical significance becomes more difficult to establish when the staff of color level reaches 26-50 percent or more.

Managing and Valuing Diversity

Of the five questions on the survey that examined how well respondents perceived that the organizations they work for manage and value diversity, three of the questions had significant mean differences between whites and nonwhites at the .95 confidence level (see Table 3) **indicating that white people are more likely to believe that their organizations manage and value diversity and inclusiveness to a greater extent than their counterparts do who are people of color.** The first question, “Managers in the organization set a positive example of how to effectively manage diversity and inclusiveness” had a mean difference of .20 ($p = .022$). The second, “The organization does not do enough to address various diversity and inclusiveness issues,” also had a mean difference of .20 ($p = .045$). The third, “The organization ‘practices what it preaches’ about diversity and inclusiveness issues,” had a mean difference of .18 ($p = .041$). While three of these numbers are statistically significant with a high degree (95 percent) of confidence, none of them had a mean difference of greater than .20. Thus, while these data do indicate some differences in how whites and nonwhites perceive that their organizations value and manage diversity (with whites perceiving that their organizations do a better job at managing and valuing diversity) the differences are significantly smaller than differences that exist regarding race-related discrimination and conflict.

Personal Experiences with Discrimination and Being Valued

The survey asked individuals to state whether they disagreed or agreed with the statement: “I have been discriminated against overtly in my organization because of my race/ethnicity” (see Tables 4A, 4B, and 4C). The group that identified with the statement (the lower the mean score, the more likely the group is to identify with the statement) most strongly consisted of individuals who identified as multi-racial ($N = 20$; mean = 3.00). African-Americans ($N = 33$) had a mean of 3.18, Asian Americans ($N = 14$) had a mean of 3.43, Hispanics/Latinos had a mean of 3.44, Native Americans ($N = 6$) had a mean of 3.5 and whites ($N = 408$) had a mean of 3.52. Similar response patterns were recorded for the statement “I have been discriminated against subtly in my organization because of my race/ethnicity” and the statement “the contributions I bring to the organization as a result of my racial ethnic background are valued”.

It is important to note that while there are mean differences between these different racial groups, the differences between whites and people of color, especially Asian Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and Native Americans, are quite small. This indicates that on an individual level, white people feel that they have been

discriminated against overtly and subtly to almost as great an extent as many people of color in the sample. The implication of this is that effectively managing diversity may improve how white people experience the workplace as well as improve the experiences of people of color.

Differences in Job Satisfaction

Of the six scales from the Abridged Job Descriptive Index that were used to analyze job satisfaction, three scales showed no significant difference between whites and nonwhites: Work on Present Job, Pay, and Opportunities for Promotion (see Table 5A). However, the three other scales did show significant differences between whites and nonwhites: Supervision (mean difference = 1.6, $p = .001$), People on Present Job (mean difference = 1.0, $p = .000$), and Job in General (mean difference = 1.54, $p = .008$). **This indicates that for the three scales with significant differences, white people had greater job satisfaction than people of color.**

VI. Conclusion

People of color working in nonprofit organizations in Colorado perceive that there are higher levels of race-related discrimination and conflict within their organizations than do whites; they are less likely than whites to feel that the organizations they work for effectively manage and value diversity than whites; they more frequently indicate that they have been discriminated against on the basis of their race than do whites; and their level of job satisfaction is lower in some key areas than is that of whites. These data indicate that regardless of the actual existence of discrimination, there is a significant difference in how individuals of color and white people experience race-related issues in the workplace. Accordingly, the nonprofit sector in Colorado would benefit from a more focused effort to create more inclusive organizational environments in order to improve the work experience for all of their employees.