Interactional Inequalities at Work: The Influences of Compositional Dynamics and the Organizational Context

Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Lisa Marie Williams, B.A.

Graduate Program in Sociology

The Ohio State University

2010

Thesis Committee:

Vincent Roscigno, Advisor

Claudia Buchmann

Andrew Martin
Abstract

Interactional inequalities---inequalities that occur within everyday workplace experiences, and that include general incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination---are an ongoing social problem. Research has suggested that workplaces characterized by procedural chaos and low status workers are especially susceptible to the emergence of such inequality. In this paper, I add to this literature by focusing on the importance of gender and racial composition/competition processes for the emergence of general incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination in the workplace. I also consider whether human resources structures, such as an EEO office and diversity training, reduce the likelihood of interactional inequalities. Analyses draw on the 2002 National Organizational Survey---a survey of U.S. businesses that includes measures of interactional inequalities, organizational context including composition, and human resource structures and diversity efforts. I find notable and overlapping associations of gender and racial composition with all three forms of interactional inequality, suggesting both general and group-specific targeting of victims. Importantly, and consistent with some other recent scholarship, human resource structures do not mitigate these patterns and, in the cases of sexual harassment and diversity trainings, may actually intensify general and group-specific interactional inequalities. I conclude by revisiting how
compositional dynamics and vulnerabilities may matter and why arguably protective structures and practices seem not to work.
Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my advisor, Vincent Roscigno, for his support and guidance on this thesis and my academic future. I appreciate the time and energy you devote to teaching me the diligence in approaching the study of social phenomena.

I also wish to thank Claudia Buchmann for her support on this thesis. Your honest feedback has challenged me to become a better researcher and writer.

I also wish to thank Andrew Martin for his thoughtful suggestions on this thesis. I am also grateful for the research experiences you provided me as a first year student. These early experiences exposed me to the process of conducting scholarly research.

Lastly, I wish to thank my family for their support. I appreciate all the sacrifices you made so that I could attend graduate school. Your work ethic and determination encourage me to work even harder towards achieving my goals.
Vita

July 25, 1985………………………………Born Los Angeles, Ca

August 2008……………………………………B.A., *Magna Cum Laude*, with Distinction in Sociology, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

2008 to present………………………………Graduate Teaching Associate, The Ohio State University

FIELD OF STUDY

Major Field: Sociology
Table of Contents

Abstract ......................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgements ........................................................................ iv
Vita .............................................................................................. v
List of Tables .................................................................................. vii
List of Figures ................................................................................ viii
Introduction .................................................................................. 1
Data and Methods .......................................................................... 10
Strategy and Results ...................................................................... 15
Discussion and Conclusion ........................................................... 22
References ...................................................................................... 26
List of Tables

Table 1: Variable Descriptions…………………………………………………30

Table 2: Compositional Effects and Organizational Processes on Outcomes…………………………………………………………………31

Table 3: Human Resource Structures on Outcomes…………………………32
List of Figures

Figure 1: Percentage of Female Workers........................................ 33

Figure 2: Percentage of Black Workers...........................................34
Introduction

We searched all the toolboxes, but the screwdrivers were either too large or had been ground at the ends. Bobby asked Carroll [the boss] if he could buy a screwdriver at the hardware store down the street. Carroll refused and told him to grind one of the ones we had. Bobby tried, but ended up stripping the screwhead so badly that nothing could get it out. Then Carroll came to the floor and in typical fashion chewed Bobby out in front of everyone. (Juravich 1985:135-36)

Interactional inequalities, as illustrated from this quote from an ethnography of a wire manufacturing factory, are inequalities that occur within everyday workplace experiences and may be general and group-specific in their targeting of victims. Conservative estimates report that between 10 and 20 percent of employees are victims of interactional inequalities each year (Rayner et al. 2002:23; Zapf et al. 2003:105-108). Such inequalities, which may consist of general incivility (e.g., physical abuse, verbal bullying), sexual harassment and racial discrimination, can range in severity (Roscigno et al. 2009b) and tend to result in humiliation and misery for victims long after the inequality has ended (Hodson 2001).

The rather mild example presented in the anecdote above captures a core theme in previous research. Bobby, a low-status worker, is employed in a disorganized workplace where he endures repeated verbal abuse from his supervisor. Work establishments such as Bobby’s, characterized by procedural chaos (e.g., disorganized) and hierarchical powerlessness, may influence the likelihood of victimization (Chamberlin 2008;
Roscigno et al. 2009; Zapf et al. 2003). Most prior work, however, has yet to determine whether varying degrees of powerlessness may leave certain workers more or less vulnerable. Particularly absent from most literature is whether female and minority employees are more susceptible to interactional inequalities because of their low status, and vulnerabilities to structural disparities in wage and mobility practices.

In the last few decades, the workforce has become increasingly diverse. Female and minority workers outnumber other workers in several sectors of the labor market. Yet, many female and minority employees continue to hold low status positions that have few channels of recourse (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993). Additionally, these employees may be visible examples of gender and racial difference because the workplace culture privileges white males (Kanter 1997). Consequently, they may be easy targets for inequalities because they hold little power in the organizational culture (Roscigno 2007). Female and minority employees’ dual roles as “different” and low status workers may make them, in effect, vulnerable to general and group-specific interactional inequalities in the workplace.

Following an overview of prior work stratification and “labor processes” research, I examine gender and racial composition and other dimensions of organizational context as potentially influential predictors of general, and gender-, and race-specific inequalities. Using indicators of general incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination as outcomes of interest, I draw on organizational level data from the National Organizational Survey 2002 to advance prior work in two ways. First, I explore the implications of gender and racial composition, organizational characteristics and
hierarchical power on general incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination in the workplace. Second, and consistent with current developments in the literature (e.g., Hirsh and Kmec 2009; Kalev et al. 2006), I examine whether human resources structures that establish accountability and promote sensitivity training mitigate the effects of inequalities.

*Compositional Dynamics and Vulnerabilities to Inequalities in the Workplace*

The focus on compositional dynamics takes into account segregated workplaces, where there are few female and minority employees, and integrated workplaces, where there are many female and minority employees. Contexts of segregation and integration have unique implications for how inequality may unfold. In segregated workplaces, for instance, female and minority workers are often isolated from the social networks that control workplace operations (Kanter 1997; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993). In integrated workplaces, in comparison, a growing female and minority workforce may be discriminated against and excluded from social network because they are perceived as a threat of competition for the majority group (Blalock 1967; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993). In either type of workplace, female and minority employees are excluded from the social networks that control organizational privileges. Additionally, these employees may be visible markers of difference because the culture of the workplace privileges white males (Kanter 1997). As a result of their status, female and minority workers may be segregated into low paying jobs and may have less access to higher-level positions (Tomaskovic-
Devey 1993; Smith and Elliott 2002; Maume 1999). They may also be more likely to experience downward mobility (Wilson and Roscigno forthcoming).

Female and minority workers may also experience structural inequalities in relation to composition and/or competition in the workplace. Most work relevant to this point uses organizational privileges, such as getting a job or receiving a promotion to capture differential treatment. Baldi and McBrier (1997), for instance, examined promotion practices among black and white workers. They found that organizations limit black workers access to promotion by placing black employees in positions that have few opportunities for mobility. Their findings suggest discrimination as a possible mechanism. However, they do not directly measure discrimination. In fact, many studies only infer discrimination relative to compositional dynamics and from the presence of structural inequalities. This is no doubt a function of the fact that workplace discrimination is often difficult to measure (Pager and Shepherd 2008; Roscigno 2007).

A few recent studies have explored discrimination itself (see Feagin 1991; Pager 2003; Roscigno 2007; Roscigno et al. 2007). Pager (2003), for example, conducted an experiment to measure discrimination in hiring practices. She examined whether white and black workers with and without criminal records were more likely to receive the job. She found that organizations were more likely to hire white workers with criminal records over black workers with no criminal record. Roscigno’s (2007) research concurs with these findings. He used formal complaints of sexual and racial discrimination filed by employees to examine the justification employers gave for firing workers. When compared to white males, he found that female and minority workers were more likely to
be terminated for unsatisfactory performance related to worker’s “dependability” and “work ethnic”. These studies have directly examined discrimination and found that female and minority workers are often susceptible to discrimination. However, the impact of compositional context remains unclear.

Building on competition threat and isolation theorizing, discussed previously, I suspect that compositional dynamics may influence the extent to which general incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination occurs in the workplace. I extend the literature by examining the roles gender and racial composition play in the occurrence of three distinct but potentially overlapping forms of interactional inequality. I also build on these expectations, next, by drawing on more general research on incivility that suggests the importance of labor processes and the organizational context.

*Workplace Incivility: The Influences of the Organizational Context*

Roscigno et al. (2009b) define workplace incivility as the “negative relational aspects of employment with consequences for safety, integrity, and dignity.” This definition of incivility allows for the inclusion of both severe (e.g., physical abuse) and less threatening (e.g., verbal bullying) forms of uncivil workplace behavior. In most studies, however, scholars only explore a single aspect of workplace incivility. Several studies, for instance, have examined verbal bullying whereas a few others have analyzed physical abuse in the workplace. Regardless of form of incivility, most scholars suggest that the organizational context and hierarchical power are pivotal to its emergence.
General incivility tends to occur in work establishments that are characterized by procedural chaos and job insecurity. Workplaces marked by procedural chaos, such as mismanagement and lack of supervision may not have the necessary structure and policies to protect workers from incivility (Hodson 2001; Vartia 1996; Zapf et al. 2003). Consequently, these work environments tend to create a culture that reduces the “cost” of incivility for offenders. These environments, for instance, may offer rewards or promotions to workers who have used harassment or bullying to succeed within the job structure. The positive enforcement for uncivil workplace behavior creates a culture of tolerance that may increase the likelihood of general incivility (Chamberlain 2008; Salin 2003).

Job insecurity, such as the fear of downsizing and corporate restructuring, can likewise cause undue stress on workers and increase workplace incivility (Hearn and Parkin 2001; Roscigno et al. 2009). For instance, as the workforce is being reduced and reorganized, employees have to complete tasks under the strain of job uncertainty, an increased workload, and strict time pressures. Workers might harass or bully each other as a way to get ahead in the organization or to deal with the stresses of their work situation (Salin 2003). Management may use abuse to pressure workers to produce more in less time (Vaez et al. 2004) or may discriminate as a way to express their lack of control in determining their own job future (Chamberlin 2008; Lopez 2009; Roscigno et al. 2009; Salin 2003). Indeed, job insecurity may reduce the consequences of incivility for offenders (Lopez et al. 2009). As a result, incivility may increase among workers.
Employees lacking hierarchical power may be especially vulnerable to incivility (Chamberlin 2008; Einarsen et al. 2003; Roscigno et al. 2009; Salin 2003). Hierarchical power reflects a structure that excludes certain workers from the key rewards of the workplace. This power is expressed through authority, such as holding management positions and privileges, such as receiving high wages. Authority positions and privileges are important benefits of the organizational structure that may give workers access to social networks that may protect workers from uncivil workplace behavior. Consequently, employees lacking hierarchical power are likely targets for incivility because of their low status workers and a related absence from influential social networks. Although researchers suggest that low status workers may be vulnerable to general incivility, research remains unclear as to whether particular low status workers may be more or less vulnerable. Are female and minority employees more susceptible to general incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination?

Interactional Inequalities in the Workplace

My analyses examine the implications of compositional dynamics and organizational context on general incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination in the workplace. Since female and minority employees tend to be low status workers, they may be particularly susceptible to inequalities. These employees hold low paying jobs that have few channels of recourse. Additionally, female and minority employees may also be visible examples of gender and racial difference because they hold little organizational
power relative to white males in the workplace. I suggest that it is female and minority employees’ dual roles as “different” and low status workers that make them especially vulnerable to interactional inequalities in the workplace.

I hypothesize that compositional dynamics and procedural chaos, job insecurity and hierarchical power increase the likelihood of general incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination in the workplace. Compositional dynamics have the greatest influence on sexual harassment and racial discrimination, whereas procedural chaos, job insecurity, and hierarchical power will likely have the greatest effect on general incivility.

Although interactional inequalities may exist in any given workplace context, it is important to realize that these inequalities may vary based on the presence of human resource structures that establish accountability and provide on the job sensitivity training. Studies have found that certain human resource structures reduce discrimination and enhance the opportunities of minority and women workers. (Holzer and Neumark 2000). Other research, in contrast, finds that human resource structures have little impact on reducing structural inequalities and discrimination (Edelmann and Petterson 1999). Scholars suggest that human resource structures may have no effect or may actually increase the reporting of structural and interactional inequalities without providing the resources needed to reduce such inequalities. Organizations may only adopt human resource structures to demonstrate compliance with the law (Dobbin et al. 1993; Edelmann et al. 1999) and to protect themselves from legal responsibilities (Kalev et al. 2006). Consequently, human resource structures might not influence the reporting of
inequalities because they lack the necessary authority and resources needed to protect workers (Edelmann et al. 1999:447; Hirsh and Kmec 2009; Kalev et al. 2006).

Additionally, human resource structures may increase the reporting of inequalities for two reasons. First, these structures may increase employees’ rights awareness through teaching employees how to identify and report discrimination. As a result, filed complaints among workers may intensify (Edelmann et al. 1999; Hirsh and Kmec 2009). Second, human resource structures may aggravate potential perpetrators creating a backlash towards vulnerable individuals (Kalev et al. 2006). Although human resource structures may decrease interactional inequalities, in line with recent work I hypothesize that such structures and training programs may be ineffective or actually increase the reporting of general incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination in the workplace.
Data and Methods

The data come from the 2002 to 2003 National Organizational Survey (NOS), a survey of 516 U.S. businesses complied from the General Social Survey (GSS) 2002 data source (Kalleberg, Knoke, and Marsden 2004). The GSS 2002 asked participants to provide the contact information for their place of employment. The NOS created a list of workplaces from participants’ employment information. Drawing from telephone interviews and mail questionnaires, the sample had a response rate of 62.4 percent. The NOS includes the workplace as the unit of analysis. Due to the dichotomous nature of the dependent variables, the results are based on logistic regression using a maximum likelihood estimation procedure. Table 1 provides a summary of the variables.

*Interactional Inequalities.* General incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination are the outcomes of interest. My sample is different for each dependent variable: general incivility (n=462), sexual harassment (n=311), and racial discrimination (n=466). The sample sizes vary because I do not recode missing data on the dependent variables. However, I recode missing data on the independent variables using multiple imputation procedures.

*General incivility* is constructed from three measures: physical abuse, bullying, and verbal or written threats. Physical abuse measures whether organizations reported
incidents of physical assault in the workplace, such as fistfights, pushing, shoving, and kicking in the past year. Bullying consists of reported cases of repeated intimidation, slandering, social isolation, or humiliation experienced within work establishments in the past year. A measure of verbal and written threats captures whether organizations, in the past year, reported incidents of shouting, swearing, threatening emails, or attempts to provoke arguments. I created a dummy variable for general incivility using physical abuse, bullying, and verbal and written threat. Workplaces that have one or more of any of the three abuses were coded as 1 and workplaces with no reported abuses were coded as 0. Since I am interested in the interactions between workers, I only included cases of workplace incivility that occurred between any combination of employees, supervisors, former employees, and former supervisors.

**Sexual harassment** captures whether the organizations have received formal complaints relating to sexual harassment in the past 12 months (1=yes). **Racial discrimination** is measured similarly, with the question “In the past 12 months, have there been any formal complaints about racial, ethnic or religious discrimination?” (1=yes). Although complaints of religious discrimination are included in the racial discrimination measure, the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) reports that religious discrimination is relatively uncommon. In 2008, formal complaints of religious discrimination only accounted for a total of 5% of all EEOC charges whereas racial discrimination comprise over 35% of all charges. Given the number of religious discrimination charges relative to racial discrimination charges, I suspect that most cases of discrimination I observe are related to racial discrimination.


*Compositional Dynamics.* I include measures of *race* (percentage of black workers) and *gender* (percentage of female workers) with the purposes of capturing potential competitive tensions and status vulnerabilities between gender and racial groups.

*Organizational Characteristics and Hierarchical Power.* To test the possible relationships between organizational characteristics and interactional inequalities I include measures of poor organization and job insecurity. *Poor organization* is measured by the percentage of workers not involved in a group that solves key production or service problems. *Job insecurity* is measured by a two variable scale that measures the percentage of the permanent workforce that left involuntarily and the percentage of the permanent workforce that experienced a temporary layoff.

I also test the association between hierarchical power and interactional inequalities by including a measure of hierarchical power (supervision) and two other indicators of low status workers: whether workers receive low wages and whether they are illiterate. *Supervision* is a dummy variable that measures whether or not employees are directly supervised by management (1=yes). *Low wages* is measured by a dummy variable that captures the percentage of employees that make less than ten dollars an hour. Workers that earn 10 dollars an hour or less are coded as 1 and employees that earn more than 10 dollars an hour are coded as 0. *Illiterate* measures the percentage of illiterate workers. According to the U.S. Education department, about 14% of Americans cannot read or write. In this sample, I find that about 2% of workers are illiterate. This sample may underreport illiterate workers for two reasons. First, employees may not
inform their employer that they are illiterate. Second, employers may be unwilling to report their actual percentage of illiterate workers. In either case, illiterate is a good proxy for an actual measure of low status workers because illiterate workers are often employed in low-level positions.

Accountability Structures and Training. In light of the prior research on the efficacy of human resource structures for reducing structural and interactional inequalities, I test whether human resource structures mitigate discrimination by including measures of accountability structures and training programs. Accountability structures are measured from three dichotomous variables (1=yes): Union presence (does the organization have a union?), Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) department (does the organization have a department or section responsible for Equal Employment Opportunity or Affirmative Action?), and grievances procedure (are there formal procedures for resolving disputes?).

Training programs are measured from indicators of general violence prevention training, sexual harassment training, and diversity training. General violence prevention training is constructed from three dummy variables: violence, conflict resolution, and disruptive behavior. Violence training measures whether organizations offer seminars or workshops on general violence prevention strategies (1=yes). Conflict resolution training captures whether workplaces have hands on or classroom training in conflict resolution (1=yes). Disruptive behavior training measures whether organizations offer training for restraining disruptive persons or for the management of disruptive behavior (1=yes). A dummy variable scale for general violence training was created using violence, conflict
resolution, and disruptive behavior. Organizations that have one or more of the three
types of training programs were coded as 1 and workplaces with no training were coded
as 0. **Sexual harassment training** measures whether organizations offer managerial
training for sexual harassment (yes=1). **Diversity training** captures whether organizations
offer diversity training for managers (yes=1).

*Controls.* Consistent with previous research (e.g., Baldi and McBrier 1997; Hirsh
and Kmec 2009), I include measures for organizational variations. I conceptualize
**organizational size** to recognize the influences of workplace bureaucracies. Since
medium to large organizations may have complicated bureaucratic structures, I introduce
a dummy variable that captures the differences between medium to large and small
workplaces. Organizations with 76 or more full-time employees were coded as 1 and
organizations with 75 or less full-time employees were coded as 0. **Number of
establishments** is coded as the total number of operating sites for the organization. Some
organizations may consist of several operating sites whereas other organizations may
only consist of one operating site. The number of establishment variable controls for
the differences between types of organizations. **Organizational age** is measured by
subtracting the year of the NOS survey by the year the organization was established.
Strategy and Results

The analytic approach is twofold. First, I examine compositional dynamics and indicators of the organizational context that may influence interactional inequalities. I start with models predicting the influences of gender and racial composition for general incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination. I model non-linear functions given the classic predictions that a stable or growing gender and racial composition poses threat to the majority group. Consistent with compositional threat literature (e.g., Blalock 1967), I expect that gender and racial composition reaches a threshold and thereafter the likelihood of interactional inequalities declines. I then introduce more general indicators of organizational context (e.g., procedural chaos, job insecurity) and hierarchical power to the modeling.

Second, I investigate whether accountability structures and training programs mitigate the effects of interactional inequalities. I model accountability structures with the purpose of exploring how structures, such as an internal EEOC office, and grievance procedures matter relative to inequalities established in the first portion of the analysis. I then introduce training programs in the forms of general, sexual harassment, and diversity training. Ideally, accountability structures and training programs will mitigate the effects of interactional inequalities. However, and as noted by some prior work discussed earlier, accountability structures and training programs may be ineffective or actually increase
the reporting of general incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination. All results are reported in odds ratios.

**Compositional Dynamics and the Organizational Context**

Table 2 reports the findings for models of compositional and organizational processes on reports of general incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination. Workplaces that have growing female and minority compositions are particularly susceptible to reports of general incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination in the workplace. As suggested by the significance of the nonlinear effects of female and black workers, as the composition of workers who are female and minorities in the workplace rises, interactional inequality also rise until the percentage of female and black workers approaches a particular threshold. Following the threshold, interactional inequalities seem to decrease.

In figure 1, I use predicted probabilities to consider the linear and nonlinear effects of compositional dynamics for reported cases of interactional inequalities. It is worth noting that figure 1 does not reflect the racial composition present in the sample. However, given the consistency with prior research (see Roscigno 2007), I suspect that these findings in figure 1 are comparable to workplaces that have female (top) and minority (bottom) compositions that range from 0% to 100% of the workforce. I then turn to indicators of the organizational context that are meaningful.
Where are interactional inequalities more likely to occur? The findings presented in figure 1 and 2 suggest that both segregated and integrated work establishments have environments that are especially susceptible to inequalities. Workplaces that have an integrated gender composition where female workers represent over 45% of the workforce are at a greater risk for reports of general incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination until female workers become the numerical majority. Workplaces with high female representation are particularly susceptible to charges of sexual harassment. Indeed, reports of sexual harassment are about 6.5 times more likely to occur in work establishments where females represent over 45% of the workforce. Workers are only about 2.5 times and 3.7 times as likely to report cases of general incivility and racial discrimination at similar levels of female representation. These differences may be due to the fact that white women are more like to file charges of sexual harassment or see incivility as sex-based whereas black women are more likely to both experience and perceive interactional inequality as a function of race-based treatment (Roscigno 2007). In either case, these inequalities appear more likely in gender integrated (and arguably competitive) contexts.

Minority composition appears to matter in both segregated and integrated workplaces. Employees are most vulnerable to reports of racial discrimination resulting from competitive threat that may exist in racially segregated workplaces (Blalock 1967). Reports of racial discrimination are more than seven times as likely when minority representation reaches about 27% of the workforce. As minority representation grows beyond about 27%, workers become less vulnerable to reports of racial discrimination.
and more susceptible to charges of general incivility and sexual harassment. Certainly, minority workers are more likely to report general incivility and sexual harassment in racially integrated work establishments. Workers are over three times as likely to file case of general incivility and sexual harassment when minority representation is about 57% and 45% of the workforce. These findings suggest that explicit race-based inequalities may decline as the minority compositions grows, however, antagonism may still persist in the forms of general and gender-based inequalities.

Equations 2 and 3 introduce key aspects of the organizational context into the models. Low status workers that are low-wage and illiterate are more likely to report general incivility and racial discrimination claims. Low-wage workers, for instance, are almost twice as likely to work in establishments that have reported claims of general incivility. Workplaces that have illiterate workers are about 2% more likely to have filed cases of general incivility and racial discrimination. Since many low-wage and illiterate workers have little if any hierarchical power, these workers may be especially vulnerable to inequalities (Einarsen et al. 2003; Roscigno et al. 2009; Salin 2003). Sexual harassment, in contrast, seems to be less associated with the status of the worker. Since educated women, who are not typically low-wage or illiterate workers, tend to file charges of sexual harassments (Roscigno 2007), other aspects of the organizational context may be more meaningful.

Poor organization and direct supervision influence the reporting of sexual harassment. Work establishments that have poor organization are about 1% more likely to have reported claims of sexual harassment. Also, workplaces that have direct
supervision over their employees are about 46% less likely to have filed cases of sexual harassment. Direct supervision may result in supervisory bullying (Roscigno et al. 2009). However, these findings seem to capture sexual harassment among co-workers because direct supervision may alleviate this form of sexual harassment (Salin 2003). Moreover, reports of sexual harassment may be more associated with organizational characteristics because higher status workers are more likely to file cases of sexual harassment. In contrast, workers that have little hierarchical power may be more inclined to report cases of general incivility and racial discrimination. In either case, the organizational context coupled with gender and racial compositional effects may leave workers vulnerable to interactional inequalities in the workplace.

*Accountability and Training*

Table 3 reports the influences of accountability structures and training programs on reports of general incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination in the workplace. Equation 1 introduces the baseline models of compositional dynamics and the organizational context reported earlier. Equations 2 thru 4 explore whether human resource structures effects of general incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination in the workplace. I begin with accountability structures reported in equation 2 and training programs presented in equation 3. I then use equation 4 to examine whether compositional dynamics and organizational indicators remain influential after human resource structures are introduced.
Do human resource structures that establish accountability and provide sensitivity training mitigate the influences of general and group-specific inequalities? Accountability structures, as reported in equation 2, actually increase the reporting of such inequalities. Workplaces that have union presence are over 2 times more likely to have filed charges of racial discrimination. Comparably, work establishments that have departments for Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) are about 2 times more likely to have cases of sexual harassment and racial discrimination filed against them. Also workplaces that have grievance procedures are 2.7 times and 4.2 times more likely to have filed charges of general incivility and racial discrimination. These findings may be explained through previous research. Scholars, for instance, have shown that organizations may only adopt human resource structures to demonstrate compliance with the law (Dobbin et al. 1993; Edelmann et al. 1999) and to protect themselves from legal responsibilities (Kalev et al. 2006). As a result, these structures may not have the authority and resources to actually reduce the reporting of interactional inequalities (Edelmann et al. 1999:447; Hirsh and Kmec 2009; Kalev et al. 2006).

Equation 3 introduces general violence, sexual harassment and diversity training programs into the modeling. Work establishments that have sexual harassment training programs for managers are about 2.5 and 12.2 times more likely to have reports of general incivility and sexual harassment. Similarly, workplaces that have diversity training programs for managers are about 3.3 times more likely to have filed charges of racial discrimination. These findings may increase the reporting of interactional inequalities for two reasons. First, these structures may increase employees’ rights
awareness through teaching employees how to identify and report discrimination. As a result, filed complaints among workers may intensify (Edelmann et al. 1999; Hirsh and Kmec 2009). Second, human resource structures may aggravate potential perpetrators of interactional inequalities and lead perpetrators to discriminate against vulnerable workers (Kalev et al. 2006). Moreover, these findings presented in equations 2 and 3 suggest that human resource structures may increase the reporting of general and group-specific inequalities. However, some compositional effects and organizational indicators are reduced after human resource structures are added.

Equation 4 includes both accountability structures and on the job training programs. I use this equation to explore the effects that remain after human resource structures are introduced in the modeling. These findings show that most compositional dynamics and organizational indicators are only slightly reduced in their level of significance or not influenced by the presence of human resource structures. Nonetheless, human resource structures seem to mitigate the influences of gender and racial composition for the reporting of general incivility¹. These results may suggest that such structures may mitigate some of the influences of general incivility.

¹Human resource structures also mitigate the influences of low wage workers for the reporting of general incivility. However, I do not include it here because this is slight reduction given that the in the baseline model low wage worker was only significant under a one-way test.
Discussion and Conclusion

Interactional inequalities are an ongoing reality in many workplaces. These inequalities occur within everyday workplace experiences and may result in humiliation and misery for victims long after the inequality has ended (Hodson 2001). Organizational characteristics (e.g., procedural chaos, job insecurity) and hierarchical powerlessness tend to influence the likelihood of victimization. Most prior research, however, has yet to determine whether varying degrees of powerlessness may leave certain workers more or less vulnerable. Particularly absent from much discussion is whether female and minority employees are more susceptible to interactional inequalities given their vulnerabilities to both status and structural disparities. In this paper, I advanced prior work in two ways. First, I explored the implications of compositional and organizational processes on general incivility, sexual harassment and racial discrimination in the workplace. Second, I examined whether human resources structures reduce the influences of general and group-specific inequalities.

I found that the organizational context coupled with compositional dynamics effect the reporting of interactional inequalities. Work establishment without direct supervision, a form of procedural chaos were more likely to have charges of sexual harassment. Also workplaces with low status workers, such as low wage workers and illiterate workers were more likely to have filed cases of general incivility and racial discrimination. Consistent with prior research, these
findings show that low status workers are vulnerable to interactional inequalities in the workplace.

However, are female and minority workers more susceptible to interactional inequalities because of their dual roles as low status workers and as “different” workers in a workplace culture that privileges white males? A core finding generated by my analysis is that workplaces that have growing gender and racial compositions are more likely to report incidences of general incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination until these compositions reach a threshold. Following the threshold interactional inequalities seem to decline. Female representation is consistently associated with general incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination until the percentage of female workers outnumbers the percentage of male workers. Minority composition creates a dual threat. When minority workers are the numerical minority, these workplaces are more likely to file charges of racial discrimination. As minority representation grows, work establishments are a greater risk for reports of general incivility and sexual harassment.

My findings concur with previous research that identifies female and minority workers as vulnerable to sexual harassment and racial discrimination, respectively. I also extend the literature by finding that gender and racial composition influence three distinct dimensions of interactional inequalities: general incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination. However, these results in no way suggest that organizations should strive to maintain a workforce that consistent of a single gender or racial group as a way to alleviate the likelihood of interactional inequalities. Instead, these findings suggest that organizations recognize the
influences compositional dynamics have on interactional inequalities in order to implement structures and practices that may reduce these inequalities.

Additionally, I considered the role human resource structures that play in mitigating the influences of interactional inequalities. I find that accountability structures that include union presence, department for Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), and grievance procedures increase the reporting of interactional inequalities. These effects, however, are largely explained away when sexual harassment and diversity training programs are included in the modeling. These training programs also increase the filing of general and group-specific inequalities. It is unlike that these findings indicate that the existence of accountability structures and training programs increases the likelihood of interactional inequalities. Instead, these findings may suggest that it is the implementation of these structures and programs that contribute to the occurrence of interactional inequalities (Kalev et al. 2006). Organizations may need to devout the necessary resources to human resource structures in order for these programs to reduce the influences of general incivility, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination.

Admittedly, there are limitations to my analyses. First, these findings are not based on cross-sectional data. As a result, I am unable to determine the casual relationship between human resource structures and interactional inequalities. That is, human resources structures could have been implemented in response to interactional inequalities. However, my findings are consistent with prior literature. Second, my outcomes of interest are conservative measures of interactional inequalities. These outcomes do not distinguish between organizations that have one case of interactional inequality and those organizations that have several cases of interactional inequalities. Also, these indicators capture official reports made by the organization. As a result,
potential experiences of interactional inequality may be excluded from these official accounts because the organization may not define these experiences as interactional inequality. Despite these caveats, consistent patterns by gender and racial composition, and lack of protective shields internal to organizational themselves are notable.

The results reported encourage future research that further addresses interactional inequalities in the workplace. Studies that draw on cross-sectional and individual level data are important steps for future researchers. Cross-sectional data will garner insight into causal relationships and changes over times. With individual level data, we can examine the relationship between the gender and racial make-up of the worker and their status in the workplace. These studies will surely add to our understanding of interactional inequalities and may help explain the gap between group vulnerabilities, the existence of human resource structures, and actual workplace experiences.
References


Lopez, Steven, Randy Hodson, and Vincent J. Roscigno. 2009. “Power, Status, and Abuse at Work: General and Sexual Harassment Compared.” *Sociological Quarterly* 50:3-27


### Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>Number of Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incivility</td>
<td>Dummy Variable of physical abuse, bullying, and verbal and written (No=0, Yes=1 one or more of the three abuses)</td>
<td>.253 (.435)</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Harassment</td>
<td>Formal Complaints about Sexual Harassment (No=0, Yes=1)</td>
<td>.300 (.457)</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Discrimination</td>
<td>Formal Complaints about Racial or Religious Discrimination (No=0, Yes=1)</td>
<td>.138 (.346)</td>
<td>499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compositional Dynamics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Percent of workers that are Female</td>
<td>50.348 (32.327)</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Percent of workers that are Black</td>
<td>12.595 (20.432)</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Context</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Organization</td>
<td>Percent of workers not involved in a group that solves key production or service problems</td>
<td>81.400 (30.981)</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Insecurity</td>
<td>Percent of permanent workforce that left involuntarily + Percent of permanent workforce that was temporary layoff</td>
<td>5.290 (16.003)</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>Direct Supervision of employees who are most directly involved with the production or service provided by the establishment (No=0, Yes=1)</td>
<td>.695 (4.55)</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Wage Workers</td>
<td>Dummy variable that captures the percent of employees that make less than 10 dollars an hour=1</td>
<td>.643 (.48)</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate Workers</td>
<td>Percent of Illiterate Workers</td>
<td>2.170 (8.46)</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Policies and Structures</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>Union Presence (No=0, Yes=1)</td>
<td>.212 (4.09)</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of EEO</td>
<td>Department or Section responsible for Equal Employment Opportunity or Affirmative Action (No=0, Yes=1)</td>
<td>.219 (4.14)</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grievances Procedures</td>
<td>Formal procedures for resolving disputes (No=0, Yes=1)</td>
<td>.618 (4.82)</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Violence Training</td>
<td>Dummy Variable of Training Programs: General Workplace Violence, Conflict Resolution, Disruptive Behavior (No=0 training programs, Yes=1 one or more of the three training programs)</td>
<td>.538 (4.99)</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Harassment Training</td>
<td>Training Program for managers (No=0, Yes=1)</td>
<td>.538 (4.99)</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity Training</td>
<td>Training Program for managers (No=0, Yes=1)</td>
<td>.464 (4.99)</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Controls</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Size</td>
<td>Dummy variable that captures the organizations with 76 or more full-time employees =1</td>
<td>.326 (4.69)</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Age</td>
<td>Age of Organization</td>
<td>30.158 (36.619)</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Establishments</td>
<td>Number of operation sites</td>
<td>187.662 (1546.664)</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Variable Descriptions
Table 2. Logistic Regression of Compositional Effects and Organizational Processes on General Incivility, Sexual Harassment, and Racial Discrimination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>General Incivility</th>
<th>Sexual Harassment</th>
<th>Racial Discrimination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compositional Effects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Female</td>
<td>1.039*</td>
<td>1.086**</td>
<td>1.057*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.016)</td>
<td>(.027)</td>
<td>(.027)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Female^2</td>
<td>1.000**</td>
<td>0.999*</td>
<td>0.999*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.0001)</td>
<td>(.0003)</td>
<td>(.0003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black</td>
<td>1.046**</td>
<td>1.055**</td>
<td>1.168***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.017)</td>
<td>(.021)</td>
<td>(.034)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black^2</td>
<td>1.000*</td>
<td>0.999*</td>
<td>0.997***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.0002)</td>
<td>(.0003)</td>
<td>(.0006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Context</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Organization</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.001</td>
<td>1.013*</td>
<td>1.012*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.004)</td>
<td>(.006)</td>
<td>(.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Insecurity</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.991</td>
<td>.994</td>
<td>.998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.009)</td>
<td>(.010)</td>
<td>(.013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.304</td>
<td>.508*</td>
<td>.958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.357)</td>
<td>(.174)</td>
<td>(.322)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Low Wage Workers</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.735^</td>
<td>.628</td>
<td>1.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.494)</td>
<td>(.220)</td>
<td>(.377)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Illiterate Workers</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.023^</td>
<td>1.003</td>
<td>1.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.013)</td>
<td>(.017)</td>
<td>(.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Size</td>
<td>3.954***</td>
<td>5.248***</td>
<td>3.985***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.056)</td>
<td>(1.343)</td>
<td>(1.364)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Establishments</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.0003)</td>
<td>(.0003)</td>
<td>(.0004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Age</td>
<td>.995</td>
<td>.998</td>
<td>1.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.003)</td>
<td>(.004)</td>
<td>(.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo $r^2$</td>
<td>.1621</td>
<td>.1535</td>
<td>.3028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-likelihood</td>
<td>-219.050</td>
<td>-225.985</td>
<td>-139.803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-214.6</td>
<td>-213.9</td>
<td>-139.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>499</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ^ p≤ .05, one tailed test  *p≤ .01, two tailed test  ** p≤ .05, two tailed test  ***p≤ .001, two tailed test
Table 3. Logistic Regression of Human Resource Structures on General Incivility, Sexual Harassment, and Racial Discrimination

Note: *p ≤ .05, one tailed test  **p ≤ .01, two tailed test  ***p ≤ .05, two tailed test  ****p ≤ .001, two tailed test
Figures

Figure 1. The Percentage of Female Workers on Interactional Inequalities.
Figure 2. The Percentage of Black Workers on Interactional Inequalities.