

## Symposium

### TITLE

Emerging workplace diversity issues: Ethnicity, bilingualism, and workplace exclusion

### ABSTRACT

Workplace conflict based on employee ethnicity is the focus of this symposium. We discuss employees' ethnic harassment experiences, exclusion due to ethnicity, and conflict based on employees' use of non-English languages in the workplace. We also present an integrative paper describing aspects of organizational climate that affect employee social cognition.

### PRESS PARAGRAPH

With increasing workforce ethnic diversity, issues related to employee ethnic harassment and ethnic conflict have become critical to examine. This symposium focuses on four recent studies that examine such interactions. They describe employees' experiences of ethnic harassment in ethnically diverse organizations, employees' reports of conflict based on use of non-English languages in the workplace, and the negative impact resulting from exclusion from social interactions. Our final integrative paper describes the impact of an organization's intolerance of discrimination on employees' views of ambiguous events and the likelihood of their reporting discriminatory behaviors. Where appropriate, legal implications will also be described.

Emerging Workplace Diversity Issues:  
Ethnicity, Bilingualism, and Workplace Exclusion

Chair: Kimberly T. Schneider

Illinois State University

This symposium will focus on issues related to workforce and workplace diversity with a focus on negative workplace experiences due to various aspects of organizational climates intolerant of diversity (e.g., resistance to employees' use of multiple languages, ethnic diversity among employees). With increased workforce ethnic diversity, researchers are now reporting unique stressors, harassment, and exclusion experienced by ethnic minority employees (Hudspeth & Bergman, 2003; Schneider, Hitlan, & Radhakrishnan, 2000). This symposium represents an opportunity to discuss four recent studies examining such interactions. The first paper, by Berdahl, Moore, and Radhakrishnan will examine experiences of ethnic harassment (i.e., verbal and physical harassment due to ethnicity) among a diverse sample of union members working in five organizations. Their results indicated that some types of ethnic harassment experiences differ for men and women in interesting ways. They place their discussion of ethnic harassment experiences within a gendered framework and describe the importance of organizational climate issues related to being an ethnic minority within a workgroup. The second paper, by Bergman, Watrous, and Gaulke, examines the potential for ethnic harassment and conflict due to employees' use of multiple languages in the workplace. They review recent legal cases related to "English-only workplaces" and report the results of focus group interviews with bilingual employees and their monolingual coworkers. Such rich and descriptive qualitative data indicate that these bilingual employees feel targeted for harassment when others perceive a mismatch between their

ethnicity and their language use (e.g., employees who appear Hispanic but do not speak Spanish). Bergman et al also discuss reports of the formation of ingroups and outgroups based on multiple language use. The third paper, by Hitlan and Harden, examines employees' general perceptions of workplace exclusion and links these experiences with negative well-being and negative job-related attitudes. They also examine individual difference predictors of employees' responses to such exclusion. Finally, Leslie and Gelfand present an integrative theory of how organizational climate for discrimination (including exclusion) affects social cognition. Such social cognitive implications include the effect of climates intolerant of discrimination on employees' construct accessibility of discrimination, their interpretation of ambiguous events, and their decisions to report potentially discriminatory behavior. The Leslie and Gelfand paper serves as a summary paper that discusses many of the theories and constructs examined in the other three papers.

We have selected Lilia Cortina as a discussant based on her extensive research experience, publications, and presentations related to racial/ethnic and gender conflict in the workplace, discrimination, and harassment. Lilia has published articles related to Latinas' experiences of sexual harassment, incivility in the workplace, and the impact of sociocultural factors on coping with harassment (cf, Cortina, 2002). Audience participation and discussion will be encouraged by both the chair and the discussant as we are particularly interested in audience members' views of applications of these constructs to workplaces with which they are familiar.

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## Ethnic Harassment: A Male-on-Male Project?

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A recent theory developed by Sidanius and colleagues (Sidanius & Veniegas, 2000) proposes that racism is primarily perpetrated and experienced by men. This theory suggests that minority men will be the primary targets of racism, while majority women will be the least frequent targets.

To test Sidanius' predictions, we compare men's and women's experiences of racism at work by studying the frequency with which they experience ethnic harassment on the job. Most previous studies have compared the experiences of two ethnic groups – primarily whites versus Hispanics/Latinos (Cortina, 2002; Schneider, Hitlan, and Radhakrishnan, 2000) – using a sample from one organization. In the current study, we compare men's and women's experiences of ethnic harassment among blacks, Asians, and whites in several organizations in Canada.

### Method

Sample. The study involved a survey of 236 employees from five organizations represented by the same union. The organizations were diverse in terms of ethnicity: 41% of the sample were of European descent (white), 14% were of African or Caribbean descent (black), and 31% were of Asian descent (Asian). Three organizations were male-dominated manufacturing and shipping plants, and two organizations were female-dominated community resource centers. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents were male.

Ethnic Harassment. We used Schneider and colleagues' (Schneider et al., 2000) measure of ethnic harassment. Some of their items involve behaviours directly relating to ethnicity – namely, ethnic slurs (e.g., “Told jokes about your ethnic group” and “Made a racially insensitive comment such as ‘go back to your own country’”). Other items involve sabotage and related experiences and make the respondent judge if they were due to ethnicity (e.g., “Failed to give you information you needed to do your job *due to your ethnicity*” and “Suspected you when something went wrong *due to your ethnicity*”). We revised the sabotage items to remove ethnic attributions and instead related them directly to respondent ethnicity, believing this was a more objective test of whether the behaviours were motivated by ethnicity.

Statistical Models. Models predicting the frequency of ethnic harassment were developed using generalized linear models in SAS (Johnston), and fit using a Poisson distribution (Gardner, 1995)<sup>1</sup>. Multiple models were tested for the frequency of ethnic slurs and for the frequency of sabotage, with dummy variables for “black” and “Asian” (“white” as the reference group), and “female” (“male” as the reference group).

Workgroup minority status – a variable measuring the degree to which one was an ethnic minority in one's workgroup – was also included in the model, as were interactions between ethnicity and sex and ethnicity and workgroup minority status. The best model included ethnicity, sex, ethnicity-by-sex interactions, and workgroup minority status.

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<sup>1</sup> These methods were used because it can often be difficult to accurately model predictors of harassment, since a large proportion of a sample will have experienced no harassment, and small proportions of the sample will have experienced high harassment frequency, which means that variance in the dependent variable is restricted, and correlated to independent variables of interest. In other words, the distribution of harassment experiences in a given population is not evenly distributed in a given population, leading to problems with heterogeneity of variance when using typical statistical procedures such as analysis of variance or linear regression (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1988). Fitting a generalized linear model with a Poisson distribution helps to correct for these issues by assuming an underlying distribution of the dependent variable that more accurately reflects the population distribution of harassment experiences.

## Results

Ethnic Slurs. A simple model consisting of only main effects of ethnicity, sex, and workgroup minority status revealed that all were significant. Blacks and Asians experienced significantly more ethnic slurs than whites, with blacks experiencing more than Asians. Men experienced significantly more ethnic slurs than women, as did individuals whose ethnicity was a minority in their work groups.

Ethnicity was no longer significant, however, when ethnicity-by-sex interactions were included in the model. There were significant interactions between ethnicity and sex: Black men were the most frequent targets of ethnic slurs while white women were the least frequent targets (see Figure 1). Sex and workgroup minority status remained significant.

Sabotage. Unlike the results for ethnic slurs, neither ethnicity nor sex was significant for the frequency of sabotage experiences at work. There were also no significant effects for ethnicity-by-sex interactions. The only variable that was significant in predicting individuals' experiences of sabotage at work included was workgroup minority status: individuals who were in the ethnic majority in their work groups were less likely to experience sabotage than individuals who were not in the ethnic majority in their work groups.

## Discussion

Consistent with predictions derived from Sidanius' theory of racism as a male-on-male project, we found that ethnic slurs at work were experienced more by men than by women across ethnic categories. In addition, minority (black & Asian) men were the primary targets of ethnic slurs and majority (white) women were the least frequent

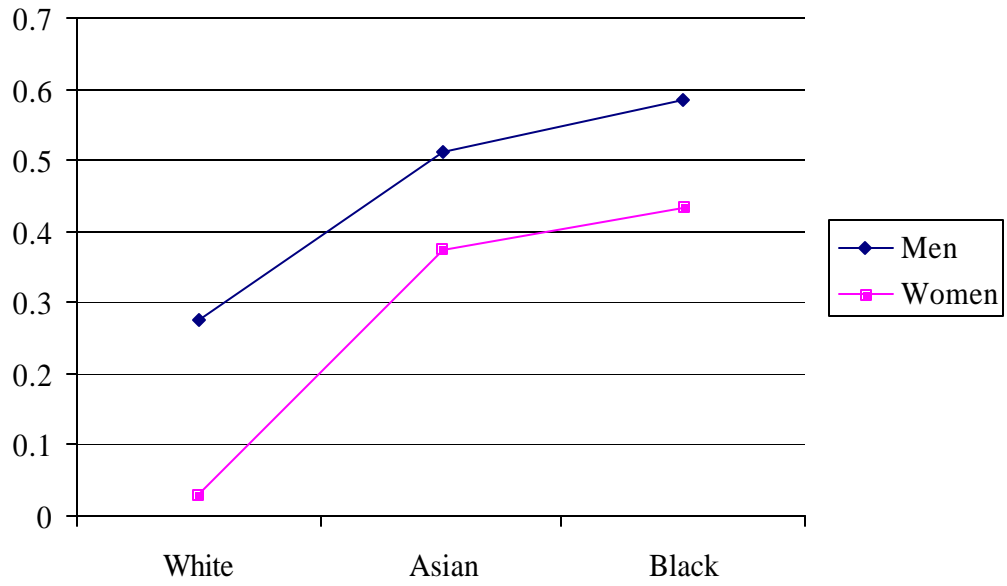
targets. We did not find evidence that worker sabotage was related to sex or ethnicity, though one's ethnic status with respect to one's work group predicted these experiences, with workers whose ethnicity was in the majority experiencing sabotage less often, consistent with research on solo and minority status in work groups (e.g., Alexander and Thoits, 1985; Crocker & McGraw, 1984; Kanter, 1977).

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Figure 1. Frequency of Ethnic Slurs by Sex and Ethnicity



## Bilingualism in the Workplace

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As the marketplace globalizes and the U.S. population diversifies, the need for and the availability of bilingual workers continue to grow. In an effort to regulate the effects of the changing workforce, some organizations have implemented “English-only” communication rules, excepting only non-English communication when requested by customers. Courts have recognized that English-only rules could be discriminatory when employees cannot speak English, but declared that Title VII does not protect employees’ language preferences (*Garcia v. Spun Steak Co.*, 1993). The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), however, has consistently opposed English-only rules, viewing them as violations of the national origin protection offered by Title VII (EEOC, 1994).

Research on multiple language usage (MLU) has generally focused on organizational policies. However, little attention has been paid to the experiences of bilingual workers and their coworkers or how MLU contributes to work-related stressors, especially ethnic harassment. The present research investigates these issues using a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) approach, a qualitative research paradigm that focuses upon the discovery of ecologically valid theories (Locke, 2002). Under grounded theory, researchers take participants’ reports of their experiences and continuously extrapolate increasingly abstract ideas and themes in an effort to understand and explain relationships. Researchers frame broad questions so that participants’ responses are not

led to converge with the researchers' pre-conceived expectations. Two of the questions investigated in this study are outlined next.

*1. How do ethnicity and MLU affect ethnic harassment risk?*

The relationship between ethnicity and MLU is not straightforward, although there is some overlap between ethnicity and languages spoken. Therefore, MLU might serve as a risk factor for ethnic harassment. Specifically, based on ingroup/outgroup biases such as horizontal hostility (White & Langer, 1999) extrapolated from social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), it is expected that the use of a non-English language consistent with an individual's ethnicity could result in that person being at risk for harassment both from coworkers of a different ethnicity and from coworkers of the same ethnicity who are not bilingual.

*2. How do organizational characteristics affect the relationships among ethnicity, MLU, and harassment?*

Organizational climate, policies, and procedures regarding language usage might moderate the relationships detailed in the previous question. In organizations with climates supportive of MLU, risk of ethnic and/or language-based harassment might be reduced, a phenomenon consistent with findings regarding sexual harassment climate (Hulin, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1996).

## Method

Participants (N=21) were bilingual (Spanish/English) workers and monolingual (English or Spanish) coworkers of bilingual workers in Texas. Participants met in focus groups of 2-9 people, joined by 2 moderators (1 Spanish-English bilingual, 1 English-speaking), to discuss ethnicity, language usage, and work. Transcripts were coded

following grounded theory principles using ATLAS/ti, software that assists in the management of qualitative data.

### Preliminary Results

Several themes were identified. First, ethnic harassment was pronounced in cases where a mismatch existed between an individual's ethnicity and language usage. Individuals who appeared Hispanic but did not speak Spanish and individuals who appeared non-Hispanic but did speak Spanish were at an increased risk of being ostracized, ridiculed, or harassed by coworkers.

Second, language and ethnicity influenced the social setting in the workplace. In- and out-groups formed on the basis of language usage. Some participants felt excluded, often to the point of terminating employment, due to an inability to speak the majority language within their workplace, even in cases in which their ethnicity was that of the majority of workers. However, other participants who did not speak the majority language felt included by coworkers, regardless of ethnicity, when a common language was agreed upon or when coworkers translated for them.

A third theme centered on organizational climate, rules, and policies. Organizations differed in the extent to which they supported MLU. Spanish speakers employed in organizations supportive of MLU described their organizations positively and were praised, rewarded, and held higher-level jobs. The opposite was true for Spanish speakers in MLU-unsupportive organizations. Often, language rules were not mandated by the organization as a whole but rather created by the supervisor; prohibitions on speaking Spanish in the workplace led some employees to misunderstand required duties.

These results suggest that MLU and ethnicity lead to harassment and discrimination in complex ways. Additionally, the results show the importance of climate as an influence on the MLU-ethnicity-harassment process. This study expands our knowledge of ethnic harassment and MLU in the workplace. Next steps with this research will be to build an emic, ecologically valid theory regarding workplace Spanish-English bilingualism and to promote general theories of bilingualism, ethnicity, and harassment.

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# The Impact of Workplace Exclusion and Personality on Workplace Attitudes and Behaviors

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Social-psychological research indicates that social exclusion affects people in a number of different ways including increased displays of antisocial behavior (Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2002). While informative, little is known about the work-related consequences of such behavior. The current research begins to fill this gap by examining how workplace exclusion impacts work-related attitudes and behavior. Exclusion is conceptualized as a form of workplace stress, and, as such, is conceptually similar to other workplace stressors (cf. Schneider, Hitlan, & Radhakrishnan, 2000) As such, we predict that more frequent experiences with exclusion should lead to more negative work-related attitudes and behaviors. A second goal of the current research was to examine individual difference in determining employee responses to exclusion.

## Method

### Participants

Participants included 104 working undergraduate psychology students from a Midwestern university. The majority (59.6%) were female, Caucasian (94.2%), and worked part-time (96.1%).

### Measures

*Job attitudes and behaviors.* Participants completed the Satisfaction with Supervision, Coworkers, and Work subscales of the Job Descriptive Index (Roznowski, 1989, Smith, Kendal, & Hulin, 1969). Work and job withdrawal were assessed with 11-item and 6-item scales, respectively (Hanisch & Hulin, 1991).

*Organizational Citizenship Behavior.* Participants completed a 10-item organizational citizenship behavior scale (Organ, 1994) measuring interpersonal helping behaviors and organizational loyalty.

*Individual differences.* We used the shortened 60-item version of the NEO personality inventory to assess the Big 5 personality dimensions (NEO-R, Costa & McCrae, 1986).

*Antisocial Work Behaviors.* Participants completed a 20-item scale developed to assess the frequency of antisocial work behaviors during the past 12 months at work (e.g., damaged property belonging to your employer).

*Workplace Exclusion.* An 18-item Workplace Exclusion Scale (WES; Hitlan, 2002) was developed to measure the extent to which an employee perceives of him or herself as being excluded by others in the workplace (e.g., coworkers shutting you out of their conversations).

### Procedure

Participants completed a computer-based survey that was administered to small groups ranging from 2 to 6 people in a laboratory setting.

## Results

### Correlational Analyses

Results indicated negative relations between workplace exclusion and satisfaction with coworkers, work satisfaction, interpersonal helping, and organizational loyalty. In contrast, a positive relation emerged between exclusion and antisocial behavior.

### Discriminant Function Analyses

Two discriminant function analyses were performed. For both analyses we conducted a tripartite split on participants' total exclusion scores creating groups representing low, moderate, and high levels of exclusion. In the first analysis, satisfaction with supervision, satisfaction with coworkers, work satisfaction and job satisfaction were predictors. Results indicated one significant discriminant function accounting for 88% of the between-groups variability and separated the high exclusion group from the other two groups. The best predictors for separating this group from the others were coworker and job satisfaction, with the high exclusion group reporting lower coworker and work satisfaction.

In the second analysis interpersonal helping, organizational loyalty, antisocial behavior, work withdrawal, and job withdrawal constituted the predictors. One significant function emerged accounting for 68% of the variance in scores and separated the high exclusion group from the other groups. Interpersonal helping, antisocial behavior, and work withdrawal contributed to this function. The high exclusion group reported the least interpersonal helping along with more antisocial and work withdrawal behaviors.

#### Individual Differences in Reactions to Exclusion

The negligible correlation between interpersonal helping and antisocial behavior ( $r = -.045, p > .05$ ) suggests that those participants engaging in less interpersonal helping are different from those participants engaging in more antisocial behaviors. For the high exclusion group antisocial behavior was positively correlated with neuroticism and negatively correlated with extraversion. In contrast, none of the personality dimensions

related to interpersonal helping. Moreover, the low and moderate exclusion groups showed a different pattern of relations.

### Discussion

Exclusion was related to several important work attitudes and behaviors. This research also suggests personality as a factor in how people respond to being excluded. These results begin to give some insight into why exclusion experienced at work may eventually lead to work or job withdrawal, along with other negative job behaviors.

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# The Effect of Organizational Climate on the Attribution to Discrimination Process

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Although much research examines how protected group members interpret ambiguous negative events (e.g. Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991; Major et al., 2002), researchers seldom explore this question within an organizational context. Likewise, with some exceptions (e.g. Perry, Davis-Blake, & Kulik, 1994), research seldom explores how organizational level variables related to discrimination and exclusion affect individuals' cognitions and behaviors. In this SIOP symposium we will present a theoretical model (see Figure 1) for how the organizational climate for the treatment of protected groups influences the accessibility of information related to discrimination, the perception of ambiguous events, and reporting of discriminatory behavior. We also explore individual difference moderators of these effects, and discuss the practical implications of the model for organizations.

Our theory integrates research on organizational climate with social psychology research on the attribution to discrimination process. The three-stage model of the attribution process includes asking (construct accessibility), answering (perceiving) and announcing (reporting/confronting) (Stangor, Swim, Sechrist, Van Allen, & Ottenbreit, in press). Outcomes during the asking stage are determined by the construct accessibility (or suspicion) of discrimination at the time of an ambiguous negative event. The second stage, answering, involves judging whether or not the ambiguous negative event constitutes discrimination. The third stage, announcing, involves reporting the discriminatory incident.

Although this model has not been studied in the organizational context, we argue that this micro-level process is related to organizational practices and procedures. Specifically, we posit an organization's climate for intolerance for discrimination (CID) influences the attribution to discrimination process. We conceptualize CID as the practices and procedures that either foster or inhibit discrimination in an organization. Although CID is related to conceptualizations of climate for diversity in the literature (e.g. Cox, 1993; Kossek & Zonia, 1993), climate for diversity is a broader construct than CID. Because discrimination can occur formally and informally we define two dimensions of CID. The first dimension, formal organizational aspects, includes outcomes that are monitored by organizations such as hiring decisions or determination of salary. The second dimension, informal organization aspects, includes unmonitored outcomes such as access to the advice of coworkers and integration into social networks.

In the symposium, we will discuss how CID affects all three stages of the attribution to discrimination process. First, we predict individuals will have less suspicion of discrimination, and therefore less construct accessibility, in a positive CID than in a negative CID. Protected group members will have less concern over becoming a target of discrimination in organizations that promote fair treatment than in organizations that do not.

Second, individuals are less likely to perceive discrimination as the cause of negative outcomes in a positive CID than in a negative CID. If an individual experiences a negative event in an organization that promotes just treatment, that individual will be unlikely to interpret the negative event in a way that contradicts the norm. Also, because each of the steps in the three stage model is dependent on the previous stage, in addition

to having a direct influence on perceiving discrimination CID will also affect perceiving discrimination through the relationship between CID and construct accessibility of discrimination.

Third, when individuals do perceive discrimination, they will be more likely to report in a positive CID than in a negative CID. An organization that promotes fair treatment, will also be receptive to reports of violations of that norm. In organizations that tolerate unjust treatment, employees will see reporting instances of discrimination as futile. This hypothesis is in the opposite direction of the influence of CID on construct accessibility and perceiving. Although few studies look at multiple stages of the model within the same study, there is some evidence for contrasting outcomes at different steps in the three-stage model (Swim & Hyers, 1999).

Finally, social psychology research indicates that individual difference variables (e.g. ingroup identity, sensitivity to discrimination, past experiences with discrimination) influence the attribution to discrimination process (Major et al., 2002; Stangor, Sechrist, & Swim, 1999; Swim & Hyers, 1999). Although our focus is on an organizational level variable, we hypothesize that individual difference variables will moderate the relationship between CID and the attribution to discrimination process.

After presenting our model, we will discuss practical implications as well as other organizational variables that may influence the attribution to discrimination process. For example, on the dyad level, Leader-Member Exchange may influence the interpretation of and response to ambiguous negative events in an organization.

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Figure 1.

