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Understanding Privilege and the Intersections of Class, Race, and Gender

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Rosa Lopez is a Salvadoran woman with a fourth-grade education who came to the United States more than thirty years ago. She became involved with the O. J. Simpson murder trial while working as a housekeeper for one of Simpson's neighbors. Rosa Lopez's testimony (which provided an alibi for Simpson) was given with the aid of an interpreter, and the attorney's questions to her were translated from English to Spanish. In her essay, "Rosa Lopez, Christopher Darden, and Me: Issues of Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in Evaluating Witness Credibility," associate professor of Law, Maria L. Ontiveros (1997 [1995]), counters the prevalent view that Lopez was a liar. She suggests that when one considers issues of culture, class, and gender, alternative views are possible.

During direct examination, Rosa Lopez established that O. J. Simpson's Ford Bronco was parked in front of his house after the alleged time of the murder. She also testified that she planned to leave the United States and not return. Among the reasons she cited for leaving was her fear that she would be physically harmed if she stayed in the United States. On cross-examination, prosecutor Christopher Darden attacked her credibility on several fronts. For example, he showed how Lopez had provided conflicting names, birth dates, and addresses on official documents that had been completed under the penalty of perjury. He argued that Lopez either manufactured the Bronco sighting or changed the time of the sighting at the suggestion of the defense. He argued that she had no reasonable fear for her physical safety.

Her demeanor and her answers further undermined Rosa Lopez's credibility during cross-examination. On dozens of occasions she responded to questions by saying "no me recuerdo" ("I don't remember"). Other times, she responded to Darden's questions by answering "if you say so, sir." Ontiveros notes that at times Lopez "appeared to concede or change her answers. She appeared hesitant and

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unsure. Sometimes her answers were non-responsive or did not seem to make sense" (Ontiveros 1997 [1995], 270).

A linguist sent a letter to the court pointing out that Rosa Lopez's tendency to answer people in authority by saying "if you say so, sir," is not altogether surprising given her humble background and gender expectations. Moreover, she is from a Spanish-speaking culture that is more subtle, more indirect, and less confrontational than that found in the United States. For example, while interpreters and court watchers alike agree that "no me recuerdo" translates to "I don't remember," the message Lopez sought to convey is less clear. Upon redirect examination, she confirmed that "no me recuerdo" meant "No," not "Positive yes," and that her usage of the phrase was common in El Salvador.

Darden also implied that Lopez must not have seen anything, because if she had, surely she would have mentioned it to her employers, whom she saw everyday. But even Court TV commentators recognized that this reasoning ignores the class differences between Lopez and her employers, which discourage intimate or even collegial conversations. Darden cast doubt on whether Lopez feared for her personal safety if she stayed in the United States, pointing out that no one had threatened her with physical harm. But Ontiveros raises a number of realities that Darden ignored. First, thousands of people "disappeared" during the war in El Salvador, including Lopez's own fifteen-year-old daughter. Further, Rosa Lopez had heard of the arrest of another defense witness for forgery charges. The prosecution justified Lopez's fears of arrest when they considered prosecuting her for the discrepancies on official forms. Given that being "arrested" could be life threatening in El Salvador, Rosa Lopez's fears become more understandable, even believable.

Rosa Lopez's credibility also appeared damaged because she used several different addresses. Yet among low-income people without a permanent address, it is not uncommon to give one relative's address as residence for mail even while living with another relative. Prosecutor Darden suggested Lopez was dishonest because she had used several last names, including Lopez, Reyes, and Martinez. Darden was ignorant of Latino naming conventions whereby people use the last names of both their parents, with the father's name appearing first. Moreover, "Reyes" could easily be a religious name given because Rosa Lopez was born on the Feast of the Three Kings.

Ontiveros concludes that she did not find Rosa Lopez to be totally believable, but neither did she find her to be the clear-cut liar depicted by the prosecution. The ordeal of Rosa Lopez, serves, nonetheless, to underscore the importance of "viewing all witness credibility through the lens of culture, class, and gender" (269). The case of witness Lopez also underscores the overlapping or intersecting spheres of class, race/ethnicity, and gender.



Imagine standing in the middle of an intersection with a view down several streets that run in different directions. If a friend stands at the end

of one of those streets, she can share some of the same view, but her perspective will also be different: the features that are closest will be different and she will have a view down different side streets. Now, think of those streets as being social dimensions such as class, race, ethnicity, gender, age, and sexual orientation. To add to the analogy, imagine class as being represented by the height of the buildings and the floor one is on (including, perhaps, being in a basement). The view of those streets represents a person's life experiences, worldview, and "social location." Describing a person's social location based solely on race, for example, would be incomplete and possibly confusing; it would be like saying "main street" or "third street" in a large, diverse city without specifying a cross (intersecting) street. An indication of whether the location was in a penthouse or lower floor would also have value in describing both the location and the view. Thus, an accurate description requires other markers, such as gender and class, to get a "fix" on the location.

This chapter is about recognizing that all people are at the center of multiple intersections of power, inequality, and privilege as shaped by their class, race/ethnicity, and gender. Nobody fits into any one category alone; instead, everyone exists at the intersection of many categories that shape not only their view of the world and the actions they take but also other people's view of them (Wildman (1997 [1996])). To many people, this statement seems rather obvious. Their experiences of the world and actions within it are not divided up into categories (or chapters) that represent class, race, or gender. Even for those others who may not have an intuitive sense about the correctness of understanding intersections and privilege, it is still an important way to get beyond the frustrating generalizations about how men are different from women or the sweeping statements about the differences between whites and minorities. Further, as box 6.1 demonstrates, many simple questions—both about society and criminology—require an understanding of how class, race, and gender fit interdependently together.

As straightforward as this perspective seems, scholars of crime and justice have been slow to embrace the idea of "intersectionalities" applying to all groups of people. Research tends to focus on one social dimension at a time, independent of others. Even the widely used phrase "women and minorities" does not take into account that approximately 15 percent of the population is *both* women *and* racial or ethnic minorities. Women of color cannot choose to be treated as a member of the oppressed sex one day and a member of the oppressed racial group the next. They are—and will always be—both, although race may be more important in some situations and gender in others. Being both, however, frequently leads to invisibility, which came up during the 2004 vice-presidential debates. Moderator Gwen Ifill asked both candidates about AIDS: "and not about AIDS in China or Africa. But AIDS right here in this country, where black women between the

Box 6.1. Ask a Simple Question . . .

Fact: Men are more likely than women to be murdered in their lifetime. Blacks are more likely than whites to be murdered in their lifetime.

Question: Who is more likely to be murdered, a white man or a black woman?

Fact: Blacks constitute about 12 percent of the U.S. population, and around half of those are incarcerated in state or federal prisons. Women make up over half of the U.S. population, and around 7 percent of those incarcerated are in state or federal prisons.

Question: Are black women overrepresented or underrepresented in correctional facilities?

Having trouble answering these questions?

Answers: To take the first example, logic probably made it relatively easy to figure out that black men face the highest likelihood of being murdered relative to black women and whites. The conclusion that white women face the lowest likelihood of being murdered relative to white men and blacks was probably also straightforward. But to answer the question posed with any degree of confidence requires more information on race and gender combined—e.g., for black women, white men, and so on. This information ultimately reveals that black women actually face a higher likelihood of being murdered than white men.

The second question is probably best answered “Both.” Black women are both overrepresented (as blacks) and underrepresented (as women) in prisons. Of course, black women incarcerated in a state or federal prison have more at stake than simply a choice of words. While the disproportionate incarceration of blacks has received a great deal of attention, most of this attention has been focused on black men. Similarly, a typical discussion of “women’s experiences” has all too often assumed that black women share the experiences and needs of white women. It was this situation that the editors of a classic text on black women were addressing when they named their book *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (Hull, Scott, and Smith 1982).

The issues raised by these two questions go beyond mere semantics and wordplay. This exercise speaks in a small way to the importance of considering characteristics such as race and gender not as separate constructs but as interlocking ones.

ages of 25 and 44 are 13 times more likely to die of the disease than their counterparts.” Between Dick Cheney and John Edwards, the candidates talked about AIDS in Africa, health insurance and genocide in Sudan, but “nary a word about Ifill’s original question. The ball dropped, and bounced, and rolled away as if it were invisible” (Talvi 2004).

Further, even when research does try to discuss more than one dimension, it still lacks an understanding of privilege. Many studies that look at race differences do not acknowledge white privilege and how that can shape patterns of behavior, research questions, methods, and conclusions. Likewise, many studies of gender differences do not acknowledge male privilege and how that can shape patterns of behavior, research questions, methods, and conclusions. Many criminologists, in other words, still assume that gender is relevant only when discussing women, race is relevant only when discussing blacks and other people of color, and class is relevant only when talking about the very rich or the very poor. Similarly, many people assume that sexual orientation is relevant only when applied to gays and lesbians. The point is, on the contrary, that everyone is a member of a social class, an ethnic/racial group, and everybody also brings their sexuality and gender construction to their presentation and reception of self in everyday reality.

The intersections of class, race, and gender describe a way of viewing social inequalities or privileges as interrelated and interacting. But understanding how this intersectionality manifests itself within the criminal justice system presents challenges, including basic problems that theorists are still only just starting to develop the vocabularies and conceptual frameworks for grasping the multiple meanings and implications of these crosscutting social relations (Daly 1995; Baca Zinn, Hondagneu-Sotelo, and Messner 2005). Given the complex nature of the field and the early stages of theorizing, this chapter in the third edition still does not present the crisp and definitive answers that many might desire. Instead, we again remind readers not to *essentialize* groups by assuming that all women or all blacks or all poor people are a certain way and that there is a great deal of diversity found within class, race, and gender groups. But in dealing with the complexity of differences, it is also a mistake to become so focused on differences that one misses the larger patterns of class, race, and gender privilege that are present in crime and social control.

Within feminism, for example, Donna Haraway wants to recognize diverse feminisms but not create a "self-induced multiple personality disorder" (1991, 3) that would undermine a basis for sustaining theoretical coherence and effective coalition building for feminist politics. While each person's experience is unique, there are still structured patterns even after taking into account the diversity within a category like women. Baca Zinn and her colleagues use the analogy of a prism to capture this idea: light is made up of many colors that appear to be the same, but it "is not an infinite, disorganized scatter of colors. Rather refracted light displays an order, a structure of relationships among the different colors—a rainbow" (2005, 1). As we discuss more below, currently there are quite a few studies of individual groups, and the next major task is to build better understandings of

the larger structure of relationships so that the “patchwork” of studies can be transformed into something even more understandable.

Thus, this chapter explores some of the challenges to understanding intersectionality, an awkward academic word used to capture the many dynamics involved in studying how the pieces of class, race, and gender “abrade, inflame, amplify, twist, negate, dampen and complicate each other” (in Baca Zinn et al. 2005, 7). Toward this end, the rest of the chapter is divided into three sections followed by a section on the implications. The upcoming section examines the question of whether one factor is more important than others, which would simplify the conceptual challenge if class or race or gender were always the most significant influence. The next section examines privilege, which may blind people to parts of their location and thus the dynamics involved in other situations. Finally, there is a section on the available data and techniques for modeling social phenomenon that present another challenge to the development of knowledge about intersectionality.

NO “MASTER STATUS”

Attempting to examine the interacting effects of class *and* race *and* gender is difficult, so a logical step to getting a handle on it is to ask which is the most important. If, for example, gender consistently had the most significant impact then it could be described as the *master status*. Unfortunately, though, neither class nor race nor gender is always the most important consideration. In some situations, one may be more important than the others in shaping the social reality of a situation, but existing theory is not sufficiently developed to predict what factor will be most important under what conditions. While this knowledge gap is frustrating, the less-than-perfect knowledge about how class, race, and gender interact does not undermine the advantages of trying to examine all of them rather than settling for a simpler but incomplete analysis.

Theorists who focus primarily on class or race or gender can make a strong claim about the importance of the attribute they study. Marxists, for example, point to class and argue that history is defined by the struggle between the rich and poor, the haves and have-nots. Law is a tool used by the rich, who make the law in this class warfare. Some feminists see “the battles of the sexes” as more fundamental and point to the failure of much traditional class analysis to examine women’s unpaid household work and reproductive labor (which makes it difficult to place them in the class structure, as noted in chapter 5). Law tends to have a patriarchal bias because men tend to make the law and are the majority of judges. Others would ar-

gue that race is fundamental because it has been the basis of genocide (see chapter 7), slavery, and the Nazi Holocaust; chapter 4 noted that American history has included a succession of exploited minorities—blacks, Asians, Native Americans, etc. Laws made by the white majority defined the slave owner's property rights, reaffirmed segregation, and established the basis for the criminal justice system to police minorities—especially to maintain social control over excess labor. All three positions make important and strong claims, which is why this book highlights class, race, and gender. Yet, when combined the arguments do not support a claim that one factor is *always* the most important, so the emphasis must be on understanding how they work together.

To take a concrete example, consider the case of a minority congressman, Representative Harold E. Ford from Tennessee. Under many circumstances, being a member of Congress is the most important aspect of his interactions, so class would be the primary status (remember that class includes status as well as actual salary). But when he was stopped by a police officer at the airport in Washington, D.C., race was the important factor as even the congressman was affected by a version of Driving While Black. Ford said the officer "demanded to see identification, and when I showed it to him, he couldn't believe it was my car and that I was a member of Congress. . . . Finally, he let me go. No apology or nothing. It really hurt me. If I'm treated like this, I can imagine how folks who don't have access to the things I do as a member of Congress are treated" (Samborn 1999). In this situation, race was the reason for the stop and was so significant that the officer did not feel an apology was necessary even after discovering he had stopped a member of Congress. To his credit, though, Ford is aware that intersections are important and that in other situations being a member of Congress provides a privilege and access to power that other minorities do not have.

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PRIVILEGE

As pointed out in each of the chapters on class, race, and gender, privilege makes inequalities seem "natural" and blinds people to many social dynamics. The rich are less likely to appreciate structural barriers to class mobility; male privilege will affect how men view gender equality; and white privilege will affect how whites view and understand racial issues. (Other races can also have privilege because there is a hierarchy of racial groups—consider people from Japan or India compared to those from African or poorer South American countries.) As we noted in the previous chapter on gender, women can draw attention to male privilege, but white women need to be aware of white privilege. Thus, researchers argue that social relations are a complex

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matrix of domination and oppression with few “pure” victims and few “pure” oppressors as people may be more or less privileged in relation to their multiple identities (Hill Collins 1990, 2004).

Further, class, race, and gender are only the starting point for understanding privilege. For example, the Social Work Code of Ethics requires those engaged in the provision of services to understand their clients in ways that include but are not limited to “race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, and mental or physical disability” (in Leighton and Killingbeck 2001). This statement is part of a larger requirement to understand diversity and oppression, so the National Association of Social Workers recognizes that privilege can potentially exist in all those areas. Finally, even those who are oppressed in multiple ways in the United States can still be privileged by living in the First World as a member of a superpower that uses its economic and military strength to maintain its “top dog” status.

Box 6.2 elaborates on the notion of privilege by examining some of the overlapping class, race, and gender privileges for a middle-class white male. Readers who do not fall in this category can still identify aspects of privilege they may share. The focus of attention should be on the idea of *privilege* rather than classism, racism, and sexism (Krisberg 1975; McIntosh 1997 [1988]; Wildman and Davis 1997). These “isms” and other forms of systematic discrimination would not exist if some people in the social order and hierarchy did not benefit from them. Also, discussions of the “isms” are much more common than candid discussions of privilege, but they may contribute to the very problems they identify by individualizing what is a systemic problem of power and inequality. For example, calling someone a racist or a sexist lays the blame on the individual rather than the cultural, social, and legal mechanisms that support and reinforce these expressions of racism and sexism. As a consequence, instead of being concerned about institutionalized racism and sexism, whites and men tend to focus on how to avoid the respective labels of racist and sexist while simultaneously benefiting from their privileged position in relation to these “isms” the labels refer to.

To the extent the “isms” discourse remains necessary, people should realize that patterns of domination and subordination are not interchangeable. In other words, someone subordinated under one form of discrimination or oppression is not similarly situated to someone under another form. This would mean, for example, there is a difference between a black or brown male subject to racial prejudice and a white, a black, and a brown female subject to sexual stereotypes; white women who view themselves as oppressed under sexism are in a privileged position based on heterosexism and racism. Drawing attention to a matrix of privilege and oppression is more complex but also more potentially productive because it highlights

Box 6.2. You Know You're Privileged When . . . (Part 3)

In keeping with this section's focus on intersectionality, we have expanded on the forms of white privilege discussed in chapter 2 and male privilege discussed in chapter 3. This list attempts to identify some of the specific characteristics of middle-class, white male privilege:

- People who meet me for the first time will assume that I have a regular job and no criminal record.
- I get praise from women friends and colleagues when I demonstrate that I can cook, clean, or care for small children.
- If someone needs help with a technical activity such as setting up a new computer with necessary hardware or software, they assume I have the expertise and can be trusted with the responsibility.
- When making a major purchase, such as a car or a home, it will be assumed that I not only have the means to make such a purchase but also that I understand the business aspects of it, such as mortgage point and amortization.
- When I wear expensive clothing or jewelry or drive an expensive car, I will be treated as though I obtained these goods through the fruits of my own legitimate labor rather than through illegal activity or my association with a sexual intimate.
- If I am a parent of small children who works long hours outside the home, people will perceive me as a good provider who only wants the best for my family, rather than as someone who puts career above family or is otherwise a faulty, absentee parent.
- In the event I am assaulted while walking home at two in the morning, no one will assume I was involved in an illicit business transaction that went bad or blame me for being out late at night.
- If I am an attorney scheduled to appear in court, I can be reasonably confident as I enter the courthouse that I will not be mistaken for a secretary, court reporter, or defendant.
- At work, no one will imply that I got my job based on my race or sex.

the benefits of the current system for different groups as well as the ideological blinders that may prevent individuals from seeing those benefits.

As one of many examples, while there is still some public debate on "affirmative action" and admission to colleges and universities, there is relatively no mention of "legacy admissions." A study of all law school admissions found that twice the number of whites as blacks got into law schools on the basis of alumni preference, an elegant essay, or recommendations from powerful people (Wightman 1997). These students—largely white and of higher class—would not have been admitted on grades and test

scores alone. These legacy admissions favor children of influential alumni or donors over other applicants—sometimes twice as many students were admitted through legacy admissions than through affirmative action (Paddilla 1997, 2). Significantly, legacy students are perceived as deserving rather than unfairly privileged. However, many view students admitted under affirmative action as having received an undeserved advantage. In the case of legacies, nobody shouts “continued discrimination”; in the case of affirmative action, many shout “reverse discrimination.”

Being aware of privilege is an important first step. Going further requires reading and seeking out knowledge “from the margins”; that is, created by the marginalized groups. This material relates experiences that more privileged groups do not have and may include theorizing about those experiences that are not recognized as valid “knowledge” or “truth.” As Dorothy Smith discusses in her chapter “Women’s Experience as a Radical Critique of Sociology” (1990), the insider’s experience—“an experience distinctively of women, though by no means the experience of all women”—furnishes the basis for a critical standpoint. It can expose privilege in the existing bodies of knowledge, the creation of new languages, and in the methods, practices of knowing, and political strategies. Ideally, this knowledge should not be collected into a sociology of women but should “bring us to ask how a sociology might look if it began from a woman’s standpoint and what might happen to a sociology that attempts to deal seriously with that standpoint” (1990, 12).

Reading and listening to voices “from the margins” does not require an uncritical acceptance as truth of whatever oppressed people write, but readers should approach marginalized knowledge with an awareness that privilege will color their willingness to see other truths—especially when it critiques their privilege, which people prefer to see as “natural” and just. The point of such discussions and writing should not be to make people feel guilt over privilege, because that is rarely the basis for a productive reaction and sustainable change. Rather, the point should be to raise awareness about privilege so that the person is in a better position to participate in the creation of a more equal and inclusive society through individual or collective actions.

DATA AND MODELING

A final challenge to studying intersections relates to the lack of complete data for systematic comparisons and the limitations of many models used to study social dynamics. It is simply not possible to discuss every permutation of class, race, and gender: simply examining “only” the upper, middle, and lower classes, two genders, and white and nonwhites would result in

some thirty-six possible class, race, and gender offender-victim combinations (Lynch 1996). Describing these soon becomes too complex a process to be practical or meaningful, and many reports cannot include tables covering all these variations.

More fundamentally, though, important aspects of the data most needed to make many basic comparisons are lacking. Consider the table from chapter 4 on unemployment and race: unemployment data for Native Americans came from a separate source, and unemployment rates by race and gender were not reported. Further, common reference publications like the Census Bureau's annual *Statistical Abstract of the United States* contain no data on class. While such a publication cannot include all statistics about the United States, it does report that the per capita consumption of asparagus has risen from 0.3 pounds in 1980 to 1.1 pounds in 2006—but the percent of wealth owned by the top 1 percent of the country is not reported (2009, table 210). In studying crime, the FBI's *Uniform Crime Reports* contain no arrest or other information broken down by Hispanic ethnicity.

Even when race data are fully collected, some of the five categories are relatively small, so they get collapsed into "other" or omitted totally. Various chapters have already noted how internally heterogeneous racial categories can be, and adding together Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and nonwhite Latinos creates a category so diverse it defies interpretation. Reports from governmental agencies typically use panethnic/racial categories such as black, Hispanic, and white (occasionally Asian and Native American) that mask great variations along generation, class, language, gender, and ethnicity lines within each of these groups. Also, government agencies tend to treat race and gender as separate variables rather than as overlapping social locations. Even reports published by the Bureau of the Census, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Justice seldom present breakdowns by race and gender simultaneously that would permit readers to compare, for instance, the offenses committed by white men to those committed by white women.

Another barrier to understanding intersections in relation to crime and justice is that most academic and government sources on criminal justice information reduce the social relations of class, race, and gender to static, categorical variables. With the widespread availability of computers and statistical software, researchers increasingly attempt to isolate specific effects of class, race, and gender on, say, a person's likelihood of being arrested or incarcerated. These mostly quantitative attempts to disaggregate effects come at the expense of understanding how these structuring factors interact with one another to yield, for example, *gendered racism* in a myriad of forms and shapes. That is to say, gendered racism is not the effect of simply adding gender to racism, nor is *racialized sexism* the product of simply adding race to sexism. Rather, each of these variables has a separate effect and is

dependent on context, so their multiple combinations are likely to occur in complex ways not captured in a model based on $1 + 1 = 2$.

Furthermore, the emphasis on quantitative methods and statistical analyses has resulted in a tendency among academics to conduct research from the assumption that we can "hold all else constant." For example, "What is the likelihood that a woman will be sent to prison, and how does that compare with the likelihood of a man being sent to prison if we hold constant prior record and offense seriousness?" But while holding all else constant and controlling for legal and extralegal characteristics make sense in a regression equation, it bears little semblance to the lives of the people who are represented by the variables. Moreover, when it comes to these interacting variables, Currie (1985, 149) has observed, "where both historical and current forces have kept some minorities disproportionately trapped in the lowest reaches of the economy, the distinction between economic and racial inequality itself is in danger of being uselessly abstract." But even though it is common knowledge that racial discrimination means blacks have lower income, researchers "control" for income to estimate the amount of racial discrimination, and the results of this sophisticated statistical control end up minimizing the amount of discrimination under the assumption that race and class are not related.

Using interactive terms, additional variables, and the incorporation of nonlinear or reciprocal dynamics has assisted quantitative analyses, but the fundamental problem is conceptual, not statistical. The lack of a consistent master status means the importance of class, race, and gender are quite fluid in ways that theory cannot yet capture. Much of the scholarship that best helps us understand how intersections play out in the social world tends to be qualitative, descriptive, and narrative, emphasizing the contextual aspects of people's day-to-day existence. Hence, we believe that qualitative studies, in combination with quantitative data, are best suited for demonstrating the nuanced meanings of class, race, gender, and their intersections. Here, the task is to go beyond what Baca Zinn and colleagues (2005) call the "patchwork quilt" phase of study, in which difference is acknowledged as important but done by "collecting together a study here on African American women, a study there on gay men, a study on working-class Chicanas, and so on."

IMPLICATIONS

A challenge remains to sort out the complex ways in which class, race, and gender simultaneously structure people's actions and others' reactions to them and to understand the complex ways in which these hierarchies are used to either sustain or resist the prevailing systems of inequality and privi-

lege. Baca Zinn and colleagues (2005, 6) give an example of how women benefit from "their race and class position and from their location in the global economy, while they are simultaneously restricted by gender":

Such women are subordinated by patriarchy, yet their relatively privileged positions within hierarchies of race, class and global political economy intersect to create for them an expanded range of opportunities, choices and ways of living. They may even use their race and class advantage to minimize some of the consequences of patriarchy and/or to oppose other women.

Nevertheless, the theoretical frameworks and orientations are still works in development that make sense of these situations in general and in criminology (see the introductory chapter section on studying criminal justice as a system and an apparatus). These attempts are further impeded by the shortage of official information that describes the distribution of social benefits and harms along class, race, and gender combined, not separately. Even with the limited information available, though, indicators of political, economic, and physical well-being indicate that social goods are not evenly distributed but rather are concentrated among the upper-class white men while poor racial and ethnic minority women incur the greatest social costs.

Nonetheless, the intersections of class, race, and gender in relation to inequality, privilege, and wealth/poverty may be further complicated by additional variables such as sexuality and marital status, or household living arrangements including cohabitation, once married, and serial marriages. For example, a nationally representative panel survey from 1979 to 2004 and a life-course of different group experiences revealed that whites generally had the most accumulated household wealth and that Hispanics also had more wealth than blacks (consistent with the tables from chapters 3 and 4 as well as the figures from chapter 5). This study revealed that whites' unadjusted average net worth was considerably more than blacks or Hispanics regardless of whether the cohabitation history was one of "directly married" (\$160,000), "spousal cohabitation" (\$160,000), "one-time cohabitation" (\$162,000), or "serial cohabitation" (\$158,500). But Hispanics' net worth was a bit more than blacks with respect to both spousal cohabitation (\$60,000 to \$58,000) and serial cohabitation (\$61,000 to \$57,000), and significantly more when directly married, \$100,000 to \$57,500. Yet conversely, the net worth of one-time cohabitating blacks was \$60,500 compared to \$57,500 for Hispanics (Painter and Vespa 2008, 10). The authors conclude "that race and ethnicity are associated with qualitatively different cohabitation experiences due to marriage markets, attitude, and non-marital childbearing" (Painter and Vespa 2008, 2).

While criminology has had a long-standing interest in class, only in the past thirty to forty years has this interest in social difference and privilege

been extended to include race and gender; some argue that now the previous interests in class have almost been forgotten. In any event, the attention to the intersections of these social dimensions is an even more recent development. Since the late eighties, an increasing number of scholars have recognized the problems inherent in assuming that all women or all members of a particular race or sex, for example, stand on a similar footing.

Among the most promising of developments has been a focus on the ways in which class, race, and gender are not only social constructs but also are processes involving creative human actors. Structured action theory in particular highlights the ways in which our dominant cultural conceptions of doing masculinity and femininity intersect with the physical body, racial category, and social class, and how these relations, in turn, shape crime and justice. Hence, whether addressing the needs of victims, offenders, or criminal justice workers, we must not assume that "same treatment" is "fair" treatment, because too often equal treatment is defined by a male norm or reflects white, middle-class biases and ignorance of the challenges faced by poor men and women of color.

In evaluating proposed policies and legislation, for example, we should take care to consider their impact on people occupying a range of social locations rather than, for instance, assuming all women face the same challenges in leaving an abusive partner. We should ask: What is this program, policy, or law supposed to accomplish? How will it actually be implemented? What are the ramifications for historically marginalized groups? Upon what assumptions is it based? Who is included, and who is left out? What can be done to improve on this effort (S. Miller 1998; Renzetti 1998)?

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. From reading the opening narrative, how did class, race, and gender play into her testimony and the "credibility" of her testimony?
2. Explain how the intersectionalities of class, race/ethnicity, and gender apply to everybody, including men and women, whites, people of color, straights, and gays.
3. What is meant by "master status"? Do you agree with the authors that there is no *consistent* master status? Why or why not?
4. How does privilege impact the study of intersections? Specifically, what privileges do you think are most important for you to understand in approaching the study of class, race, and gender? What other types of privilege discussed in the chapter may also be important? Why?
5. What concerns do the authors have about data to fully study intersections, and how do they critique quantitative models of intersections?

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