The Hidden Injuries of Racial Employment Discrimination: A Qualitative Analysis of Depression and Psychological Distress

Dissertation

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By

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Abstract

Work represents a primary sphere of social and economic life wherein stratification arrangements are created and reproduced. Stratification research has made this point, delineating how racial inequality within and across labor markets has resulted in wage, unemployment, and mobility inequalities. Less explicit has been the processes of social closure, and specifically the micro-mediational and interactional dynamics that are ultimately shaping these inequalities. Similarly, research on minority mental health and well-being has documented extensively the relationship between race, discrimination, and mental health. However, research in this tradition has been less successful in identifying the processes that underlie this relationship. Scholars in both traditions have stressed the importance in examining the linkages between discrimination and inequality, however, limitations in available data across research veins precludes their ability to do so.

Building on prior research and drawing explicitly from theorizing on social closure, I first, analyzed labor market and occupational variations in racial discrimination and the micro-mediational processes responsible. I then explored the relationship between discrimination across the labor market and occupations, on the psychological well-being of individuals. Few studies to date have
examined this relationship and those that have explored the link between discrimination and psychological functioning were limited to the use of perceived discrimination rather than actual instances of discrimination. Drawing from a unique data set of approximately 400 verified workplace discrimination charges filed with the Ohio Civil Rights Commission (OCRC) from 1988 to 2003, my research addresses questions of discriminatory processes, consequences, and variations using statistical, comparative, and qualitative methods.

The focus of this study was to elaborate existing stratification research in two important ways – mechanisms and exploration of atypical outcomes. The primary contribution of this study was to understand the underlying mechanisms that result in persistent inequality in the American labor market. The qualitative immersion shed significant light on how discrimination unfolds and the ways it may manifest distinctly depending on industrial sector and across occupational statuses. Indeed, in certain sectors and across occupations, “poor performance” is the mechanism employers used in discriminating; in others, “misconduct”; and still, in others, covert and discriminatory tactics are prevalent.

An additional contribution to stratification research was consideration of a fresh outcome apart from economic rewards. The present study explored the linkages between the mechanisms that underlie racial discrimination in the context of employment and minority well-being. Exploration of the qualitative
materials showed how it is likely that discrimination across industrial sectors and occupations shaped mental health outcomes. The literature in this avenue is far less clear about the processes that may be relevant in this relationship therefore this exploratory effort is meant to aid in theory development. The qualitative immersion uncovered certain mechanisms, specifically the role of harassment, which may be central to understanding the link between discrimination and other outcomes such as psychological distress and depression. This is the first study of its kind exploring verified discrimination and consequences that seem to follow.
Dedication

To those who have come before me and for those who will follow.

Si se puede!
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Allegations of workplace discrimination plague this nation’s largest corporations and even trickle down to some of our smallest employers. Abercrombie & Fitch, for example, was ordered to pay $40 million in 2005 in damages to Latino, African American, Asian, and female applicants for failing to hire and even discouraging minority applicants. Further in 2008, the legendary New York restaurant, Tavern on the Green, was ordered to pay $2.2 million to 50 employees who had been victims of severe sexual and racial discrimination on the job. More recently, NASCAR settled a case for $225 million with an ex-official who alleged severe racial and sexual discrimination during her employ. These headlines exemplify that, discrimination is not always just about gaining access to employment as was the case with Abercrombie and Fitch, sometimes discrimination occurs after you get your foot in the door.

In the Tavern on the Green case we see that over the course of several years, female employees were grabbed, groped, and fondled, and African American and Latino employees were ridiculed and often referred to as “ignorant immigrants.” In both cases employees who complained about their treatment were retaliated against by the restaurant management and suffered reduced work hours or pay. The ex-NASCAR official claimed she was often referred to as “Nappy Headed Mo” and “Queen Sheba” by her co-workers. Additionally, she was subjected to sexual advances by several co-workers who engaged in such activities as exposing themselves to her and telling graphic and lewd jokes to her.
The last straw for her was the fear she experienced by one official’s constant references to the Ku Klux Klan. She, like those employed by Tavern on the Green, had succeeded in gaining entry to the workplace, yet, were subjected to a pervasive culture of harassment, perpetuating inequality through harassment in the workplace, a relationship we know relatively little about.

As the American workforce continues to diversify, research about workplace discrimination continues to be pivotal. Sociological research over the past several decades has examined racial inequality in the American labor market and documented its effects extensively. We have learned a great deal about racial variations in labor market opportunity (e.g., Beggs 1995; Cohn and Fossett 1995; Coleman 2002; McCall 2001; Smith and Elliott 2002), wage differentials (e.g., Huffman and Cohen 2004; Kmec 2003; Mason 2000; Tomaskovic-Devey and Skaggs 1999), and other allocative issues. Yet, our knowledge about specific causal processes and non-pecuniary consequences remains limited. While we know the monetary results of discrimination are vast, we need a proper examination of discrimination’s impact on individual well-being. Specifically how does the process of experiencing workplace discrimination affect an individual’s mental health?

To date various studies have examined the way the structural context of the workplace influences social psychological outcomes and stratification (House 1981; Inkeles 1959; Kohn and Schooler 1969; Pearl 1979). Most of these earlier studies examined the degree to which the conditions of occupational life influenced personality and values (e.g. self-direction and conformity) (Inkeles
1959; Kohn and Schooler 1969; Pearlin 1999). In terms of sociology, there is no doubt that this work identifies the specific impact that the structural context of the workplace has had on personality traits. Despite this, it does very little to help us understand how occupational life can influence the psychological functioning of an individual. Building on these works I examine the specific effect of one process, discrimination, on the psychological functioning of individuals. The few studies that have examined this relationship (Clark et al, 1999; Krieger 1999; Pavalko, Mossakowski, and Hamilton 2003; Williams and Williams-Morris 2000) unfortunately were limited to the use of perceived discrimination rather than actual instances of discrimination.

In the present study I address the shortcomings in prior research through an examination of the process of discrimination and its relation to psychological functioning. My objectives are twofold: (1) to examine the continuing relevance of discrimination in the labor market thus identifying a mechanism through which inequality persists in the workforce; and (2) to explore the consequences of discrimination on an individual’s psychological functioning. Drawing from a unique data set of discrimination cases filed in the state of Ohio, this study begins to explicate the process of social closure, in the form of workplace discrimination, while also identifying the potential effects that closure can have on psychological functioning. This research is unique in that it begins to fill the void in the literature by examining stratification creation, persistence, and experience as a function of more general social closure processes rather than as a function of human capital attributes at an individual level.
Racial Discrimination in the American Labor Market

Sociological research has documented significant racial disparity in the American labor market with implications for wage differentials (e.g., Huffman and Cohen 2004; Kmec 2003; Mason 2000; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993), persistent poverty and unemployment (Cohen 1998; Kasarda 1978; Wilson 1978), and job entry and mobility in general (McBrier and Wilson 2004; Pager 2003). Most scholarship has focused on human capital differences, specifically inequalities in educational background (Blaug 1976; Kingston et al. 2003), on-the-job experience (Mincer and Ofek 1982), and job skills (Ben-Porath 1967; Duncan and Hoffman 1979; Mincer and Ofek 1982; Mincer and Polachek 1974). While human capital explanations clearly benefit our understanding of inequality, it is far from complete in terms of explanatory power. These explanations view differences in societal outcomes as being rooted in individual behavior (Blaug 1976). Correspondingly, a sole (or primary) focus on human capital overlooks the role of inequality in institutional processes generally, and closure enacted by institutional and dominant group actors that reify existing stratification arrangements -- factors beyond the control of any given subordinate group member.

Sociological scholarship on labor market inequality has certainly alluded to the importance of discrimination and its more general closure consequences (Reid and Padavic 2005; Vallas 2003; Tomaskovic-Devey, Thomas and Johnson 2005). Often this work infers that residual differences in, for instance, wages once controlling for segregation and human capital differences, are attributable to
employer discrimination (e.g., Cohen 1998; Huffman and Cohen 2004; Peterson and Saporta 2004; Prokos and Padavic 2005; Tomaskovic-Devey, Thomas and Johnson 2005; Wilson and McBrier 2005). Such actions, however, can only be inferred from aggregate designs noted by Reid and Padavic (2005):

*Do employers engage in reasonable evaluation practices that accurately distinguish productive from less productive workers, or do they make such distinctions on the basis of informal criteria, which allow more leeway for the influence of stereotypes based on race and class background? ... The large residual raises the possibility that unmeasured discrimination accounts for differential rates of employment exit and, again, intra-firm processes would shed light on the issue* (257).

Pager (2003), employing audit methodologies and racial testers to analyze employer hiring decisions, finds discretionary and discriminatory behavior by human agents to be key. Yet, more grounded analyses of such processes, as they pertain to not only hiring but firing, mobility, and general harassment, are clearly warranted.

Correspondingly, Reskin (2003) calls for a shift in the discussion towards the mechanisms by which inequality is maintained in our society. She defines “mechanisms” as the “specific processes that link an individual’s ascriptive characteristics to workplace outcomes” (Reskin 2003: 2). This study does what she and other sociologists (Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991; Reskin 2000, 2003) are asking -- it focuses on the mechanisms through which inequality is produced by examining the process of discrimination and its effect on the individual. Rather than relying on the analytic foci proscribed by human capital theory, my theoretical conception is more sociological in nature and revolves around the issue of social closure, when it occurs, why, and its consequences.
Social closure is a process of subordination whereby one group seeks to maximize their advantages with or without intent, by limiting those of another group (Murphy 1986; Parkin 1979; Weber 1968). Closure offers an orienting device by which to not only study the inequality that continues to plague the labor market, but also the mechanisms that are in place to maintain it. The process of discrimination is one such mechanism, whereby one segment of the population protects their control over societal resources and privileges at the expense of another. By examining the process of discrimination from a closure perspective we gain a deeper understanding of the processes by which stratification is defined, created, and maintained.

**Psychological Consequences of Inequality at Work**

While outcomes that are objectively measurable, such as segregation levels, wage and promotion disparities, and levels of hiring or firing have received considerable attention, the social psychological consequences of discrimination and the capacity of individuals to respond to that discrimination have received at most, only secondary treatment. As suggested in a small body of literature, discrimination is quite consequential to overall well-being of minorities – minorities who often adopt strategies to cope with, avoid, and resist discriminatory actors, interactions, and processes.

Analyses of minority mental health have been relatively clear on the role perceived discrimination plays in creating psychological distress, and in shaping physical and mental health across a wide variety of outcomes (Krieger et al. 1993;
Williams 1997; Williams and Collins 1995). The causal effect itself may be relatively direct, through actual face-to-face discriminatory experiences, or indirect through discrimination’s influence on socioeconomic well-being. Analyses of discriminatory processes themselves especially when coupled with first party interpretations of what occurred and the consequences – one of the goals of the current study – would shed significant light on the discrimination’s multiple costs and move beyond speculative consequences based on perceived discrimination as was the case in the past.

This Study and the Data

The data for this study is drawn from 2 distinct sources. (1) the Americans’ Changing Lives survey (ACL), available through the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research; and (2) the Ohio Discrimination Project (ODP) collected by the Ohio State University, under the direction of Vincent Roscigno. The ACL data focuses on the differences between African Americans and Whites later in life, and the ways in which they adopt to stressors in life, with perceived discrimination as one such stressor. The study further includes various dimensions of mental and physical well-being, and occupational life. Data from the ACL has been included in this study to provide a grounded, quantitative analysis of the effects of perceived discrimination on the psychological functioning, specifically mood and anxiety disorders, of individuals. This data is consistent with what past research has used and provides a nice background for how occupational life may influence an individual’s psychological functioning. Coupled with the ODP data,
this study now holds unique explanatory power for helping us understand precisely how occupational life influences an individual’s psychological functioning, not just that it does.

The ODP data set is derived from workplace discrimination charges filed with the Ohio Civil Rights Commission (OCRC) for a 15 year period. These data include the charging party’s race; the respondent (e.g., the employer); the basis of the charge (e.g., race); the harm or injury that occurred (e.g., hiring, firing, general harassment, promotion, or demotion); the industry; the outcome of the investigation; and some geographic indicators (e.g., county FIPS code, zip code). This large data set is useful for making rigorous quantitative comparisons but has also been supplemented with systematic qualitative data taken from the actual case files. This content coded sub-sample includes information on the occupation, industry, race and gender composition of the workplace and detailed first-hand accounts of what occurred from the charging party’s perspective and the employer’s response to the allegations. Such data allow us to move beyond identifying instances where discrimination occurs to a more complete understanding of how and why discrimination persists and its social psychological effects. Both data sets, methodological approach, and analytic strategy are discussed further in Chapter 5.

**The Chapters Ahead**

This study holds exciting potential to address an important limitation in the study of stratification generally, that pertaining to inequality in employment more
specifically. Moreover, it also allows us to gain a greater understanding of how discrimination affects an individual’s psychological functioning in general, but more specifically anxiety and mood disorders. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on workplace experiences and discrimination generally, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of past research. Similarly, Chapter 3 provides the reader with the necessary foundation of minorities and mental health while identifying some gaps in this research avenue as well. I integrate these foci in Chapter 4 and ground the project theoretically, clarifying discrimination and its relation to broader social closure processes.

Chapter 5 turns to the two distinct data sources used for this study, clarifies the measures used in the analyses, and proposes a multi-method analytic strategy aimed at filling the voids past research has been unable to touch. Chapter 6 begins with the Americans’ Changing Lives study. Chapter 6 highlights the importance of examining nationally representative data to explore the relationship between employment discrimination and psychological distress and depression. Findings here indicate that employment discrimination is significantly related to psychological distress and remains so even when controls for such mediating factors such as education, gender, and race are introduced into the model. This is an important first step in understanding the relationship between employment discrimination and psychological distress. Findings for depression are also significant. Chapter 6 explores the possible reason for these findings and what this may mean. A much needed second step in this research tradition is explored in chapters 7 and 8. Chapters 7 and 8 present the results of the analyses from the
Ohio Discrimination Project. Chapter 7 highlights the role of discrimination as a continuing relevant mechanism in the American labor market. Chapter 7 shows us that industrial sector is particularly important for helping us to understand the process of discrimination. More specifically, that firing is the most likely form of discrimination across all sectors of private industries as compared to hiring in the public sector. Additionally, chapter 7 uses the qualitative materials drawn from the ODP data set to offer insight into the process of discrimination. Findings here include that discrimination does indeed manifest itself differently across sectors. Disparate policing is more prevalent in the core industrial sector, while managerial abuse is more prevalent in the low-wage service sector. In the high-wage service sector and the public sector, employers use particularistic criteria and “soft skill” justifications to mask discriminatory behaviors. Additionally, this chapter also discusses variations in the discrimination across occupational statuses. Low-status occupations are plagued by discrimination in the form of disparate policing. Mid-status occupations and high-status occupations fall victim to the use of particularistic criteria. Chapter 8 further explores differences across industrial sectors and occupations but this time in an attempt to understand how the conditions under which depression and psychological distress emerge in victims of discrimination. Psychological distress and depression emerge in the core surrounding the threat of losing one’s livelihood. In the low-wage service sector, themes under which depression and distress develop center on feeling trapped and blocked in employment opportunities. Cases in the high-wage service sector indicated that mounting frustration was the main cause of depression and
distress. Finally, in the public sector, distress and depression emerged when individuals felt isolated and frustrated by their lack of remedy. A similar analysis of the qualitative materials was conducted for occupational status, depression and distress emerged in low-status occupations under conditions of extreme harassment coupled with constant supervision and stricter scrutiny. In mid-status occupations, collective behavior and the failure of formal procedures to protect workers led to the emergence of psychological distress and depression. Finally, in high-status occupations, extreme harassment paired with intimidation was key for the development of psychological distress and depression.

I conclude, in Chapter 9, by discussing prevalent themes that emerged in my analyses, how they speak to existing literature and empirical gaps, and directions for future research. A key finding of this study is that the process of discrimination is not the same across industrial sectors; in fact it does indeed unfold in distinct ways depending on the sector in which the individual is embedded. I believe this can be attributed to the organization of work. Certain industrial segments are organized with protections meant to constrain the arbitrary and often discriminatory behaviors of individuals and based on these conditions the form of discrimination varies. A similar conclusion can be drawn for occupational status. The process of discrimination was distinct across occupational statuses indicating that it does indeed matter for the way in which discrimination is experienced. I speculate that occupational status is relevant to this relationship because of the characteristics of jobs. Certain jobs by virtue of
their status hold more power, authority, and autonomy, this influences the way in which arbitrary discriminatory behaviors can be enacted.
Chapter 2: Racial Disparity in the American Labor Market

Sociological research has documented significant racial disparity in the American labor market with implications for wage differentials (e.g., Huffman and Cohen 2004; Kmec 2003; Mason 2000; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993), persistent poverty and unemployment (Cohen 1998; Kasarda 1978; Wilson 1978), and job entry and mobility in general (McBrier and Wilson 2004; Pager 2003). Although these inequalities and their relative change over time are important, equally relevant sociologically are the workplace-level processes through which such patterns of stratification are created and reproduced. Aside from recent analyses of employer biases (Moss and Tilly 1996), the role of job networks (e.g., Royster 2003) and employers’ tendencies for discretionary hiring (Pager 2003), however, few analyses have been able to explicitly examine proximate workplace mechanisms and processes – mechanisms and processes that hold implications for the work lives and day-to-day experiences of minorities.

Limited attention to processes responsible for the aggregate racial inequalities is largely attributable to a lack of detailed qualitative and quantitative data at the workplace and interactional level. Indeed, researchers have tended to rely on aggregate or survey data, or singular organizational designs. Here, aggregate inequalities even in the face of controls for human capital are easily
captured as are relations with, for instance, economic sector or racial composition 
(e.g., Cohen 1998; Peterson and Saporta 2004). Although such findings are 
certainly important, much recent work concludes that discrimination is also quite 
likely important. Such actions, however, can only be inferred from aggregate 
designs as noted recently by Reid and Padavic (2005).

In the discussion that follows I review the literature on racial inequality at 
work which has gone far in highlighting the persistence of inequalities at work 
and their linkages not only to individual preferences or background attributes, but 
also to labor market and organizational processes that disadvantage minorities.
Much of this work, however, while often assuming that social closure processes 
are playing a role, has left these processes largely unexamined. The exceptions are 
those few studies that utilize audit methodologies or retrospective experiential 
accounts. Yet, aside from a handful of audit analyses which focus largely on the 
exclusionary dimensions of discrimination, few analyses have been able to 
directly analyze contemporary discrimination itself, its various forms, and how 
minorities may be affected.

**Racial Stratification and Labor Markets**

Extensive research over the past several decades has examined workplace racial 
inequality, and sociological work on the topic is clear. The gap between African 
Americans and whites in terms of wages, organizational power, employment 
opportunities, and quality of life has not narrowed significantly. And, notably, 
these gaps remain even in the face of declines in educational inequality and

Traditionally, neo-economic theorizing and status attainment research identified differences in human capital as the principal cause of labor market disadvantages, particularly those of African Americans. The assumption here was that individual investments, such as education, can increase productive capability and, thus, worth and compensation (Kingston et al. 2003; Balser 2002; Bertrand and Mullinathan 2004). This theory however, assumes that people are rational more specifically, that employers will act in the interest of profit maximization and employees will seek employment at the most competitive wage (Bibb and Form 1977). Proponents of human capital theory argue that if an individual is for example, paid a higher wage, it is simply because they possess attributes which make their higher compensation justified. The focus of human capital is not discrimination as the underlying reason for wage differentials, but marginal productivities, and if someone is paid a lower wage, it is not because of discrimination rather it is because they are less productive (Bibb and Form 1977). Reskin and Roos (1990) and Balser (2002) further argue that productivity based on individual characteristics affects opportunities at work from who gets hired, to job assignment, to wages. Kaufman (2002) refers to this as the “skills deficit” argument, noting how some workers¹ have differing (i.e., lower) levels of human

¹ Specifically women and minorities.
capital\textsuperscript{2} that will result in differential labor market opportunities. If one accepts this premise, it might historically make sense that African Americans will earn lower wages, have less organizational power, and fewer overall economic opportunities.

Most problematic with the aforementioned explanation, however, is its “methodological individualist” orientation, wherein societal outcomes are seen as rooted largely in individual behaviors\textsuperscript{3} (Blaug 1976). Correspondingly, a solitary focus on human capital overlooks the role of inequality in institutional processes generally, and closure enacted by institutional and dominant group actors that reify existing stratification arrangements -- factors beyond the control of any given subordinate group member. Moreover, all individuals are presumed to have equal opportunity, in say compulsory schooling or training. Since training often determines wages and movement within the organization, but is not always provided equally to all employees it is a delicate way in which discrimination can be seen in the workplace today (Balser 2002; Glass 1999).

As noted recently by Tomaskovic-Devey, Thomas, and Johnson (2005), this has implications for not only the data that scholars have tended to collect, but also our ability to theoretically and empirically examine sociologically relevant processes.

\textsuperscript{2} Consistent with past research, the desired forms of human capital are education, on-the-job-training, work experience, skills etc…

\textsuperscript{3} For example, a conscious decision to forgo wages while pursuing an advanced education. It is also the case that human capital investments are often assumed to be fixed across all segments of the labor market (Beck, Horan and Tolbert 1978). This assumption is problematic because research has documented that the social organization of labor varies across industrial sectors and that economic and social rewards correspondingly follow (Kaufnan, Hodson, and Fligstein 1981) -- a point which is revisited momentarily.
Within a status-attainment or human capital framework, we cannot observe discrimination. These are essentially theoretical models that assume a more or less meritocratic labor market allocation process. They have encouraged social scientists to collect data on individuals’ characteristics and labor market attainment. Thus, discrimination is not observed, but must be inferred as a residual significant effect, once presumably meritocratic factors have been statistically accounted for. It seems unlikely that we will ever advance knowledge of discrimination mechanisms with data collected in a human capital or status-attainment framework. (Tomaskovic-Devey, Thomas, and Johnson, 2005: 85).

In recent years it seems that labor market sectoral differences and levels of workplace segregation seem more paramount. Indeed, recent research has highlighted the structure of the labor market and its relationship to inequality (e.g., Beggs 1995; Coleman 2002; Mason 2000; Semoyonov, Raijman and Yom-Tov 2002). This work has highlighted quite nicely the effects of economic structures on the racial wage gap (e.g. Huffman and Cohen 2004; McCall 2001), the role of racial competition on group economic well-being (e.g. Semoyonov, Raijman and Yom-Tov 2002), and the role of business concentration on black employment (e.g. Coleman 2002). It has been less successful, however, in explaining the overall receptiveness of industrial sectors to non-white workers (notable exceptions include Royster 2003; see also Beggs 1995). 4

Traditional labor market analyses divided the economy into two sectors: monopoly and competition (O’Connor 1973); core and periphery (Averitt 1968; Bibb and Form 1977); marginal and non-marginal (Bridges 1980). Although the names vary, they all essentially refer to the same economic arrangements. Each of these models share similar features -- a primary sector characterized by high

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4 And women, although this is not the particular focus of this research.
productivity and profits, high levels of capital, and large firms; and a secondary sector, marked by low productivity and profits, smaller firms, and increased competition. Presumably the organization of work varies across these sectors, leading economic and social rewards and work experiences to also vary – a point made clear by Wilson (1976) in his arguments and analyses of de-industrialized minority concentrated areas and increasing reliance on secondary sector employment (see also Roscigno and Hodson 2004).

A simple dichotomous break in labor market structure is, however, too simplistic and will underestimate variation even within the dual categories of core and periphery (Bridges 1980; Hodson and Kaufman 1982). Kaufman, Hodson, and Fligstein (1981) argue that strategies of growth and control come together to lead to structural differentiation that is not limited to only two sectors. They articulate a more complex multi-dimensional model for operationalizing difference in industrial sector. The authors conclude that the multi-dimensional model takes into consideration variations in the organization of the sector. Some, for instance, are more bureaucratic; in others, firm size, monopolization and large-scale productivity dictate organization; still others owing largely in part to specialization, professionalism, and training are organized with certain protections; and yet still some are disorganized, leading to less formalized structure and process and more chaos (Roscigno and Hodson 2004).

It is important to consider industrial sector because it does indeed pattern work, and specifically the extent to which actors are enabled or constrained from acting in discretionary and, indeed, discriminatory ways. Sociologists have
maintained that employer discretion is a fundamental source of racially disparate treatment in workplace rewards (Dobbin et. al 1993; Tomaskovic-Devey and Skaggs 1999; Pager 2003; Reskin 2000). More formalized economic sectors (e.g., the state sector, high wage, core sector, etc.) and the organizational structures within them, for instance, may provide procedural constraint in arbitrary and ascriptively-oriented managerial and co-worker conduct. Discretion, which is usually a product of a workplace with relatively few formalized regulations, permits subjective judgments to filter into decision-making by employers regarding access to socioeconomic rewards (Pager 2003; Wilson et. al 1999). Bielby (2000) argues that our ability to limit the effect of “stereotypical thinking” on personnel decisions is particularly difficult when the criteria on which to base decisions is arbitrary. The more discretion individuals have in terms of hiring, promotion, and other workplace decisions, the more likely it is that bias will play a role in the decision. Low-wage service sector work is often poorly organized with significant managerial flexibility in terms of hiring, firing, and promotion, and which lends itself to abuses of that flexibility (Roscigno and Hodson 2004). Correspondingly, one might expect heightened levels of discrimination by race, and certainly that which appears completely arbitrary in nature.

When we talk of subjective judgments in the context of race, however, we must consider that what could be seen as an arbitrary action is likely linked to the history of race in the United States and the dynamics of “modern prejudice” (Pettigrew 1985). Minority group members are often hindered by seemingly race-neutral, objective employment practices which are rooted in for example,
stereotypes about their work ethic, loyalty/trustworthiness, and interaction ability (Bobo 2002; Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991; Pettigrew 1985). These stereotypes provide the foundation for “soft-skills” and “hard-skills” which results in statistical discrimination (Tomaskovic-Devey and Skaggs 1999) resulting in differential valuation of human capital credentials (Pettigrew 1985; Wilson 1997). Accordingly, African Americans are not viewed with the same degree of objectivity with which whites are viewed a point I will revisit momentarily.

**Recent Developments and the Explication of Social Closure Processes**

As previously noted prior work has been quite useful in demarcating levels of racial inequality in employment, variations by sector, and the roles of disparate concentration, human capital variations, and job networks. A more complete understanding of stratification, however, requires examination of process and actors involved in reinforcing inequality (Vallas 2003). Feagin’s (1991) account of discriminatory processes in day-to-day interaction nicely illustrates the role of majority group actors and the interactive nature of inequality creation. Numerous others studies attest to the persistence of discrimination, particularly in everyday encounters (Feagin 1991; Feagin and Vera 1995; Forman, Williams and Jackson 1997; Hughes and Thomas 1998; Kessler, Mickelson and Williams 1999; Smith 1995). Even workplace stratification research has begun to address this question, especially in the form of employer attitudinal analyses and audit studies.

Labor market analyses by sociologists in recent years have begun to examine the processes that produce inequities on the basis of race. Employer
interviews are one method researchers have employed to assist in understanding why blacks and whites may experience differential treatment and outcomes in the workplace. Aggregate data sets can only analyze “hard skills” – typically measured by human capital, skill, and experience. Since employer discretion and screening methods often rely on a justification of differences in “soft-skills,” they are best measured through employer surveys. Here, employers, net of human capital credentials and other “hard skills” invoke invidious stereotypes that result in rating blacks lower in measures of soft skills such as interactional ability and motivation (Kirschenman, Moss, Tilly 1995; Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991; Moss and Tilly 1996).

While certainly useful and suggestive, there still remains the potential for slippage in what employers say versus what they may actually do. Indeed, behavior can be influenced by such things as social desirability, interactions with individuals, and situational factors – all of which do not always directly follow from attitudes (Pager and Quillian 2005). Correspondingly, audit methodologies may be more effective at getting at discriminatory process.

Audit studies attempt to place qualified minorities and white actors into economic and social settings to measure how each group will fare (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004). These studies have been instrumental in informing us on topics surrounding discrimination. For instance, Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) sent resumes to employers in several metropolitan areas that were identical in all respects except they simulated race via the use of name for the concocted job candidates. The authors found that a candidate with a “white” sounding name
e.g. Emily Walsh, was more likely to receive a call back for an interview, as compared to a candidate with a “black” sounding name (e.g., Jamal Jones). These authors additionally tested for several other dynamics, including resume quality,^5^ a possible proxy for human capital, and found that added resume quality did not operate as a benefit for blacks in the same way that it did for whites^6^.

The most recent audit study by Pager and Quillian (2005) was meant to test the relationship between employer attitudes towards hiring ex-offenders, race, and their actual behavior. Pager and Quillian (2005) first sent “testers” with similar qualifications and appearance into the same work environment only varying race and ex-offender status only to find large and significant effects of both race and ex-offender status. Blacks and ex-offenders were less likely to be invited back for second interviews with black offenders experiencing the greatest disadvantages. This audit study was then followed by a telephone survey which allowed employers to express their hiring preferences. Employers reported a far greater willingness to hire ex-offenders than the audit study illustrated. Their results suggest that what employers say do not match what they do, thereby confirming the problems associated with relying solely on attitudes to inform us on inequality at work.

Although Pager and Quillian’s work is helpful in pointing out the dangers in relying on attitudinal analyses, it is not without its limits. Audit studies in

^5^ Higher quality resumes typically had more work experience, fewer gaps between employment, were more likely to have some form of degree certification and foreign language skill (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004).

^6^ Whites with higher quality resumes received 30% more call backs than whites with lower quality resumes, this effect was not as large for blacks (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004).
general can only get at one form of discrimination, exclusion, and typically do not shed light on the interactional nature of inequality or even differential mobility within the workplace. Moreover, audit studies, Pager and Quillian (2005) included, tend to focus on happenings in only one sector, the low-wage service sector, thereby leaving the remaining segments of the labor market virtually unexplored. Audit designs nevertheless move us in a needed direction by bringing human actors back into the equation and by asking how, precisely, the inequalities so effectively highlighted in racial stratification research are being recreated.

Conclusions

Sociological research has devoted much scholarship to understanding the American labor market and the workplace experiences of African Americans. This literature has provided a framework for understanding racial employment discrimination and highlights the importance of allocative issues in the American labor market, often attributing the existing inequality to differences in individual characteristics – the neo-classical economic argument. However, this research fails to consider the role of social closure in the labor market.

It seems that while disparate workplace outcomes are due in part to individual characteristics and structural factors, organizational processes such as social closure are also important factors to be considered. These organizational processes are used by members of the dominant group to reify the existing arrangements so that African Americans continue to remain at a disadvantage in the American labor market.
More recent research has begun to address the shortcomings of the neo-classical perspective by considering the role of race and employer prejudice in employment decisions. By using audit studies to explore this relationship we have gained greater insight into the experiences of African Americans in the labor market. There are however, problems with this line of research as well. Use of audit methodology has been limited to examine access to employment, thereby leaving the other dimensions of the workplace such as firing and promotion, virtually unexplored. Additionally, other problems with audit studies include: inability to eliminate differences between all testers, tester bias, and sample size. Yet nevertheless we have gained a greater understanding of the agents involved in generating and maintain discrimination in the workplace and how procedures can be and are manipulated by those in the dominant group to preserve their advantage.
Chapter 3: Work, Discrimination, and Well-being

Work represents one of the primary spheres of social life, within which stratification remains apparent even decades after the Civil Rights Act. For this reason, sociological research continues to focus on racial inequality in the sphere of work. While the literature on racial inequality has been successful in explaining variations in labor market opportunity (e.g., Beggs 1995; Cohn and Fossett 1995; Coleman 2002; McCall 2001; Smith and Elliott 2002), wage differentials (e.g., Huffman and Cohen 2004; Kmec 2003; Mason 2000; Tomaskovic-Devey and Skaggs 1999), human capital differences (e.g., Tam 1997), and the impact of workplace segregation (e.g., Browne et al 2001; Maume 1999; Reskin 1993), it has been less successful in explaining the process of racial discrimination in the context of work and its psychological consequences.

To date various studies have examined the way the structural context of the workplace influences social psychological outcomes and stratification (House 1981; Inkeles 1959; Kohn and Schooler 1969; Pearlin 1999). Most of these earlier studies were concerned with the degree to which the conditions of occupational life influenced personality and values such as self-direction and conformity. In terms of sociology, there is no doubt that this work identifies the specific impact that the structural context of the workplace has had on personality traits but it has done little in the way of exploring the link to other dimensions of stratification
(Forman 2003). Sociological research must move beyond this to examining the specific effect of one process, racial discrimination in the context of employment, on the psychological functioning of individuals. Forman (2003) argues:

…it is essential that we begin to push the survey method in new directions in order to shed light on the social processes and conditions that constitute the lived experiences of those interviewed (Forman 2003: 346)

Scholars have started this process by examining the effects of perceived discrimination on health status, generally finding that African Americans have higher levels of psychological distress than whites. However our understanding of the factors responsible for racial differences in health is still limited and even more limited is our understanding of the role of experiencing discrimination in the context of employment on health status. Few studies to date have examined this relationship (notable exceptions are Amaro, Russo and Johnson 1987; Broman, Mavaddat, and Hsu 2000; Forman 2003; Krieger 1999; Pavalko, Mossakowski, and Hamilton 2003) and those that have examined the link between racial discrimination, employment, and health were limited to the use of perceived discrimination rather than actual instances of discrimination.

In the section that follows I review the literature on racial discrimination and its psychological consequences, which has gone far in highlighting the continuing significance of race and its implications for an individual’s well-being. Similarly to workplace stratification research, much of this work is often unable to examine the processes and mechanisms by which discrimination can lead to changes in health. The exceptions are those few studies that utilize qualitative
accounts to uncover the association between the multiple contexts of racial
discrimination and health. Yet, aside from a handful of these analyses which focus
largely on perceived discrimination, few analyses have been able to directly
analyze contemporary racial employment discrimination itself, its various forms,
and how it can induce considerable distress for minorities.

**Racial Discrimination and Health**

Sociological research over the past several decades has examined the relationship
between health and discrimination extensively. These studies have highlighted the
association between unfair treatment and/or racial bias and psychological distress
(Amaro, Russo and Johnson 1987; Dion et. al. 1992; Meyer 1995; Rumbaut 1994;
Salgado de Snyder 1987; Williams 2000), life satisfaction (Amaro, Russo and
Johnson 1987; Birt and Dion 1987; Jackson et al 1996; Williams and Chung
1999) depressive symptoms (Kessler et. al. 1999; Noh and Kaspar 2003;) and
hypertension (James et. al. 1984; Krieger 1990; Krieger and Sydney 1996). This
research has illuminated the salience of this topic to sociological research and the
importance of its continued exploration. However, the findings for this body of
work are bifurcated and often contradictory in nature.

Several studies have shown that the experience of discrimination has
resulted in higher levels of psychological distress (Landrine and Klonoff 1996;
Kessler et al. 1999; Ren et al. 1999) and that African Americans tend to exhibit
higher levels of this distress as compared to their white counterparts (Williams et
al. 1997). Yet still other research in the same vein has found no association
between the experience of discrimination and psychological distress (Jackson et al. 1996; Williams et al. 1997) and that under certain conditions African Americans who reported experiencing discrimination also reported significantly lower levels of distress (Williams et al. 1997). These confounded findings also hold true for other measures of health such as well-being, often operationalized as overall life satisfaction. Similarly, these findings indicate that there is an inverse relationship between discrimination and life satisfaction (Amaro, Russo and Johnson 1987; Jackson et al. 1996; Williams and Chung 1999), yet Williams et al. (1997) found that in certain instances African Americans who had reported experiencing discrimination actually had higher levels of life satisfaction.

The mixed results of this avenue of literature beg us to call to question these contradictory findings and necessitate closer examination of the methods employed in this research. One limitation of past research has been its inability to derive a common measure of discrimination (Williams, Neighbors and Jackson 2003), resulting in wide variation in how discrimination is measured in health studies. To begin with most studies are examining perceived discrimination and an individual’s exposure to that discrimination. Some studies have involved exposure to perceived discrimination over a 30 day period (Jackson et al. 1996), while others have asked respondents to recall their experiences with discrimination in as much as the past 6 months to a year (Landrine 1995; Meyer 1995; Thompson 1996) or even 3 years (Broman 1996, 2000). In addition, some studies examine chronic experiences with discrimination (Williams et al. 1997), others acute experiences (Kessler et al. 1999), and still others offer no indication
as to if it is a chronic or an acute experience (Krieger 1990; Krieger and Sydney 1996).

A second similar limitation of this line of research is the variation in which indicators of health status are used. There is great diversity in the measures selected to capture health status. Some studies have examined psychological distress (Landrine and Klonoff 1996; Williams 2000), others depressive symptoms (Kessler et al. 1999; Noh and Kaspar 2003), and still others life satisfaction (Clark et al. 1999; Jackson et al. 1996; Williams and Chung 1999). Further, some studies have examined indicators of physical health such as blood pressure (Dressler 1990; James et al. 1984) and heart disease (Broman 1996), and even low birth weight (Murrell 1996) and premenstrual symptoms (Landrine et al. 1995). Yet in spite of this wide range of measures, discussions all seem to center around a common theme “the effect of discrimination on health status,” when in reality, these studies are examining various indicators of health.

An additional concern for this research is the subjective nature of many measures. Often, respondents are asked to self-report not only their own perceptions of discrimination but also their own health, which is far from a clinical diagnosis and problematic it is own right.

Nevertheless, while methods and measures have varied over time, a majority of the available research seems to consistently find that there is a significant association between discrimination and physical and mental health. What research has been unable to determine thus far is the extent to which exposure to discrimination leads to increased health risks, the conditions under
which this would occur, and the mechanisms and processes that are involved (Williams, Neighbors and Jackson 2003).

**The Psychological Consequences of Racial Discrimination at Work**

As just noted analyses of minority mental health have examined the role perceived discrimination plays in creating psychological distress, and in shaping physical and mental health across a wide variety of outcomes (Krieger et al. 1993; Williams 1997; Williams and Collins 1995). The causal effect itself may be relatively direct, through actual face-to-face perceived discriminatory experiences, or indirect through discrimination’s influence on socioeconomic well-being. However, little research has focused solely on the role of racial discrimination in the context of work and the implications it may have for physical and mental health.

Recent research has started to explore the relationship between health and the context of employment, examining such issues as job segmentation (Forman 2003), entrance into the workplace (Broman, Mavaddat, and Hsu 2000; Pavalko, Mossakowski, and Hamilton 2003), job security (James et al. 1984), mobility in the workplace (Pavalko, Mossakowski, and Hamilton 2003) and workplace conditions more generally (Broman, Mavaddat, Hsu 2000; Pavalko, Mossakowski, and Hamilton 2003). The findings are clear, African Americans who perceive themselves as victims of discrimination suffer health consequences.

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7 Although less often focused upon, one might expect a similar pattern to hold for women given objective and subjective differences in workplace experiences and rewards (Ross and Mirowsky 1996) and direct forms of discrimination that women may face within employment contexts.
What is less clear however, is the process behind these findings and scholars agree, that no existing data set permits the adequate examination of this process and related mechanisms. In spite of the limitations of existing data, it is important to understand what we can, regarding the experience of discrimination and health effects.

The most recent research by Broman, Mavaddat, and Hsu (2000) expands Broman’s earlier studies by testing the relationship between several key arenas (at work, at home, shopping etc.) and mastery and distress. Broman, Mavaddat, Hsu (2000) find that 60% of their sample of African Americans perceived that they had been discriminated against in some way in the past 3 years, reporting that discrimination while shopping in a store was the most common occurrence of the experience. Additionally, nearly 25% of their respondents reported perceiving discrimination in getting a job or at their workplace. Further, it appears that as expected, the experience of discrimination in getting a job leads to increased distress and a decline in mastery. Results however, for the experience of discrimination at work in general were not statistically significant.

Similarly, Pavalko, Mossakowski, and Hamilton (2003) found significant physical and emotional health repercussions for women who had experienced discrimination at work. Pavalko, Mossakowski, and Hamilton (2003) utilized a unique study design, examining not only different forms of discrimination, but also multiple points in time, offering us the most extensive research methods available. The authors found that there was a difference in how discrimination impacted health over time. Based on their results they concluded that emotional
health is impacted by more recent discrimination, while problems with physical health tended to take several years after the discrimination had been reported to manifest (Pavalko, Mossakovski, and Hamilton 2003).

Another central study in this body of work examined the association between perceived racial segmentation in the workplace and psychological well-being. Forman (2003) explored the association between the least desirable jobs in terms of power, prestige, and chance for advancement and emotional distress, feelings of worthlessness and powerlessness. A secondary dimension of his analysis was the relationship between job segmentation and social status. Forman’s (2003) findings highlight the inverse relationship between job segmentation for African Americans and well-being, and its positive association to psychological distress. Additionally, Forman (2003) finds that these relationships are of greater significance for higher status blacks, arguing that this is in part due to the fact that whites have become their comparison group for evaluating their success and even their well-being.

While this body of research has illustrated the significance in understanding the relationship between discrimination in the context of employment and health effects, little light has been shed on the mechanisms underlying these potential health effects.

**Conclusion**

By devoting limited empirical attention to processes of social closure, workplace stratification research has tended to neglect several consequences of
discrimination that are quite important to those experiencing it. Indeed, while outcomes that are objectively measurable, such as segregation levels, wage and promotion disparities, and levels of hiring or firing have received considerable attention, the social psychological consequences of racial discrimination in the context of employment and the capacity of individuals to respond to that discrimination have received at most, only secondary treatment. This is unfortunate. As suggested, discrimination is quite consequential to the overall well-being of minorities – minorities who often adopt strategies to cope with, avoid, and resist discriminatory actors, interactions, and processes. As recently noted by Williams, Neighbors, and Jackson (2003):

*A major challenge in future research is to think more carefully about the models by which perceived discrimination might adversely affect health status, including focusing more explicit attention on the plausible pathways by which these effects might occur. One of the most critical needs is for more careful research attention to the specific mechanism by which perceptions of discrimination might adversely affect health (Williams, Neighbors, and Jackson 2003: 205).*

Analyses of discriminatory processes themselves especially when coupled with first party interpretations of what occurred and the consequences would shed significant light on discrimination's multiple costs.
Chapter 4: Limitations, Extension and the Present Study

As previously noted, sociological literature has devoted much attention to understanding the role of the American labor market in stratification maintenance. We have developed a vast knowledge of differences in wages (McCall 2001; Huffman and Cohen 2004) occupational segregation (England 1982; Maume 1999) and black joblessness (Wilson, 1991; Farley 1987). Still though, our understanding of the processes behind these persistent inequalities is limited. A parallel interest in minority well-being and its association with discrimination also emerged and similarly, we have learned how perceptions of discrimination can induce distress for minority group members. Specifically, increased levels of distress (Williams and Williams-Morris 2002; Landrine and Klonoff 1996) lower levels of life satisfaction and happiness (Broman 1997; Williams and Chung 1999; Hughes and Thomas 1998), as well as poor physical health (Williams and Chung 1999; Jackson et al. 1996). But again, our understanding of the mechanisms which link discrimination to health outcomes is limited at best. Further, scholars in both research traditions have independently agreed that we have omitted the linkages between these two avenues of interest and simultaneously, overlooked consideration of the mechanisms and processes by which discrimination unfolds and can lead to changes in health and well-being from research in these traditions.
In this chapter, I further examine the limitations of prior research discussed in the previous chapters and lay out a theoretical framework that will allow me to speak to the multidimensional nature of discrimination and its significance for health and well-being. An ancillary function of this chapter is to highlight the primary and secondary contributions of my research to the field of sociology.

**Limitations of Past Research**

Scholarship on workplace and labor market inequality certainly alludes to the importance of discrimination and its more general closure consequences, often inferring that residual differences in, for instance, wages, once controlling for segregation and human capital differences are attributable to employer discrimination (e.g., Huffman and Cohen 2004; Prokos and Padavic 2005; Tomaskovic-Devey, Thomas and Johnson 2005; Wilson and McBrier 2005). And, quite recent analytic developments in the workplace stratification literature by Pager (2003), which employ audit methodology (and racial testers) in analyzing employer hiring decisions, find discretionary and discriminatory behavior by human agents to be key. Yet, more grounded analyses of such processes, as they pertain to not only hiring (exclusion) but firing, mobility, and general harassment, are clearly warranted in order to explicate the multidimensional nature of discrimination.

Limitations of past stratification research are primarily due to constraints of available data – data on individuals’ characteristics that has been collected in
the tradition of status attainment models which presume that the labor market is meritocratic (Tomaskovic-Devey, Thomas and Johnson (2005). The result is data that highlights empirical relationships but which is unable to delve into the processes that underlie these relationships. While these types of cause-effect analyses are necessary for understanding and even specifying relations, they only make modest steps towards informing us on the ways in which these relations unfold. More exploratory research on the processes and mechanisms that form the basis for inequality are needed.

While research in the traditions of mental health has openly acknowledged the importance of discrimination to health, it has been ineffective at best, in studying discrimination as a consequence of social closure. A central critique of the field of mental health relates to the problems in defining and measuring sociological concepts. In general, dissimilar instrument design or fluid criteria of “caseness” across studies often makes them indirectly comparable (Vega and Rumbaut 1991) and could perhaps, be one of the reasons why findings have been so inconsistent over the past several decades.

Moreover, research in this tradition has been forced to rely on data derived from individual perceptions of discrimination, with studies asking participants about their experiences of unfair treatment in several spheres of social life. This measure of discrimination is flawed at best for several reasons: 1) there is no clear

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8 Vega and Rumbaut (1991) describe “caseness” as a process whereby researchers attempt to identify individuals who have symptom levels similar to those of patients in treatment. Historically this process has involved comparing responses to a series of items on the Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D) symptom checklist. Scores on this scale usually range from 0-60, but scores of 16 or higher are interpreted to mean high levels of depressive symptomology (Vega and Rumbaut 1991).
definition of discrimination since it is based on individual perceptions of unfair treatment; 2) variability in both what is meant by unfair treatment and in the cause of the unfair treatment cannot be accounted for; and 3) survey questions are often not specific enough in terms of the dimension of discrimination that is being studied or the social realm in which the experience occurred. Given these limitations in data collection, there is no clear way of determining if this perceived unfair treatment is indeed discrimination. The data used for this study clearly resolves this issue and uses a measure of actual discrimination adjudicated by a neutral third party as opposed to perceptions of unfair treatment.

As a result of these limitations in available data, sociological research has been largely unable to uncover the linkages between discrimination and changes in health and well-being. Lack of quantitative and qualitative data prevent us from being able to examine the workplace processes that are responsible for these changes in health and well-being. As noted by Vega and Rumbaut (1991):

*Presently, a law of the instrument prevails in mental health research. Checklists and diagnostic protocols are invented, surveys are conducted, and the data are presented....The result is an epidemiologic research literature that reflects a general disregard for both the cultural content and the social context of mental health problems (p.359).*

This study aims to fill that void by utilizing a unique data set to address both the cultural content and the social context of mental health problems arising from discrimination in the context of employment. By employing a mixed methods research design, I will overcome the limitations of past research, and begin to uncover the previously unidentifiable linkages between discrimination and well-being.
Theoretical limitations, however, are also to blame – limitations that have pushed researchers toward the specification of relations (e.g., direction, magnitude, statistical significance of proposed associations) rather than toward explication of how such relations operate in concrete workplace settings. Reskin (2003), in her presidential address to the American Sociological Association, makes a similar case, suggesting that stratification scholars must shift attention toward an elaboration of “mechanisms” or the “specific processes that link an individual’s ascriptive characteristics to workplace outcomes” (p.2). Similarly, Williams, Neighbors, and Jackson (2003) challenge researchers to shift their focus from specifying associations to unearthing the underlying processes by which discrimination may adversely affect health. Recent analyses of employment inequalities as well as stratification across a variety of institutional arenas concurs regarding this need (Charles 2003; McBrier and Wilson 2004; Huffman and Cohen 2004; Vallas 2003). Indeed, delineation of mechanisms and in-depth analyses of process will provide a validity check on interpretations and existing theoretical speculation rather than necessarily supplanting work already undertaken on the topic.

**Theoretical Extension**

Closure is thus a useful sociological orienting device because it forces us to consider not only the degree of stratification, but rather the sociological processes that are implicated in its reproduction. In doing so we gain a more complete understanding of stratification -- a central goal to inequality scholars, for sure, but
one which also lends itself more clearly to policy and organized efforts to address persistent disparities. It is not enough however, in a discussion of closure to only focus on outcomes we must give attention to how and why these disparate outcomes occur. Social closure offers us a way to not only study this continuing inequality, but also the mechanisms that are in place to maintain it. Closure is a process of subordination whereby one group seeks to maximize their advantages with or without intent, by limiting those of another group (Murphy 1986; Parkin 1979; Weber 1968).

The process of discrimination is one such mechanism, whereby one segment of the population protects their control over societal resources and privileges at the expense of another. Discrimination refers to arbitrary decision-making on the part of individual actors that can take the form of either outright differential treatment or covert acts of discrimination or both. By examining the process of discrimination and its repercussions from a closure perspective we gain a deeper understanding of the processes by which stratification is defined, created, and maintained, thereby shifting attention towards not only disparate outcomes which continue to exist, but also the causal mechanism which result in these persistent inequalities.

The Present Study

This study is an elaboration of existing stratification research in two important ways – mechanisms and exploration of atypical outcomes. Research in this

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9 The assumption here is that there is some level of agency involved in these interactions and that not all discrimination is indeed structural.
tradition has devoted much time into understanding how discrimination results in inequality, yet little attention has been paid to understanding how those inequalities are maintained. The primary contribution of this study is to explore the underlying mechanisms that result in the persistence of inequality stemming from employment discrimination. This process was started with audit studies and other experimental designs however, due to the nature of these studies they can only measure one form of discrimination – exclusion. The present study evaluates not only exclusion but also discrimination in firing, mobility, and general harassment.

An additional contribution to the stratification literature is consideration of how discrimination can affect an outcome other than allocation and pecuniary rewards. It is clear that discrimination can have personal and behavioural consequences, yet few studies explore this relationship. The present study begins to explicate the linkages between the mechanisms that underlie racial discrimination in the context of employment on the personal and behavioural consequences of marginality such as those stemming from the experience of discrimination.

A secondary contribution of this study is to the mental health literature. Past research has denoted the empirical relationship between perceptions of discrimination and mental health however a clear measure of discrimination has escaped their grasp. In this study I am able to clearly define and measure discrimination as something beyond just a perception of unfair treatment. Moreover, my data is drawn from civil rights claims adjudicated by a neutral third
party, giving them added value beyond data based solely on perceptions. Due to reliance on measures of perceived discrimination rather than actual instances of discrimination, the study of minority mental health and well-being has been incapable of identifying the mechanisms that lead to poorer health. Therefore a secondary focus of this study is to identify the mechanism and processes of discrimination that lead to consequences for an individual’s mental health.

**Conclusion**

Social stratification research has examined the empirical association between discrimination and inequality across multiple economic outcomes extensively, but it has failed to explore how those inequalities are maintained. Conjointly, scholars in this research tradition have given little consideration to the role discrimination may play in personal and behavioural outcomes such as psychological distress or depression. Similarly, researchers studying the empirical relationship between mental health and discrimination have reported mixed findings, which could perhaps be due to problems associated with a measure of perceived discrimination. Equally important in sociological research is however, the development of what processes may be relevant in the empirical relationships we study. The present study shifts attention to two very important foci – the causal mechanisms which result in disparate outcomes in the American labor market and exploration of an atypical outcome in stratification research.

Social closure as a sociological construct invites and, in fact, directs us toward an in-depth understanding of the *processes* through which stratification
hierarchies are both defined and recreated (Murphy 1986; Parkin 1979; Weber 1968). Discrimination – or actions or practices carried out by members of the dominant group that have a differential and negative effects on subordinate group members (Feagin 1991; Feagin and Vera 1995) – reflects arguably the most important dimension of closure with implications for employment opportunity, well-being, and inequality more generally.
Chapter 5: Data & Methods

This is a multi-method study, and I use both primary and secondary data. Because a central goal of my dissertation is to understand the mechanisms behind discrimination and mental health consequences, I use qualitative and quantitative data derived from two data sets. The Ohio Discrimination Project (ODP) collected under the direction of Vincent Roscigno at the Ohio State University and the Americans’ Changing Lives (ACL) longitudinal data, available publicly from the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), are used.

The Americans’ Changing Lives Survey

Administered by the Institute for Social Research, Survey Research Center and funded by the National Institute on Aging, the ACL is a national longitudinal panel survey focusing on differences between African Americans and whites in middle and late life. Data was collected through face-face interviews with adults age 25 and over, living in the United States over four (4) points in time. For Wave I, a multistage stratified area probability sample that over-sampled African Americans and adults age 60 and older, was used (N=3,617). For Wave II, an attempt was made to contact all the original respondents from the first wave.
resulting in N=2,867 for Wave II. For Wave III, respondents from both Waves I and II were contacted (N=2,298) and some proxy respondent were used (N=164). Finally, for Wave IV, a similar procedure was used regarding contacting original respondents (N=2338) and proxies (N= 95) resulting in total respondents numbering N= 2433\textsuperscript{11} for Wave IV. Though this is a panel study, in these analyses I will be treating it essentially as cross-sectional data, examining data drawn from Wave IV.

This data was selected for two primary reasons. First, the questionnaire included extensive batteries of questions on issues surrounding mental health, quality of life, stress, and psychological well-being, as well as indexed variables measuring the magnitude of depressive episodes and the symptoms of depression. Because of the design of the survey, the ACL was able to ascertain information on not only perceptions of ill health and depressive symptoms, but also frequency and duration of occurrence. Additionally, the ACL also contains a series of indicators of discrimination. Respondents where first asked if they had been treated unfairly in various social arenas, and were then asked about the frequency and duration of the events, before being asked about the main reason they believed they had experienced this unfair treatment. Unlike, the discrimination measures available in previously collected data, the ACL specifically included a

\textsuperscript{11} This number is much lower than the initial 3,617 interviewed at Wave I because 1,184 respondents had died and were not interviewed for Wave IV (575 died at Wave IV and the remainder had died prior to Wave IV).
battery of questions pertaining to discrimination in the context of employment.\textsuperscript{12}

Since the primary interest of this analysis is how employment discrimination impacts an individual’s health and well-being, the sample was limited to those respondents who answered the question about being unfairly fired or denied promoted (N=1657).

The present study is a unique analysis that investigates the extent to which racial discrimination in the context of employment, impacts mental health status. Findings in this research tradition have been mixed and this analysis is the first step in reframing the way in which we examine the impact of discrimination on health and well-being.

\textbf{The ACL Measures}

The data provided several measures for individual depression and psychological distress derived from a detailed battery of questions that not only asked respondents if they had experienced the symptom, but also included questions regarding the frequency and duration of a given symptom. Additionally, the principle investigators used the responses collected from these various symptoms to create a scale of psychological distress and one of major depressive episodes, I have selected these as my dependent variables for this portion of the analysis.

\textsuperscript{12} Respondents were asked a series of questions pertaining to their experiences at work. Respondents were first asked if they had been “unfairly fired” or “unfairly denied a promotion,” if respondents answered affirmatively to this questions they were subsequently asked about the frequency of this event and the main reason why they felt this event had occurred.
Psychological distress is defined as the inability to function positively in society and maintain positive relations with others, which leads to the feeling that life is not meaningful (Ryff 1989). The ACL measure of psychological distress combined multiple outcomes\(^{13}\) into an 11 item Center for the Epidemiological Study of Depression (CES-D) scale. This variable was constructed by taking the mean across the 11 input items. The final index was re-standardized using Wave 1 weighted index mean and standard deviation.\(^{14}\) Higher scores on this index indicate higher levels of psychological distress.

In addition to an analysis of this scale of psychological distress, a separate analysis of depression will also be conducted. Depression is defined as an emotional state that affects an individual’s mood, physical health, and ability to handle life’s everyday decisions and pressures (http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/depression/complete-index.shtml). The measure drawn from the ACL data is a dichotomous measure of depression and is classified as a measure of major depressive episode. This index indicates if the respondent had a major depressive episode (MDE) in the past 12 months or not. Cases that had a score of 3 or higher on the overall count of depressive

\(^{13}\) The variables included in the psychological distress scale included: felt depressed in the past week, felt everything was an effort in the past week, sleep was restless in the past week, felt lonely in the past week, felt people were unfriendly in the past week, did not feel like eating in the past week, felt sad in the past week, felt that people disliked them in the past week, and could not get going in the past week. Two additional items were included in the scale: felt happy in the past week and enjoyed life in the past week, both reversed coded before including them in the scale.

\(^{14}\) If a case had non-missing values on at least 50% or more of the input items (6 or more) then the index value for that case was the mean of the non-missing items. 8 cases were missing more than 50% of the input items and were imputed using the following OLS Regression technique: W4 CES-D-11 values were estimated based on sex, age, W3 CES-D-11 value, W4 functional health, W4 self-rated health, and W4 LOT optimism scale value.
symptoms are coded as “1” (for having a MDE); cases coded 0, 1, or 2 on the overall count of depressive symptoms are coded as “0” (for not having a MDE). So, in order to be coded as having a MDE a respondent would have had to meet the severity threshold for either “feeling sad, blue, or depressed for 2 weeks or more in a row,” or meet the severity threshold for “losing interest in most things for 2 weeks or more in a row,” the feelings had to last “all day long” or for “most of the day,” and the respondent had to have felt this way “every day” or “almost every day” for the time period. In addition, a respondent had to report having 2 or more of the follow-up depression-related symptoms such as “felt tired out or low on energy,” “gained or lost 10 pounds or more without trying,” “thought a lot about death” etc. (see the ACL codebook for full description).\(^\text{15}\)

The ACL data was also selected for its detailed measure of discrimination. Discrimination is defined as actions or practices carried out by members of the dominant group that have a differential and negative effect on subordinate group members (Feagin 1991; Feagin and Vera 1995). Unlike past studies which provided general measures of discrimination, the ACL actually contains a measure of employment discrimination: experiences of discrimination with firing and promotion.\(^\text{16}\) Employment discrimination, is the form of social closure where actors engage in arbitrary discriminatory behavior in the context of employment.

\(^{15}\) If a case was “Don’t Know” or “Not Ascertained” on one of the symptoms questions, the case was assumed to be “No” on that symptom. Cases that were “Don’t Know” or “Not Ascertained” on the lead in question (V12237-V12239 or V12252-V12254) were assumed to be “No” and were coded as having no MDE in the past 12 months.

\(^{16}\) The ACL measure attempts to catch two forms of discrimination in this variable, by asking respondents if they had been denied promotion or unfairly fired, however it is impossible to tease out what is discriminatory firing vs. promotion, so this variable is being treated as employment discrimination.
It is measured by asking respondents if they had been unfairly fired or denied promotion, and if so, what the main reason was for this unfair treatment. Respondents were able to identify multiple reasons for their perceived unfair treatment. The principle investigators combined information for all the variables identifying the reason behind the unfair treatment at work into one overall measure. A series of dummy variables were created for the measure of employment discrimination. Respondents who identified their main reason as race were coded “1” for racial employment discrimination, all others were coded “0;” respondents who identified gender were coded “1” for gender employment discrimination, all others “0;” respondents who identified some other reason were coded “1” for general mistreatment, all others “0.” The reference group for all three dummy variables included those who identified that they had not been unfairly fired or denied promotion. Gender discrimination and general mistreatment are introduced into the model as controls.

While this measure reflects perceptions of discrimination, it represents an important deviation from the past in that it is specifically examining discrimination in the context of employment, and is arguably the first step in reframing our understanding of discrimination. Moreover, this measure attempts to address another form of discrimination aside from discrimination in hiring by asking specific questions regarding firing and promotion.

In addition to these primary variables a number of additional controls were also introduced into the model. I have selected variables for this analysis that are
related to mental health and well-being as determined by past research. Controls for age (in years), gender, education (in years), and income were be introduced into the model. Additional controls for occupation and industry were also introduced in this analysis because of their importance in later analyses of the ODP data. Occupation was initially a categorical variable of job classification with codes for professional or managerial; clerical or sales; craftsmen and kindred workers; operatives; laborers; and service workers. I recoded this variable into high-status, mid-status, and low-status occupations, coded “1” if the occupation was low-status, “2” if the occupation was mid-status, and “3” if the occupation was high-status.

Industry was derived from self reported responses to a follow-up question on occupation, which asked respondents “what kind of business or industry” housed their occupation. Responses were coded using 2000 Census industry codes and this variable was then recoded into four industrial segments for this analysis: “1” – Core sector; “2” - Low-wage service sector; “3” - High-wage service sector;

17 Gender was re-coded into a dichotomous variable with “1” if female and “0” if male.
18 High status occupations include professional and managerial positions; mid status occupations include clerical or sales positions, craftsmen and kindred workers, and operatives; and low status occupations include laborers and service workers. Additionally, individuals who identified that they were either retired, permanently disabled, unemployed, a student, keeping house, temporarily laid off or sick or who did not specify their type of job were excluded.
19 There were a number of cases with missing data on this variable (N=813). In order to care for missing values, I first ran a diagnostic test using a missing value dummy variable which was entered into the regression equations. Since this dummy variable was not significant it was a good indicator that the missing data was missing at random. I further employed several methods for dealing with the missing data including substituting modal categories based on race for the missing values of occupation as well as multiple imputation. Models which included the substitution of the modal categories were rejected in favor of the models derived from the multiple imputation.
and “4” Public.\textsuperscript{20,21} See Table 5.1 for a complete listing of ACL variables used, definitions, measure, and coding.

\textit{The Ohio Discrimination Project}

The Ohio Discrimination Project data was obtained from the Ohio Civil Rights Commission (OCRC).\textsuperscript{22} The OCRC enforces civil rights laws pertaining to employment, housing, credit, and public accommodation.\textsuperscript{23} This data was drawn from discrimination charges filed with the OCRC\textsuperscript{24} from 1988 to 2003, and includes the charging party’s race; the respondent (e.g., the employer); the basis of the charge (e.g., race); the harm or injury that occurred (e.g., hiring, firing, general harassment, promotion, or demotion); the industry; the outcome of the investigation; and some geographic indicators (e.g., county FIPS code, zip code). This base equates to approximately 35,000 employment cases of race discrimination.

\textsuperscript{20} Core industries includes durable manufacturing, transportation, utilities, wholesale trade, and construction; Low-wage service includes employment in retail trade or personal services; High-wage service includes employment in financial and medical industries; and the Public sector is employment in any level of government or in the non-profit sector.
\textsuperscript{21} Similar to occupational status, industrial sector had a number of missing cases (N=837). The same procedure outlined for occupational status was employed for industrial sector, all final analyses are those resulting from the multiple imputation.
\textsuperscript{22} The OCRC was established by the Ohio Legislature in 1959 and focused primarily on employment discrimination until 1965 when the statute was amended to include housing. It is mandated by Section 4112 of the Ohio Revised code to enforce civil rights laws.
\textsuperscript{23} The OCRC has a work-share agreement with the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC), so charges filed with the OCRC are jointly filed with the EEOC. OCRC determinations are adopted and enforced by the EEOC. The rare exception to this is any case already being investigated or litigated by the EEOC or an EEOC national initiative.
\textsuperscript{24} Charges examined for this analysis include cases filed at any of the six regional offices, located in Akron, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, Dayton, and Toledo. The central office is located in Columbus.
Since the primary focus of this project is the process of discrimination, it is important to only consider those cases in which significant supporting evidence of discrimination exists, according to neutral, third-party investigators. Hence, analyses are limited to those cases in which either a determination of probable cause was made by the OCRC or the case was settled in the charging party’s favor, prior to litigation\textsuperscript{25,26} (N = 7,704). While this certainly will have the effect of underestimating discrimination by excluding cases where there simply was not enough evidence, it simultaneously bolsters confidence and the ability to conclude that the processes uncovered pertain directly to serious cases of discrimination (rather than alleged or perceived discrimination).

This large data set, useful for making rigorous quantitative comparisons has also been supplemented with systematic qualitative data taken from the actual case files\textsuperscript{27} for a sub-set of these cases. These files range from 20 to 120 pages each, on average, include the following: detailed, first-hand accounts of what occurred from the charging party’s perspective, often in their own words; a response and/or explanation from the respondent as to what happened; witness statements as to what occurred; whether the charging party or respondent are represented legally or by an advocacy group; who carried out the discrimination (i.e. supervisor, owner, coworker etc.); a deposition of testimony, taken by the

\textsuperscript{25} Legal scholars who both study and testify in discrimination suits deem settlement prior to litigation as supporting evidence for the claim.
\textsuperscript{26} The sample was also limited to claims filed by African Americans alleging racial discrimination or retaliation for a previous racial discrimination claim.
\textsuperscript{27} Permission was granted by the OCRC to review and use material from the case files themselves. In legal terms, once a case is filed with the OCRC and a final case determination is reached, the case file itself and the information contained within become public information, available to any citizen or agency – both charging parties and respondents are made aware of this point.
attorney general’s office, if the case reached that point; the occupation of the
charging party, or occupation in question; and the equivalent EEOC race and gender
composition data for the workplace, requested by the OCRC of the respondent once a
case was filed.

A random sample of 800 case files wherein probable cause was found or
settlement favorable to the charging party occurred was selected and coded on
dimensions of discrimination. This sub-sample was further limited to African
American charging parties resulting in N=325. A random sample of these files
was then selected for the mental health analyses. Using a constructed content
coding device, new case materials such as details regarding the experience of
discrimination, medical documentation of the charging party’s psychological
distress and depression, and additional symptoms of psychological distress and
depression were collected (N=50). This allowed for 1) sub-sample analyses of
industrial and occupational differences in the degree and types of discrimination,
2) much called for analyses of how discrimination and its various forms may vary
by contexts and 3) careful examination of the multiple personal costs of
discrimination. This will be the first study of its kind linking qualitative material
pertaining to actual processes of discrimination to the consequences for the
individuals on the receiving end of that discrimination. This qualitative data is
quite rich and speaks quite directly to the complex nature of discrimination and its
consequences.

The ODP Measures
The ODP data provide indicators of both discriminations occurrence and form.
These indicators, along with other relevant variables are described in Table 5.2.
The forms of social closure through discriminatory processes captured by these
data include: Hiring -- closure wherein individuals are kept out of the firm
through discrimination in hiring; Firing -- closure wherein individuals are forced
out of the firm through discriminatory firing; Promotion -- closure wherein access
to the upper tier is prevented through differential promotion; Demotion -- closure
wherein mobility downward is differentially applied; and General Harassment --
closure where the work experience is tainted by day-to-day harassment on the job.
One variable combining all forms of discrimination was created coded “1” for
Hiring; “2” for Firing; “3” for Promotion; “4” for Demotion; and “5” for General
Harassment. This data allows for the comparison of different forms of
discrimination essential for a discussion of variations in the process of
discrimination.

It is important to consider industrial sector because it does indeed pattern
work, more specifically, formal organizational structures and procedures e.g.,
protection, level of constraint, and organization, will vary between sectors and
therefore must be considered in the analyses. Each one of these formal
organizational structures and procedures, or elements of bureaucratization, is
important in determining the organization of work and consequently influence the
process of discrimination. Industrial sectors are the various spheres where
individuals engage in work, and where the organization of work will depend on
the goods produced. Based on Kaufman, Hodson, and Fligstein’s (1981) multi-dimensional model of industrial sectors, I have coded four industrial segments for this analysis: Core -- durable manufacturing, transportation, utilities, wholesale trade, and construction; Low-wage service -- employment in retail trade or personal services; High-wage service -- employment in financial and medical industries; Public -- employment in any level of government or in the non-profit sector. One variable combining all industrial segments was created coded “1” if the firm fell within the Core sector, “2” if the firm fell within the Low-wage service sector, “3” if the firm was in the High-wage service sector, and “4” if the firm was in the Public sector. If the social organization of labor indeed varies across industrial sectors as pointed out in prior work, it is quite plausible to expect variations in the likelihood and/or forms of discrimination occurring as well as, in the psychological consequences of that discriminatory experience. Indeed, the social organization of work within each sector should have implications for the capacity of actors to utilize their positions in potentially discretionary and arbitrary ways and for the victims of this discrimination to suffer differential mental health consequences as a result.

Similarly, we can expect that occupation may function in a parallel fashion to industrial sector. Occupations, or the work an individual does as a means of making a living, can be organized with certain protections, owing this largely in part to specialization, professionalism, and training; while others can be

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28 Extractive Industries such as mining, fishing, forestry and agriculture were excluded from this analysis because of the small number of cases within this sector
disorganized, leading to less formalized structures and processes and more chaos. Correspondingly occupations that are high-status may offer some form of protection in terms of the experience of discrimination and the hidden psychological injuries derived as a result of that experience. Occupation has been coded from the case files into 3 segments for this analysis: High-status -- managers and other professional positions; Mid-status -- craft workers, operators, technicians, and those in pink-collar or other semi-skilled positions; and Low-status -- laborers, entry level service workers and other unskilled laborers. One variable containing all three classifications was created. It is coded “1” for Low-status occupations, “2” for Mid-status occupations, and “3” for High-status occupations.

Additionally measures of the psychological consequences of discrimination were also created for a sub-set of the content coded sample (N=50). Case files were reviewed and using the Hopkins Symptom Checklist (Derogatis, Lipman, Rickels, Uhlenhuth, and Covi 1974) an assessment of the variety of symptoms experienced was made. The Hopkins Symptom Checklist categorizes symptoms into 5 broad classifications including: depression, obsessive compulsive behavior, interpersonal sensitivity, anxiety, and somatization and has identified key symptoms for each of these.

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29 Because only case files were examined, not the actual charging parties, only the presence of a symptom could be assessed, not the severity or duration of the symptom.
30 Somatization was not included in these analyses.
classifications. I collapsed these 5 broad classifications into two (2) variables, depression and psychological distress, which included obsessive compulsive behavior, interpersonal sensitivity and anxiety. Based on the presence of one or more of the symptoms I determined if the individual had experienced either depression or psychological distress as a result of racial discrimination at work.

Analytic Strategy

Consistent with our earlier discussion, the analyses proceed in several steps for each of the data sets selected. First, I analyze the ACL data using Ordinary Least Squares Regression techniques for the measure of psychological distress (CES-D 11). The goal here is to gain a better understanding of the relationship between psychological distress and employment discrimination. The question is simply, does employment discrimination lead to greater levels of psychological distress. This analysis is coupled with a logistic regression analysis of the measure of depression (MDE). Again, my hope is to determine the relationship between employment discrimination and depression. My interest in this analysis is in determining if employment discrimination leads to depression.

Following this analysis of the ACL data is the presentation of the ODP data. First, I analyze variations in serious discrimination suits across industrial

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31 For example several symptoms were identified for depression such as lack of motivation, suicidal, lack of interest, feeling lonely or blue. These symptoms were also very similar to the items included in the ACL measure of MDE.

32 Obsessive compulsive behavior, interpersonal sensitivity, and anxiety were combined into one variable because they include symptoms commonly identified as measures of psychological distress. For example, “people don’t like me,” nervousness, being upset, feeling inadequate, or feeling worried. Similar to the symptoms of depression, these too also overlapped a great deal with the ACL measure of psychological distress.
sectors and occupational statuses noted previously, and then turn to multi-nominal logit modeling (MNL) techniques to address these potential variations simultaneously. The question here is simply, do levels of discrimination, generally, and/or specific forms of discrimination vary by industrial sectors or occupational status? Next, I analyze variations in the consequences of the discrimination, my interest lies in exploring the patterns of the multiple personal costs of discrimination emerging from the data.

Following analyses of variations, I turn attention to qualitative case material to examine “why” the relations uncovered exist. The qualitative data, discussed previously, are wonderfully suited for this objective. Unlike much prior work, which relied on aggregate analyses, retrospective interpretations, or perceptions of discrimination (often without substantiation), these data provide the opportunity to highlight grounded accounts of discriminatory processes occurring in the contemporary world of work. These data also shed descriptive sociological light on the cognitive, emotional, and interpretive dimensions of social closure. This qualitative data, as the analyses to follow reveal, is quite rich and speaks quite directly to the complex nature of discrimination and its consequences. Relative to the earlier discussion, I explore the variations in the multiple personal costs of discrimination, I suspect that psychological distress and depression will vary by the industrial sector in which the individual is employed and by their occupational status.
**ACL Descriptive Statistics**

In Chapter 6 the results of the regression analyses are presented, however it is helpful to understand the general characteristics of the data before turning to a discussion of these regression results.

Table 5.3 presents the correlations, means, and standard deviations for the variables included in the ACL analysis of employment discrimination on psychological distress and depression. If we consider the bi-variate correlations of the psychological distress, with the main variable of interest, racial discrimination (0.074) this is a moderately strong positive correlation. In examining the other forms of discrimination, gender discrimination is also significant and moderately strong positive. For the other control variables, consistent with the literature education (-0.223) and income (-0.118), both appear to lessen the levels of distress as they increase. However, women (0.094) and African Americans (0.142) appear to have increased levels of psychological distress.

Turning now to the dependent variable measuring depression, in examining the bi-variate correlations of depression, with the main variable of interest, racial discrimination, we find non significant results. All control variables shows that they are all relatively weakly correlated and are not significant except for being female (0.075) which appears to increase the level of depression, and education (-0.049) and age (-0.086) however, appear to lessen the likelihood of depression.
**ODP Descriptive Statistics**

Chapter 7 presents the analyses of the ODP data. Chapter 7 explores “why” the relations uncovered earlier may exist however, before that data is discussed let us examine the variations in employment, forms of discrimination and the psychological consequences of discrimination.

**Employment Trends**

Figure 5.1 presents us with the breakdown of sample members’ employment by industrial sector. Nearly 30% of our sample is employed in the Core Industrial Sector (28.4%), the Public Sector (27.78%), and the Low-wage Service Sector (26.54%). The smallest proportion of the sample (17.28%) was employed in the High-wage Service Sector.

![Figure 5.1. Employment by Industrial Sector for the ODP Data N=325](image)
Similarly, Figure 5.2 presents the breakdown of sample members’ employment by occupational status. Here we can clearly see that nearly half (48.85%) of the sample is employed in Mid-status occupations such as skilled craftsmen and operators, while 30% of the sample is in Low-status occupations (e.g. unskilled workers and laborers), and only 20% in High-status occupations (e.g. professionals and managers).

Figure 5.2. Employment Breakdown by Occupation for the ODP Data N=325

**Forms of Discrimination**

Turning now to a discussion of the forms of discrimination, Figure 5.3 presents the prevalence of a given form of discrimination in the sample.
More than half (57.75%) of the sample members reported experiencing discriminatory firing at the hands of their employer, followed by general harassment at work (16.2%), and differential promotion (14.44%). Hiring discrimination (6.69%) and demotion (4.93%) were the least likely forms of discrimination reported.

Variations across industrial sectors and occupations are also important to consider since they can pattern work and constrain an individual’s capacity to act in discriminatory fashion. Figure 5.4 presents the distribution of forms of discrimination across industrial sectors, which do differ significantly ($X^2 = 55.53$).
Figure 5.4. Variations in Forms of Discrimination across Industrial Sectors for the ODP data N=325

Here we can see that firing remains the most prevalent form of discrimination in all industrial sectors, except the public sector. Perhaps this can be attributed to greater protection through procedural constraint present in the public sector. Interestingly enough, the most commonly reported form of discrimination in the public sector was differential promotion. So while procedural constraint provides greater protection from arbitrary behavior which would lead to discriminatory firing, it offers no protection against that same arbitrary behavior in differential promotion. It is the proverbial “double edged
sword” protecting against expulsion while causing African Americans to experience differential promotion in the Public Sector.

It is also interesting to note that when the forms of discrimination are broken down by industrial sector, harassment at work remains as the second most commonly reported form of discrimination in the core industrial sector, the high-wage service sector, and the public sector. Since the low-wage service sector is marred by poor organization, part-time work, job insecurity, and high turnover in general, it seems that these conditions would lend themselves to managerial abuse resulting in greater levels of harassment, yet this is not the case. Overall though, as expected, the specific forms of discrimination do indeed vary by industrial segment, and this can likely be attributed to differences in organizational structures, procedures, and bureaucratization, across the different industrial sectors.

Figure 5.5 presents a similar breakdown but by occupation status rather than industrial sector. Recall that I expect that occupational status is going to function in a parallel fashion to industrial sector.

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33 Forms of discrimination do not differ significantly across occupational statuses.
Here we can see that firing remains the most commonly reported form of discrimination experienced irrespective of occupational status. High-status occupations fail to provide protection from discriminatory firing. One should also note, that differential promotion is fairly prevalent amongst individuals who occupy high-status occupations. While the specialization and professionalism attributable to high-status occupations offer no protection in terms of the experience of discrimination, it is important to note that they can in fact lead individuals to be more acutely aware of the presence of discrimination and the violation of their rights.

Figure 5.5. Variations in Forms of Discrimination across Occupational Status for the ODP data N= 325
Psychological Consequences of Discrimination

Turning now to a discussion of the mental health sub-sample (N=50), recall that symptoms of psychological distress and depression were coded from the materials contained in the case files. As you can see in Figure 5.6, of the cases that reported suffering mental health symptoms, 60% reported experiencing symptoms of depression, while 77% reported experiencing symptoms of psychological distress.\(^{34}\)

Figure 5.6. Presence of Symptom for the Mental Health Sub-sample N= 50

Figure 5.7 reports the form of discrimination for the sub-sample, half of the sub-sample (50%) reported discriminatory firing as the primary issue of their

\(^{34}\) Percentages sum to more than 100% because in many cases (33/50) ODP charging parties identified the presences of both depression and psychological distress.
charge, 26% reported experiencing harassment due to their race, 8% reported being denied promotions and 14% being demoted for racially discriminatory reasons, and 2% reported being excluded from the workforce all together.

![Figure 5.7. Forms of Discrimination in the Mental Health Sub-sample N=50](image)

In examining the breakdown of industrial sector for the mental health sub-sample, 21% were employed in the core sector as well as in the low-wage service sector, 24% in the high-wage service sector, and the remaining 34% employed in the public sector, these numbers also vary slightly from those for the larger sample reported earlier. See Figure 5.8.
Figure 5.9 is a visual presentation of the presence of mental health symptoms by industrial sector. As you can see in Figure 5.9, 31% of those employed in the core industrial sector and 28% of those in the high-wage service sector identified symptoms consistent with psychological distress as compared to nearly 21% in each the low-wage service sector and public sector. The results for symptoms of depression are as follows: 31% of those employed in the public sector and core industrial sector each reported the presence of depression; 22% in the low-wage service sector and 16% in the high-wage service sector also reporting the presence of depression.
Turning now to a discussion of occupational status, roughly 1/4 of the sub-sample occupied low status positions (27%) as compared to a bulk of the sample who occupied either mid status occupations (38%) or high status occupations (36%), this deviates slightly from the larger sample reported earlier.

Figure 5.10 presents the data pertaining to the presence of mental health symptoms by occupational status. Nearly 42% of those who reported experiencing psychological distress can be found in mid-status occupations, as compared to 34% in high-status occupations and 24 % in low-status occupations who also reported experiencing psychological distress. Additionally, symptoms of depression were equally present among those employed in mid-status and high-status occupations (39%) as compared to the 23% who reported feeling depressed and occupied low-status occupations.
Chapter 6 turns now to a discussion of the regression results for the ACL data and begins to aid in our understanding of the multiple personal costs of discrimination, the chapters that follow (Chapter 7 and Chapter 8) move towards an understanding of what the variations that emerged from the ODP data mean and what they can be attributed to.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Distress</td>
<td>The inability to function positively in society and maintain positive relations with others, which leads to the feeling that life is not meaningful.</td>
<td>11-item CES-D scale</td>
<td>Values range from -1.16 to 4.08, with higher values representing higher levels of distress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>An emotional state that affects an individual's mood, physical health, and ability to handle life's everyday decisions and pressures.</td>
<td>Dichotomous measure derived from overall count of depressive symptoms.</td>
<td>0 - did not have a MDE in the past 12 months. 1 - had a MDE in the past 12 months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>Employment discrimination is the form of social closure where actors engage in arbitrary discriminatory behavior in the context of employment.</td>
<td>Dichotomous measure derived from perceptions of discrimination in the context of employment.</td>
<td>0 - did not experience employment discrimination because of race. 1 - experienced employment discrimination because of race.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expulsion</td>
<td>The form of social closure where individuals are forced out of the firm through discriminatory firing.</td>
<td>Expulsion - the form of social closure where individuals are forced out of the firm through discriminatory firing.</td>
<td>0 - unfairly fired for a reason other than race. 1 - unfairly fired because of race.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Control Variables

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Age in years</td>
<td>Values range from 25-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Respondent's gender</td>
<td>0 - male; 1 - female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Years of education completed</td>
<td>Values range from 0 - 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Respondent's race</td>
<td>0 - all others; 1 - black</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: Variables, Definitions, and Measures used in the ACL Analyses
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.1 continued</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Occupation</strong></td>
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<td>Variable Name</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Psychological Distress</td>
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<td>Discrimination</td>
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<td>Obstruction</td>
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<td>Displacement</td>
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</table>

Table 5.2: Variables, Definitions, Measures, and Coding of ODP Variables
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.2 continued</th>
<th>Strain</th>
<th>The form of social closure where the work experience is tainted by day-to-day harassment on the job.</th>
<th>Dichotomous measure derived from overall count of harassment.</th>
<th>0 - All others 1 - Harassment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Sector</td>
<td>The various spheres of employment where individuals engage in work.</td>
<td>1 - Core Sector 2 - Low-wage service sector 3 - High-wage service sector 4 - Public sector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Industrial Sector</td>
<td>Employment in durable manufacturing, transportation, utilities, wholesale trade and construction.</td>
<td>Dichotomous measure derived from the overall count of employers in the core sector.</td>
<td>0 - All other sectors 1 - Core sector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-wage Service Sector</td>
<td>Employment in retail trade or personal services.</td>
<td>Dichotomous measure derived from the overall count of employers in the low-wage service sector.</td>
<td>0 - All other sectors 1 - Low-wage service sector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-wage Service Sector</td>
<td>Employment in financial and medical industries.</td>
<td>Dichotomous measure derived from the overall count of employers in the high-wage service sector.</td>
<td>0 - All other sectors 1 - High-wage service sector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>Employment in any level of government or in the non-profit sector.</td>
<td>Dichotomous measure derived from the overall count of employers in the public sector.</td>
<td>0 - All other sectors 1 - Public sector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Status</td>
<td>The work an individual does as a means of making a living.</td>
<td>Categorical measures derived from an individual's self-reported occupation.</td>
<td>1 - Low-status occupations 2 - Mid-status occupations 3 - High-status occupations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychological Distress</td>
<td>Racial Discrimination</td>
<td>Gender Discrimination</td>
<td>General Mistreatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
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<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Gender Discrimination</td>
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<td>0.020</td>
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<td>-0.061**</td>
<td>0.067***</td>
<td>-0.136***</td>
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<td>-0.101***</td>
<td>-0.065***</td>
<td>-0.149***</td>
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<td>0.066***</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.108***</td>
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<td>-0.010</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.014</td>
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<td>-0.014</td>
<td>-0.037</td>
<td>-0.026</td>
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<td>Occupational Status</td>
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<td>0.064**</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.061**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>0.348***</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>-0.1987</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>0.944</td>
<td>0.164</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>0.343</td>
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</table>

N=1657

* Significant at $\alpha = .10$; ** Significant at $\alpha = .05$; *** Significant at $\alpha = .01$; **** Significant at $\alpha = .001$

Table 5.3. Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations of Variables used in the ACL Analysis of Racial Discrimination on Psychological Distress and Depression

continued
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological Distress</th>
<th>Industrial Sector</th>
<th>Occupational Status</th>
<th>Depression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racial Discrimination</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Discrimination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Mistreatment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Sector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Status</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Mean                  | 2.140             | 2.18                | 0.081      |
| Standard Deviation    | 0.878             | 0.758               | 0.273      |

N=1657
Chapter 6: Employment Discrimination and Psychological Consequences: The Americans’ Changing Lives Study

The current scholarship on racial discrimination and health has gone far in highlighting the continuing significance of race and its implications for an individual’s well-being. Scholars in this research tradition, however, have been unable to agree on the overall implications of discrimination for an individual’s well-being. As previously noted, several studies have shown that the experience of discrimination has resulted in higher levels of psychological distress (Landrine and Klonoff 1996; Kessler et al. 1999; Ren et al. 1999) and that African Americans tend to exhibit higher levels of this distress as compared to their white counterparts (Williams et al. 1997). Yet still other research in the same vein has found no association between the experience of discrimination and psychological distress (Jackson et al. 1996; Williams et al. 1997) and that under certain conditions African Americans who reported experiencing discrimination also reported significantly lower levels of distress (Williams et al. 1997).

Perhaps these mixed findings can be attributed to inconsistent measures of discrimination in available data. Data in this research tradition has been forced to rely on measures of perceived discrimination, typically with studies asking participants about their perceptions of “unfair treatment” in various arenas of
social life. Not only will this variation in perceived “unfair treatment” cause mixed findings but additionally, this measure of discrimination does not seem specific enough for us to be able to draw any worthwhile conclusions regarding the effects of employment discrimination on psychological functioning. This chapter aims to fill that void by exploring the relationship between perceptions of employment discrimination, specifically, and psychological distress and depression.

In this chapter I present the results of the secondary data analysis of the Americans’ Changing Lives data which includes a specific measure of perceived employment discrimination. The purpose of this chapter is to test the relationship between perceptions of employment discrimination, specifically that based on race, and psychological distress and depression. The analyses in this chapter begin with the logistic regressions of employment discrimination on depression and proceed to the OLS regressions of employment discrimination on psychological distress. The questions asked here are, does employment discrimination specifically that based on race, lead to depression? And does it also increase rates of psychological distress? I suspect that racial employment discrimination leads to both depression and increased rates of psychological distress. The experience of discrimination is stressful and can take a toll on the mental health of anyone, including those who have extensive networks of support and other coping mechanisms available to them. Thusly, discrimination can indeed lead to the development of both depression and psychological distress. This chapter is an
important first step in understanding the relationship between employment discrimination and well-being by specifying if the relationship does indeed exist.

**Employment Discrimination and Depression**

Table 6.1 presents the results of the logistic regression of employment discrimination on depression. Model 1 is testing the relationship between the various types of employment discrimination and depression and Model 2 presents the results of the full model including all controls. As you can see there are no significant relationships between employment discrimination and depression in the model which examines the effect of racial employment discrimination, controlling for gender discrimination and general mistreatment. Gender discrimination is though significant.

However, when controls are introduced into the model, the relationship between racial discrimination and depression becomes significant with those who experience racial discrimination being approximately 2 times more likely to experience depression. This seems to indicate that there is perhaps something about the nature of racial employment discrimination and these other variables, for instance education or occupational status, which allow for the emergence of the effect racial discrimination. Interestingly, the effect of gender discrimination on depression which was significant in Model 1 is no longer significant once controls are introduced.

---

35 Significant results for all the controls are not discussed since they are not central to this study. Only those pertaining to the other forms of discrimination are discussed. They are available in Table 6.1, Model 2 and discussion can be provided upon request.
This finding is actually worthy of further discussion. This model has allowed for us to test the empirical relationship between racial discrimination at work, and depression. I have been able to identify the direction, and magnitude of this relationship. However, that is all I am able to ascertain from this particular analysis, survey data in general are not well suited for exploring processes and mechanisms. Recall that one of the critiques of past research was that it was limited to just specifying relationships between variables, identifying the direction, magnitude, and significance; as in this analysis or any analysis involving survey data. But in doing so we are unable to gain any insight about workplace processes that are responsible for those relationships we are trying to specify. In order to identify the linkages between employment discrimination and changes in well-being one must examine this relationship further. Chapter 8 uses the qualitative data drawn from the ODP data set to examine this relationship to provide insight into the workplace processes that are perhaps responsible for this significant relationship.

**Employment Discrimination and Psychological Distress**

Table 6.2, presents the results of the OLS regression of employment discrimination on psychological distress. Model 1 presents the results of the OLS regression testing the relationship between the forms of discrimination and psychological distress. This relationship is significant, for both racial discrimination and gender discrimination at work. This indicates that individuals
who have experienced employment discrimination either because of their race or their gender have higher levels of psychological distress.

Model 2 introduces the additional control variables into the equation.36 As you can see, even after introducing control for potentially mediating variables, the relationship between racial employment discrimination (0.473) and psychological distress is still significant and has increased slightly in magnitude. The presence of other indicators does not explain away the effect of racial employment discrimination on psychological distress. Additionally, the effects of gender discrimination also remain significant, and general mistreatment emerges as significant in this analysis. The ACL data clearly shows that employment discrimination does have important consequences for psychological distress. One possible reason for this finding is that the experience of employment discrimination is stressful and no matter how many coping mechanism one may have available, it will take a toll on their mental health.

The results from these two analyses however, while offering insight into the direction and magnitude of the relationship between perceptions of employment discrimination and psychological distress and depression, provide us with relatively little information regarding the underlying processes that lead to these relationships.

Conclusion and Discussion

36 Again only the significant results for the other forms of discrimination are included in this discussion, the others are not but are presented in Table 6.2 and discussion can be made available if requested.
This chapter presented the results of the secondary data analysis of the Americans’ Changing Lives data testing the relationship between perceived employment discrimination and psychological distress and depression. The questions of interest for this analysis were 1) does employment discrimination, specifically that based on race, lead to depression? and 2) does it also increase rates of psychological distress? I suspected that racial employment discrimination would lead to both depression and increased rates of psychological distress but I was only partially correct. The relationship between racial employment discrimination and psychological distress was significant and remained so, even when controls were introduced into the model. However, the relationship between depression and racial employment discrimination was only significant after all of the controls were introduced into the model. It is not clear why this is the case, perhaps it could be that the effect of racial discrimination on depression emerges when consideration is given to other related factors, closer examination of this is warranted.

Similar to past research findings, the results of these analyses were mixed, and if this study were to end here we still would not know much about the relationship between employment discrimination and depression and psychological distress. This relationship deserves closer examination. This analysis like past studies is also limited in the lack of detailed information surrounding the instances of discrimination and psychological distress and depression which would allow researchers to do more than just specify relations.
Limitations of available data have prevented sociologists from offering insight into the process of discrimination and its effect on health and well-being.

The focus of this chapter was to employ survey data to examine the relationship between discrimination and psychological distress and depression. The focus of this study is in understanding process: the process of discrimination across industrial sectors and occupational statuses and the process of discrimination in manifestations of depression and psychological distress. Focusing solely on the specification of relations as in direction, magnitude, and significance, will not help us understand how these relations operate in an actual workplace setting. To do that we must examine the mechanisms or the processes which serve as the basis for employment discrimination and well-being. Chapters 7 and 8 take us beyond specifying relations and begin to help us understand the process of discrimination.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>Exp (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(S.E.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial</td>
<td>0.401</td>
<td>1.493</td>
</tr>
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<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>(0.485)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1.001*</td>
<td>2.721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Mistreatment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.247)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
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<td>Sector</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1657</td>
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</table>

*Significant at $\alpha = .10$, one-tailed  
** Significant at $\alpha = .10$, two-tailed  
***Significant at $\alpha = .05$, two-tailed  
**** Significant at $\alpha = .001$, two-tailed

Table 6.1: Logistic Regression of Employment Discrimination on Depression
<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>b</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(S.E.)</td>
<td>(S.E.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Racial</td>
<td>0.448***</td>
<td>0.473***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>(0.141)</td>
<td>(0.142)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.488**</td>
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<td>General</td>
<td>0.103</td>
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<td>0.125**</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>0.131**</td>
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<td>(0.000)</td>
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*Significant at α = .10, two-tailed
** Significant at α = .05, two-tailed
***Significant at α = .01 one-tailed
**** Significant at α = .01, two-tailed

Table 6.2: OLS Regression of Employment Discrimination on Psychological Distress
Chapter 7: Racial Discrimination at Work

This chapter highlights the industrial sector variations in discrimination as well as, occupational variations, by first examining the patterns that emerged in the ODP data set. Following this discussion is an investigation of the qualitative materials drawn from the larger set which explore “why” the relations uncovered exist. Findings for industrial variations are presented first, followed by those for occupational variations.37

Findings of the multinomial logit model of industrial differences on the likelihood of discrimination are presented in Table 7.1, and generally reflect the patterns already reported. The interpretation of the table focuses on the interaction of the industrial sector and the form of discrimination. The effect of each industrial segment on the form of discrimination is compared to the likelihood of exclusion (hiring discrimination) in the public sector.

Discriminatory firing is more likely in all private sectors arenas relative to exclusion in the public sector. Indeed, it is seven times more likely in the core industries compared to exclusion in the public sector. In the low-wage

37 Findings of the multinomial logit model of occupational differences on the likelihood of discrimination are not presented because there were no significant relationships.
service sector we see that firing is also five times more likely relative to exclusion in the public sector. It is even more pronounced (approximately four times more likely) in the high-wage service sector. This may very well be a function of the fact that discretionary decision-making with a racial discriminatory character happens more so at exit from the workplace.

Analyzing the quantitative material allows us to begin to understand the variations of the forms of discrimination across industrial sector. Yet, it reveals little about how this is occurring and why. The literature provides some guideposts in this regard. Specifically, employers may be using arbitrary “soft skill” criteria (McBrier and Wilson 2004), holding whites and blacks to different standards (Pager 2003), or simply discriminating in ways that are difficult to detect (Herring 2002). Few studies have been able to directly address these possibilities. I suspect, however, that there will be differences in how discrimination unfolds, and the extent to which it is indeed racially explicit or perhaps the result of an unconscious action depending on the sector being analyzed. It is also likely that there will be differences in the process of discrimination across the various occupational statuses although the findings of the logit analysis and the chi square test were not significant. To uncover these variations, immersion in the qualitative materials is needed. The qualitative materials are wonderfully suited for an exploration of the mechanisms and processes which contribute to continuing inequality as well as theoretical clarification and elaboration.
**Discriminatory Processes across Industrial Sectors**

The focus of this chapter turns now to the stories that emerged across industrial sectors. A better understanding of these stories begins with a clear idea of which sectors we are discussing. Recall that the industrial sector is the sphere of employment where individual’s engage in work. For the purpose of these analyses we have coded four industrial segments: the core, low-wage service sector, high-wage service sector, and the public sector. If the social organization of work varies across sectors it is plausible to expect variations in discrimination across them as well.

The figures presented in chapter 5 allow us to begin to understand the variations of the forms of discrimination across industrial sectors, yet little was revealed in terms of how or why this occurs. Correspondingly should we assume the processes to be similar across sectors? Or does the process itself unfold in quite distinct ways depending on the sector in which one is embedded? First, let us look at the core industrial sector more closely.

**Core Industrial Sector**

One of the overall themes that emerged from the qualitative materials is disparate policing. Disparate policing refers to differential application or enforcement of workplace policies. Why would we be likely to see this in the core? Characteristics of the core include unionization and formalized bureaucratic procedures, procedures that are meant to constrain arbitrary decision making. Yet
the crux of disparate policing is that often these procedures are differentially targeted or applied based on race.

Consider, the case of Rosemarie Lawler, a receptionist working in the core sector for a large, wholesale distributor of construction materials. Rosemarie was employed by the respondent for less than a year before being terminated for her inability to perform her job duties as a result of excessive restroom use. During the commission’s investigation, they found that Lawler’s predecessor, Amy Lindy [white], was often away from her desk. In her witness statement, Mary Jones, another co-worker, corroborated this, stating that “…she [Amy] was frequently away from her desk in the bathroom, getting supplies, etc, yet she was not fired, rather she was transferred to another position.” Jones further contended that Lawler was a better receptionist than Lindy, and even recommended her for a position in her division. A request that was subsequently denied and Lawler dismissed.

Lawler’s case is not a solitary example. Elaine Pines, telephone operator at Earthly Communications, was discharged for excessive absenteeism. It was subsequently found by civil rights investigators that white employees of Earthly Communications were “…afforded more favorable terms and conditions of discipline and discharge than similarly situated black employees.” Investigators contacted the union steward, who has access to attendance records of all employees, and discovered that “white employees who have numerous absences are not as far along in the disciplinary process as black employees in the same situation.” In their concluding remarks, the civil rights investigator notes:
In summary, evidence and testimony substantiate that white employees, both male and female, have received preferential treatment relative to their absenteeism. The evidence substantiates that a white male was afforded a suspension, whereas charging party was not. This male had three months less seniority than charging party, yet testimony substantiates that respondent’s excuse for not first suspending charging party was her length of service. Evidence substantiates that respondent requested that a union steward be present during the discharge of a white male who was later returned to work via settlement with the union. Respondent did not afford charging party the presence of a union steward during her discharge. Further, a white female group leader agreed to remove a white male’s final written warning if he were to have six months with no absences, charging party was never afforded this opportunity.

In both examples we see outright differential enforcement of workplace polices, clear evidence that disparate policing is occurring. Policies that differentially are targeted based on race, reveal that discrimination can unfold as a result of deliberate acts motivated by self-interest and often entail “closing ranks” to preserve status hierarchies. This indicates that perhaps there is some agency on the part of the actors in the workplace and that manifestations of discrimination are not all structural.

**Low-wage Service Sector**

Turning now to the low-wage service sector, one theme that emerges is the role of managerial abuse in discrimination. Managerial abuse involves individual discretion and arbitrary decisions in the workplace. Why would we expect the low-wage service sector to be ripe with managerial abuse? Lack of formalized procedures to constrain their actions would be one reason why we would see

---

38 It is important to note that abusive behavior includes arbitrary decision making that typically stems from the exertion of power in employment decisions (Roscigno, Lopez, and Hodson 2009).
increased rates of abuse (Roscigno, Lopez, and Hodson 2009). Bureaucratic policies are meant to limit the role of subjective assessments in employment decisions. The absences of these policies would place African Americans at risk of becoming targets for abusive behavior (Roscigno, Lopez, Hodson 2009).

Consider the example of Rose Gold, a low-wage service sector employee who worked for a large retail department store. Rose had been in the respondents employ for over seven years and had never been promoted in spite of having managerial duties. In her charge form Rose states:

*I am black. I have been denied promotions to the position of Department Manager. Most recently, I was denied the position of Manager of the Drug Department. No reasons have been given for why I was denied the promotions.*

During their investigation the commission found that the respondent did not have a formal application process for promotions and that this informal system had resulted in an all Caucasian managerial staff selected by the store manager. This informal process resulted in her manager selecting his friends for vacant supervisory positions, had limited the opportunity of African Americans in her workplace, and therefore race was indeed a factor in Ms. Gold not being selected for promotion. As a result of this experience, Rose states:

*Well, it limits your being promoted there when there is no positions posted. You don’t know anything about it, so how are you going to apply for it. And, just like, I have been there, it will be seven years in October. And, I have to work a second job to make ends meet. Because, you know, we only, and then the raises is only like 10-15 cents, every six months, and you know, it limits, I mean, we’re just at a standstill.*
Rose’s store illustrates the impact of arbitrary decision making on advancement opportunity, and is not the exception. Many other cases in the low-wage service sector, such as that of James Lewis, reveal a similar tendency. Lewis was employed first as the store manager (and later as sales manager) at a fairly large retail store. He notes in his charge affidavit,

*I believe that I have been discriminated against, demoted and subsequently discharged by the respondent due to consideration of my race, Black, because: I was running the number one store in the region...however, Wade Smith [white, regional manager], fired me from my store manager position. Smith later called and told me to forget the firing and re-hired me for a Sales Manager position, which was a demotion....I had always received favorable performance reviews. Smith did not discipline me or notify me of any position performance problems prior to my demotion or discharge. Respondent demoted Logan Moss, white, from Store Manager to Sales Manager, but did not reduce his pay, as they reduced mine....I was the only black Store Manager and Sales Manager employed by Respondent. Respondent immediately replaced me with George Carter, white, who had much lower performance reviews than I.*

During their investigation, the OCRC found that Smith [regional manager] had repeatedly told one of the other store managers that there was something about Lewis that he did not like and often referred to black males as ‘niggers.’” Although these comments are not direct evidence of discriminatory treatment, they do support the possibility that there were discriminatory motives on the part of the regional manager, particularly in light of the fact that the goals that Lewis allegedly failed to meet were not fixed, but rather determined by Smith.

These examples illustrate that the manifestation of discrimination in the low-wage service sector stems from abused of power, unregulated due to lack of organization and formalized procedures in the workplace. Chaos on the floor,
conditions of powerlessness for some, and job insecurity, facilitate abusive behavior (Roscigno, Lopez, and Hodson 2009), which is often arbitrary in nature and results in discrimination.

**High-wage Service Sector**

The nature of the high-wage service sector is quite different from that of the core or the low-wage service sector, as such one theme that emerged from a review of the qualitative materials is the use of particularistic criteria and “soft-skills.” The high-wage service sector is one that is often constrained by bureaucratic procedures, especially in terms of mobility, yet one where individual discretion can still play a role in discrimination. Often times employers used the justification of “soft-skills” as reasons for discriminating and these justifications are derived from race-based assumptions. Rather than “misconduct at work” or covert actions on the part of managers, high-wage service sector cases often include meritocratic claims by the respondent that the charging party’s work was simply not meeting the standard. Discrimination in this form develops from unconscious cognitive processes associated with in-group/out-group status which automatically pattern behavior (Reskin 2000).

As an example of this particularistic criteria, take, for instance, Penny Mitchell, a secretary at a local medical clinic who was terminated “because things were not working out,” for tampering with computer equipment, and because her work was substandard. In her charge affidavit, Mitchell claims:
I deny that my work was below standard. All my previous evaluations given by other supervisors had been excellent. Prior to my termination, three physicians to whom I had to report gave me excellent evaluations, but Ms. Belkin [Caucasian administrator] refuses to accept them.

In response to her claim, the director of the clinic offered to have Mrs. Mitchell reinstated, an offer which was ultimately denied. In a letter to the director of the clinic, Mitchell’s attorney writes:

Mrs. Mitchell is no longer interested in being reinstated to her prior position with the clinic. We believe that due to the nature and extent of her discrimination as well as the extreme humiliation which she suffered at the clinic as a result of employee actions, reinstatement is not an alternative for which we can consider. For example, a notice was posted on her office door broadcasting Mrs. Mitchell’s termination. Also, there have been instances of extreme racial discrimination such as an instance which occurred on May 8, 1989, where she was referred to as a monkey. Under these circumstances, I would not recommend reinstatement to my client.

During their investigation the OCRC discovered that similarly situated Caucasian employees were not terminated for poor performance but were in fact transferred to other areas. And that the claim that Mrs. Mitchell was fired for tampering with computer data, was in fact never substantiated. The OCRC examiner writes:

Respondent [the clinic] claims that the charging party was the only one with both the technical knowledge and the access to tamper with the computer system... No witnesses have been provided that would place the charging party at the computer in question when the tampering would have occurred. In addition, it seems puzzling that the department administrator, Ms. Belkin, would insist on passwords and key locks on all machines with the exception of the one charging party most often used. If one is concerned about an employee destroying data, it seems that the machine that is used by that employee would be the first to be password protected.
But the most compelling evidence in the case, was:

...the lax way in which the evaluation was handled by [the] Respondent. The charging party was not given a 45 day evaluation and then was not given an extension when her 90 day evaluation was unsatisfactory, although the three doctors she worked for provided her with written, passing evaluations. This would seem to contradict the Respondent’s own policies and procedures.

In the high-wage service sector employers will often also use “soft-skills,” such as “they didn’t interview well,” or “they are not (or too) assertive, or even something like reliability, as the justification for denying mobility to African Americans. Consider, for instance, the case of Melody Barnes. Mrs. Barnes was employed in the high-wage service sector at a large medical facility where she sought promotion to the supervisory nurse’s position. In a letter to her employer Mrs. Barnes writes:

*It is now obvious that there was no intent to seriously consider me for this position. I am aware that the decision to hire the other applicant was made prior to my second interview and the interview only served as a formality to appease me. Lisa Davenport was given the position despite the fact that she was trained by me and that she has only been employed with the you for 15 months; I for seven years. In the seven years I have been employed, I have trained 15 assistants and have taken on many managerial duties. [You have] no legitimate reason to deny me this promotion...Throughout this whole ordeal, my education, experience, and knowledge all seemed to have been of no consequence to the individuals in charge.*

Mrs. Barnes claims that more attention was given to her personal life, rather than whether or not she was qualified for the position. Several times her reliability was
questioned as her “past record” of absences became the focus of her interview process -- absences that were clearly documented as excused in her employment file.

The use of “soft skills” criteria is evident as well in many other cases, including that of Delia Jordan. Ms. Jordan also worked in the high-wage service sector but for an insurance company and yet found herself in a situation very similar to that of Mrs. Barnes. She was the person primarily responsible for training new hires – new hires eventually promoted over her. Notably, Ms. Jordan had received many awards and commendations for her work. Investigative materials pertaining to the case suggest that management felt she did not “present herself” as well as the other candidates. In particular, management asserts that she was too “negative,” did not focus enough on the positive aspects of her work history, and did not make enough eye contact with the interviewer. In contrast, white candidates presented themselves “clearly,” “positively,” and “concisely.”

The nature of the high-wage service sector is one that is more organized and structured by formalized procedures, therefore employers offer “justifications” such as poor sales or performance or lack of “soft-skills” to mask the discriminatory behavior. We clearly see that individual discretion influenced by race-based assumptions is playing a role in continuing discrimination. These behaviors however, are not explicitly racist in nature, nor do they appear to be deliberate acts motivated by self-interest but nevertheless still have discriminatory results. Sociological research has categorized these unconscious behaviors which result in discrimination as opportunity hoarding (Tilly 1998; DiTomaso, Post, and
Parks-Yancy 2007) or homosocial reproduction (Kanter 1977; Elliot and Smith 1994). Though opportunity hoarding and homosocial reproduction refer to distinct sociological processes they have one defining characteristic in common, unconscious acts that result in discrimination. Opportunity hoarding refers to controlling resources for the benefit of one group at the expense of another (Tilly 1998; DiTomaso, Post, and Parks-Yancy 2007). Homosocial reproduction proposes that since individuals feel more comfortable around people like themselves and have greater levels of trust in them, they are more inclined to feel a sense of obligation to them and will make employment decisions which favor them (Kanter 1977; Elliot and Smith 1994). Again like, opportunity hoarding, these actions are unconscious and are not driven by the intent to disadvantage, that is an unfortunate consequence. Exploring the qualitative material reveals that unlike managerial abuse which stems from the imposition of power, particularistic criteria is a justification for an employment decision informed by stereotypes that has an unintended negative effect of some. Whether the impetus behind the action is opportunity hoarding or homosocial reproduction depends on the circumstances specific to each particular case.

**Public Sector**

The public sector shares some similarities with the high-wage service sector in the use of particularistic criteria and soft-skills as justifications for discriminatory behavior. Given that individual behavior is more likely to be constrained by bureaucratic policy and procedures in government offices, “justifications” for
promotion decisions for example, are needed to mask discrimination. Consider the case of Erica McCants, an investigator with the County Department of Human Services. Ms. McCants had been employed in various capacities with the Department of Human Services during her 16 year tenure there and was seeking promotion to Administrative Assistant III. She applied, went through the process, and was one of the finalists for the position, which was ultimately awarded Shirley Panek, the only external applicant. Ms. Panek was the first external applicant to be awarded a position over a qualified internal applicant in the history of the agency. When asked why she did not receive the position Ms. McCants was told that the director found that both women met the minimum qualifications, but that she believed that Ms. Panek had more connections at various state agencies and that this would be helpful in the capacity of her employment with the County Department of Human Services. Ms. McCants writes:

What job relatedness does having contacts with the district office have on the job duties of the administrative assistant III? Read [the] job description and state classification specifications for [the] administrative assistant, neither refer to the need to have skills in communication with [the] district or state quality control personnel...

Ms. McCants had been told that only job related criteria were used in the selection process and that seniority and qualifications were important, but in the end her seniority, experience, and tenure with the department were not enough to secure her the position. The director’s justification was that Ms. Panek’s
“connections” proved she had more public relations experience and therefore greater ability.

Many Ohio agencies have a policy of promoting from within, or giving preference to internal candidates who meet the minimum qualifications and have seniority but in reading the case files, it is evident that often supervisors interpret these policies to suit their needs. For example, in Eileen Barto’s case, she was passed up for promotion to data entry operator with the Department of Public Works, she states:

_I was the third most senior of four candidates for the position. The first and second most senior candidates eventually declined the position and based on the contract I should have been promoted. On October 24, 1990, David Jackson, Caucasian…and I were asked to take a test, on that same day I was informed that David did better on the test and therefore he would receive the position. This is the first time I am aware of a test replacing seniority as the determining factor for promotions._

Witness testimony further claims that her immediate supervisor was overheard saying “all black women in the city should be happy they have jobs,” and if it were up to him “they wouldn’t go any further.” In Eileen’s case, his racist sentiments caused him to arbitrarily decide to have the two remaining applicants take a test to determine who should be awarded the position, even though, the contract specified that Eileen should have been awarded the position. The OCRC investigator notes in the file:

_Staff concludes that Charging Party should have received the position based on her seniority and qualifications, and Respondent did not need_
to give a test for the position. Charging Party had the basic knowledge or skills to perform the basic functions of the job. Instead, Respondent gave the position to a less senior Caucasian.

So although it was the policy of this department to promote based on seniority, the supervisor, interpreted the policy to suit his needs and to place a candidate of his liking in the position, rather than the Ms. Barto.

The nature of the public sector is one that seems to require employers to offer “justifications” to mask their discriminatory behaviors, behaviors which are influenced often by race-based assumptions. While the structure and organization of the public sector may limit the exclusion of African Americans from the workplace, we clearly see that discretionary behavior still plays a role in continuing discrimination. As was the case with the high-wage service sector, these behaviors are not deliberate discriminatory acts, but still result in opportunity hoarding or homosocial reproduction.

**Discriminatory Processes across Occupational Statuses**

The focus of this chapter turns now to the stories that emerge across occupational statuses. A better understanding of these stories begins with a clear idea of which statuses we are discussing. Recall that occupation status is the work an individual does as a means of making a living. For the purpose of these analyses we have coded three occupational statuses: high-status occupations or supervisors, managers, and professionals; mid-status occupations or skilled, semi-skilled, and office workers; and low-status occupations or unskilled workers and laborers.
Similar to industrial sectors, it is plausible to expect variations in discrimination across the occupational statuses because the social organization of work can also vary as well.

The figures presented earlier allow us to begin to understand the variations of the forms of discrimination across occupational statuses, yet little was revealed in terms of how or why this occurs. As with our discussion of industrial sectors, we begin to ask the same questions: should we assume the processes to be similar across occupations? Or does the process itself unfold in quite distinct ways depending on the type of position that one holds? Immersion in the qualitative materials will help to identify key processes that merit further exploration.

The themes that emerged from the qualitative data for occupations are quite similar to those that emerged in our examination of variations across industrial sectors. Interestingly enough it seems that when examining the process of discrimination across occupations, these themes work in tandem, i.e. disparate policing and managerial abuse targeted at African Americans employed in low-status occupations to make their work situations intolerable or “soft skills” and particularistic criteria used as justifications for biased employment decisions for high-status occupations. Let us first look at low-status occupations more closely.

**Low-status Occupations**

In examining the occupational differences in discrimination, it is interesting to note that the themes of disparate policing and managerial abuse emerged for low-status occupations. Recall, that disparate policing refers to differential application
or enforcement of workplace policies and managerial abuse involves individual discretion which results in arbitrary decision making. Why would we be likely to see these in low-status occupations? Characteristics of low-status job include increased turnover, part-time work, increased managerial supervision, and lack of authority, autonomy, and power, in general. These characteristics all lend themselves to increased rates of disparate policing and managerial abuse. Per the discussion of these themes in the core industrial sector and low-wage service sector, these acts have the deliberate intention of disadvantaging some while preserving status for others. This type of behavior is evident across low-status occupations where powerlessness and lack of status result in abusive behavior.

Consider the example of Tina Ray, who was employed as a cashier for a larger lumber retailer. Ms. Ray was discharged for “misappropriation of company time,” her supervisor alleged that she would clock in to work late and then take an additional 10-15 minutes of company time to arrive at her work station. The OCRC investigator notes:

*Respondent states that it does not implement a formal disciplinary discharge policy and [that] “the decision as to the type and severity of the particular discipline is entirely discretionary upon the part of the appropriate management individual”. They further state that disciplinary procedures may take the form of written or verbal counseling at the discretion of management.*

In this case, the fact that there is no formal policy in place lends itself to managerial abuse and disparate policing. The investigator goes on to say:

*Respondent indicates that two [former employees], David Lee and Jeremy Forbis, both white, were discharged for misappropriation of company time. However, it is noted that Lee had three prior*
At issue is the fact that Ms. Ray was discharged for committing the same infraction as Lee and Forbis, yet she never received verbal counseling for the problematic behavior. Lee and Forbis, not only received verbal counseling regarding their misappropriation of time, they were counseled several times while Ms. Ray was not afforded such treatment, rather she was fired on her first infraction.

Ms. Ray’s case is not the lone example, Fay Cress a housekeeper at a small bed and breakfast was fired for fighting with another employee while at work. Ms. Cress and her employer concur that the altercation, verbal and physical, involving herself and Caucasian, Alexis Greenburg, occurred on site. According to the employee conduct policy in effect at the time, fighting on company property is reason for dismissal, yet only Ms. Cress was discharged, her co-worker, Ms. Greenburg, was given an unsatisfactory report of conduct/performance. A review of both women’s employment files indicates that Ms. Cress had never received a disciplinary charge prior to the incident in question, while Ms. Greenburg had. Yet in this case Ms. Greenburg received another written reprimand and Ms. Cress was discharged. The OCRC investigator notes, that clearly race was a factor in the dismissal of Ms. Cress.

In another example, Bob Belli was discharged from his position as delivery driver for failing to make his deliveries on time. On several occasions, Mr. Belli had been late for work due to problems with his personal transportation.
to the warehouse, thereby resulting in delayed deliveries. During the investigation, the OCRC investigator determined:

Testimony substantiates that other white employees have had performance problems including: 2 or 3 traffic accidents, vandalizing respondent’s truck, stealing from a gas station, complaints from customers, driving while under the influence, etc. but these people have not been discharged. The CP was treated differently than White co-workers and the evidence and testimony substantiate that the CP’s race was a factor in the respondent’s decision to discharge him.

In a letter explaining his claim to the OCRC Mr. Belli writes:

There are drivers that are never on time...when I be on my way to a customer I see driver’s in rest areas sleep. I was terminated for being late to Springdale, I never got a warning letter about 3 days off [suspension] or nothing, they just fired me.

Clearly, Mr. Belli was aware of his differential treatment and that his supervisor was abusing his power by engaging in arbitrary behavior which ultimately resulted in Mr. Belli’s discharge.

In these examples we see outright differential enforcement of workplace policies and managerial abuse of power often work in tandem against African American employees. These examples reveal the ways in which strategic acts shape discriminatory processes lend further support individual actors play a role in the process of discrimination. Actors that often engage in behaviors with the specific intent of discrimination motivated by self-interest.

Mid-status & High-status Occupations
In this next section I review mid-status and high-status occupations together because the themes that emerged in both occupational classifications are very similar. In both cases the use of particularistic criteria and “soft skills” as justification for racially biased employment decisions emerged from the qualitative data.

Recall from the discussion of the high-wage service and public sectors that the use of particularistic criteria and “soft-skills” refer to justifications for employment decisions that are derived from race-based assumptions. So for example, rather than stating that the individual was in “violation of company policy” employers will often claim that the charging party’s work was “not meeting the standard” or that they themselves were “not management material.” Reskin (2000) considers these behaviors to be unconscious discriminatory acts that result not from the motivation to harm others, but rather because our perceptions of others are influenced by stereotypes which lead us to biased evaluations of ability. Take for instance Jay Heldt, a field services supervisor for a parcel delivery company who was bypassed for promotion.

Mr. Heldt had received “superior” job performance reviews in the years prior to seeking promotion, he had no record of disciplinary actions or reprimands in his employment file, and had been with the company for nearly ten years. He states “I have more seniority, experience, and qualifications than Stasik” but still was not selected to run the station at the River City Airport. When questioned by the OCRC regarding Heldt’s denial of promotion, his employer said “…the biggest factor in deciding not to promote Heldt, was his failure in holding the
people he supervised accountable...he was bypassed because he exhibited a lack of management authority.”

In another example, Jeru Fontaine was discharged from his position as senior account manager for a financial planning firm. His employer denied that he was discharged because of his race and sited lack of satisfactory performance of his duties. In his charge form, Mr. Fontaine states:

*I have an excellent work record as evidenced by the fact that I was promoted from part-time to full-time.... Additionally, approximately one (1) month before my release Mr. Williams informed me that I was to begin training for the position of store manager. Despite the fact that I had received no prior warnings regarding my performance I was let go and my job duties were reassigned to Caucasian, Steve Thompson.*

If his employer’s claim of unsatisfactory performance was indeed valid, why would Mr. Fontaine have been recommended for the management trainee program? What had changed so drastically in one month? His supervisor. Mr. Williams was replaced by Mr. Cornheiser, who did not like Fontaine.

In a similar example, Joe Groat was discharged from his position of bank branch manager for failing to follow procedures as inability to meet job expectations. During the interview the OCRC investigator notes that he had performed well before transferring to the Center City branch under the supervision of regional director, Sally Ryder. In fact his evaluations, before Ms. Ryder became his supervisor were good. He ran the Bristol branch for 2 months without incident and had met his performance goals for 1993. It was only after he
transferred to the Center City branch that his performance was questioned and that he started having problems.

In the case of Gordie Howe, Mr. Howe was denied hire to the position of press operator with Landon Industries. Mr. Howe had been placed with Landon Industries through a temp agency and was now seeking a full-time position. It was not uncommon for employees to gain entry to Landon in this fashion, and normally, “temps” were reviewed after 90 days and considered for full-time status. As the end of his 90 days approached, Mr. Howe followed the appropriate procedure and submitted his application materials, ultimately he was denied, and let go and Marshall Owens, Caucasian, was hired for the position. Landon’s representative, stated that there were “too many gaps” in Mr. Howe’s work history and that his “references did not check out”. Additionally, his file noted that the foreman and supervisor had both been questioned regarding his performance during the 90 days. The OCRC investigator notes:

A review of Mr. Owens’ resume and job application reveals that he was laid off from a job, left because the business closed on another job, and left because of a disagreement with a supervisor on a third job. [Yet] respondent found no reason to question his resume. No reference checks...are noted, nor any input from Lead Man, Mike Daniels, or Manufacturing Supervisor, Chuck McIntyre.

The investigator goes on to note that he also called Mr. Howe’s references and found that several had asked for Howe’s consent prior to providing the reference, not that they had given him a bad reference.

The case of Jean Lynch, an office clerk for a manufacturing company who was passed up for promotion to material handler is also an interesting example of
particularistic criteria. The respondent had asserted that the reason Ms. Lynch was not selected for the position of material handler was because she could not read blue prints, further the White male who was selected could read blue prints and also had experience in the use of reading micrometers. The OCRC’s investigation revealed that reading blue prints and micrometers were not requirements for the material handler’s position and that Ms. Lynch met the listed qualifications for the position. Further investigation also revealed and respondent admitted that a similar situation occurred when Ms. Lynch and another female applied for the material handler’s position 2 years earlier. Both had similar qualifications but the position was given to the white female because of her seniority. Neither woman could read blue prints or micrometers so the respondent used seniority as the deciding factor. Interestingly enough, when Ms. Lynch had the most seniority, the respondent used the selectee’s ability to read blue prints and micrometers as the deciding factor.

In one final illustration, consider the case of Susan Ortiz, a senior benefits analyst for a large healthcare company. Susan had applied for several promotions and was continuously denied. In their statement to the OCRC, her employer writes:

*Charging party was not chosen because she did not present herself as well as Smith and Jones did during the interview. Charging party’s responses zeroed in on conflict and negativity instead of focusing on her strengths and accomplishments, she made little eye contact with the interviewer and often focused on the negative aspects of her work history, rather than the positive. The other candidates presented themselves clearly, positively, and concisely.*
These statements are characteristic of the justification of soft skills often used to prevent the mobility of African Americans in the workplace. Notice how the statements regarding the charging party seem to be centered around the perception that African American females are combative and negative, while those of the two white males highlight their ability to communicate themselves effectively.

So, what is it about mid-status and high-status occupations that lend themselves to discrimination as a result of particularistic criteria or “soft-skills”? Perhaps, it is a function of the differences in human capital that individuals in these types of occupations posses. Their greater levels of education, job experience, training, tenure etc…make them more acutely aware of discrimination and their rights under the law, therefore the perpetrators of the discrimination have to engage in more seemingly race neutral behaviors that are unconscious and in fact derived from race based assumptions.

_Harassment at Work_

One prevailing theme that cuts across sectors and occupational statuses is harassment at work. Harassment at work is a virtually unexplored form of discrimination, however, as our data suggests it is one that is particularly important for understanding the interactional nature of inequality. Nearly 20% of the claims in our data set identify strain as the primary form of discrimination. In this next section, I highlight the manifestations of harassment, examining explicitly racist behavior which is the prevailing form of harassment in the core
industrial sector and the low-wage service sector and for low-status and mid-status occupations. Individuals employed in the high-wage service sector and the public sector and in high-status occupations often are victims of explicitly racist behavior but also find themselves dealing with intimidation and isolation. Explicitly racist behavior which is often coupled with deliberate acts intended to disadvantage some is an accurate representation of the ways in which some behave. This harassment in general reifies the racial hierarchy and leads to despair, distress, and isolation, and can shape overall job satisfaction and social psychological functioning a point revisited in Chapter 8.

Explicitly Racist Behavior

In the core we find harassment is explicitly racist in nature and is typically collective behavior. For instance, the case of the black male construction worker (mid-status occupation) who had been on the job for just a few days when his co-workers sent him down to the basement of the site alone – hanging in the basement he found a black faced mannequin. When he reached the top of the stairs terrified, his co-workers were laughing, amused by the reaction their joke had elicited.

The low-wage service sector contains another example of behavior that is also explicitly racist in nature, consider Paul Jensen, an employee at an auto-parts shop (low-status occupation). Mr. Jensen states:

39 The discussion that follows is organized by industrial sector rather than occupations because occupations are embedded within industrial sectors which dictate the organization of work and the ability of an individual to act in discretionary ways. Occupational status is identified in the narrative.
For the past year a six-page letter with 114 racial jokes has been circulating throughout the Respondent’s facility. A picture of various types of monkeys has been posted on the bulletin board, which included a picture of myself. It was posted in plain sight for all employees to view.

See Figure 7.1. He goes on to state that also posted was a “nigger application” for employment and a picture of a black female giving birth to a baby who is listening to a radio. Clearly Mr. Jensen’s work environment was explicitly racist, unwelcoming, and intolerable.

In the high-wage service sector harassment can involve explicitly racist behavior such as the case of Melody Barnes, the medical employee who sought promotion to the head nurse’s position (mid-status occupation), she added that the problem in her workplace was indeed more pervasive and was not limited to failure to promote:

Several times I have been insulted. Once a doctor turned off the lights and said all he could see was my teeth....there is definitely a problem here....I have just recently been subjected to jokes demonstrating racial insensitivities. Being compassionate to other people’s feelings should be a criteria [for medical professionals]...so it still leaves me, as well as other minorities, in a climate that is blatantly unfair.

Her words touch upon the way her work environment has shaped feelings of isolation as well as her overall job satisfaction a key difference in the nature of harassment in the high-wage service sector. These examples highlight the salience of race in “…discrimination that results from the purposive actions by dominant group members who seek to preserve and expand their privileges” (Reskin 2000: 351).
Intimidation and Isolation

Harassment can also involve intimidation and isolation, behaviors that are not explicitly racist on their own, but that nevertheless have negative consequences on African Americans in the workplace (Roscigno 2007). African Americans are often easy targets of isolation and intimidation tactics because of their status group differences and in many cases these tactics are about creating or preserving status hierarchies (Roscigno, Lopez, and Hodson 2009).

The case of James Favors is interesting. Mr. Favors filed a claim with the OCRC for intimidation and harassment he experienced while working as an executive (high-status occupation) at a large financial services firm in the high-wage service sector. Mr. Favors complained internally about the company’s racially discriminatory hiring policies after which the harassment and intimidation started. In a letter to his supervisor, Wally Richardson, Favors states:

The baseness of your derogatory and racially insensitive and offensive name calling as well as your profane antics does not merit that I should diminish my own professionalism to stoop so low as to respond in-kind. Rest assured however, that I am not only willing, but very well prepared to address your unwarranted and unjustifiable behavior in a more appropriate forum. Your attacks both professional as well as personal that I, as a successful long term employee and senior manager have had to endure for raising legitimate policy and legal concerns are by any measure harassment. It is my right, not only by my position and function as a manager, but as an employee of this organization to raise my concerns, as I have done in the proper forum. No attempt at threat, coercion or retaliation will dissuade me from availing myself of my legal, professional and moral rights. Your reaction as well as those of your subordinate serves only to provide further evidence of the continuing and unrelenting hostile environment that exists within this organization toward African-American as well as other ethnic minority staff.
In a letter to the Affirmative Action Office at his place of employment, Mr. Favors, writes:

...I wish to formally lodge a complaint pursuant to the treatment that I have received as a result of my raising legitimate affirmative action concerns relative to a recent employment decision. As a successful long-time employee, as well as Director of Personnel, and management’s representative to the affirmative action council, I believe that my concerns were appropriately raised. The subsequent negative, threatening and unjustified actions directed toward me gives rise to this complaint and further serves to substantiate what I believe to be a continuing racially motivated hostile environment which is not in keeping with the implied as well as stated Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity policies...

Again, his thoughts confirm the effects that harassment can have on reifying the racial hierarchy in the workplace and how this works to isolate African Americans on the job thereby maintaining stratification arrangements.

Yet another example of verbal harassment is the case of Buddy Johnson. Buddy was a patrolman in River City, Ohio. Over the course of his employment he was reassigned to several times and states:

...on June 26th, 1987 I had been reassigned from general duty to “intake officer” at River City Hospital E/R...one Friday afternoon, Lt. Smith came into the E/R lobby, where I was sitting, walked over to me, bent over to my ear, and in a very low voice stated to me, ‘You know Buddy, you’re a very lucky n-----’.

The harassment that Buddy experienced however, extended beyond verbal abuse. On one occasion Buddy returned to his locker to find a racially and sexually explicit cartoon taped to it. On another occasion he returned to his locker and found the following:

It was on or about June 10th, 1988. I am not sure who is responsible the number of bugs being directly in front of my locker. I think the
exterminator paid a visit that day and someone took the opportunity to
insure that while there were relatively few bugs killed in the entire area,
there was relatively many bugs smashed directly in front of my locker. I
took Polaroid pictures of this to show the unlikelyhood of that number of
bugs choosing to make the journey to my locker to make this very limited
space their last resting place.

While talking to the commission investigator he states:

_The Commission should know that there is no one a black officer can
take a complaint to...This type of activity is condoned by police
supervision, nothing is ever done to make these individuals responsible
feel that they are in any type of serious jeopardy, of departmental action._

It seems that the structure of the workplace contributed to the
harassment that Mr. Johnson was experiencing and that in fact the culture
of the workplace was one that was isolating and ultimately led to these
feelings:

...this is a regular routine. _The various city administrators promise I
won’t be harassed any longer, then soon after the oral promise I am
subjected to every indignity imaginable. It is late in my career and I
would like to be able to enjoy the remaining years._

Harassment includes verbal abuse by co-workers and supervisors but also
extends beyond verbal abuse to include random acts that serve to reinforce a
culture of racial inequality in the workplace.

Buddy’s case is the perfect example of why we need to explore the
multiple personal costs of discrimination.

_Conclusion_
This chapter has presented the results of several separate analyses. The first analysis modeled the relationship between industrial sector and the likelihood of forms of discrimination. The results of this multinomial logit model indicated that firing in all private industrial sectors was more likely relative to exclusion in the public sector.

The second analysis examined the qualitative materials collected and identified the prevalent conditions under which discrimination unfolds in each industrial sector. Core cases indicated that disparate policing was the central factor in the emergence of discrimination. Low-wage service sector cases identified managerial abuse as the main element necessary for the emergence of discrimination. The qualitative materials further indicated that in the cases in both the high-wage service sector and the public sector, centered on particularistic criteria and “soft skills” as the justifications for discriminatory behavior.

In addition to these analyses of variations in the likelihood and process of discrimination across industrial sectors, parallel analyses for occupational status were also conducted. The results of this multinomial logit model proved to be non-significant but this does not mean that there are not still important differences in the process. To determine this, a review of the qualitative materials was conducted and the results indicated that disparate policing and managerial abuse were the relative themes for the development of discrimination in low-status occupations. While cases of mid-status and high-status occupations revealed that particularistic criteria and “soft skills” were key factors for the development of discrimination.
I surmise that the variations that were found in industrial sectors are due to the organization of work and the variations in occupational status were due to characteristics of jobs. For example, core industries tend to be organized with formalized procedures. These procedures are meant to prevent arbitrary behaviors on the part of individual actors. Disparate policing, or the differential application of work place policies especially when based on race, will lead to discrimination. Similarly, for low-status occupations where managerial abuse and disparate policing tend to be a concern for the emergence of discrimination, a parallel argument can be made. Low-status occupations tend to be those occupations with little power, authority, and autonomy, conditions which lend themselves to be susceptible to managerial abuse.

One final analysis was done in this chapter – that of harassment. Recall that harassment was a prevalent theme across all industrial sectors and occupational statuses. The review of the qualitative material indicated that harassment at work could be ether explicitly racist in nature or involve intimidation and isolation tactics. Explicitly racist behavior is more likely in the core industrial sector and typically involves collective behaviors. Intimidation and isolations tactics are not explicitly racist in nature but can still lead to the development of discrimination through the emergence of a hostile working environment. These behaviors were typically found in the high-wage service sector and the public sector.

Both disparate policing and managerial abuse are behaviors that are meant to intentionally disadvantage some. These purposeful deliberate acts are
motivated by self-interest and often entail “closing ranks” with the sole purpose of maintaining stratification hierarchies. Behaviors that are unconscious and seemingly race neutral, such as particularistic criteria, are in fact informed by cognitive biases influenced by stereotypes and which nevertheless result in discriminatory behavior such as opportunity hoarding or homosocial reproduction. Reskin (2000) argues that both deliberate acts and unconscious behaviors are equally important for our understanding of inequality and for informing our discussions on why it persists.

The qualitative materials in this chapter have shed significant sociological light on the process of discrimination across industrial sector and within occupational statuses. Broad patterns have emerged that will help to inform our understanding of inequality. The qualitative materials were helpful to uncover two distinct manifestations of social closure. Closure refers to actions or behaviors that the dominant group engages in to preserve their status at the expense of members of the subordinate group. The qualitative material has uncovered that these closure strategies can take the form of deliberate acts or unconscious behaviors.

Chapter 8 now turns to a discussion of how racial discrimination at work can impact an individual’s psychological functioning.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Firing</th>
<th></th>
<th>Promotion</th>
<th></th>
<th>Demotion</th>
<th></th>
<th>Harassment</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>Odds Ratio</td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>Odds Ratio</td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>Odds Ratio</td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>Odds Ratio</td>
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<td>Core Industries</td>
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<td>(0.711)</td>
<td>-1.022</td>
<td>0.360</td>
<td>1.609</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>1.174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-wage Service Sector</td>
<td>1.683**</td>
<td>(0.650)</td>
<td>-0.329</td>
<td>0.720</td>
<td>1.099</td>
<td>3.000</td>
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<td>0.587</td>
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<td>High-wage Service Sector</td>
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<td>1.609</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>1.174</td>
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</table>

Log Likelihood: 112.027

a Reference group is Exclusion in the Public Sector
b Standard errors are in parentheses
* Significant at $\alpha = .10$
** Significant at $\alpha = .05$
*** Significant at $\alpha = .01$

Table 7.1 Multinomial Logistic Regression Estimates of Industrial Differences in the Likelihood of Discrimination$^{ab}$ N=325
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Firing Coefficient</th>
<th>Firing Odds Ratio</th>
<th>Promotion Coefficient</th>
<th>Promotion Odds Ratio</th>
<th>Demotion Coefficient</th>
<th>Demotion Odds Ratio</th>
<th>Harassment Coefficient</th>
<th>Harassment Odds Ratio</th>
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<td>Low-status Occupations</td>
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<td>0.570</td>
<td>-1.099 (0.940)</td>
<td>0.333</td>
<td>-0.405 (1.111)</td>
<td>0.667</td>
<td>-0.629 (0.946)</td>
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<td>Mid-status Occupations</td>
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<td>0.315</td>
<td>-0.811 (1.054)</td>
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a Reference group is Exclusion in High-status Occupations
b Standard errors are in parentheses

Table 7.2 Multinomial Logistic Regression Estimates of Occupational Differences in the Likelihood of Discrimination^a^b^ N=325
Figure 7.1: Case materials from ODP data set
Chapter 8: The Multiple Personal Costs of Racial Discrimination at Work

Depression and psychological distress limit the ability of an individual to function in all aspects of life, from positive relations with others, to their mood or physical health, to their ability to handle life’s everyday decisions. Recent sociological advances have highlighted the importance of the context of employment for overall mental health and well-being but have been unable to unearth the mechanisms that foster this relationship. In chapter 6 I analyzed quantitative data to test this relationship empirically and like much of the past literature found mixed results. The effect of employment discrimination is quite prominent on psychological distress but not so for depression. Past literature has been plagued by mixed feelings and as previously discussed this is perhaps due in part to limitations of available data. Although the ACL data was unable to provide us with a complete picture of this relationship it is an important first step to understanding this relationship. The next step is closer examination of the qualitative materials collect in the Ohio Discrimination Project. The ODP data is meant to help us explore the process through which depression and distress unfold and through careful examination of the qualitative materials one can inform theory development and verification.
This chapter highlights the multiple personal costs\textsuperscript{40} of discrimination by examining the patterns and themes that emerged in the ODP data set. Drawing from an investigation of the qualitative materials taken from the subset of mental health cases I explore “why” the relations uncovered in chapter 5 exist.

\textit{Depression, Psychological Distress, and Discriminatory Processes across Industrial Sectors}

The focus of this chapter turns now to the stories that emerged across industrial sectors regarding the presence of depression and psychological distress. A better understanding of these stories begins with a clear idea of the types of symptoms we are discussing. Recall that using the Hopkins Symptom Checklist, I identified symptoms of depression and psychological distress.\textsuperscript{41} Cases were identified with the presence of either mental health illness if they had any combination of symptoms. The experience of discrimination is difficult in its own right, but when coupled with the presence of any of these symptoms it may lead the individual into a state of depression and/or psychological distress.

In chapter 5 basic trends within the ODP data set were presented. This data was useful for identifying which industrial sectors seem especially problematic in terms of manifestations of discrimination and ill-mental health. Yet little was revealed in terms of how this occurs or what the personal costs are.

\textsuperscript{40}Data on both symptoms of depression and psychological distress were collected and are presented in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{41}For depression these symptoms included such things as signs of withdrawal, lack of motivation and energy, feeling lonely or blue, and blaming oneself. For psychological distress symptoms such as nervousness, being upset, feeling inadequate, feeling frustrated or worried.
Correspondingly should we assume the process to be similar across sectors? Or do
distress and depression unfold in quite distinct ways depending on the sector in
which one is embedded? First, let us look at the core industrial sector more
closely.

**Core Industrial Sector**

In examining the qualitative material collected from the mental health subsample,
one key theme emerged from the data, manifestations of psychological distress
and depression seemed to be tied to the loss of one’s livelihood. Exploring the
materials from the cases that exhibited symptoms of psychological distress and
depression revealed that when the charging parties believed that their means of
making a living was threatened, they expressed feelings of nervousness, anger,
and became worried about how they would support their families. Why is it that
this experience of discrimination may evoke these emotional feelings? Recall
from the discussion in chapter 7 that characteristics of the core include
unionization and formalized bureaucratic procedures. Unions and formalized
procedures are meant to constrain arbitrary behaviors and to protect the rights of
workers. However, given the conditions that these charging parties faced, neither
their unions nor the procedures of the workplace could protect them from
arbitrary discriminatory behavior. Presumably, when this hope of protection from
arbitrary discriminatory behavior is lost individuals become vulnerable to
depression and psychological distress.
Take the case of Jim Sasso, a supervisor at Apex Delivery, who was discharged from his position. The investigator notes what had become part of Jim’s regular work responsibilities:

*Because of his position of authority with the company other black employees would come to him with their concerns about racial inequality in the workplace. Charging Party in turn would use his power/position to voice their concerns to upper levels of management. He was regarded as a leader of the mounting protest movement of black managers against racial injustices at Apex. This did not sit well with his immediate supervisor therefore in an attempt to quash this he transferred him to another office.*

The investigator goes on to say: “this arbitrary transfer, Sasso’s second in less than two years, place[d] him in a job he was least familiar with, and also isolated him more.” Apex was trying to use these arbitrary transfers to intimidate Sasso into resigning and when that failed they decided to discharge him for insubordination which the investigator termed “pretextual.” In a letter included with his charge form Sasso writes: “I think I have some legitimate concerns…all I am asking for is your help” Sasso has been stripped of his livelihood and is now frustrated and fed up, two key symptoms of psychological distress.

In another example, Rich Domi talks about the isolation, demoralization, and heartache he experienced when the camaraderie he thought he had been building for several months with his co-workers was shattered. Domi had been passed up several times for promotion and could not understand why since it seemed that everyone liked him. The company chose to fire him rather than promote him and the OCRC later determined that he had been a victim of
disparate policing of company policies. Domi could not understand what happened he states:

*I was hurt and felt very bad because I thought they had accepted me as a friend. After that I really experienced heartaches because I felt that everything that I had accomplish[d] [had] gone down the drain. My hopes and dreams [of] us become[ing] one was suddenly [gone]. I was demoralize[d] ... rejected.*

Domi was clearly upset about what he had experienced which brought on the onset of his depressive symptoms.

Consider another example that of Paul Miller, a coordinator for a large retail store. During the course of his employment Mr. Miller was subjected to a hostile working environment, his lawyer writes:

*By frequently exposing Mr. Miller over a period of several years to an outrageous stream of race-related comments and discriminatory actions, Respondent has intentionally inflicted emotional distress on Mr. Miller.*

During the investigation, witnesses testified that several of the other White coordinators would refer to him as the “TN – token n-----”; Mr. Miller would get phone calls at his desk where the caller would say the word “n-----” and then hang-up.

In the case of Dolores Reddy, a phone operator, she states that she perceived a threat to her livelihood when she was given a final warning for poor performance. The investigation revealed that there were other employees, mostly White, who were not meeting their performance levels either but who were not given poor evaluations. The investigators noted in her file:

*The stress of these conditions at work forced her to seek medical care. Her Dr. diagnosed her as suffering from severe stress,*
anxiety, and reactive depression. He placed her on medical leave and when she returned she was fired.

Ms. Reddy’s fear of losing her livelihood was realized when she returned from her leave which had been necessitated because of the unbearable conditions at work. As we are seeing from these stories, when individuals are faced with the prospect of losing their means of support it evokes mental anguish. In many cases, individuals had been tolerant of the discriminatory behavior for quite some time before reporting it and when asked why, most simply responded that they could not afford to lose their jobs. Jake Cutler, a carpenter for a construction company, said it the best:

*I didn’t really want to make a stink because like I said earlier, I wanted to keep my job, I mean I had plenty of things I could complain about and there were a lot of things on my mind when I was working there. But it seemed, you know, that…it come to the point where it just wouldn’t do any good to complain.*

In these examples we see how closure enacted by dominant group members evokes feelings of depression and psychological distress. In the previous chapter discussion of the core focused on deliberate acts intended to disadvantage some over others. What was missing was a discussion of how those deliberate acts could have important consequences for health and well-being. Individuals have the expectation to work in tolerable work environments, free from harassment and believe that protectionary mechanisms, whether union advocacy or bureaucratic procedure, will constrain arbitrary discriminatory behaviors. When these expectations go unrealized, issues relating to psychological distress and depression emerge.
**Low-wage Service Sector**

Turning now to the low-wage service sector, I find that managerial abuse results in feeling trapped or blocked in current employment situations which evoke symptoms of depression and psychological distress. When individuals feel trapped or blocked in an employment situation their opportunities are limited and they may often feel as if they are incapable of job advancement or fulfilling their job responsibilities. As previously noted the characteristics of this sector which facilitate managerial abuse include lack of formalized procedures, disorganization, increased rates of abuse, and turnover. Unlike the core, where workers have the expectation of protection from arbitrary behavior, the low-wage service sector offers workers very little protection. This lack of protection paired with the high rates of turnover and in many cases, minimal skills for many of those employed in this sector, may leave them feeling as if they “need this job” further contributing towards feeling trapped in their circumstances.

In this first example, I explore the conditions at Sutton House a residential community for teens. The environment at Sutton House was quite hostile for African American employees, as a result seven different employees filed charges with the OCRC within just a few months of each other alleging unlawful termination or constructive discharge.42 The flood of claims came after a new shift supervisor was named, one who clearly was trying to force out the African American employees on his shift. One woman left work in tears nearly every day

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42 Constructive discharge is the term the OCRC uses when individuals are forced to quit because the workplace environment is intolerable.
for a period of a week as a result of constant confrontations by her new supervisor. She could not bear to return to work so she finally quit. Another employee, Pete Brown, was told not to speak to anyone while at work, just to do his job. He was so upset he went to seek counseling, he states:

I left the meeting feeling depressed, angry, and betrayed. The next day I had counseling with the social worker at the VA clinic and talked for a couple of hours concerning my feeling toward what was happening to me...I decided they [management] were completely negative towards resolving my problem and decided not to [accept] the humiliation, aggravation, harassment of their discriminatory behavior...

His file contained a letter he wrote to the grievance committee regarding the changes in his work situation: his contact with co-workers and residents was limited, his hours had been reduced, and he was demoted from childcare worker to janitor (all within a few weeks after the new shift supervisor took over). He goes on to state how these changes were affecting his mental health, he asked for action on the part of the committee, but the only action that followed was his resignation. In many other cases that identified constructive discharge as the primary injury, the charging parties are quoted as saying “work had become so intolerable, I felt I had no choice,” “what else could I do, I couldn’t take it anymore.” These statements indicate feeling trapped, powerless, and while many of them “needed their jobs” they were often so frustrated that rather than continue to suffer emotional and psychological damage they quit.

Feeling blocked was also a catalyst for mental health problems, and these cases tended to take one of two forms, either feeling that current employment
situations were blocked liked Robert Moffit and Bruce Jenner, or feeling blocked from other opportunities like Don Waters.

Consider the case of Don Waters, a sous chef at the All-American Eatery. During his hearing Mr. Waters testified about how the experience of discrimination had caused him emotional and psychological problems he states “I feel the situation there has blocked me from getting another job…I haven’t been able to get a job, you know, in the line of work that I’m doing in that caliber.” He goes on to say:

*It’s…a situation where a gentleman would worry when he has a family to take care of. And during the time that I got hired there Mr. Malcolm had told me, “well, you definitely have to have a car” I went and bought a new car thinking I had this job to pay for it and it’s been a lot of stress worrying about meeting those bills and added extra pressure on my wife’s income*

Mr. Waters continued to reiterate that he had to take care of his family and he was finding himself unable to do so because he was unable to secure employment after his unlawful discharge from All-American.

Robert Moffit and Bruce Jenner are also interesting examples to consider. Both Mr. Moffit and Mr. Jenner were managers at their respective companies; both men stated they felt as if upper management purposefully blocked their ability to perform the duties of their positions properly. For example, neither man had the authority to hire or fire employees for their locations, although all other store managers could do so; neither man could implement new ideas, promotions, or specials without getting “permission” first from headquarters, no other managers
had the same stipulations. Coincidentally, both were the only black
managers in the companies. These restrictions on their employment led
them both to struggle on their performance evaluations, both received
fewer merit pay increases, and eventually were discharged for poor
performance. The frustration stemming from this experience ultimately led
to feelings of psychological distress.

As was the case in the core industrial sector, purposive strategies with the
intent to disadvantage some over others likely have significance for the health and
well-being of African Americans. The above cases illustrate how psychological
distress and depression develop in the low wage service sector. Feelings of being
trapped in intolerable situations with no hope for improvement, along with feeling
blocked in terms of opportunities at work, lead people to become frustrated, upset,
and angry – clear symptoms of mental health problems. It is likely that these
conditions emerge in the low-wage service sector because of the characteristics of
the sector itself. Workplace environments that are unorganized, ripe with
managerial abuse, and which may lack formalized procedures meant to constrain
arbitrary behavior on the part of individual actors lend themselves to the
development of conditions under which employment discrimination would occur
and could induce psychological distress and depression.

**High-wage Service Sector**

In examining the cases drawn from the high-wage service sector, the key factor in
determining depression and psychological distress is mounting frustration.
Mounting frustration resulting from an overly hostile work environment pushes people to their mental limit and gives rise to mental health problems. What was also interesting about these cases was that all charging parties spoke very openly about the mental toll that the discriminatory experiences were taking on them. These individuals readily admitted that they were suffering from depression as a result of the discrimination, and in many cases included medical documentation and/or letters from their doctors. Recall that this sector includes FIRE industries, as well as education and health services so perhaps their openness regarding their mental health can be attributed to the higher overall levels of education and the likelihood to invoke assistance that people employed in this sector tend to have. Because of their generally higher levels of education, I would also argue that individuals employed in this sector would be more aware of their rights under the law and additionally be more inclined to seek legal remedy if those rights were violated. Moreover, the high-wage service sector is not chaotic and disorganized like the low-wage service sector rather there is more organization, and workers benefit from the presence of some formalized procedures. So under conditions of extreme racial animus, when those procedures fail to protect the workers from discriminatory behavior, frustration will be at its maximum and individuals will be vulnerable to mental health problems.

As an example consider the case of Mary Turner, a phone operator for an investment firm, she was constantly being disciplined for violation of company policy and being harassed by her supervisor. But Mary’s actions were no different.

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43 FIRE industries include finance, insurance, and real estate.
from those of her White co-workers who were not being harassed or disciplined. The stress caused by this differential treatment led Mary to consult a doctor regarding the feelings of depression she was experiencing. Her file notes: “she admits feelings of depression and does manifest some anxiety and depression.” Her file also contained several letters from her primary doctor and several psychological reports and evaluations. The OCRC ultimately determined that she was being treated differently because of her race and found in her favor but not before she was terminated and not before she had become a victim of depression.

In another example Melanie Moore, a clerical worker in a doctor’s office describes her every day ordeal at work and the toll it was taking on her. Melanie worked alongside 3-4 other women maintaining patient records and filing away forms. In recent months the office manager, Betty James, noticed that there was an increase in the number of filing errors and accused Melanie of being responsible for them. Ms. James asked Melanie if she wanted to enroll in a file management course (at the expense of the office), when Melanie declined saying that she did not feel it was necessary, Ms. James then asked if she could read, Melanie was offended. On a separate occasion Ms. James asked if Melanie suffered from dyslexia, and ultimately if she would take an IQ test. All of these inquiries were in front of the other staff members, none of whom were subjected to such inquiries. As a result of these confrontations Melanie’s co-workers began to watch her closely and question her every action. Ms. Moore writes: “I could not continue to work under [the] pressure exerted by Ms. James and subsequently quit” she goes on to say that she “…could not continue to work for an employer
that would be wondering about her capabilities.” When she turned in her resignation and the doctor asked why she was leaving she explained to him what had been going on for the past several weeks and how it was impacting her ability to function she said “I told him that I felt they were unhappy with my work and that was making me unhappy” (emphasis added).

In another example Jim Michaels discusses his frustration with his employment situation and recent termination he writes:

*Please be informed that at the time of this letter I am EXTREMELY UPSET and FRUSTRATED! Today I was terminated from Holy Name Hospital for something I did NOT do. I would appreciate if you would take the time to review this letter, and let me know ASAP, your feelings on the situation. (Emphasis in the original).*

Mr. Michaels was terminated for allegedly engaging in a verbal altercation with another employee, who was not disciplined in any form. Although Mr. Michaels denied the charge and offered to provide a witness attesting to the fact that he was not involved, he was let go. In a letter to the hospital he writes:

*Is this justifiable? I am terminated because “he said she said they said”! not yet has anyone asked me “what happened” I am INFURIATED and DISTURBED that you let things like this go on in your department...I feel Paul [his supervisor] has discriminated against me for terminating me for “hearsay,” as well as Lucy [alleged victim of altercation] for misstating me, I feel my Civil Rights have been infringed upon. If Paul or Lucy have something against me as a black male individual.....let’s get it out in the open! Just because I push a mop doesn’t make me dumb!!!!! (Emphasis in the original).*

These cases highlight the ways in which procedures in place to govern the workplace were being applied differentially causing the charging parties frustration. This mounting frustration is the catalyst for the emergence of
symptoms of distress and depression. Additionally, the openness of the individuals in this sector in discussing their feelings and emotional states resulting from the experience of discrimination is unlike the other sectors. Employees in the core and low-wage service sectors seemed to be reluctant to admit that the discriminatory events were impacting their mental health. Perhaps this can be attributed to the stigma associated with ill mental health and an individual’s unwillingness to be labeled as “sick.” However, in the high-wage service sector where people in general have higher levels of education it follows that a greater understanding of the disease and a willingness to be open about its effects and seek treatment would be present.

The examples presented here illustrate how the experience of discrimination in the high-wage service sector brings on symptoms of distress and depression. Frustration from differential treatment and employment decisions motivated by racial biases are to blame. The discussion in chapter 7 highlighted how discrimination in the high-wage service sector often stems from an unconscious behavior informed by stereotypes which lead to biased evaluations of abilities. Here we are presented with similar conditions recall the examples of Mr. Michaels presumed to be aggressive and prone to violence or Ms. Moore, judged as illiterate – both judgments informed by stereotypes of African Americans and which ultimately evoke feelings of distress and depression in the victims of these actions.
**Public Sector**

After reviewing the qualitative materials for the last sector of interest, the public sector, it is clear, symptoms of depression and psychological distress in the public sector also stem from harassment and isolation resulting in frustration. As in the discussion of the core, this can be attributed to the organization of the workplace and the presence of bureaucratic policies and procedures designed to constrain individual behavior. The mere presence of those policies and procedures implies protection from discriminatory behavior. So when that expectation of protection is unmet and individuals feel violated at work the result in many cases is psychological distress and depression.

Consider the case of John Pinelli, principle of Goodlawn High School. He had been selected to serve as the principle of Goodlawn High and felt things were going well. He had received a great deal of positive feedback from both parents and community members, but when the school board changed he noted some drastic changes in his work environment. He states:

*I was never encouraged to participate in the school community. I felt excluded from certain school community events and was made to feel unwelcomed at board meetings and other school related meetings. I observed that the other administrators [all White] in the school district were included in the school community events and encouraged to participate...I felt excluded and isolated by members of the board.*

In this example Mr. Pinelli is aware of the disparate treatment he is being subjected to and notes its impact on him – feeling excluded and isolated both unique symptoms of psychological distress.
Consider the case of Rod Williams, a director with the utilities commission. Mr. Williams’ primary work responsibilities included designing and implementing surveys aimed at measuring residents’ satisfaction with the utility companies. Mr. Williams had filed several claims with the OCRC, the first alleging that he was being paid less than his White co-workers. Subsequent to filing that charge his employer reassigned his job responsibilities which resulted in his loss of his merit increase for the year. Mr. Williams then filed a second charge for retaliation and harassment at which point his work environment really changed. When he became the victim of discrimination his employer tried to silence him through the use of intimidation tactics, reassignment of duties, and even went so far as to tell his co-workers not to talk to him during work hours for fear that he may encourage them to exercise their rights. Mr. Williams writes: “What is this anyway? A campaign of racism, harassment, retaliation and intimidation against me? For what reason?” His frustration is evident, Mr. Williams is aware that something is wrong but is powerless to do anything about it.

Or the case of Al Cabo, a researcher for the state who gave quite a detailed account of his work experience and the history of his treatment on the job since Mike Saxe, became his supervisor. Al Cabo was one of only two black males employed in the department and Mr. Saxe was constantly confusing them. This angered Al and set the tone for the rest of their interactions over the course of four years. Cabo’s subsequent evaluations were all negative and in fact on two
separate occasions he appealed his review and had them expunged from his record. The contentious relationship worsened, Cabo states:

We have an untenable situation between Saxe and myself. I was so angry, you know, at some of the things that went on...Although I tried to work it out, it cannot work...It’s not a good situation because I felt baited and I felt provoked, extremely...we did not have a supervisory relationship; this was a relationship that was based on intimidation...You can only push an individual so far.

Towards the end Mr. Cabo is alluding to the fact that he has reached his limit which gives rise to his distress.

Consider the case of Lisa Washington, an account executive in the public sector. Ms. Washington and only she, was continually being disciplined for her poor work performance. The harassment by her supervisor had reached an intolerable level she filed a claim with the OCRC. In a letter she submitted to her employer she writes:

I am hereby requesting [that] you stop all further attempts to harass me. Life and death have dealt me enough stressful blows this year. If you will check available information, you will discover that everyone has a breaking point. Please [do] not assist me in arriving at mine. Do not view this as a threat but as a professional warning that continued harassment by you will not be tolerated...I am in no mental condition to endure any further pettiness or illegal practices by the administration...

Here we see that Ms. Washington’s frustration, like Al Cabo’s had finally reached a point where distress and depression were inevitable consequences of their intolerable working conditions.

The case of Mark Lloyd, director of personnel for the Center City school district, is another interesting example. Due to some changes in the administration
Mr. Lloyd had taken over the responsibilities of both the director of unclassified personnel and classified personnel for the school district. However, this change came after the start of the school year and unbeknownst to him several teachers had been hired without the requisite criminal background check. When the district discovered this error Mr. Lloyd was held responsible although it had not been his error. During the OCRC investigation it was determined that the district’s policy for disciplinary action and “bumping” privileges were not followed properly in Lloyd’s case and that he had been discharged unlawfully, however by then it was too late, news of the issue with the new hires had spread. Mr. Lloyd writes: “[the district] has fabricated charges against me, wrongfully discharged me, deprived me of a livelihood and totally destroyed my professional career, as I have been unable to secure a job as a human resources administrator.” The OCRC investigator further notes, “the unwarranted harassment of Mr. Lloyd by the district and by certain employees, individually, has resulted in health problems triggered by these actions...” In this case his employer’s actions have resulted in Mr. Lloyd’s isolation from the professional community in Center City and his inability to secure employment, precipitating his mental health problems.

These examples illustrate how untenable situations stemming from isolation lead individuals to feel frustrated and can result in psychological distress and depression. Isolation is not always a racially explicit behavior yet it can induce feelings of distress and depression. As illustrated in chapter 7 and as legal scholars will attest to, not all discriminatory behaviors have to be intentional, it is the impact that is often more consequential. The bureaucratic nature of the public
sector and the procedural constraints in place should prevent arbitrary decision making from affecting individuals. However when the expectation of protection is not met, this gives rise to depression and psychological distress.

The previous sections have examined the process by which symptoms of psychological distress and depression arise across industrial sectors. The qualitative materials collected from the case files were helpful for uncovering the processes and variations in how discrimination evokes feelings of distress and depression. Exploratory analyses such as these allow for the elaboration of theory and can inform survey construction to better be able to empirically test this relationship. I now turn to a discussion of occupational status to see if the same holds true for occupational status.

**Depression, Psychological Distress, and Discriminatory Processes across Occupational Statuses**

The focus of this chapter now turns to examining the process by which symptoms of psychological distress and depression emerge as a result of employment discrimination across occupational statuses. As with industrial sector, examining the trends in the presence of depression and psychological distress across occupational status tells us little about how and why this relationship is occurring. Does the experience of discrimination across occupational statuses induce manifestations of depression or psychological distress differently? All that we can gather from past research is that individuals who see themselves as victims of discrimination suffer adverse health consequences but nothing else. I suspect that
the severity of the experience of discrimination and the pervasiveness of the culture of harassment will have a significant effect on mental health problems. To uncover these differences we must examine the qualitative materials.

**Low-status Occupations**

To understand how depression and psychological distress emerge as a result of the experience of discrimination in low status occupations re-immersion in the qualitative materials drawn from the ODP data set is needed. In examining the case files it seems that the necessary condition for the development of psychological distress and depression is an intolerable working environment teeming with harassment, constant supervision, and stricter scrutiny. Since low-status jobs, in this analysis include unskilled workers and laborers, these positions are often those characterized by increased turnover, part-time work, increased managerial supervision, and lack of authority, autonomy, and power, in general. These characteristics all lend themselves to increased rates of harassment and managerial abuse and other deliberate acts which would result in intolerable working conditions and make an individual susceptible to psychological distress and depression as a result of discriminatory behavior.

Recall the case of Dolores Reddy, the phone operator who was discharged after returning from her medical leave? The OCRC investigator noted in her file that “for a period of months CP’s immediate supervisor was consistently rating her low on performance evaluations” as a result of these low evaluations her
supervisor was constantly monitoring her work. She notes in a letter to the OCRC that she was subjected to an:

*Extensive review and evaluation, being done with many nitpicky requirements which added additional administrative tasks [which] increased [the] need for overtime. Due to the high degree of “evaluating my performance weekly” based on a lot of these administrative tasks, it appeared that I was always behind and not accomplishing the day to day business needs.*

So the constant supervision and additional tasks prevented her from being able to complete her every day obligations which added to her poor evaluations. It was the proverbial “never ending cycle.” Ms. Reddy eventually sought medical care for the treatment of multiple symptoms of ill mental health including reactive depression that developed as a result of her work environment and the discrimination she experienced.

The case of Julia Stiles is a perfect example of how stricter scrutiny can affect an individual’s mental health. Julia, a telephone operator, at a large insurance company, had injured herself on the job and needed to take disability leave, while she was out on leave her employer fired her. During the investigation it was discovered that Ms. Stiles’ employer wanted her to go and see the “company doctor” to have her injuries re-evaluated. Ms. Stiles had already been seen by her doctor and several other specialists who confirmed her condition and the need for disability leave. However, after her visit to the “company doctor” he certified her to return to work. When Ms. Stiles did not return to work she was fired for excessive absences. During their investigation, the OCRC discovered that there were two White comparatives who were out on disability longer than
Ms. Stiles and neither was asked to have their condition verified by the “company doctor: nor were they terminated. After this experience Ms. Stiles became very nervous and paranoid and consulted with a psychologist. The doctor noted: “claimant reports paranoia, fear of others, [is] tense, ill at ease, and [has] generalized vocational stress.” Her experiences at work had sent Ms. Stiles spiraling down a tunnel of depression and psychological distress, she stated: “my condition has worsened, I’m afraid that I might lose everything including my sanity.”

The case of Martha Washington was slightly different from that of Ms. Stiles. Mrs. Washington was employed at a dry cleaning service and was one of only two African Americans working there. Day in and day out Mrs. Washington would come to work only to be subjected to a racially hostile work environment. When she complained to her supervisor about the harassment, no action was taken. Her employer made no effort to advise its employees that racist remarks and comments were inappropriate in the workplace. In her statement to the OCRC Ms. Washington stated that “the conditions were getting so bad that I didn’t have a choice” she just quit. The environment had become so intolerable, she felt trapped, leaving her constructive discharge as the only available remedy. While Mrs. Washington was not subjected to stricter scrutiny, she was being harassed and suffering because her environment was teeming with racial animus.

As we can see from these examples, depression and psychological distress in low-status occupations is induced by the presence of an environment that is overwhelmingly racially hostile and where employees are either under constant
supervision and scrutiny. The perpetrators of the discrimination in these cases can be either the individuals’ co-workers, as in Martha Washington’s or as in the case of Dolores Reddy, it can be those people in positions of power, who can dictate the terms and conditions of employment. Why does harassment and stricter scrutiny in low-status jobs suggest psychological distress and depression? Again, it seems that this is a result of characteristics of the jobs themselves. Jobs with low-status typically are also jobs that lack power and authority and are subject to increased managerial supervision and abuse. When these deliberate acts which are motivated by self-interest and serve to intentionally disadvantage the victims such as Ms. Stiles and Mrs. Washington, discrimination will result and it is likely that those same conditions will bring about psychological distress.

Sociological research needs to devote much effort into understanding the ways in which these behaviors maintain status hierarchies and keep subordinate group members down. Social closure in the form of these racially motivated behaviors is one way in which stratification hierarchies are maintained.

Mid-status Occupations

In examining the qualitative materials for the mid-status occupations I find that extreme racial hostility is key to the development of depression and psychological distress. Yet rather than stemming from constant supervision and stricter scrutiny as in low-status occupations, psychological distress and depression in those holding mid-status occupations often results from collective behavior on the part of co-workers. It can also stem from the frustration associated with following the
appropriate procedures to voice their grievances but with no remedy to the situation. Why does this appear to be the case? This occupational classification was created by collapsing several EEO categories into one, categories such as craft and other skilled workers as well as operators, technicians and semi-skilled workers, occupations typically found in the industries that make up the core industrial sector. The core sector has historically been dominated by white males who may act in ways which protect what they have. Additionally, because many of the occupational categories that were combined to make this occupational status are in the core industrial sector, which is organized in with certain policies and procedures the expectation is that those procedural constraints will serve to protect the an individual and when they do not, it is almost as if the individual feels greater harm.

Take for example, Isaiah Thomas’ case. Mr. Thomas was a machine operator at a manufacturing plant who was having some problems at work. Evidence substantiated that several management employees openly made racially stereotypical and derogatory remarks about Mr. Thomas. One manager, Mr. Monitor, was particularly abusive. During his hearing Mr. Thomas testified that he was under undue pressure from Mr. Monitor. He was constantly watching him and referring to him as “that lazy n-----.” Mr. Thomas suffered through this environment because his family’s welfare depended on it but not without rising personal costs.

This next example illustrates the extreme measures that people will undertake to rid themselves of the root of the problem. Rory Newell was an office
worker at a large car manufacturing plant. His working conditions had become
unbearable – the constant harassment from his supervisor and others needed to
stop. He explained to the OCRC investigator what the situation was and she notes
in his file:

...a couple of weeks ago he was so fed up with it [the harassment]
that after considerable thought, he decided to handle the matter by
killing his supervisor and a couple others. He went into a meeting
planning to kill the people there. He had his “equipment” under
his jacket...he said he was trying to decide how to do it because he
knew he couldn’t get them all at once. He knows what he is
planning is wrong but he’s fed up. He realizes he’ll go to jail and
possibly get the electric chair but he’s take care of the problem. He
takes 10 mg of valium every day before going to work so he can get
through the day without hurting his supervisor. He is trying to
psych himself into going to work and tolerating whatever happens
without losing control because he still has feelings of wanting to
kill those people.

While Rory Newell’s case is an extreme example it nevertheless illustrates
the extent to which discrimination can give rise to an individual’s psychological
distress.

Consider the example from earlier, Pete Brown, the child care worker at
Sutton House, who had been demoted to janitor. As previously mentioned Mr.
Brown attempted to remedy the unfair treatment he was experiencing at work
through Sutton’s internal grievance procedure but to no avail. Ultimately the
frustration derived from management’s lack of response to his concerns left Mr.
Brown feeling depressed and upset with a system that he thought was in place to
rectify such situations. Mr. Brown also eventually sought treatment from mental
health professionals and his file included documentation identifying that he was
being treated for anxiety and depression directly related to the harassment he was experiencing at work.

In another example of feeling frustrated with the avenues to remedy the situation we find Deanne O’Dell. Ms. O’Dell had been placed through her secretarial school at the Young Jewish Women’s Association, where she was to start her employ as the new full-time secretary. When she arrived for her first day of work and the director realized she was African American, she informed Ms. O’Dell that the position was only a part-time position. Needing the job Ms. O’Dell agreed to work part-time at a reduced wage. Over the next several weeks Ms. O’Dell took several messages for the director from the placement counselor at the secretarial school stating that “she was still looking for a qualified Jewish secretary for you.” Eventually, Ms. O’Dell was fired and went to the OCRC to file her claim while there she could not believe that the investigator was encouraging her to accept a settlement. She stated:

_I was crying…I felt very hurt…I was not the one that brought this on…I was upset and very hurt that you an OCRC supervisor would talk to me so angrily, harshly, and seeming unconcerned about what has happened to me…you did not have to treat me the way that you did without any compassion at all towards what I have been through and still going through being discriminated against is a horrible thing to happen to any person. [it] has damaged my livelihood as far as working by me being the head of my household and having no other monies coming in…_

Ms. O’Dell followed the procedure as outlined by the OCRC and ultimately felt betrayed by the OCRC investigator leading her to feel even more upset and angry than she had been before.
Still others in mid-status occupations derive their symptoms of depression and psychological distress not only from the failure of the system but also from harassment enacted by groups of co-workers. Recall the story of Buddy Johnson, the patrolman from River City, Ohio discussed in chapter 7? Buddy had been experiencing continued harassment at the hands of his supervisor as well as his fellow police officers and had complained on numerous occasions about the racist jokes, cartoons, and statements he was subjected to but nothing seemed to discourage his harassers. This ultimately took its toll on Buddy, a statement from his doctor says:

*It is my opinion that Buddy’s a bright assertive police officer whose problems, most of them job related have created severe emotional strain. He has become obsessed with the need to correct the perceived racial and other injustices in the police department, this obsession consumes large amounts of his time and energy. It leads to impaired interpersonal interactions and causes him to be ostracized by his co-worker(s) at times. It also influences his decision making process...it is therefore my opinion that, the depression, stress, and obsession with job related problems interferes with Buddy’s ability to function effectively as a police officer.*

Unlike, Rory Newell where the extreme racial animus in his workplace had left him seeking an illegal remedy, Buddy’s experiences left him obsessed with solving the racial injustices at work, thereby preventing him from functioning properly in other avenues of his life.

Take the case of Doc Peterson, a safety line operator, employed by a trucking firm. Doc states in his charge form and during his hearing that he was constantly subject to racist remarks and extreme harassment by his co-workers and supervisors. It was not uncommon to hear “go get that cotton pickin n-----,
he’ll do it” or “go get Blackie down there, he’ll get your gas for you” or for him to be referred to as “damn n-----” or “f------ n-----”. His work environment was extremely hostile and as the only African American on the shop floor he didn’t feel like there was much he could do. The day finally arrived when Doc could no longer take the harassment so he decided to walk off the job, he went to the locker room changed out of his work uniform and proceeded to leave. The following exchange subsequently took place between he and his supervisor, Joe Girardi:

Joe: What are you doing in your dress clothes?
Doc: I’m reporting off work.
Joe: What’s the matter?
Doc: I’ve been harassed over there, I’ve been called names by Sal. I’m sick and tired of it.
Joe: Well, what happened?
Doc: The man is over there calling me names; he’s harassing me and everything. I called about this before and you said you were going to do something about it and you never did nothing about it...

At this point, Mr. Girardi proceeded to grab Doc by the jacket and turn him around. Doc states:

he spun me around and I told him to take his hands off [me]. I said if you want that jacket...if you think you’re man enough to get it now, you can get Mr. Spence over there to help you or those other two supervisors...I’ll try all four of you

Clearly, Doc had reached a point where his frustration with the situation had reached its maximum level and he could no longer take it. He became angry, upset, and subject to temper outbursts, all symptoms of psychological distress.

In one final example of the development of symptoms of distress and depression in those working in mid-status occupations I revisit Don Waters, the sous chef from All-American Eatery. He had managed to move from line cook to
sous chef and once he received that promotion he started having trouble with several of his co-workers. During his hearing he was describing a particular incident with his co-worker Jim Lutz:

*He made one racial remark that really stuck in my mind. I had some cologne on that someone had gave me and it really smelled good, you know, and he said, “well I’m not black and I’m not dirty. I don’t have to wear perfume”*

When he was asked why he didn’t report any of the incidents to the head chef, Mr. Waters stated that he had been told when he was hired that the head chef “didn’t have time to listen to racial complaints.” Over the course of time, the situation became progressively worse for Mr. Waters, and ultimately resulted in his discharge and the emergence of symptoms of emotional and psychological distress.

These examples illustrate the toll that intolerable and unbearable workplace environments can have on the presence of depression and psychological distress in an individual. Those occupying mid-status jobs and who have been subjected to a pervasive culture of harassment at the hands of their co-workers or have difficulty seeking remedy for their discriminatory treatment through proscribed procedures seem to exhibit greater presence of symptoms of depression and psychological distress. As previously mentioned, this is possible since many of the occupations that are contained in this classification are typically found in the core industrial sector and as discussed earlier the core industrial sector is organized with certain protections, such as unionization and bureaucratic procedures. When those protections fail the results are even more devastating.
Also, this industrial sector has been historically been dominated by white males who may act in ways that maintain the stratification hierarchy.

As you can see when it comes to the conditions under which symptoms of psychological distress and depression emerge in mid-status occupations, there is some variation in the underlying processes. Recall from the discussion in chapter 7 that discrimination in mid-status occupations was characterized by unconscious acts, rooted in stereotypes which emerged from the data in the form of particularistic criteria but here feelings of depression and distress are evoked as a result of explicitly racist behavior. What explains this variation? It is unclear, but these mechanisms deserve further exploration and I return to this point momentarily.

**High-status Occupations**

To completely understand the manifestation of psychological distress and depression across occupational statuses we must also consider high-status occupations. Recall that high-status occupations are comprised of managers, supervisors and other professionals. Individuals who are typically aware of their rights under the law and the protections that the law affords them, as well as other remedies that they may be entitled to when they are victims of discriminatory actions. Similar to low-status and mid-status occupations, symptoms of distress and depression emerge for those occupying high status occupations when a pervasive culture of harassment exists. However, unlike either of the other two occupational classifications there is an element of intimidation involved in these
cases. Perhaps, because these individuals are more aware of their rights, and in many cases have higher levels of education, employers employed multiple tactics which when coupled with the harassment resulted in the emergence of symptoms of depression and psychological distress. Interestingly enough, those employed in high-status occupations often solicited the assistance of legal representation for the OCRC matter, as well as for pending civil claims against their former employers, again perhaps a testament to their knowledge of their rights under the law.

Consider the case of Colin Odden, a manager at a communications company who had filed several claims with the OCRC regarding unfair practices by his employer. During his 17 year tenure Mr. Odden had been regularly passed up for promotion and bonus points. He watched as others around him continued to progress much faster than he and exercised his rights with the OCRC for an investigation. Eventually he too was promoted but not without a cost, in his new position he was constantly being harassed, behavior that he alleges was in retaliation for having filed previous claims. The harassment came to be too much for him and he eventually was forced to take disability leave to cope with the resulting physical, emotional and mental injuries that his employers “malicious” behaviors resulted in. His lawyer writes:

*Defendant retaliated against plaintiff [Odden] by harassing him, refusing to accord him equal treatment, refused to honor its contract and promises to upgrade and promote plaintiff, demoted his position, all of which caused plaintiff to leave on forced disability which has caused a loss of earning, loss of fringe benefits, pain and suffering, and an impossibility of returning to employment with defendant. As a direct and proximate result of*
defendant’s malicious infliction of mental distress, plaintiff was subjected to extreme anxiety and emotional distress and serious personal injury.

In this case Odden’s depression resulted from his employer’s use of multiple discriminatory tactics to force him out of the workplace, which they did but at a tremendous financial cost to them when his case was later settled for $350,000.

In another example, Reese Granger was first suspended then discharged from his position of Commissioner of the Housing Board of Edison, Ohio, for mismanagement, unprofessional conduct, incompetence, dishonesty, and acts of moral turpitude. His then supervisor, Bob Taccit, acting on behalf of the city, held a news conference and published statements in this regard. Subsequently it was determined that these accusations were false but the damage had already been done. Mr. Granger’s lawyer writes:

This office represents Reese Granger. Mr. Granger has been personally injured by your publication of false and defamatory charges concerning his performance while employed as Commissioner.

He goes on to say:

The information published by Taccit, acting within the scope of his employment and authority, on behalf of Edison, was substantially false, impugned the plaintiff’s good name, reputation, honor, integrity, and imposed upon him a stigma that forecloses his freedom to take advantage or obtain other employment opportunities. These stigmatizing statements made by Taccit were widely published in both the print, radio and television media. As a result of these statements, the plaintiff is virtually unemployable in his profession.
In this case, the city of Edison, specifically, Bob Taccit, suspended charging party first, then discharged him, did not afford him his pre- or post-termination hearings, did not allow him to exercise his “bump” rights, and finally publicly humiliated him in order to keep him out. As a result of these extreme actions, which could be considered forms of intimidation, Granger suffered distress.

In another example, Patsy Cline, the supervisor of the night shift at Sutton House, talks about her experiences. She says:

*Sutton House breeds a very hostile working environment. Intimidation tactics are used constantly and the threat of losing one’s job or turning the center into a pizza parlor[are present]. It presented a highly stressful environment for me as well as most of the workers. The administrators constantly made comments and jokes about race and disabilities that were found to be very offensive. During my last five months of employment I felt ostracized by administrators and new supervisory staff. It was very clear when Mr. Bennett was promoted to general supervisor and Damon Childs was made shift supervisor that they had planned to terminate me. I had been involved with the process many times. At this point I considered this to be discrimination and a definite breech of an employment agreement. The emotional stress and unhealthy conditions under which we were subjected was too much. I had been a loyal employee for over two years and could not have lasted much longer under the stressful conditions.*

Recall that Sutton House was the employer where multiple employees had filed claims in a short period of time. Patsy’s story details how her employer used intimidation tactics to keep the African American employees “in line,” thereby resulting in negative mental health consequences for numerous individuals.

These cases illustrate how psychological distress and depression can develop in high-status occupations. It seems that because of the nature of high-
status jobs, employers must develop discriminatory behaviors that prey on an individual’s need to maintain their status. It is through attacking that “weakness” with intimidation tactics and other discriminatory behaviors that psychological distress and depression unfold in high-status occupations. Harassment, that is either explicitly racist in nature or involves techniques of intimidation evokes feelings of victimization and symptoms of psychological distress and depression in holders of high-status occupations. Similar to the discussion of mid-status jobs, this appears to be different from the themes presented in chapter 7 surrounding high-status occupations. Recall that in both cases, discrimination took the form of unconscious behaviors that were not out right racially explicit or intended to harm African Americans. Yet, the re-immersion in the qualitative materials for the purpose of exploring the way in which discrimination can shape the emergence of distress and depression has revealed that it is behaviors that are explicitly racist that triggers these symptoms. What could be causing these variations? One possibility is discussed momentarily.

**Conclusion**

This chapter examined the presence of and psychological distress and depression in victims of employment discrimination across industrial sectors and occupations. Past research has offered us a starting point, highlighting that individuals who see themselves as victims of discrimination suffer adverse health consequences and has been able to partially identify trends and patterns in the presence of psychological distress and depression in those who have experienced
perceived discrimination, but that is it. Using qualitative data provided by the Ohio Civil Rights Commission, this chapter explored the mechanisms behind why the patterns previously examined develop.

A closer review of industrial sectors has shown that the process does indeed vary across industrial sectors indicating that symptoms of depression and psychological distress do unfold in distinct ways depending on the sector in which the individual is embedded. Cases in the core industrial sector revolved around the threat of the loss of one’s livelihood; cases in the low-wage service sector centered on feeling trapped or blocked in opportunities at work; cases in the high-wage service sector highlighted the role of mounting frustration; and finally, cases in the public sector focused on isolation and frustration. I speculate that these differences are due to the variations in the organization of work across industrial sectors.

Exploration of the qualitative materials for occupational status told a different story. Manifestation of symptoms of psychological distress and depression across occupational statuses had one element in common – harassment in the day-to-day experiences on the job. Cases across occupational statuses were often subjected to explicitly racist behavior intended to preserve the status quo or maintain status hierarchies. Variations however, emerged in how these purposeful acts were enacted. Cases that were low-status occupations identified constant supervision and scrutiny; mid-stratus occupations involved collective behaviors and failure of the protective procedure of the workplace; and high-status occupations involved intimidation tactics. I speculate that this can be attributed to
differences in the characteristics of jobs but also as discussed earlier, these variations could be due to the organization of workplaces. Occupations are embedded within organizational and industrial context, so perhaps these effects are the primary effects. Analyses that can situate occupations in the appropriate nested contexts are warranted. One other interesting finding that merits further discussion is that of mid-status and high-status occupations and the relationship of harassment to the emergence of symptoms of psychological distress and depression. Why is it that deliberate harassment evokes symptoms of distress and depression, when the sectors were characterized by unconscious actions earlier? Perhaps because these unconscious actions are not explicitly racist in nature, and are not intended to inflict harm, those are not the actions which will induce distress and depression. Symptoms of distress and depression are brought on by more “damaging” behaviors.

Re-immersion in the qualitative materials has helped to clarify the processes and variations by industrial sector and occupational status in the emergence of symptoms of psychological distress and depression in victims of discrimination. This study is well suited for helping to understand how discrimination is likely to shape mental health outcomes. These mechanisms may be central to our understanding of discrimination and a consequence which seems to follow – ill-mental health. The mechanisms discussed here warrant further exploration.
Chapter 9: Discussion and Conclusion

A well-established body of literature has demonstrated that racial inequality in the American labor market has pervasive effects on allocative issues such as variations in labor market opportunities and wage differentials. Although there is no question that this line of research has been beneficial in contributing to our overall knowledge and understanding of inequality, it does not address the mechanisms through which inequality persists in the workplace. Thus, previous research has not explored stratification creation and persistence as a function of social closure processes. Of course social closure entails disparate outcomes, which is where most of the past literature has focused, and the quantitative analyses in this paper support this. However, it is not enough to focus on the extent of disparate outcomes, we need to also focus on the causal mechanisms – how and why these disparate outcomes exist.

Similarly, sociological research has also devoted much time and effort into analyses of minority mental health generally, and racial discrimination and mental health more specifically, theses analyses although plagued by mixed research findings primarily conclude that African Americans who are victims of discrimination suffer mental health consequences as a result. What has been
missing from these past analyses as well, is a discussion of the causal mechanisms.

To this end, I used a unique combination of data to first specify the relationship between employment discrimination and depression and psychological distress in a national probability sample, and then used qualitative materials to explore the process that shape discrimination and its impact on mental health symptoms. This final chapter presents a summary of the findings, followed by their theoretical relevance, limitations, and offers some directions for future research.

**Discussion**

In the analysis presented in chapter 6 I hypothesized that racial employment discrimination would lead to greater instances of depression and increased rates of psychological distress. Findings from these analyses indicated that the relationship between employment discrimination and psychological distress was significant however the relationship between employment discrimination and depression was only significant after the controls were introduced into the model. These findings merit further exploration of the relationship between employment discrimination and depression. Quantitative analyses such as these are only capable of specifying direction, magnitude, and significance; they tell us nothing about the underlying mechanisms that influence this relationship. Specifying relations as past research has done (and as chapter 6 did) will not help us understand how these relations operate in an actual workplace setting. Equally
important to these empirical analyses are those that center on theory development. What are the processes that may be relevant or are likely to shape particular outcomes? To move beyond theory verification and elaborate on processes and mechanisms, immersion in the qualitative materials collected was necessary.

A series of hypotheses were generated from the Ohio Discrimination Project data. Specifically, I hypothesized that the form of discrimination would vary across industrial sectors. Given the differences in the organization of work across industrial sectors, the ability of actors to engage in discriminatory behavior may be constrained in certain ways. In the low-wage service sector, for example, I suspect that lack of protection and formalized procedures, such as what you would find in the public sector, lead to an overall lack of accountability increasing the instances of discrimination, specifically discriminatory firing. The public sector, in contrast, is plagued by higher instances of harassment. Perhaps the level of bureaucratization constrains how discrimination plays out in that formalized procedures prevent discriminatory behavior from manifesting itself in exclusionary tactics but get diverted into the day-to-day mistreatment and harassment of individuals on the job.

The multinomial analysis revealed that the form of discrimination does vary across industrial sectors. In fact, discriminatory firing was more likely in the core industrial sector, the low-wage service sector, and the high-wage service sector than the comparison group (exclusion in the public sector).

A related hypothesis was regarding the process of discrimination. I hypothesized that the process by which discrimination unfolds across industrial
sectors would vary depending on the organization of work. Discriminatory firing was the primary form of discrimination in the core, low-wage service sector, and the high-wage service sector but did manifestations of discriminatory firing look the same? Or is this somehow dictated by the organization of work? I suspect that because the core is characterized by formalized procedures and unionization that arbitrary discriminatory behavior will have to be masked in some way, such as differential enforcement of existing policies. In contrast since the low-wage service sector is marred by a lack of organization and few formalized procedures, managerial abuse and arbitrary decisions in the workplace will be rampant.

Qualitative re-immersion allowed for the elaboration of variations captured by the statistical analysis. The organization of work is important for understanding how the process of discrimination unfolds. Indeed, managerial abuse was the prevalent theme that emerged from the low-wage service sector and disparate policing in the core. As for the high-wage service sector and the public sector, particularistic criteria and “soft skills” justifications were used to mask discriminatory behavior, largely because of the presence of formalized procedures and bureaucratic policy. This data allowed for the exploration of the link between discrimination and unequal workplace outcomes. How might discrimination affect workplace outcomes? Using social closure as an orienting device, one possible explanation is that discriminatory behavior can take two forms – explicitly racist, deliberate acts or unconscious acts fueled by stereotypes and cognitive biases (Reskin 2000). The ODP data revealed what processes might be relevant in the empirical relationship between discrimination and workplace outcomes.
Exploration of the qualitative materials was also useful for uncovering the ways in which discrimination was likely to shape the emergence of symptoms of mental health. The goal of this portion of the analyses was not to specify an empirical relationship rather to explore relations that could lead to theory development to aid us in better understanding what processes are relevant for the way discrimination may shape an outcome such as mental health. In fact the qualitative re-immersion did uncover certain mechanisms that may be central for our understanding. For instance, in the core where discriminatory firing is the most prevalent form of discrimination and where it generally takes the form of disparate policing, symptoms of distress and depression emerged as a result of the potential loss of one’s livelihood. As compared to the public sector where differential promotion is the most prevalent form of discrimination, we see its manifestation through particularistic criteria and “soft skills” justifications, distress and depression appear to emerge as a result of forced isolation and frustration from the situation at work.

Exploration of the qualitative materials reveals that it is likely that distress and depression do unfold in distinct ways depending on the sector in which the individual is embedded. These findings warrant further exploration and should perhaps be used to inform survey construction which would allow for empirical tests of this association.

A parallel set of hypotheses were made based on occupational status. The first hypothesis was that the form of discrimination would vary across occupational statuses. Similar to the discussion of industrial sector, occupations
have different characteristics which may enable or constrain an individual’s ability to engage in discriminatory behavior. Positions with a lack of authority and power such as low-status occupations, will be unable to protect themselves and therefore be vulnerable to managerial abuse, increasing the instances of discriminatory firing. High-status occupations on the other hand, by virtue of the power and authority they possess may be insulated from discriminatory firing but not obstruction of promotional opportunities. The results of the multinomial were not significant indicating that the forms of discrimination do not significant differ across occupational statuses.

The next hypothesis postulated that the process by which discrimination unfolds across occupational status would vary depending on the characteristics of jobs. Expulsion was the most prevalent form of discrimination across occupational statuses, but did expulsion take the same form? Did getting fired in low-status occupations look the same as in high-status occupations? Or was the process different? Given the lack of power and authority and greater turnover in low-status occupations, it is possible that the process in low-status occupations will involve managerial abuse. In high-status occupations however, discrimination could follow a different process, attributable to the greater power occupants of these position tend to hold, in these cases discriminatory actions will be more covert and may involve particularistic criteria.

The ODP data reveal that disparate policing and managerial abuse were the themes that emerged from low-status occupations as the mechanisms through which discrimination was manifested. However, the ODP data did not reveal any
differences between mid-status and high-status occupations. Individuals in both occupations were victims of particularistic criteria and “soft skills” justifications for discriminatory actions on the part of their employers. Re-immersion in the qualitative materials helps to clarify the mechanisms that varied across occupational statuses and which merited further elaboration. As previously mentioned, there was not much variation across the occupational statuses themselves, there were indeed variations in the form of social closure enacted. Similar to the discussion of industrial sectors, discriminatory behavior took two forms across occupational status – deliberate, racist acts and unconscious cognitive biases. The qualitative materials revealed that low status occupations were more vulnerable to deliberate acts through managerial abuse and disparate policing. Those in mid and high-status occupations however, seemed to be vulnerable to more unconscious behaviors through use of particularistic criteria and “soft skill” justifications for employment decisions.

Further exploration of the qualitative materials was also useful to uncover how discrimination is likely to shape psychological distress and depression. Re-immersion in the cases files reveals that distress and depression unfold across occupational statuses due to the experience of harassment at work. The qualitative materials are helpful for identifying that it is the form of this harassment that varies. In low-status occupations, where managerial abuse runs rampant, symptoms of psychological distress and depression emerged under conditions of constant supervision. In contrast, in high-status occupations there is an element of harassment in the day-to-day activities of work but it is couple with intimidation
tactics. These findings have offered some insight into the link between
discrimination, occupational status and the consequences that seem to follow but
clearly warrant further explorations. This qualitative immersion has uncovered
certain mechanisms which are likely central to our understanding of the relevance
processes of discrimination which empirical research should incorporate into
survey design and construction.

**Conclusion**

A vast body of sociological literature has explored how the American labor
market replicates existing stratification arrangements in society. Scholars have
explored various pecuniary outcomes and we have consequently learned a great
deal about wage inequality (e.g., Huffman and Cohen 2004; Kmec 2003; Mason
2000; Tomaskovic-Devey and Skaggs 1999), labor market opportunity (e.g.,
Beggs 1995; Cohn and Fossett 1995; Coleman 2002; McCall 2001; Smith and
Elliott 2002), black joblessness (Wilson 1987; Royster 2004) and other economic
issues. Yet stratification scholars have left the process by which these inequalities
develop relatively unexplored. How inequalities are maintained or persist over
time and the underlying mechanisms in the process of discrimination has received
little attention (Reskin 2000, 2003). Research in this tradition has also paid
limited attention to non-pecuniary consequences of inequality. We have learned
little about how discrimination impacts outcomes other than economic differences
and allocative issues. Personal and behavioral consequences of discrimination
remain relatively unexplored. A proper examination of the mechanisms by which inequality is maintained and an examination of a fresh outcome is needed.

A growing vein of research in the area of minority well-being has examined its association with discrimination. These studies have shown the ways in which discrimination can induce ill mental health for minority group members. However our understanding of the factors responsible for racial differences in health is still limited and even more limited is our understanding of the role of experiencing discrimination in the context of employment on health status. Few studies to date have examined this relationship (notable exceptions are Amaro, Russo and Johnson 1987; Broman, Mavaddat, and Hsu 2000; Forman 2003; Krieger 1999; Pavalko, Mossakowski, and Hamilton 2003). Limitations with available data however, have prevented us from being able to truly assess the ways in which discrimination can lead to changes in health and well-being. Data is often drawn from perceptions of discrimination and includes experiences in various social arenas rather than specifically within the context of employment.

A central goal of this study was to elaborate existing stratification research in two important ways – mechanisms and exploration of atypical outcomes. Sociological research has devoted limited attention at best to understanding how inequalities are maintained. The primary contribution of this study was to explore the underlying mechanism that result in persistent inequality in the American labor market. Limitations in available data has precluded past research from being able to truly assess this relationship.
Social closure as an orienting device provides us with a way to understand both how and why people engage in discriminatory behavior. Discrimination can take two forms explicitly racist behavior or the deliberate, purposeful acts of dominant group members against subordinate group members which are meant to preserve status hierarchies. This had been a popular explanation in sociological literature in terms of our understanding of gender inequality in the workplace (Reskin 1988; England 1982; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993) as well as for our understanding of differences in outcomes for African Americans (Feagin 1991; Feagin and Vera 1995; Blalock 1956; Reskin 2000). In this study we saw this explicitly racist behavior manifest across all industrial sectors and occupations, and ultimately evoke feelings of distress and depression. Individuals were often times subjected to pervasive cultures of harassment in the day-to-day activities of their employment which resulted in not only inequality in economic outcomes but also in many cases the emergence of symptoms of ill-health.

However, outright explicitly racist acts are not the only types of discriminatory behavior that individual actors engage in (Reskin 2000). Social closure also includes unconscious behaviors which Reskin (2000) argues are informed by cognitive biases fueled by stereotypes. These unconscious behaviors can take on one of two forms. First, is opportunity hoarding which involves monopolizing/controlling resources for the benefit of one group, but at the exclusion of another (Tilly 1998; DiTomaso, Post, and Parks-Yancy 2007). In these cases it is not necessarily about deliberate acts but rather behaviors that result in the exclusion of some. These behaviors can occur at either the industrial
or occupational level where in the context of this research, whites shape the rules and the ways in which they are applied to maintain their advantage. Opportunity hoarding is not about purposeful acts rather it is often manifested through seemingly race neutral policies differentially applied based on stereotypes. The qualitative materials revealed opportunity hoarding through the use of particularistic criteria or “soft skill” justifications for employment decisions – “he didn’t interview well;” “she was too loud;” “he was aggressive” – these justifications often articulated by employers indicate that employment decisions are often informed by cognitive biases rooted in racial stereotypes which lead to biased evaluations of ability (Reskin 2000; DiTomaso, Post, Parks-Yancy 2007; Kirschenmen and Neckerman 1991).

A second form of unconscious behavior that nevertheless has a discriminatory impact on its victims is homosocial reproduction. Homosocial reproduction proposes that individuals are generally more comfortable with people like themselves – in marriage, in social circles, and for the purpose of this discussion, at work (Kanter 1977; Elliot and Smith 1994). Because of greater levels of trust in people similar to themselves and because of a sense of obligation, homosocial reproduction can lead to favoritism in terms of performance evaluations, training opportunities, promotions and other rewards and opportunities at work (Kanter 1977; Elliot and Smith 1994; DiTomaso, Post, Parks-Yancy 2007). Similar to opportunity hoarding, homosocial reproduction does not involved explicitly racist behavior but rather manifests itself through the advantages that some experience in the workplace. The qualitative immersion
revealed that this does indeed happen. Recall the case of Rose Gold who never received a promotion because vacancies were never posted, allowing her boss to promote her cronies, or the countless other cases in the data set where charging parties expressed blocked opportunities, but not because of outright, explicitly racist behavior as is typically envisioned in discussions of discrimination.

An additional contribution to stratification research is consideration of a fresh outcome separate from allocative and pecuniary rewards. Discrimination does have multiple personal costs, including personal and behavioral consequences, which merit attention. The present study explored the linkages between the mechanisms that underlie racial discrimination in the context of employment on minority well-being. Exploration of the qualitative materials shows how it is likely that discrimination across industrial sectors and occupation is likely to shape mental health outcomes. The literature in this avenue is far less clear about the processes that may be relevant in this relationship therefore this exploratory effort is meant to aid in theory development. This is the first study of its kind exploring verified discrimination and consequences that seem to follow. The qualitative immersion uncovered certain mechanisms, specifically the role of harassment, which may be central to understanding the link between discrimination and other outcomes such as psychological distress and depression. Clearly these processes warrant further exploration and tests of empirical associations.

A secondary contribution of this study has been to the mental health literature, offering a way to move beyond perceptions of unfair treatment to a
measure of actual instances of discrimination. Again, use of verified
discrimination to explore the relationship between psychological distress and
depression has not occurred before. Research in this tradition has also ignored the
study of the mechanisms and processes of discrimination that lead to
consequences for well-being. This study offers an elaboration of existing mental
health research by specifying discrimination more clearly and precisely than ever
before and exploring the linkages between employment discrimination and
changes in well-being.

**Limitations**

There are however, several limitations to this study that are worthy of discussion.
In terms of the analysis of the ACL data, perhaps the first limitation surrounds the
measures of discrimination. The measure for depression, or major depressive
episode appears to be more indicative of a diagnostic tool, thereby perhaps
imposing a stricter scrutiny for the likelihood of the event, and perhaps future
analysis should be conducted treating this as a “rare event.” The scale
representing psychological distress appears to be a continuous measure which
captures distress and depression together. It also appears to be more of a screening
device for mental health problems as compared to a diagnostic tool, therefore
more respondents may appear to experience distress.

The first issue arising from the Ohio Discrimination Project data is that no
null cases were available. Null cases are those in which no discrimination would
have occurred – hence why they would not be available from the OCRC. It is
beyond the scope of the OCRC’s responsibilities to keep track of every employee ever employed. Beyond conducting case studies of selected employers where all employees are interviewed, there is no way of collecting information on null cases. However, the value of the qualitative materials for informing the underlying processes and mechanisms of discrimination and the rich and creative ways in which this study can inform future research far outweighs this limitation.

An additional concern is the inability to claim causality in terms of mental health outcomes in this study. The sample size is small and cases were selected on the dependent variable, which could be problematic for analyses specifying relationships. However, this study was an exploratory effort designed to identify the processes that may be relevant for understanding the empirical relationship between discrimination and mental health outcomes. Cases were included that would help to understand this process and though selection was made on the dependent variable, in exploratory research this is not problematic. Additionally, because there was variation in the materials contained in each case, severity of the mental health symptoms cannot be gauged or measured. Here I am relying on the OCRC to perform an adequate investigation of the claim and to probe when needed. Clearly this is not the best method, however, in the absence other data derived from verified discrimination cases, it is the best available data.

A final concern with the data presented in this study is also relating to the mental health outcomes and that is self-selection bias. Could it be that people who are pre-disposed to mental health problems are also the ones who in turn are likely to file claims reporting their discriminatory experiences? While this is a legitimate
concern, Brown and his colleagues (2000) tested to see if this was indeed an issue in research on discrimination and mental health and found that perceptions of discrimination were not a function of prior poor mental health, rather than perceptions of discrimination were linked to the onset of adverse mental health.

**Directions for Future Research**

This study ends with a discussion of the avenues that future researchers should explore in order to understand not only the process of discrimination but also its relationship to mental health outcomes.

Research exploring the underlying processes and mechanisms behind discrimination is clearly warranted. Sociological research has been limited in its ability to understand these processes due to limitations in data, so more data like the ODP data is needed. Partnering with agencies like the OCRC in other states could open the door for multi-state comparisons and could expand our understanding of the processes that underlie discrimination. Future partnerships with these agencies could also enable researchers to interview victims of discrimination at the time of their experience to assess specific consequences of discriminatory behaviors.

My hope is that this study will help to inform the creation of better survey tools to better be able to empirically test the relationship between discrimination and mental health outcomes. The qualitative immersion revealed processes that were relevant for the emergence of this relationship and while this study was unable to claim causality, future studies could.
A future goal of researchers should also be to tease out the policy implications of this line of stratification research. Sociological research has demonstrated that inequality in the workplace exists through various empirical studies, but reforms to policy have been slow to follow primarily because of its inability to articulate why it persists or how to effectively reduce it (Reskin 2000). Clearly, future research should focus on effectively articulating stratification maintenance and ways of reducing it.
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