

THE INTERSECTION OF GENDER AND RACE IN THE LABOR MARKET

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■ **Abstract** This review investigates scholarship on the intersection of race and gender, with a particular focus on the U.S. labor market. We ask the following questions: What assumptions underlie intersectional perspectives in sociology? Is there any evidence to demonstrate that race and gender intersect in the labor market? We begin by discussing the core assumptions within Black and multiracial feminist theories, which represent the most fully articulated treatments of “intersectionality.” We then broaden our theoretical overview by identifying fundamental differences in the way that sociologists conceptualize intersectionality. We look for evidence of intersectionality in three central domains of research on labor market inequality: (a) wage inequality, (b) discrimination and stereotyping, and (c) immigration and domestic labor. We find that race and gender do intersect in the labor market under certain conditions. Finally, we consider how an intersectional approach enriches labor market research and theorizing about economic inequality.

INTRODUCTION

In her 1997 review of feminist theorizing in sociology, Saltzman Chafetz asserts “the ‘hot topic’ among feminist scholars is ‘the intersection of race, class and gender.’” Most sociologists—feminist or otherwise—who study economic inequality readily acknowledge that any analysis of women that ignores race will be incomplete and may very well simply describe patterns for White women. Theories of racial inequality that fail to incorporate gender into their frameworks are similarly insufficient for understanding the lives of women of color (Reskin & Charles 1999). However, the emphasis on the intersection of race, class, and gender discussed by Saltzman Chafetz (1997) moves beyond simply including race in research on gender or including gender in studies of race. Intersectional approaches maintain that gender and race are not independent analytic categories that can simply be added together (King 1989, Weber 2001). Instead, feminist sociologists call for

an alternative theorizing that captures the combination of gender and race. Race is “gendered” and gender is “racialized,” so that race and gender fuse to create unique experiences and opportunities for all groups—not just women of color (Amott & Matthaei 1991, Collins 1999b, Essed 1991, Glenn 1999, Higginbotham 1997, Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994, Kibria 1990, Landrine 1985).

What assumptions underlie intersectional perspectives? Is there any evidence in support of this position? In this chapter, we address these questions by focusing on the intersection of race and gender in one of the key institutions in the United States—the labor market. Our focus on the labor market leads us to highlight the literature on race and gender as systems of economic stratification. We begin by discussing the core assumptions within Black and multiracial feminist theories, which represent the most fully articulated treatments of “intersectionality.” We then broaden our theoretical overview by identifying fundamental differences in the way that sociologists conceptualize intersectionality. Next, we turn to the question of evidence for intersectionality by examining research on labor market inequality in three central domains: (a) wage inequality, (b) discrimination and stereotyping, and (c) immigration and domestic labor. Finally, we consider how an intersectional approach enriches labor market research and theorizing about economic inequality.

THEORIES OF INTERSECTIONALITY

The development of an intersectional perspective on gender and race is rooted in the work of scholars studying women of color. This body of work is usually referred to under the rubric of multiracial feminism, multicultural feminism, or postcolonial feminism (Baca Zinn & Thornton Dill 1996, Lorber 1998, Mohanty 1991).¹ As part of this endeavor, Black feminist theory has remained in the forefront, providing a systematic treatment of the intersection of race and gender in determining labor market outcomes (Brewer 1993, Collins 1999b, James & Busia 1993). Relying on an experience-based epistemology, Black women revealed that not only were both race and gender implicated in shaping their lives, but neither the extant theories of gender nor the theories of race adequately addressed their experience of race and gender as “simultaneous and linked” social identities (Bambara 1970, Brewer 1993, Glenn 1999, hooks 1989, Hull et al. 1982, Spelman 1988). These insights are also incorporated in the study of racial and ethnic categories that move beyond the Black/White dichotomy (Asian Women United of California 1989, Blea 1992, Glenn 1986, Kibria 1990).

Because of the prominence of multiracial feminist theory in the literature on intersectionality, in this section we describe the central tenets of this theory in

¹Multiracial feminist theory is largely interdisciplinary and draws on a range of disciplines, from literary criticism to political science. In our review, we primarily focus on sociological contributions to multiracial feminist theory.

some detail. Not all sociologists studying intersections of gender and race in the labor market accept these tenets, however. We therefore consider differences in the conceptualization of intersectionality both within multiracial feminist theory and outside these theories. In particular, we cover three core differences: the underlying explanations for race and gender oppression, assumptions of whether race and gender intersections are ubiquitous or contingent, and disputes on whether women of color face multiple jeopardy as a result of these intersections.

Black and Multiracial Feminist Theories of Intersectionality

Multiracial feminist theorists argue that race and gender are socially constructed, not only influencing individual identities but also providing principles of organization in the social system (Collins 1999b, Glenn 1999). Further, these categories are mutually constituted to produce and maintain social hierarchy. Collins (1999b) refers to the “interlocking systems of race, class and gender” as constituting a “matrix of domination.” Within this matrix, an individual can simultaneously experience disadvantage and privilege through the combined statuses of gender, race, and class.² Baca Zinn & Thornton Dill (1996, p. 329) note that from a multiracial feminist perspective, “Race, class, gender, and sexuality are not reducible to individual attributes to be measured and assessed for their separate contributions in explaining given social outcomes.” This perspective also highlights the ways that privilege and disadvantage are linked (Baca Zinn & Thornton Dill 1996, Glenn 1999, Higginbotham 1997). A unidimensional understanding of inequality thus breaks down with an intersectional lens. For instance, radical feminist claims that men oppress women miss the potential complexity of the economic relation between some groups of men and White women. In many cities, White women earn more than Black, Mexican-origin, and Puerto-Rican men (Browne 1999, McCall 2000).

As socially constructed categories, race and gender are seen as fluid, historical, and situationally contingent (Espiritu 1992, Glenn 1999, Mullings 1997, Omi & Winant 1994). A growing literature demonstrates how the meanings given to gender and race change with historical circumstances and local conditions (Lorber 1994, Omi & Winant 1994). For example, in 1992 in the United States, dominant Whites defined the racial category of Black by the “one drop rule,” in which an individual who had any Black ancestry was considered Black (Wright 1992). Contemporary definitions of race in the U.S. Census have shifted over the past four decades, with Asian included under White in one census and shifted into a separate category in a subsequent census (Wright 1992).

Feminists have similarly argued that gender is a category that is socially constructed to maintain social hierarchy. Gender creates social differences between men and women that transcend any biological/physiological differences (Amott

²In addition to race, class, and gender, other social categories position individuals within a matrix of domination. These statuses include sexuality, ability/disability, and age (Weber 2001).

& Matthaei 1991, Lorber 1994). Rather than being natural, gender is a social construction that is constantly reproduced through social interaction (Fenstermaker & West 2002).

Multiracial feminists claim that the beliefs and practices associated with gender are inextricably interwoven with the beliefs and practices associated with race (Ferdman 1999), that is, traditional definitions of femininity that include passivity and weakness describe the social norm for a White middle-class woman. Dominant culture has traditionally constructed Black femininity in juxtaposition to this image. According to Collins (1999b), stereotypes of Black women have included the asexualized Mammy, the promiscuous Jezebel, and the profligate welfare queen. These images reinforce racial divisions by denigrating Black women in comparison with White women. At the same time, these images reinforce gender inequality among Whites by positing White women as weak and in need of White male protection. Thus, the experience of gender deeply reflects racial and ethnic meanings.

Race and ethnicity are also constructed within gendered meanings. Within dominant culture, these meanings provide legitimizing ideologies to subordinate men and women of color. Stereotypes within dominant culture of Black men include the idea of the “hypersexualized Black man” who is a potential threat to White women, which became a justification for lynching (Davis 1981). In contrast, popular ideologies have oftentimes “desexualized” or “feminized” Asian men, legitimizing the occupational segregation of Asian men into positions such as “houseboy” (Espiritu 1992). The construction of race and gender is often obscured, but no less potent, for members of the dominant social categories. Lamont (2000) shows how working class men clearly use notions of masculinity that are based on their ideas of White masculinity to define their class identity and understand their position in the social structure.

In sum, feminist intersectional theories assume that gender and race are socially constructed categories that contain inherent power differences (Collins 1999b, Glenn 1999, Weber 2001). These power differences are infused into every aspect of social life—from identities and self-concepts, to interpersonal interactions, to the operation of firms, to the organization of economic and legal systems (Collins 1999b, Glenn 1999, Weber 2001).

Differences in the Conceptualization of Intersectionality

Scholars have applied these ideas about the social construction of race and gender to consider economic inequality in the labor market. For example, women have different experiences from men and Latino/as have different experiences from Whites. Yet, to understand the experience of a Latina in the labor market requires more than understanding the experience of women and Latino/as. An intersectional perspective instead posits that the experiences of Latinas in the labor market reflect social constructions of gender that are racialized and social constructions of race that are gendered to create a particular experience. In addition, there is a relational aspect to these experiences; the experiences of Latinas in the labor market are

connected to the experiences of White women. For example, White women are more likely to be viewed as professional workers than Latinas, and White women benefit from this privilege. In addition, many White families in high-paying professional jobs rely on Latina workers to relieve them of their caregiving duties by taking low-paying jobs doing housekeeping and caring for children and the elderly. White women then doubly benefit from the social constructions that define Latinas within the labor market.

The above example carries the assumption that social constructions of gender and race are systematically related to labor market dynamics to generate inequality. This assumption is widely debated within the literature on economic stratification, which offers a range of explanations for why and how race and gender operate in the labor market. Sociologists who advocate an intersectional approach—including multiracial and Black feminists—differ in their answers to these why and how questions. The differences in the conceptualization of intersectionality result in disparate approaches to research design and the criteria for evidence of intersectionality. In this section, we focus on three important differences: What are the underlying causes of economic inequality? Do race and gender always intersect? Does intersection necessarily create multiple disadvantage for women of color and multiple privilege for White men?

WHAT ARE THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF RACE AND GENDER OPPRESSION? The debates on the causes of race/gender intersections in the labor market reflect the core debates within the area of social stratification and are particularly germane to the issue of how social constructions of gender and race are related to systems of economic stratification. Scholars differ in their emphasis on ideology and systems of meaning as perpetuating intersections of gender and race inequality (Collins 1999b) versus material interests and control over productive and political resources (Mullings 1997, Weber 2001). Most feminist scholars taking an intersectional approach acknowledge the importance of both ideological mechanisms and control of economic and political resources, particularly when examining labor market outcomes (Collins 1999b, Glenn 1999, Kibria 1990). Intersectional theories assume that dominant groups control productive resources and major social institutions, using those institutions to promulgate legitimizing ideologies that make social inequalities appear natural (see Sidanius & Pratto 2001 for a review).

A related theoretical tension concerns the underlying motivation for differential treatment of groups based on their gender and race. Some writers assert that the dominant group—heterosexual elite White men—consciously procures resources for itself and excludes the “outgroup” (Collins 1999b, Weber 2001). Other explanations posit that social hierarchies are created through perceptual, cognitive, and behavioral processes about which participants are oftentimes quite unaware (Reskin 2002b, Ridgeway 1997). Thus, intersectional approaches to labor market processes draw on an array of existing theories of social stratification to explain how and why “ascribed statuses” influence labor market processes. Intersectional approaches have not solved the problem of how processes at the level of social interaction are

related to the distribution of resources and political power. This problem is central in the larger debates on labor market inequality. For instance, human capital theorists might argue that even if race and gender are mutually constructed social categories, these categories have little influence on labor market outcomes in the long run. What matters most to employers is to hire and promote the most productive worker to generate the most profit. In the labor market literature, human capital arguments are usually countered by theories of discrimination, in which perceptions, biases, and interests based on race and gender are translated into unequal outcomes.

The mechanisms proposed by intersectional approaches are not fundamentally new to debates on stratification. Among those who agree that gender and race do affect labor market experiences and outcomes, the proposition that these statuses are interrelated raises novel questions regarding the interrelationship between multiple stratification hierarchies in the economy (Ransford 1980).

ARE INTERSECTIONS UBIQUITOUS OR CONTINGENT? Differences in the assumptions regarding the causes of economic inequality lead scholars to disagree on the question of whether intersectionality exists at all times and in all places (even if it changes forms) or whether under some conditions, one category might actually supercede the other in determining labor market experiences and outcomes. For example, if material interests are motivating the actions of the dominant social groups, could certain interests, such as class interests, override interests based on gender or race given certain historical conditions (Glazer 1991, Reynolds 2001)? Are there conditions under which one social category, such as gender, becomes most salient in employer perceptions and behavior? We refer to this as the ubiquitous or contingent question.

The ubiquitous nature of race, gender, and class intersections—intersections of power relations—is assumed by many scholars who see these categories as mutually constituted at the level of representation and social interaction (Adams 1998, Collins 1999b, Smith 1995, West & Fenstermaker 1995, Yoder & Anaiakudo 1997). Scholars who take an institutional approach also assert the ubiquity of race/gender/class intersections. In her book, *Understanding Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality: A Conceptual Framework*, Weber (2001) stresses that race and gender intersect as “social systems” that “operate at all times and in all places,” and that, given their inextricable and mutually constituting character, no one social category will ever eclipse the other (2001, p. 4).

Race, class, gender, and sexuality are interrelated systems at the macroinstitutional level—they are created, maintained, and transformed simultaneously and in relation to one another. Therefore, they cannot be understood independently of one another. (Weber 2001, p. 104)

In contrast, some scholars see the question of the ubiquity and salience of gender and race disadvantage in the labor market as hypotheses to be tested (Cotter et al. 1999, Glass 1999, Morris et al. 1994, Kilbourne et al. 1994, McCall 2000, Raijman & Semyonov 1997, Ransford 1980). The introduction to a special issue

of *Work and Occupations* devoted to “race, ethnicity and gender in the workplace” urges researchers to develop theoretical propositions that specify the conditions under which race or gender may be salient in the labor market, and the conditions “under which they will inevitably interact” (Glass 1999, p. 420). This contingent perspective is more cautious in its assertions of intersectionality.

For instance, Kilbourne et al. (1994) conceptualize gender and race as representing distinct stratification systems that might or might not be interrelated. They ask “Is the gender stratification system experienced differently depending on race and is the race stratification system experienced differently depending on gender?” Aspects of the gender stratification system include the gender segregation of occupations and the devaluation of female-dominated jobs (Kilbourne et al. 1994, Reskin & Padavic 1994). The race stratification system includes occupational segregation by race and ethnicity, as well as residential segregation and unequal access to educational and training opportunities (which, some argue, is a premarket form of race-based inequality) (Bayard et al. 1999, Massey & Denton 1993) (see Altonji & Blank 1999 for a thorough review of economic theories of wage gaps by race and gender, respectively.) In this conceptualization, the gender and race systems of stratification are seen as distinct (although not necessarily unrelated), but the outcomes of these systems create unique experiences depending on the combination of gender and race.

MULTIPLE JEOPARDY: UNIFORM OR VARYING COMBINATIONS? Among those who agree that race and gender intersect in the labor market, there is a question of whether this intersection creates a situation of multiple jeopardy for Black women and other women of color. Ransford (1980) proposes the Multiple Jeopardy-Multiple Advantage hypothesis, predicting that individuals who occupy the lowest position on two or more social categories—such as female and Latina—will experience the most disadvantage of any group and possess the least amount of economic resources and rewards. Conversely, individuals who occupy the highest levels of multiple social categories—White men—will accrue the greatest privilege, power, and prestige. The terms double negative or multiple disadvantage are also used by feminist scholars to describe women of color, who are most consistently found on the bottom of the economic ladder (Beal 1970, Hesse-Biber 1986, Segura 1989).

King (1989) further develops the concept of multiple jeopardy, asserting that the disadvantages of race and gender are often compounded, or multiplied, so that poor Black women encounter greater disadvantage through the combined race/gender/class status than the addition of the individual statuses would provoke (King 1989). West & Fenstermaker (1995) have critiqued these conceptualizations of intersectionality, claiming that the mathematical metaphors arise from a misleading ontology, missing the contingent and fluid character of the social construction of the categories.

Explicitly arguing against the multiple jeopardy thesis, Sidanius & Pratto (2001) claim that it is men of color who are the primary targets of combined gender and race discrimination. Relying on evolutionary psychology, they counter that men

of color represent the greatest threat to dominant (White) men, and therefore will be most forcefully repressed. Although they find studies in which Black men face greater discrimination than Black or White women, Sidanius & Pratto (2001) fail to consider the volume of research that consistently show that Black and Latina women³ remain at the bottom of the labor market reward structure: They earn the lowest wages (Browne 1999), have the least authority in the workplace (Browne et al. 2001, Maume 1999), and are most concentrated in “bad jobs” (Aldridge 1999, Spalter-Roth & Deitch 1999).⁴

These examples do not answer the question of whether the distribution of labor market rewards is due to the intersection of race and gender or their separate—and additive—influences. Is there evidence for intersectionality of race and gender in the labor market? Does intersectionality occur across all economic domains, or are there only certain conditions that produce intersecting outcomes? What does the evidence on intersectionality tell us about the claim that race and gender are not simply intertwined social statuses that influence labor market outcomes but that the intersection of race and gender represents an “interlocking system of privilege and disadvantage” (Collins 1999b)?

EVIDENCE FOR INTERSECTIONALITY IN LABOR MARKETS

Empirical Studies of Intersectionality in the Labor Market

Assessing empirical research on intersectionality in social institutions such as the labor market involves a thorny issue, as sociologists disagree over what constitutes social science evidence (Abbott 2001). In fact, Black and multiracial feminist theory offers an alternative epistemic position to traditional social science epistemologies, highlighting the subjective experiences of members of oppressed groups as a valid basis for knowledge (Collins 1999a, King 1989). This work includes a critique of positivist social science, in which theories are constructed as a set of propositions leading to hypotheses that are tested through empirical research (Collins 2000). Therefore, much scholarship uses intersectionality as a theoretical lens from which to study the experience of inequality, rather than as a tool to analytically consider propositions of whether or not race and gender intersect within particular labor markets or settings. Yet, although race and gender may indeed be intermeshed within an individual’s identity, these two categories may not be necessarily always intermeshed at the level of the social system (Brewer 1993, p. 15).

To date, the bulk of the research using an intersectional approach focuses on women of color. On many indicators, such as wages, job authority, and

³Cuban-American women are an exception to this generalization about Latinas.

⁴The picture for Asian women is more complex, with some groups of Asian women (such as Japanese-origin women) reaching parity or more with White women in earnings and education, whereas others (such as women from Southeast Asia) fall at the bottom of the wage distribution.

occupational position, Black women, Latinas, and some groups of Asian women are at the bottom, falling below White women and men of their same race/ethnicity (Browne 1999, Reskin & Padavic). As we discuss below, intersectional approaches do provide a powerful tool with which to understand the position of women of color in the labor market. However, if race and gender are constructed together to influence labor market outcomes for all individuals—not just women of color—then it is necessary to conduct comparative studies. Yet, as our review reveals, research interrogating the existence of intersections in a comparative framework tends to be rare and often is not rooted in multiracial feminist theory. Claims that race and gender intersections are ubiquitous provide little theoretical leverage in understanding the conditions under which intersections would appear. We contend that specifying these conditions is important in countering neoclassical economic theory, which sees race and gender as an impediment to efficient market transactions and therefore likely to be overridden in the long run by the exigency to generate profit (Altonji & Blank 1999, England 1992).

Our discussion of the evidence for intersections of race and gender in the labor market focuses on three economic domains. The first two, wages and discrimination, lie at the heart of debates on labor market inequality. The third domain, immigration and domestic labor, represents one of the richest sources of research on intersectionality in labor markets conducted by multiracial feminist sociologists. These studies illuminate the wide differences in the way that intersections of gender and race are conceptualized and examined.

The literature on wage inequality in particular shows the gaps in the literature. Theories of intersectionality are less developed in articulating how intersections of gender and race are implicated in the intricate workings of the economy at the macro level than they are about the social construction of gender and race. Sociological theories of labor markets continue to debate neoclassical economic theories, which question whether gender and race matter in determining economic outcomes. Social constructionist perspectives are largely absent from these debates.

Wage Inequality

Sociologists seeking to explain labor market inequality have focused heavily on wages (England 1992, England & Browne 1992). Indeed, the gap in wages between groups is such a well-recognized summary measure of the extent of inequality that 1970s feminist activists wore buttons that simply read “59¢.”

Studies of wage inequality represent more contingent approaches to intersectionality, looking for *prima facie* evidence that race and gender intersect in the labor market to produce unequal outcomes. Models of wage inequality ignore the assumptions regarding socially constructed power hierarchies underlying multiracial feminist theory, as these assumptions need not obtain for intersectionality to appear. Instead, investigators simply posit that given the observation that individuals are positioned uniquely in the labor market based on their race and gender, economic

processes will affect each race-gender group differently. In studies of wage inequality, only a few researchers directly ask whether the economic conditions affecting gender inequality are the same as those affecting race inequality, and how these two systems of inequality might be linked. If they are linked, do the processes creating high levels of race inequality reduce or exacerbate gender inequality? These questions are particularly germane given the growing wage inequality witnessed over the past 25 years in the United States. Reversing a growing Black-White parity in wages in the early 1970s, the Black-White wage gap increased in the 1980s, as did the Latino-White wage gap (McCall 2001a). Within each race/ethnic group, inequality also increased between low- and high-skill workers (Levy & Murnane 1992). (Skill is usually measured as education and experience or is inferred by dividing workers along the wage distribution.) In sharp contrast, the male-female wage gap has decreased (McCall 2001a). Theories regarding these changes focus on the restructuring of the U.S. economy through processes such as deindustrialization, immigration, changes in the organization of work (flexible production and nonstandard work arrangements), globalized production, and trade policies (McCall 2001a, Sassen 1998).

The study of trends in wage inequality by Morris et al. (1994) from 1967 through 1987 tested two predominant theories of increasing wage inequality for White men, White women, Black men, and Black women. The skill mismatch thesis posits that technological innovations have increased the need for highly skilled workers, thus pulling their wages upwards. The polarization thesis argues that the new economy produced low-paying service jobs as well as high-paying jobs, depleting opportunities for employment in the middle range of the wage distribution. They found that the polarization thesis fit trends for White men since 1967 but was only relevant to the experiences of Black men and White women in the 1980s. Most striking is the fact that neither theory is adequate to explain the unique patterns for Black women. In the 1980s, Black women saw a rise in the proportion of low-paying jobs without the concomitant increase in high-paying jobs. Although this study provides strong support for the intersectionality thesis for trends over time, the evidence appears mixed in cross-sectional studies comparing wage gaps across local labor markets (metropolitan areas). Cotter et al. (1999) report that evidence for intersectionality appears negligible, concluding that race and gender represent two independent systems of inequality. When the gender wage gap is high in a metropolitan area, it is high for all racial/ethnic groups. This result is particularly robust for those at the low end of the income distribution.

McCall's (2001a,b) more fine-grained analyses of gender and race wage gaps across local labor markets find that the race stratification system and gender stratification system are neither completely independent nor completely interacting. Some economic conditions have similar effects on race inequality regardless of gender. For both men and women, industrial structure (unionization, casualization of work) is the predominant source of Black/White wage inequality, whereas the demographic mix of the local labor market (specifically, the percent immigrant) has the strongest effect on Asian/White and Latino/White inequality. However,

she also finds that there are economic conditions uniquely influencing a particular gender and race group. The “both independent/and intersecting” conceptualization of race and gender is consistent with the claims of multiracial feminist theory, which eschews a dualistic either/or approach to understanding gender, race, and class (Collins 2000).

Overall, studies of wage determination at the individual level echo McCall’s findings that there are some distinct patterns for women of color, but also similarities to coethnic men (the race stratification system) and to White women (the gender stratification system) (Bound & Dresser 1999, Corcoran et al. 1999, England et al. 1999, Kilbourne et al. 1994). Using the National Longitudinal Survey for Youth, Kilbourne et al. (1994) and England et al. (1999) look specifically at the question of whether individual wage differences are the result of intersections of gender and race. Comparing Whites, African Americans, and Latinos, England et al. (1999) found that education and experience explain a large portion of the race gap in earnings for both men and women, although the size of the effect is larger for women than men. For each of the three ethnic groups, education and experience explain none of the gender gap in pay; instead, the male-female pay gap is produced by the gender segregation of occupations (England et al. 1999). Yet, the authors also uncover important intersections of race and gender. Compared to White women, Black women are more adversely affected by working in a predominantly female occupation (Kilbourne et al. 1994), and they receive less of a payoff for the wage-enhancing attributes of experience and seniority (England et al. 1999). As a result, experience and seniority explain much less of the gender gap in pay among African Americans than they do among Whites or Latinas (England et al. 1999).

In contrast to studies that aggregate diverse groups at the national level, the intersection of race and gender appears to have a greater reach in analyses of wage inequality for particular groups within specific locales. Women of color are differentially situated in local labor markets compared with White women and coethnic men, so that economic restructuring affects each group uniquely. For instance, studies of how the decline in manufacturing led to the deteriorating position of Black men in the United States relative to White men assume that women’s concentration in services protected them from economic restructuring (Wilson 1996). Although this generalization holds for all White women and Black women in some regions, young Black women living in the Midwest experienced a drop in wages when manufacturing jobs left the central cities of the rustbelt (Bound & Dresser 1999). Similarly, Puerto-Rican women in New York and New Jersey lost jobs and wages with economic restructuring, whereas recently arrived female Mexican immigrants in California were incorporated into low-wage factory jobs (Myers & Cranford 1998). Immigration and citizenship also add greater complexity to the race/class/gender nexus (Kibria 1990, Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994, Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila 1997). Not only is there a difference in labor market position based on gender, ethnicity, place of residence, and citizenship status, but opportunities and modes of incorporation also vary within immigrant groups depending on their birth cohort and year of arrival (Cintron-Velez 1999, Myers & Cranford 1998).

Finally, there are some analyses of wages at the individual level that look at whether there is statistical significance in the interaction of race and gender. For instance, most quantitative studies of wages do not find a statistical interaction of gender and race. Differences in wages are explained by the main effects of gender and race (Browne et al. 2001, Kilbourne et al. 1994, Spalter-Roth & Deitch 1999). Often, these main effects drop sharply with sufficient controls for industry and occupation (Altonji & Blank 1999, Browne et al. 2001). However, it is precisely in the sorting of individuals into jobs that gender and race appear to intersect in important ways.

In sum, although much evidence indicates that there is some amount of race/gender intersections in wage inequality, the existence and degree of intersections depends on how wages are measured, which groups are compared, and how the relationships are modeled. To arbitrate between these mixed findings, better theories are needed that identify the conditions under which race and gender will intersect to produce wage inequities (Brewer 1993, Cotter et al. 1999).

Despite differences in the existence and extent of an intersection of gender and race, most studies of wage inequality tend to find a consistent and strong pattern of the intersection of race and gender with social class. In effect, the processes affecting the shape and extent of inequality are different for high-skill and low-skill workers.⁵ This finding is consistent with the claims of many multiracial feminists: If gender and race intersect, then this could take different forms depending on social class. Intersections might occur along some parts of the wage distribution but not others.

Discrimination and Stereotyping

The race gap in wages and the gender gap in wages represent “persistent facts” in the U.S. economy (Altonji & Blank 1999). Debates on the underlying causes of gender and race inequality in the labor market center on three broad explanations: differences in individual preferences and skills (the human capital argument), differences in labor market position (occupation, industry, firm, region) (Reskin & Padavic 1999), and discrimination (Altonji & Blank 1999, Becker 1959, Jackman 1994, Pettigrew 1980).⁶ Feminist intersectional approaches assume that discrimination is operating in the workplace; employers are making decisions about hiring, promotions, training, and wages based on the combination of a worker’s gender and race (Weber 2001), whereas actions by coworkers and customers may also contribute to discriminatory environments (Bell & Nkomo 2001, Martin 1994, Weber & Higginbotham 1997, Yoder & Aniakudo 1997).

⁵Cotter et al. (1999) report some evidence for intersectionality at the top of the wage distribution, but their results are unreliable due to low sample sizes for women and men of color.

⁶These explanations are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For instance, the sorting of individuals into different jobs or industrial sectors could be the result of individual choices and attributes or discriminatory practices.

Stereotyping figures prominently as a key perceptual process through which discrimination by race and gender occurs (Browne & Kennelly 1999, Falkenberg 1990, Fiske 1998, Reskin 2002). Stereotyping is defined here as “a conventionalized and usually oversimplified conception or belief” (*American Heritage Dictionary* 1987) (see Miller 1982 for a comprehensive summary of the debates over the definitions of stereotyping). Social-psychological research demonstrates that stereotyping is a cognitive strategy used by all individuals to process the vast quantities of information in the environment (Fiske & Taylor 1991). Stereotyping involves cognitively situating others in relation to oneself based on socially relevant characteristics such as gender and race (Fiske & Taylor 1991, Ridgeway 1997). Through selectively attending to a fraction of the information confronting them to fit the pre-existing categories, individuals routinely form perceptions that are partial and biased (Fiske & Taylor 1991, Hoffman & Hurst 1990).

A purely intersectional perspective suggests that there is no gender perception that is race blind, and there is no race perception that is gender blind (Weber 2001, p. 17). Instead, perceptions are based on the entire constellation of social attributes of the individual within the interaction—race, gender, physical ability/disability, age—rather than a single dimension. Yet, experimental cognitive research finds support for the contingent perspective, demonstrating that social identities become more or less salient in interaction depending on the specific context (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin 1999). In task-related groups, for instance, status characteristics such as gender do not always direct the behavior of individuals toward each other. Gender becomes activated when group members have little knowledge about the abilities of each other in relation to the task at hand. Members will use gender as a proxy for the missing information, and will presume that men have more expertise than women (unless the task is considered the specific domain of women, such as needlepoint or childcare). These expectations quickly lead to a gender hierarchy in which men are accorded greater influence and status within the group (see Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin 1999 for a comprehensive review). When gender appears with other status characteristics such as race, individuals appear to base perceptions on combining information on multiple status characteristics to create performance expectations that affect behavior (Berger et al. 1980). However, a particular characteristic may or may not be salient, depending on the information that group members have about each other in relation to the group’s assigned task (Ridgeway 1997). Although much work has been done in expectations states theory on how multiple status characteristics operate together, little of this research looks at gender and race. Status characteristics such as education and specific experience are more often paired with gender (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin 1999).

In experimental studies, stereotypes dissipate or disappear with information about specific abilities that men and women bring to a job or a task (Heilman et al. 1995). For example, individuals are apt to stereotype female managers as “less competent” than men unless the women are described as “successful managers.” Organizations appear to create ample opportunity for stereotyping to occur, as individuals base perceptions on an environment where tasks and positions are

segregated by gender and race (Browne and Tigges 2000, Ridgeway 1997). In addition, it appears that the quality of information on worker performance and perceptions of that performance may vary among workers (Reskin & Padavic 1999). Neumark (2002) presents evidence that employers possess better information about the performance of White men than Black or Hispanic men or Black women.⁷ Thus, both performance and skills and the structure of the work environment are related to the content of stereotypes and the propensity to stereotype in general.

Research focusing on intersections support the claim that race and gender play out quite differently for men and women depending on their social class, education, and occupation, as well as the organizational setting in which they work (Landrine et al. 1995). For instance, employers depict low-skill young Black men from the inner city as lazy, belligerent, or dangerous (Kirschenman & Neckerman 1991, Moss & Tilly 2001), but they stereotype low-skill Black women as single mothers who are either distracted or desperate for a paycheck (Kennelly 1999). Based on their study of Atlanta, Browne & Kennelly (1999) show that the image of Black female workers as single mothers is based on a common stereotype and is inconsistent with the characteristics of Atlanta's workforce. Although Black women are more likely to be single parents than White women, the majority of Black women employed in Atlanta do not have children living at home. Taken together, these findings suggest that race and gender intersect in perceptions of employees, but they do not suggest that these stereotypes disadvantage women of color more than men of color. Instead, this study's results imply that women and men of color face different stereotypes that lead to discrimination.

The content of stereotypes directed at professional men of color and women appears to differ from those directed at low-skill workers. Beyond the skills and attributes that individuals bring to the workplace and the jobs that they are expected to perform, low-skill workers and professionals face divergent organizational environments. In particular, low-skill men of color and women tend to be surrounded by workers who are similar to themselves in terms of race and gender, whereas professional men of color and professional women often find themselves the sole member of their demographic group (Bell & Nkomo 2001, Browne et al. 2001, Tsui and O'Reilly 1989). Kanter (1977) would argue that at the top levels of the corporation, men of color and women are especially vulnerable to stereotyping, given their extreme visibility as tokens.

Bell & Nkomo's (2001) research on Black and White women in top corporate management jobs found that token status leads to both similar experiences that

⁷Much of the research on group differences regarding employer information on worker skills tests the theory of statistical discrimination. Presumably, employers are attempting to hire the most productive worker, and use race and gender as proxies for worker productivity. Intersectional theories would argue that discrimination is not simply based on inaccurate information, but arises to maintain status hierarchies by race and gender (Browne & Kennelly 1999).

cross race as well as unique disadvantages for the Black women. Women of both races felt a sense of isolation from a corporate environment in which the majority of managers were White men, and they perceived a White male culture that was inhospitable and alien to them. Despite this shared discomfiture, Black women had fewer resources such as network contacts to fit into the organization compared with the White women. Black women also felt greater pressure to perform better than their male colleagues (almost all of whom were White) and were much less likely to have role models that were the same gender and race as themselves. The Black women also reported more formidable barriers to advancement, with more lateral moves and fewer promotions to upper level management. Without a comparison of men, it is difficult to assess whether the additional barriers faced by the Black women were due to a race effect or a unique fusion of race and gender. For instance, the Black women felt that they were stereotyped as "incompetent and unqualified." The stereotype of incompetence is also applied to professional Black men (Bell & Nkomo 2001). Yet, Black men have been more successful in achieving promotions to upper management, which suggests that there are important differences between groups (Maum 1999).

Indeed, the bulk of research on intersections of race and gender in processes of stereotyping and discrimination focuses on women of color (Bell & Nkomo 2001, Higginbotham & Romero 1999, Martin 1994, Segura 1992, Weber & Higginbotham 1997, Yoder & Anaiakudo 1997, St. Jean & Feagin 1998). Although these studies clearly demonstrate that women of color experience added burdens of discrimination by race and gender not felt by their White female counterparts, without multiple comparisons, it is unclear whether race and gender are intersecting in these processes.

Scholars also disagree over the mechanisms that translate those stereotypes into discriminatory practices.⁸ Reskin (2002) proposes a theory of discrimination to counter the conventional notions of race and gender prejudice. Reskin (2002) argues that the impetus for discrimination is not necessarily animus by White male employers toward men of color and women. Rather, discrimination is fueled by unrecognized employer biases toward individuals "like themselves." Individuals not only generalize from ideas regarding social groups to individuals, but they tend to perceive those like themselves more favorably (Read 1983). Those in dominant social statuses benefit from positive attributions (Berger et al. 1980).

⁸According to economists, market competition provides a strong incentive for employers to ignore race and gender and to increase profits by hiring the most productive worker (Becker 1959, England 1992), that is, employers who discriminate will pay a wage premium for the preferred group of workers (White males). Nondiscriminating employers will be able to hire cheaper labor, and should therefore garner higher profits. Over the long run, the competitive edge of the more profitable nondiscriminatory enterprises should allow them to prosper and drive the more inefficient discriminatory enterprises out of the market (Becker 1959, England 1992). However, the evidence indicates that discriminatory practices can persist over the long run (Altonji & Blank 1999).

Taken together, these perceptual processes induce White men to perceive White men in more favorable terms than men of color or women.

Ridgeway (1997) also finds taken-for-granted understandings that underlie interaction as a powerful force behind discriminatory practices. She describes social interaction as the “invisible hand” that re-creates hierarchies within organizations. Although focusing on gender, her theory speaks directly to some key assumptions underlying intersectional approaches. Drawing on expectations states theory, Ridgeway (1997) posits specific mechanisms through which social constructions and identities at the micro level can produce and fortify systematic inequalities within and across labor market institutions. Interactions mediate the distribution of rewards within organizations. “Cognition research shows that when institutional identities and occupational roles are activated in the process of perceiving a specific person, they become nested within the prior, automatic categorization of that person as male or female and take on slightly different meanings as a result” (Ridgeway 1997).

Research on stereotyping looks at race and gender separately, yet reveals common conditions leading to discrimination in the labor market: signals regarding an individual’s performance (the task or job at hand, information on the skills and background of the employee), group composition that affects interactions (race/gender of workgroup, managers, and employers), as well as institutional arrangements that facilitate or impede a predilection to discriminate (informal versus formal procedures for hiring and promotion, supports for Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidelines—including affirmative actions policies and enforcement of those policies) (Reskin 2002). However, there is no systematic theoretical model specifying whether these factors will lead to discrimination along a single dimension or through the intersection of gender/race, and the form that the intersection will take.

Domestic Work: The Ubiquity of Race, Gender, and Class

The research on discrimination and stereotyping suggests that domestic work should be especially ripe for discriminatory practices by gender and race. Domestic work is deeply imbedded in hierarchies of class, gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality. Not only are domestic tasks associated with one gender (women), but gendered norms of childcare and housework being seen as “natural” for women devalue domestic work and workers. Historically, domestic work has been performed by ethnic minorities, and ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship-status construct an idea of domestic workers as “others,” who do not deserve better pay or working conditions. Work conditions are informal, leaving ample room for employers to use personal preferences and biases to enter decisions about hiring, pay, and the treatment of their domestic employees. Scholarship on domestic labor illustrates the ubiquity of the intersection of race, gender, and class in shaping the opportunities and experiences of domestic workers and their employers. This scholarship has generally relied on qualitative historical or in-depth interview studies

(Rollins 1985; Glenn 1986, 1992; Thornton Dill 1988; Romero 1992, 1999; Kousha 1995; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila 1997; Momsen 1999; Anderson 2000; de la Luz Ibarra 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Parreñas 2001; but see Milkman et al. 1998). As Parreñas (2001, p. 78) describes, "The hierarchy of womanhood—involving race, class, nation, as well as gender—establishes a work transfer system of reproductive labor among women, the international system of caretaking."

Domestic work directly illustrates the links between privilege and disadvantage. Relying on domestic workers (often racial and ethnic minority immigrant women) who earn low wages allows middle-class men and women (often White and American-born) to earn more in the labor market (Glenn 1992, 1999). Romero (2002) points out that workers who care for their employers' children often do so at the direct expense of their own children, who receive less of their own parents' time. Although domestic workers make life easier for their employers, they earn extremely low wages and rarely receive benefits, labor long hours doing physically demanding work, and struggle to care for their own families. The experiences of domestic workers provide stark examples of the stresses of the interrelatedness of privilege and disadvantage.

Global restructuring has played a key role in creating a pool of immigrant women workers who perform housework and childcare for extremely low wages. Across the globe, as neoliberal structural adjustment policies imposed by organizations such as the World Bank create harsh economic conditions for workers, these workers immigrate to wealthier countries in hopes of greater economic opportunity (Chang 2000, Momsen 1999, Parreñas 2001). At the same time, globalization has created more high-paying professional jobs in the United States, stimulating the demand for low-paying jobs that service the needs of professional workers (Anderson 2000; Chang 2000; de la Luz Ibarra 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994, 2001; Momsen 1999; Morris et al. 1994; Parreñas 2001; Sassen 1988, 1991, 1998; Zentgraf 2001). Once primarily filled by American-born racial and ethnic minority women, these jobs now increasingly draw on the labor of immigrant men and women (de la Luz Ibarra 2000, Fernandez-Kelly & Sassen 1995, López-Garza & Diaz 2001a, Sassen 1988, Vernez 1999).⁹ Domestic work, such as housecleaning and caring for children, has "left the hands of wives and mothers and has entered the global marketplace" (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001, p. xii). Indeed, beyond North America, domestic work has expanded in Europe, the Pacific, industrializing countries in Asia, oil-rich Middle Eastern countries, and large cities in Africa and Latin America; domestic workers are drawn from various parts of the globe to meet these needs, creating an "international division of reproductive labor" (Anderson 2000, Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001, Momsen 1999, Parreñas 2001).

⁹This change is in part due to the favorable impact of measures such as the Civil Rights Act on the opportunities of American-born racial and ethnic minorities. Although many American-born racial and ethnic minority workers still face limited economic opportunities, the lowest-paying jobs have increasingly gone to immigrants.

Class, gender, race/ethnicity, and nationality are all embedded in the relationships between domestic workers and their employers.¹⁰ Employers are clearly advantaged by class relative to the workers, who daily witness differences in opportunities and experiences. Workers also face particular class dislocations. For example, many immigrants come from more privileged class backgrounds in their home countries, as the poorest workers do not have the resources to emigrate (de la Luz Ibarra 2000, Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001, Parreñas 2001).¹¹ However, their employers do not respect their workers' experiences and backgrounds, in part because of the superiority they derive by treating their workers as inferiors (Rollins 1985, Romero 1992).

Gender is also germane. Employers justify low wages for women workers by assuming that women are not breadwinners. Gender subordination also colors the relationship between domestics and their employers—even as employers are generally women [women employers remain responsible for domestic work as it is (devalued) women's work, even as they employ other women to handle the work]. As Rollins (1985, p. 186) argues, "The female employer, with her motherliness and protectiveness and generosity, is expressing in a distinctly feminine way her lack of respect for the domestic as an autonomous, adult employee." Employers use this maternalism and the emotional nature of caretaking work to further exploit workers (Anderson 2000; Glenn 1986, 1992, 1999; Rollins 1985; Romero 1992; Thornton Dill 1988). Domestic workers also must transgress gender norms of caretaking for their own families, even as they care for their employers' families (Chang 2000, Glenn 1999, Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila 1997, Parreñas 2001). Domestic workers address these conflicts by critiquing their employers for selfishly not adhering to gender norms of caretaking for their families while seeing themselves as selflessly breaking such norms in order to financially support their families (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila 1997).

Race and ethnicity, as well as nationality and citizenship, also shape the experience of domestics and their employers. Employers may justify exploitatively low wages arguing that immigrants are better off in the United States earning low pay than in their home countries. Many employers develop hierarchies of racial and ethnic preference, for example, preferring to employ Latina immigrants because they are outside White middle-class English-speaking circles. Whereas American-born

¹⁰Milkman et al. (1998) discovered that they can predict 57% of the variation in the extent of domestic service employment (for 100 large metropolitan areas in the United States) by including measures for the percentage of African Americans and Latinas in the female labor force, the percentage of foreign-born in the female labor force, mothers' labor force participation (with children 6 years old or younger), and the household income inequality ratio. Although this model suggests that race, ethnicity, gender processes, and class inequality play critical roles in explaining the expansion of domestic work, it does not examine the intersection between these factors.

¹¹Some transnational domestic workers employ their own domestic workers to care for their families in their home countries, creating even more complicated hierarchies of privilege (Parreñas 2001).

African-American women once dominated domestic work, employers often prefer immigrants as more “docile” and easier to manipulate. Similarly, U.S. employers are more hesitant to employ Filipinas, who tend to be well educated and fluent in English, and therefore viewed as “uppity” (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001, Parreñas 2001). Employers may also have different expectations for domestic workers based on race/ethnicity—for example, they expect that White nannies watch children, whereas Latina nannies also clean (de la Luz Ibarra 2000, Romero 1992, Wrigley 1995). Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001) also illustrates that domestic workers absorb hierarchies of racial and ethnic preference—often preferring to work for Whites rather than other racial or ethnic minorities.

However, it is the intersection of race/ethnicity, gender, class, citizenship status, and other factors that help explain the extent of the exploitation that these workers face. Romero (1992, p. 15) notes “class, race, ethnic, and gender hierarchies are reproduced in the home and create oppressive working conditions.” Because domestic work is often not viewed as “real work” but as unskilled and “natural” women’s labor, employers feel justified in paying low wages (de la Luz Ibarra 2000). Yet, the racial/ethnic background and citizenship status of domestic workers intersects with their gender, as employers believe that these workers deserve less than White and American-born women workers owing to their other status as racial and ethnic minorities and immigrants. Employers then use ideologies of race, ethnicity, citizenship, and gender to justify exploiting women of color. Indeed, employers often completely disregard the employment laws governing pay, taxes, working conditions, and benefits that protect workers but are rarely enforced for domestic workers (Chang 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Romero 1992, 1999; Rosales 2001). As Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001, p. 12) argues, “The problem of paid domestic work not being accepted as employment is compounded by the subordination by race and immigrant status of the women who do the job.” The intersectional approach also illustrates that the higher living standards of White middle-class women have depended on the lower living standards and exploitation of racial/ethnic minority and immigrant women (Glenn 1992, 1999).

Therefore, domestic work can illustrate the ubiquitous nature of race, gender, and class intersections. From a multiple jeopardy perspective, race/ethnicity, gender, class, and citizenship are compounded, so that poor immigrant ethnic minority women encounter greater degrees of disadvantage (King 1989). Yet, even within domestic work, hierarchies of inequality may be more complex than might first appear. For example, there is important variation in pay, flexibility, and the amount of autonomy that domestics experience in their jobs—particularly depending on whether workers are live-ins, live-outs, or housecleaners (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001, Romero 1992). Indeed, as immigrant workers become more established, they may move from more exploitative live-in positions to more flexible and well-paid positions as housecleaners. Similarly, American-born racial and ethnic minority women have moved from domestic work positions to service sector work in restaurants, laundries, and similar establishments, work which is still devalued, but perhaps less exploitative (Glenn 1992, Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). If disadvantage diminishes

over time for those working in the domestic work labor market, such experiences may also illustrate the conditionality of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and citizenship intersections.

Domestic work represents the underside of the U.S. labor market. Protective workforce regulations governing pay, working hours, and benefits are often not enforced, and workers face extreme levels of exploitation. It does not appear to be accidental that these positions are filled by the groups that face multiple jeopardies—immigrant women of color. Of course, findings regarding the intersection of race and gender in domestic labor cannot be generalized to the rest of the labor market. Yet, even in these jobs, it is important to recognize the variation in levels of exploitation in order to develop explanations and strategies for change.

CONCLUSIONS

The view that some groups have power and privilege in society based on their social location—race, gender, class, and sexual orientation—runs counter to the predominant neoclassical economic theory of labor markets, which suggests that any differences are due to variations in human capital. Yet, sociological research clearly shows that accounting for education, experience, and skill does not fully explain significant differences in labor market outcomes. Social location matters. For sociologists, the question is how processes such as race and gender play out.

Although numerous studies point out the impact of gender and race on labor markets (Reskin 2000), and theorists posit the importance of the intersection of gender and race (Baca Zinn & Thornton Dill 1996, Collins 1999b), there has been less empirical research that systematically analyzes the impact of the intersection of race and gender on labor market experiences. An intersectional approach expects that race and gender combine to create distinctive opportunities for all groups. Focusing on the intersection of gender and race provides a fruitful avenue for understanding inequality in the labor market. This scholarship is already revising and enriching our thinking about gender and race. For example, we cannot claim that men earn more than women when White women outearn Black men (Browne 1999). Specificity is critical to complete, effective, and useful analyses of inequality in labor market outcomes.

There are many theoretical, conceptual, and methodological challenges to using an intersectional approach. Intersections involve multiple comparisons and multi-dimensional conceptualizations that can be difficult to comprehend. Researchers often fall back on conventional theories that are conceptually more elegant, even though they do not adequately represent the complexity of labor market processes. Methodologically, researchers often hold one aspect (such as gender) constant, so that their comparisons are more manageable. However, intersectionality calls for more than performing separate analyses by race and gender groups and applying traditional theories to interpret the results. We must construct new theories that more sufficiently address the complex processes through which social categories influence economic fortunes. To this end, there is much work to be done, both in terms of theorizing and research.

In particular, scholars must develop more middle-range theories to specify the conditions under which intersections of gender and race are exacerbated or neutralized. This could involve expanding existing theories to consider intersections more systematically. Ridgeway's attempt to use expectation states theories to link micro processes with meso and macro processes may provide one useful framework.

A consideration of intersections of race and gender also needs to move beyond a focus on women of color and pay attention to intersections for all groups. Intersectional research should be able to illustrate the dynamic and interdependent matrices of privilege and disadvantage that affect labor market outcomes across social locations. For instance, Reskin's recent theory of "positive discrimination" and the practices through which elite White men retain their privilege offers a way to look at the reproduction of privilege (Reskin 2000).

Similarly, there must be further elaboration of theories from a multiracial and multiethnic perspective. Much intersectional research currently focuses on White and Black men and women, without considering the wide array of other ethnic groups whose changing labor market experiences may shed greater light on the complexity of labor market inequalities. Analyses also often combine heterogeneous categories; yet "Latinos" and "Asians" or indeed "minorities" are not useful groupings, as they include individuals from a wide range of cultures, religions, languages, and nationalities with very different labor market experiences and opportunities. Quantitatively, new datasets such as 2000 Census data and the Multicity Study of Urban Inequality allow greater latitude in analyzing multiple groups and making multiple comparisons. However, qualitative research, which has historically allowed for more in-depth analyses of how race and gender intersections affect labor market experiences, also must be designed to collect and analyze data across a wider range of ethnic groups.

Overall, we argue that theories must stipulate the mechanisms and conditions through which gender and race intersect, and research must consistently test for intersections and their effects. As our review of existing research suggests, the evidence for the intersection of gender and race is mixed and depends on the question posed, the method employed, and the type of labor market process under investigation. Although, for example, primarily qualitative research on domestic labor illustrates a site in which race and gender clearly intersect in important ways to shape (and limit) labor market opportunities, some large-scale studies of wage inequality suggest that gender and race stratification are independent, rather than intersecting, systems of inequality.

Although it is challenging to conceptualize and measure these intersecting systems of stratification, systematic and thoughtful attention to how labor market experiences are shaped by the intersection of race and gender is our best hope of truly understanding economic inequality. Focusing on the intersection of race and gender leads to research that enriches our understanding of economic inequality and provides the most accurate conceptualizations of labor market processes. The concept of the intersection of race, gender, and class is not merely relevant to labor markets, but also holds great promise for enhancing—and perhaps transforming—sociological inquiry in a wide range of fields.

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