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Authority and Work

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LAST MODIFIED: 26 APRIL 2018

DOI: 10.1093/OBO/9780199756384-0210

Introduction

The sociological study of authority (i.e., legitimate workplace control of human and organizational resources) is rooted in early theoretical debates surrounding the conceptualization of stratification and social class position. Such debates around conceptualization naturally led to disagreements over the manner in which authority should be measured (qualitative categories versus quantitative scales) for empirical assessment of social inequality. Thus, this field of sociological inquiry is about measuring positions in the workplace, the processes leading to those positions, and the consequences of those positions for workplace rewards. In addition to theory and measurement, the emergence of authority research includes studies of gender, race, and ethnic differences in the factors that determine authority and in the consequences of authority for various workplace outcomes. As multiracial/ethnic samples became available, researchers focused on the manner in which gender intersected with race/ethnicity to forge differential authority outcomes for men and women of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Studies here underscore the fact that job authority remains unevenly distributed nationally (race/ethnicity, gender), and cross-nationally (gender), and authority gaps have remained robust over time. Authority studies employ a variety of data from the United States and Europe, regions that dominate quantitative assessments of authority inequality, but recent data from Israel and Korea foreshadow the extension of these inquiries to less traditional locales, thereby expanding our understanding of group differences and similarities in authority attainment more globally.

Theoretical Foundations

The theoretical foundations of authority as an important dimension of social inequality is rooted in the unreconciled debate regarding the conceptualization of modern industrial societies as either based on social class or social status. This debate, which has broad implications for the measurement and operationalization of authority for quantitative research, remains unresolved.

Debate on Class, Status and Images of Society

Marx 1977 and Weber 1968 are often used as points of departure in the social class versus social status debate. Specific attempts to theorize authority always involves a connection to “legitimate” positions or opposing classes within the context of the workplace. In this vein, Dahrendorf 1959 challenges Marx’s binary model of ownership of the means of production versus laborers by reframing class and class conflict as a battle between those with formal authority (i.e., legitimate power) versus those who lack it. Hazelrigg 1972, Lopreato 1967, and Lopreato 1968 (cited under Debate on the Measurement of Authority) take issue with Dahrendorf’s formulation. Taking his lead from Weber 1968, Blau 1977 conceptualizes power as a flowing from control over economic and positional resources within work organizations. The literature review Smith 2002 places it in a broader context of theory, measurement, and research.

Blau, Peter M. 1977. *Inequality and heterogeneity: A primitive theory of social structure*. New York: Free Press.

Consistent with Weber, Blau conceptualizes power as a social resource connected to positions. Two forms of power are delineated: power flowing from the possession of superior economic resources and power emanating from the positions people occupy in the opportunity structure. Both forms of power are not only sourced in work organizations but are differentially allocated and representative of "legitimate" forms of positions of domination and subordination in modern societies.

Dahrendorf, Ralf. 1959. *Class and class conflict in industrial society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press.

Seeks to supersede Karl Marx's economic theory of society. Argues that dichotomous authority (i.e., people with authority versus those without it) better represents contemporary class conflict more so than Marx's capitalists-versus-laborer distinction. Argues authority relations are class relations, and class relations are organized around imperatively coordinated associations comprising positions that allow incumbents to exercise formal authority over subordinates. Popularized the theory of authority relations as class conflict.

Hazelrigg, Lawrence E. 1972. Class, property, and authority: Dahrendorf's critique of Marx's theory of class. *Social Forces* 50.4: 473–487.

Criticizes Dahrendorf's critique of Marx's theory of class. Asserts that Dahrendorf misread Marx on several counts including falsely conflating authority with domination. Concludes that Dahrendorf's theory is not a theory of classes and therefore does not supersede Marx's class theory.

Lopreato, Joseph. 1967. Class conflict and images of society. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 11.3: 281–293.

Examines whether Dahrendorf's authority theory of class conflict supersedes Marx's economic theory of class conflict. Providing a limited test using data from Italy, summarized in cross-tabulations, Lopreato argues that it does not.

Marx, Karl. 1977. *Capital: A critique of political economy*. Vol. 1. New York: Vintage.

Offers a seminal theory of class based on economic relations between those who own the means of production (capitalist) versus those who do not (laborers). Class conflict flows from the different interests of the two groups. Capitalists gain by exploiting the labor power of laborers.

Smith, Ryan A. 2002. Race, gender and authority in the workplace: Theory and research. *Annual Review of Sociology* 28:509–542.

A comprehensive review of theories, measurement, and research featuring workplace authority. Emphasizes the quantitative study of race, ethnic, and gender inequality in both the determinants of authority and the consequences of authority for income in the United States and cross-nationally.

Weber, Max. 1968. *Economy and society*. Translated by G. Roth and C. Wittich. New York: Bedminster.

This seminal work discusses Weber's views on social stratification. Explicates the concepts of bureaucracy and domination as featured in the distinction between charismatic, traditional, and legitimate authority. The bases for later formulations by Blau, Robinson and Kelley, Spaeth, and Halaby.

Debate on the Measurement of Authority

Given the debate surrounding the conceptualization of social class and social status as images of society, it stands to reason that scholars would differ on the question of how the concept of authority should be measured for quantitative analysis of group differences in the determinants and consequences of authority. The broader measurement debate centers on whether typological (class) categories versus continuous (status) scales are better at measuring authority and modeling earnings returns to authority. Lopreato 1967 (cited under Debate on Class, Status and Images of Society), Lopreato 1968, Wright and Perrone 1977, and Wright 1993 promote categorical (or discrete) measures; Blau 1977 (cited under Debate on Class, Status and Images of Society) and Robinson and Kelley 1979 endorse a continuous (or scalar) measure of authority; and Halaby and Weakliem 1993, Halaby 1993, Robinson and Kelley 1979, and Spaeth 1985 argue in favor of a hybrid of both approaches. There has been no clear resolution to the matter.

Halaby, Charles. 1993. Reply to Wright. *American Sociological Review* 58:35–36.

In his reply to Wright's reply, Halaby doubles down on the charge that Wright's models, when it comes to predicting earnings returns to authority, are inelegant, misspecified and prone to producing results that are difficult to interpret.

Halaby, Charles, and David Weakliem. 1993. Ownership and authority in the earnings function: Non-nested tests of alternative specifications. *American Sociological Review* 59:5–21.

A comparison of two approaches to measuring earnings returns to ownership and authority: Wright's (Wright and Perrone 1977) typological, class categories and the scalar, continuous measures offered by others (Robinson and Kelley 1979, Spaeth 1985). This hybrid approach is deemed more elegant than Wright's typological measure.

Kalleberg, Arne, and Larry J. Griffin. 1980. Class, occupation, and inequality in job rewards. *American Journal of Sociology* 85.4: 731–768.

Informed by Wright and Perrone 1977, this article argues that class (employers, managers, workers) is conceptually and operationally distinct from occupational characteristics (Duncan's SEI, DOT of data, people, and things), but both are needed to adequately explain inequality in income, earnings, and job fulfillment.

Lopreato, Joseph. 1968. Authority relations and class conflict. *Social Forces* 47.1: 70–79.

Challenges the validity of Dahrendorf's dichotomous formulation of class conflict around authority relations on the grounds that there is more conflict within the dominant class than between the dominant versus the obeying class, according to his data from Italy. Thus, article supports the argument that authority is more continuous than dichotomous.

Robinson, Robert V. 1984. Reproducing class relations in industrial capitalism. *American Sociological Review* 49:182–196.

Builds on Wright and Perrone 1977 and its measurement of class to shed light on the transmission of class advantage from one generation to the next. Analyses of data from five capitalist societies highlights the importance of education for acquiring control over labor power (e.g., managers, supervisors, foreman) but not control over the means of production or the purchase of labor power.

Robinson, Robert V., and Jonathan Kelley. 1979. Class as conceived by Marx and Dahrendorf: Effects on income inequality,

class consciousness, and class conflict in the U.S. and Great Britain. *American Sociological Review* 44:38–58.

Karl Marx's ownership of the means of production and Ralf Dahrendorf's authority is linked to quantitative research on status attainment. A synthesized measure representing both theories of class are added to the Blau-Duncan model of status attainment and shown to be a better predictor of income relative to the original Blau-Duncan model alone among men but not among women. Class position has a greater impact on class identification and political identification in Great Britain than in the United States.

Spaeth, Joe L. 1985. Job power and earnings. *American Sociological Review* 50.5: 603–617.

A comprehensive effort to synthesize indicators for status attainment, market segmentation, and Wright's class typology into models predicting earnings. Spaeth shows that control over monetary resources is a better predictor of income than socioeconomic status (SES) for men, while the combination of control over monetary resources and control over personnel, relative to SES, better predicts income among women.

Wright, Erik O. 1993. Typologies, scales, and class analysis: A comment on Halaby and Weakliem's "ownership and authority in the earnings function." *American Sociological Review* 58:31–34.

In this reply to Halaby and Weakliem's critique of his typological class model, Wright takes issue with Halaby and Weakliem's conclusion that his typological strategy is inferior to the scalar, continuous approach, arguing that it depends on the analytical question under investigation and the larger theoretical approach under consideration.

Wright, Erik O., and Luca Perrone. 1977. Marxist class categories and income inequality. *American Sociological Review* 42:32–55.

Wright and Perrone's pioneering study provides a preliminary operationalization of Marxist class categories for use in the quantitative study of income inequality. Argues and empirically demonstrates that although class variables need not supplant traditional status variables (e.g., education, occupational status, age, etc.), models of income determination must include an assessment of how class interacts with traditional measures to produce income inequality.

Data Sources

Many data sources are available to scholars and students interested in the quantitative analysis of job authority in the United States and cross-nationally. The relative strengths and weaknesses of data sources depend on many factors including the breadth of survey questions tapping into multiple dimensions of workplace authority, sample size, diversity of survey respondents, and whether the data are cross-sectional or longitudinal. The non-exhaustive list of data sources described below are some of the most widely used, offer some of the most comprehensive authority questions publicly available to researchers, or were used in some of the most influential authority studies.

United States Data

Data from the United States allows researchers to track change over time in the authority outcomes of different respondents using repeated cross-sectional data (General Social Survey), or longitudinal data sources that track the same respondents over time (Panel Study of Income Dynamics, Youth Development Study, Wisconsin Longitudinal Study). Data collected at one point in time from multiple states in the United States or a single US state feature specialized samples comprising multiple race, ethnic, and gender groups (Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality) or extensive measures of authority (Illinois Survey of

Managers).

General Social Survey.

A repeated cross-sectional, US-based survey with a four-part question designed to identify a person's location in the work hierarchy or chain of command. The target sample size for each survey is 1,500. Questions pertaining to authority (asked roughly every two years since 1972), indicate whether the respondent (or spouse, if respondent is unemployed) has a supervisor and/or whether the respondent supervises anyone. A myriad of human capital, demographic, occupational, industry, attitudinal, and political variables are also available.

Illinois Survey of Managers.

A representative sample of 557 Illinois participants conducted in 1982. Respondents worked at least twenty hours per week. A broad array of questions taps into several dimensions of authority including level of authority, supervisory authority, discretion, number of subordinates, monetary control, control over organizational structure, control over nonlocal work units, absence of supervisor, and Wright's class categories (bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, managers, advisory managers, supervisors, autonomous, workers).

Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality.

A multistage, stratified, area probability sample of households (n=2,600+) and employers conducted between 1992 and 1994 in Atlanta, Boston, Detroit, and Los Angeles. For Atlanta, Boston, and Los Angeles, there is an extensive array of authority measures (supervisory status, hire/fire, influence pay) along with the gender and racial/ethnic identity of respondent's supervisor and coworkers. Questions regarding respondent's socioeconomic status, firm characteristics, and attitudes regarding inequality, gender, race, and ethnicity are also available.

National Study of Changing Workforce.

Conducted 1992, 1997, 2002, and 2008 (averaging over n=2,000 wage and salary workers), this nationally representative survey of the US labor force contains questions on work/family balance. Provides unique information on the degree of support employees receive from their supervisors, promotion information, supervisor traits, and basic demographic and workplace measures.

National Organizations Survey.

The NOS is survey of over 688 work establishments with information on whether respondents supervise the work processes of at least one subordinate. When merged with the GSS (individual-level data), the NOS (establishment-level data) provides researchers with a wealth of demographic, human capital, family, and establishment-level (firm size, firm age, hierarchy, etc) data.

Panel Study of Income Dynamics.

Billed as the longest-running longitudinal household survey in the world, the PSID has tracked the same, nationally representative sample of individuals (n=18,000) and families (n=5,000) residing in the United States since 1968. The PSID contains several authority-related questions: (1) whether respondents supervised workers on the job, (2) whether they have say over the pay or promotion of others, and (3) the number of subordinates a supervisor controls.

Quality of Employment Survey.

A cross-sectional survey of over 1,455 workers conducted between 1969–1970 and 1972–1973. Questions related to authority inquire about respondent's feelings regarding their relationship with supervisors and job satisfaction. Questions are designed to link to items from the Survey of Working Conditions (1969–1970).

Science and Engineers Statistical Data System.

A longitudinal data set built from three surveys. Over twenty thousand respondents who hold degrees (bachelors and above) in science and engineering provide information on their educational, occupational, and employment status. Data have been collected every two to three years since 1993.

Wisconsin Longitudinal Study.

Formerly known as the Wisconsin Study of Social and Psychological Factors in Socioeconomic Achievement, this is a cohort study (beginning in 1957) of over 10,317 men and women who graduated from Wisconsin high schools. Respondents are interviewed at ages eighteen, thirty-six, fifty-four, and sixty-five. Authority measures include: authority to hire and fire, influence the pay of others, general supervisory status, and decision-making authority over what workers do and how they do it. Also included are measures of socioeconomic status, family formation and health status.

Work, Stress, and Health Survey.

A 2005 national survey of 1,800 adults. Respondents are asked if they have influence over the pay of others, or authority to hire and fire subordinates, and whether they have managerial or supervisory responsibility over subordinates and whether subordinates have managerial and supervisory authority. Also included are questions pertaining to occupational status, job sector, income and a range of demographic and interpersonal conflict items.

Youth Development Study.

The Youth Development Study, a longitudinal dataset that tracks three generations (N=1,010) (1988-wave 1 to 2011-wave 19), has a broad array of variables including socioeconomic status. Included are several questions around supervisory status and experiences with and feelings about respondent's supervisor or manager.

Cross-National Data

Cross-National comparative data have allowed researchers to focus on gender differences in authority outcomes across multiple countries (Comparative Project in Class Analysis, European Social Survey, International Social Survey Program), while other gender inquiries analyze data from a single country (Israel Mobility Survey, Korean Workplace Panel Survey, Swedish Level of Living Survey).

Comparative Project in Class Analysis.

This cross-sectional data was collected between 1980–1987. It is known for relational dimensions of social inequality (authority, autonomy, and property) and gradational dimensions of social inequality (income, education, and occupational

status). Data are available across eleven countries with sample sizes ranging from 823 (Japan) to 2,577 (Canada). Specific authority items include: sanctioning authority (influence on pay, promotion, or punishment of subordinates), decision-making authority (influence over policy decisions), and formal position (hierarchical location).

European Social Survey.

Cross-sectional survey (every two years since 2002) of twenty-six countries (49,066 respondents) with information on supervisory position drawn from two questions: "In your main job do/did you have any responsibility for supervising the work of other employees?" If yes, "How many people are/were you responsible for?" Also available is information on respondent's demographic, human capital, family, and work status along with information on firm attributes (e.g., firm size).

International Social Survey Program.

A cross-sectional survey of thirty countries. A 2005 module (n=19,124) on work orientation includes a supervisory question (e.g., "In your main job, do you supervise anyone or are you directly responsible for the work of others?") and key items to measure cross-national gender inequality in job authority (e.g., gender, human capital, employment characteristics, occupational status, family composition, labor force participation, etc.), along with information on women's employment policies and gender attitudes.

Israel Mobility Survey.

A representative cross-sectional survey of the Israeli households (n=5,800) conducted between 1991 and 1992. Questions tap into three dimensions of authority: formal hierarchical position (top, middle, low, or non-management), sanctioning authority (power to promote or reward workers), and decision-making authority (able to make policy decisions); there are also questions on gender identity, human capital, industry, and family status.

Korean Workplace Panel Survey.

A 2005 nationally representative sample of South Korean private (n=3,916) and public sector (n=400) establishments. Questions tap into the percentage of women in managerial and supervisory positions along with measures of gender antidiscrimination policy, family friendly policies, presence of a human resources department, organizational size and age, unionization, employment sector, market competition and whether an organization has undergone downsizing.

Swedish Establishment Survey.

A 1991 national probability sample of Swedish private and public-sector establishments (n = 2,135). The APU is matched with individual-level data from a variety of registers (including the Swedish Level of Living Survey). Together, these data sources provide useful information on respondent's managerial and supervisory status, educational background, seniority, work experience, occupational status, industry classification and firm size.

Swedish Level of Living Survey.

Includes cross-sectional and panel data collected in 1968, 1974, 1981, 1991 and 2000. Along with basic human capital and occupational questions, thousands of Swedish respondents are queried about their supervisory tasks, if they have subordinates, and if so, the number of subordinates.

Gender and Authority Inequality

Much has been written about gender and authority inequality. This research has greatly enhanced our understanding of the factors that determine gender inequality and the consequences of gender inequality in authority for other workplace rewards including but not limited to earnings/income.

Gender Differences in Authority Attainment

Bridges and Miller 1981; Fligstein, et al. 1981; Wolf and Fligstein 1979a; and Wolf and Fligstein 1979b represent early studies marking gender differences in authority attainment (late 1970s to mid-1980s). These works parallel and often intersect with either explicit or implicit critiques of the status attainment paradigm and the manner in which authority should be measured and operationalized. Huffman 1995 focuses on the human capital versus structural determinants of sex differences in authority. The influential paper Jacobs 1992 tracks women's managerial attainment over time, while Wodtke 2015 specifically examines gender disparities in authority and ownership over time. Maume 2011 and Cohen, et al. 1998 explore whether women benefit from having a female boss, or whether the sex composition of jobs matter for women's authority attainment, respectively.

Bridges, William P., and Baila Miller. 1981. Sex and authority in the workplace: A replication and critique. *American Sociological Review* 46.5: 677–684.

This replication and critique argues that the Wolf and Fligstein 1979a study is flawed on the grounds that, among other things, it fails to challenge the status attainment paradigm. Using national data from the Quality of Employment Survey that includes all ages and educational groupings, the authors raise questions about the role human capital and employer policies and behaviors play in structuring sex differences in authority attainment.

Cohen, Lisa E., Joseph P. Broschak, and Heather A. Haveman. 1998. And then there were more? The effect of organizational sex composition on the hiring and promotion of managers. *American Sociological Review* 63:711–727.

Cohen and colleagues managerial data from 333 California-based savings and loan associations (1975 to 1987) to examine gender differences in hiring and promotion. Women are more likely to be hired and promoted into jobs when a critical mass of women already occupy the jobs in question or the jobs above the jobs in question. Findings contradict the "cog in the wheel" theory.

Fligstein, Neil, Michael Sobel, and Wendy Wolf. 1981. Response to Bridges and Miller. *American Sociological Review* 46.5: 685–688.

Responding to Bridges and Miller's critique of Wolf and Fligstein 1979a, the article argues that their work does in fact challenge the status attainment paradigm to the extent that it implicitly questions the legitimacy of relying on one status indicator to measure workplace inequality. They conclude by urging researchers to redouble their efforts at measuring position in the workplace and the processes that lead to those positions.

Huffman, Matt L. 1995. Organizations, internal labor market policies, and gender inequality in workplace supervisory authority. *Sociological Perspectives* 38.3: 381–397.

Analyzing data from the 1991 National Organizations Survey (NOS), this study finds that occupational segregation plays a larger role in explaining the gender gap in supervisory authority than gender differences in human capital. Female-dominated occupations lowered the odds of women's authority chances, but marital status and child status did little to explain the gender

gap in authority.

Jacobs, Jerry A. 1992. Women's entry into management: Trends in earnings, authority, and values among salaried managers. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 37:282–301.

A seminal investigation into whether the increase in women's managerial representation between 1970 and 1988 was a function of job title inflation or authentic managerial attainment. Merged data from the US Census, Current Population Surveys, and General Social Surveys revealed a narrowing of the earnings gap among men and women; however, the sex gap in authority remained the same, leading the author to conclude that real (but slow) progress has been made in eliminating gender disparities.

Maume, David J. 2011. Meet the new boss . . . same as the old boss? Female supervisors and subordinate career prospects. *Social Science Research* 40:287–298.

Maume draws on data from the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce to examine the effects of having a female boss on the careers of female subordinates. Contradicting Cohen and Huffman 1995, Maume finds that having a female boss has little or no impact on the career prospects of women, which the author concludes is akin to female bosses being "cogs in the machine" as opposed to positive change agents for women.

Wodtke, Geoffrey. 2015. Continuity and change in the American class structure: Workplace ownership and authority relations from 1972 to 2010. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 42:48–61.

Data from the General Social Surveys (1972–2010) and the Comparative Project in Class Analysis (1980 and 1991) reveal that gender differences in authority (and ownership) remained largely stable over time.

Wolf, Wendy, and Neil Fligstein. 1979a. Sex and authority in the workplace: The causes of sexual inequality. *American Sociological Review* 44:235–252.

A pioneering study of the causes of sex differences in authority based on analyses of longitudinal data (1957–1975) from the Wisconsin Study of Social and Psychological Factors in Achievement. The data show that men garner a larger authority return for their educational investments than women at higher (but not lower) levels of authority, and being married or having children does not explain the gender gap in authority. To close the gender gap the article concludes that women should improve their educational attainment, and employers should change their behaviors and policies.

Wolf, Wendy, and Neil Fligstein. 1979b. Sexual stratification: Differences in power in the work setting. *Social Forces* 58:94–107.

The first of two studies to explore sex differences in authority in the workplace. Advocates extending comparable worth inquiries beyond an assessment of whether men and women have comparable occupational positions to assessments of whether there is gender parity in workplace authority. Using data from the Wisconsin Study of Social and Psychological Factors in Socioeconomic Achievement (see Wolf and Fligstein 1979a), the authors show that women are less likely than men to control the work of others regardless of educational level and socioeconomic status.

Consequences of Gender Differences in Authority

When the question turns to gender differences in the consequences of authority for workplace rewards, Halaby 1979, a standard-bearer in the field, champions the importance of hierarchical rank segregation over wage discrimination as an explanation for the gender wage gap. Reskin and Ross 1992 draws similar conclusions about women's segregation among lower authority ranks and the impact such relegation has on women's earning relative to men's. Using similar data, Spaeth 1985 delineates gender differences in earnings returns to control over monetary and human resources. Cohen and Huffman 2007 examines whether the gender composition of managerial ranks has any bearing on the gender wage gap, while Alkadry and Tower 2011 is interested in the manner in which gender works through authority to perpetuate gender disparities in compensation among public sector employees. Beyond gender comparisons, more recent inquiries into the consequences of authority focus on the association between job authority and breast cancer (Pudrovska 2013), sexual harassment (McLaughlin, et al. 2012), and interpersonal conflict (Schieman and Reid 2008). These studies, which mark a significant departure from prior studies, may portend the future for authority research.

Alkadry, Mohamad, and Leslie Tower. 2011. Covert pay discrimination: How authority predicts pay differences between women and men. *Public Administration Review* 71:740–750.

A survey of public sector chief procurement officers (2007) is used to analyze the indirect effects of gender on women's pay through the intervening variables of authority. Gender affects the amount of authority that is delegated to an employee, which, in turn, affects the variance in pay between men and women. Concludes that gender plays a hidden role in influencing compensation by shifting the chain of authority given to executives as they build a career portfolio.

Cohen, Philip N., and Matt L. Huffman. 2007. Working for the woman? Female managers and the gender wage gap. *American Sociological Review* 72:681–704.

An analysis of data from the 2000 Census shows that the gender wage gap is narrowed when there are greater numbers of female managers in the workplace especially at high managerial levels. The authors conclude that female managers serve as "agents of change" for nonmanagerial female workers instead of "cogs in the machine."

Halaby, Charles N. 1979. Job-specific sex differences in organizational reward attainment: Wage discrimination vs. rank discrimination. *Social Forces* 58:108–127.

A seminal paper that examines whether the gender wage gap is largely a function of wage discrimination (differences in the rates of returns to human capital) or unequal access to higher paying positions (hierarchical rank segregation) among managers. The data, collected in 1960 from a utility firm in California, largely supports the latter interpretation but there is some evidence of wage discrimination as well.

McLaughlin, Heather, Christopher Uggen, and Amy Blackstone. 2012. Sexual harassment, workplace authority, and the paradox of power. *American Sociological Review* 77.4: 625–647.

Employs a mixed-methods approach to test hypotheses regarding the relationship between job authority and sexual harassment. Longitudinal data from the Youth Development Study (2003–2004) and qualitative in-depth interviews reveal that female supervisors are more likely than non-supervisors to report sexual harassment.

Pudrovska, Tetyana. 2013. Job authority and breast cancer. *Social Forces* 92.1: 1–24.

A novel inquiry into the connection between job authority (hire/fire, influence over pay, supervision and influence over others) and the incidence of breast cancer in a sample of women from the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study (1957–2011). Drawing on gender relations theory and social stress research, the results show that women with the authority to hire/fire and influence the

pay of others face higher risk of breast cancer but not women with general supervisory status or influence over others' work. Concludes that gender inequality in authority can shed light on the social causes of breast cancer.

Reskin, Barbara, and Catherine Ross. 1992. Authority and earnings among managers: The continuing significance of sex. *Work and Occupations* 19:342–365.

A sample of Illinois managers (1982) is used to examine the effects of gender on access to and earnings returns to decision-making authority. Relative to male managers, women managers are clustered at the bottom of command chains, restricted to largely supervising other women, less likely to have decision-making authority, and relegated to cosigning on decisions made by men. Concludes that sex is not declining in significance.

Schieman, Scott, and Sarah Reid. 2008. Job authority and interpersonal conflict in the workplace. *Work and Occupations* 35.3: 296–326.

Explicates the association between job authority and interpersonal conflict with specific focus on whether the effect of job authority on interpersonal conflict varies by gender and age. An analysis of 2005 data from the Work, Stress, and Health Survey reveal a positive association between authority and conflict more so among men (versus women) and younger (versus older) employees that cannot be explained by group differences in a host of background factors.

Spaeth, Joe L. 1985. Job power and earnings. *American Sociological Review* 50.5: 603–617.

A sample of employed men and women from Illinois (1982) is used to explore gender differences in earnings returns to two types of power: control over monetary resources and control over human resources. Control over monetary resources is an important determinant of earnings for men, while control over both monetary and human resources collectively serve as important determinants of earnings for women.

Gender and Authority Inequality in Cross-national Perspective

Unlike occupational status, which may vary in definition and content from one country to another, job authority, as tied to positions in the workplace, is well suited for cross-national comparative purposes as it includes clearly defined indicators that tap into control over monetary resources, human resources (hiring, firing, promotion), or human resources policy. With this in mind, workplace power is universally understood as a coveted resource that transcends national boundaries. As such, those who have authority have a vested interest in keeping it, and those who lack authority have a vested interest in acquiring it. That is the crux of why gender inequality (men dominating women) in workplace authority remains a social problem that transcends national boundaries. Even in so-called gender-friendly countries, women still trail men in authority attainment. The magnitude of the gender gap in authority varies from country to country. Hutlin and Suklin 2003 shows how the gap remains prominent and consequential for women's wages. The reasons for such widespread, global disparities in authority between men and women are hotly contested. Abendroth, et al. 2013 draws attention to the role of human capital as an explanation for persistent gender differences, while Bygren and Gähler 2012 trains their analytical lens on gender disparities in family formation. For Hutlin 1998, gender discrimination is the featured explanation for such disparities, while Kraus and Yonay 2000 and Stainback Kwon 2012 draw attention to occupational sex composition as a likely culprit. More comprehensive cross-national comparisons of gender inequality in authority feature analyses spanning many countries. Wright, et al. 1995 covers seven countries, Rosenfeld, et al. 1998 features nine countries, and Yaish and Stier 2009 covers as many as twenty-six countries. These studies serve to highlight the ubiquitous nature of gender inequality in authority. Analyses of race and ethnicity tend to be absent from cross-national studies of authority inequality perhaps due to the disparate meaning of race and ethnicity from one country to another.

Abendroth, Anja-Kristin, Ineke Maas, and Tanja Van der Lippe. 2013. Human capital and the gender gap in authority in European countries. *European Sociological Review* 29.2: 261–273.

This article uses data from the European Social Survey (2004–2005) (twenty-six countries) to examine the role human capital plays in contributing to the gender gap in authority. Several human capital factors (overall work experience, experience with current employer, and hours worked) contribute to the authority gap among women and men, but other human capital factors (educational specialization, career interruptions, and unemployment) have less of an impact. The gender gap in authority is much narrower in countries where part-time work is plentiful.

Bygren, Magnus, and Michael Gähler. 2012. Family formation and men's and women's attainment of workplace authority. *Social Forces* 90.3: 795–816.

Analyzing Swedish panel data from 1968 to 2000, this study asks whether the gender gap in supervisory authority has narrowed over time and whether the gap can be explained by gender differences in family status. Only a modest narrowing in the gender gap is evident in the data, and this is explained by gender differences in the impact of having children; this has a positive impact on men's authority chances but is of no consequence for women's authority prospects.

Hutlin, Mia. 1998. Gender differences in workplace authority: Discrimination and the role of organizational leaders. *Acta Sociologica* 41.2: 99–114.

Data from the 1991 Swedish Level of Living Survey and a 1991 Swedish Establishment Survey of employees are used to examine gender differences in the processes (e.g., human capital, family status, and organizational characteristics) that lead to supervisory authority. Men in female-dominated establishments benefit more than women when it comes to occupying positions of authority. However, having a male superior does not limit the authority prospects of women nor improve the authority chances of men.

Hutlin, Mia, and Ryszard Suklin. 2003. Mechanisms of inequality: Unequal access to organizational power and the gender wage gap. *European Sociological Review* 19.2: 143–159.

Matches data from the 1991 Swedish Establishment Survey of private sector establishments (excludes the public sector) with 1995 individual-level data from various sources to address the question of whether women's lack of managerial and supervisory representation contributes to the gender gap in wages. The gender wage gap in Sweden was found to be wider in organizations where men dominate managerial and supervisory positions—even when controls for human capital and organizational factors were taken into account.

Kraus, Vered, and Yuval P. Yonay. 2000. The effect of occupational sex composition on the gender gap in workplace authority. *Social Science Research* 29.4: 583–605.

This unique study based on data from the Israel Mobility Survey (1991–1992) examines gender differences in authority attainment in occupations with different gender compositions (female dominated, mixed, male dominated) and concludes that gender disparities in authority are largest in female-dominated occupations, and women's chances of attaining authority are greater in male-dominated occupations.

Rosenfeld, Rachel A., Mark E. Van Buren, and Arne L. Kalleberg. 1998. Gender differences in supervisory authority: Variation among advanced industrialized democracies. *Social Science Research* 27:23–49.

A cross-national comparison of the factors that explain the gender gap in supervisory authority. Draws on individual-level data

from respondents in nine countries using the comparative Class Structure and Class Consciousness Survey (1980s). Greater inequality in authority was found in countries with larger earnings inequality, longer maternity leaves, and better economic conditions. The smallest gender difference in authority occurred in Australia while the largest disparity occurred in Japan.

Stainback, Kevin, and Soyoung Kwon. 2012. Female leaders, organizational power, and sex segregation. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 639.1: 217–235.

Data from the Korean Workplace Panel Survey (2005) of private- and public-sector establishments show that lower levels of sex segregation in Korea were observed in organizations with large proportions of women in managerial jobs, supporting the notion that women in power serve as positive “agents of change” for other women.

Wright, Erik O., Janeen Baxter, and Gunn E. Birkelund. 1995. The gender gap in workplace authority: A cross-national study. *American Sociological Review* 60:407–435.

Examines the gender gap along three dimensions of authority using data from the Comparative Project on Class Structure and Class Consciousness based on information from seven countries (1980–1987). While gender disparities in authority are smaller in four of the English-speaking countries and highest in Japan, gender differences do not appear to be a function of disparities in education, labor force interruptions, and employment context. The notion that women self-select out of contention for authority only applies to Canada.

Yaish, Meir, and Haya Stier. 2009. Gender inequality in job authority: A cross-national comparison of 26 countries. *Work and Occupations* 36.4: 343–366.

Using data from the 2005 International Social Survey Program, this multilevel, comparative analysis of the gender gap in authority across twenty-six countries, reports larger gender gaps in authority in countries where women are concentrated in the “feminized” public sector. The authors detail the implications of their findings for family-friendly policies.

Race, Ethnicity, and Authority

While studies of race, ethnicity, and authority emerged around the same time as gender and authority studies (late 1970s), comparatively fewer authority inquiries directly address race and ethnicity. And no authority studies, to our knowledge, investigate race and ethnic inequality in authority attainment cross-nationally. Some studies in this genre focus on race, ethnic, and gender differences in the determinants of authority (e.g., whether minorities have to make higher investments in human capital, job tenure, hours worked, etc., than their white counterparts to reach the same levels of authority). Other studies are noted for the emphasis placed on group differences in the consequences of authority for workplace rewards such as income and other desirable workplace outcomes (e.g., whether racial and ethnic minorities with the same levels of authority as whites receive the same income and benefits).

Racial and Ethnic Differences in Authority Attainment

With data mostly limited to black and white men, early and later research into racial and ethnic differences in authority attainment (i.e., differences in the determinants of authority), relied on data collected at a single point in time, cross-sectional data collected at multiple points in time, or longitudinal data. With data from a single point in time, Kluegel 1978 and Wilson 1997 provide quantitative assessments of racial and ethnic differences in authority attainment, Mueller, et al. 1989 provides similar analyses but focused on two distinct points in time, while Smith 1999 and Wodtke 2015 use repeated cross-sectional

data at multiple points in time.

Kluegel, James R. 1978. The causes and cost of racial exclusion from job authority. *American Sociological Review* 43:285–301.

A pivotal analysis of race differences in authority attainment among black and white men using 1973 data from Wisconsin. Relative to white men, black men are found to have significantly lower levels of authority. Black/white inequality is a function of race differences in organizational characteristics, educational, and occupational attainment.

Mueller, Charles W., Toby Parcel, and Kazuko Tanaka. 1989. Particularism in authority outcomes: The case of supervisors. *Social Science Research* 32:21–33.

Analyzes disparities among black and white men in the processes that lead to acquiring span of control (number of subordinates) and span of responsibility (say regarding pay and promotion). Two waves of PSID data (1972 and 1975) provide evidence supporting, among other things, the notion that black men have to be more qualified than white men to reach the same levels of authority.

Smith, Ryan A. 1999. Racial differences in access to hierarchical authority: An analysis of change over time, 1972–1994. *Sociological Quarterly* 40:367–396.

Uses GSS data to track the net racial gap in authority among black and white men over time. Whites receive a higher authority return than blacks for their human capital investments, and the overall racial gap in authority increased among men living in large cities relative to men in small cities from 1972 to 1994.

Smith, Ryan A. 2001. Particularism in control over monetary resources at work: An analysis of racioethnic differences in authority outcomes of black, white, and Latino men. *Work and Occupations* 28:447–468.

One of the first quantitative studies of authority inequality to include a sample of Hispanic men and women along with samples of black and white men and women. Data from the MCSUI (1992–1994) show a net racial/ethnic gap in the odds of controlling monetary resources exist between white men and black men but not between white men and Hispanics. Consistent with the particularism thesis, the credentials of black men are more heavily scrutinized when vying for authority positions that come with control over the pay of others.

Wilson, George. 1997. Pathways to power: Racial differences in the determinants of job authority. *Social Problems* 44.1: 38–54.

Confirms Kluegel 1978 and Mueller, et al. 1989 findings of particularistic manipulation, the notion that the credentials of blacks are more strongly scrutinized than their male counterparts when vying for workplace authority. Specifically, Wilson extends Mueller, et al. 1989 using a more recent wave of the PSID data (1985) but also shows, importantly, that particularism is more prominent in the private than the public sector.

Wodtke, Geoffrey. 2015. Continuity and change in the American class structure: Workplace ownership and authority relations from 1972 to 2010. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 42:48–61.

Data from the General Social Surveys (1972–2010) and the Comparative Project in Class Analysis (1980 and 1991) reveal that racial differences (non-blacks versus blacks) in authority (and ownership) remained largely stable over time.

Consequences of Racial and Ethnic Differences in Authority

Early investigations into the consequences of racial and ethnic differences in authority attainment for income can be traced to Kluegel 1978, which offers one of the most comprehensive empirical analyses of the subject. Data limitations also restricted Smith 1997 and Wilson 1997 to analyses of black and white men, but they further sought to determine whether the racial gap in the amount of income men received for occupying similar positions of authority had changed over time. Smith's cross-sectional analysis of annually repeated surveys and Wilson's analysis of longitudinal data revealed persistent racial gaps in the amount of income men earn for occupying similar positions of authority at work.

Kluegel, James R. 1978. The causes and cost of racial exclusion from job authority. *American Sociological Review* 43:285–301.

A pioneering study of Wisconsin data (1973) documenting that black men have lower income returns to authority than white men, especially at higher occupational levels. Black men's direct exclusion from authority accounts for one-third of the black/white income gap.

Smith, Ryan. 1997. Race, income and authority at work: A cross-temporal analysis of black and white men (1972–1994). *Social Problems* 44:19–31.

Smith analyzes data from the General Social Survey. He finds that differences in the amount of income returns to job authority increase between 1972 and 1994, favoring white men over black men. The increase is greatest at higher levels of job authority: that is, positions with more layers of bureaucratic authority below them.

Wilson, George. 1997. Payoffs to power among males in the middle class: Has race declined in its significance? *The Sociological Quarterly* 38.4: 607–622.

A test of William J. Wilson's thesis of the declining significance of race using longitudinal data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics. A significant increase in the racial gap in the amount of earnings returns to two dimensions of authority among black and white men between 1976 and 1985 cast doubt on the declining significance of race thesis.

Intersections of Gender, Race, and Ethnicity

Scholars have long held that gender, race, and ethnicity likely intersect with class (however defined) to structure different labor market outcomes for men and women of diverse racial/ethnic and social class backgrounds. Whether the labor market experiences of white men are similar to or different from that of white women, black men, black women, Latinos/as, Asian men, Asian women, etc. is an empirical question intersectional approaches attempt to answer. Opportunities to explore this question are rare due largely to data limitations and, frankly, a myopic preoccupation with analyses that focus on gender at the expense of race/ethnicity or a focus on race/ethnicity at the expense of gender. At the same time, social class is rarely overtly factored into the intersectional mix, but it is often implied via the operationalization of key outcome measures (e.g., authority as class, income, occupational status). Within the domain of authority studies, McGuire and Reskin 1993 explicitly calls for an intersectional approach to studying group differences in authority at work. Smith 2012 and Smith and Elliott 2005 directly answer this call with a multiracial/ethnic analysis of the effects of family structure on the authority attainment of women and men. An intersectional approach also informs Smith 2012 and its query of whether race, ethnicity, and gender intersect to produce unequal wages and benefits among supervisors and non-supervisors. The logic of intersectionalism is further evident

in Elliott and Smith 2004 and its test of Rosabeth Kanter's thesis of homosocial reproduction and Mintz and Krymkowski 2010 and its analysis of change over time in authority attainment (see also Maume 2004 and Williams 2013 under Authority: Glass Ceilings, Glass Escalators, and Glass Cliffs).

Elliott, James R., and Ryan A. Smith. 2004. Race, gender, and workplace power. *American Sociological Review* 69.3: 365–386.

Using a multiracial/ethnic sample of men and women (MCSUI, 1992–1994), Elliott and Smith show that, all groups (white men and women, black men and women, Latinos/Latinas) benefit from homosocial reproduction but white males benefit the most because they are disproportionately located in high levels of authority to begin with.

McGuire, Gail, and Barbara Reskin. 1993. Authority hierarchies at work: The impact of race and sex. *Gender & Society* 7:487–506.

One of the first studies to assert that race and sex intersect to simultaneously structure different access to authority and different income rewards for authority. Based on a 1980 national telephone survey, their study lends credence to the hypothesis that the dual status of black women (female and black) renders them doubly disadvantaged relative to other groups.

Mintz, Beth, and Daniel H. Krymkowski. 2010. The ethnic, race, and gender gaps in workplace authority: Changes over time in the United States. *The Sociological Quarterly* 51:20–45.

Examine how race, ethnicity, and gender intersect in the authority attainment process at two points in time. General Social Survey data reveal important race/ethnic and gender differences in the processes leading to authority, and this article reports that little has changed across the two periods (1972–1989 and 1990–2006) covered by the data.

Smith, Ryan A. 2012. Money, benefits and power: A test of glass ceiling and glass escalator hypotheses. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 639.1: 148–171.

Data from the MCSUI (1992–1994) show that race, ethnicity, and gender intersect to structure differential monetary and benefits returns to authority among a multiracial/ethnic sample of men and women.

Smith, Ryan A., and James R. Elliott. 2005. Family structure and organizational power: A multiracial/ethnic analysis of women and men. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 2.1: 69–90.

MCSUI data (1992–1994) confirms that marriage and parenthood influences the authority attainment of black, white, and Hispanic men and women in different ways. Black women experience a “marital bonus” in predominantly white workplaces, while Latinas experience a “marital bonus” in predominantly Latina workplaces. Marriage does not enhance the authority prospects of white women, white men, or black men and Latinos.

Authority: Glass Ceilings, Glass Escalators, and Glass Cliffs

In the 21st century, authority researchers have been concerned with the conceptualization and measurement of popular (e.g., glass ceiling and glass escalators) and newly established (e.g., glass cliffs) metaphors to describe persistent gender, race, and ethnic inequality especially in positions of power and influence at work. Focusing on gender, Wright, et al. 1995 and Baxter

and Wright 2000 examine glass ceiling inequality cross-nationally, while Cotter, et al. 2001; Elliott and Smith 2004; Maume 2004; and Zeng 2011 examine the role race/ethnicity *and* gender plays in structuring glass ceiling inequality the US context. These nascent areas of authority research present mixed evidence for the presence of a glass ceiling that blocks the advancement of women and racial minorities. Williams 1992 introduces the concept of the glass escalator to describe the leadership advantages men experience over women in female dominated occupations, but later, upon revisiting her original formulation, she notes that, among other things, she failed to take into account intersectionality—the notion that gender, race, and class intersect to forge different labor market outcomes for groups (Williams 2013). Even before the revelation, Wingfield 2009 and Smith 2012 had used the glass escalator concept to theorize race. Ryan and Haslam 2005a and Ryan and Haslam 2005b introduce the “glass cliff” metaphor to describe the precarious executive roles women are recruited into.

Baxter, Janeen, and Erik O. Wright. 2000. The glass ceiling hypothesis: A comparative study of the United States, Sweden, and Australia. *Gender & Society* 14.2: 275–294.

This test of the glass ceiling hypothesis (e.g., women’s decreased promotion probabilities relative to men as they ascend the authority hierarchy) using data from the Comparative Class Analysis Project (1980–1995), which features samples of women and men from three countries: United States, Sweden, and Australia, confirms the presence of a gender gap in authority in all three countries but finds only weak evidence of glass ceiling inequality in Sweden and Australia and no evidence in the United States.

Cotter, David A., Joan M. Hermsen, Seth Ovadia, and Reeve Vanneman. 2001. The glass ceiling effect. *Social forces* 80.2: 655–681.

Using data from the PSID (1976–1993), this paper advances four conditions that should be met in order to establish the presence of glass ceiling inequality as it pertains to gender or race. All four criteria are met when analyzing gender inequality (e.g., white and black women relative to white men), but only two out of four criteria are met when analyzing racial inequality (black men relative to white men).

Elliott, James R., and Ryan A. Smith. 2004. Race, gender, and workplace power. *American Sociological Review* 69.3: 365–386.

Using a multiracial/ethnic sample of men and women (MCSUI, 1992–1994), Elliott and Smith show that, relative to white men, black men and women, Latinos/Latinas and white women, experience a glass ceiling (e.g., increasing disadvantage at higher levels of authority). But unlike the other groups, glass ceiling inequality experienced by black women is more consistent with direct forms of discrimination.

Maume, David J. 2004. Is the glass ceiling a unique form of inequality? Evidence from a random-effects model of managerial attainment. *Work and Occupations* 31.2: 250–274.

Somewhat of a replication of Cotter, et al. 2001 using the PSID (1980–1992) to examine managerial status, instead of earnings, as a more accurate test of the glass ceiling hypothesis. The data supports the existence of glass ceiling inequality for women and racial minorities that intensifies at higher levels of managerial attainment and, given the longitudinal nature of the data, later in the life cycle.

Ryan, Michelle K., and S. Alexander Haslam. 2005a. The glass cliff: Exploring the dynamics surrounding the appointment of women to precarious leadership positions. *Academy of Management Review* 32.2: 549–572.

A comprehensive review of “glass cliff” evidence, this article covers the processes that contribute to the glass cliff and ways to

eliminate it. Reviewing experimental studies, archival studies, and web-based data, the article develops propositions regarding the causes and consequences of glass cliff inequality for women. Raises the importance of understanding context when evaluating the performance of women in leadership and discusses how the glass cliff phenomenon might be applicable to minority groups.

Ryan, Michelle K., and S. Alexander Haslam. 2005b. The glass cliff: Evidence that women are over-represented in precarious leadership positions. *British Journal of Management* 16:81–90.

Women who are successful at breaking through the glass ceiling may find themselves stranded on a “glass cliff” as defined as precarious or risky leadership roles (e.g., general financial downturn and downturn in company performance). This conclusion, supported by web-based archival data (2003) drawn from banking, retail and information technology companies, contradicts the notion that appointing women to managerial positions leads to a decline in company performance. Instead, results support the interpretation that companies already experiencing a financial downturn are likely to recruit women in leadership roles. Implications and future research directions are discussed.

Smith, Ryan A. 2012. Money, benefits and power: A test of glass ceiling and glass escalator hypotheses. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 639.1: 148–171.

A multiracial/ethnic sample of men and women (MCSUI 1992–1994) produces no evidence that women and racial minorities experience glass ceiling inequality relative to white men in that relative inequality wages and employment benefits does not increase with movement up the authority hierarchy as the glass ceiling hypothesis implies. Instead, relative inequality remains constant throughout all levels of the authority hierarchy.

Williams, Christine L. 1992. The Glass Escalator: Hidden Advantages for Men in the “Female” Professions. *Social problems* 39.3: 253–267.

A series of in-depth interviews with 76 men and 23 women (1985–1991) in four U.S. cities establishes that men experience structural advantage when entering traditionally female occupations (e.g., nursing, elementary school teacher, librarianship, and social work) in comparison to women when entering traditionally male occupations. Men in feminized occupations experience preferential hiring, promotion in managerial/administrative roles, and acceptance by supervisors (particularly when sharing the same gender identity) and colleagues.

Williams, Christine L. 2013. The glass escalator, revisited: Gender inequality in neoliberal times. *Gender & Society* 27.5: 609–629.

Revisits the glass escalator concept on the grounds that it failed to take into account intersectionality (e.g., race, sexuality, and class intersect to privilege some groups, namely white men, over women and racial minorities), and it was based on the mistaken assumption that employment would remain stable and job hierarchies and career ladders would remain intact. The fluctuating aspect of each component led Williams to conclude that new metaphors are needed to fully understand gender inequality at work.

Wingfield, Adia H. 2009. Racializing the glass escalator: Reconsidering men’s experiences with women’s work. *Gender & Society* 23.1: 5–26.

Examines the glass escalator concept with data from seventeen in-depth interviews of African American men working in the traditional “female” profession of nursing in 2007. Results suggest that the glass escalator is both gendered and racialized. African American men did not experience the advantages the glass escalator should afford men in feminized occupations.

Instead, African Americans face promotion barriers by supervisors, were stereotyped by patients, and reported discomfort from feminized aspects of their jobs.

Wright, Erik O., Janeen Baxter, and Gunn E. Bir kelund. 1995. The gender gap in workplace authority: A cross-national study. *American Sociological Review* 60:407–435.

Examines the gender gap along three dimensions of authority across seven countries (Comparative Project on Class Structure and Class Consciousness, 1980s). Their test of the glass ceiling hypothesis, the notion that disparities increase as one moves up the authority hierarchy, is not supported by the data.

Zeng, Zhen. 2011. The myth of the glass ceiling: Evidence from a stock-flow analysis of authority attainment. *Social Science Research* 40:312–325.

Panel data from the Scientists and Engineers Statistical Data System from the period 1993–1999, are used to analyze “transitions across authority levels” (workers, supervisors, managers) among white and Asian men and women and a combined group of men and women classified as “under represented racial minorities” (e.g., blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians). Results showed no support for the glass ceiling hypothesis as defined by Zeng.

[back to top](#)

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