Urban Affairs Review

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>> Version of Record - Jan 4, 2006

What is This?

LINGUISTIC PROFILING
A Continuing Tradition
of Discrimination in the
Home Insurance Industry?

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"Linguistic profiling," the identification of a person's race from the sound of their voice and the utilization of that information to discriminate on the basis of race, has been documented in the home rental market. This article examines this phenomenon in the home insurance industry. From an analysis of matched-paired tests conducted by fair-housing organizations, we find that home insurance agents are generally able to detect the race of someone who contacts them by telephone and that this information affects the services provided those who inquire about purchasing a home insurance policy.

Keywords: *linguistic profiling; insurance discrimination; redlining; segregation; housing*

Racial discrimination appears to have ameliorated in recent decades as some key measures of inequality have declined. But discrimination remains a central feature of the opportunity structure in the United States. To illustrate, White job applicants with a criminal record are more likely to get a job than

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are equally qualified Blacks who have committed no crimes (Pager 2003). Job applicants with White-sounding names are more likely to get a job than equally qualified jobseekers with Black-sounding names (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004). And racial minorities encounter discrimination in approximately one of every five visits to a rental or real estate agent when they attempt to rent or buy a home (Turner et al. 2002). Overt discrimination grounded in patent racial prejudice has faded. What appears to be a decline in racial discrimination, however, may often reflect a transformation from explicit to subtle forms of bias.

In the nationwide study of housing discrimination conducted by the Urban Institute for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that yielded the findings noted above, researchers utilized the same paired testing techniques they had employed in a similar study 10 years earlier. Levels of discrimination were substantially lower in 2000 than they were in 1990 (Turner et al. 2002; Ross and Turner 2005). But one discriminatory practice that increased was racial steering, and often it was the White tester who was most directly steered. For example, White testers were offered such unsolicited advice as the following: "It is not the neighborhood in which to buy a home; too many Hispanics living there" and "That area is full of Hispanics and Blacks that don't know how to keep clean." (Galster and Godfrey 2005). Black and Hispanic homeseekers are not overtly denied service by these practices. But they clearly serve to perpetuate segregation and the adverse consequences for racial minorities that follow (Massey and Denton 1993; Cashin 2004; Charles 2005).

A similar evolution appears to have taken place in the home insurance industry. There is longstanding evidence of discrimination in the underwriting and pricing of policies, coverages included, location of insurance agents, claims processing, and other practices (Badain 1980; Yaspan 1970; Squires 1997, 2003; Galster et al. 2001). But maps with areas literally drawn in red where agents were prohibited from writing policies and with written instructions such as, "Quit writing all those Black people" (United States v. American Family Mutual Insurance Company, 1995) may no longer be the norm. More typical is the following type of question an agent said his company asked about a particular Boston neighborhood; "do the kids in the neighborhood play hockey or basketball" (interview with Andrea Luquetta, Director of Housing and Community Reinvestment, Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations, March 29, 2002). Paired-testing evidence has revealed racially discriminatory practices leading to the settlement of fair housing complaints against some of the nation's largest insurers including Allstate, State Farm, and Nationwide (Smith and Cloud 1997; Lynch 1997). The current widespread use of credit scoring results in the

persistence of disparate impact discrimination, if not intentional disparate treatment (Texas Department of Insurance 2004; Birnbaum 2004). If the more overt forms of discrimination have faded from the home insurance market, discrimination appears to be alive and well.

"No Blacks need apply" signs may have disappeared. But more unobtrusive measures have frequently taken their place. The "name" discrimination that Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) documented is one example. So-called "linguistic profiling" is another. In controlled experiments, respondents have been able to identify the race or ethnicity of a speaker from auditory cues alone (that is, without seeing the speaker) and little speech was necessary for such identification. The race or ethnicity (White, Black, Hispanic) was identified correctly in more than 70% of the experiments just after hearing the word "hello" (Purnell et al. 1999). In the housing market, rental and real estate agents often detect the race of a homeseeker by the sound of their voice and treat them differently, and unfairly, as a result (Purnell et al. 1999; Massey and Lundy 2001; Fischer and Massey 2004). This study examines whether home insurers can detect the race of an applicant from the sound of an applicant's voice and, if so, how that information is used in determining eligibility for insurance.

THE HOME INSURANCE TRANSACTION— DOES RACE MATTER?

Home insurance policies are often bought over the phone. While the actual policy is generally mailed out from the company to the insured and premium payments are often made by mail or via credit cards, the actual "deal" is usually consummated between an agent and homeowner via the phone. Insurers or their agents obtain the information they want for underwriting and pricing purposes (e.g., location of the home, construction (brick or frame), presence of alarm systems) from the applicant over the telephone. (In recent years insurers have begun to utilize credit reports, which they obtain from various credit reporting agencies including Experian, Equifax, and Trans Union. But they secure the necessary identifying information for the credit report during the phone conversation with the customer.) Often the customer is offered a binder or is covered at the completion of the call, with the understanding that the full policy will then be mailed out from the insurance company.

Neighborhood characteristics, including racial composition, appear to be critical factors in the underwriting and pricing decisions of property insurers. In fact, most of the insurance-related fair-housing litigation has focused more

on the racial composition of the neighborhood than the race of the applicant. That is, the complaints that have been filed and settled generally charge insurers with treating applicants from neighborhoods with large minority populations less favorably than comparable risks from predominantly White neighborhoods. Applicants from minority neighborhoods are more likely to be denied a policy, charged higher prices or offered less favorable terms and conditions for policies that are offered, required to meet more stringent requirements (e.g., to have the home inspected when "majority" applicants are not), and treated in other less favorable ways (Smith and Cloud 1997).

Given the salience of location, and particularly the racial composition of neighborhood, a question arises as to whether there are any systematic differences in when insurers solicit neighborhood information from Black and White applicants. If race is not a factor or insurers cannot detect race over the phone, then in the initial telephone conversation there should be no association between the race of the caller and when the applicant is asked about the location of the home. But if the insurer can detect the race of the applicant and race (or racial composition of neighborhood) matters, a question about where the home is located would likely be posed earlier in the conversation with Black applicants than with Whites. The sound of a Black voice may cause some hesitancy on the part of the agent and lead that agent to assume the home to be insured might be in a Black (and therefore, from the insurer's perspective, less desirable) neighborhood. The agent may want to quickly confirm this suspicion by asking the "neighborhood" question earlier in the conversation than would be the case with White applicants. By obtaining what they perceive to be the critical information (i.e., that which enables the agent to make initial underwriting and pricing decisions) sooner in the conversation, the agent can reduce transaction costs; that is, the time and expenses involved in collecting and analyzing information for the purpose of evaluating an application. Determining where a property is located facilitates this process for the insurer. For Blacks, but not necessarily for Whites, knowing the location may be all the agent needs to know.

The hypothesis we pose in this exploratory study is that Black applicants will be asked about the neighborhood in which the home to be insured is located sooner in the initial conversation with an agent than will White applicants. We examine paired tests conducted by members of the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA)(described below) in which Black and White "testers" posed as equally qualified risks and contacted several major insurance companies about the availability of insurance for their homes. If this hypothesis is supported, we would conclude that agents generally do recognize an applicant's race from their voice and that this information is used in a way that reduces the chances for Black applicants to be offered a policy or

makes the terms and conditions of a policy that they will be offered less favorably than those generally offered to similarly qualified Whites.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data for this study consist of 221 matched paired tests conducted by member agencies of the National Fair Housing Alliance in nine different metropolitan areas between 1992 and 1999. Each paired test includes two contacts, one by a White tester and one by a Black tester. A more detailed description of the data and findings from these tests were reported earlier by NFHA staff and member agencies (Smith and Cloud 1997, HOME 1999). NFHA is a nonprofit agency whose mission is to eliminate housing discrimination and to ensure equal housing opportunity for all people by providing leadership, education and outreach, membership services, public policy initiatives, advocacy, and enforcement. The tested insurance companies were chosen because of both their large market share and because of complaints received by member agencies. Together, these companies accounted for approximately 25% of the market share of all property/casualty insurance written during this time period (Insurance Information Institute 1995, 1996, and 2003).

NFHA chose private fair-housing member agencies to conduct the testing through a request-for-proposal process. These agencies were chosen based on their capacity and willingness to participate, the presence in their cities of agents from the insurance companies to be tested, and the presence of racially identifiable neighborhoods with housing stock that was comparable in terms of age, value, and overall quality. Within the cities, agents were chosen by random selection in the vicinity of the neighborhoods selected. Representatives of the selected fair-housing agencies were trained to use the same testing methodology, including reporting practices.

Matched paired testing was then conducted with each pair of testers, including a Black tester with a home located in a neighborhood known to contain 50% or more Black residents, and a White tester with a home in a neighborhood known to contain 80% or more White residents. Testers were selected that had racially identifiable voices as determined by NFHA staff. All of the test homes were in neighborhoods where the homeownership rate was 50% or greater, and each pair of test homes was closely matched by housing type and features, including construction material, stories, age, square footage, and related characteristics of the houses. Test houses in minority neighborhoods presented similar or superior risks to the homes in White neighborhoods in that the minority tester represented the houses to

have similar construction and age but often to have newer features such as plumbing, roof, and heating system.

Testers were instructed to telephone particular agents and request an estimated quote for insurance. Paired tests were then compared for similarities and differences in treatment. Results were considered different when they fit into one or more of five categories (outcomes are in parentheses):

(1) The policy quoted the tester was at least 5% more expensive than that offered the other tester (55% White favored, 35% Black favored, 10% neutral).
(2) One tester was offered a lower quality type of policy or lesser coverage (for example, by offering a market value rather than a full-replacement-cost policy) (60% White favored, 22% Black favored, 18% neutral).
(3) The agent was less responsive to one tester by not returning calls (59% White favored, 32% black favored, 9% neutral).
(4) The agent failed to provide one tester with promised information but did provide the information to the other tester (60% White favored, 29% Black favored, 11% neutral).
(5) A quoted company policy was applied to only one tester (for example, requiring an inspection before a quote was given) (62% White favored, 33% Black favored, 5% neutral).

Of the tests in this dataset 48% resulted in differences in treatment where overall the White tester was favored, 27% resulted in differences in treatment where the Black tester was favored, and 25% of the tests resulted in similar treatment between the testers (Smith and Cloud 1997, HOME 1999). A test was generally considered White or Black favored if either tester was favored on more items than the other tester. Tests were neutral if neither tester was favored on any item. However, some judgment was used in making these determinations based on a continuum that weighted each item in importance, with the policy cost and policy quality holding more weight than agent responsiveness and amount of information offered. So, for example, if the White tester was given less information than the Black tester but was offered a better-quality policy and the Black tester received more information and encouragement but a lower-quality policy or a higher-costing policy, this would be scored a White-favored test even though each was favored on one of these five items (interview with Shanna Smith, Executive Director, NFHA, May 12, 2005).

For each test, testers were required to record the first eight information requests by the insurance agent in rank order. The primary question of interest for this analysis is the insurance agent's inquiry regarding the neighborhood in which the property is located. For example, in a given telephone contact an agent might request information in the following order: the type of policy the tester is interested in, whether the tester currently has insurance

with the company, the address or neighborhood where the property is located, what the construction of the house is (brick or frame), what type of roof it has, and so on. In this example, the "neighborhood" question would receive a rank order of 3 because it was the third question asked. After the first eight questions testers were told to record only that the question was asked. For each completed tester contact, we recorded the sequence number of when the question about location of the property was asked in the conversation. When a tester was asked this question after the first eight or if the tester was never asked about the location of the property, we recorded the location question as a 9. In 8% of the Black tests and 7% of the White tests the neighborhood question was not raised.

Below we report the average rank of this neighborhood question for Blacks and Whites. Then we determine the frequency with which Blacks and Whites were asked this item earlier for all matched pairs. We also calculate the frequency with which neighborhood or address was the first question posed to each group of testers. And we examine whether the order of the neighborhood question has any bearing on the outcome of the tests in terms of the agent's treatment of either tester.

FINDINGS

The insurance agents contacted in these tests did in fact ask the "neighborhood" question sooner in their conversations with Blacks than in those with Whites. The differences were statistically significant. This pattern held for the entire sample of 221 tests and for the tests within at least four of the nine cities. The most notable difference was the number of times this was the first question asked of Blacks compared to the frequency with which this was the first question posed to Whites. Perhaps the most salient finding, however, is that for either Blacks or Whites, the earlier the neighborhood question was asked, the more likely they would be adversely treated by the agent.

For the entire sample, the neighborhood or address question was generally one of the first two or three questions asked of Blacks whereas it was one of the first three or four questions asked of Whites. The mean score for Blacks was 2.97 compared to 3.75 for Whites and this disparity was statistically significant (see Table 1). In four of the nine metropolitan areas (Akron, Louisville, Richmond, and Toledo) these differences were significant. In two of the remaining communities (Cincinnati and Milwaukee) results were in the hypothesized direction but not significant.

Overall, the Black tester was asked the neighborhood question before the White tester in 24.04% of all tests. Whites were asked earlier in 13.57% of the

TABLE 1: **Mean Score of When Neighborhood Question Was Asked (from 1–9)**

	n =	*White Mean*	*Black Mean*	p *value*
All tests	221	3.75	2.9683	0.00***
Cities: all data				
Akron	29	4.0345	2.2414	0.01***
Atlanta	16	3.5625	5.125	0.13
Cincinnati	33	4.6061	3.6061	0.17
Los Angeles	20	3.5	3.55	0.95
Louisville	28	2.8214	1.5357	0.00***
Memphis	23	3.087	3.3043	0.75
Milwaukee	5	5.8	4.4	0.51
Richmond	35	3.0286	2.0857	0.06*
Toledo	32	4.5938	3.2813	0.05**

*p = .10. **p = .05. ***p = .01.

tests (see Table 2). Again, the disparity was significant. In eight of the nine communities Blacks were asked about neighborhood or address before Whites and the differences were significant in six of the cities (Akron, Atlanta, Cincinnati, Louisville, Richmond, and Toledo).

The salience of neighborhood was revealed by the frequency with which it was the first question that was asked. For Blacks, this was the first question in almost one of every five contacts (18.28%). For Whites, this was the first question in fewer than one out of every ten contacts (9.03%) (see Table 3.) In eight of the nine communities Blacks were more often asked the neighborhood question as the very first question than were Whites, and this disparity was significant in five of these metropolitan areas (Akron, Cincinnati, Louisville, Memphis, and Richmond).

The timing of the neighborhood question appears to be associated with the likelihood of a discriminatory outcome in the paired tests generally. To illustrate, among all tests the neighborhood question was the first question raised of Blacks in 18.28%, but in those tests in which Whites were favored (or Blacks were discriminated against), this was the first question asked of Blacks in 33.06% (see Table 4). In the relatively few cases in which Blacks were favored, this was the first question for just 16.53%. Blacks were asked the neighborhood question before Whites in 24.04% of all tests, but Blacks were asked this question earlier than Whites in 29.94% of White-favored and in just 16.17% of Black-favored tests. Similarly, the mean score of the neighborhood question for Blacks overall was 2.97 but in White-favored tests it was 2.88 and in Black-favored tests it was 3.53. This overall pattern held for Whites as well. That is, the neighborhood question was asked of Whites

TABLE 2: Percent of Testers That Were Asked the Neighborhood Question First

	White		Black		
	n =	% Asked Earlier	n =	% Asked Earlier	p value
All tests	60	13.57%	107	24.04%	<.00***
Cities: all data					
Akron	3	5.17%	19	32.76%	<.00***
Atlanta	11	34.38%	1	3.13%	0.00***
Cincinnati	9	13.64%	17	25.76%	0.04**
Los Angeles	7	17.50%	8	20.00%	0.74
Louisville	3	5.36%	17	30.36%	<.00***
Memphis	8	17.39%	10	21.74%	0.55
Milwaukee	1	10.00%	2	20.00%	0.49
Richmond	10	14.29%	18	25.71%	0.05**
Toledo	8	12.50%	15	23.44%	0.07*

*p = .10. **p = .05. ***p = .01.

TABLE 3: Percent of Testers That Were Asked the Neighborhood Question as the First Question

	White		Black		
	n =	% First Question	n =	% First Question	p value
All tests	40	9.03%	81	18.28%	<.00***
Cities: all data					
Akron	6	10.34%	14	24.14%	0.03**
Atlanta	3	9.38%	2	6.25%	0.63
Cincinnati	5	7.58%	12	18.18%	0.05**
Los Angeles	4	10.00%	5	12.50%	0.71
Louisville	9	16.07%	18	32.14%	0.02**
Memphis	2	4.35%	7	15.22%	0.06*
Milwaukee	0	0.00%	1	10.00%	0.29
Richmond	7	10.00%	16	22.86%	0.02*
Toledo	4	6.25%	6	9.38%	0.49

*p = .10. **p = .05. ***p = .01.

sooner in those tests in which Blacks were favored and later when Whites were favored.

We then split the tests into White and minority favored for each of the five variables: price of policy, quality of policy, agent responsiveness,

TABLE 4:   Order of Neighborhood Question and Discrimination Outcome

	Mean Score		*% Asked Earlier*		*Neighborhood as First Question*	
	White	*Black*	*White*	*Black*	*White*	*Black*
All tests	3.75	2.97	13.57%	24.04%	9.03%	18.28%
White favored	3.67	2.88	14.97%	29.94%	14.88%	33.06%
Black favored	3.10	3.53	11.98%	16.17%	12.40%	16.53%

information provided, and company policy (see Table 5). In those tests in which Whites were favored on these factors, the greatest disparities were with agent responsiveness and company policy. When Whites were favored on agent responsiveness and company policy, the mean scores for Blacks were 2.25 and 2.62 compared to 3.85 and 4.31 for Whites. Blacks were asked the neighborhood question in these groups of tests earlier than Whites in 42.86% and 50% of the cases compared to 14.29% and 18.75% of the tests where Whites were asked the question earlier. And it was the first question for Blacks in 47.62% and 50% of tests compared to 9.52% and 7.14% for Whites in those tests in which Whites were favored on these two variables. While agent responsiveness and company policy appear to be the two factors that drive the general connection between when the neighborhood question is asked and the likelihood of a discriminatory outcome, given the small number of cases in each of these groups, these findings must be interpreted quite cautiously.

Overall, the findings reveal that agents do inquire about the neighborhood or address of a property sooner in the conversation with Black testers than with Whites. That these disparities are statistically significant indicates this is not a chance occurrence. And it appears the order in which the neighborhood question is asked is associated with the outcome of the tests in terms of whether or not one of the testers is treated more favorably by the agents. Two critical findings flow from this pattern. First, agents are generally able to detect the race of testers from their voices over the telephone when they pose as shoppers for an insurance policy. Presumably those agents are able to elicit the same information from the telephone voice of actual homeowners or those trying to become homeowners when they attempt to purchase a policy. Second, the information is often used in a manner that is biased against African-Americans. As indicated above, in 48% of these tests NFHA analysts found disparate treatment against the Black testers. In no city was the level of such discrimination below 32% (Smith and Cloud 1997, 108–109). In those

TABLE 5:   Order of Neighborhood Question and Discrimination Outcome: Impact of Selected Variables

	n =	Mean Score		% Asked Earlier		% First Question	
		White	Black	White	Black	White	Black
All tests	221	3.75	2.97	13.57%	24.04%	9.03%	18.28%
White favored on selected variables							
Price of policy	75	3.57	2.97	19.81%	33.66%	17.50%	33.75%
Policy quality	38	3.37	2.66	21.28%	34.04%	17.95%	35.90%
Agent responsiveness	20	3.85	2.25	14.29%	42.86%	9.52%	47.62%
Information provided	27	3.63	2.56	20.00%	36.67%	17.24%	31.03%
Company policy	13	4.31	2.62	18.75%	50.00%	7.14%	50.00%
Black favored on selected variables							
Price of policy	48	3.79	3.21	14.85%	21.78%	15.00%	20.00%
Policy quality	14	3.07	2.00	10.64%	12.77%	7.69%	17.95%
Agent responsiveness	11	3.73	2.64	10.71%	21.43%	14.29%	14.29%
Information provided	13	2.15	2.15	16.67%	13.33%	13.79%	24.14%
Company policy	7	2.57	3.00	18.75%	6.25%	21.43%	21.43%

particular tests, Blacks were asked about the location of the home to be insured earlier in the discussion than in tests that were neutral or in which Blacks were favored.

Because the race of the tester matched the predominant race in the neighborhood, it is difficult to disentangle the effects of race from neighborhood racial composition. Earlier findings suggest that neighborhood racial composition has a greater adverse effect than race of applicant (Smith and Cloud 1997). The exploratory results reported here are consistent with both forms of discrimination and linguistic profiling being part of the process in both types.

Insurers have long considered the neighborhood in which a property is located when evaluating an application for a home insurance policy. Racial composition is one neighborhood characteristic that matters, and it matters in a way that adversely affects residents of Black neighborhoods. Racial composition of neighborhood affects what, if any, insurance product is offered even among similarly qualified risks. Insurance agents apparently solicit

neighborhood information sooner from Blacks than from Whites and agents are able to do so because they can generally detect a person's race from the sound of the caller's voice on the telephone. Such linguistic profiling constitutes part of a pattern of behavior resulting in residents of Black neighborhoods receiving fewer options, or lower-quality options, when they shop for insurance policies for their homes. The fact of discrimination in the property insurance industry has long been established. These findings suggest at least some of the dynamics—the processes by which discrimination is carried out in some agent-customer transactions. Perhaps more importantly, they suggest critical directions for future research and fair-housing enforcement.

RESEARCH AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

These findings reaffirm the value of paired testing in the home insurance market for both research and enforcement purposes. Far more can be learned about linguistic profiling and its impact on racial inequality generally as well as how enforcement agencies might be better able to identify and respond to unlawful racial discrimination.

Testing enables investigators to learn whether or not race affects access to insurance products, and if so, how race matters. But a limitation of this study is the focus on tests where the race of the tester matches that of the neighborhood. As noted above, such tests do not separate out the effects of discrimination due to the race of the applicant from discrimination due to the racial composition of neighborhood. And the independent effects of linguistic profiling cannot be conclusively determined. Future testing should include tests in which some pairs inquire about homes in Black neighborhoods, others inquire about homes in White neighborhoods, and still others in which Black and White testers are matched but each caller is inquiring about homes in neighborhoods of different racial composition. This would allow for more conclusive analyses of the nature and dynamics of discrimination, including the role of linguistic profiling in that process. It would also be informative to include a combination of male and female testers to explore the impact, if any, of gender and possible interaction effects of race and gender.

More comprehensive testing can also tease out the effects of particular variables. Linguistic profiling may often manifest itself in the nonreturn of phone calls and other indicators of agent responsiveness. And it may be most associated with the tendency of at least some agents to apply company "policies" to Blacks that are not applied to Whites, such as the need for inspections as part of the underwriting process. Larger samples are necessary to draw

more definitive conclusions about the effects of any particular variable or possible interaction effects among the variables in terms of the role of linguistic profiling and discriminatory outcomes generally.

These findings also suggest that in future testing, linguistic profiling should be more explicitly examined. That is, testers should be selected who clearly speak a racially identifiable dialect. This was the case in the tests examined here but has not been the case in all previous insurance testing. In addition, such testing should include those who speak what Massey and Lundy (2001, 456) have labeled as standard White, middle-class English, Black-English vernacular, or Black-accented English. This would allow for more thorough investigation of the independent effects of voice, including race and class effects, in the marketing of home insurance.

Such research and investigative tools should also be utilized to examine the effects of other dialects. Particularly as the immigrant population grows in major cities and smaller communities around the country, the effects of Latino, Asian, Middle Eastern, and other dialects may grow (Katz 2003). NFHA has produced a public-service television ad in which a tester, using three different racial- or ethnic-sounding names and dialects (Latino, southeast Asian, and African-American) contacts a rental management company to inquire about a unit; each call results in his being told the apartment is no longer available. Then, in standard English, he calls and introduces himself as Graham Wellington and is immediately told the apartment is still available. This advertisement reflects a compilation of actual tests that have been conducted. And while the respondent has the additional information of the caller's name, it also provides further evidence that linguistic profiling is a common phenomenon in the housing market.

Paired testing has been proven to be an effective research and investigative tool in several other areas, including real estate sales and rental practices, mortgage lending, employment, automobile sales, service in restaurants, and many other retail and commercial transactions, in addition to housing (Lee 1999; Fix and Turner 1999; Ross et al. 2003). Areas for future testing could include admissions to nursing homes and related health care facilities, calling for taxi cabs, applications for government contracts, and virtually any other area of life in which goods and services are provided (Boggs 1999). In cases such as these where telephone contact is a normal part of the transaction, and particularly when it is the initial part of the transaction, linguistic profiling may well be taking place and is an appropriate subject for investigation.

Given the increasingly subtle nature of racial discrimination, future studies that fail to capture practices like linguistic profiling will understate the extent to which that discrimination persists. Enforcement activity that fails to examine such practices will miss much of the "action" that is occurring and,

consequently, will be less effective in protecting basic civil rights. Paired testing that explicitly examines the phenomenon of linguistic profiling may well be essential in order to understand and be responsive to the realities of contemporary racial inequality and the role of discrimination in fueling that inequity.

Explicit, overt discrimination and public displays of prejudice and bigotry are clearly not as common today as in years past. Progress has been made in ameliorating racial and ethnic disparities. But substantial disparities persist and discrimination remains a central factor in shaping the allocation of home insurance products and other goods and services in the United States. More subtle practices have often replaced the more outward displays of times past. The fundamental way people communicate, by simply talking to each other, is often the basis today for determining who gets what and why.

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