

African American Men and the Experience of Employment Discrimination

Sherry N. Mong · Vincent J. Roscigno

Published online: 4 November 2009
© Springer Science + Business Media, LLC 2009

Abstract The economic marginalization of African American men has been studied in a variety of contexts, from trade union exclusion, to joblessness, to disparate wages and mobility. Discrimination is often inferred as an influential mechanism, yet seldom directly examined in its own right. Drawing on a unique sample of verified workplace discrimination cases, this article analyzes forms and processes of discrimination that African American men face in employment. Our results denote the prevalence of discriminatory firing, with on-going racial harassment and discriminatory promotional and hiring practices also quite evident. In-depth immersion into case materials highlights the centrality of racial stereotyping and significant discretion on the part of gatekeepers within organizational environments—discretion in the use of “soft skills” criteria to exclude and debilitate mobility, and in selective (or even targeted) use of seemingly neutral organizational policies and sanctions. Moreover, harassment on the job—something that conventional workplace inequality research has overlooked—is quite problematic and well-represented in these data. We conclude by discussing the implications of our results for the conceptualization of inequality reproduction and that pertaining to race, status, and the workplace in particular.

The marginalization of African American men in the arena of employment remains problematic. Gaps on key economic indicators such as employment, occupational prestige, income, and job mobility persist some forty years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act (Baldi and McBrier 1997; Grodsky and Pager 2001; Smith 2001; Wilson et al. 1995; Xu and Leffler 1992). Analyses of these disparities, typically using aggregate or survey data, often implicate through inference the role of discrimination by institutional gatekeepers (e.g., Huffman and Cohen 2004; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993a). We view differential treatment and the inequality that it breeds as pressing sociological matters with clear relevance to particular literatures, but also as fundamental to broader questions surrounding fairness and justice (see also Young 1990; Henry and Jennings 2004).

S. N. Mong (✉) · V. J. Roscigno
Department of Sociology, 238 Townshend Hall, 1885 Neil Ave. Mall, Columbus, OH 43210, USA
e-mail: mong.23@osu.edu

V. J. Roscigno
e-mail: Roscigno.1@sociology.osu.edu

Understanding discrimination relative to workplace stratification is important for several reasons. First, researchers have increasingly identified discrimination as a likely *mechanism* and, correspondingly, have called for a greater understanding of the underlying social and interactional processes involved (Reskin 2003; Vallas 2003). Indeed, an emerging body of research demonstrates that employers engage in racial stereotyping—stereotyping that has strong and unique implications for African American men (Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991; Moss and Tilly 1996, 2001; Shih 2002; Pager 2003). Second, beyond shaping objectively measurable workplace outcomes (e.g., mobility, wages, occupational prestige and promotion), discrimination may have other, less easily measurable, dimensions (e.g., harassment) as well as important social psychological consequences (Hughes and Demo 1989; Williams and Williams-Morris 2000; Kessler et al. 1999). Finally, limited theoretical and empirical attention to discrimination can lend itself to overly determined conceptions of inequality—conceptions that theoretically prioritize either structure or victim background attributes, but that downplay or neglect relational elements of social closure as well as agency on the part of gatekeeping actors.

Acknowledging interactional processes and discretionary power within structural/organizational bounds is important, not to mention consistent with theorizing on social justice and inequality reproduction. At the core of such theorizing is the premise that social closure, the exercise of power, and inequality, while certainly reinforced and reproduced by history and structure, are fundamentally relational (Blau 1964; Foucault 1980; Young 1990). In this article, we examine interactional dynamics surrounding power and status, gatekeeper discretion within organizational environments, and the consequences for black men in the context of employment. Although all African Americans undoubtedly face discriminatory barriers, we focus specifically on African American men owing to unique stereotyping, labor market position, and vulnerabilities. Our analyses draw from a unique data set of verified employment discrimination cases filed from 1988 to 2003 in the state of Ohio—a relatively representative state, and one wherein state civil rights guidelines and enforcement practices parallel those at the federal level. The qualitative components of these data are particularly unique, offering an exceptional view of African American men's experiences on the job and the specific character of the discrimination they experience.

Stratification, race and the labor market

Black men have high unemployment, remaining twice as likely as their white counterparts to experience long bouts of joblessness (Cohn and Fossett 1995). Significant inequalities likewise exist in income and wages (Bound and Freeman 1992; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993a; Smith 1997; Grodsky and Pager 2001) and promotion and authority attainment (Baldi and McBrier 1997; Wilson 1997; Wilson et al. 1999; Smith 2002).

Tomaskovic-Devey (1993a) suggests that the inequalities about which we are speaking are primarily due to *social closure* processes—processes whereby blacks are often sorted or queued into jobs that require lower credentials, offer less on-the-job training, or that may be “racialized” personnel jobs intended to serve other minorities (Kaufman 1986, 2002; Reskin and Roos 1990). Such jobs can hinder the further development of human capital and often offer little in the way of upward mobility (Collins 1993, 1997). Reid (1998) and Tomaskovic-Devey (1993b) have correspondingly argued that processes such as discrimination in hiring and job assignment may be salient as starting points from which to understand wage differentials. Recent work on stratification processes within firms

(Peterson and Saporta 2004) and across labor markets (Huffman and Cohen 2004) concurs that more systematic attention to discrimination itself is warranted.

The role of racial discrimination and bias

Sociological scholarship on workplace discrimination has focused primarily on *hiring* and statistical discrimination—discrimination that occurs when employers use attributes (such as race or gender) of prospective employees as “signals” of their productivity. Analyses using experimental designs, such as racial “testing” audits, have generally shown that blacks are less likely to be hired (Fix and Struyk 1993; Bendick et al. 1994; Pager 2003). Fewer callbacks have also been documented for resumes with African American sounding names (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2003; see also Bobo and Suh 2000). Such patterns are only exacerbated by segregated networks—networks that hurt African Americans’ chances of being hired (Braddock and McPartland 1987; Wilson 1987; Royster 2003). Although formal hiring practices may help equalize the playing field, nepotism may, in fact, continue to exert an influence (Moss and Tilly 2001; Royster 2003). Indeed, although employers often claim to be open to hiring minorities, recent work indicates that there is a significant disjuncture between what they say and what they actually do (Pager and Quillian 2005).

Studies designed to detect racial discrimination in *promotional practices*, rather than capturing discrimination directly, tend to rely on aggregate data sets with promotion or occupation as the dependent variable. Generally, these studies reveal that blacks are less likely to be promoted, or are promoted at slower rates than whites, even after controlling for individual and firm characteristics (Baldi and McBrier 1997; Maume 1999; James 2000; Smith 2005). Scholars have focused on promotion due to the inherent problem of subjectivity and supervisor bias in the evaluation process. Indeed, several studies have demonstrated that blacks receive lower job evaluations than whites (Greenhaus et al. 1990; Sackett et al. 1991; Elvira and Zatzick 2002). Expanding on Kluegel’s (1978) concept of particularistic manipulation, in which employers base promotion decisions on subjective and often, vague, attributes, research generally supports a “particularistic mobility thesis.” Here, African Americans must follow more narrow and restricted mobility paths than whites (Mueller et al. 1989; Wilson 1997; Wilson et al. 1999).

Subjectivity in performance evaluations may also shape *discriminatory firing* and, partly related, employers’ layoff decisions (Cummings 1987; Elvira and Zatzick 2002). In this regard, quantitative analyses suggest that African Americans—particularly men—are significantly more likely than whites to be laid off, after controlling for individual and job-related factors (Elvira and Zatzick 2002; Park and Sandefur 2003). In fact, as corporations experienced downsizing in the 1990s, African American white-collar workers were disproportionately displaced into lower-level white-collar and, particularly, blue-collar jobs, while whites benefited from traditional protective factors such as higher SES, professional or technical employment, union membership, and firm tenure (McBrier and Wilson 2004). This supports a “minority vulnerability thesis”—the flip side to the particularistic mobility argument—wherein downward mobility for minorities is more general, less circumscribed, and less predicted by traditional protective factors (see especially Wilson and McBrier 2005).

Whether queued into positions for which they are overqualified, struggling to push through glass ceilings (Maume 1999), or riding the escalator “down” the occupational ladder (McBrier and Wilson 2004), there is clear evidence that race matters for the employment experiences of black men. Although inequalities have been pervasive for all African Americans, employers hold certain negative stereotypes that may be particularly

detrimental for African American men (Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991; Moss and Tilly 1996, 2001; Shih 2002; Wilson 1996). In this regard, Moss and Tilly (2001) find that employers often hold negative views of both the “hard” and “soft” skills of black men in entry-level jobs—black men who are variously described as “defensive,” “overly sensitive,” “violent,” and “difficult to control.” In short, although they may become “honorary whites” through their sharing of male common interests (Vallas 2003), there is a long history of African American male subordination based on perceived threat and broader cultural stereotypes (Lynn and Mau 2002).

Interaction, power, and discrimination in employment

Scholars advocating a broad view of justice in their conceptions of inequality production note the circular nature of power, its fruition through action, and the importance of institutional context in the enactment of power among gatekeeping agents (Foucault 1980; Young 1990). While previous research has certainly offered insight in these regards, little theoretical and empirical attention has focused precisely on relevant dynamics in the context of employment. Focusing simply on distributions and disparities in easily measurable economic rewards, for instance, fails to consider the ways in which discretionary power—power that manifests in the course of interaction and that is embedded within organizational environments—plays a part in creating and maintaining social status hierarchies (See Blau 1964; Young 1990). Moreover, relational features of racial/ethnic hierarchy maintenance, such as informal, day-to-day harassment, may very well be overlooked. These two unique yet somewhat overlapping foci—discretion and harassment—encompass the core of our analyses and contributions in what follows.

We draw from and build on social closure theory as an orienting frame given its emphases on inequality creation and maintenance rather than merely its extent (Parkin 1974; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993a). Social closure—a term utilized by Weber to denote the process or processes by which more powerful actors seek to maximize advantage by restricting access and privileges to others—often occurs through institutional exclusion and dominant group positioning. It also comes about, consciously and unconsciously, within the context of everyday interaction—interaction that, through language, symbolic acts, and/or physical control or force, has as its aim status-hierarchy preservation and the various advantages/disadvantages that hierarchy affords (Roscigno 2007).

Especially central is the role of power, and that exerted by supervisors in the course of discretionary decision making—supervisors who, more often than not, have status-based power derived from their race (and gender), but also position-based power in the workplace hierarchy. And, there is good reason to believe that such actors, with vested interests in established status and positional hierarchies, will invoke and enact broader cultural stereotypes within workplaces (see Moss and Tilly 2001). Although discriminatory behavior is arguably constrained by both law and organizational mandates, there can be significant flexibility, discretion, and relational dynamics among and within the most formalized, bureaucratic environments (Kalev 2009). Moreover, informal workplace subcultures play a significant role in shaping individual behavior, with implications for deviance and even the effectiveness and impact of workplace diversity policies (in this regard, also see Vaughan 1992; Coleman 2006; Kalev et al. 2006).

In line with arguments pertaining to “particularistic manipulation,” noted earlier, gatekeeping actors likely exert flexibility in defining, rather informally, what attributes determine who is the best employee to hire or promote. Indeed, such actors have the power

to ignore or invoke formal organizational procedures and rules—procedures and rules that are arguably neutral but that may, in fact, be discriminatorily applied or used in targeted, detrimental ways toward a particular group (Roscigno 2007; for similar arguments relative to mortgage lending and insurance redlining, see Smith and Cloud (1996), and Roscigno et al. (2009)). Moreover, they exhibit in actions and decision making a tendency toward homosocial reproduction, wherein opportunities are afforded more so to similar others (Elliot and Smith 2004; Royster 2003).

Importantly, discrimination is not simply about exclusion from concrete job positions or easily objective workplace rewards. It also embodies harassment of various forms, including differential treatment, once employed—harassment not so easily captured by commonly utilized, and objectively measurable, indicators. Scholars dealing with gender and sexual harassment (De Coster et al. 1999; Kimmel and Smith 2005; MacKinnon 1979) have made this point quite clearly, while research pertaining to work and race has not. Rather than centering on systematic institutional exclusion or the unequal distribution of objective workplace rewards, race-targeted harassment (whether by gatekeeping actors and/or co-workers) likely has as its aim social status maintenance pertaining to racial hierarchy. Although the consequences may not lie in objective work status (e.g., getting the job, promotion, or salary increase), such harassment on the job holds quite significant social-psychological consequences for victims (see Feagin and McKinney 2003; Krieger et al. 1993; Williams 1995; Williams and Collins 1995).

None of this, of course, is to suggest that all discriminatory acts are necessarily conscious ones. Indeed, subjectivity on the part of gatekeeping actors may reflect cultural bias (Young 1990). Moreover, because such actors are also members of various social groups, they may carry non-conscious biases toward “out-group” members and may not realize or mentally acknowledge their perceptions or their actions as discriminatory, particularly in the absence of company constraints (Reskin 2000, 2003). Thus, while some discrimination is certainly driven by explicit bias, it need not be. It may be seen as fair by gatekeepers given their power and organizational discretion, and legitimated through dominant ideological themes of merit and color-blindness (in this regard, see Bonilla-Silva 2003; Hunt 2007; Kluegel 1978).

Data

Data are drawn from discrimination suits filed with the Ohio Civil Rights Commission (OCRC) between 1988 and 2003. The OCRC is responsible for enforcing state laws against discriminatory practices in employment, housing, public accommodations, credit, and higher education (OCRC 2004). The OCRC is a neutral party and can render a “probable cause” recommendation, in accordance with EEOC, federal, and state guidelines, only when the “preponderance of evidence is sufficient to substantiate that discrimination has occurred” (OCRC 2004). The neutral position of the OCRC, its power as an investigative body, and its review process provide strong evaluative evidence of whether discrimination occurred. Since 1978, the OCRC has had work share arrangements with the EEOC so that employment charges are dual filed (OCRC 2004). The EEOC, however, often relies on the opinion of the OCRC unless the case falls into an already existent EEOC investigation, litigation, or national initiative. These cases are, in effect, both state and federal discrimination cases.

Ohio is a particularly appropriate state for this study. In the 2000 census, 11.5% of its population reported being black or African American. This is slightly lower, yet quite

comparable to the 12.4% rate for the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000). Although local economies have their own configurations of racial and gender inequality based on unique factors such as industrial base, geographic location, and immigrant influx (McCall 2001), Ohio's industrial base affords an opportunity to examine work settings where African American men have traditionally been employed, as well as the possible work dynamics that may result from deindustrialization. Here, the employment statistics for black men in Ohio are quite comparable to those of the nation. In 1999, African American men made up 5.26% and 6.41% of private industry employees in Ohio and the United States, respectively (EEOC 2004). The distribution of these men among occupations is also quite similar in Ohio and the U.S., as noted in Table 1.

The base data includes the charging party's race and sex, the basis of the charge, the industry in which the claim occurred, and the outcome of the investigation. We consider only those cases in which the charging party self-identified as African American and male, and in which the basis of the charge is either race (black) or race (black)-retaliation ($N=15,054$). Because it would be inaccurate to assume that every claim that is filed is one in which discrimination actually occurred, we limit our analyses and use of qualitative materials to verified cases ($N=3,164$). Verified cases include those with either a probable cause finding, or a high level favorable finding for the charging party such as a settlement arbitrated by a neutral third party (OCRC or District Attorney's office). Focusing primarily on verified cases bolsters confidence that the processes uncovered and discussed throughout pertain straightforwardly to discrimination, rather than alleged, perceived, or unsubstantiated discrimination.

Discrimination will undoubtedly be underestimated in such data given that someone discriminated against must (1) interpret their treatment as discrimination, (2) understand their rights under the law, (3) actively seek out a civil rights commission office, and (4) enter the office and go through an entire investigative process. There is a subjective element to the process and within the cases analyzed, to be sure—one wherein a charging party's subjective interpretation of the discrimination experience and their corresponding filing of a charge aligns with the law and meets investigative criteria. Relative to prior work, however, these cases reveal notable heterogeneity by discriminatory form, occupational status, and

Table 1 Occupational employment of black men in private industry, 1999

	United States		Ohio	
	<i>Number Employed</i>	<i>Percentage in EEO Group</i>	<i>Number Employed</i>	<i>Percentage in EEO Group</i>
Officials & Managers	153,320	5.55	5,904	5.29
Professionals	159,235	5.76	5,571	5.00
Technicians	122,848	4.44	4,212	3.78
Sales Workers	263,840	9.54	8,701	7.80
Office & Clerical Workers	198,463	7.18	6,730	6.04
Craft Workers	271,378	9.82	9,935	8.91
Operatives	669,306	24.21	28,708	25.75
Laborers	439,005	15.88	20,118	18.04
Service Workers	486,980	17.62	21,628	19.40

1999 EEO-1 Aggregate Report for United States and Ohio

across industry, and the qualitative materials provide a level of detail and richness seldom seen in the stratification, work, or race literatures.

Importantly, African American men work largely in white, male, segregated workplace contexts. Supplementary data on a subsample of approximately 100 of these men suggest that the majority of them work in white contexts (i.e., greater than 80% white), and 93% are in the numerical minority on the jobs. Moreover, the composition of their workplaces is, on average, 70% male, suggesting that the dynamics about which we speak may be gendered in their own right. The qualitative material we present below is informative in this regard, revealing that it is mostly white male supervisors or groups of white male coworkers who discriminate and harass. We make note of this along with other potential variations within our findings. We also revisit the question of gendered processes among men, and potentially unique processes for African American women, in our conclusions.

We briefly report quantitative descriptive patterns below, but then turn to our qualitative analyses and central foci—discretionary and harassment dynamics and how they are enacted. All victim and employer names have been changed in the qualitative materials that follow. As each case file runs somewhere between 50 and 250 pages, this qualitative data provides rich information on what occurred in the employee's own words, the employer's response to charges, and witness testimony. The qualitative data reported reflect not rare or unique cases, but rather typical scenarios and patterns we uncovered during our immersion into this large body of case files. These qualitative data are truly unique and, by virtue of case immersion and coding, provide an exceptional view of the various dimensions and costs of workplace discrimination, the claims and detailed experiences of those involved, and the underlying social and interactional processes.

Discriminatory forms and the explication of process

We highlight quantitative patterns in these data, and then turn specifically to the question of how discrimination in access, mobility, and harassment manifests for African American men across an array of workplace contexts. These discussions reveal how discrimination is enacted, and arguably some of the ways in which structural patterns are reified. In this regard, and following Young (2001, p. 13), we view interaction and relations of power among human agents, especially when patterned in some systematic fashion, as part and parcel of structure itself. To disregard or underplay interactional processes would, in fact, be misleading in so much as “social structures exist only in action and interaction of persons; they exist not as states, but as processes.”

Figure 1 reports the distribution of the reported injuries for the 3,164 verified and 11,890 non-verified discrimination cases filed by African American men between 1988 and 2003. The reader will note relatively consistency between the two, suggesting that our analytic emphasis on verified cases does not necessarily bias our interpretations in any fundamental manner. Indeed, and as noted earlier, non-verified cases may reflect generally similar processes but without enough supporting documentation to lead to a probable cause finding or settlement. Probable cause findings may also be influenced by which cases civil rights investigators choose to pursue. Substantively speaking, however, the differences are rather minor, likely indicating minimal bias in what we are capturing.

Turning to the verified claims specifically, we find that hiring discrimination comprises the fewest charges. There is good reason, however, to suspect that this particular form of discrimination is seriously underrepresented. Simply, those who have not been hired for a position may not realize that they have been discriminated against. Only those prospective

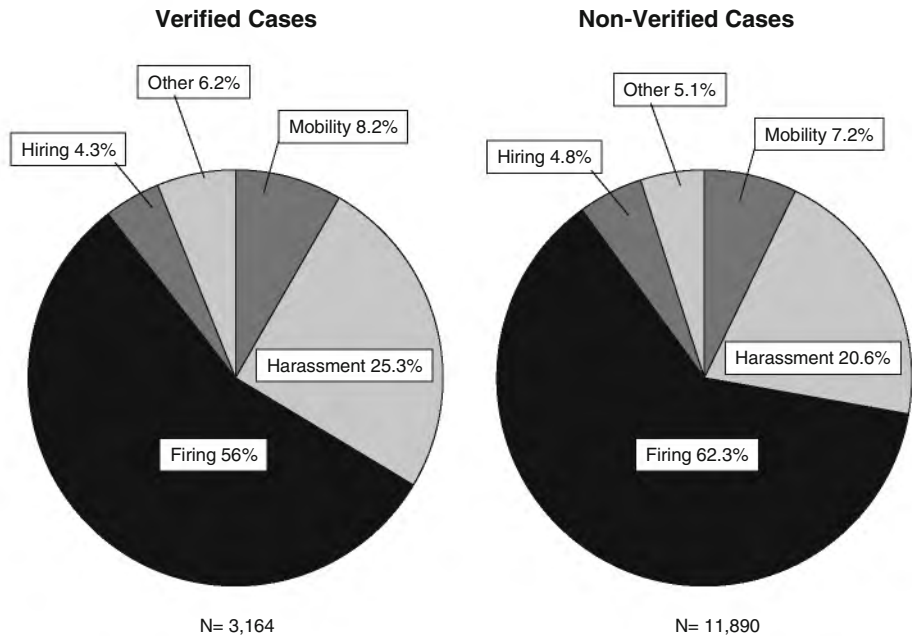


Fig. 1 Distribution of verified and non-verified discrimination charges filed by African American men, by Injury, 1988–2003.

employees who have access to knowledge about who was hired might feel justified in filing a claim. Conversely, it is likely that employees who are already familiar with the workplace have greater knowledge of potential job openings, including which jobs are filled, and by whom. Correspondingly, mobility, which consists of both promotion denials and demotions, represents approximately 8.2% of verified cases, which is almost two times that of hiring.

Although institutional access in hiring discrimination has been studied with the use of experimental and auditing designs, far less is known about the role of discriminatory firing. This is notable, as firing makes up the overwhelming majority of discrimination cases, comprising 56% of those verified by civil rights investigators and 62% of those not verified. Such differences are quite negligible, though may suggest that investigators pursue firing cases with validating evidence more fervently. Moreover, and although seemingly high, the prevalence of discriminatory firing in our data is strikingly consistent with legal scholarship, which most often relies on Federal EEOC cases. Such scholarship relates firing to employers' willingness to undertake discretionary and arguably discriminatory behavior especially when unemployment is high and fired workers can be easily replaced (in these regards, see especially Donohue and Siegelman 1991). The prevalence of discriminatory firing is also consistent with recent work suggesting that employer subjectivity and biases make minorities especially vulnerable to forced exits (McBrier and Wilson 2004; Wilson and McBrier 2005). Firing includes discharge, constructive discharge, layoffs, and involuntary retirement, as well as other employer acts which effectively encourage the employee to quit, such as suspensions or failure to recall.

One of the most striking patterns is the prevalence of harassment claims. Harassment, comprising such injuries as discipline, exclusion, antagonism, and differential terms and

conditions of employment, makes up over 25% of the verified cases. Harassment can cause humiliation and embarrassment, and its prevalence in these data speaks to the day-to-day experiences of discrimination (Feagin 1991; Feagin and McKinney 2003) and the emotional stress it can cause. As the qualitative analyses that follow show, harassment also holds important implications for occupational mobility and victims' abilities to perform their jobs. Other differential treatment—which represents 6% of verified claims—involves perceived inequities in other key job measures such as benefits and seniority.

Hiring and upward mobility

The qualitative data on hiring discrimination speak to its sometimes explicit and sometimes covert character. Interestingly, victims generally either know who was hired or believe that the workplace is discriminatory because so few blacks have *ever* been hired. An applicant for a maintenance position with a state agency, for example, knows that whites were hired for the position for which he applied and that the workplace has only one black employee. A local newspaper article had previously criticized this department for nepotism in its hiring of employee friends and relatives. Another example involves an applicant for a grounds worker job in a public school system. Although the charging party learned he had scored the highest on the written portion of the entry exam, he was told he did not get the job because of poor performance on the oral portion, which had a much more subjective character to its scoring. Finally, a welder who sought a position in an equipment business was told, upon his arrival for the interview, that the newspaper had been mistaken—that the job required someone with skills as both an electrician and a welder. He was told that the ad would be corrected, yet it never ran again.

With regard to promotion, these African American men generally note that a less qualified or less senior worker is given the job. The employer's typical response is that the charging party was not as qualified as the person hired, or did not meet the criteria for the promotion. Such employer counterclaims of "merit" are especially pronounced in public sector organizations, where one might expect to see more bureaucratically-framed responses given explicit historical mandates pertaining to fair employment practices. Such cases are also more apparent among skilled and professional workers, likely owing to the hierarchical structure of their workplaces and accompanying career mobility ladders.

Since many of these men are equally qualified in terms of formal evaluation, according to civil rights investigators, it is quite likely that supervisor discretion and an invoking of "on-the-spot" subjective criteria are playing a role. Indeed, the case material suggests that employers often hold stereotypical views of African American men's "hard" or "soft" work skills. As a case in point, a lieutenant for a county park district was denied promotion due to his "poor writing skills," yet noted that his evaluations never reflected this critique—a fact confirmed by case investigators. In another case, a probation officer was denied promotion to supervisor over a white employee because he "didn't interview well."

Such "particularistic criteria" may play a role in prioritizing informal work relations over objective criteria in promotion decisions. Civil rights investigators, for instance, determined that when Brandon Lang, an equipment operator, was denied promotion to a superintendent position, the job was given to a less qualified coworker. The promotion decision was based on answers to a written test and ratings from an ad hoc committee made up of employees who evaluated the candidates based on their perceived "performances" and "personal observations." Under testimony, the engineer responsible for the promotion decision admitted that he had never used a written test in the evaluation process before, and that the test answers were "not graded right or wrong, but on the basis of understanding the

questions and writing an answer.” The engineer destroyed all of the test results and could show no evidence of the written answers given by candidates. Moreover, the investigation revealed that committee members did not access personnel files in the evaluation process and some of the committee members could not remember the details of how they rated candidates.

Q: And, you’ve thrown away any records of what those scores were?

A: Well, number one, I would like to point out that the scoring was something on my part to try to get some input from my employees, but the final choice had to be mine, and I was responsible for the final choice. So, I saw no reason to implicate any other people in the choice. And at the time I felt it was a good idea to destroy things, but obviously it wasn’t.

Q: Hindsight is like that.

A: I guess so.

Q: In any event, you’re not able to tell me what those scores were, for those individual employees, or to suggest to me any way that I might find out what those scores were?

A: Only if the various employees would remember what they did. And if their memory is like mine, I don’t think so.

Importantly, *lack of formal policy facilitates employer bias and blocked promotion opportunities* for many of these men, opening the window for discretionary decision making. Security Guard Jason Wright was unaware that there were opportunities for promotion into a supervisory position at the retail business where he worked, and was upset when a less-qualified white employee was promoted as his supervisor. He maintains that blacks were not “put in any decision making position.” When he asked about the promotion, the Director of Loss Prevention informed him that he was “against affirmative action” and believed in “people working on their own merits.” According to Jason:

I asked him about the criteria...and [about] how [he got] the position over me or any other blacks in the company who had been there much longer than him....His comment was, in effect was, that remark about laying his wallet down and it being there when he get back and...I said “Do you know what you’re saying?...like you’re laying your wallet down, say like, like blacks are going to steal from you or something.” I said, “Do you know what you’re saying?” He said “it was his prerogative or at his discretion to make what promotions that he wanted to and the way he see fit, it was best for the department” or something to that effect.

To be clear, the men who file on mobility issues are generally not aware of any problems with their performance, or know of no reason why they should not be promoted. Such claims are especially powerful in the face of the civil rights investigation—an investigation that includes a thorough examination of internal documents such as personnel evaluations. In this regard, consider the case of Shawn Sullivan, who applied for a position as District Field Service Manager for his current employer—a mail shipping company—and was temporarily filling the position until someone was hired. He was not even allowed to interview for the position even though he had “more seniority, experience and qualifications” than the white employee who was transferred from another facility and hired. A letter from the former District Field Service Manager substantiated that Sullivan had a superior rating, but that he was not given the job due to his lack of management “authority.” Sullivan worked under the new District Field Manager, but was terminated within a few months because the new Manager believed Sullivan “undermined his authority.” A white employee wrote that the new Manager was “out to get” Sullivan and

was “nitpicking on a lot of little things.” Such “nitpicking” provides support for the possibility that black men may be judged based on subjective criteria or that minor infractions may be used to justify the social closure they experience.

Firing and downward mobility

Firing is most highly represented among all verified (and also non-verified) discrimination case filings for Black men. Although the case materials substantiate that African American men of all occupational ranks may be vulnerable, this is disproportionately the case for those with less formal skills, who have little in the way of contractual protection and who can be most easily replaced. Although they work in establishments of quite varying sizes, they are nearly always the numerical minority and, in many cases, are relatively isolated as the only black employee or one in but a small handful. Some report unfair work conditions prior to being fired, such as being paid less than white workers. Or, they are forced to work in racially hostile environments wherein racial slurs by supervisors are commonplace. Many were dismissed for infractions, such as absences, for which similarly-situated white employees were not sanctioned. One case involved a construction laborer who was given permission to take the day off and was then fired for it.

Such seemingly arbitrary decisions reveal the discretionary nature of power and its enactment by supervisors. Moreover, we find a clear pattern of *disparate policing and sanctioning* as a mechanism of social closure in these cases. Brad Hill, a crater for an industrial company, is a case in point. He was involved in a verbal dispute with a white maintenance worker after entering a bathroom that had just been cleaned. According to Hill, the white maintenance worker poked him in the side and told him to get out of the restroom, and that he wasn’t supposed to be in there. This maintenance worker, however, did not similarly warn a white employee who was also in the restroom. In response, Hill told the maintenance worker to “keep his damn hands off of him.” An incident report was filed and Hill was made to take a drug test and was suspended awaiting its results. The other employees involved were not made to take the test, and were not suspended. The test results were negative, and there was no evidence that Hill had been under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The employer countered Hill’s discrimination claim, saying Hill was suspended and made to take the test due to his “aberrant behavior.”

Another case involves Ed Taylor, a hylo driver in a manufacturing business who was terminated after damaging some equipment while driving. He suggests that whites had caused much worse damage including breaking a water main, yet were only given verbal warnings or allowed to change jobs—a fact confirmed by civil rights investigators. Taylor notes that:

Jack Green, white hylo driver, did massive damage to the hylo “roll over” and ran into and damaged other objects. Rule #10 was applied and he received discipline of a written warning, was disqualified as a hylo driver and allowed to choose a “second home.”

Similarly, Ben Goodwell, an operator in a manufacturing business, was fired by his supervisor for “improper conduct” when he failed to properly “report off” when leaving his equipment, and for taking a break in a restricted area. The case investigator found that employees routinely took breaks in this area and that the supervisor was using this excuse to fire Mr. Goodwell. Indeed, case file materials substantiate that there was a racially hostile environment, that only four of the 105 employees were black, and that Goodwell’s

supervisor had used racial slurs toward him. When Goodwell had taken off a day for personal reasons, for example, his supervisor had joked to other employees that he was “probably selling watermelons.”

Holding black men to *higher performance standards and, again, more harshly sanctioning them for policy violations*, is evidenced in many firing cases. Phil Simpson, a store manager, notes that he was fired by a District Manager for low sales performance, but that a white store manager who had worse performance was retained. Phil also claimed that the District Manager falsely accused him of stealing cash and store merchandise. A Chief of Police was fired for failure to follow company policy to purchase a home within the city limits of his community, despite evidence that other city administrators had lived outside the city limits without penalty. A boys’ head basketball coach for a state school filed suit because his contract was not renewed, despite positive recommendations by the (white) school principal and (white) superintendent. He was the only black teacher in his district, and noted that the school renewed the contract of the (white) track coach, “despite conduct and procedure problems.” He states, “I was not advised of any shortcomings on my part nor was I given an opportunity to correct any problems of which I was not aware.” Although the school board claimed that it had received complaints regarding the coach’s “bench demeanor and treatment of players,” several witnesses, including one school board member praised his performance. This school board member claimed that other board members offered only “vague accounts” of who had complained. According to a local sports editor, although the coach “demands a lot from his players and asks that they work hard...he does not yell at players or officials any more than most coaches, and other coaches are not criticized.” This case speaks to the strong role of subjective, particularistic criteria in decision making.

Lack of on-the-job training may contribute to discriminatory firings, demotions, and related allegations of improper or inadequate job performance. Bill Howard, an order-puller in a low-wage services business, was employed for only five days before being discharged from a warehouse job. He states, “I have two years of similar previous warehouse experience. In one week’s time I was not afforded the opportunity to learn all of... [the] procedures.” Witnesses testified in detail how Howard was never offered proper training for the job. Similarly, Jake Ross, a truck driver employed by a company that had no written personnel policy and no progressive discipline policy, was one of only two black employees. Although never shown how to operate the truck, he was fired after only two weeks on the job.

Nobody showed me how to drive the truck, nobody never got into the truck with me and said, “here, we’re going to see whatever...this is that.” They didn’t even let me see how the gears work, I went out and checked myself....

Notably, in many such cases, racial harassment occurs prior to the firing, although the charging party did not necessarily file on harassment. Vince Barton, a shop teacher in a public school system, charged that his supervisor constantly reprimanded him in front of students. Barton was laid off after four years of employment:

The senior teacher...who was Caucasian, made my work difficult for me by locking up the tools I needed for teaching. I complained to my supervisor and superintendent about this adverse treatment but they did not correct the situation....The State regulation requires eight students in order for me to get funding. At the time in question, I only had seven. However, eight more students became interested and attempted to sign up for the class. The counselors discouraged some and denied

others. This action had the result of limiting me to seven students which was below minimum enrollment....[The] Vocational Director informed me that I needed 15 students instead of the eight. I believe this was an arbitrary decision to include me in a reduction of force. I was aware that similarly situated Caucasian teachers have not met the 15 students figure yet they were reemployed. My supervisor allowed a note to remain on the bulletin board, which was further meant to advise me. The note said, "Hope to see 99% of you guys next school year. Have a great summer."

As noted previously with promotion issues, African American men who are discriminatorily demoted are generally not aware of any performance problems. Craig Benham, a Sales Manager in the retail industry, was demoted and then later discharged for "poor performance" by Jones, his white Regional Manager. He had not, however, been previously notified of any performance problems. Benham stated:

I was the only Black Store Manager and Sales Manager employed by the Respondent....I am aware that Jones set my sales goals much higher than the previous Sales Manager's at the same location. Respondent immediately replaced me with Tim Smith, White, who had much lower performance reviews than I. I became aware from co-workers that Jones was trying to fire me prior to my discharge.

With regard to demotion, black men who break company rules or policies may be sanctioned much more severely than similarly situated white employees. Such dynamics appear to be particularly acute as black men reach management ranks. Consider Joe Thompson, a Superintendent of Manufacturing who was demoted due to the improper use of a company vehicle. Not only did the company sanction him for this "offense," but there was also evidence that they harassed Mr. Thompson and his family by sending a surveillance crew to "stake-out" his house. Crewmembers banged on the windows and questioned his children as they arrived home from school. Thompson, who suffered a nervous breakdown after his demotion, explained:

Throughout my tenure with the company, my work record has been excellent.... During the course of my employment...it became more and more apparent to me that Respondent just did not want me to continue in its employ. Guthrie, Vice President of Operations, advised me of this fact when I inquired of him exactly why I was being demoted. In my 20 years with the Respondent, I know of no one else to be demoted for a disciplinary infraction. Despite my repeated requests, Respondent has yet to show me a copy of its policy reference [regarding] use of company vehicles that I allegedly violated. I followed the same procedure for signing out a vehicle, as did all other salaried employees, yet I was the only employee disciplined. To this day, Caucasians sign out vehicles in an identical manner, without being disciplined. I believe that the vehicle issue was merely a ruse to humiliate me into resigning my position, because Respondent was uncomfortable with a Black in its highest salaried position.

McBrier and Wilson's (2004) minority vulnerability thesis should be considered here in relation to downward occupational mobility. This thesis contends that minorities are especially vulnerable to firing and layoff—and also presumably demotion—because they are not as protected as whites. It is quite likely, as is evidenced by our qualitative analyses thus far, that rule violations and minor infractions indeed can serve as mechanisms that facilitate the demotion or firing of otherwise qualified African American men.

Racial harassment on the shop floor

Harassment is woven throughout the discrimination experiences described thus far and mitigates job mobility, to be sure. This is true even when the victim of discrimination does not specifically file on harassment issues. Harassment, no doubt, entails significant psychological costs that impede job performance, even beyond our ability to measure (Feagin and McKinney 2003). The fact that harassment, in and of itself, represents about 25% of cases filed is notable given that much conventional research on racial stratification at work, rather than grappling with or acknowledging racial harassment as a dominant, ongoing form of inequality, prioritizes as its analytic focus more objectively measurable forms of workplace stratification (i.e., hiring, promotion, wages, etc.). Moreover, cases of harassment represent individuals who, by and large, are not alleging some form of positional closure and who remain in their workplace even after they file a charge. They thus risk both greater isolation as well as employer retaliation. Importantly, many of those experiencing and filing on harassment are semi-skilled and skilled workers, working in traditionally white, male, blue-collar arenas.

Many workers in our case materials were given unfair, negative evaluations, most often by white male supervisors. Others were asked to perform jobs that whites were not, and some were given disparate workloads. John Mullins, a diesinker in the metal industry, for instance, filed harassment charges because unfair, negative job evaluations kept him from the apprentice program. Bill Smith, a mechanic, suffered racist comments from coworkers and managers, was denied training, left out of meetings, and had his lunch time changed so he would have to eat alone. Dan Jones, a tax examiner for a government agency was given low evaluations and denied training. Others note that they were paid less than whites or were not granted the same opportunities for overtime.

Many of these African American men note racial slurs by co-workers, including cases of extreme public harassment and humiliation. Again, in most cases, the harassment is undertaken in traditionally male, skilled and semi-skilled workplace contexts, and by white males. Jared Day, a police officer, experienced racial separation, witnessed the spreading of racist literature, and was the direct victim of racial slurs. Doug Mills, a journeyman machinist, was continually harassed by co-workers—co-workers who tampered with his machine and left a cross and noose hanging at his work station. Consider also Chad Brewster, a Catalog Coordinator for an auto parts manufacturing company:

For the past year a six-page letter with 114 racial jokes has been circulating throughout 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. [Also posted was] a "nigger application" for employment, a letter to a "Jungle Bunny Hunter," and a picture of a black female giving birth to a baby who is listening to a radio.

Brewster, the only black employee, later filed a charge for being unfairly disciplined in retaliation for his harassment charge. He claims that management instructed secretaries "to observe my movements which caused me considerable stress," and also insisted that he sign a false time card. Management, for their part, claimed that Brewster was simply disciplined for tardiness and for taking long lunch breaks. Interestingly, female secretaries play a part in the harassing behaviors in this instance, but under the advisement of white male managers.

Harassment is intricately woven throughout many of the claims analyzed, whether or not it was the principal cost or injury claimed. As in the case of Jason Wright, the aforementioned security guard who filed on a promotion issue, deeper case analyses reveal

that harassment is often used to frustrate and intimidate the victim. Jason, for instance, testified that his supervisor transferred him to another district, where it was necessary to catch “two to three buses” to get to work. He was also asked to work in the refrigerator without a jacket, and his insurance was dropped without warning. He finally resigned his position. His comments are telling and speak to the nature of discriminatory acts that occur outside the realm of blatant behavior:

Now there was nothing I could pinpoint, and say that he is actually doing it because he stayed within the scope of what a supervisor might do. But since he had never done it before I felt that way and I felt that he was probably trying to get me to be subordinate to him and—but I wasn’t going to fall into that trap....He stayed within a supervisor position....I mean, it wasn’t, it wasn’t nothing overbearing that you could put your finger on and that you could—that you could say, “hey this man did this.” It—it was very subtle.

Discussion and conclusions

African American men have long experienced workplace inequality and exclusion from valued labor market positions. The nature and causes of these inequalities, and whether discrimination is playing a role, however, remain unclear in the dominant literature. Drawing from unique data, this article provides insight on concrete forms and processes of workplace discrimination that African American men experience in the contemporary world of work. Our findings inform area-specific literatures pertaining to both racial inequality and workplace stratification, but also speak to more fundamental sociological concerns pertaining to power, status, and social closure within organizational contexts and within the course of everyday interactions.

Our results suggest that African American men experience significant levels of discretionary sanctioning and policing while on the job. While some of this is tied to harassment, there is no doubt that such policing is playing a large part in disparate rates of firing and differential mobility. Indeed, African American men seem to be systematically targeted for oversight by supervisors—something one victim refers to as “them just watching.” In some cases, targeted attention appears to be part of a plan to terminate the employee in question from the outset. In others, disparate oversight and then more harsh sanctions when policy is violated appear to be shaped by explicit and implicit assumptions regarding black male employees.

Regardless of the particular scenario, a key issue in understanding workplace stratification and social closure is disparate enforcement and policing relative to organizationally defined, “legitimate” policies and procedures. Notably, it is not the policy itself that is in question, rather the extent to which it is followed, when, and by whom. The consequences, beyond the most obvious ones pertaining to demotion or job loss, are numerous and are often socially and psychologically devastating. Victims often become paranoid and, perhaps with good reason, believe that they are being watched; they recount ways in which their overall sense of security and dignity has been assaulted. They also recognize quite clearly the race-based nature of such treatment, given observations that other employees routinely undertake the behavior in question yet are never penalized.

Particularistic mobility processes and the discretionary invocation of “soft skill” criteria by immediate supervisors are also obvious interactional mechanisms of closure that warrant more sociological attention. We find that those in more powerful positions

sometimes define desirable job qualities informally or “on the spot,” and in a manner that undermines minority hiring and promotion. This is especially poignant for higher-skilled African American men—men who are more likely to be on mobility ladders and within workplace contexts with some mobility potential. Soft skills, such as communicative ability, confidence, ability to work with others, etc. certainly may be important for particular jobs. Yet, such markers become problematic when used arbitrarily in employment decisions, undergirded by (1) racist intent from outset, (2) tendencies toward homosocial reproduction, or (3) simple and perhaps non-conscious subjective interpretation invoked on the spot.

Processes of harassment are notably all but invisible in contemporary scholarship on racial employment inequalities. The exception is recent work by Bonilla-Silva (2003) and Feagin and McKinney (2003). These scholars, relying on interviewing, describe the ways in which race is interwoven in everyday encounters and interactions. *Our analyses, which draw from actual case histories of discrimination, support many of their insights, with a specific focus on the workplace context. Harassment is clearly a formidable component to social closure unto itself.* It reflects both social status and positional hierarchy maintenance and, more often than not, a combination of both. Overt racist acts by coworkers and supervisors continue to occur in the contemporary era, and obviously have profound implications for the targets, including fear, insult, stress and a sense of indignity. Such harassment, however, does not have to be explicitly racist in tone, nor does it have to be conscious on the part of gatekeepers. Rather, it may take the form of general taunting, systematic isolation on the job, or neglect of employee needs. The possibility of harassment seems especially pronounced in traditionally white, male, blue-collar work.

Our conclusions are tempered, of course, by the recognition that we are examining documented cases of discrimination. To file a case requires knowledge that discrimination happened and avenues of redress, resources (e.g. time, travel, social support, etc.), as well as a willingness to legally challenge an employer. There is no doubt that countless incidents every year are never reported and that, consequently, any analysis of discrimination’s extent will be underestimated. Focusing on verified cases may also lead to underrepresentation, for instance, of hiring discrimination, where African American men may not realize that they have been discriminated against, or overrepresentation of discriminatory firing, where the employee is now removed altogether from the workplace and need not fear ongoing employer retaliation. Finally, more bureaucratic, procedurally-rigid workplaces are significantly underrepresented in our analyses precisely because gatekeeping actors with proclivities to discriminate will arguably be more constrained from doing so. Future research is needed to more fully delineate discriminatory patterns in light of organizational contexts, policies and procedures (for recent work in this regard, see especially Kalev et al. 2006).

Our analyses are also limited to the experiences of African American men. While there are likely some similarities between what African American men and women experience in terms of workplace racial discrimination (e.g., high rates of firing) and generally parallel patterns of reporting, the character of the discrimination itself will likely differ due to both gender and the character of jobs that black women and men hold. In a companion paper, for instance, we find generally similar rates of reporting, and distributions of discrimination type for black men and women (Roscigno et al. 2007), yet fundamentally different biases and processes. Black males, for instance, are more likely to face overtly racist actions in traditionally white, male, semi-skilled professions. Black women, in contrast, who are more likely to be working alongside white women, are more likely to experience differential monitoring by supervisors and

coworkers, are seen as potentially undependable given motherhood status, and are periodically subject to discriminatory treatment following pregnancy. It is thus clear that the underlying gender component, complete with unique preconceptions and stereotypes, has its own complex dynamic—a dynamic that warrants unique attention in its own right and that is, in the case of African American women, relatively difficult to tease apart from race.

The exclusive focus on African American men should not be interpreted to suggest that gender dynamics are not at play, even for this all-male population. As denoted previously, beyond racial isolation in the workplace, African American men disparately work in male contexts and often in traditionally white, male, skilled and semi-skilled work environments. Within such workplaces, it is most often white male supervisors and coworkers who enact discrimination. One might interpret this pattern as a function of more general racial competition and social closure processes (e.g., Blalock 1967), as a consequence of individualized social psychological threat, or as efforts toward social dominance (Sidanius and Pratto 1999). In any case, the intra-gender nature of such discriminatory encounters and their foundations is noteworthy and warrants further research attention.

Despite these caveats, the case immersion reflected in this article has enabled us to elaborate more fully on the interactional and power-laden processes of workplace discrimination and fill important knowledge gaps in terms of *how* discrimination unfolds. Drawing from case files, and using civil rights and EEOC criteria and case determinations specifically to restrict our sample, provides significant leverage and confidence that the processes described capture discrimination in its varied forms rather than just perceptions, self-reports, or second-hand accounts. We also see this as a particularly important extension and contribution to much prior work—prior work that has, through rigorous quantitative analyses, denoted persistent racial gaps and that often attributes residuals to discrimination (e.g., Huffman and Cohen 2004; Reid and Padavic 2005; Tomaskovic-Devey et al. 2005; Wilson and McBrier 2005).

Although our intent from the outset has been to shed light on relevant power and interactional dynamics, given that this is where the literature is sorely lacking, it is clear that the general processes we are discussing are fundamentally bounded and conditioned by the structures within which they exist. Workplace supervisors, for instance, can activate discretion and the use of discriminatory criteria, but only to the extent that organizational structures, procedures, and rules give them the flexibility to do so. By default, this implicates organizations and institutions themselves in the inequalities that we have described. Conversely, there are certainly organizations and businesses, not represented in our data, wherein mandates and formalized procedures constrain actors—actors perhaps with a proclivity to discriminate—from doing so.

Obviously there is an interplay between expressions of human agency/discretion and the environments within which they are embedded. And, it is at the crux of this interplay where the most interesting sociological questions lie. How does the structure of workplaces, for instance, alter the nature of individual and group interactions in a manner that reifies or mitigates prevailing stratification arrangements and social status hierarchies? Or, how might processes of social closure and related micro-level interactions reinforce or alter structural arrangements themselves? Whether one builds one's research question from micro to macro or from macro to micro, or defines the question itself in terms of agency to structure or structure to agency, does not really matter. What is more paramount is that theorists and researchers alike make explicit the ways in which human action and interaction, conditioned and constrained to some degree by structure, are responsible for the patterns they describe.

Acknowledgments The authors acknowledge the support of the Department of Sociology, Ohio State University, and that of members of the Ohio Discrimination Project. We also thank Randy Hodson, Steve Lopez, George Wilson, the Editor of *Qualitative Sociology*, Javier Auyero, and three anonymous reviewers for constructive insights and suggestions on an earlier draft.

References

- Baldi, S., & McBrier, D. B. (1997). Do the determinants of promotion differ for blacks and whites? *Work and Occupations*, 24, 478–497.
- Bendick, M., Jackson, C. W., & Reinoso, V. A. (1994). Measuring employment discrimination through controlled experiments. *Review of Black Political Economy*, 23, 25–48.
- Bertrand, M., & Mullainathan, S. (2003). *Are Emily and Greg more employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A field experiment on labor market discrimination*. NBER working paper series. Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Blalock, H. (1967). *Toward a theory of minority group relations*. New York: Wiley & Sons.
- Blau, P. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life*. New York: Wiley & Sons.
- Bobo, L. D., & Suh, S. A. (2000). Surveying racial discrimination: Analyses from a multiethnic labor market. In L. D. Bobo, M. L. Oliver, J. H. Johnson Jr. & A. Valenzuela Jr. (Eds.), *Prismatic metropolis: Inequality in Los Angeles*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2003). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Bound, J., & Freeman, R. B. (1992). What went wrong? The erosion of relative earnings and employment among young black men in the 1980 s. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 107, 201–232.
- Braddock, J. H., II, & McPartland, J. M. (1987). How minorities continue to be excluded from equal employment opportunities: Research on labor market and institutional barriers. *Journal of Social Issues*, 43, 5–39.
- Cohn, S., & Fossett, M. (1995). Why racial employment inequality is greater in northern labor markets: Regional differences in white-black employment differentials. *Social Forces*, 74, 511–542.
- Coleman, J. W. (2006). *The criminal elite: Understanding white-collar crime* (6th ed.). New York: Worth.
- Collins, S. M. (1993). Blacks on the bubble: The vulnerability of black executives in white corporations. *Sociological Quarterly*, 34, 429–447.
- Collins, S. M. (1997). Black mobility in white corporations: Up the corporate ladder but out on a limb. *Social Problems*, 44, 55–67.
- Cummings, S. (1987). Vulnerability to the effects of recession: Minority and female workers. *Social Forces*, 65, 834–857.
- De Coster, S., Estes, S. B., & Mueller, C. W. (1999). Routine activities and sexual harassment in the workplace. *Work and Occupations*, 26, 21–49.
- Donohue, J. J., & Siegelman, P. (1991). The changing nature of employment discrimination litigation. *Stanford Law Review*, 43, 983–1033.
- Elliot, J. R., & Smith, R. A. (2004). Race, gender, and workplace power. *American Sociological Review*, 69, 365–386.
- Elvira, M. M., & Zatzick, C. D. (2002). Who's displaced first: The role of race in layoff decisions. *Industrial Relations*, 41, 329–361.
- Feagin, J. R. (1991). The continuing significance of race: Antiblack discrimination in public places. *American Sociological Review*, 56, 101–116.
- Feagin, J. R., & McKinney, K. D. (2003). *The many costs of racism*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Fix, M., & Struyk, R. J. (eds). (1993). *Clear and convincing evidence: Measurement of discrimination in America*. Washington: Urban Institute.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge*. New York: Pantheon.
- Greenhaus, J. H., Parasuraman, S., & Wormley, W. M. (1990). Effects of race on organizational experiences, job performance evaluations, and career outcomes. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 33, 64–86.
- Grodsky, E., & Pager, D. (2001). The structure of disadvantage: Individual and occupational determinants of the black-white wage gap. *American Sociological Review*, 66, 542–567.
- Henry, E. G., & Jennings, J. P. (2004). Age discrimination in layoffs: Factors of injustice. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 54, 217–224.
- Huffman, M. L., & Cohen, P. N. (2004). Racial wage inequality: Job segregation and devaluation across U.S. labor markets. *American Journal of Sociology*, 109, 902–936.

- Hughes, M., & Demo, D. H. (1989). Self-perceptions of black Americans: Self-esteem and personal efficacy. *American Journal of Sociology*, 95, 132–159.
- Hunt, M. O. (2007). African American, Hispanic, and white beliefs about black/white inequality, 1977–2004. *American Sociological Review*, 72, 390–415.
- James, E. H. (2000). Race-related differences in promotions and support: Underlying effects of human and social capital. *Organization Science*, 11, 493–508.
- Kaufman, R. L. (1986). The impact of industrial and occupational structure on black-white employment allocation. *American Sociological Review*, 51, 310–323.
- Kaufman, R. L. (2002). Assessing alternative perspectives on race and sex employment segregation. *American Sociological Review*, 67, 547–572.
- Kalev, A. (2009). Cracking the glass cages: Restructuring and ascriptive inequality at work. *American Journal of Sociology*, 114, 1591–1643.
- Kalev, A., Kelly, E., & Dobbin, F. (2006). Best practices or best guesses? Assessing the efficacy of corporate affirmative action and diversity policies. *American Sociological Review*, 71, 589–617.
- Kessler, R. C., Mickelson, K. D., & Williams, D. R. (1999). The prevalence, distribution, and mental health correlates of perceived discrimination in the United States. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 40, 208–230.
- Kimmel, M. S., & Smith, T. (2005). The “reasonable woman” and unreasonable men: Gendered discourses in sexual harassment litigation. In J. E. Gruber & P. Morgan (Eds.), *In the company of men: Male dominance and sexual harassment* (pp. 143–166). Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Kirschenman, J., & Neckerman, K. M. (1991). “We’d love to hire them, but...”: The meaning of race for employers. In C. Jencks & P. E. Peterson (Eds.), *The urban underclass* (pp. 203–232). Washington, D. C.: Brookings Institution.
- Kluegel, J. R. (1978). The causes and cost of racial exclusion from job authority. *American Sociological Review*, 43, 285–301.
- Krieger, N., Rowley, D. L., Herman, A. A., Avery, B., & Phillips, M. T. (1993). Racism, sexism, and social class: Implications for studies of health, disease, and well-being. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, 9, 82–122.
- Lynn, R., & Mau, W. (2002). Why do black American males earn less than black American women? An examination of four hypotheses. *The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies*, 27, 307–313.
- MacKinnon, C. (1979). *Sexual harassment of working women*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Maume, D. J. (1999). Glass ceilings and glass escalators: Occupational segregation and race and sex differences in managerial promotions. *Work and Occupations*, 26, 483–509.
- McBrier, D. B., & Wilson, G. (2004). Going down?: Race and downward occupational mobility for white-collar workers in the 1990 s. *Work and Occupations*, 31, 283–322.
- McCall, L. (2001). *Complex inequality: Gender, class and race in the new economy*. New York: Routledge.
- Moss, P., & Tilly, C. (1996). Soft skills and race: An investigation of black men’s employment problems. *Work and Occupations*, 23, 252–276.
- Moss, P., & Tilly, C. (2001). *Stories employers tell: Race, skill, and hiring in America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Mueller, C., Parcel, T., & Tanaka, K. (1989). Particularism in authority outcomes: The case of supervisors. *Social Science Research*, 32, 1–20.
- Ohio Civil Rights Commission. (2004). *About OCRC*. Columbus, OH: Ohio Civil Right Commission. Retrieved November 2, 2004 (<http://crc.ohio.gov/mission.htm>).
- Pager, D. (2003). The mark of a criminal record. *American Journal of Sociology*, 108, 937–975.
- Pager, D., & Quillian, L. (2005). Walking the talk? What employers say versus what they do. *American Sociological Review*, 70, 355–380.
- Park, H., & Sandefur, G. D. (2003). Racial/ethnic differences in voluntary and involuntary job mobility among young men. *Social Science Research*, 32, 347–375.
- Parkin, F. (1974). Strategies of social closure in class formation. In F. Parkin (Ed.), *The social analysis of class structure*. London: Tavistock Publications Limited.
- Peterson, T., & Saporta, I. (2004). The opportunity structure for discrimination. *American Journal of Sociology*, 109, 852–901.
- Reid, L. L. (1998). Devaluing women and minorities: The effects of race/ethnic and sex composition of occupations on wage levels. *Work and Occupations*, 25, 511–536.
- Reid, L. L., & Padavic, I. (2005). Employment exits and the race gap in young women’s employment. *Social Science Quarterly*, 86, 1242–1260.
- Reskin, B. (2000). The proximate causes of employment discrimination. *Contemporary Sociology*, 29, 319–328.
- Reskin, B. (2003). Including mechanisms in our models of ascriptive inequality. *American Sociological Review*, 68, 1–21.

- Reskin, B. F., & Roos, P. A. (1990). *Job queues, gender queues: Explaining women's inroads into male occupations*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Roscigno, V. J. (2007). *The face of discrimination: How race and gender impact work and home lives*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Roscigno, V. J., Garcia, L., & Bobbitt-Zener, D. (2007). Social closure and processes of race/sex employment discrimination. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 609, 16–48.
- Roscigno, V. J., Karafin, D., & Tester, G. (2009). The complexities and processes of racial housing discrimination. *Social Problems*, 56, 46–69.
- Royster, D. A. (2003). *Race and the invisible hand: How white networks exclude black men from blue-collar jobs*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sackett, P. R., DuBois, C. L. Z., & Noe, A. W. (1991). Tokenism in performance evaluation: The effects of work group representation on male-female and white-black differences in performance ratings. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 76, 263–267.
- Shih, J. (2002). ...Yeah, I could hire this one, but I know it's gonna be a problem: How race, nativity and gender affect employers' perceptions of the manageability of job seekers. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 25, 99–119.
- Sidanius, J., & Pratto, F. (1999). *Social dominance: An intergroup theory of social hierarchy and oppression*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, R. A. (1997). Race, income, and authority at work: A cross-temporal analysis of black and white men (1972–1994). *Social Problems*, 44, 19–37.
- Smith, R. A. (2001). Particularism in control over monetary resources at work: An analysis of racioethnic differences in the authority outcomes of black, white, and Latino men. *Work and Occupations*, 28, 447–468.
- Smith, R. A. (2002). Race, gender, and authority in the workplace: Theory and research. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 28, 509–542.
- Smith, R. A. (2005). Do the determinants of promotion differ for white men versus women and minorities: An exploration of intersectionalism through sponsored and contest mobility processes. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 48, 1157–1181.
- Smith, S. L., & Cloud, C. (1996). The role of private, nonprofit fair housing enforcement organizations in lending testing. In J. Goering & R. Wienk (Eds.), *Mortgage lending, racial discrimination, and federal policy* (pp. 589–610). Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute.
- Tomaskovic-Devey, D. (1993a). *Gender & racial inequality at work: The sources & consequences of job segregation*. Ithaca: ILR.
- Tomaskovic-Devey, D. (1993b). The gender and race composition of jobs and the male/female, white/black pay gaps. *Social Forces*, 72, 45–76.
- Tomaskovic-Devey, D., Thomas, M., & Johnson, K. (2005). Race and the accumulation of human capital across the career: A theoretical model and fixed-effects application. *American Journal of Sociology*, 111, 58–89.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. (2000). *Population and household economic topics: Ohio quick facts*. Washington, D. C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census. Retrieved December 20, 2004 (<http://www.census.gov/population/www/index.html>).
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). (2004). *Employment Statistics (1999 EEO-1 Aggregate Reports)*. Washington, D. C.: U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Retrieved November 2, 2004. (<http://www.eeoc.gov/stats/define.html>).
- Vallas, S. P. (2003). Rediscovering the color line within organizations: 'The knitting of racial groups' revisited. *Work and Occupations*, 30, 379–400.
- Vaughan, D. (1992). The macro-micro connection in "white-collar crime" theory. In K. Schlegel & D. Weisburd (Eds.), *White collar crime reconsidered* (pp. 124–145). Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Williams, D. R. (1995). Poverty, racism and migration: The health of the African American population. In S. Pedraza & R. Rumbaut (Eds.), *Immigration, race and ethnicity in America: Historical and contemporary perspectives*. CA: Wadsworth.
- Williams, D. R., & Collins, C. (1995). U.S. socioeconomic and racial differences in health: Patterns and explanations. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 21, 349–386.
- Williams, D. R., & Williams-Morris, R. (2000). Racism and mental health: The African American experience. *Ethnicity & Health*, 5, 243–268.
- Wilson, F. D., Tienda, M., & Wu, L. (1995). Race and unemployment: Labor market experiences of black and white men, 1968–1988. *Work and Occupations*, 22, 245–270.
- Wilson, G. (1997). Pathways to power: Racial differences in the determinants of job authority. *Social Problems*, 44, 38–54.

- Wilson, G., & McBrier, D. B. (2005). Race and loss of privilege: African American/white differences in the determinants of job layoffs from upper-tier occupations. *Sociological Forum*, 20, 301–321.
- Wilson, G., Sakura-Lemessy, I., & West, J. P. (1999). Reaching the top: Racial differences in mobility paths to upper-tier occupations. *Work and Occupations*, 26, 165–186.
- Wilson, W. J. (1987). *The truly disadvantaged: The inner city, the underclass and public policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wilson, W. J. (1996). *When work disappears: The world of the new urban poor*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Xu, W., & Leffler, A. (1992). Gender and race effects on occupational prestige, segregation, and earnings. *Gender & Society*, 6, 376–392.
- Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Young, I. M. (2001). Equality of whom? Social groups and judgments of justice. *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 9, 1–18.

Sherry Mong is a PhD candidate in sociology at the Ohio State University. Her research interests include workplace labor processes, race, gender, and unpaid labor and caregiving. Her current dissertation work uses in-depth interviews of home health nurses and caregivers to explore the paid and unpaid labor processes in home health care.

Vincent Roscigno is Professor of Sociology at Ohio State University. His recent books include *The Voice of Southern Labor* (2004, Minnesota) and *The Face of Discrimination* (2007, Rowman & Littlefield). His articles on inequality and work appear in *American Sociological Review*, *American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Forces*, *Work & Occupations*, and the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*. Current projects include analyses of race, sex, and age discrimination in the workplace, as well as historical analyses of Native American insurgency in the late 1800s.