Gender and Ethnicity: Perspectives on Dual Status

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The role of gender and ethnicity as status variables, i.e., as cues to social standing, personal experiences, and cultural expectations, is discussed and the relevant literature is reviewed. The point is made that gender research typically fails to include race/ethnic concerns, and that studies of ethnic groups often ignore gender issues. Consideration is given to the relative scarcity of research which deals with both gender and race/ethnic issues. The impact of each variable, gender and race, is examined separately, and in combination. Issues of racism and sexism are specifically addressed, and the need for research which utilizes an interaction approach is presented. An overview of the articles presented in this special issue is provided. They are discussed in terms of their ability to confirm the importance of the gender/ethnic interaction.

This special issue is intended to contribute to the growing efforts to resist homogenization of gender, race, ethnicity, and social class. Indeed, we wish to consider the combined impacts of status characteristics as they occur simultaneously. Specifically, we proposed this issue to investigate the effects of both gender and ethnicity. In our society these two traits are particularly salient, having been shown to distinguish between high status and low status individuals (Ladrine, 1985). Indeed, among the various characteristics which have been identified as contributors to status, gender and ethnicity are undoubtedly the most permanent, most noticeable, and have the most established attributional systems to accompany them.

Researchers in the social sciences have attended carefully to the impact of social status characteristics of behavior. Status has been defined as important in social and personal interactions (Bushman, 1984; Eagly & Chrva-

la, 1986; Gergen & Gergen, 1986). It has had demonstrable effects on affiliation, attitude change, learning, and other behaviors. Generally, social status provides us with information and expectations for people's behavior. High status individuals are accepted as leaders and models; low status people are devalued and ignored (Wentworth & Anderson, 1984). Among the status characteristics addressed in many studies are: age, ethnicity, gender, race, religious affiliation, and social class.

Many researchers have attempted to generate theories to explain how these various characteristics influence individual and group behavior. In psychology, particularly, there has always been pressure for parsimony in the development of theoretical analysis. The pressure for "elegant" or "clean" results, at times coupled with political concerns (see Scarr, 1988), has often led psychologists to examine one trait at a time. Observations of multiple characteristics have been infrequent especially when those characteristics deal with socially sensitive issues, such as gender and race. On an intellectual level, most investigators recognize that status characteristics are not easily isolated in real people. In practice, however, theories rely heavily on data constrained by the assumptions of majority dominance and universality. In other words, most researchers focus their investigations on Whites. Further, they freely extrapolate from their data to other groups with minimal consideration about the appropriateness of generalizations. Scarr (1988) suggests that avoiding issues of race and gender serves neither the development of accurate information, nor the best interests of the groups involved.

GENDER ALONE AS A STATUS VARIABLE

Virtually every society uses gender in assigning expectations and in determining distinct roles for males and females (Williams & Best, 1982). In most societies males more often than females hold positions of public importance; men dominate and control family resources; and they are more often assigned status and power as their birthright (Rogers, 1981). Women typically play private, personal roles; they have little control of their lives; and they frequently have difficulty earning and keeping power and status (Williams, 1983). Based on such data, it seems clear that ascribing lower status to women is widely accepted. What has also been revealed through research is that the result of such lower status expectations is often damaging to personal relationships, as well as to professional ones. In the professional realm women expect and receive lower salaries (Martin, 1989), are more likely to have their activities taken lightly, and are perceived as less competent and expert (Dexter, 1985; Kanter, 1977). On the personal level, gender-typed expectations may contribute to women's experiences of stress, low self-esteem, and dissatisfaction in their roles as spouses, homemakers/workers,

mothers, and friends (Stokes & Peyton, 1986; Grieve, Rosenthal, & Caval-
lo, 1988; Mellinger & Erdwins, 1985).

When gender studies began to burgeon in the late 1960's and 1970's,
an urgent request was made that men not be the standard for behavior. Yet,
decades later it appears that the standard was only broadened to include White
females. Despite the fact that investigators have demonstrated the complex-
ity of predicting behavior for dual status groups from studies of single sta-
tus populations (Adams, 1980), ethnicity as a status variable has been largely
ignored within the context of gender issues. Recent studies have focused on
the status conveyed by gender and have evaluated its impact in a variety of
relationships and situations. Yet, much of such research ignores the diversi-
ty among women focusing instead on White middle-class women and chil-
dren. The bias towards use of exclusively White participants extends across
the range of research participants from college students and school-aged chil-
dren to middle-aged and professional women (e.g., Burns & Homel, 1989;
Golding, 1988). There are also many investigations in which the race of the
participants is not even reported (e.g., Coutts, 1987; Greendorfer, 1987; Rose
& Roades, 1987), thus, leaving the reader to her/his own conclusions about
participation rates of ethnic minorities in the sample. Such omissions seri-
ously limit the possibility for subsequent meta-analysis of race differences
and the overall ability of researchers to demonstrate whether race has sig-
nificance or not.

ETHNICITY/RACE ALONE AS A STATUS VARIABLE

In the United States, as in many other countries, ethnicity or racial
characteristics are cues to family background and social status. While gender
is recognized as a highly salient characteristic by which we identify and dis-
tinguish individuals; it is often surpassed by race (Grady, 1977). Ethnic group
characteristics which are easily distinguished, e.g., skin color, facial features,
use of non-standard English language, are assumed to reveal personality,
mental abilities, and behavioral traits (O'Kelly & Carney, 1986; Smith,
Burlew, Mosley & Whitney, 1978). Frequently decisions made in response
to ethnic characteristics are biased in predictable ways. White males and fe-
males are typically assigned superior status in professional and social set-
tings, whereas other ethnic/racial groups are assumed to be inferior (Tumin,
1969). For example, an African American woman in an office setting may
be assumed to be the secretary, not the executive; a Latino mowing his
lawn in a middle class neighborhood may be thought to be the gardener,
not the homeowner.

Indeed, scientific studies have not been very successful in changing the
long held assumptions about the influence of ethnicity on social outcomes,

especially when the ethnic group holds a minority position. In the United States a history of negative stereotypic beliefs and low status attributions have been documented as directed against Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans (Burgess, 1965; Sagar & Schofield, 1980; Senour, 1981; True, 1981; Witt, 1981). Variously the stereotypes portray the ethnic group member as possessing negative characteristics, e.g., they are sly, stupid, lazy, or barbaric. Paradoxically, popular beliefs also tend to undervalue accomplishments or positive traits held by ethnic groups, when they cannot be ignored. For example, outstanding Black athletes are commonly touted in the media as "naturals" suggesting that determination, drive, effort, and practice is less important for their success than it would be for White athletes of similar stature. On the other hand, some researchers have found that discriminatory behavior may depend on situational conditions, such as organizational climate (Larwood et al., 1988).

   We find it more than disconcerting to note that while many discussions of racism include the concern of racists with sexuality, miscegenation, and like topics (e.g., Comer, 1980), the same discourse will avoid inclusion of the underlying concepts of sex roles, gender-typed dominance, and role expectations. The omission of gender issues has occurred not only when the process of racism has been studied, but such neglect also occurs in more broadly focused discussions of the psychology of ethnic minorities (e.g., Jenkins, 1982). As in gender studies which ignore race, ethnic studies which overlook gender present us with an incomplete and, possibly, distorted view of the behaviors we attempt to investigate. An interaction approach as called for by Smith and Stewart (1983) is clearly needed.

GENDER AND RACE/ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION

   Discussions of relationships between gender and ethnicity raise the issue of yet another powerful interaction, the effects of sexism and racism. Although we do not intend to minimize the experiences of discrimination directed at ethnic minority men, ethnic minority women are in the unique position in our society to experience the deleterious impact of prejudice directed at them for their multiple identities. Gender discrimination may be generated from both within and outside of their own ethnic minority community (Reid, 1988). Racial/ethnic prejudice may come from other women, as well as from men. While infrequently studied, the combined impact of dual identification has been recognized as an influence on personal development. However, the effects of possible double discrimination are only recently being explored (Larwood, Szwajkowski, & Rose, 1988; Smith & Stewart, 1983).

   In comparing the features of both racism and sexism, it was demonstrated that while the two concepts and their concomitant processes have a

number of similarities, the differences are sufficient to warrant separate consideration and investigation (Reid, 1988). The comparison indicates that racism and sexism are similar in their definitions, behavior, attitudes, and in their overall manifestations. However, a number of differences were also observed. Sexism was seen as fairly universal with many cultures sharing some basic beliefs about women. Racism was described as more culture specific. Further with respect to scope, it was pointed out that the relationship to societal power embodied by White men is different for ethnic minority people than for White women, who are necessary to and intimate with them. A major difference may also be that racism has been frequently described as pathological (e.g., Delany, 1982). Sexism on the other hand, has been most often explained as a systemic problem, not necessarily a personal one. The implication drawn from many investigations is that sexists are socially misguided or poorly socialized, not necessarily mentally ill (Lockheed & Hall, 1976; Fischer, 1987).

IMPACT OF GENDER AND RACE/ETHNICITY ON IDENTITY

While racism and sexism have been found to have a serious psychological impact on persons toward which they have been directed (Howard, 1982), we must not assume that gender and racial status *per se* determine one's psychological outlook. Certainly, gender and race are important components of one's identity; however, assumptions that being female or being Black or Hispanic will necessarily cause one to adopt or accept an attitude of inferiority are mistaken. Self-identification occurs at approximately three years of age for both race and gender (Rathus, 1988). Each characteristic has been shown to have relevance for determining personality characteristics such as self-esteem (Lyons, 1986; Taylor, 1976); as an indicator of probable socialization experiences (Reid, 1982); and for providing cues which factor into the reactions of others (Larwood et al., 1988; Romero & Garza, 1986). Both gender and ethnicity may be considered bio-social factors in that they combine components of biological/hereditary traits with social/environmental influences within the same individual. These traits may also be considered utilizing a developmental perspective, since the impact of each has been found to evolve over the lifespan. Considering the research attention directed toward developmental issues, it is noteworthy that relatively few investigations have been conducted to examine the circumstances which might lead these two important components of personality to combine to produce behavior different from other ethnic/gender groups.

The articles in this special issue examine the interaction between gender and ethnicity. As previously indicated, such interaction appears to have been neglected in previous research. The articles here discuss issues of relevance

to African American, Asian and Pacific Island, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian communities. They comprise different developmental populations, such as children, college students, adult women and men. Diverse topics are also included. Among the issues discussed are: the effects of gender and ethnicity on non-traditional families, psychological androgyny, females' sexual satisfaction, ethnic identity among college students, acculturation and immigration, nonconformist gender roles, and psychopathology and its treatment.

Issues of gender significantly affect the study of ethnic minority groups, while simultaneously, ethnic and racial variables interact with individuals' sex roles. This multileveled framework attests to the complex effects of the gender/ethnicity interaction among ethnic minority populations. The Black community, for instance, may not adhere to the traditional concept of family described as a nuclear unity composed of father, mother, and children. Indeed, there is diversity within the family structure of African American families. However, there are themes underlying such diversity which also provide coherence. These themes include 1. strong kinship bonds among a variety of households; 2. strong work, education and achievement orientation; 3. strong commitment to religious values and church participations; and 4. high level of flexibility in family roles (Hill, 1972; Ho, 1987; Solomon, 1976).

In this issue, Melvin N. Wilson and his associates (1990) have empirically examined the degree of flexibility in Black families. They studied nontraditional Black families focusing specifically on the sharing of childcare duties. Their research expands our knowledge of family interaction and childrearing practices in single and dual parent Black families. The role of grandmother in the Black family is particularly highlighted. This type of empirical work validates the cultural context of the definition of family for many ethnic minorities.

The identity formation of ethnic minority individuals is a complex issue which is related to the gender/ethnicity interaction. Ethnic and gender variables exert a powerful influence on individuals' identities. In fact, they constitute paramount roles that need to be integrated into the ethnic minority individual's overall sense of self. In general, all individuals acquire different identities according to the developmental stage which they have reached. For ethnic minorities, there exist a multiplicity of roles which need to be managed. These include: ethnic, sexual, cultural, socioeconomic, and developmental, among others. Kathleen Ethier and Kay Deaux (1990) studied ethnic identity and the degree that it may be threatened for Hispanic (Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans) students in their first year in Ivy league universities. They examined Hispanic identity, collective self-esteem, and perceived threats to the students' ethnic identity. Moreover, the researchers examined the degree to which strength of cultural background relates to self-esteem and to collective self-esteem.

GENDER AND ETHNICITY IN CULTURAL TRANSITIONS

Developmental transitions are not the only adjustments that many ethnic minorities face. Immigration and migration with the subsequent culture shock, transition and translocation may pose an added stress to many ethnic minorities. Gender roles tend to be affected by cultural transitions and subsequent cultural adaptation (Comas-Diaz, 1988). Within an Hispanic population, Salgado de Snyder and her associates (1990, in this issue) examine the relationship between immigration and generalized distress among females and males from different cultural backgrounds. Their study expands the knowledge of the mental health of Hispanic immigrants and Hispanic Americans, by examining the psychosocial correlates of generalized distress as they relate to gender and ethnic differences. Given the diversity prevalent among the Hispanic groups, the researchers studied Mexican immigrants, Central American immigrants, Hispanic Americans, and Anglo Americans. The research findings point to gender differences as well to ethnic differences. They suggest a strong relationship between immigration stress and generalized psychological distress. They also address the need to understand the changes that immigrant females undergo during the process of adapting to a new cultural context.

Cultural transitions have also been forced upon Native American populations. While they have not emigrated, their cultural heritage has also been overwhelmed by Anglo and European traditions. The American Indian population is culturally and linguistically diverse. American Indians tend to value 1. harmony with nature (as opposed to control over nature), 2. present time orientation (as opposed to future time orientation), 3. collateral relationship with others (as opposed to individual relationships with others), 4. being-in becoming as preferred mode of activity (as opposed to doing as preferred mode of activity), and 5. the nature of man is perceived as good (as opposed to the nature of man is perceived as good and bad) (Attneave, 1982; Ho, 1987). This set of values is contrary to the Anglo mainstream values and has thus created conflict. For the Native American males and females, struggling with multiple conflicting cultural demands has become a highly stressful challenge.

American Indian women have been historically independent, but at the same time, supportive and submissive to the role of their spouses (Hanson, 1980). Similarly, many American Indian women have had to contend with low prestige positions, while having more freedom and latitude in their roles as compared to their male counterparts (Spindler & Spindler, 1971). Teresa LaFromboise (1990) in this issue presents a comprehensive review of the gender roles among American Indian women. She discusses the process of retraditionalization of American Indian females who are responding to critical tribal economic, political, and social needs by extending traditional

caretaking roles through professional and political activities. In addition to the traditional roles, LaFromboise discusses the non-traditional or noncon-formist female roles, such as *berdache* or cross-gender individuals; daring Cheyenne women horse-riders; *manly hearted women*; chief or *sit-by-wives*; Crow, Cheyenne, and Blackfoot *warrior woman;* Lakota *beloved children; winktes* of the Siouxtribe; the Cherokee Beloved Woman; the Sun Dance Woman; the sexually promiscuous Crazy Woman; and the lesbians.

Many of the multi-cultural and multi-lingual issues arise again in the cases of Asian and Pacific Americans. In this issue Reiko Homma True (1990) examines the sources of stress which influence Asian American women. There are many similarities among the ethnic groups, yet we also find each group distinct and intriguing in history, evolution of stereotypes, and the manifestations of stress versus coping strategies. True offers sugges-tions for therapists who have the opportunity of assisting ethnic minority women with their struggle to adapt to American society. Her cases and ex-amples, while directed specifically to Asian Americans, may actually serve as models for other ethnic groups as well.

ETHNIC PERSPECTIVES ON SEXUALITY AND SEX ROLES

In this issue, Victoria Jackson Binion (1990) examines the rela-tionship among masculine and feminine personality attributes, sex role attitudes, and socialization antecedents in Black women. Sex-role theories, as most other psychological explanations of attitudes and behavior, have been developed in the absence of minority participation. In her attempt to correct this situation, Binion has begun to determine what is standard for Blacks. From her findings she indicates that Black women report androgynous sex-ual identities. However, she also finds that African American women report having traditional beliefs about the female role within the family context. Such apparent contradiction reveals the complexity of the effect of ethnicity on sex roles among ethnic minorities. The question future researchers must address is how do Black women reconcile the androgynous orientation with the more traditional cultural context where the mothering role is central to identity.

With regards to the African American and other ethnic populations, there is not only the need to establish the theoretical basis for examining gender-related beliefs, but there is also a need to collect systematic data on real-life behavior. In this issue, the study co-authored by Gail Wyatt and Sandra Lyons-Rowe (1990) attempts to address the topic of sexual behavior by examining African American women's sexual satisfaction and sexual identity respectively. Environmental, sociocultural, and family

parameters specific to this population, were utilized to frame the research. For instance, marital status *per se* was not defined as the context of sexually satisfying relationships. Recognition of the increasing number of Black females with disrupted marital relationships indicated that other dimensions would be necessary to measure such constructs.

A final case for the need for direct examination of ethnic behavior and professional bias is provided by Maria Root's article in this issue (1990). Root investigates eating disorders, particularly anorexia nervosa, which have been identified as White female phenomena. She indicates that the predominant assumption is that the occurrence of eating disorders among ethnic minorities is rare. Root presents an examination of a) how racial and ethnic stereotypes obfuscate clinical assessment of this disease among African American, Latina, and Asian American females; b) the question of whether eating disorders are increasing among ethnic minorities; and c) strategies for including ethnic minorities as participants in studies and in treatment of eating disorders.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Both gender and race serve as status variables which provide cues to our experiences and social standing. Psychologists have demonstrated that each of these factors clearly influences a number of attitudes and behaviors. Investigations and explanations of these attitudinal and behavioral outcomes have typically focused on only one determining variable at a time. In addition, interpretations have frequently been driven by norms and expectations developed exclusively from studies of White middle-class Americans.

We have found that research consideration of the behavior patterns among ethnic minority women and men, when it is given, has been found to result as an afterthought by the researcher. This approach to the study of gender or race is inadequate; indeed, the "tacked on" analysis may or may not be relevant to the issue of the original study. We have also noted that even less frequently are studies focused on the impact of gender within an ethnic groups. Also neglected has been the role of gender concerns in the study of race.

Given the fact that both race and gender characteristics play a role in so many social situations, it is rather surprising that researchers have continued to overlook the possible combined or interactive effects that one dimension may have upon the other. The implication of these observations is that gender and ethnicity may be understood as orthogonal factors. Such a hypothesis seems somewhat simplistic or naive. As it does not seem possible to separate (except through statistical manipulations) the impact of a per-

son's heredity from his or her environment, it would seem less than unlikely that a person in our society could be evaluated without gender or ethnic factors and experiences influencing her or him in distinct and measurable ways. For these reasons, we wish to focus attention on gender and ethnicity as characteristics which may work in tandem. In addition to the obvious existence of many ethnic minority women for whom the dual status role is an important factor, there remains a need to direct attention to the study of the manifestation of double identity and to the impact of dual status.

Many of the articles presented in this special issue address topics of particular concern to ethnic minority women. The condition of being a double minority lends itself to the invisibility that has plagued the empirical literature on ethnic minorities as well as the literature on women. The research as well as the review articles presented in this issue attest to the special impact of both gender and ethnicity. Both gender and ethnic variables are crucial to the understanding of ethnic minorities' behaviors. Their interactive effect constitutes a major component of the psychological, sociocultural, environmental, and biological realities for these communities. Understanding the impact of these variables helps to construct and build conceptual, empirical, and applied knowledge relevant to the complex realities of everyday experiences. Although the field of ethnic-gender research is still in its incipient stage, we hope that this special issue of *Sex Roles* can contribute to the development of this topic and that it will stimulate further research.

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