

Shades of the past: Experiences of racial discrimination among a sample of university students in Jamaica

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Abstract

This study reports on the prevalence of race-related experiences of discrimination among a convenience sample of 147 young adult students at a public university in urban Jamaica. The overall prevalence was over 52%. Although there was no statistically significant difference between the prevalence rates for students who self-identified as Black and those who self-identified with any other racial grouping (prevalence rates of 59.29% and 41.67% respectively), self-identifying as Black was significantly associated with feeling personally discriminated against because of race, with worrying in the past year about personally experiencing racial discrimination, and with worrying in the past year about members of one's racial group experiencing racial discrimination. Findings indicated that those from the lower-middle class reported higher (84%) prevalence rates for experiencing discrimination in any of the situations described, than did those in the upper-middle class (51.55%). In addition, 96% of students in the lower-middle class felt that members of their group experienced racial discrimination compared with 70% of those from the upper-middle class. The implications for future studies on the prevalence of racial discrimination for Caribbean people in majority Black Caribbean contexts are discussed.

Keywords: discrimination, race, class, young adults, Jamaica, Caribbean

Sombras del pasado: experiencias de discriminación racial, entre una muestra de estudiantes universitarios en Jamaica

Resumen

Este estudio informa sobre la prevalencia de experiencias relacionadas con el racismo entre una muestra de conveniencia de 147 estudiantes adultos jóvenes en una universidad pública en la zona urbana de Jamaica. La prevalencia general fue de más del 52%. Aunque no hubo diferencias estadísticamente significativas entre las tasas de prevalencia para los estudiantes que se auto-identificaron como Negro y aquellos que se identificaron con él y con cualquier otro grupo racial (tasas de prevalencia de 59,29% y 41,67%, respectivamente), auto-identificarse como Negro se asoció significativamente con la sensación de ser discriminado personalmente por razones de raza, con preocuparse en los últimos años acerca de experimentar personalmente la discriminación racial, y con tener que preocuparse en el pasado año sobre los miembros del grupo racial del que experimenta la discriminación racial. Los resultados indicaron que los de la clase media-baja reportaron más alto (84%) las tasas de prevalencia para experimentar la discriminación en cualquiera de las situaciones descritas, que hizo los de la clase media-alta (51,55%). Además, el 96% de los estudiantes de la clase media-baja sintió que los miembros de su grupo experimentaron discriminación racial en comparación con el 70% de las personas de la clase media-alta. Se discuten las implicaciones para futuros estudios sobre la prevalencia de la discriminación racial de los pueblos del Caribe en contextos Negro Caribe mayoritarios.

Palabras claves: discriminación, raza, clase, adultos jóvenes, Jamaica, Caribe

"We are all socialized in a society with a cumulatively racist history." Jones, 1997, p. 416

"Among present day black populations in the Americas preoccupation with hair texture, shade of blackness, and the shape of nose and lips ... points to the continued availability of older racial meanings." Carnegie, 2002, p. 29

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Racism has been a fundamental element of the structure and organization of the modern world

(Rattansi, 2007). Does it, however, exist in supposedly post-racial societies and alleged racial democracies – particularly for those who have had no direct exposure to the overt White racism of colonial times? In today’s culturally, linguistically, and ethnically heterogeneous, post-Emancipation, post-colonial, post-Independence Caribbean countries, for example, have centuries of racial mixing guaranteed more or less color blind societies, ones in which interpersonal experiences of racial discrimination are few and far between?

While the racialization of societies throughout the Americas is examined in extensive historical and social commentary writing, social science contributions in the study of interpersonal experiences of racial discrimination within contemporary Caribbean contexts remain mostly at the conceptual level. The purpose of the present study is to build empirical scholarship in this area by providing initial descriptive data. Looking at Jamaica, a Caribbean country now 51 years post-Independence and one in which over 97% of the population is classified as Black or of partial or complete African descent, the study explores interpersonally experienced racial discrimination and whether there are racial group differences and class group differences in such experiences.

Do People Experience Racial Discrimination in “Post-Racial” Societies?

In much scholarship, an implicit assumption exists that Caribbean societies are exempt from entrenched racial inequalities because their White populations are a numeric minority. Scholars consistently note, for example, that Black people occupy positions of leadership and are visible in the power and wealth distributions of modern day Caribbean societies (e.g. Vickerman, 1999). In Caribbean contexts in which there are more numerous ethnic groups, such as Africans and East Indians, racial discrimination and racism are discussed in the context of these ethnic groups and not in terms of White racism. In majority Black Caribbean countries, Black people are largely assumed to not experience White racism because of their sheer numeric majority. If this is indeed the case, the prevalence of reported experiences of racial discrimination should likely be low.

Arguably, however, the prevalence of interpersonally experienced racial discrimination in these contexts will tend to be high – even among those who have had no direct exposure to overt White racism as in the colonial era. Three distinct reasons support such logic.

First, it is highly improbable, if not impossible to erase the deeply entrenched history of nearly 400 years of institutional racism in the form of slavery, with 50 years of post-colonial experiences. These legacies are

apparent in the high prevalence rates of interpersonally experienced racial discrimination in postcolonial contexts outside Jamaica and the broader Caribbean.

In New Zealand, for example, ethnic groups that have been faced with histories of systemic discrimination (Maori and Asian peoples) have consistently reported higher prevalence rates of racial discrimination compared to their European countrymen (Harris et al., 2012). Data from the 2002/3 and the 2006/7 New Zealand Health Surveys (NZHS) show that the prevalence of discrimination for Europeans has remained consistently low relative to ethnic minority groups in that context. Rates in 2002/3 were 27.3% for Pacific people, 28.1% for Asian, and 34.3% for Maori, while for Europeans it was 14.5%. In 2006/7, rates were again lowest for Europeans, and highest among the non-European groups (Harris et al., 2012). Similarly, in a 2002-2004 national probability sample survey of 4351 adults in South Africa, the prevalence rates of acute discrimination for African, Colored, and Indian descent persons were 7.6%, 7.4%, and 10.7% respectively – rates that were three or four times more than Whites (3.1%), with similar differences noted for experiences of chronic or everyday discrimination attributed to race (Williams et al, 2008). The same has been found in post Civil Rights United States of America. National data from the 1990s showed a 49% prevalence rate of exposure to at least one experience of acute racial or non-racial discrimination for Blacks, while Whites reported a 31% rate (Kessler, Mickelson, & Williams, 1999). Post-1990 studies suggest the disadvantage to groups considered ethnic minorities in the United States continues (e.g., Krieger, Smith, Naishadham, Hartman, & Barbeau, 2005; Shariff-Marco, Klassen, & Bowie, 2010). Such data suggest that prevalence rates in contexts with histories of race-based discriminatory legal and governmental frameworks are at a minimum over 10% and may even be as high as over 50%.

Second, while young adults in post-Independence Caribbean contexts may not be as exposed to the dominant and overt (Jones, 1997) or hard (Rattansi, 2007) forms of discrimination, as might their older peers and predecessors born before Independence, they are likely still exposed to the transformed ways in which racism may be presented. Scholarship based in non-Caribbean contexts suggests that racial bias is very much alive and present in symbolic, modern, aversive forms (Jones, 1997). Given the existence of these types of racial bias, it is quite likely that prevalence of racial discrimination experiences will be high.

Third, people in Caribbean societies continue to be socialized in racialized ways and will therefore likely report high prevalence rates of experiences of racial discrimination. The “whiteness bias” (Henriques, 1969)

noted in the immediate post-Independence period in countries such as Jamaica arguably still manifests in practices such as skin bleaching (Charles, 2009; Cooper, 2004). Additional research suggests that, regardless of ethnicity, Caribbean people endorse negative stereotypes of Black people (e.g. Butler, Tull, Chambers, & Taylor, 2002; Tull et al., 1999). The racialized socialization of persons from contexts with histories of race-based discrimination is also apparent in a personal-group discrepancy effect (Taylor, Wright, Moghaddam, & Lalonde, 1990). In numerous studies, people tend to perceive a higher level of discrimination directed against their group as a whole rather than against them as individual members of the group in question.

These three distinct lines of reasoning suggest that the overall prevalence of racial discrimination is likely to be high, even in post-colonial, post-Independence, majority Black Caribbean contexts. These high prevalence rates have major implications not just for the structure and organization of societies, but also for the health and well-being of individuals and communities. If they in fact exist, it is quite likely that high prevalence rates of experiences of racial discrimination are strongly correlated with inequities in many realms in these contexts, including physical and mental health, education, and work opportunities, as they have been found to be in other contexts (e.g. Williams et al., 2003, 2008).

Experiences of Racial Discrimination: The Roles of Racial and Class Group Memberships

While race can be considered a social construction (Rattansi, 2007), research indicates that levels of cumulative and current exposure and experiences with racial discrimination vary according to groups defined by racial categorization. Ethnic groups that have been historically oppressed by race-based structural and institutional discrimination have reported high prevalence rates for interpersonal experiences of racial discrimination (e.g. Torres, O'Connor, Mejia, Camacho, & Long, 2011; Williams et al., 2008). This has been consistent regardless of whether the groups are in the numeric minority (such as ethnic minorities in the USA, UK, Canada, New Zealand), or whether they constitute a numeric majority (such as Black Africans in South Africa).

However, racialized differences are not restricted to self-reported racial group membership. Race relations in many contemporary Caribbean contexts are not characterized by the racial hierarchy of the plantation societies, in which the White planter class was at the top, followed by a colored middle class, and African

slaves at the bottom. Nor are the race and color dynamics the same as in the immediate post-Emancipation period, in which the meanings of freedom of movement and identities were being renegotiated in very blatant ways. Instead, in contemporary contexts, the history of oppression may not be overtly represented. This is especially so given shifts in the leadership and power structures of these societies – shifts that see Black people at the helm of many institutions and movements (Vickerman, 1999).

Class is likely therefore one of the key ways in which the policies and practices of institutional racism may manifest in the post-Independence and post Civil Rights eras. Ethnographic and anthropological research suggests that this is the case in Jamaica. Jamaicans in contemporary Jamaica, it is suggested, no longer view the society as organized according to the racial hierarchy of the plantation era (Douglass, 1992). However, they do perceive it as unequal (Douglass, 1992). The myth of “out of many one” tends to be deconstructed when racial dynamics and class position interplay (Carnegie, 2002; Cooper, 2004). In the Caribbean, arguably in distinct ways from other contexts in which institutionally based racial discrimination was legalized up until recently (the 1960s in the US and the 1980s in South Africa, for example), class is therefore not a “nuisance” variable to be statistically controlled for. Instead, it deserves systematic attention as a possible indicator of the ways in which racial dynamics may still permeate these societies. In such cases, class groups will likely differ in their perceptions and experiences of racial discrimination.

Current Study

The present descriptive study examines racial discrimination in a contemporary, majority-Black Caribbean context. Using data from a convenience sample of university students in urban Kingston Jamaica, it explores the prevalence of experiences of racial discrimination. It is hypothesized that such experiences will be highly prevalent, at least over the 10% recorded in national probability samples of persons of color in South Africa (Williams et al., 2009) and the 48% recorded for Blacks in the United States (Kessler et al., 1999). The second goal of the current study is to examine differences in experiences of racial discrimination for self-identified racial groups. It is hypothesized that those who self-identify as Black will report higher prevalence rates and will be more likely to report other racial discrimination experiences than will those who self-identify as belonging to any other racial group. The third and final goal of the study is to describe associations between class and racial discrimination experiences. It is expected that those of

lower social class status will report higher prevalence and more experiences than those who report being in a higher social class status.

Method

Data Source, Data Collection, and Study Sample

Data were collected from a convenience sample of students from a sample frame of 1055 students. The sample frame was a proportionately stratified (according to faculty) list of students who were randomly selected from the total population of 12,945 students registered at an urban university in Kingston, Jamaica during the 2009-2010 academic year. Students were enrolled as either full-time or part-time in one of the four main faculties (Social Sciences 37%, Humanities & Education 21%, Medical Sciences 23%, and Pure & Applied Sciences 19%).

After gaining ethical permission from the university's ethics committee, research assistants used the sample frame list to recruit, in a non-random manner, potential participants. Using either email, phone call, or SMS text media, they contacted persons in the sample frame and told them about the study and the incentives of eligibility for weekly or grand raffle prizes of telephone call credit.

Among those in the sampling frame who agreed to participate, data were collected using a paper-pencil self-administered questionnaire. This was completed either in individual or group administered sessions facilitated by a research assistant or, if more convenient, with the respondent completing it on his/her own time and returning it to the research assistant.

A sample size of between 96 and 196 respondents was targeted to estimate the overall prevalence of experiences of racial discrimination to within 7 to 10% of its true value, and, in the context of no existing data, using the recommended assumption of 50% prevalence within the population of the university from which data were collected (Lwanga & Lemeshaw, 1991). Data collection began in October 2010 and ended in April 2011, when a sample of 165 students was obtained. The present study uses data from the 147 young adult students whose ages ranged between 18-35 years old.

Variables

Experiences of interpersonally-based discrimination.

Experiences of racial discrimination. In the questionnaire, respondents' experiences with racial discrimination were measured in six domains using the Experiences of Discrimination instrument (EOD;

Krieger, 1990; Krieger & Sidney, 1996; Krieger et al., 2005). Specifically, they were measured in: (1) lifetime occurrences of discriminatory experiences, (2) frequency of day-to-day discrimination, (3) response to discrimination, (4) perception of being discriminated against generally (i.e. not specific to any situation), (5) worry about being discriminated against, and (6) filing complaints or reports because of being discriminated against.

For the purposes of the present study, the following discrimination factors were examined and are thus described: (1) lifetime occurrences (used for prevalence, both overall and situation specific), (4) perception of being discriminated against (both for self personally, and for members of one's racial group), and (5) worry about being discriminated against (again both for self personally, and for members of one's racial group).

For lifetime occurrences, an overall prevalence was calculated as the proportion of the sample that responded affirmatively to having experienced discrimination in any of the nine situations presented because of being from their racial group. Example situations include: "at school", "getting service in a store or restaurant", and "at work" (see Table 2 for all nine situations). Respondents indicated "Yes" or "No" to having experienced discrimination because of race in each of the situations.

A dichotomous variable was created for feeling personally discriminated against and another for feeling that members of one's racial group were discriminated against (0 = No, 1 = Yes). Respondents were asked first whether they felt personally discriminated against because of race and then asked whether they felt that members of their racial group were discriminated against because of race. The response options for these two questions were 1 = never; 2 = rarely; 3 = sometimes; and 4 = often. To ensure adequate cell sizes for data analyses, the "never" and "rarely" categories were collapsed and coded as 0 = No, and the "sometimes" and "often" categories were collapsed and coded as 1 = Yes.

Similarly, two dichotomous variables were generated for being worried about personally experiencing racial discrimination in the past year and worrying that members of one's racial group would experience it. In this case, the response options were 1 = most of the time, 2 = some of the time, and 3 = rarely or never. To ensure adequate cell sizes in the chi-square tests of association, the "rarely or never" category was recoded as 0 = No, and the "most of the time" and "some of the time" categories were collapsed and coded as 1 = Yes.

Race and class predictors.

Racial group. Respondents provided their own descriptions for an open-ended question about their

racial group membership. The key groups that emerged were: African-descent or Black Caribbean, Chinese, Indian, and Mixed. Because the sample size for those self-identifying as a specific racial group other than African-descent or Black Caribbean was so small ($n = 3$), this group was collapsed with the Mixed group ($n = 23$) for an overall category that encompassed racial groups other than strictly African-descent / Black Caribbean. These (“Black Caribbean” and “Other”) were therefore the final two racial groups that were used in analyses for the present study.

Social class group. Respondents provided their own descriptions for an open-ended question about their social class membership. All responses were some version of middle class: lower ($n = 3$), lower-middle class ($n = 23$), middle class ($n = 99$), and upper-middle ($n = 5$). Characteristics of various social classes in Jamaica and why there may be a preponderance of students self-identifying as being of the middle class is a major topic that requires much more attention than is possible in the present paper and with the present sample. For the purposes of the present study, focus was therefore on comparing those from the lower-middle versus from the upper-middle class. As such, the first two categories were collapsed, as were the last two categories.

Demographics

Respondents also provided demographic information: age, sex, academic level, faculty of enrolment, and citizenship.

Data Analyses

The distribution of sociodemographic characteristics was first examined. The overall prevalence of reports of experiences of racial discrimination was assessed. To assess the prevalence rates for specific situations, the prevalence of “Yes” responses to each of the nine situations was examined and the situations were then ranked. To examine whether differences in prevalence rates existed for racial groups and for social class groups, two-sample tests of proportions (Black versus Others; Lower-middle versus Upper-middle) were conducted.

Chi-square tests were conducted between race (Black vs. Other) and each of the four dichotomous discrimination outcomes: whether the respondent feels personally discriminated against on account of race; whether s/he feels that members of her/his racial group are discriminated against; whether s/he has worried in the past year about being discriminated against on account of race; and whether s/he has worried in the past year about members of her/his racial group being discriminated against.

Similarly, to explore whether class was associated with any of the discrimination outcomes, chi-square tests were conducted between class (Lower-middle vs. Upper-middle) and each of the four dichotomous discrimination outcomes indicated above.

Exploratory chi-square tests were also computed between each of the sociodemographic variables and each of the discrimination experiences outcomes.

All analyses were conducted using Stata 12.1 and statistical significance was evaluated with .05-level 1-sided tests when appropriate.

Results

Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 presents data on the socio-demographic characteristics of the study sample. The mean age of the students was approximately 23 years old. The sex distribution mirrored the sex distribution in the university population at the time of data collection, in which approximately 70% of students were female. The distribution of the students from the faculties was somewhat different from the actual proportions in the university. Specifically, the number of students sampled from the Social Sciences faculty and the Medical Sciences faculty was fewer than their actual university proportions (37% and 23% respectively), while the number of students sampled from the Pure and Applied Sciences faculty was greater than the actual university proportion (19%). Students sampled from the Humanities and Education faculty reflected their actual university proportion (21%). The majority of the sample was undergraduate students, Jamaican in citizenship, self-described Black Caribbean, and upper-middle class.

Research Question 1: What is the Prevalence of Experiences of Racial Discrimination?

Table 2 presents the overall prevalence of any reported experiences of racial discrimination. Over 52% of the students in the sample reported having experienced racial discrimination in at least one of the situations over their lifetimes. Prevalence rates for specific situations ranged from a high of over 42% (in situations of getting service in a store or restaurant) to a low of under 4% (in situations of getting credit, bank loans, or mortgages).

Research Question 2: Are there Race Differences in Experiences of Discrimination?

Table 3 presents prevalence rates for the self-reported racial groups. In general, there was no statistically

Table 1
Characteristics of the Sample of 18-34 Year Old Young Adult Jamaican University Students

Characteristic	N	<i>n</i>	Proportions (%)
Sex	146		
Male		44	30.14
Female		102	69.86
Faculty	147		
Humanities and Education		31	21.09
Law or Medical Sciences*		25	17.01
Pure and Applied		40	27.21
Social Sciences		51	34.69
Level	147		
Undergraduate		124	84.35
Graduate		23	15.65
Citizenship	147		
Jamaican		141	95.92
Other		6	4.08
Racial group	146		
Black Caribbean		120	82.19
Other		26	17.81
Self-reported social class	130		
Lower-middle		26	20.00
Upper-middle		104	80.00
Age	147		
Mean (SD)			22.97 (3.43)

* Note. There was only one student from the Faculty of Law. The Law and Faculty of Medical Sciences were therefore treated as one.

significant difference in the prevalence rates for Black students (59.29%) versus those who self-identified with any other racial group (41.67%). In one case, however, marginally significant differences were detected in the two-sample tests of proportions for having ever experienced racial discrimination at work. Specifically, those identifying with racial groups subsumed under the "Other" category had a lower prevalence rate than those who self-identified as Black ($z = -1.76, p = .07$).

In three of the four dichotomous racial discrimination outcomes, there was a difference between self-identified Black students and students who identified as being from any other racial group.

First, the relationship between race and feeling personally discriminated against was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 144) = 4.46, p = .035$, Cramér's $V = 0.18$. Among the 144 persons who provided data for this

question, 27.12% of those who self-identified as Black said that they felt personally discriminated against because of race, compared with just 7.69% of those who self-identified with any other racial group.

Second, the relationship between race and worrying in the past year about being personally discriminated against was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 144) = 5.07, p = .024$, Cramér's $V = 0.19$. Among the 144 persons who provided data for this question, 28.81% of those who self-identified as Black said that they worried in the past year about being personally discriminated against because of race, compared with just 7.69% of those who self-identified with any other racial group.

And third, the relationship between race and worrying in the past year about members of one's racial group being discriminated against was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 142) = 5.15, p = .023$, Cramér's $V = 0.18$.

Table 2

Prevalence of Racial Discrimination for the Sample of Young Adult University Students in Jamaica, Ranked by Situation with Highest Prevalence

Experienced Racial Discrimination...	N	%
In any of the situations	138	52.38
Getting service in a store or restaurant	142	42.86
On the street or in a public setting	143	22.45
At school	143	19.05
At work	142	14.97
Getting hired or getting a job	142	10.20
From the police or in the courts	141	8.84
Getting medical care	141	8.16
Getting housing	140	3.40
Getting credit, bank loans, or a mortgage	141	3.40

Table 3

Prevalence of Racial Discrimination for Young Adult University Students in Jamaica who Self-Identified as Black Versus Those Who Self-Identified with Another Racial Group, Ranked by Situation with Highest Prevalence

Experienced Racial Discrimination...	Black		Other	
	n	%	n	%
In any of the situations	67	59.29	10	41.67
Getting service in a store or restaurant	55	47.41	8	32.00
On the street or in a public setting	29	25.00	4	15.38
At school	24	20.69	4	15.38
At work	21	18.10	1	4.00†
Getting hired or getting a job	14	12.07	1	4.00
From the police or in the courts	12	10.53	1	3.85
Getting medical care	11	9.65	1	3.85
Getting housing	5	4.39	0	0.00
Getting credit, bank loans, or a mortgage	5	4.35	0	0.00

† $p < .10$

Among the 142 persons who provided data for this question, 38.79% of those who self-identified as Black said that they worried in the past year about members of their racial group being discriminated against because of race, compared with just 15.38% of those who self-identified with any other racial group.

With the present sample, there was no statistically significant difference between self-identified Black versus other racial groups in reports of worrying in the past year about being personally discriminated against because of race.

Research Question 3: Are there Class Differences in Experiences of Discrimination?

Table 5 presents the overall prevalence rates of experiences of racial discrimination for social class groups. As shown, the overall prevalence was statistically lower for those from the upper-middle class, compared to those from the lower-middle class ($z = -2.93, p = .003$). However, as with the findings for the racial groups, the prevalence rates for each of the situations did not differ statistically for the social class groups. It is worth

Table 4
 Summary of Crosstabulations of Racial Groups and Racial Discrimination Outcomes

Discrimination Outcome (<i>N</i>)		Racial Group	
		Black	Other
Feel Discriminated Against –Self	144		
	Frequency	32*	2
	Expected frequency	27.9	6.1
Feel Group Discriminated Against	144		
	Frequency	87	17
	Expected frequency	85.2	18.8
Worried – Self	144		
	Frequency	34*	
	Expected frequency	29.5	6.5
Worried – Group	142		
	Frequency	45*	4
	Expected frequency	40	9

* $p < .05$

mentioning, however, that similar to the findings for the racial groups, probabilities of lower than .10 were detected for the “work” situation and for the “getting service in a store or restaurant” situation. In both cases findings suggested lower prevalence rates for the upper-middle class group than for those in the lower-middle class. It is also interesting to note that, though again not statistically significant, prevalence rates were higher for the upper-middle class group – not the lower-middle class group – for three of the nine situations presented.

As Table 6 shows in one of the four dichotomous racial discrimination outcomes, there was a difference between lower-middle class students and upper-middle class students. Interestingly, this racial discrimination outcome was the one for which a significant association was not found for the comparisons between racial groups.

The relationship between class and feeling that members of one’s group are discriminated against was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 128) = 7.31, p = .007$, Cramér’s $V = 0.24$. Among the 128 persons who provided data for this question, 96% of those who self-identified as lower-middle class reported feeling that members of their racial group are discriminated against, compared with 69.90% of those who self-identified as being in the upper-middle class.

With the present sample, there was no statistically significant difference between self-identified

lower-middle class versus upper-middle class groups in reports of feeling personally discriminated against, of worrying in the past year about being personally discriminated against, or of worrying in the past year about members of one’s racial group experiencing racial discrimination.

Associations between all other sociodemographic variables (sex, faculty, level, and citizenship) and all of the discrimination outcomes were also tested. No significant associations were found.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to describe the prevalence of race-related discrimination and other discrimination factors among young adults in Jamaica, a majority Black, post-Independence Caribbean context. A secondary purpose was to describe whether these experiences of racial discrimination varied between racial groups and between class groups.

Prevalence of Racial Discrimination

In a convenience sample of university attending students at an urban university in Kingston, Jamaica, a high prevalence rate of 52% was reported for experiences of race-related discrimination. The overall high prevalence rate for the experiences of racial discrimination is comparable with those reported for historically disadvantaged groups in other contexts. The rate was

Table 5
Prevalence of Racial Discrimination for Young Adult University Students in Jamaica who Self-Identified as Lower-middle Class Versus Upper-middle Class, Ranked by Situation with Highest Prevalence

Experienced Racial Discrimination...	Lower-middle		Upper-middle	
	n	%	n	%
In any of the situations	21	84.00	50	51.55**
Getting service in a store or restaurant	16	64.00	44	44.00†
On the street or in a public setting	6	24.00	24	19.80
At school	6	24.00	20	19.80
At work	7	28.00	13	12.87†
Getting hired or getting a job	4	16.00	8	8.00
From the police or in the courts	2	8.00	9	9.00
Getting medical care	1	4.00	9	9.09
Getting housing	2	8.00	2	2.02
Getting credit, bank loans, or a mortgage	0	0.00	4	4.00

† $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 6
Summary of Crosstabulations of Class Groups and Racial Discrimination Outcomes

Discrimination Outcome (N)		Class Group	
		Lower-middle	Upper-middle
Feel Discriminated Against – Self	128		
	Frequency	9	22
	Expected frequency	6.1	24.9
Feel Group Discriminated Against	128		
	Frequency	24**	72
	Expected frequency	18.8	77.2
Worried – Self	128		
	Frequency	7	25
	Expected frequency	6.2	25.8
Worried – Group	126		
	Frequency	11	35
	Expected frequency	8.8	37.2

** $p < .01$

higher than the rates for indigenous and Asian ethnicity persons in New Zealand (Harris et al., 2012) and for Whites and Blacks in the U.S. (Kessler et al., 1999; Krieger et al., 2005; Shariff-Marco et al., 2010). The prevalence rate was much higher than that recorded in a national sample from South Africa, a country context with a history of oppression of people of color but a

numerical majority of the same. This high prevalence rate suggests that, even in the contemporary Caribbean, young adults believe that they are exposed to a lot of interpersonal discrimination that is racially driven. This disturbing reality, while consistent with the experiences of other peoples with histories of racial oppression and discrimination, sounds an alarm for the need to address

these high prevalence rates and the likely mental and physical health consequences.

However, the findings must also be interpreted with caution. Previous research has found that university-educated persons report higher prevalence rates than those with less formal education (Pérez et al., 2008). It may be that the prevalence rate is lower for persons within Jamaica who have less education. Furthermore, in studies that use discrimination or unfair treatment measures that ask explicitly about race, demand characteristics have been noted such that the inclusion of the words “race” “racial” and “discrimination” are associated with higher prevalence levels compared to questions that ask about unfair treatment more generally (Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003). It may be that if a neutral discrimination measure were used in the study and a question asked at the end of the measure about to what the unfair treatment was attributed, a lower prevalence rate might have been found. This is arguably what occurred in the South African data described earlier (Williams et al., 2009). Future studies should therefore include community-based samples and target groups with lower levels of education. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to include measures that both ask explicitly about discrimination and those that are neutral in their question phrasing. This is particularly necessary for contexts like many Caribbean countries that tend to downplay race.

Racial Differences in Discrimination Outcomes

There were no statistically significant differences in the overall prevalence rate of racial discrimination between racial groups. On the other hand, there were significant associations between race and three of the four discrimination outcomes. Specifically, those who self-identified as Black were significantly more likely to report feeling discriminated against personally because of race, feeling worried about being personally discriminated against in the past year, and feeling worried in the past year about members of their racial group being discriminated against, than were those whose racial self-identification was other than Black.

The mixed support for hypotheses of racial group differences in discrimination outcomes suggests that more attention must focus on this area of study. The lack of a statistically significant difference in the prevalence rates for those who self-identified as Black and those in the collapsed “All Others” group (prevalence rates of 59% and 42% respectively), was counter to what was expected given the extensive body of work from contexts similar to Jamaica with histories of race-based discrimination. It is possible that significant differences could have been found if comparisons between the groups that were collapsed (“Other” and “Mixed”) were examined separately.

The significant associations between racial group and three of the four discrimination experiences outcomes also encourages further research, particularly with larger sample sizes, and, when possible, with probability samples. It is likely that larger “race x [discrimination outcome]” cell sizes will facilitate increased power for hypothesis testing using both bivariate tests like those in the present study, as well as multivariate models (e.g. logistic regression). For example, while the expected frequencies for the “Other X Feel Personally Discriminated Against/ Worried About Self/ Worried About Group” met the chi-square assumption of the expected value in each cell of being greater than five, the observed values were between two and four observations. Larger sample sizes and replications with other convenience samples, as well as with probability samples are needed before definitive conclusions about racial group differences in prevalence rates can be made for samples similar to this one in terms of developmental stage and racial composition of the context.

Those limitations notwithstanding, this study provides an initial idea of discrimination prevalence rates and outcomes for racial groups among university students in urban Jamaica. It may therefore provide baseline data for replication and extension studies.

Class Differences in Discrimination Outcomes

Findings suggested that, for the present sample, self-reported social class played a role in the prevalence of experiences of racial discrimination, and in feeling that members of one’s class group experience racial discrimination. The overall prevalence of racial discrimination was markedly higher (84%) among those from the lower-middle class compared to those from the upper-middle class (approximately 52%). On the other hand, though not statistically significant, in three of the nine situations presented, upper-middle class students – not lower-middle class students – reported higher prevalence rates for racial discrimination than their lower-middle class peers. This merits additional investigation. Those trends suggest variation within the middle class in discrimination experiences. What might be the factors contributing to the higher prevalence of discrimination among upper-middle class students when dealing with police or the court system, getting medical care, and getting credit, bank loans, or a mortgage? Can these trends be replicated in future studies? Might they demonstrate statistical significance in others? What might be the factors involved in lower-middle class group members experiencing higher prevalence in some situations but upper-middle class experiencing higher prevalence in others? These are all areas for further study.

That lower-middle class students were more likely to report feeling that members of their racial group ex-

perience racial discrimination than were upper-middle class students also suggests the need for more detailed investigation on the interconnections between race and class. A large body of work suggests that the cumulative effect of racial inequities manifests in contemporary contexts as low socioeconomic standing (Jones, 1997). The findings from the present study therefore (university attending young adults) add to this body of work by specifying a sub-sample (university attending young adults) from Caribbean contexts for whom this may also be the case. However, once again, the findings must be interpreted with caution as the “Lower-middle class X Don’t feel that members of group are discriminated against” chi-square cell was one. Larger cell sizes in future studies will therefore facilitate more rigorous tests of hypotheses.

Areas for Future Research

The findings from the present study also point to other important areas for future research. First, the study used a measure of race-based discrimination in which race was explicitly mentioned. Prior studies have shown that such explicit mentioning of race can inflate the reports of racial discrimination. In contexts in which racialized conditions from the past might manifest in ways other than self-reported racial group membership, understanding more about to what individuals might attribute their experiences of unfair treatment can facilitate more nuanced understandings of how racism might manifest in the modern Caribbean contexts.

Second, and related to the first point, future research could be useful to disentangle the ways in which race and class discrimination may be perceived as similar and different. These types of investigations will be beneficial if they are undertaken with a developmental approach, noting similarities and differences in the concepts for young adults compared to older adults, and for persons from different periods and cohorts. In support of such approaches, it is useful to note that in the post-questionnaire evaluations, the young adult respondents often noted that the questionnaire should have asked about class based discrimination because race “was not an issue” in Jamaica today.

Third, the findings suggest the need for future research that examines social class as a multidimensional construct and the implications of that more complex measurement for prevalence rates of racial discrimination. Self-reported social class is, however, at best an incomplete indicator for social class, particularly in Caribbean contexts in which racialized disadvantages and opportunities likely manifest in myriad other ways, such as residential context and neighborhood (Austin-Broos, 1994). It is therefore essential to explore how the

multiple ways in which class manifests may be predictive of differences in prevalence rates for discrimination and related outcomes.

Fourth, the findings on social class differences also suggest that the ways in which race, class, and other social identities might interact needs to be explored in future research. It might be that Black persons of lower social classes report experiencing racial discrimination more than Mixed persons from lower social classes. Or in a context in which Blackness is the norm, it might be that Mixed or persons from other ethnic backgrounds who have a lower social class standing report experiencing racial discrimination more than Black people who are for the most part surrounded by other Black persons. Caribbean anthropological (Carnegie, 2002) and ethnographic (Douglass, 1992) scholarship highlights this relational nature of racial and class group constructions. Building on such work, empirical work is needed that explores the ways in which gender and intimate relations also contribute to the overlaps and divergences in racial and class group memberships and the factors involved in when discrimination is attributed to either or both social identities. This is a rich area for empirical psychological research.

Conclusion

By providing the first known Jamaica-specific empirical data on the prevalence of experiences of race-related discrimination and variations by racial and class groups for a specific demographic (university attending young adults in urban Jamaica) this descriptive study offers an invaluable contribution to the empirical examination of racial discrimination in Caribbean contexts, particularly post-Independence contexts. Without adequate empirical scholarship, the default is to speak about race-relations in contemporary Caribbean contexts using the vocabulary and associations of other periods, such as the immediate post-Independence period. While the study shows that the prevalence of discrimination is still high and that race and class play are associated with such experiences, it also suggests that much remains unknown. Caribbean societies, like all others, are dynamic. While there are multiple ways in which historical legacies are woven into the fabric of the present, contemporary experiences and perceptions are also influenced by the dynamics, awareness, access and denial issues, and conditions that are characteristic of contemporary life. The complex interplay of race, class, gender, geographic and spatial location in the construction of inequalities in Caribbean societies noted in scholarship from other disciplinary traditions must continue to be examined in the social sciences, and particularly in psychology. It is only in

an evidence-based acknowledgement of inequalities in our societies that they can be effectively addressed.

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