

Race, Gender, and Workplace Power

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Survey data support hypotheses regarding differential access to workplace power among women and minorities relative to white men. Specific findings indicate that, relative to white men, all groups encounter increasing inequality at higher levels of power, but only black women seem to experience this form of inequality as a result of direct discrimination. Further analysis indicates that network assistance is more a response to this form of discrimination than an indirect cause. Finally, analysis shows that most groups attain power through homosocial reproduction, but what differs is the opportunity to engage in such reproduction, wherein white men excel. These findings imply that while women and minorities face lower odds than white men of achieving higher levels of workplace power, the reasons for this disadvantage vary among respective groups and thus will likely require different remedies.

Power, defined as “control over resources, people, and things” (Wolf and Fligstein 1979), is an essential aspect of social stratification (Bendix 1956; Braverman 1974; Dahrendorf 1959). In this study we focus on one dimension of power: authority and control over others in the workplace. Weber ([1914] 1968) conceptualized this dimension of power as a form of “legitimate authority” because it derives from organizational positions that people occupy rather than from the people themselves. We concentrate specifically on how race, ethnicity, and gender affect the likelihood of attaining successively higher levels of such authority.

This issue merits attention for several reasons. Despite significant progress in the socioeconomic status of working women and minorities, data analyses at the city, state, national, and cross-national levels continue to document race and gender inequalities in workplace power (see Smith 2002 for a recent review). Moreover, federal reports indicate that discrimination claims pertaining to promotion have risen steadily in recent years, while discrimination claims per-

taining to hiring have declined (Myerson 1997). These patterns suggest that workplace power constitutes a central battleground in struggles for equalizing opportunities in coming years—a possibility fueled by rising expectations of unprecedented numbers of women and minorities now employed in the formal economy.

Another reason for investigating racial and gender inequalities in workplace power is that despite the popularity of the “glass ceiling” metaphor, surprisingly little, direct research exists on related assumptions. For example, numerous quantitative studies document ascriptive inequalities in workplace power, but few examine whether these inequalities increase at higher levels of power, and none adequately account for factors that ethnographic research contends are important, namely, the ascriptive contexts in which positions of power are embedded and the networks that supposedly play key roles in the allocation of these positions to particular individuals. Conversely, ethnographic research is insightful, but it only comes from a few, select case studies (e.g., Kanter 1977).

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Consequently, it remains uncertain just how generalizable the claims from these studies are and the selection biases they might reflect.

Finally, prior quantitative studies on ascriptive inequalities in workplace power focus either on race *or* gender, but not both (for notable exceptions, see McGuire and Reskin 1993; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993). This conventional approach is problematic because it reinforces the erroneous assumption that racial stratification and gender stratification are mutually exclusive systems that we can somehow sum to understand differences among non-white-men. By contrast, we view racial, ethnic, and gender stratifications as having fundamentally similar causes, and how these causes overlap to produce different outcomes for different groups remains a decidedly empirical question. In taking this approach, it is important to move beyond exclusively black-white comparisons to consider Latinos, not only because Latinos constitute the largest and fastest growing panethnic group in U.S. society, but also because recent research indicates that employers of all ethnoracial backgrounds tend to prefer Latinos over blacks when filling positions in their organizations (Moss and Tilly 2001; Wilson 1996).

In the present study we address these shortcomings in prior research through an examination of authority attainment among white, black, and Latino men and women. Our objectives are twofold: (1) assess the extent to which inequality in workplace power increases among women and minorities, relative to white men, at higher levels of power; and (2) examine the mechanisms of allocation responsible for this form of inequality for each group. In pursuing these objectives, we focus specifically on power positions under the supervision of others. One reason for this focus is that workplace power is not limited to the upper echelon of *Fortune 500* corporations; it is found in all places of employment. While popular reporting on the glass ceiling often obscures and even trivializes the phenomenon, it is critical to general understanding because even seemingly mundane jobs are not left to run themselves, as the lack of autonomy in most low-skill positions attests. Instead, people are selected to fill positions of power throughout all levels of the workforce. And mid-level positions not only constitute the most common form of legitimate authority, but they also represent positions wherein vertical and horizontal inter-

group competition is likely to be greatest among incumbents of roughly equal credentials.

BACKGROUND

A popular explanation for ascriptive inequalities in workplace power invokes the metaphor of a glass ceiling, which was first popularized in a 1986 *Wall Street Journal* article that described barriers women often face as they climb corporate ladders. In 1995, the United States Department of Labor issued an official report on this subject, noting that during the interim decade, observers had extended the term two ways: first, to include racial and ethnic minorities in addition to women; and second, to refer to all management and decision-making positions, not just to top-level positions at large corporations (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission 1995:iii). A core idea invoked by the metaphor is that while employers might let women and minorities into low positions of authority, they are much less likely to let them into high positions that involve greater control.

While we do not explicitly test for corporate glass ceilings in this research, we do examine whether women and minorities have an increasingly difficult time, relative to white men, accessing jobs with greater organizational power. Recent research along these lines has taken one of two general approaches. The more restrictive approach views this type of inequality in terms of an absolute barrier that blocks women and minorities from higher positions of workplace power *because they are women and minorities* (Jacobs 1992; Morrison and Glinow 1990; Reskin and McBrier 2000; Reskin and Ross 1992). Taken literally, this perspective implies an invisible barrier below which women and minorities attain a modest degree of workplace power (e.g., supervisory authority) and above which they do not (e.g., managerial control). A less restrictive approach views increasing inequality as a form of disadvantage facing women and minorities, *relative to white men*, which *intensifies* at higher levels of workplace power.

This second approach to conceptualizing increasing inequality has two important implications for empirical assessment. First, inequality is presumed to occur not in a single, absolute step, but rather over several steps of *increasing* magnitude relative to white men. Second, and

as such, a declining share of women and/or minorities in positions of higher power offers necessary but insufficient evidence of increasing inequality. Instead, sufficient evidence requires *decreasing probabilities of advancement*, relative to white men, at higher levels of power. To illustrate, Table 1 depicts nonsupportive and supportive evidence for increasing inequality in a simple three-level hierarchy (worker, supervisor, manager). In this table, the “white-black ratio” is the key statistic because it summarizes black men’s probability of advancement, relative to white men, at two successive levels of power: first, from worker to supervisor; and second, from supervisor to manager. In the panel labeled “lack of support for increasing inequality,” the relative ratio of advancement for black men *decreases* from 2.5 to 2.0 with movement up the hierarchy. By contrast, in the panel labeled “support for increasing inequality,” the relative ratio for black men *increases* from 2.5 to 4.0. This difference in supportive and nonsupportive evidence for increasing inequality, relative to white men, occurs despite the fact that the share of black men decreases with movement up the hierarchy in both panels (see columns labeled “% black men”).

In the present research we focus on this odds-based criterion for assessing inequality and operationalize this focus via the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Women and minorities’ odds of advancement decrease, relative to white men, at higher levels of power.

In the most direct test of this hypothesis to date, Baxter and Wright (2000) use a six-level index of workplace power to examine cross-national

differences in gender inequalities and find no evidence in the United States that women’s likelihood of advancement, relative to men, declines at successively higher levels of power (see also Yamagata et al. 1997). Their small sample sizes, however, prevent the authors from showing increasing inequality for racial minorities at higher levels of power, particularly women of color. On this subject, studies by Cotter et al. (2001) and Morgan (1998) are instructive, albeit indirect. Both studies use longitudinal data to examine wage inequality in individual careers but they reach different conclusions about the presence of increasing racial and gender disadvantage, relative to white men, at later stages. For example, Cotter et al.’s analysis of data from the Panel Survey of Income Dynamics reveals increasing wage inequality for white and black women, relative to white men, but not for black men. From this evidence, the authors conclude that increasing inequality in wages in individual careers is more reflective of gender than racial stratification. Morgan (1998), by contrast, uses a single-cohort longitudinal design with data from the Survey of Natural and Social Scientists and Engineers and a multi-cohort, cross-sectional design with data from the 1992 Survey of Women and Men Engineers. From these analyses, Morgan concludes that increased pay gaps among men and women at later career stages are more reflective of cohort-replacement dynamics—that is, past inequalities working themselves through the system—than increasing gender inequality among men and women as they progress in their careers.¹

¹ For criticism of Morgan’s analysis and conclusions, see Alessio and Andrzejewski (2000), with reply by Morgan (2000).

Table 1. Inequality among Men at Higher Levels of Workplace Power

Power Level	Men in Power Level			Odds of Advancement to Next Level of Power		
	White (n)	Black (n)	% Black	White	Black	White-Black Ratio
Lack of Support for Increasing Inequality						
Manager	10	2	17	—	—	—
Supervisor	20	8	29	.50	.25	2:1
Worker	30	30	50	.67	.27	2.5:1
Support for Increasing Inequality						
Manager	20	2	9	—	—	—
Supervisor	20	8	29	1.00	.25	4:1
Worker	30	30	50	.67	.27	2.5:1

Note: Data adapted from Baxter and Wright 2000.

Together, these two studies provide key insights into race, gender, and employment inequalities in the United States, but they also leave us unclear about what to expect in analyses of workplace power. Some of this uncertainty stems from their mixed results, and some of it stems from the fact that they analyze wages, not workplace power. The last point is important because racial and gender differences in workplace power are an important source of wage inequality (Halaby 1979; Kluegel 1979; Robinson and Kelley 1979; Smith 1997). Thus, to clarify this issue, it is important not only to examine these differences in workplace power directly, relative to white men, but also to examine the mechanisms of allocation commonly presumed responsible for these differences at higher levels of legitimate authority.

MECHANISMS OF ALLOCATION. Observers commonly point to three broad mechanisms responsible for increasing ascriptive inequalities at higher levels of workplace power. One mechanism is direct discrimination, which can take two distinct forms: “taste discrimination” in the form of old-fashioned racism and sexism based on out-group prejudice and antipathy; and “statistical discrimination” in which employers use race and sex as proxies for assessing potential productivity in candidates when they lack other information about the candidates. For example, if women generally are less likely to put work demands above family demands, then employers might use this easy-to-observe trait (sex) to screen and evaluate managerial candidates in favor of men, regardless of the (unobserved) work commitment of individual male and female candidates under review. Researchers typically identify these forms of discrimination using a residual (or “net gap”) strategy in which disadvantage, relative to (white) men, is evaluated after statistically controlling for job-relevant factors, such as education, experience, and employment context (e.g., Wright, Baxter, and Birkelund 1995). If relative disadvantage for the minority and/or female group in question increases with movement up the power hierarchy, increasing disadvantage is presumed to exist and to be the result of direct discrimination, although the precise form (“taste” or “statistical”) is difficult to differentiate.

Another broad mechanism presumed to generate increasing inequalities in workplace power involves a more indirect process, namely the exclusion of women and minorities, relative to white men, from networks that regulate access to information, opportunities, and resources needed to advance in the workplace. Research on this subject generally shows that work-related networks help workers gain skills, acquire legitimacy, and climb promotional ladders (Bridges and Villemez 1986; Campbell and Rosenfeld 1985; Podolny and Baron 1997) and that these resources are important because most employees’ job training and career development come from informal instruction rather than continuing education and explicit on-the-job training (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics 1996).

Additionally, recent research by McGuire (2002) indicates that exclusion of women and minorities can occur *within* job-related networks, as well as outside such networks. In her study of over a thousand financial-services employees, McGuire found that even when black and white women held jobs in which they had personal ties to the same types of higher-level employees as white men, they received significantly less work-related help from these ties than similarly situated white men. McGuire concludes that this discrepancy arises because network members are less likely to invest in women than (white) men as a result of cultural beliefs that rank women below men. The implication is that workers, not just employers, use race and gender to rank network members, and this ranking influences the type and amount of assistance available to members of different groups. Although McGuire focused primarily on network assistance within organizations, such assistance can also be useful in gaining positions of power across organizations, by providing informal training and contacts necessary to open doors to other employers. On the basis of this rich body of research, we advance the following general hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Women and minorities’ odds of network assistance decrease, relative to white men, at higher levels of power.

A corollary to this hypothesis is that women and minorities often rely more on education and experience, relative to white men, to “break into” higher levels of power, often having to

“out-credential” white-male counterparts to compensate for their relative lack of network assistance. Researchers sometimes characterize these distinct modes of advancement as “sponsored” and “contest” mobility regimes, respectively—the first pertaining to network utilization among white men, the second to skills-based competition among women and minorities (e.g., Mueller, Parcel, and Tanaka 1989). While the “contest” regime might seem fair in its emphasis on objective, skills-based traits, it can lead to relative disadvantage for women and minorities for a couple reasons.

First, given practical limits to educational attainment and experience, it becomes increasingly difficult to “out-credential” other workers with movement up workplace power hierarchies, leaving network assistance still a key factor in determining who will advance and who will not. Second, as women and minorities move up organizational chains of command, their out-group, or “other,” status often becomes more evident, leaving them more susceptible to informal processes of exclusion and assessment as symbols of an “other” category rather than as individuals. We examine this corollary set of assumptions via the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Women and minorities’ reliance on education and experience intensifies, relative to white men, at higher levels of power.

Support for this hypothesis would mean that regression coefficients for education and experience in equations predicting workplace power would be statistically significant and increasingly large for women and minorities, relative to white men, with upward movement in workplace power.

A third mechanism presumed to generate increasing inequality in workplace power is ascriptive dissimilarity with superiors who oversee higher positions of power. In perhaps the best known discussion of these dynamics, Kanter (1977) contends that with movement up organizational hierarchies, power positions become characterized by increasing uncertainty, interdependence, and necessity for rapid, accurate communication about murky matters, such as relations between organizational means and ends and criteria for performance evaluation. These job characteristics, in turn, place a premium on discretion and trust among workers

selected to advance up the power hierarchy. One way that higher-level managers try to maximize these traits and impose greater predictability on an otherwise uncertain environment is to maintain relative social homogeneity among individuals they select to fill positions of organizational power beneath them. The underlying idea is that communication, discretion, and trust are facilitated by social similarity. Higher-level managers prefer this type of relationship over the strain of dealing with people who are different when higher degrees of legitimate authority are at stake.²

Kanter refers to this process generally as “homosocial reproduction” because it tends to reproduce the social characteristics of organizational power structures over successive generations of workers—an idea that traces back to Wilbert Moore’s concept of “bureaucratic kinship systems” (Moore 1962). Because white men have historically held the reins of power in U.S. workplaces, they benefit most from these universal tendencies for in-group favoritism as they move up organizational hierarchies, creating increasing inequality for out-group members. We examine this mechanism of allocation via the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: White men’s odds of having self-similar superiors increase, relative to women and minorities, at higher levels of power.

This hypothesis assumes that in most organizational contexts, homosocial reproduction operates in a vertical fashion, with superiors selecting individuals like themselves to fill power positions *below* them rather than in a horizontal fashion, with superiors selecting individuals like themselves to fill power positions *alongside* them. To illustrate, consider a simple

² This argument is consistent with recent research in “organizational demography” and “new economic sociology” that claims the following: (1) people tend to make sense of their social worlds by categorizing others into in-groups and out-groups; and (2) this normal information processing occurs largely outside conscious control, biasing treatment of others because of race, gender, and other discernible traits of group membership (see Pfeffer 1983; Reskin 2002). See Tsui and O’Reilly (1989) for specifics on importance of ascriptive similarity for performance evaluation in superior-subordinate dyads.

three-level firm in which managers are As, supervisors are Bs, and workers are Cs. Hypothesis 4 implies the following conditions: (1) As will tend to fill openings for B with individuals like themselves; (2) likewise, Bs will tend to fill openings for C with individuals like themselves; (3) the first tendency will be greater than the second tendency because more power is at stake; and (4) this process benefits white men more than other groups because white men are the group best positioned to benefit from in-group favoritism at higher levels of power.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS. Our hypotheses reflect common assumptions about increasing ascriptive inequality at higher levels of workplace power and the mechanisms that produce it. However, these assumptions remain open to several criticisms. First, thus far empirical support for the idea that white men uniquely benefit from network assistance comes from indirect assessments (e.g., Mueller, Parcel, and Tanaka 1989; Wilson 1997). These assessments typically use regression analysis to show that job-relevant factors, such as education and experience, are more predictive of authority attainment by women and minorities than by white men, leaving the latter with greater unexplained variance. Researchers then interpret this greater unexplained variance for white men as evidence of the relative importance of unobserved mechanisms, including network assistance, for white men's power attainment. This interpretation is a logical but assailable inference in the absence of direct measurement of network assistance.

Second, researchers commonly assume that white men exert control over most, if not all, positions of workplace power, particularly those with greater legitimate authority. While this assumption might be true in relative terms, white men's control over U.S. workplaces is not absolute. Third and relatedly, researchers have never demonstrated empirically tendencies toward homosocial reproduction across groups and organizational contexts. Thus it remains uncertain if the process Kanter describes is universal, or if white men are more likely to engage in this homosocial reproduction than women and minorities. Both points are important politically, as well as sociologically, because they speak to how women and minorities behave when they rise to positions of power, and whether, once in these positions, their behavior

is likely to open doors to minority and women's power attainment in the future.

Together these additional considerations raise the possibility that *how* members of different race and gender groups advance up workplace power hierarchies depends not just on their own race and gender, but also on the race and gender of those overseeing the power positions in question—ascriptive similarity with superiors might not be an additive factor but one that conditions how other factors operate. This possibility suggests that a key difference between white men and other groups is that white men, by virtue of being dominant, nearly always rise to power under “similar others,” whereas women and minorities generally take two tracks: they advance under white men, or they advance under similar others. Which track women and minorities take, in turn, might influence which factor (network assistance or human capital) is likely to be most important for advancement. Extrapolating from white men's experiences under similar others, we might reasonably expect network assistance to be more important for advancement among women and minorities who work under ascriptively similar superiors than those who work under ascriptively dissimilar (e.g., white-male) superiors; whereas, the opposite would be true of education and experience—it would be less important for advancement under ascriptively similar superiors than under ascriptively dissimilar superiors. Additional consideration of these potential conditional effects of relative superior ascription motivates our final hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: Women and minorities under self-similar superiors rely more on network assistance and less on human capital to attain higher positions of power than women and minorities under self-dissimilar superiors.

DATA

Data for our study come from the Multi-City Survey of Urban Inequality (MCSUI), which is a multistage, stratified, area-probability sample of white and minority respondents in Atlanta, Boston, and Los Angeles conducted during 1992–1994, a time of local and national economic expansion. The survey was administered through face-to-face interviews that lasted

approximately two hours. Race and ethnicity of respondents and interviewers were matched to minimize well-known race-of-interviewer effects (see Johnson, Oliver, and Bobo 1994).³

For our purposes, the advantages of the MCSUI are fourfold. First, its multiethnic sample allows us to examine Latino men and women in addition to whites and blacks—this is a novelty in quantitative research on workplace power in the United States.⁴ Second, the MCSUI provides data on multiple, successive levels of workplace power and on the race and sex of immediate superiors, in addition to data about human capital and employment context. This information allows us to test for evidence of increasing inequality at higher levels of power (see Table 1) and the extent to which this evidence might differ according to the relative and absolute characteristics of superiors involved. Third, the MCSUI provides data about how workers acquired their jobs (e.g., through formal searches or with network assistance), which allows us to test assumptions about the importance of such assistance for advancement directly. Finally, the MCSUI draws from a diverse set of metro economies, which, while perhaps not representative of the U.S. labor force as a whole, collectively draws from a wide range of labor market processes and contexts that can influence the distribution of workplace power.

While these features make the MCSUI the best large-scale dataset available for the kind of analyses we wish to conduct, it is not without weaknesses. First, our indicator of workplace power is basic; we measure broad differences

among workers, supervisors, and managers. While these differences are important, they do not allow us to identify individuals' detailed positions on the corporate ladder, as prior research on gender inequality has sought to do (e.g., Baxter and Wright 2000). Second, information on network assistance is self-reported and may reflect group differences in the likelihood of such reporting, in addition to differences in actual networking effectiveness. Finally, there is no way to determine entirely whether evidence of homosocial reproduction is a product of in-group preference or the result of sex and race segregation that effectively limits candidates to in-group members only.

With these limitations in mind, we select only civilian labor force participants between the ages of 21 and 64 who are not self-employed. We focus on non-self-employed workers because we are interested in power distribution among paid employees, not among individuals who made a qualitative shift from employee to employer. Second, in tests of "homosocial reproduction" and other allocation processes specified in Hypotheses 2–5, we restrict our sample to workers who report having immediate supervisors, which means that our results cannot be generalized to the very tops of organizational hierarchies where power holders have no superiors. We believe that this focus is justified by the fact that such mid-level positions comprise the overwhelming majority of workplace power positions in the United States and represent strata where competition for legitimate authority among individuals of different races, ethnicities, and genders is likely to be most common.⁵

VARIABLES

In this section we discuss our operational definitions for key variables, starting with the dependent variable: legitimate authority (i.e., workplace power). All variables are listed in Table 2 with subsample means and standard deviations.

³ The MCSUI also includes data from Detroit, which we omit because of a lack of information on key labor market variables (e.g., level of workplace power). For limitations of using cross-sectional data to study increasing inequality in workplace power attainment, see Baxter and Wright (2000).

⁴ We refer to men of Hispanic descent as "Latino" and women of Hispanic descent as "Latina." The vast majority of these groups in our sample comes from Central America and the Caribbean. Within these subsamples, Mexicans comprise the largest group (39 percent), with most residing in Los Angeles. Puerto Ricans and Dominicans comprise the next largest groups (20 percent and 13 percent respectively), with most residing in Boston. Sample limitations preclude us from analyzing these specific groups directly.

⁵ Exclusion of respondents with no immediate superior reduced our sample by 9.3 percent. Further investigation indicates that excluded respondents tended, on average, to exhibit the same odds of power attainment as respondents in our sample.

Table 2. Variables Used in Analysis

	Men			Women		
	White (N = 513)	Black (N = 454)	Latino ^a (N = 527)	White (N = 566)	Black (N = 885)	Latina ^a (N = 535)
Managerial status (0:1)	.203 (.403)	.101 (.302)	.102 (.304)	.120 (.325)	.053 (.224)	.037 (.190)
Supervisory status (0:1)	.163 (.370)	.181 (.385)	.142 (.350)	.147 (.354)	.154 (.361)	.095 (.294)
Ascriptively similar superior (0:1)	.712 (.454)	.258 (.438)	.338 (.473)	.443 (.497)	.262 (.440)	.142 (.349)
Network assistance (0:1)	.596 (.491)	.646 (.479)	.726 (.426)	.574 (.495)	.601 (.490)	.715 (.452)
Education, years of	14.3 (2.44)	13.2 (2.18)	10.2 (3.74)	13.9 (2.23)	13.2 (1.98)	10.5 (3.70)
Work experience, total years	17.0 (11.0)	17.1 (10.4)	15.6 (10.8)	15.3 (10.1)	15.5 (10.8)	13.0 (10.6)
Prior job-specific experience (0:1)	.589 (.493)	.529 (.499)	.421 (.494)	.581 (.494)	.421 (.494)	.394 (.489)
Years with employer	6.86 (8.17)	6.03 (6.99)	4.22 (4.45)	5.71 (6.30)	6.28 (7.37)	3.82 (4.71)
Log _n (number of workers in establishment)	4.29 (1.97)	4.45 (2.00)	3.71 (1.66)	4.35 (1.88)	4.61 (2.00)	3.94 (1.69)
Public sector (0:1)	.166 (.372)	.240 (.428)	.076 (.265)	.184 (.387)	.266 (.442)	.136 (.344)
Log _n (work hours/week)	3.72 (.332)	3.66 (.306)	3.67 (.263)	3.54 (.409)	3.59 (.310)	3.58 (.340)
Professional/technical occupation (0:1)	.489 (.500)	.222 (.416)	.102 (.303)	.431 (.495)	.270 (.442)	.127 (.333)
Craft/repair occupation (0:1)	.261 (.439)	.366 (.482)	.582 (.493)	.075 (.265)	.097 (.296)	.370 (.483)
Service occupation (0:1)	.099 (.300)	.268 (.433)	.211 (.408)	.133 (.339)	.238 (.426)	.254 (.435)
Sales and clerical occupation (0:1)	.144 (.351)	.138 (.346)	.104 (.306)	.355 (.478)	.388 (.488)	.248 (.432)
Married (0:1)	.455 (.498)	.329 (.471)	.533 (.499)	.476 (.500)	.212 (.409)	.344 (.475)
Children in household (0:1)	.255 (.436)	.273 (.446)	.463 (.499)	.410 (.492)	.490 (.500)	.703 (.476)

Note: Data shown as mean with standard deviation in parentheses.

^a “Latino” and “Latina” refer to men and women of Hispanic descent, respectively.

WORKPLACE POWER

Employed respondents in the MCSUI were asked three closed-ended questions commonly used in survey research on workplace power: (a) Do you supervise another employee who is directly responsible to you? (b) Do you influence or set the rate of pay received by others? (c) Do you have the authority to hire or fire others? We use responses to these questions to classify employees into one of three hierarchical levels:

- 0 = worker (“no” to a, b, and c); (1)
- 1 = supervisor (“yes” only to a); (2)
- 2 = manager (“yes” to a, and “yes” to b or c). (3)

We combine questions b and c to help construct a single indicator of managerial status for several reasons: first, all respondents who answered “yes” to b or c also answered “yes” to a; second, the correlation between b and c in our pooled sample is quite high ($r = .543; p < .0001$), with 70 percent of respondents answering “yes” to b also answering “yes” to c; and third, b and c are conceptually similar in that they denote control over the distribution of organizational

resources, as well as people. To test for increasing inequality, we use multinomial regression analysis to compare odds of being a supervisor versus being a worker (1 versus 0) with odds of being a manager versus being a supervisor (2 versus 1). If the second set of odds is statistically significant and larger than the first set of odds, we conclude the existence of increasing inequality for the group in question.

This operationalization of workplace power is preferable to an occupationally based measure because legitimate authority extends well beyond the boundaries of officially recognized managerial occupations. In the MCSUI, for example, only five percent of employees with supervisory or managerial status work in a managerial occupation (Census Occupation Codes 23–42). Moreover, supervisory status is associated with 193 distinct 3-digit Census Occupation Codes, and managerial status is associated with 133 such codes. To assess the validity of our three-level dependent variable, we computed means and *t*-tests for factors commonly associated with movement up the power hierarchy. Results indicate monotonic and statistically significant differences from one level to the next along multiple dimensions of

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socioeconomic status, compensation, job complexity, education, experience, and ascriptive job context (see Table A1 on the *ASR* Web site supplement, <http://www.asanet.org/journals/asr/2004/toc039.html>). These differences combine with prior research using similar questions to support the empirical validity of our parsimonious measure of workplace power.

KEY FACTORS IN ALLOCATION OF WORKPLACE POWER

For Hypotheses 2 and 5, we operationalize *network assistance* as a dummy variable based on the following question: “Did you find your job through friends or relatives, other people, newspaper ads, or some other way?” If the respondent reported using a personal contact, the interviewer collected information about the mode of assistance. Using this information, we define network assistance conservatively as cases in which a job contact talked to the employer on the respondent’s behalf, provided a reference, or hired the respondent. We exclude contacts who merely passed along information about the job because this mode of network assistance is considered secondary to workplace power distribution, which emphasizes processes of sponsorship over mere information flow. Because the MCSUI asked about the use of job contacts only among respondents who reported actively searching for jobs, we also define workers who entered new jobs without an active search as receiving network assistance. The logic here is that, in these cases, job networks brought the employer to the respondent, rather than vice versa, and that both scenarios constitute a “strong” form of network assistance (see Granovetter 1995).

For Hypotheses 1, 3, and 5 we operationalize four indicators of human capital. We measure *education* as the total number of years of formal schooling. We also include three indicators of labor force experience. We measure *total work experience* as the number of years that a respondent was employed formally since first leaving full-time school. We measure *prior job-specific experience* as a simple dummy indicator (0 = no; 1 = yes) based on the question, “Did you have any previous experience in this type of job, excluding schooling, before you were hired?” Finally, we measure

organizational tenure as the number of years that the respondent reports being employed with his or her respective employer.

For Hypotheses 4 and 5 we operationalize a dummy indicator that is set to 1 if the respondent works under an *ascriptively similar superior*—that is someone of the same race/ethnicity and sex—and 0 if the respondent works under an ascriptively dissimilar superior. This indicator is based on three nested questions. “Do you have an immediate supervisor on your job to whom you are directly responsible?” “What is your immediate supervisor’s race or ethnic origin?” “Is your immediate supervisor a man or a woman?” We interpret a value of 1 for this variable as indicating a pattern consistent with homosocial reproduction. Our reasoning is that even if a respondent’s immediate superior did not have sole responsibility for filling the respondent’s current position, he or she almost certainly provided meaningful input. In supplemental analyses, we also use information on the race and ethnicity of coworkers, which we discuss later in this article.

CONTROL VARIABLES

To isolate hypothesized relationships, we include several job-relevant factors identified in prior research as being important covariates of workplace power. One such factor is *establishment size*, which reflects the vertical and horizontal complexity of the organization in question and the number of power positions likely to be available to respective employees. We operationalize this factor as the natural log of the number of employees that the respondent reports working at his or her establishment. We also include a dummy indicator for *public sector* (0 = private sector; 1 = public sector) because prior research indicates that the relative disadvantage that women and minorities face in advancing up workplace power hierarchies tends to be lower in public than private settings, owing to more egalitarian hiring practices and bureaucratic protocols for advancement in the former (Fernandez 1975; Wilson 1997).

Another factor related to workplace power is time spent at work. We operationalize this variable as the natural log of the average number of *hours worked per week*. We log this

variable to compress higher values because work hours that extend beyond normal full-time status are more likely to be the result of being a manager than a determinant of becoming a manager. We also include a four-category indicator of *occupational location*. This indicator is based on 1990 Census Occupation Codes and includes the following categories: (1) professional and technical occupations, which include officially titled managers and supervisors; (2) craft and repair occupations; (3) service occupations; and (4) clerical and sales occupations (reference category).⁶ Consistent with prior research on power attainment (Baxter and Wright 2000; Rosenfeld, van Buren, and Kalleberg 1998; Wright, Baxter, and Birkelund 1995), we use this crude indicator of occupational location to minimize problems of circularity that would result if we used more refined categories or a single, continuous measure of occupational status, such as the socioeconomic index. The problem with these more refined measures of occupational location is that they would be too closely tied conceptually and empirically to our dependent variable of workplace power to be included as compositional controls.

In supplemental analyses, we also include two indicators of family status: *currently married* (0 = no; 1 = yes) and *children in the household* (0 = no; 1 = yes). Researchers often assume that marriage and parenthood correlate negatively with power attainment among women, who have historically been more likely than men to sacrifice employment mobility for domestic responsibilities.

⁶ Concern that occupational location is an endogenous variable is minimal here because we use broad categories and because most workplace power is achieved outside officially recognized "manager" and "supervisor" occupations. Still, we reestimated all our models using a 10-category industrial typology in place of our occupation controls. Results were nearly identical in both cases, except estimates of the effects of educational attainment are slightly lower in models with occupation rather than industry controls. Thus, our estimates of educational attainment with occupation controls provide a comparatively conservative estimate of this variable's effect on authority attainment.

RESULTS

TESTING FOR INCREASING DISADVANTAGE AND DIRECT DISCRIMINATION: A "NET GAP" APPROACH

Hypothesis 1 states that women and minorities find it increasingly difficult to advance, relative to white men, at higher levels of workplace power. To test this hypothesis we estimate several, nested multinomial regression equations that predict employment at successive levels of workplace power, focusing specifically on changes between worker-versus-supervisor and supervisor-versus-manager comparisons. We interpret increasing inequality, or disadvantage, specified by Hypothesis 1 as one in which a group's manager-versus-supervisor coefficient is negative, statistically significant, and larger in magnitude than its supervisor-versus-worker coefficient. This pattern would imply that the group in question finds it more difficult, relative to white men, to advance from supervisor to manager than from worker to supervisor. Results from these analyses appear in Table 3.

Model 1 estimates the "gross gap" in authority for each group, with no statistical controls. Comparisons of coefficients in rows 1a and 1b offer initial support for the increasing-inequality hypothesis for every group except white women at the .05-level (two-tailed test); a one-tailed test, however, would include white women. As an interpretative example, consider black men. Results from Model 1 indicate no statistical difference between black men and white men with respect to being a supervisor versus a worker ($\exp[-0.027] = 0.97$). However, the anti-log of -0.792 indicates that black men are only 0.45 times, or about half, as likely as white men to be managers as supervisors. Thus, without statistical controls, we conclude that a pattern of increasing inequality exists for black men, relative to white men, based on the judgment that 0.45 differs significantly from 0.97.

A more rigorous test for the presence of increasing inequality includes statistical controls for nondiscriminatory factors associated with workplace power. For this test we fit two additional models. In Model 2, we add human-capital factors (years of education, total work experience, prior job-specific experience, and employer tenure). Comparing results across Models 1 and 2 indicates that these factors explain most of the increasing-inequality effect

Table 3. Multinomial Regression Coefficients for Gross and Net Gaps in Power Attainment

	Men			Women		
	Black, B1	Latino, B2	White, B3	Black, B4	Latina, B5	
Model 1. Gross Gap ^a						
a. Supervisor versus worker	-.027 (.174)	-.316 (.176)	-.256 (.172)	-.288 (.154)	-.855*** (.192)	
b. Manager versus supervisor	-.792** (.235)	-.542* (.231)	-.413 (.220)	-1.276*** (.223)	-1.150*** (.302)	
Model $\chi^2 = 132.4$ (10df)						
Model 2. Net Gap with Controls for Human Capital ^b						
a. Supervisor versus worker	.078 (.177)	.081 (.193)	-.198 (.173)	-.174 (.157)	-.472* (.205)	
b. Manager versus supervisor	-.649** (.238)	.080 (.254)	-.345 (.221)	-1.166*** (.227)	-.744* (.316)	
Model $\chi^2 = 278.6$ (18df)						
χ^2 test of model 2 versus model 1 = 146.2 (8df)***						
Model 3. Net Gap with Controls for Human Capital and Employment Context ^c						
a. Supervisor versus worker	.119 (.181)	.121 (.195)	-.026 (.180)	-.042 (.164)	-.371 (.208)	
b. Manager versus supervisor	-.311 (.262)	.145 (.262)	-.178 (.231)	-.843*** (.238)	-.436 (.324)	
Model $\chi^2 = 448.3$ (30 df)						
χ^2 test of model 3 versus model 2 = 169.7 (12df)***						

Note: Data shown for specific group versus white men. Standard errors appear in parentheses. N = 3,480.

^a $\log[\Pr(\text{Level}_n)/\Pr(\text{Level}_{n-1})] = a + b_i[\text{race-sex}_i]$; b_i reported (white men as reference group).

^b $\log[\Pr(\text{Level}_n)/\Pr(\text{Level}_{n-1})] = a + b_1[\text{race-sex}_1] + b_2[\text{years of education}] + b_3[\text{total work experience}] + b_4[\text{prior job-specific experience}] + b_5[\text{years with employer}]$; b_i reported (white men as reference group).

^c $\log[\Pr(\text{Level}_n)/\Pr(\text{Level}_{n-1})] = a + b_1[\text{race-sex}_1] + b_2[\text{years of education}] + b_3[\text{total work experience}] + b_4[\text{prior job-specific experience}] + b_5[\text{years with employer}] + \Sigma b_j[\text{employment context}_j]$; indicators of employment context include number of workers in establishment (logged), public sector (0:1), hours worked per week (logged), and occupational location (professional/technical, craft/repair, service, clerical/sales [ref.]); b_i reported (white men as reference group).

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed test)

among Latinos and white women, but not among black men, black women, and Latinas (i.e., coefficients for these groups in Row 2b are still negative, statistically significant, and larger than coefficients in Row 2a). Next, in addition to these human-capital factors, we add controls for employment context in Model 3 (establishment size, public/private sector, occupational location, and hours worked per week). Comparing results across Models 2 and 3 indicates that these factors explain most of the increasing-inequality effect among black men and Latinas, but not among black women.

These findings indicate that although each major race-sex group exhibits a pattern of increasing inequality, relative to white men, only black women exhibit this pattern after controlling for variation in human capital and employment context, suggesting that they suffer more than other groups from direct discrimination. Specific calculations from Model 3 indicate that, net of the full set of controls, black women are just as likely as white men to be supervisors as workers ($\exp[-0.042] = 0.96$), but they are only 0.43 times as likely as white men to be managers as supervisors ($\exp[-0.843]$). The implication for the remaining groups (black men, Latinos, white women, and Latinas) is not that they are free from increasing inequality (relative to white men). Instead, the implication is that this inequality is more attributable to indirect processes affecting human capital attainment and assignment to different employment contexts than it is to direct discrimination. It is worth noting, however, that in Model 3, coefficients for all groups (except Latinos) are in the hypothesized direction.

A potential criticism of these results is that women voluntarily make themselves less available for promotion to save time and energy for fulfilling traditional wife and motherhood roles at home (i.e., increasing inequality for women is attributable to self-removal from higher levels of power, not discrimination). To explore this self-removal issue, we estimated a fourth multinomial regression equation that included the full set of controls present in Model 3 plus main-effect and group-specific interaction terms for marriage (yes/no) and presence of children in the household (yes/no). If self-removal is operating, we would expect women's relative gap in power attainment to be larger in comparisons among married parents than in com-

parisons among single nonparents. Results of our supplemental analysis lend little support to this expectation (see Table A2 on the ASR Web site supplement, <http://www.asanet.org/journals/asr/2004/toc039.html>); a chi-squared test indicates no significant improvement in model fit over Model 3; none of the respective family-status interaction terms are statistically significant at the .05-level; and, appropriate calculations reveal that the strongest evidence of increasing inequality among black women, relative to white men, occurs in comparisons among single nonparents (the family status with the least traditional self-removal pressures), not nonmarried parents (the family status with the most traditional self-removal pressures).

These findings affirm support for our conclusions regarding black women from Table 2. Moreover, they are consistent with the conclusion by Wright et al. (1995) that family status accounts for little of the observed gender gaps in workplace power in the United States. These findings are also consistent with those of Cassirer and Reskin (2000), who found that, net of job-relevant factors, men and women have equal aspirations of promotion, regardless of family status.

TESTING DIFFERENCES IN ALLOCATION PROCESSES: AN "INTERACTION" APPROACH

To test Hypotheses 2–4 we take an "interaction approach." The logic behind this approach runs as follows: To test if specific factors operate differently for white men than other groups, we first establish how these factors operate for white men by estimating a "main effects" model separately for them. Next, to test the extent to which specific factors vary in their effects between white men and each of the "other" groups, we pool each separate "other" group with white men and estimate a model with appropriate interaction terms. When a coefficient for an interaction term is determined to be statistically significant at the .05 level, we conclude that the interaction effect under review is statistically different from zero; otherwise, we conclude that the interaction effect occurred by chance. In these analyses, *negative* and statistically significant coefficients at higher levels of workplace power for indicators of network assistance and self-similar superiors would affirm Hypotheses 2 and 4, respectively. By

contrast, *positive* and statistically significant coefficients for human-capital factors at higher levels of power would affirm Hypothesis 3.

For these and remaining regression analyses, we restrict our sample to respondents who changed jobs within five years of the survey, either within the same organization or through a change in employer. We impose this restriction because the MCSUI collected data about network assistance only from recent job changers in order to maximize measurement reliability—a common practice in studies of job networking (see Granovetter 1995). As a result of this restriction, we minimize differences in power attainment that linger from past personnel practices and maximize differences resulting from contemporary practices, that is, behavior most likely to be still in operation today.

Results of these regression analyses appear in Table 4. As a point of comparison, we start with the baseline equation for white men. Here results indicate that, net of background factors, the chief variable distinguishing supervisors from workers is employer tenure. Specifically, results imply that for every additional year with an employer, a white man's odds of moving from worker to supervisor increase an average of 5 percent ($\exp[0.054]$). This factor, however, exerts little additional effect on moving from supervisor to manager. Instead the key factor here appears to involve ascriptive similarity with higher-level superiors. Specifically, results indicate that white men are twice as likely to advance from supervisors to managers when these managerial positions are overseen by white men than when they are overseen by ascriptively *dissimilar* superiors ($\exp[0.706] = 2.03$). This finding suggests that, as white men move up workplace power hierarchies, they benefit increasingly from practices of homosocial reproduction. By contrast, the nonsignificant coefficients for network assistance do not imply that such assistance is unimportant, but rather that it is equally common among white men at all levels of the power hierarchy—a constant cannot explain a variable outcome such as workplace power. Similar nonsignificant findings result for education and experience.

The remaining results in Table 4 test whether these processes of advancement identified for white men differ significantly from those experienced by the other groups in our study. For

these tests, we report coefficients for interaction terms from the respective pooled-equations estimated with white men. For example, in the pooled equation for black men, the coefficient 0.001 ($p > .05$) for “years with employer” refers to the interaction term “years with employer \times black man” (with white men as the comparison group). The fact that this coefficient is statistically nonsignificant at the 0.05 level, net of other factors, implies that there is no statistical difference between black men and white men along this dimension of authority attainment: net of other factors, both groups rely approximately equally on organizational tenure to advance from worker to supervisor. Similar conclusions obtain for all other measures in the model. Notably, the statistically nonsignificant coefficients for self-similar superiors suggest that black men and white men rely approximately equally on processes of in-group favoritism to advance from supervisor to manager status (-0.769 ; $p = .22$).⁷ In general, results for black men in Table 4 imply that they move up workplace power hierarchies much the same way that white men do: using organizational tenure to advance from worker to supervisor, and using in-group favoritism to advance from supervisor to manager. These findings offer no support for Hypotheses 2–4 and, instead, imply a set of “separate but parallel” processes of authority attainment for black men, relative to white men.

Results for Latinos reveal much the same pattern, with one exception. Organizational tenure plays an even stronger role among Latinos in advancing from worker to supervisor than it does among white men. Appropriate calculations from the full set of coefficients (not shown) indicate that, whereas white men receive a 5-percent bonus for each additional year of organizational tenure, Latinos receive an 18-percent bonus. No other factors differ sig-

⁷ For example, to estimate the effect of having a self-similar superior among black men, we would sum the coefficient for having a self-similar superior with the coefficient for being a black man (as opposed to a white man) with the coefficient for the interaction of these two factors. This calculation yields a value of $-.465$ ($.757 + -.457 + -.765$). This value compares to a value of $.757$ for white men. The interaction coefficient of $-.765$ (SE of $.623$) indicates that this difference is statistically insignificant at the $.05$ level.

nificantly from white men, including reliance on ascriptively similar superiors to advance from supervisor to manager status. Thus, as with black men, we find little support for Hypotheses 2–4 among Latinos.

Results for women depict different scenarios. For white women, findings indicate that advancement from worker to supervisor occurs much the same way as it does for white men. However, advancement from supervisor to manager occurs much *less* often under ascriptively similar superiors. Calculations from the full set of coefficients (not shown) indicate that white women are three times more likely than white men to break into managerial positions under ascriptively *dissimilar* superiors, 86 percent of whom, in our sample, are white men. This high prevalence of out-group status, relative to (mostly white-male) superiors, may help to explain why, in the face of the weakest statistical evidence for increasing inequality of any group in our study, many observers still insist that such inequality exists for white women: if white women are increasingly likely to work under white men as they advance up workplace power hierarchies, there may be both real and perceived obstacles to further advancement to unsupervised, top-level positions. These results affirm Hypothesis 4 for white women but not Hypotheses 2 and 3.

Results for Latinas are similar to those for white women, except ascriptive similarity with superiors appears even *less* effective, relative to white men, for assuming higher positions of power. In fact, the likelihood of Latina supervisors and managers having ascriptively similar superiors is so low that the effects of this variable on power attainment cannot be reliably calculated. (In our sample, 0 of the 20 Latinas with manager status report an ascriptively similar superior, and only 7 of the 51 Latinas with supervisory status report an ascriptively similar superior.) The implication is that Latinas almost always break into power positions under dissimilar superiors, which likely limits their odds of further advancement, if practices of homosocial reproduction are operating. As with white women, these results affirm Hypothesis 4 but not Hypotheses 2 and 3.

The final and perhaps most surprising set of results occur among black women. Contrary to Hypothesis 2, results indicate that network assistance is *increasingly* effective among black

women, relative to white men, for moving into higher positions of power. Appropriate calculations from the full set of coefficients (not shown) indicate that, whereas white men rely on network assistance almost equally at all levels of workplace power, the odds of black women advancing from workers to supervisors increase 39 percent when they receive network assistance, and the odds of black women advancing from supervisors to managers increase 500 percent when they receive network assistance. These findings suggest that instrumental network assistance can be an important *response* to discrimination, rather than simply an indirect cause. Further investigation of the data reveal that black women most often rely on black *men* to assist them in attaining managerial positions. Three-quarters of the time these men are friends or relatives and nearly two-thirds of the time they also work for the employer in question. In our sample, such assistance occurs most commonly among registered nurses, sales representatives, and secretaries in predominantly black work settings.

Overall, then, results in Table 4 offer no support for Hypotheses 2 and 3 and occasional support for Hypothesis 4, regarding patterns of homosocial reproduction. Notably, this support for Hypothesis 4 is countered by the finding that, net of other factors, black men, Latinos, and black women receive roughly the same relative benefit from homosocial reproduction in advancing up the workplace power hierarchy as white men.

A CLOSER LOOK AT HOMOSOCIAL REPRODUCTION

A potential criticism of our test of homosocial reproduction (Hypothesis 4) in Table 4 is that it relies on a measure of ascriptive similarity with *superiors* rather than a measure of ascriptive similarity with *coworkers*.⁸ This criticism builds on an alternative interpretation of homosocial reproduction that understands power holders as reserving power positions *alongside*, rather than under, themselves for in-group members. To test this alternative interpretation, we constructed a dummy indicator for

⁸ We thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.

working with, rather than under, ascriptively similar coworkers. We constructed this indicator from two sources of information. First, we identified the racial majority, if one existed, of coworkers from the MCSUI question, "What is the race and ethnicity of most of the employees doing the kind of work you do at the place where you work?" Next, lacking similar information about the gender of coworkers, we used metropolitan-level data from the 1990 5% Public Use Micro Samples (PUMS) to identify the locally dominant sex for each of the roughly 500 detailed Census Occupation Codes in each metropolitan area. We then appended this information to the MCSUI and created an alternative indicator of homosocial reproduction that takes a value of 1 if a respondent works with mostly coethnic coworkers in an occupation that, locally, consists of mostly same-sex workers; otherwise, the indicator takes a value of 0. We then reestimated the equations reported in Table 4, substituting this horizontal indicator of homosocial reproduction for our original vertical indicator of having an ascriptively similar superior.

Results of this supplemental analysis (see Table A3 on the *ASR* Web site supplement, <http://www.asanet.org/journals/asr/2004/toc03.html>) indicate only one substantive change from findings reported in Table 4. Importantly, this change is that white men do *not* benefit from patterns of (horizontal) homosocial reproduction as they move up workplace power hierarchies, net of other factors; this finding is consistent with similar race-only analyses in prior research (Smith and Elliott 2002). Relatedly, white and Latina women no longer differ significantly from white men along this (horizontal) dimension of homosocial reproduction. One implication of these findings is that when generalizing about power attainment across a wide array of work settings, homosocial reproduction is perhaps better conceptualized in terms of ascriptively similar superiors regulating access to power positions *beneath* them, rather than in terms of ascriptively similar superiors regulating access to power positions alongside them. The opposite conceptualization might be more valid empirically when generalizing about top-level positions in large corporations of the type Kanter (1977) studied.

Another consideration with respect to homosocial reproduction is that it actually

derives from the product of two distinct rates: (1) the *relative opportunity* to practice homosocial reproduction (i.e., how often group members are in positions to fill power positions beneath themselves); and (2) the rate of homosocial reproduction among group members *given the opportunity* (i.e., how often group members select in-group members to fill the power positions they oversee). To examine these two rates and their product, we use our original (vertical) indicator of homosocial reproduction to examine how often different levels of power are overseen by respective groups and how often these groups appear to select other in-group members to fill positions of power immediately below them. Results appear in Table 5.

Column 1 of Table 5 provides information about the *relative opportunity* to practice homosocial reproduction. Unsurprisingly, results indicate that white men have the greatest opportunity to practice homosocial reproduction, and this opportunity increases at higher levels of power. For example, results show that 59 percent of manager positions in our sample are overseen by white men compared with only 41 percent of supervisor positions and 39 percent of worker positions. Column 2 shows that after controlling for this opportunity structure, women and minorities actually appear to practice homosocial reproduction in positions of power at higher rates than white men. For example, results indicate that 28 percent of white-male superiors select other white men to fill supervisor positions immediately below them. This rate of homosocial reproduction contrasts with the rate of 36 percent among white women; approximately 50 percent among black men, Latinos, and Latinas; and 65 percent among black women. Rates of homosocial reproduction in manager positions converge by comparison, indicating that, after controlling for relative opportunity, all groups are roughly the same in their tendency to select similar people to fill manager positions immediately beneath themselves.

Overall, these findings help to refine our understanding of homosocial reproduction. Table 5 indicates that patterns consistent with homosocial reproduction are common among *all* race-sex groups. Yet, only white men have sufficient opportunity to engage in these practices with relative frequency, and this frequency

Table 5. Opportunity and Rate of Homosocial Reproduction Decomposed by Group and Level of Power

Gender and Race of Superiors that Oversee Respondents' Work	Respondents ^a (%)	Positions that Superiors Fill with In-Group Members ^b (%)	Positions that Superiors Fill through Homosocial Reproduction ^c (%)
Workers (n = 2,480)			
Men			
White	39.4	22.9 (n = 978)	9.2
Black	8.9	38.9 (n = 221)	3.5
Latino	12.5	47.3 (n = 309)	5.9
Women			
White	24.0	30.3 (n = 596)	7.3
Black	10.6	71.9 (n = 263)	7.6
Latina	4.6	61.1 (n = 113)	2.8
Total	100.0	—	36.3
Supervisors (n = 470)			
Men			
White	41.3	28.4 (n = 194)	11.7
Black	9.4	47.7 (n = 44)	4.5
Latino	9.6	46.7 (n = 45)	4.5
Women			
White	26.4	36.3 (n = 124)	9.6
Black	10.4	65.3 (n = 49)	6.8
Latina	3.0	50.0 (n = 14)	1.5
Total	100.1	—	38.6
Managers (n = 315)			
Men			
White	59.3	45.5 (n = 188)	27.0
Black	8.2	38.5 (n = 26)	3.2
Latino	6.2	57.9 (n = 19)	3.6
Women			
White	18.9	45.0 (n = 60)	8.5
Black	7.3	50.0 (n = 22)	3.7
Latina	0.0	N/A (n = 0)	0.0
Total	99.9	—	46.0

Note: Sample includes all eligible respondents, not just workers entering new jobs within five years of the survey.

^a Relative opportunity for homosocial reproduction.

^b Rate of homosocial reproduction given the opportunity.

^c The percent is an estimation. Data in this column show aggregate rate of homosocial reproduction.

increases with upward movement within workplace power hierarchies. In other words, in-group favoritism may be universal, but opportunities to practice it are not. As a result, column 3 of Table 5 indicates that 27 percent of all manager positions in our sample were filled in a manner consistent with white-male homosocial reproduction—over three times the rate for white women and over eight times the rate for respective minority groups.

ASCRPTIVE TRAITS OF SUPERIORS AND POWER ATTAINMENT OF MINORITIES AND WOMEN

Hypothesis 5 asserts that how women and minorities advance up workplace power hier-

archies is conditioned by whether such advancement occurs under ascriptively similar or dissimilar superiors. The underlying idea is that homosocial reproduction influences the relative importance of network assistance and human capital in moving up organizational chains of command. To test this hypothesis we estimate a multinomial regression equation to predict the likelihood of employment at successive levels of workplace power for each group of non-white-men. The independent variables are the same as those in Model 3 of Table 3, with the addition of interaction terms for having an ascriptively similar superior (yes/no) by network assistance and the four indicators of human capital. If Hypothesis 5 is

correct, we would expect coefficients for “ascriptively similar superior \times network assistance” to be positive and statistically significant, whereas we would expect coefficients for corresponding interaction terms with education, total work experience, prior job-specific experience, and organizational tenure to be negative and statistically significant. Because Latinas very rarely gain positions of power under ascriptively similar superiors, we do not include them in this analysis.

Results of this test offer little support for Hypothesis 5 (see Table A4 on the *ASR* Web site supplement, <http://www.asanet.org/journals/asr/2004/toc039.html>). For black men, Latinos, and black women, none of the coefficients for respective interaction terms reach statistical significance at the .05 level. These nonsignificant findings imply that network assistance and human capital are equally predictive of authority attainment under ascriptively similar superiors as under ascriptively dissimilar superiors. Results for white women, by contrast, produce several statistically significant coefficients for relevant interaction terms. The finding most consistent with Hypothesis 5 indicates that for white women, organizational tenure matters less for advancing from supervisor to manager under other white women than it does under ascriptively dissimilar superiors. The other statistically significant interaction term involves total work experience, but its effects run contrary to Hypothesis 5. To illustrate, we solve the equation for white women for increasing years of work experience, setting all other factors equal to subsample means for white women. We then plot the estimated odds of employment at successive levels of power in Figure 1.

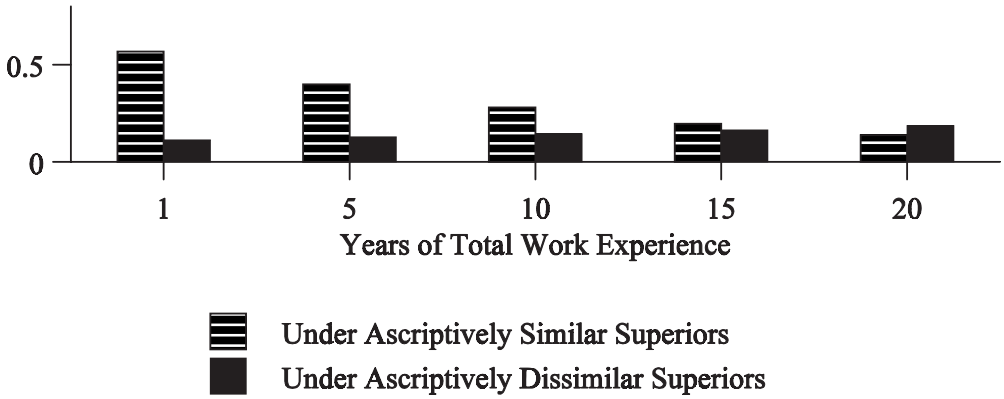
Results reveal countervailing effects of work experience for white women’s advancement. First, the top panel of Figure 1 indicates that white women with relatively little work experience are much *more* likely to advance from worker to supervisor under ascriptively similar superiors than under ascriptively dissimilar superiors. This conditional difference appears to last until white women gain between 15 and 20 years of work experience, at which time the relative odds of advancing from worker to supervisor become roughly equal (but low) under both types of superiors. By contrast

and contrary to Hypothesis 5, the bottom panel of Figure 1 indicates that work experience matters *less* for advancing from supervisor to manager status under ascriptively *dissimilar* superiors than under ascriptively similar superiors.

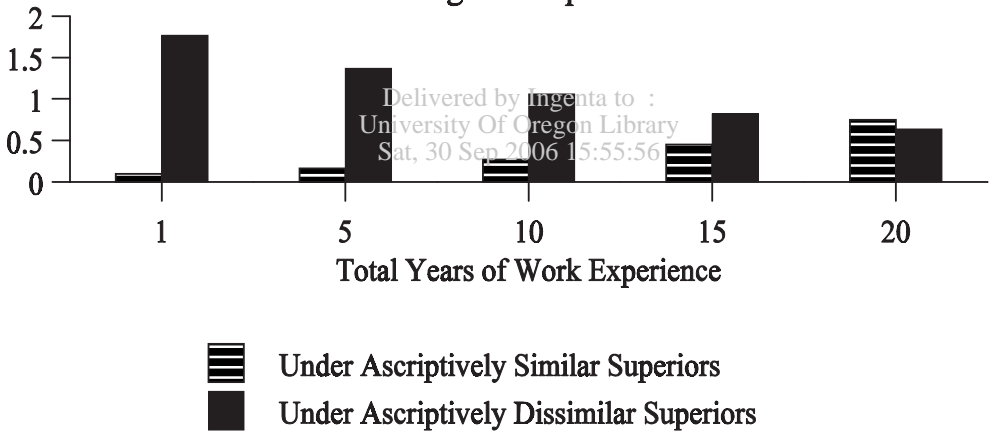
While unexpected, these findings suggest that white women tend to take one of two tracks up workplace power hierarchies: (1) they enter into supervisory positions relatively early in their careers under other white women and then, as they accrue experience, slowly increase their odds of advancing from supervisor to manager; or (2) they enter into managerial positions under white men relatively early in their careers. Because white men oversee more managerial positions than white women (see Table 5), the second route is currently more common for white women’s managerial attainment. These findings suggest a very different picture than that implied by Hypothesis 5. Instead of experience being more important for advancement from supervisor to manager status under white men, experience is less important.

One possible explanation for this finding is that white men tend to view experience among white women less in terms of productive capacity and more in terms of fading desirability, leading white men to favor younger, less experienced white women over older, more experienced white women for manager positions, all else equal. Another possible explanation is that times have changed in recent years, such that white women entering the labor force now do not have to prove themselves to white-male superiors to the same extent as they had to in the past in order to advance into managerial positions. Either way, results yield little overall support for Hypothesis 5. The main findings imply that human capital and network assistance are equally determinant of advancement among black men, black women, and Latinos, regardless of ascriptive similarity with superiors. Among white women, however, ascriptive similarity with superiors improves odds of attaining supervisory status with little work experience, but this benefit does not then open doors to managerial power; youth under white men does.

Supervisor v. Worker Status



Manager v. Supervisor Status



Source: Estimated multinomial regression equation predicting successive levels of workplace power among white women (see ASR website, Table A4). Control variables are set at subsample means for white women.

Figure 1. White Women’s Estimated Odds of Employment at Successive Levels of Power by Total Years of Work Experience

CONCLUSION

This research had two broad goals. First, we wanted to determine if there is empirical evidence of increasing inequality in workplace power for a wider array of women and minorities than previously examined in sociological research. Second, we wished to study the mechanisms that help create and sustain this form of

inequality among recent job entrants/changers. In this investigation, we focused specifically on hypothesized differences in human capital and observable, interpersonal mechanisms that differentiate white men from other groups depending on their particular combination of ascriptive traits. One of these mechanisms was effective network assistance; the other mechanism was superiors’ preferences for similar oth-

ers. Certainly these are not the only mechanisms that determine who attains power, and these mechanisms are surely mediated by organizational policies and behavior that require further investigation.

Still, our findings indicate that, with reasonable statistical confidence, men and women of various races and ethnicities experience increasing inequality in workplace power, relative to white men, but they experience it to different degrees and via different mechanisms. Among Latinos and white women, increasing inequality appears to result largely from human-capital deficiencies relative to white men (specifically education among Latinos and work experience among white women). Therefore, one policy recommendation might be to improve human capital among these groups, in hopes that greater similarity in education and experience will bring greater similarity in workplace power attainment. However, there are at least two reasons to be skeptical of this plan's success over the long term.

First, white men currently do not need to discriminate against Latinos to ensure Latinos' noncompetitiveness because educational differences yield effectively the same result. If the human-capital difference between white men and Latinos decline, and competition intensifies, white men might close ranks against Latinos through other mechanisms. Second, white women appear to fare worse, not better, under white-male superiors as they *gain* work experience—the opposite of what we might expect. Because white men oversee the majority of managerial positions in U.S. workplaces, this pattern can offset human-capital improvements among white women. Both scenarios, of course, ultimately depend on organizational practices that convert human capital into equal opportunity and suggest that merely equalizing human capital credentials will be insufficient, by itself, to remove patterns of increasing disadvantage in tomorrow's workplaces.

With respect to networking, the strongest empirical results run counter to expectation. Black women, not white men, appear most likely to rely on instrumental network assistance to attain positions of power. This pattern could reflect several dynamics. First, networking can serve as an important *response*, as well as cause, of direct discrimination, as research on immigrant adaptation and ethnic economies sug-

gests. Second, people who face multiple oppressions, such as black women due to their race and gender, might be uniquely conscious of network assistance when they receive it, making them more likely than other groups, including white men, to report better information on network assistance in surveys. Third, because networking is typically more an intra-organizational process than an extra-organizational process when positions of power are at stake, our use of a random sample of employees across many workplaces might understate the relative importance of network assistance for white men's authority attainment. A larger random sample *within* organizations might yield results more consistent with traditional conceptualizations of "old boy" networks, since this type of data would permit better analysis of the differential effectiveness of networks *within* internal labor pools.

Finally, with respect to preferences for similar others, there are strong findings to indicate that most superiors, regardless of their race and sex, tend to fill power positions they oversee with ascriptively similar others, that is, they appear to engage in what Kanter called "homosocial reproduction." Findings also show that because there are more white men at higher levels of workplace power than members of other groups, white men have greater opportunity to exercise this self-similar preference and, in the process, reproduce their advantage over successive generations of employees. What remains to be determined is the extent to which these patterns reflect *a priori* segregation of races and sexes across establishments and jobs as opposed to "real time" preferences of superiors for similar others. In extreme cases, forces of segregation are in operation long before employers make hiring decisions regarding positions of power. This can leave superiors with few nonsimilar candidates from which to choose, rendering their ascriptive preferences moot. In other cases, the circle of eligible candidates might be quite diverse, rendering the preferences of those in charge more salient for understanding group inequalities in power attainment.

This consideration points to another area where more and better information about intra-organizational dynamics could be useful in determining the specific subprocesses at work in producing increasing ascriptive inequality in higher positions of workplace power. In addition

to this new (and costly) data collection strategy, future research on this form of inequality might look to comparative ethnographies that examine how different groups perceive and adjust to the unique sets of obstacles they appear to face, relative to white men, as they move up workplace power hierarchies. As we await these insights, we should resist the conclusion that all people who are not white men face the same hurdles to attaining higher levels of workplace power. Evidence here suggests that a one-size-fits-all explanation hides more than it reveals and that more research is still needed to pinpoint the precise mechanisms that convert different combinations of ascriptive characteristics into inequalities in workplace power.

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