Money, Benefits, and Power: A Test of the Glass Ceiling and Glass Escalator Hypotheses

By
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This article explores the manner in which race, ethnicity, and gender intersect to produce inequality in wages and employer benefits among "workers" (employees with no job authority), "supervisors" (employees with broad supervisory responsibilities), and "managers" (employees who can hire/fire and set the pay of others). Using data uniquely suited to examine these relationships, the author finds that, contrary to the glass ceiling hypothesis, the white male advantage over women and minorities in wages and retirement benefits generally does not increase with movement up the authority hierarchy net of controls. Instead, relative inequality remains constant at higher and lower levels of authority. However, in nontraditional work settings where white men report to minority and female supervisors, there is evidence that a glass ceiling stifles women and minorities while a glass escalator helps white men. Instead of representing mutually exclusive processes and outcomes, glass ceilings and glass escalators may actually overlap in certain employment contexts. The implications of these results for future analyses of workplace inequality are discussed.

Keywords: wages; employer benefits; glass ceiling; glass escalator; job authority; intersectionalism

In the past quarter-century, two dominant metaphors have come to symbolize the processes and outcomes associated with workplace inequality: *glass ceilings* and *glass escalators*. While originally conceived as blocked promotional

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opportunities for women in the corporate hierarchy (Hymowitz and Schellhardt 1986), the concept of the glass ceiling has now been extended to include not only women but also racial minorities, and not employees only at the upper levels of corporations but throughout the lower and middle occupational ranks as well (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission 1995). Despite the glass ceiling metaphor's popularity and its influence on the way workplace inequality is understood, social scientific evidence as to whether it exists has produced two schools of thought. On one hand, opponents argue that general inequality may exist between women and men (Baxter and Wright 2000; Wright, Baxter, and Birkelund 1995; Morgan 1998) and between white men and women and racial minorities specifically (Zeng 2011), but they claim the disparities do not necessarily increase with movement up the authority hierarchy as the glass ceiling hypothesis implies. One researcher siding with this position has even gone as far as to call the glass ceiling idea a "myth" (Zeng 2011). On the other hand, a larger body of literature has documented the presence of a glass ceiling for women relative to men (Cotter et al. 2001; Huffman 2004; Jacobs 1992; Maume 1999, 2004; Morrison and Glinow 1990; Reskin and McBrier 2000; Reskin and Ross 1992), and for racial minorities and white women relative to white men (Elliott and Smith 2004; Maume 2004; Smith n.d.). These studies show increasing inequality between groups from lower levels of an outcome variable (e.g., authority, wages, managerial transitions) to higher levels.

Needless to say, the battle to prove or disprove the existence of glass ceiling inequality in the United States is a "winner take all" proposition. Understandably, the very idea that the glass ceiling is a myth would come as a major shock to students of workplace inequality, policy proponents, diversity advocates, practitioners, and scholars. After all, if there is no glass ceiling, the countless millions of dollars spent to dismantle it, the policy and legal prescriptions designed to combat it, and the research dollars set aside to study it may have all been for nought. The stakes are high indeed.

With less fanfare and far less empirical scrutiny, the concept of the glass escalator has influenced the way social scientists have come to understand the differential workplace rewards men and women receive when they work in predominantly female occupations (Budig 2002; Huffman 2004; Hultin 2003; Maume 1999; Williams 1992, 1995). Drawing on Rosabeth Moss Kanter's seminal work *Men and Women of the Corporation* (1977), Christine Williams (1992, 1995) argued, contrary to Kanter's theory of tokenism, that male tokens working in female-dominated jobs do not experience the same kind of discrimination women face when they are tokens working in male-dominated jobs. In fact, Williams argued that men working in female-dominated jobs (e.g., nurses, elementary school teachers, librarians, and social workers) experience a certain amount of favoritism at the point of hire and in promotions to higher-paying, more prestigious positions.

While less voluminous than glass ceiling inquiries, quantitative tests of the glass escalator hypothesis have also produced mixed results, with some studies providing evidence in support of the hypothesis (Huffman 2004; Hultin 2003; Maume 1999)

while others show evidence to the contrary (Budig 2002; Snyder and Green 2008). One of the major limitations of past quantitative inquiries into this matter is the general impression that the glass escalator lifts all men (regardless of color) in female-dominated jobs to higher-paying positions with more authority. This assumption is contrary to a recent claim that glass escalators are both racialized and gendered such that white men are more likely than minority men to benefit from working in female-dominated jobs (Wingfield 2009). Thus, the second major goal of this article is to provide a formal test of this proposition. Specifically, I extend the glass escalator literature in four ways. First, I examine whether glass escalator inequality can be extended beyond female-dominated jobs to environments in which white men report to women and minority supervisors versus white male supervisors. Second, drawing a hypothesis from intersectional theory, I test the assumption that the glass escalator is both gendered and racialized—meaning that its exclusive benefits accrue only to white men and to not black men and Latinos. Third, I add employer-sponsored benefits to a traditional wage analysis of glass escalator effects, which enables an assessment of workplace inequality that takes into account the total compensation package. Finally, this study examines the possibility that glass ceilings and glass escalators are not necessarily mutually exclusive entities (Maume 1999; Williams 1992). If so, then *glass escalator* evidence should be marked by a clear advantage in wages and employer benefits for white men (relative to women and minorities) when they are employed in nontraditional work settings—such as when they report to women and minority supervisors. Under such circumstances, the advantage white men experience, relative to women and minorities, should increase with movement up the authority hierarchy as the *glass ceiling* hypothesis implies.

Background

Glass ceilings and glass escalators symbolize different kinds of blocked opportunities for women and racial minorities. The emerging subfield of organizational demography sheds light on the underlying social psychology that operates within these structures to limit the life chances of women and racial minorities, while the nascent area of "intersectional" scholarship offers an explanation as to *how* race, ethnicity, and gender may intersect to forge unique labor market advantages for white men and disadvantages for minority men and women. A brief review of each perspective is offered below.

Glass ceiling inequality

Baxter and Wright's (2000) provocative proposition denying the existence of gender-based glass ceiling inequality in the United States is rooted in a cross-national study of women and men in the United States, Australia, and Sweden. Using a six-level measure of authority, the authors find "weak" evidence of a glass

ceiling for Australia and Sweden and no evidence of glass ceiling inequality in the United States. However, the authors did find significant gender differences at each stage of their authority measure, but the disparities did not increase with movement up the authority hierarchy—as the glass ceiling hypothesis implies. Much of the controversy resulting from their study stemmed from their definition of the glass ceiling, the lack of operational controls for glass ceiling inequality, and the cross-sectional nature of their data. Regarding definitional concerns, critics argued that the glass ceiling was not just about the hierarchical position of women relative to men. Instead, they noted that other dimensions of stratification should also be assessed, including income, prestige, and authority (Britton and Williams 2000). I heed this call in the present study as I employ wages and employer-sponsored benefits as chief outcome measures.

Another definitional objection quarreled with the proposition that glass ceiling inequality had to take place at higher rather than lower levels of an organization. Gender specialists Dana Britton and Christine Williams (2000) noted that the glass ceiling could also manifest itself at lower organizational levels in a manner akin to a "sticky floor." This study addresses this possibility, as it examines group differences in wages and employer-sponsored benefits among employees who are concentrated at lower to middle levels of job authority as defined by employees with no authority ("workers"), employees with broad supervisory responsibilities ("supervisors"), and employees with authority to hire/fire and set the pay of others ("managers"). Another complaint pointed to the lack of statistical controls for occupational gender segregation (Britton and Williams 2000)—an important point given that men and women are concentrated in different organizations with different hierarchical structures such that a manager in a female-dominated organization may be ranked much differently than a manager in a male-dominated organization. To this point, Britton and Williams lamented, "If the authors had controlled for the sex segregation of occupations in their analysis, they would have been able to compare similarly situated men and women in each hierarchical category" (2000, 806). One way the present study takes this issue into account is by controlling for percent female in an occupation. An additional criticism concerns the cross-sectional nature of Baxter and Wright's (2000) data. Ideally, assessments of glass ceiling inequality are better suited to longitudinal designs that allow researchers to track the career trajectories of the same incumbents over time (Cotter et al. 2001; Maume 1999, 2004; Zeng 2011). Baxter and Wright fully acknowledged the limitations of their cross-sectional data but concluded that when it comes to studying glass ceiling inequality, "cross-sectional evidence can be illuminating" (2000, 815). Additional investigations into the matter concur (Elliott and Smith 2004; Wright, Baxter, and Birkelund 1995).

The concerns about definitional clarity, statistical controls, and cross-sectionality notwithstanding, the weight of empirical evidence to date supports the presence of glass ceiling inequality in the United States. What is important is that the most convincing evidence in favor of glass ceiling inequality has proven to be quite responsive to Baxter and Wright's (2000) early critics. That is, scholars have

extended tests of glass ceiling inequality by exploiting longitudinal designs, moving beyond a strict analysis of organizational hierarchy, predicting multiple dependent variables, and adding myriad statistical controls for workplace variables that might otherwise differentiate groups—including controls for occupation-based and job-based segregation. What has survived these innovations is Baxter and Wright's basic definition of glass ceiling inequality—the idea that inequality increases from lower to higher levels of an outcome measure, be it job authority, wages, or managerial positions. With this definition in mind, there is strong evidence to support the presence of a glass ceiling in the United States, whether conceived as a barrier women face relative to men (Cotter et al. 2001; Huffman 2004; Jacobs 1992; Morrison and Glinow 1990; Reskin and McBrier 2000) or as barrier minorities and women confront relative to white men (Maume 1999; Elliott and Smith 2004; Smith n.d.). In contrast, other scholars uncover group disparities throughout levels of authority structures but no evidence that the disparities increase with movement up the authority hierarchy (Baxter and Wright 2000; Wright, Baxter, and Birkelund 1995; Zeng 2011). A chief goal of this study is to provide data that will allow us to adjudicate between these two perspectives. If glass ceiling inequality exists, then it should be represented by a progressive increase in group differences (between white men versus women and minorities) in wages and employer benefits with movement up the authority hierarchy.

Glass escalator inequality

Christine Williams's (1992, 1995) in-depth interviews with seventy-six men and twenty-three women in female-dominated professions (e.g., nurse, elementary school teacher, librarian, and social worker) yielded a provocative conclusion. In contrast to the theory of tokenism, Williams argued that male tokens who work in female-dominated jobs did not experience the same kind of discrimination women tokens experienced when they worked in male-dominated jobs. In fact, she found that men were favored in the hiring process and encouraged to pursue the most masculine jobs in female-dominated professions—jobs that offered higher pay and more authority.

Compared with the voluminous body of literature on glass ceiling inequality (see Jackson and O'Callaghan's [2009] review), far fewer researchers have tested for glass escalator effects. There is substantial support for Williams's (1992, 1995) argument rooted in qualitative assessments of the matter (see Yoder [1991] for a review). However, as with the glass ceiling hypothesis, quantitative support for the glass escalator cuts across a variety of outcome measures, including wages (Huffman 2004), internal promotions (Hultin 2003), managerial promotions (Maume 1999), perceived job-related support, and advancement opportunities (Maume 2004). This research generally shows that men (specifically white men) do not suffer the same penalties as women (and racial minorities) for their token status. Recently, Wingfield (2009) has called on researchers to consider how race intersects with gender to stifle the benefits minority men receive from working

in feminized occupations. Her study, based on seventeen semistructured interviews of black male nurses, concluded that unlike white men, black men do not get to ride the glass escalator to better-paying jobs and higher pay in the nursing profession. Maume's (1999, 2004) core findings, which may be regarded as quantitative tests of Wingfield's assumption, are largely supportive. An important contribution of Maume's work in this area is a shift in focus away from a concern for what happens in female-dominated jobs. That domain still remains salient, but it obscures the need to direct attention to other workplace conditions, such as when employees report to supervisors of a different race. On this point, Maume (2004) found that reporting to a female supervisor brought greater rewards for men than women in the form of more job-related support and career optimism—a pattern that is consistent with glass escalator effects. I extend this research to an examination of wages and employer-sponsored benefits. If glass escalator effects are present, inequity between white men and other groups should be most prevalent under anomalous work settings, such as when white men report to female and minority supervisors. If glass ceiling inequality is present, the wage and benefits disparities between white men and other groups should increase from lower to higher levels of authority.

Data

The data to test these expectations come from the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality (MCSUI). The MCSUI is a multistage, stratified, clustered area-probability design with a sampling of whites and an oversampling of minority groups (blacks and Latinos) from Atlanta, Boston, and Los Angeles. The survey was conducted from 1992 to 1994.[1] The oversampling of minorities necessitated weighting all descriptive statistics but not the multivariate analyses (see Kmec 2003).[2]

The MCSUI data are good sources for testing for glass ceiling and glass escalator inequality. First, the MCSUI's multiethnic sample of men and women enables a study of Latino men and women in addition to whites and blacks, which makes it possible to test competing theories of *how* race/ethnicity and gender affect the relationship between wages and employer benefits and authority attainment. Second, the MCSUI provides detailed information on individual-level factors, family status indicators, and a full array of important structural determinants of wages and benefits (see the appendix for all variables).

Third, the MCSUI provides data on successive levels of workplace power and information on the race and gender of immediate superiors. These factors enable a test of whether inequality in wages and benefits stems from glass ceiling inequality (i.e., increasing inequality between white men and other groups at higher levels of power) and glass escalator inequality (i.e., white men's receipt of higher compensation via wages and retirement benefits when they work in settings that are

supervised by minorities and women). Finally, the MCSUI offers data from local, urban labor markets and also job-level information that scholars now regard as strategic sites at which labor market opportunities are concentrated (Huffman 2004, 324; Kmec 2003). However, the data are cross-sectional, which eliminates the possibility of tracking the same employees throughout their career trajectory—a key criterion in some investigations of the glass ceiling (Cotter et al. 2001; Maume 2004).

Methods and Measures

Dependent variables: Wages and employer-sponsored benefits

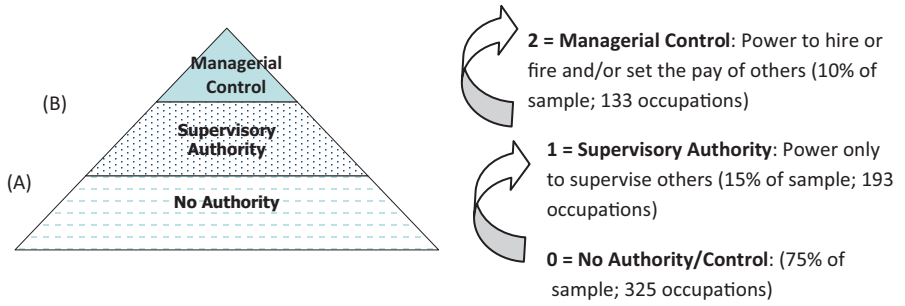
The focus here is on two components of job-level rewards: wages and employer benefits. For employer-sponsored benefits, the MCSUI survey asked respondents, "Through your job, (are/were) any of the following available to you?" Choices included "paid sick leave; hospital or health insurance for yourself; hospital or health insurance for your family or dependents; and a retirement plan." Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression is used to predict hourly wages. For employment benefits, I use logit equations predicting the odds (yes/no) of each ethnoracial and gender group having employer-sponsored retirement plans, sick leave, individual health insurance, and family health insurance relative to white men net of control factors.

Hierarchical authority

The association between wages and job authority in studies of gender and race inequality at work has been well established (see Smith's [2002] review). This research shows that job authority is positively associated with wages; men earn a higher wage return to authority than do women (Reskin and Ross 1992; Wolf and Fligstein 1979), and whites receive a higher wage return than minorities for occupying similar positions of authority net of select controls (Kluegel 1978; McGuire and Reskin 1993; Smith 1997; Wilson 1997).

While much is known about the wage–job authority link, a search for research that examines the relationship between employer benefits and job authority yielded no results. This leaves open two important questions: Are employer benefits as unequally distributed among ethnoracial and gender groups as are wages? And are there group differences in the employment benefits returns employees receive for occupying similar levels of authority? As shown in Figure 1, the authority measure is based on a three-level index of workplace power that is derived from yes/no responses to questions that come from prior sociological research on workplace authority (Wolf and Fligstein 1979). Incumbents of *managerial control* positions have the power to hire, fire, and set the pay of others. Those with *supervisory authority* have generalized supervisory responsibilities. Remaining employees

FIGURE 1
Hierarchical Measure of Job Authority (Primary Dependent Variable)



NOTE: Tests of increasing inequality compare odds of transition (A) to odds of transition (B), each relative to white men. If the relative gap grows larger from (A) to (B), there is evidence of increasing inequality with movement up the authority hierarchy, relative to white men.

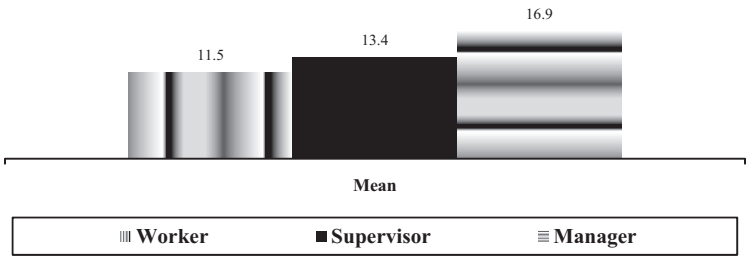
have *no authority*. This measure has been shown to be a reliable and valid measure of workplace authority (Elliott and Smith 2004).[3]

Controls

To test for whether race/ethnicity intersects with gender to forge differential wage and employer-benefit opportunities for employees, dummy variables were constructed for each ethnoracial and gender group: white men, black men, Latinos, white women, black women, and Latinas. Standard controls include individual-level and family factors (i.e., age, education, total work experience, total work experience squared, prior job-specific experience, job tenure, English speaking ability, nativity, marital status, child status, and nonspousal adult living in the household).

Several job-relevant factors are also considered, including organizational size (natural log, which is often associated with formalized bureaucratic procedures [Dobbin et al. 1993]). To test for glass escalator effects and to offer a stricter test for glass ceiling effects, in some analyses the data are stratified by whether a respondent reports to a white male supervisor or a minority/female supervisor—the latter is combined to increase sample size. In addition, the multivariate models include controls for employment sector and occupational location,[4] socioeconomic status, unionized job, weekly job tasks (face-to-face, phone, read, write, computer), and city of residents, with the latter accounting for possible between-city differences in history, economy, and labor supply (Browne, Tigges, and Press 2001). Finally, since the likelihood of possessing authority declines for both men and women with increased representation of women in an occupation (Huffman and Cohen 2004), multivariate models take into account the percent female in an occupation. The next section begins with the analysis of wage inequality and is followed

FIGURE 2
Mean Hourly Wages (in Dollars), by Authority Level (Data Are Weighted for Oversampling)



NOTE: Each category is significantly greater than the prior category at the .001 level.

by a separate analysis of employer-sponsored benefits.

Results

Do hourly wages vary by authority level?

Let us begin with a baseline analysis of whether hourly wages vary by authority level. There is ample reason to believe that managers will be paid more than supervisors who should, in turn, be paid more than workers who do not exercise any authority at all (Robinson and Kelley 1979, 43). To test this hypothesis, Figure 2 depicts mean hourly wages by authority level. The descriptive statistics indicate that wages increase steadily up the authority hierarchy from worker to supervisor to manager. Converted to full-time, year-round totals (40 hours per week for 52 weeks), workers in the sample would have mean earnings of roughly $36,239 (2011 dollars), compared with roughly $42,226 for supervisors and $53,255 for managers.[5] Each category is significantly greater than the prior category at the .001 level.[6]

Do hourly wages vary by group and authority level?

Figure 3 compares differences in mean hourly wages by group and by authority level, using white men as the comparison group. Generally speaking, hourly wages do, in fact, vary by ethnoracial and gender groups, and group differences in hourly wages are greater than wage differences by authority level. That is, without controls, group variation in wages exceeds authority wage differentials.

For example, based on full-time earnings, the average supervisor would earn $4,000 more per year than the average worker. By comparison, and assuming full-time status, the average black woman would earn $10,400 less than the

FIGURE 3
Differences in Mean Hourly Wages by Group and Authority Level (Data Are Weighted for Oversampling)

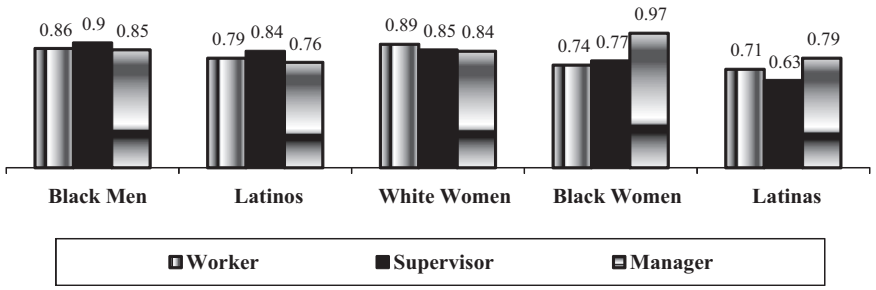
NOTE: All group differentials, relative to white men, are negative and statistically significant at the .001 level; n = 3,480.

average white man. Put another way, the white male advantage over black women is greater than the managerial wage advantage over nonsupervisory workers. Also, as shown in Figure 3, black men average about $3 less per hour than white men—without taking into account group differences in human capital. This difference is greater than the average difference between workers and supervisors generally, which is only about $2 per hour. So although wage differences by authority level are statistically significant (see Figure 2), they pale in comparison to enduring ethnoracial and gender differences. For a more rigorous assessment of these dynamics, a series of regression equations was estimated to examine how wages and authority intersect and whether group differences in wage returns to authority increase with movement up the authority hierarchy (controlling for possible group disparities in a full set of control variables).

Wages and the glass ceiling

Are these general gaps in wages relative to white men generated, at least in part, by increasing white male advantage with movement up the authority hierarchy, as glass ceiling proponents would predict? Based on a series of OLS estimates starting with controls for human capital and another model controlling for human capital plus a full array of background factors, the answer is no. That is, none of the interactions between ethnoracial/gender groups and authority level are statistically significant in the OLS estimations (models not shown), which implies, contrary to the glass ceiling hypothesis, that the observed wage gaps for the respective groups, relative to white men, do not increase with movement

FIGURE 4
Hourly Wages Relative to White Men with Full Controls



NOTE: The bars represent probabilities generated from ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models, with hourly wages regressed on an indicator for each ethnoracial/gender group, authority, and the product of the two controlling for known wage determinants and city of survey. OLS model: Hourly Wage = *a* + [Group] + [Authority Level] + [Group × Authority Level] + [years of school completed, total experience, total experience squared, previous work experience, job tenure, foreign-born, English speaking ability, age, marital status, child status, non-spousal adult in household, establishment size(logged), employment sector (public/private), socioeconomic index, occupational categories, percent female occupation, job complexity (face-to-face, phone, read, write, computer, math) + union status, city of survey (Atlanta, Los Angeles, Boston)]. The sample is restricted to employees who report to a white male supervisor, n = 1,325.

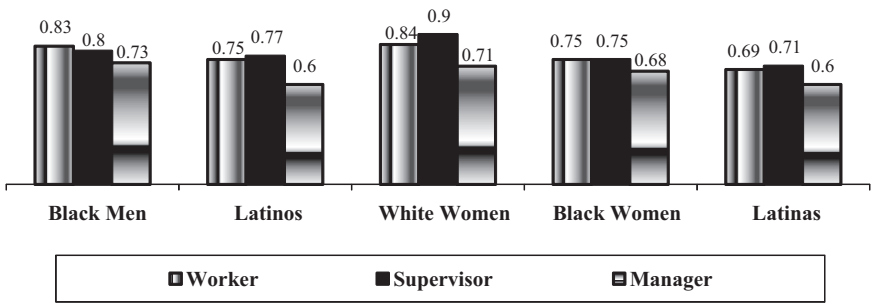
from worker to supervisory to managerial positions. Instead, the relative white male advantage remains the same at each level of authority for each ethnoracial and gender group.

White male supervisor versus female/minority supervisor wage effects

Do these patterns change in any way with the ethnoracial and gender identity of a respondent's superior? Since white men still occupy the largest share of decision-making positions, it stands to reason that glass ceiling inequalities, if present at all, should be greater for those who report to a white male superior than for those reporting to a woman or racial minority. A clear indication that such a pattern exists would mean that the wage gaps between white men and other groups working under white men should increase when moving up the authority hierarchy. If anything, the findings here suggest the very opposite. As shown in Figure 4, none of the observed wage gaps for the respective groups, relative to white men, increase with movement up the authority hierarchy, beyond what might occur by chance. Instead, consistent with Baxter and Wright (2000), the relative white male advantage remains the same at each level of authority for each group in question.[7]

However, the picture is quite different when employees report to non-white-male supervisors (Figure 5). In particular, relative to white men, Latinos,

FIGURE 5
Hourly Wages Relative to White Men, with Full Controls among Those Not Supervised by White Men



NOTE: The OLS model is the same as that depicted in Figure 4, except the sample is restricted to employees who do not report to a white male supervisor, n = 2,081. Controls for human capital are statistically significant at the .001 level.

Latinas, and, perhaps to a lesser extent, white women and black women experience increasing wage inequality from lower to higher levels of authority.[8] For black men, similar patterns are evident but not statistically significant. A comparison of Figures 4 and 5 suggests that, if anything, the white male advantage is more likely to increase with movement up the authority hierarchy outside settings supervised by white males—contrary to a strict interpretation of the glass ceiling hypothesis.

What emerges is a more nuanced pattern that is more consistent with a glass ceiling and glass escalator interpretation. This is because, even after extensive controls, white male supervisors and managers are paid better under dissimilar superiors than under white male superiors; the opposite is true for all other groups. To observe this pattern up close, consider the probabilities in Table 1. In support of both the glass ceiling and glass escalator hypotheses, the wage gaps between white men and other groups increase from supervisory to managerial authority, and the wage gaps are wider between white men and other groups in work settings where employees report to women and minorities. Among other things, this finding supports prior research showing that glass ceilings and glass escalators are not necessarily mutually exclusive phenomena (Maume 1999, 2011; Williams 1992).

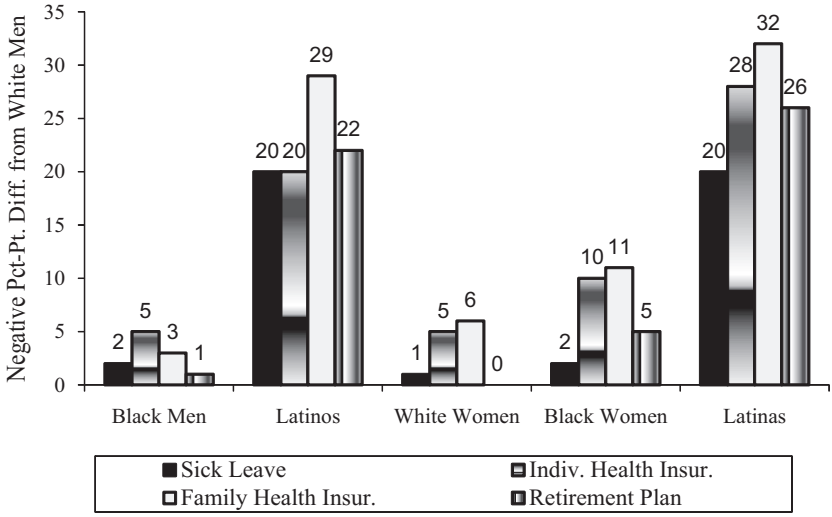
While an important piece of the compensation puzzle, wages are not the only form of remuneration valued by workers. In fact, as argued at the outset, to paint a more complete picture of the consequences of authority for workplace compensation, it must be understood that, in lieu of wages, workers routinely receive employer-sponsored benefits, which include retirement plans, sick leave, individual health insurance, and family health insurance. With the cost of health care

TABLE 1
Average Hourly Wage for Respondents Reporting and Not Reporting to a White Male Supervisor Net of Controls

	White Men		Black Men		Latinos		White Women		Black Women		Latinas	
	White Male Supervisor	Non-White Male Supervisor	White Male Supervisor	Non-White Male Supervisor	White Male Supervisor	Non-White Male Supervisor	White Male Supervisor	Non-White Male Supervisor	White Male Supervisor	Non-White Male Supervisor	White Male Supervisor	Non-White Male Supervisor
Manager	15.9	18.4	13.7	13.5	12.2	11.0	13.4	13.1	15.5	12.5	12.8	11.0
Supervisor	13.7	14.0	12.1	11.1	11.6	10.6	11.6	12.5	10.8	10.4	8.6	9.8
Worker	13.1	12.6	11.3	10.4	10.5	9.4	11.6	10.6	9.7	9.4	9.4	8.7

NOTE: Identical OLS model as in Figure 4. If supervised by a male superior, n = 1,325. If not supervised by a male superior, n = 2,081.

FIGURE 6
Comparing Probability Differences in Benefits, by Group



NOTE: All group differentials are relative to white men and negative. N = 3,291 to N = 3,456, due to missing cases.

at an all-time high, employers are increasingly transferring the burden of covering health care costs to workers. At the same time, the value of retirement benefits is constantly shrinking, causing older workers to stay on the job longer than they ordinarily would. What this means for the daily subsistence of workers is that employer benefits are a valued and increasingly scarce resource that, similar to wages, are likely to be unequally distributed by race, ethnicity, gender, and authority. The following section examines this likelihood.

Employer benefits

The absence of an extant literature that links employment benefits to job authority makes it difficult to formulate expectations about ethnoracial and gender differences in the employer benefits that workers receive for the authority positions they occupy. Notwithstanding this omission, the rising cost of health care and the fact that for-profit and public agencies are rapidly transferring health care costs to employees (Paulin and Dietz 1995) means that employer-sponsored benefits are an important, yet understudied, part of an employees' total compensation package. It comes as no surprise to learn that this shifting cost leaves low-income people and racial minorities in a particularly precarious state, as they are least able

to absorb the cost associated with proper health care (Penner 2008). Similar constraints are associated with employer-provided retirement plans. According to reports, there are many ways to save for retirement (e.g., personal savings, equity in home ownership, pension plans, and personal retirement accounts), yet blacks and Hispanics are more likely than other groups to rely on Social Security benefits (Penner 2008). This suggests that, as with wages, employer-provided benefits are yet another source of compensation in which group disparities may flourish. Is there any evidence that employer-sponsored benefits vary by group and authority level? How might glass ceilings and glass escalators factor into the matter, if at all? These questions are addressed next.

Variation in employer benefits by group and authority level

Figure 6 presents the probability of each group having four types of employer benefits. The bars represent the percentage point differences between white men and each of the other groups in the likelihood of having employer benefits. All differentials are negative, which means that white men are more likely than any other group to have sick leave, individual health insurance, family health insurance, and retirement plans. For example, the 5 percentage point differential for black men's individual health insurance means that the probability of such a benefit is 5 percentage points lower than that of white men (72 versus 77 percent), but since the difference is not statistically significant at the .05 level, the gap may very well be due to chance.

Black women are significantly different from white men with respect to individual and family health insurance, as are white women. However, compared with the other groups, the difference between Latinos/Latinas and white men in the probability of having employer benefits is astounding. The probability of Latinos/Latinas having employer benefits is between 20 and 32 percentage points lower than that of white men, and the differences are statistically significant at the .05 level for all four types of benefits. In this case, the highest differential (modal category) occurs among those with family health insurance. For example, the probability of Latinos/Latinas having family health insurance is 29 and 32 percentage points, respectively, lower than white men's. In raw percentages, 67 percent of white men have family health insurance, compared with 38 percent of Latinos and 35 percent of Latinas.

Do group differences in employer benefits increase with movement up the authority hierarchy?

If glass ceiling inequality exists, it should be represented by a progressive increase in group differences in employer benefits with movement up the authority hierarchy. And if there is more than one glass ceiling, the increasing inequality between white men and other groups should vary from one group to another. To

examine these possibilities, four logit models were generated predicting the odds (yes/no) of each ethnoracial and gender group having sick leave, individual health insurance, family health insurance, and retirement plans relative to white men. To assess what accounts for ethnoracial and gender gaps in employer benefits between white men and all other groups, a baseline model without controls was generated, followed by a model that controls for human capital differences and a final additive model that controls for human capital, additional individual-level factors, family and household characteristics, job/occupational variables, employment sector, union status, and city of residence.

The results of this exercise reveal the prominence of human capital attributes as a source of group differences in employer benefits. In particular, Latinos and white women experience increasing personal health insurance inequality, relative to white men, as they move from supervisory to managerial positions. The data show that a full 92 percent of white male managers have personal health insurance, compared with 60 and 79 percent of Latinos and white women, respectively. However, once differences in human capital are taken into account, evidence of increasing inequality disappears. With regard to family health insurance, there is evidence that Latinas experience increasing inequality, relative to white men, as they move from supervisory to managerial positions. Underlying percentages show that 86 percent of white men have family health insurance compared with only 40 percent of Latinas. However, this effect also disappears once controls for human capital are taken into account. So, contrary to the glass ceiling hypothesis, there is no evidence that group differences in employer benefits increase with movement up the authority hierarchy net of education, total work experience, total work experience squared, prior job specific experience, and job tenure.

Effects of a white male supervisor versus a non-white-male supervisor

Do the findings above vary according to whether a respondent reports to a white male supervisor versus a minority or female supervisor? To answer this question, the MCSUI sample was stratified by whether respondents report to a white male supervisor. That is, statistically, models were fitted separately for each scenario, controlling first for possible group differences in human capital (model 1) and group differences in human capital plus all other controls (model 2). If glass ceiling inequality is present, there should be evidence of increasing inequality between white men and other groups from supervisory authority to managerial control, and, in the strictest definition of glass ceiling inequality, this pattern should be most evident when employees report to a white male supervisor. Moreover, if glass escalator effects are present, inequity between white men and other groups should increase from low to high levels of authority in anomalous work settings, such as when minorities and women exercise authority over white men.

The first sets of results are straightforward and are presented without tables. Contrary to the glass ceiling hypothesis, there is no evidence of increasing group

TABLE 2
Group Differences in Retirement Benefits (Standard Errors in Parentheses)

	Ethnoracial and Gender Identity of Supervisor			
	Non-White Male Supervisor		White Male Supervisor	
Key Variables and Model Statistics (White Men as Comparison Group)	Human Capital Controls[a]	All Controls[b]	Human Capital Controls[a]	All Controls[b]
Worker	–0.851 (0.523)	–0.790 (0.559)	0.383 (0.342)	0.489 (0.389)
Manager	1.79 (1.147)	1.406 (1.178)	0.273 (0.410)	0.392 (0.459)
Black men	0.065 (0.579)	–0.005 (0.633)	–0.400 (0.509)	–0.730 (.599)
Black men × worker	0.567 (0.646)	0.674 (0.710)	0.872 (0.566)	1.219* (0.661)
Black men × manager	–3.570*** (1.302)	–3.081** (1.364)	0.737 (0.783)	1.165 (0.878)
Latino	–0.281 (0.603)	–0.348 (0.688)	0.444 (0.505)	0.224 (0.594)
Latino × worker	0.813 (0.659)	1.200 (0.736)	–0.484 (0.551)	–0.234 (0.633)
Latino × manager	–2.472** (1.311)	–2.114 (1.372)	–0.373 (0.696)	–0.168 (0.780)
White women	0.356 (0.587)	0.765 (0.636)	0.135 (0.547)	0.209 (0.646)
White women × worker	0.075 (0.647)	–0.382 (0.703)	–0.187 (0.593)	–0.153 (0.687)
White women × manager	–2.469** (1.260)	–2.331* (1.307)	0.755 (0.783)	0.778 (0.873)
Black women	–0.078 (0.526)	0.111 (0.569)	–0.171 (0.523)	–0.344 (0.598)
Black women × worker	0.491 (0.584)	0.429 (0.631)	0.312 (0.571)	0.440 (0.654)
Black women × manager	–2.112* (1.241)	–2.279* (1.282)	1.239 (1.062)	1.479 (1.142)
Latina	–0.065 (0.586)	0.394 (0.642)	–0.167 (0.782)	0.492 (0.890)
Latina × worker	0.327 (0.643)	0.240 (0.696)	0.233 (0.820)	–0.103 (0.910)
Latina × manager	–2.606** (1.322)	–2.620** (1.377)	–1.011 (1.405)	–0.444 (1.643)
Model χ^2 (*df*)	625.57 (22)	1,022.97 (45)	330.28 (22)	560.26 (45)

a.Log[Pr(Retirement Benefits$_n$)/Pr(Retirement Benefits$_{n-1}$)] = a + [Group] + [Authority Level] + [Group × Authority Level] + [years of school completed, total experience, total experience squared, previous work experience, job tenure].

b.Log[Pr(Retirement Benefits$_n$)/Pr(Retirement Benefits$_{n-1}$)] = a + [Group] + [Authority Level] + [Group × Authority Level] + [years of school completed, total experience, total experience squared, previous work experience, job tenure, foreign-born, English speaking ability, age, marital status, child status, nonspousal adult in household, establishment size(logged), employment sector (public/private), socioeconomic index, occupational categories, percent female occupation, job complexity (face-to-face, phone, read, write, computer, math) + union status, and city of residence (Atlanta, Los Angeles, Boston)].

*$p < .10$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$ (two-tailed tests).

differences, relative to white men, in either scenario (whether employees have a white male or non-white male supervisor) for sick leave, personal health insurance, or family health insurance. However, when it comes to retirement benefits, a different story emerges. The results, reported in Table 2, show that black men, Latinos, white women, Latinas, and, marginally, black women each experience increasing inequality, relative to white men, with movement from supervisor to manager in jobs overseen by someone other than a white male superior net of human capital controls.

Consequently, in this type of setting, women and racial minorities with the same human capital as their white male counterparts have substantially lower probabilities of receiving retirement benefits from their employers. As we might expect, these findings are modified somewhat once all statistical controls are taken into account, rendering the effects for white women and black women marginally significant. To observe these patterns from a different perspective, consider the probabilities in Table 3. Table 3 shows that, all else being equal, white men at the supervisory and managerial level who report to women and minority superiors are far more likely than any other group, including white men who report to white male supervisors, to have retirement benefits—and the disparities increase with movement up the authority hierarchy, as the glass ceiling hypothesis predicts.

Summary and Discussion

In the United States, ethnoracial and gender disparities in workplace processes and outcomes remain formidable obstacles to the fulfillment of a truly meritocratic system of attainment. Using wages and employer-sponsored benefits as key dependent variables, this study sought to determine whether women and minorities confront a glass ceiling at work and whether white men experience glass escalator–like advantages when they are supervised by women and racial minorities. The main findings both corroborate and extend prior research. The wage results show that relative inequality between white men and other groups remains the same at each level of authority, but there is no evidence, even net of controls, that such generalized wage inequality increases with movement up the authority hierarchy. Thus, this finding is very consistent with prior cross-sectional (Baxter and Wright 2000) and longitudinal (Zeng 2011) tests of the glass ceiling hypothesis. However, the analysis of supervisor effects broadens our understanding regarding the employment context in which glass ceiling inequality may be most operative. The data show that when employees work in settings that require them to report to minority and female supervisors, all groups, except black men, experience increasing wage inequality, relative to white men, with movement up the authority hierarchy. This pattern is very consistent with prior quantitative evidence of glass escalator inequality favoring white men working outside their traditional work settings (Hultin 2003; Maume 1999, 2011) and a glass ceiling for women and racial minorities (Huffman 2004; Hutlin 2003; Maume 1999, 2011).

When it comes to employer benefits, group disparities coalesced around retirement benefits. The data show that group differences, which are especially large and consistent for Latinos and Latinas, relative to white men, are mainly a function of group disparities in human capital. Once these differences are taken into account, Latinos/Latin as have roughly the same probabilities as white men of receiving employer-provided benefits. When these inequalities are examined

TABLE 3
Likelihood of Having Employer-Sponsored Retirement Benefits among Employees Reporting and Not Reporting to a White Male Supervisor Net of Controls

	White Men		Black Men		Latinos		White Women		Black Women		Latinas	
	White Male Supervisor	Non-White Male Supervisor	White Male Supervisor	Non-White Male Supervisor	White Male Supervisor	Non-White Male Supervisor	White Male Supervisor	Non-White Male Supervisor	White Male Supervisor	Non-White Male Supervisor	White Male Supervisor	Non-White Male Supervisor
Manager	70	94	73	38	50	32	83	71	88	64	52	37
Supervisor	54	73	41	77	50	56	59	83	47	74	46	61
Worker	65	54	72	65	41	48	64	59	65	61	49	40

NOTE: Logit model: Retirement Plan = a + [Group] + [Authority Level] + [Group × Authority Level] + [years of school completed, total experience, total experience squared, previous work experience, job tenure, foreign born, English speaking ability, age, marital status, child status, nonspousal adult in household, establishment size(logged), employment sector (public/private), socioeconomic index, occupational categories, percent female occupation, job complexity (face-to-face, phone, read, write, computer, math), union status, city of survey (Atlanta, Los Angeles, Boston)]. If supervised by a male superior, n = 1,305. If not supervised by a male superior, n = 2,063.

in different job contexts—specifically whether an employee reports to a white male superior—evidence consistent with a glass escalator–type of advantage for white men emerges once again. In sum, not only do white male supervisors and managers who report to women and minorities earn substantially more than their white male counterparts who report to white male supervisors (and their female and minority counterparts), net of all important controls, but they also have a greater probability than these groups of receiving lucrative retirement benefits, thereby extending disparities into the post-labor-market years.

Among other things, the results reported here support the contention that, just like the glass ceiling, the glass escalator is gendered and racialized (Maume 1999; Wingfield 2009). That is, white men experience a double advantage based on the fact that they possess two socially valued statuses with regard to race (white) and gender (male) (Browne, Tigges, and Press 2001). However, contrary to Budig's (2002) claim, this advantage does not necessarily extend to all work settings.

What is behind the glass escalator effects favoring white men? Three explanations seem reasonable. First, women and minority supervisors may simply yield, wittingly or unwittingly, to the normative favor white men experience as employees relative to other groups. If, as Williams (1992, 263) argued, "men take their privilege with them when they enter predominantly female occupations; [and] this translates into an advantage in spite of their numerical rarity," then not only do white men take their privilege with them to settings where they are supervised by women and minorities, but the privilege is magnified in those contexts. Second, women and minority supervisors may cater to white male subordinates to bolster the perception that they are fair and unbiased and perhaps as a talisman to ward off any accusations of reverse discrimination. Third, women and minority supervisors may favor white male subordinates to increase their own status in the eyes of their white male peers and superiors. That is, just as some mentors are partial to their most promising protégés, women and minority mentors may take a special interest in white male protégés because they possess two socially valued statuses.

Of course, additional research is needed to adjudicate between these possibilities. More tests of the glass ceiling and glass escalator hypotheses under different employment contexts are warranted. In addition to analyses that include a consideration of the total compensation package employees receive, future inquiries should explore the extent to which white male advantage is present when white men report to specific ethnoracial and gender groups. Data limitations required combining women and minority supervisors into one group. However, reporting to a white female superior may yield different rewards for white men relative to reporting to a minority female or a minority male superior. Ideally, a longitudinal design that tracks the same individuals over the course of their careers would constitute a more direct test of the ideas presented here. Despite these limitations, this study supports the contention that glass ceilings and glass escalators are alive and well in the United States.

Appendix

Descriptive Statistics on Variables Used in Analysis by Race, Ethnicity, and Gender (Weighted Data to Correct for Oversampling)

Total (N = 3,480)	White Men	Black Men	Latinos	White Women	Black Women	Latinas
Money, power, benefits						
Wage (hourly)	15.9	12.9	9.6	12.7	10.9	8.2
Wage (logged hourly)	2.7	2.5	2.2	2.4	2.3	1.9
Manager (%)	19.6	14.6	11.2	11.1	7.0	5.7
Supervisor (%)	14.6	14.4	12.9	16.2	17.3	10.8
Worker (%)	65.8	71.1	75.8	72.6	75.6	83.4
Retirement benefits (%)	69.0	69.0	42.0	65.0	60.0	38.0
Sick leave (%)	75.0	71.0	52.0	71.0	66.0	46.0
Personal health insurance (%)	83.0	75.0	60.0	72.0	67.0	51.0
Family health insurance (%)	77.0	59.0	41.0	62.0	59.0	37.0
Individual factors						
Age (years)	38.0	35.9	34.2	38.1	36.5	35.1
Education (years)	14.7	13.8	10.7	13.9	13.7	11.0
Total work experience (years)	17.2	15.3	15.9	15.1	15.1	13.6
Total work experience squared	420	339	369	328	339	303
Prior job-specific experience (0:1)	.62	.50	.45	.58	.49	.39
Job tenure (mean)	6.9	6.2	4.6	6.5	6.5	4.9
No English (0:1)	0	0	.05	0	0	.08
Fair English (0:1)	0	0	.48	0	0	.43
Good English (0:1)	1	1	.32	1	1	.34
Foreign-born (%)	5.3	23.1	68.9	7.6	6.5	69.8
Family and household factors						
Married (%)	57.4	42.2	59.2	60.9	31.7	45.1
Children (%)	32.7	36.2	48.3	43.8	43.1	63.9
Nonspouse living in household (%)	31.9	43.8	56.8	24.4	35.0	53.0
Job and organizational factors						
Log organizational size (mean)	4.6	4.6	3.6	4.5	4.7	3.9
White male supervisor (%)	68.0	42.0	40.0	43.0	27.0	14.0
Occupational indicators						
Professional/technical (%)	56.0	30.4	14.1	48.8	33.0	17.7
Sales (%)	3.3	1.4	2.3	5.7	8.9	10.1
Clerical (%)	9.3	17.6	8.5	28.9	31.8	19.5
Service (%)	7.1	23.1	16.1	9.5	19.0	19.3

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

Total (N = 3,480)	White Men	Black Men	Latinos	White Women	Black Women	Latinas
Craft/repair (%)	24.3	27.5	59.0	7.1	7.3	33.4
% female occupation	34.3	37.2	27.9	64.5	66.9	62.4
Socioeconomic index score (mean)	58.3	47.8	37.5	54.1	47.8	38.2
Weekly job task						
Face-to-face (%)	61.9	67.8	45.2	74.1	73.3	52.2
Phone (%)	63.3	56.1	28.2	72.6	70.3	42.6
Read (%)	81.5	74.5	60.5	71.6	73.8	50.0
Write (%)	64.5	48.2	35.7	65.9	54.4	36.4
Computer (%)	69.5	48.1	23.1	72.1	56.5	34.3
Sector, union status, city of residence						
Government/public (%)	19.1	18.8	7.5	17.6	26.5	13.5
Union (%)	22.6	31.2	21.4	15.7	25.5	16.8
Atlanta (%)	15.9	29.1	1.4	19.4	33.9	1.7
Los Angeles (%)	45.9	59.1	94.2	39.4	53.9	94.2
Boston (%)	38.1	11.7	4.4	41.2	12.1	4.0

Notes

1. The MCSUI also sampled residents from Detroit and Asian Americans. I omitted Detroit from this study because questions related to key variables were not asked of Detroit residents. Asian Americans were also omitted due to small sample sizes.

2. Information about the MCSUI comes from Bobo et al. (1998/2000).

3. The indicator of workplace power is not without limitations. First, the measure does not include corporate-level employees in the executive suites, so, if anything, I have underestimated the degree of inequality across ethnoracial and gender groups. Also, authority as defined may not mean the same for all groups. A manager at McDonald's may not receive the same remuneration or benefits as a manager in a larger establishment. To address this possibility, I added controls to simulate workplace context, such as establishment size, employment sector, job complexity, and occupational location.

4. Indicators for industry classification were also added to models without any significant alteration to the findings reported below. Consequently, industry was deleted from the models to maintain parsimony.

5. The inflation rate between May 1994 (approximate end date of survey) and March 2011 was approximately 51.50 percent. The rate of inflation was calculated by taking the average wage for workers in May 1994 ($23,920) × .5150 (inflation rate) = $12,319 + $23,920 = $36,239.

6. Hourly wages below $4 and above $30 were recoded to these respective bottom and top values to minimize the statistical influence of outliers. There were thirty-three cases (or less than 1 percent of the sample) below $3 and forty-six cases (or 1.3% of the sample) above $30. The sample includes civilian, non-self-employed workers with a superior (N = 3,480).

7. Several OLS models were generated leading up to the full model shown in Figure 4. The findings were resilient regardless of controls.

8. In the full set of results based on the OLS estimation, the interaction terms, net of all controls, for Latinos and Latinas were negative and statistically significant at the .05 level, while the interaction terms for white women and black women were marginally significant at the .10 level and nonsignificant for black men.

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