

**The Determinants of Racial Disparities in Perceived Job Insecurity:  
A Test of Three Perspectives**

George Wilson\*  
University of Miami

Tamela McNulty Eitle  
University of Miami

Benjamin Bishin  
University of Miami

Address all correspondence to George Wilson, Department of Sociology, University of Miami, Merrick Building, Coral Gables, Fl. 33124 e-mail [Gwilson1@miami.edu](mailto:Gwilson1@miami.edu)

## **ABSTRACT**

### **The Determinants of Racial Disparities in Perceived Job Insecurity: A Test of Three Perspectives**

Why do African Americans report higher levels of perceived job insecurity than Whites? We analyze data from the 1996 and 1998 General Social Survey to test alternative predictions from the compositional, inclusive-discrimination, and dispositional perspectives concerning the sources of the racial gap in perceived insecurity. Results from ordered probit regressions provide most support for the inclusive-discrimination perspective, which maintains that employment practices associated with "modern racial prejudice" induce perceived insecurity on a widespread and generalized basis among African Americans. Accordingly, compared to Whites, African Americans experience perceived insecurity net of human capital credentials and job/labor market characteristics. Additional analyses provide one qualification to these findings: dynamics associated with the inclusive-discrimination perspective are more pronounced in the private sector than the public sector.

**Keywords:** race, workplace, perceived job insecurity, employment.

## **The Determinants of Racial Disparities in Perceived Job Insecurity: A Test of Three Explanations**

In the last several decades sociologists have identified the ways in which race continues to constitute a fundamental cleavage in the American workplace. To date, the majority of these studies have focused on a range of socioeconomic outcomes including the attainment of earnings and reward-relevant job characteristics such as supervisory responsibility as well as patterns of occupational mobility (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993; Wilson 1997; Smith 1997; Kluegel 1978; Spalder Roth and Deitch 1999). Findings from these studies document that African Americans, relative to Whites, suffer from continuing disadvantage both in acquiring the skills and experience necessary for success and receiving inferior reward-based “returns” from the skills and experience acquired (Royster 2003; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993).

At the same time, a smaller group of studies has extended our understanding of African American/White differences in workplace-based outcomes to experiential domains which, while ostensibly “quality of life” measures, also have implications for socioeconomic outcomes (see Firebaugh and Harley 1995). These studies establish that along experiential domains African Americans are disadvantaged because of exclusionary dynamics: their less salutary orientations--such as relatively high levels of alienation from job tasks (Hofstetter and Buss 1988; Dworkin et al. 1983) and low levels of job satisfaction (Firebaugh and Harley 1995; Martin and Tuch 1993; Tuch and Martin 1991)--are a product of "positional" (Tuch and Martin 1991) or "compositional" (Herman et al. 1975) factors. African Americans, accordingly, suffer because of a limited supply of individual-level credentials (e.g. human capital) and underrepresentation in jobs/labor markets containing characteristics (e.g. job authority, autonomy) that promote favorable

outcomes rather than because of causal factors inducing race-specific effects among similarly credentialed and situated individuals.

This line of research, however, has yet to assess the determinants of racial differences along important experiential domains in the workplace. For example, absent have been analyses of African Americans' relatively high levels of perceived job insecurity. In fact, there is a consensus among sociologists who have analyzed trend data that the proportion of African Americans who express at least a "moderate" (Manski and Straub 2000) fear of job loss has remained at least twice that of Whites over the last two decades or so (Schmidt 2000; Gottschalk and Moffitt 2000; Dominitz and Manski 1997). Moreover, the trend in the racial gap is evident among both men and women and all adult age groups, among individuals across a range of levels of work experience, and in all regions in the U.S. (see Schmidt 2000).

These findings signal disadvantage for African Americans: negative consequences ensue from the "psychic trauma and strain" (Jacobsen 1991) associated with perceived job insecurity. For example, fear of impending job loss is related to behavior in the workplace such as employee absenteeism (Loscacco and Spitze 1990), falling worker productivity (Barling et al. 1998), low levels of worker commitment (Ferrie et. al 1998; Lim 1996), and elevated levels of workplace injuries and accidents (Probst and Brubaker 2001). Perceived job insecurity, in addition, helps to structure psychosocial quality of life indicators that operate both in and out of the workplace such as diminished job satisfaction (Lim 1996; Heaney et al. 1994), stress (Siegerist 1996; Jacobsen 1991), depression (Heaney et. al 1994; Siegerist et al. 1988), and negative sentiments toward outgroups (Thornton and Mizuno 1999). Finally, perceived insecurity is also associated

with a range of antisocial behaviors outside of the workplace including domestic and marital conflict (Ferrie 1997), and even plays a role in structuring career aspirations that are transmitted to one's children (Barling et al. 1998).

In sum, findings from existing research establish the importance of perceived job insecurity. Its effects extend well outside of the workplace and are intergenerational in scope. As such, the on-going efforts of sociologists to understand the sources of inequities across crucial workplace-based experiential domains are enhanced by examining perceived job insecurity. This study uses data from a nationally representative sample to assess the contributions of three theoretical perspectives in explaining the sources of the gap in perceived insecurity among African Americans and Whites.

## **Perspectives On Race and Perceived Job Insecurity**

### The Compositional Perspective

The "compositional" perspective derives from current research on the sources of perceived job insecurity (Manski and Straub 2000; Neumark 2000; Schmidt 2000; Dominitz and Manski 1997; Ferrie et. al 1998; Jacobsen 1991; Loscocco and Spitze 1990; Probst and Brubaker 2001). It posits that perceptions of job insecurity are generated by a range of "supply" and "demand" side traditional stratification-based factors that operate uniformly across racial groups. Accordingly, heightened perceptions of job insecurity among African Americans are a product of a limited accumulation of individual-level credentials and relatively favorable job/labor market-level characteristics that provide insulation from its underlying cause, job dismissal (i.e. layoffs and firings).

In line with the thrust of the compositional perspective, phenomenon such as class-based aspirations for socioeconomic attainments (Featherman and Hauser 1978)

result in African Americans' accumulating lower levels of human capital credentials—such as years of education—than Whites (Farley and Allen 1989). Human capital constitutes an indicator of "productivity" (Becker 1957), and provides protection from firings (Neumark 2000); human capital also enhances prospects for representation in jobs that are relatively insulated from layoffs, namely, "white collar" vis-a-vis "blue collar" jobs as well as those that offer higher order job functions and have built-in "collectivized employee rights" (Burstein 1985) such as job authority, autonomy, and unionized status (Schmidt 2000).

Further, studies that make up the compositional perspective maintain that African Americans are disadvantaged pursuant to class-based and race-based allocation practices into unfavorable segments of a differentiated private labor market (Hodson and Kaufman 1982). Along these lines, African Americans suffer because they are more likely than Whites to be employed in "declining industries" (Neumark 2000) and "peripheral" sector (Neumark 2000) firms. Declining industries are those that have "shrunk" in terms of the absolute number of positions available in the last two decades (Stewart 2000). Incumbents in declining industries have experienced higher rates of job loss than those in "growth industries" (Neumark 2000), that is, industries that have expanded in terms of the absolute number of positions available.<sup>1</sup> Firms in the peripheral sector are undesirable relative to those in the "core" (Beck and Horan 1978) sector because of their relative lack of productivity and high rates of dissolution that produce career disruption and instability (Beck and Horan 1978).

### The Inclusive-Discrimination Perspective

The "inclusive-discrimination perspective"--a second formulation--is distilled from recent case studies and survey-based analyses that focus on adverse social psychological consequences for African Americans ensuing from a range of employment practices in predominantly White owned and managed workplaces (Wilson 1997; Kluegel 1978; Fernandez 1981, 1975; Collins 1997; Pettigrew 1985; Mueller et al. 1999; Brown and Erie 1981; Moore 1981). The employment practices are rooted in the institutionally-based dynamics associated with "modern racial prejudice" (Pettigrew 1985). Accordingly, the hallmark of this perspective is that discriminatory employment practices produce perceived job insecurity among African Americans on a broad and generalized basis, i.e., when they are similarly credentialed and work in the same jobs and labor markets as Whites.

The inclusive-discrimination perspective maintains the foundation of African Americans' generalized perceptions of job insecurity lie in practices by employers that restrict job tasks as well as contacts with both clients/customers and co-workers. For example, African Americans tend to be allocated into "racialized" (Collins 1997) jobs, namely those in which they are restricted to servicing the needs of African Americans customers/clients (Collins 1997). Further, African Americans tend to work in racially delineated work groups, that is, entities formed to accomplish specifically targeted organizational goals (Fernandez 1981, 1975). In addition, even when African Americans succeed in gaining access to "integrated" jobs, i.e., those that involve servicing the needs of a racially diverse customer/client base, and racially mixed work groups, they tend to be relegated as subordinates to Whites in authority hierarchies and also rely upon racially segregated job networks (Collins 1997; Fernandez 1981).

Studies comprising the inclusive-discrimination perspective document that these employment practices induce perceived job insecurity among African Americans in two ways. First, they are interpreted as "signals of relative lack of worth to the firms in which they work" (Fernandez 1981:103). Second, they lay the foundation for unfavorable performance evaluations, which render African Americans disproportionately susceptible to firings, as well as layoffs pursuant to the discretion employees have in identifying who are to be victims of downsizing (see Valletta 2000). In this vein, the evaluation process for African Americans becomes infused with cognitive distortions such as "statistical discrimination" (Pettigrew 1985; Tomaskovic-Devey and Skaggs 1999) and "attribution bias" (Pettigrew 1985) because they are assessed on selective bases that reaffirm preexisting negative stereotypes about suitability for, and levels of productivity at, work.

### The Dispositional Perspective

The "dispositional perspective"—a third formulation—emerges from a synthesis of a recent line of social psychological research: it posits that adherence to global values acquired primarily out of the workplace permeate the sphere of work, thereby structuring levels of perceived insecurity about employment status (Dalbert 1997; Cook 2001; Szompka 2001; Turner and Kielcolt 1984; Janson and Martin 1983; Ross et al. 2001). Studies comprising this perspective posit that two dispositions play a role in accounting for racial differences in levels of perceived job insecurity. The first is fatalism, that is, beliefs concerning the extent to which matters in one's life "work out" (Dalbert 1997; Turner and Kielcolt 1984). The second is mistrust, which refers to an "absence of confident reliability on the integrity, honesty, or justice of another" (Cook 2001: 27).



The dispositional perspective also sheds light on the development of fatalism and mistrust (Cook 2001; Ross et al. 2001). First, while evolving over the life-course, the formative years are particularly important: once fatalism and mistrust become ingrained early in the life-span they serve as a "lens that filters subsequent experiences." (Ross et al 2001). Second, these dispositions are shaped by disadvantaged socioeconomic conditions associated with "neighborhood effects" (Ross et al. 2001; Sampson and Wilson 1995). Specifically, greater exposure to manifestations of "concentrated disadvantage" (Sampson and Wilson 1995) induce both perceptions of threat in daily life and feelings of powerlessness to manage them (Ross et al. 2001). In this context, residents learn both that it is safer not to trust people (Ross et al. 2001) and develop a sense of hopelessness regarding their life-chance opportunities (Ross et al. 2001; Petterson 1999).

Studies forming the basis of the dispositional perspective, in addition, have linked the relatively high rates of fatalism and mistrust among African Americans (Mortimer and Lorence 1979) to neighborhood effects (Cook et al. 2001; Ross et al. 2001). In particular, across the life-course African Americans--at all class levels--reside in relative close proximity to impoverished populations (Massey and Denton 1993; Jargowsky 1997). This proximity, in turn, is responsible for exposure to the conditions associated with neighborhood disadvantage including manifestations of both social pathology such as rampant criminality, widespread drug abuse, and the presence of gangs (Sampson and Wilson 1995), as well as economic marginality such as limited opportunity structures and poorly funded institutions (Sampson and Wilson 1995; Wilson 1987).

## **Data and Methods**

Data from the 1996 and 1998 files of the General Social Survey (GSS) are pooled in order to assess the adequacy of the compositional, inclusive-discrimination, and dispositional perspectives (see Davis and Smith 1996 for a description of the GSS data set). In particular, the sample consists of all non-self employed Whites and African Americans between the ages of 18 and 70 who were posed questions regarding perceived job insecurity and at the time of their interview worked full-time. This selection criteria resulted in a sample of 580 African Americans and 2175 Whites. The model used in this study is operationalized as follows.<sup>ii</sup>

### **Dependent Variable**

#### **Perceived Job Insecurity**

Consistent with the approach taken in the majority of previous research perceived job insecurity is operationalized as a one-item, global indicator that taps fear of losing present job (Manski and Straub 2000; Schmidt 2000; Ferrie et al. 1994; Jacobsen 1991).

Specifically, the item is phrased as follows: "Thinking about the next 12 months, how likely do you think it is that you will lose your job or be laid off—not at all likely, not too likely, fairly likely, or very likely?" Higher scores on the item reflect greater levels of perceived job insecurity.<sup>iii</sup>

### **Independent Variables**

#### **Sociodemographic Characteristics**

Two sociodemographic characteristic are included in this study. First, race is coded as 1=White, 0=African American. Second, gender (1=male, 0=female) is included as a control variable. Significantly, gender confounds analyses because of difficulties in

disaggregating its effects from race: higher proportions of African American females are employed than White females and perceived job insecurity correlates with both subordinate gender and racial status (Manski and Straub 2000).

### Human Capital Characteristics

Level of educational attainment is the principal human capital predictor variable in the model and is coded categorically as follows: “less than high school”, “high school”, “some college”, “college degree” and “post college education”.<sup>iv</sup> Higher scores reflect greater levels of educational attainment. A measure of experience in the workplace is included as a control variable to partial out the effects that derive from issues surrounding “seniority”. The GSS provides no direct measure of experience in the workplace.

However, in line with other studies (Smith 1997; Kluegel 1978) a variable that constitutes a proxy for experience is constructed. Specifically, experience equals age minus years of education minus 6, with age being respondents’ age in years and education being the number of years of school completed.<sup>v</sup>

### Job/ Labor Market Characteristics

The influence of several job characteristics are assessed. First, position in the authority structure is measured by constructing a three category hierarchical variable that derives from the following questions: 1. "In your job, do you supervise anyone who is directly responsible to you?", and, 2. "If yes, do any of those persons supervise anyone else?"

Those with two levels of subordinates are coded as 2, those with one level of subordinates are coded as 1 and those who do not supervise anyone are coded as 0.

Second, job autonomy is measured by the following question: "Do you have a supervisor

on your job to whom you are directly responsible (coded 1=no, 0=yes). Third, union status is based on whether respondent belongs to a labor union (1=yes, 0=no). Fourth, this study assesses the extent to which racial differences in the sources of perceived job insecurity vary across census-based broad occupational categories: a variable is constructed which is coded as 1 for white collar (1990 census-based Professional/Managerial and Technical/Sales and Administrative Support occupational categories) and 0 for blue collar (Service, Operatives/Laborers, and Precision/Craft/Repair 1990 census-based occupational categories).

In addition, several labor market characteristics are assessed. First, the public-private sector distinction is represented by a dummy variable (1=public, 0=private). Second, the effect of industry on perceived job insecurity is gauged. Specifically, the broad three digit 1990 industries [(A) Public Administration, B) Finance, Insurance and Real Estate, C) Retail and Wholesale Trade, D) Transportation, Communications, and Public Utilities, and E) Entertainment, Professional, Recreational, and Business Services] that have expanded in terms of the number of available jobs during the 1990's are designated "growth industries" (Neumark 2000) and are coded 1; industries [(A) Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries/Mining, B) Nondurable Goods--Manufacturing C) Durable Goods--Manufacturing, and, D) Construction] that have contracted during the decade of the 1990's are designated "declining industries" (Neumark 2000 ) and are coded 0.

### Dispositions

The influence of two dispositions are assessed. First, fatalistic views about future life-events is measured as a summative scale of two questions that assess the extent to which

respondents agree or disagree with the following statements: "The really good things that happen to me are mostly luck", and "I have little control over the bad things that happen to me." Higher scores on the scale indicate heightened levels of fatalism.<sup>vi</sup> "Choices on each of the two items range from "strongly disagree" (coded 0) to "strongly agree" (coded 4). Mistrust is also measured with a likert-style item that is worded as follows: "Generally speaking, would you say that people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?" Higher scores on answers signify greater mistrust. Specifically, answers ranged from "people can always be trusted" (coded 0) to "almost always can't be too careful in dealing with people" (coded 3).

#### Additional Variables

A variable for year respondents were interviewed is included to assess the possible influence of period effects on the dependent variable (1996=1; 1998=2).

#### Analytic Strategy

An ordered probit regression with a pooled sample is used to assess the adequacy of the compositional, inclusive-discrimination, and dispositional perspectives in explaining racial differences in the sources of perceived job insecurity. Probit is estimated by maximum likelihood techniques and is the appropriate form of multivariate analysis to employ when the dependent variable is measured in terms of ordered categories that do not take the form of a precise interval scale. Assuming that the ordered categories are of equal length can produce biased results when standard ordinary least squares regression is employed.

Probit assesses the substantive importance of shifts in particular independent variables on the likelihood that a particular event will occur in the dependent variable. Probit includes one set of additional parameters (cut points) that represent the unobserved thresholds between the categories and permit the likelihood function to be maximized with respect to the effect and threshold parameters simultaneously (see Maddala 1983).

Overall, the statistical model was run in a hierarchical fashion. At step 1 all main effects were entered. At stage 2 a complete set of race-based interaction terms with all variables in the model were entered. The output from stage 2 provides the basis for the tables presented. In particular, the findings from the pooled sample, the race-specific effects for African Americans and Whites, and the race-based interaction terms are presented in separate columns.

## **Results**

Descriptive statistics for all variables in the analyses are presented in Table 1.

(Table 1 About Here)

They indicate that African Americans have greater levels of perceived job insecurity than Whites. In particular, the difference in mean score (t-test statistically significant at .01 level) across racial groups is .7. Further, African Americans have lower mean levels of education, are disadvantaged in terms of attaining job authority and job autonomy, and also are underrepresented in unionized jobs, White collar employment as well as in both the private employment sector and in growth industries. African Americans, in addition, have higher mean levels of both dispositions—fatalism and mistrust--than Whites.

## General Analyses

Table 2 utilizes ordered probit regression analyses to assess the adequacy of the compositional, inclusive-discrimination, and dispositional perspectives in explaining the determinants of perceived job insecurity among African Americans and Whites.

(Table 2 About Here)

The context for this assessment is provided in column 1, which presents findings for main effects from the pooled sample. Several findings are highlighted. Most importantly, race emerges as statistically significant: Whites are less likely than African Americans to experience perceived job insecurity. In addition, the likelihood of experiencing perceptions of job insecurity derives from a combination of human capital credentials, job/labor market characteristics, as well as dispositions. Specifically, unit increases in job experience and job autonomy as well as working in the public sector and a white collar job serve to decrease the likelihood of experiencing perceived insecurity among GSS respondents; growing mistrust in others serves to increase the likelihood of experiencing perceived job insecurity among the GSS sample.

The race-specific analyses that follow provide substantial support for the inclusive-discrimination perspective. The merits of this perspective derive from the race-based interaction terms with variables that measure human capital characteristics and job/labor market characteristics in column 4. Overall, five of the eight interactions with human capital credentials and job/labor market characteristics are statistically significant. Further, all significant variables exert effects in the direction predicted by the inclusive-discrimination perspective, namely, increases in human capital credentials and more tradition stratification-favorable job/labor market characteristics serve to decrease the

likelihood of Whites' experiencing perceived job insecurity relative to African Americans. In this regard, two job/labor market characteristics are most pronounced: unit increases in job authority and working in a White collar job are significant at the .01 level. In addition, incumbency in a unionized position, working in the public sector as well as unit increases in educational attainment serve to decrease the likelihood of Whites experiencing perceived job insecurity relative to African Americans at the .05 level.

Results provide less support for competing theoretical perspectives. First, the merits of the compositional perspective derive from the main effects of the variables for African Americans and Whites that measure human capital credentials and job/labor market characteristics in columns 2 and 3. Four of these variables, are significant for Whites and one is significant for African Americans. Specifically, for Whites, working in the public sector and in a white collar job, incumbency in a unionized position as well as unit increases in job authority decrease the likelihood of experiencing perceived job insecurity at the .05 level; for African Americans, unit increases in job experience decrease the likelihood of experiencing perceived insecurity at the .05 level.

Second, the adequacy of the dispositional perspective are gauged from the main effects that measure fatalism and trust for African Americans and Whites in columns 2 and 3. Overall, both of these dispositions exert a statistically significant effect on either African Americans or Whites but not both. Specifically, among Whites increasing mistrust with others enhance the likelihood of experiencing perceived job insecurity ( $p < .05$ ) while among African Americans gains in fatalism increase the likelihood of experiencing perceived insecurity ( $p < .05$ ).



## Sectoral Analyses

One potential qualification to the scope of the inclusive-discrimination perspective is investigated. Table 3 presents multivariate analyses similar to that reported in Table 2 separately for the public and private sectors. Significantly, in a series of studies sociologists have documented that legislatively mandated guidelines enacted to ensure economic opportunities for minority groups have a relatively narrow reach and are not as strictly enforced in the private sector--relative to the public sector—which translates into relatively unstable economic prospects for African Americans (Collins 1997; Brown and Erie 1981; Burstein 1985). Accordingly, several of the employment practices posited by the inclusive-discrimination perspective that constitute underpinnings of heightened perceptions of job insecurity among African Americans--namely, allocation into racialized job slots and assignment to racially delineated work groups--are deeply-rooted in the private sector and opportunities to formally contest their adverse consequences, such as dismissal, are limited (Fernandez 1981). Overall, these findings lead to the prediction that the effects of causal factors posited by the inclusive-discrimination perspective as producing heightened perceptions of job insecurity should be pronounced in the private economic sector.

Table 3 reports the results of probit analyses that assess the determinants of perceived job insecurity among workers separately in the private and the public sectors.

(Table 3 About Here)

The findings indicate that, as predicted by the inclusive-discrimination perspective, the sources of perceived job insecurity are pronounced in the private sector. In this regard, several findings stand out. First, the race coefficient is significant in the

private but not the public sector: Whites are significantly less likely to experience perceived job insecurity than African Americans in the private but not the public sector. Second, a greater number of race-based interaction terms—5 to 2—that measure human capital credentials and job/labor market characteristics are statistically significant in the private than the public sector. Third, all statistically significant interaction terms operate in the direction predicted by the inclusive-discrimination perspective. Specifically, in the private sector all significant variables--educational attainment, job authority, job autonomy, union status, and white collar employment--decrease the likelihood of Whites' experiencing perceived insecurity relative to African Americans. In the public sector, working in a white collar job and increases in job authority decrease the likelihood of Whites' experiencing perceived job insecurity relative to African Americans. Fourth, there is a fundamental difference in the significance levels of the coefficients across economic sectors: three of the five significant variables in the private sector—job authority, union status, and white collar employment--exert effects at the .01 level while both variables significant in the public sector exert effects at the .05 level.

### **Discussion**

Analyses of the GSS sample indicate that African Americans' relatively high levels of perceived job insecurity are best explained by dynamics associated with the inclusive-discrimination perspective. Accordingly, employment practices associated with "modern racial prejudice" induce perceived insecurity on a widespread and generalized basis among African Americans. Specifically, compared to Whites, African Americans

experience perceived job insecurity net of their accumulation of human capital credentials and job/labor market characteristics.

Worth highlighting from the findings is the uniqueness of the sources of racial differences in perceived job insecurity. In particular, race structures perceptions of job insecurity in a different manner than it does for other experiential workplace-based domains such as job satisfaction and alienation from job tasks, which are a product of dynamics associated with the compositional perspective (Hanson et al. 1987). A plausible, albeit speculative, explanation for the unique pattern of the determinants of perceived insecurity emerges from this study: racial differences in sentiments along experiential domains such as perceived job insecurity, whose objective referent-- employment status-- is a reward-based, material outcome are a product of deeply-rooted and workplace-based discrimination that extends to African Americans and Whites who are similarly credentialed and situated.

In addition, subsequent analyses introduce a qualification to the scope of the inclusive-discrimination perspective: racial differences in the determinants of perceived job insecurity are pronounced in the private relative to the public sector. Specifically, in the private sector there are relatively large racial differences in the effects of human capital credentials and job/labor market characteristics on perceived job insecurity. This finding is interpreted as a product of the relatively narrow reach and less stringent enforcement of equal employment opportunity laws in the private sector, which is associated with relatively pervasive discriminatory behavior on the part of employers and limited formal channels for employees to redress them (Quadagno 1994; Burstein 1985).

Further, it is important to note that the findings from this study do not bode well for African Americans. Perceived job insecurity is an aspect of racial inequality that will be difficult to redress: the racial gap in perceived insecurity is pronounced in the private sector of the economy, where African Americans, pursuant to increasing calls from partisans of virtually all political persuasions in recent years to downsize the traditional occupational “niche” of African Americans—the government—are likely to find themselves increasingly represented in the future (Edsall and Edsall 1991; Quadagno 1994). Accordingly, efforts to redress racial differences in perceived job insecurity should focus disproportionately on monitoring institutionally-based discriminatory employment practices in the private sector. In particular, it is important to formalize conditions of work: for example, establishing clear-cut guidelines that facilitate integrated work-tasks which match minority employees and majority group clients/customers reduce the preponderance of segregated job networks as well as the allocation of African Americans into racialized job functions (Bielby 2000; Reskin 2000).

In sum, this study represents only a preliminary attempt to assess the determinants of perceived insecurity across racial groups. Future research needs to explore this issue in greater depth. For example, research needs to employ longitudinal and trend-based designs that are necessary to assess the durability of the findings reached here. Moreover, in the context of the inclusive-discrimination perspective, research needs to more directly establish the link between the behavior of employers and perceived job insecurity. A recognized limitation of this study is that employers' discriminatory employment practices are not directly measured: their influence is inferred from patterns of significance along a vector of predictor variables in which they should play a role. It is

possible the effects of human capital credentials and job/labor market characteristics on perceived insecurity are driven by unmeasured variables—such as cognitive differences and performance differences in the workplace--not included in the statistical model; these unmeasured variables could, conceivably, render differences in the statistical effects of human capital credentials, and job/labor market characteristics not a product of institutionalized discriminatory dynamics. Accordingly, it is necessary to cast the causal role of institutionally-based dynamics in qualified terms. This limitation, we believe, can be overcome by collecting data in specific organizations, where the potential exists to observe first-hand how different levels of vulnerability to dismissal across racial groups are created, and in turn, how specified employment practices impact on perceived job insecurity. In sum, when these suggestions for future research are implemented it will move us forward in better understanding the underlying causes of an experiential domain in the workplace which constitutes a significant aspect of inequality along racial lines.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for GSS Sample**

Variables	Whites		African Americans		T-Statistic
	(N=2175)		(N=580)		
	<u>X</u>	<u>S. D.</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>S. D.</u>	
<b><u>Dependent</u></b>					
Perceived Job Insecurity	1.0	.3	1.7	.3	4.83**
<b><u>Independent</u></b>					
<u>Sociodemographic</u>					
Gender	Female=51.3%		Female=56.7%		1.16
<u>Human Capital</u>					
Education	13.2	1.5	12.5	1.4	2.34*
Job Experience	12.2	2.8	10.7	2.2	2.83*
<u>Workplace/Labor Market</u>					
Public Sector	38%		43%		3.11*
Job Authority	1.5	.6	1.0	.5	4.25*
Job Autonomy	52%=Have		42%=Have		5.17*
Unionized	31%		21%		5.05*
White Collar	66%		51%		6.44**
Growth Industry	67%		52%		6.23**
<u>Disposition</u>					
Fatalism	4.2	1.0	5.4	1.2	5.08**
Mistrust	1.4	.3	2.3	.4	4.79*
Year	1.2	.3	1.5	.2	1.21

Notes:

\* p < .10, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

**Table 2. Probit Regressions For Determinants of Perceived Job Insecurity:**

	<u>Perceived Job Insecurity</u>							
	<u>Full Sample</u>		<u>White</u>		<u>Afr. American</u>		<u>Race-Based Interactions</u>	
	Column (1)	Column (2)	Column (3)			Column (4)		
	(N=2755)	(N=2175)	(N=580)					
	<u>(coeff)</u>	<u>(s.e.)</u>	<u>(coeff)</u>	<u>(s.e.)</u>	<u>(coeff)</u>	<u>(s.e.)</u>	<u>(coeff)</u>	<u>(s.e.)</u>
<u>Sociodemographic</u>								
Race	- .15*	.05						
Gender	-.05	.04	-.08	.05	-.02	.02	-.06	.04
<u>Human Capital</u>								
Education	-.01	.01	-.01	.02	.02	.02	-.04*	.02
Job Experience	-.03*	.01	-.02	.01	-.03*	.01	.01	.01
<u>Job/Labor Market</u>								
Job Authority	-.06	.04	-.13*	.05	.07	.05	-.21**	.07
Job Autonomy	-.07	.04	-.09	.05	-.03	.02	-.06	.05
Union Status	-.08	.05	-.10*	.05	.06	.04	-.16*	.07
White Collar	-.11*	.05	-.15*	.07	.03	.02	-.18**	.07
Public Sector	-.12*	.06	-.17*	.08	-.03	.02	-.14*	.07
Growth Industry	-.03	.03	-.02	.02	-.03	.02	.01	.01
<u>Dispositions</u>								
Fatalism	.04	.03	.02	.02	.07*	.03	-.05	.03
Mistrust	.06*	.03	.08*	.03	.05	.03	.03	.02
Year	-.02	.02	-.03	.02	-.02	.02	-.01	.02
1st Cut			-2.735		-2.818		-2.846	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Cut			-1.563		-1.338		-1.135	
Wald Chi-Square			333.43		411.26		428.58	

Notes:

\*P<.05 \*\*P<.01

**Table 3. Probit Regressions For Determinants of Perceived Job Insecurity By Economic Sector**

	<u>Perceived Job Insecurity</u>															
	Private Sector							Public Sector								
	Full Sample		White		Afr. American		Race-Based Interactions		Full Sample		White		Afr. American		Race-Based Interactions	
	Col. (1)	Col. (2)	Col. (3)	Col. (4)	Col. (5)	Col. (6)	Col. (7)	Col. (8)	Col. (9)	Col. (10)	Col. (11)	Col. (12)	Col. (13)	Col. (14)		
	(N=1679)		(N=1348)		(N=331)			(N=1076)		(N=827)		(N=249)				
	(coeff)	(s.e.)	(coeff)	(s.e.)	(coeff)	(s.e.)	(coeff)	(s.e.)	(coeff)	(s.e.)	(coeff)	(s.e.)	(coeff)	(s.e.)		
<u>Sociodemographic</u>																
Race	-19**	.06							-.11	.06						
Gender	-.06	.04	-.09	.05	-.02	.02	-.07	.04	-.04	.03	-.06	.04	-.01	.01	-.05	.04
<u>Human Capital</u>																
Education	-.01	.01	-.01	.02	-.03	.01	-.04*	.02	-.02	.01	-.02	-.02	.01	.01	-.02	.02
Job Experience	-.03*	.01	-.02	.02	-.04*	.02	.02	.02	-.02	.01	-.03*	.01	-.01	.01	-.02	.02
<u>Job/Labor Market</u>																
Job Authority	-.04	.03	-.13*	.06	.12	.08	-.25**	.08	-.09	.05	-.11*	.06	.07	.05	-.18*	.07
Job Autonomy	-.07	.05	-.09	.06	.02	.02	-.11*	.05	-.05	.04	-.06	.04	-.05	.03	-.01	.01
Union Status	-.09	.05	-.13*	.06	.07	.06	-.20**	.08	-.07	.04	-.07	.05	.05	.03	-.12	.07
White Collar	-.12*	.06	-.14*	.07	.06	.04	-.20**	.07	-.09	.07	-.17*	.08	-.04	.03	-.13*	.05
Growth Industry	-.03	.06	-.04	.03	-.03	.03	.01	.02	-.03	.02	-.04	.02	.03	.02	.01	.01
<u>Dispositions</u>																
Fatalism	.05*	.02	.04	.03	.08*	.03	-.04	.03	.03	.02	.01	.01	.06	.04	-.05	.03
Mistrust	.07*	.03	.09*	.04	.05	.03	.04	.03	.05*	.02	.03	.03	.06	.03	-.03	.02
Year	-.02	.02	-.03	.02	-.02	.02	-.01	.01	-.02	.02	-.03	.02	-.02	.01	-.01	.01
1st Cut			-2.347		-2.719		-2.749				-2.773		-2.343		-2.683	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Cut			-1.922		-1.445		-1.112				-1.221		-1.345		-1.233	



Wald Chi-Square	408.81	407.55	409.33	410.39	411.16	412.36
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Notes:

\*P<.05 \*\*P<.01

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## Notes

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<sup>i</sup>These trends persist despite, for example, the “growing democratization of layoffs” (Neumark 2000: 146) across the occupational structure in the last two decades or so pursuant to practices such as downsizing, off-shoring, and sub-contracting that have increased the rate of layoffs among groups who traditionally had been relatively insulated from this phenomenon—namely, white collar workers, the well-educated and workers in service sector jobs (Schmidt 2000).

<sup>ii</sup>Checks on model specification were performed to ensure that results were not confounded by heteroscedasticity or multicollinearity. The Cook-Weisberg test of the assumption of common error variance was performed for all regression analyses. In all instances  $X^2$  statistics of .01 were obtained and had corresponding p values that ranged from .664 to .683, indicating low levels of heteroscedasticity. In addition, collinearity diagnostics were performed, and conditional indices produced no evidence of multicollinearity.

<sup>iii</sup>Items in the perceived insecurity literature are of two types: the GSS qualitative types (likelihood of job loss) and probabilistic type (chance of job loss). Significantly, Dominitz and Manski (1997) compared the GSS item in this study with a probabilistic item from the Survey of Economic Expectations. The authors found that they exhibit similar variations in risk perceptions across groups by race, gender, and educational attainment.

<sup>iv</sup>Missing values for both African Americans and Whites on all independent variables

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were coded to racial group means. Overall, for Whites missing data on independent variables varied between 5 percent (fatalism) and 13 percent (income) of cases; for African Americans missing data varied between 4 percent (union status) and 17 percent (income) of cases. As recoding to means could bias the findings, an additional set of regressions were performed for only sample members who had no missing data (373 African Americans, 1612 Whites). The findings were virtually identical in all models to those reported in this study.

<sup>v</sup>This proxy is based on the notion that workplace-based experience is one's age minus the total number of years spent in school and age 6, the age in which formal education begins.

<sup>vi</sup>Cronbach's alpha of internal reliability for scales constructed in the statistical model were .64 for job authority and .71 for fatalism.