The National Longitudinal Surveys Data for Labor Market Entry: Evaluating the Small Effects of Racial Discrimination and the Large Effects of Sexual Discrimination

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This paper constructs racially and sexually comparative models of labor market entry to assess the effects of individual differences and labor market discrimination. Traditional measures of racial discrimination in the labor market are of relatively small importance in explaining prestige and income gaps compared to the effect of individual differences. Measures of sexual discrimination, however, are of considerable importance in accounting for the differences in prestige and income between male and female workers. Sexual discrimination works against women in the allocation of income, but against men for occupational prestige, a pattern that holds for both black and white workers. Discrimination against men for prestige is the logical counterpart of discrimination against women for income. Women should be considered theoretically and empirically distinct from blacks when minority relations are analyzed.

Several national studies of occupational mobility illustrate the strong impact of the first full-time job on later movement in occupational class structure. While studies have compared black and white entry models for men (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Featherman and Hauser, 1976b; Lyon and Abell, 1980; Ornstein, 1976), or less often women (Baker and Levenson, 1976; Jones, 1979), there have been no studies of labor market entry for a general sample of black and white men and women. Accordingly, there are no comparative estimates of the relative effects of racial and sexual discrimination at the entry point into the labor market. We do not know the degree to which the level of entry into the labor market is determined by individualistic, human capital variables or more structural variables such as racial or sexual discrimination in the labor market. Nor do we know which individualistic variables are predominant in producing initial occupational rewards and how they vary in effectiveness by race and sex. In an attempt to answer these questions, we construct four comparable entry models for black and white men and women and estimate the effects of racial and sexual discrimination on variations in the levels of income and prestige for the first full-time job.

Researchers differ on the most efficacious way to relate racial and sexual discrimination. Traditional works such as Myrdal (1944) and Becker (1971), as well as more recent Marxist approaches (O'Connor, 1973; Szymanski, 1978) sometimes see the two forms of discrimination as similar, and hence creating one large minority group of disadvantaged workers: white women and all blacks. Other studies (Epstein, 1973; Hudis, 1977; Treiman and Terrell, 1975; Villenez, 1977) focus more on the different effects racial and sexual discrimination have on women and blacks. Our four entry models isolate possible sexual and racial effects and allow comparisons of the

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degree to which these groups differ in human capital and labor market interaction. If the differences are considerable, it will not disprove previous works such as Myrdal (1944), but a single, comprehensive approach to discrimination will be rendered less valuable. If white women share human capital levels or labor market entry models with black workers, then the applicability of a comprehensive approach is strengthened.

There has been considerable discussion concerning the apparent lack of sexual discrimination against women in the allocation of occupational prestige. Researchers who report little or no discrimination against women (England, 1979; Featherman and Hauser, 1976a; McClendon, 1976; Treiman and Terrell, 1975) have sometimes had their findings challenged (Fligstein and Wolf, 1978; Sørensen, 1979). Our analysis can provide additional insight into this controversy and will develop theoretical and empirical support for a conceptualization of occupational prestige as a necessarily distinct phenomenon from income.

The National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS) of Labor Market Experience were conducted by the Center of Human Resources of the Ohio State University for the U.S. Department of Labor. Four groups of the U.S. population have been periodically surveyed, including two cohorts analyzed in this paper: young men and women age 14 to 24. The initial sample for the groups is large (n>5,000), representative (multi-stage probability sampling design), with a high respondent completion rate (76 to 86 percent) over the six years (1966-1971) reported here. We constructed models explaining the attainment of occupational prestige and income from these data. While considerable research has been done in the area of status attainment, ours is the first racially and sexually comparative study of labor market entry similar to the traditional causal models developed by Blau and Duncan (1967) and Ornstein (1976). These traditional models that focus on individual attainment have been criticized for being primarily white male oriented, encroached in functional terms, assuming a rather open competitive market, and treating socio-economic status as unidimensional (Acker, 1980; Sokoloff, 1980). This paper, while using the individual attainment paradigm, includes both black and women workers and estimates labor market discrimination. This allows an interaction of individual and structural components that should result in a more balanced understanding of status attainment.

The first task was to select those NLS respondents who were employed in their first full-time job. This produced more precise measurement than the retrospective technique of asking people to remember their first job (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Ornstein, 1976). In order to select those who were employed in their first full-time job, we chose respondents who labeled themselves as full-time students one year (either 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, or 1970) and as full-time workers the next year (1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, or 1971). Then, we determined the occupational rank, as measured by the Duncan Socio-economic Index (SEI), and income reported by the young workers the year they entered the labor market, as dependent variables. Thus, some of the workers reported their job and earnings in 1967, others in 1968, 1969, 1970, or 1971, depending upon when they began their first full-time job.

In addition, we separated the male and female NLS samples into black and white workers. Two previous studies of these samples (Jones, 1979; Lyon and Abell, 1980) found somewhat different patterns of labor market entry by race. Table 1 shows that white men and women entering the job market from 1967 to 1971 came from smaller families, where the head of the household has more years of formal schooling and a higher status job than their black counterparts. These young white workers score higher on IQ tests, complete more years of formal education, and possess more knowledge about job requirements and conditions.1 In general, then, both white men and

1. Many NLS variables are not comparable by sex because some questions were asked for men and not women, or vice versa. Table 1 represents all NLS variables examined in previous entry studies for which there is direct comparison. Operational definitions are available from Jones (1979), and Abell and Lyon (1979).
women bring to the labor market higher levels of individual (i.e., human capital) variables. We will show the degree to which these racial differences in background translate into differences in occupational rewards.

Racial differences are substantially larger than corresponding sexual differences. For most variables, there are only small differences between black men and black women and/or between white men and white women. Except for women possessing slightly more work knowledge and parental encouragement to remain in school than men, the background similarities between men and women are considerable for both black and white workers. However, this pattern of large racial differences and small sexual differences is not translated accordingly into occupational rewards.

White women enter the labor market with more prestigious jobs than white men, but they earn less. Likewise, black women enter with a more prestigious job than their male counterparts, yet earn less. The racial differences in prestige and income are also large, with higher rewards going to the white workers. Thus, the patterns for occupational rewards show significant sexual and racial differences, while only racial differences are significant for family background.

### MODELS OF LABOR MARKET ENTRY

We developed four causal models based on the variables in Table 1 to account for variation in the level of labor market entry among black and white men and women. Two criteria were used in constructing these models. First, variables included in one model must be included in all four, in order to maximize comparability. Second, in making the models comparable, there must be no substantial reduction in the number of respondents or the explanatory power of any of the four models. To evaluate our ability to conform to the requirements of these criteria, earlier models of
labor market entry (Jones, 1979; Lyon and Abell, 1980; Ornstein, 1976) were used for comparison. Our goal was to construct racially and sexually comparable models from the NLS variables in Table 1 without sacrificing sample size or explanatory power when compared to the earlier entry studies.

We tried many variations and combinations of the variables in Table 1, with the model in Figure 1 producing the highest levels of sample size and explained variance with identical predictors. When contrasted with major entry models such as Ornstein's, the R²'s in Table 2 are similar in magnitude, with a larger sample than earlier NLS studies of this cohort (Jones, 1979; Lyon and Abell, 1980). This increase in NLS respondents is the result of statistical manipulation of the IQ variables. IQ proves to be an important explanatory variable in the female models, but its inclusion in the black models severely reduces the sample size. In order to include IQ and not diminish the number of respondents, a projected IQ score is given to those workers who have measures of all the variables in the model except IQ.

Beyond this one modification, variables shown in Figure 1 are the same variables as those in the NLS code books and previous NLS entry research. Parental Socio-economic Status (SES) is an

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2. Ornstein (1976) is the most extensive labor market entry study in the field, but it only develops models of male entry. Jones' (1979) study of young women and Lyon and Abell's (1980) study of young men are the only NLS entry research comparable with Ornstein. Griffin et al. (1981) focus exclusively on new NLS workers who did not attend college. Link and Ratledge (1975), Jud and Walker (1977), and Rosenfeld (1980) also focus on young NLS workers, but they analyze all workers in a particular year(s) rather than only those entering the labor market.

3. Parental socio-economic status (SES), education, income, and occupational prestige were used to estimate IQ. Separate equations were created for men and women with an R² of .29 for women and .26 for men (dividing by race did not improve the predictive power: white R² = .21, black R² = .25). Workers with projected IQ scores never comprised more than one-third of the total respondents in any of the four samples. Analysis of alternate samples—(1) without projected IQ, (2) without IQ as a predictor in the model, and (3) with the presence of projected IQ as a dummy variable—indicate that no substantive bias is introduced by this technique. See Kohen (1973) for a more detailed explanation of the IQ variable created for NLS research, and Lyon and Rector-Owen (1981) for a similar estimate of missing IQ scores.
## Table 2
### Standardized Regression Effects on Labor Market Entry

### White Men N = 1155

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Predetermined Variable</th>
<th>Direct Effect</th>
<th>Occupational Prestige</th>
<th>Total Effect</th>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Parental SES</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
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<td>R² = .35</td>
<td>IQ</td>
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<td>.20</td>
<td>.52</td>
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<td>Parental SES</td>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
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<td>.13</td>
<td>.83</td>
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<td>.155</td>
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<td>.50</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>.04</td>
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<td>.14</td>
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<td>Income</td>
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<td>.12</td>
<td>.48</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>.01</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>R² = .12</td>
<td>IQ</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.12</td>
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<td>Occupational Prestige</td>
<td>Parental SES</td>
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<td></td>
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TABLE 3
Multiple Regression Equations for Occupation and Income Levels with Comparisons by Race and Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Occupational Prestige</th>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>White Men</strong></td>
<td>$-70.96 + .01 \text{ParSES} + .30 \text{IQ} + .77*\text{Ed}$</td>
<td>$-56.57 + .08 \text{ParSES} - 1.42 \text{IQ} + 21.14*\text{Ed} + .96*\text{OcPres}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black Men</strong></td>
<td>$-52.62 + .14*\text{ParSES} + .13 \text{IQ} + 5.37*\text{Ed}$</td>
<td>$-39.85 + .53*\text{ParSES} - 1.75 \text{IQ} + 16.03*\text{Ed} + .54*\text{OcPres}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>White Women</strong></td>
<td>$-34.27 + .03 \text{ParSES} + 1.04*\text{IQ} + 5.24*\text{Ed}$</td>
<td>$-59.97 + .07 \text{ParSES} + 2.41 \text{IQ} + 14.15*\text{Ed} + .93*\text{OcPres}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black Women</strong></td>
<td>$-34.03 + .10*\text{ParSES} + 1.20*\text{IQ} + 4.55*\text{Ed}$</td>
<td>$-48.42 + .05 \text{ParSES} + 1.08 \text{IQ} + 14.50*\text{Ed} + .96*\text{OcPres}$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
* $p < .05.$

NLS index that includes parents' education and occupation, the education of the oldest sibling, and the availability of home reading material. IQ is the respondent's standardized percentile score of mental ability based on national "intelligence" tests (e.g., California Test of Mental Maturity, Lorge–Thorndike Intelligence Test). Education is the years of formal schooling completed by the new worker prior to entering the labor market. Hourly income (adjusted if paid by week or month) is the reported income of the worker and is adjusted for inflation. Occupational prestige is the Duncan Index (SEI) of the first full-time job.

A comparison of the four entry models in Table 2 shows consistent causal dominance by education and some variation in total explanatory power by race and sex. Generally, the models are more powerful for whites than blacks and for prestige rather than income. These are not uncommon findings (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Featherman and Hauser, 1976b; Ornstein, 1976) and imply that occupational prestige is more predictable than income. Additionally, the higher white R²'s are usually interpreted as showing that U.S. society dispenses rewards along lines of stratification (family background) and credentialism (education) more for whites than blacks. Therefore, models that include such measures should be more accurate for white workers than black.

The “indirect” and “total” effects of the causal variables are also shown in Table 2. Here we are able to assess the relative causal effects within each sample. For white men and women, education is clearly the major causal variable. Parental SES is next in importance, usually possessing less than half of education's total effect on prestige and income; a similar pattern exists for black workers. However, parental SES is closer in causal impact to education in the black samples, especially for black men. That parental SES should be nearer to the explanatory power of education for blacks than whites is not as advantageous as it appears, since Table 1 shows that black workers lag far behind their white counterparts in this family background variable. However, in order to make more explicit racial and sexual comparisons, we must examine the regression equations.

These equations, shown in Table 3, indicate substantial differences by race and sex. For example, white men receive higher returns in prestige and income for equal investments of time in school than any other group. This could imply, then, that the labor market is biased in favor of

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4. Income measures are sometimes transformed into a logarithmic distribution. However, the correct transformation is difficult to specify (Beck et al., 1980; Hauser, 1980). We chose to employ "real" earnings in order to maximize the interpretations of our findings. "Log" and "semilog" transformations failed to produce major substantive changes in our findings.
white men, but such a conclusion is premature. Note that parental SES produces greater rewards for black workers than whites. In other words, the direction of the racial or sexual bias varies by causal variable, and hence requires the simultaneous examination of all the causal variables in order to estimate racial and sexual discrimination in the labor market.

A MODEL FOR ESTIMATING RACIAL AND SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION

When the entire regression equation is used to evaluate the effect of structural variables such as labor market discrimination, or individual, human capital variables such as education, the importance of either labor market discrimination or individual differences depends on the changes made in the equation. Given our sample divisions by race and gender, the degree to which the variable means in the equation are changed reflects the impact of human capital. Conversely, variation in the regression coefficients is the effect of labor market changes in the rates of return for human capital. Mathematically, there is an infinite number of manipulations that can be made in the models; the means and coefficients can assume any desired level. However, not all changes are equally plausible or socially desirable. For the purposes of this model, plausible and desirable changes in the individual mean would occur if the group with lower labor market rewards were able to acquire the same family background, IQ, and education levels as the more highly rewarded group. An acceptable change in the labor market would be for groups with lower pay and prestige to be rewarded at the same exchange levels for education and other individual variables as the more highly rewarded groups. While these are not the only changes one could make in these models, they seem to be among the most reasonable.

As an example of these changes, consider black and white male workers. In order to estimate racial discrimination in the labor market for first-year workers, the regression equations for male income can be standardized by race. In this case, the regression equation for black men is given the means of white men and a new reward level is computed. Thus, both white and black men are now equal in measured levels of human capital. If a projected income or prestige level is still below that of white workers, the remaining gap can be attributed to the "cost" of being black. Or, the black means can be placed in the white equations. Here black workers are rewarded as if they were white. Now, any increase in projected rewards over actual levels can be interpreted as labor market discrimination. Both of the techniques have their own advantages and disadvantages; thus, the analysis shown in Table 4 uses both in order to minimize the degree to which the findings may be an artifact of the method employed. For the four samples, there are eight logical possibilities (four each for prestige and income) and, therefore, eight estimates of the magnitude of racial or sexual discrimination in the labor market. In each case the sample with the higher reward levels is used as the standard for comparison. For example, since white men receive more prestige and income than black men, white means are substituted into black regressions in order to standardize human capital, and white regressions are used with black means to standardize labor market reward levels.

A crucial caveat must be interjected here. Such statistical modeling is valid only to the degree that variables not in the model are either roughly equal by sex and race or relatively unimportant in the allocation of occupational rewards. For example, we must assume that a variable such as the desire for economic gain is of similar magnitude for black and white men before it is possible to compute discrimination levels for a comparison of their models. Likewise, we may assume that although black and white women may differ in eye color or length of hair, these are not substantial contributors to occupational achievement. Another possibility is that the presence of important structural variables not measured in traditional human capital models may distort

5. As alternatives, note Wright and Perrone's (1977) or Rosenfeld's (1980) variations on manipulating the mean. There are other ways of changing the model, or in dividing the sample (Beck et al., 1978a; Wright and Perrone, 1977) depending on the research question and theoretical orientation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Racial Discrimination for Occupational Prestige</th>
<th>Racial Discrimination for Income</th>
<th>Sexual Discrimination for Occupational Prestige</th>
<th>Sexual Discrimination for Income</th>
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<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>35.10 BIEqWhX</td>
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<td>4% individual**</td>
<td>40% individual**</td>
</tr>
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<td>24.33 BIX</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.58 MIEqMII</td>
<td>1% individual**</td>
<td>-4% individual**</td>
<td>-4% individual**</td>
<td>-6% individual**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.88 FmII</td>
<td>40% discrimination*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.85 FmEqMII</td>
<td>-2% individual**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- * Estimated change in reward level for lower group if discrimination in labor market is eliminated.
- ** Estimated change in reward level for lower group if individual characteristics or human capital is equalized.

discrimination measures (Beck et al., 1978b). In this case, we must assume that the variables in the current model also determine the entrance into sectors, and therefore still represent the initial cause of the reward differences (Griffin et al., 1981) regardless of the role of class (Wright and Perrone, 1977) or industrial classifications (Beck et al., 1978a). If such assumptions cannot be made, then the models do not allow valid comparisons. These problems have been acknowledged.
and analyzed since the original formation of the comparative techniques by Duncan (1968). The end result, however, appears to have been a general acceptance of some variation of the techniques described above as a measure of labor market discrimination (Featherman and Hauser, 1976a,b; Ornstein, 1976; Rosenfeld, 1980; Treiman and Terrell, 1975; Wright and Perrone, 1977). Whether or not this acceptance is merited will be considered here in some detail after these techniques are applied to the present data.

Estimating Racial Discrimination

Table 4 begins by estimating racial discrimination in occupational prestige for men. White men begin work with a job level of 35.74 (e.g., about the SEI level of a restaurant manager or plumber) while black men enter at 24.33 (e.g., an usher or welder). This racial gap in occupational prestige can be ascribed either to differences in human capital (white workers bringing to the labor market more “desirable” qualities) or labor market discrimination against blacks. If black men entering the labor market possess the same parental SES, IQ, and education levels as their white counterparts, the projected prestige level climbs from 24.33 to 35.10. This represents a 44 percent increase and almost closes the racial gap. The remaining gap of .64 points, while it can be attributed to racial discrimination in the labor market, is extremely small. This implies that an elimination of racial discrimination in the labor market against black men would increase the prestige of the first job by only three percent.

The alternative technique emphasizes human capital differences over discrimination even more. If black men receive prestigious first jobs according to the same reward system as white men, their initial job would have slightly less prestige (23.93). This shows a reverse discrimination effect of two percent. Again, if human capital differences are inferred from this technique by subtracting the projected black mean from the actual white mean, a 48 percent increase in black prestige is predicted by raising black parental SES, IQ, and education to reported white levels. Both techniques produce the same conclusions about labor market discrimination against black men in the allocation of prestigious first jobs: namely, these measures of labor market discrimination are of little consequence for racial differences and the reason for the higher level of prestige for white men can be found in the higher levels of human capital they bring to the labor market.6

A similar pattern can be found for women entering the labor market. We would project a 26 to 28 percent increase in the prestige levels of first-year black workers, if they possess the human capital levels of white women. Only a one to three percent increase is estimated by eliminating racial discrimination in the labor market. Thus, for both new male and female workers, racial labor market discrimination in the allocation of prestigious jobs appears to be of minimal importance; of major importance are the individual characteristics of the workers themselves.

The relative insignificance of racial discrimination continues for income. Black men can expect an increase in pay of only two or three percent if these indicators of labor market discrimination against them are removed. A more substantial increase of 18 percent is projected for standardizing human capital to the levels of white men. This pattern of individual characteristics being more important than racial discrimination is also repeated for women. Only a weak (-4 to -6 percent) causal impact is projected for discrimination (this time in favor of blacks), while greater impact is projected for human capital (16 to 19 percent).

6. Social discrimination can be responsible for lower levels of human capital, but no racially discriminatory practices by the employer are ascertained for labor market entry. It is important to note as well that racial discrimination may be active in preventing blacks from entering the labor market in the first place. We have chosen to focus only on those young men and women who were successful in entering the labor market; unemployment is a separate issue. If the unemployed are included, the interpretations of such data are debatable (Beck et al., 1980; Hauser, 1980).
Estimating Sexual Discrimination

This pattern of little labor market discrimination does not hold for sexual comparisons, however. White women have the most prestigious jobs of any of the four samples. When white men are given white women’s human capital levels, there is a small reduction (−3 percent) in prestige, but there is a large increase (27 percent) when these men are treated as white women in the labor market. Both techniques indicate considerable sexual discrimination against white men in the allocation of prestige, but show little importance for human capital differences. Black men also appear to suffer from sexual discrimination. An almost 40 percent increase in initial prestige is projected by the elimination of sexual discrimination, while only a one to three percent increase is estimated by changing human capital. This analysis suggests that the allocation of prestigious jobs appears to be a joint function of sexual discrimination in the labor market and individual or human capital differences between races. That is, in order to explain the higher aggregate prestige levels given to female workers, it is necessary to consider the difficulty that men encounter in converting human capital into prestige (i.e., apparent discrimination against male workers). However, given these low estimates of racial discrimination, the higher levels of prestige given to white workers appears to be due to the higher levels of human capital they bring to the labor market.

Indicators of sexual discrimination for income are also important. Although white men and women bring into the labor market equivalent levels of human capital, they experience sizeable income differences. The lack of sexual variation in measured human capital virtually eliminates it as a possible cause of the sexual gap for income and automatically attributes any differences to sexual discrimination. Thus, the techniques used to estimate the effects of raising individual levels of education, IQ, or family background show almost no change (either +1 or −2 percent). However, the elimination of measured sexual discrimination against white women is estimated as producing approximately a 40 percent increase in income.

For black workers, the expected pattern of one group possessing both higher human capital and higher rewards is again broken. Black men earn 49 cents an hour more than black women; but if these female workers possess the human capital levels of black men, their income drops six percent to $1.57 per hour. This implies a 33 to 35 percent increase in pay if sex discrimination against black women is removed. Our comparisons indicate further that while sexual discrimination may be a powerful factor in accounting for income differences between black men and women, standardization of human capital will have only a negligible effect on the gap.

Conclusions

The data presented in Table 4, which includes racial and sexual comparisons of human capital and labor market discrimination for the attainment of prestige and income, suggests three main conclusions:

1) Traditional measures of discrimination in the labor market are of relatively small importance in explaining the prestige and income differences between the first jobs of black and white workers.

2) Similar measures of sexual discrimination are of considerable importance in accounting for differences in income and prestige between male and female workers.

3) Sexual discrimination appears to work against men in the allocating of prestige, but against women for income; and this pattern holds for both black and white workers.

7. Although men do monopolize those positions with the highest prestige, such positions are numerically insignificant in the NLS and most other samples. Of course, such positions may be very significant in terms of power and influence (England, 1979).
The Small Effect of Racial Discrimination

The relatively small impact of racial discrimination in the labor market on pay and prestige has been previously documented in other surveys of the 1970s (Featherman and Hauser, 1976b; Ornstein, 1976). We believe, however, that ours is the first study to estimate the effects of racial discrimination on prestige and income for men and women entering the labor market. These small estimates of racial discrimination fit the trends of declining labor market discrimination posited by Featherman and Hauser (1976b) and Jencks (1979). However, it is important to remember that these small estimates of racial discrimination apply only to labor market discrimination against full-time workers. Beyond those qualifications, there is reason to believe that racial and sexual discrimination against blacks and women at entry is lower than in later years of labor market experience (Lyon and Abell, 1979; Ornstein, 1976; Sewell et al., 1980).

The Large Effect of Sexual Discrimination

While other studies have found income discrimination against women similar to that reported here, most report little or no labor market discrimination against women for occupational prestige (England, 1979; Featherman and Hauser, 1976a; McClendon, 1976; Treiman and Terrell, 1975). Our study finds considerable discrimination against men. This may be an unsettling finding because the aforementioned studies that report an absence of discrimination against women—much less discrimination favoring women—have provoked considerable discussion. For example, Fligstein and Wolf (1978) have evaluated the possibility that women appear to be rewarded like men because samples of working women are necessarily occupationally successful women. Wolf and Fligstein (1979) argue that a focus on power rather than prestige will uncover the expected discrimination. Most recently, Sorensen (1979) rejects the Duncan prestige measure and offers a new, more general scale, claiming it is more accurate because it shows greater discrimination against women than the Duncan SEI.

What, then, can be made of the evidence for sexual discrimination in the allocation of occupational rewards? Our analysis of the NLS data indicate that there is significant discrimination against women in acquiring income, but also significant discrimination against men in acquiring occupational prestige. The interpretations of these apparently contradictory findings are important because studies such as ours indicate that, other things being equal, gender is a much more important variable than race in accounting for entry or movement in the labor market.

We believe the most plausible interpretation is to accept both types of sexual discrimination as expected results of a sexually stratified society. McClendon points out that:

... [t]he white-collar jobs in which the majority of the women are found are cleaner, more comfortable and safer than the male-dominated blue-collar jobs. They also possess relatively higher status. Thus, society seems to protect the "weaker" sex, to a greater degree than males, from the rigors and unpleasantness of the lower status blue-collar jobs. Such paternalism tends to increase the occupational status of females relative to males (1976:63).

However, the same paternalism that directs women toward relatively prestigious occupations (e.g., a secretary with an SEI of 61, but a 1970 median income of only $4,803) also directs women away from many relatively high paying jobs (e.g., an electrician with an SEI of only 44, but a 1970 median income of $9,097). In other words, this interpretation maintains that discrimination

8. The findings of Treiman and Terrell (1975), Featherman and Hauser (1976a), and possibly McClendon (1976) and England (1979) can be interpreted as showing discrimination against men, but the researchers chose to emphasize the similarities in reward patterns. Only Sewell et al. (1980) find and discuss the type of prestige discrimination against men reported in this paper.
against men for status attainment is as real and as much a part of society as discrimination against women for income attainment.

An alternative interpretation of these findings is that they are, for some reason, unreliable and/or invalid. For example, it can be argued that because women are much less likely than men to be fully employed, comparisons of samples of working men and women have a built-in bias that confounds any attempts to measure discrimination (Featherman and Hauser, 1976a; McClendon, 1976). This seems reasonable, but the most direct test of such a possibility concludes “that the sex comparisons of occupational attainment are not biased” in this regard (Fligstein and Wolf, 1978:210). It has also been argued that the prestige measure itself (usually Duncan's SEI) is faulty because it fails to show the same type of discrimination against women as is typically found for income. While it is possible to construct alternative prestige measures that produce different findings (Heyns and Gray, 1973; Sørensen, 1979), the current prestige measures seem reasonably valid (Featherman and Hauser, 1976a; England, 1979; Treiman and Terrell, 1975). To argue that a new measure is more valid because it produces discrimination patterns for prestige more like those for income (Sørensen, 1979) ignores the idea of stratification as a multi-dimensional phenomenon.9 There can be separate patterns for class (income), status (Duncan's SEI), and power (England, 1979; Wolf and Fligstein, 1979), and no necessary reason why they should be the same. In other words, we conclude it is entirely plausible that women entering the labor market can be discriminated against in acquiring income and discriminated for in acquiring prestige.

The Meaning of, and Reasons for, Sexual and Racial Discrimination

At this point the exact meaning of “discrimination” and the degree to which it is accurately estimated by the traditional techniques used in our analysis become crucial. Do we find many women in jobs with low pay, or many men in jobs with little prestige, because of self-selection (e.g., men fearing they would compromise their “masculinity” if they were secretaries, or women their “femininity” as electricians)? Or is real labor market discrimination to blame (e.g., a male executive feeling uncomfortable with a male secretary, or a foreman not hiring a woman because he believes she could not handle the physical demands of an electrician)? This is not such an important point for black/white entry comparison because, as our data show, most of the reward differences between races can be accounted for through different levels of human capital. There are, however, significant differences in the entry patterns between men and women. Does the reason for the differences lie in the individual worker or in the labor market? Barring the direct and accurate measurement of all relevant variables,10 there is no way in which the usual techniques pioneered in research on racial discrimination can separate the effects of self-selection from labor market discrimination. Even the attempt at separation may be a sterile exercise. There are clearly sex role socialization patterns that lead men toward one set of occupations and women toward another (Hearn and Olzak, 1981), and there is a discriminatory, sex-segregated labor market that bestows prestige on women, and money and power on men (Lloyd, 1975). A sexually distinct job selection process is both a cause and an effect of sex discrimination and segregation in the labor market. They cannot exist without one another.

It appears, then, that both sex-role socialization and hiring discrimination are combining to

9. This is not to argue against Sørensen's provocative new socio-economic scale; rather we challenge his contention that differences in sex discrimination for income and prestige constitute a “problem” (Sørensen, 1979:362). It is only a problem if income and prestige must vary together.

10. The NLS data include several attitudinal measures that could address the self-selection issue (e.g., Rotter's Locus of Control, work motivation), but they have generally failed to demonstrate a major causal effect on occupational rewards (Abell and Lyon, 1979; Griffin et al., 1981). This could imply support for the labor market discrimination argument, but difficulties in accurately measuring attitudinal values must temper conclusions about the lack of importance of such variables.
provide a sexually segmented labor market which has large numbers of women in jobs that allow relatively high prestige, but provide low wages. Noting similar findings in her own research, England (1979) contends that the high prestige that many women workers receive is "vacuous" because of the low pay and power also associated with traditionally female occupations. We would add that high occupational prestige should not be too quickly dismissed as a poor substitute for pay or power. Recent research by Hogan and Pazul (1981) suggests that black men will opt for higher prestige and lower pay under certain conditions (e.g., when they have no family members to support, or when they have relatively high levels of formal education), and similar choices may be made by other workers as well. Prestige is a real and viable component of a multidimensional stratification system. Without an acknowledgment of the desire for high occupational prestige, even at the expense of a significant reduction in pay, it is difficult to account for the continuance of our highly segregated labor market (Blau and Hendricks, 1979).

Comparing Women with Blacks

Our research cautions against the common practice of theoretically or empirically viewing blacks and women as similar minority groups (de Beauvoir, 1949; Becker, 1971; Firestone, 1971; Hacker, 1951; Millet, 1970; Myrdal, 1944; O'Connor, 1973; Stimpson, 1971; Szymanski, 1976). In terms of human capital levels prior to entry, the racial differences are much more pronounced; in terms of labor market treatment upon entry, sex differences are more important. New workers differ more along racial lines but are rewarded more along sexual lines. This means, then, that white women are not like black women in what they bring to the labor market and are not like black men in how they are rewarded in the labor market (Villemez, 1977). Thus, attempts to group white women with blacks as one large disadvantaged minority may obscure important differences. From the results of our study, we would argue instead for groupings by race when the emphasis is on the family or education, and groupings by gender for labor market concerns such as occupational prestige or income. For example, family or educational assistance programs should include race as a significant factor. As another example, labor markets segmented by gender seem certainly as worthy of research as segmentation by economic class or industrial sector.

Closing the Racial and Sexual Gap

Finally, there are implications for closing the racial and sexual gaps in occupational prestige and income. For the racial gap, the focus is clearly directed toward individualistic, human capital changes and away from discrimination in the labor market. At the entry stage, at least, there is little evidence of racial discrimination. The lower levels of black prestige and income appear to be due to corresponding low levels of black human capital. This implies that we can either improve black family background and education levels through combatting racial discrimination in these areas or simply require higher labor market rewards for blacks regardless of human capital differences (i.e., affirmative action programs).

The sexual differences in prestige and income are not due to the same type of human capital differences found between races. Here we find men and women entering the labor force with many similar individual characteristics but ending up with very different types of jobs. Specifically, women generally secure more prestigious jobs and men secure higher paying ones. In this case, the reasons for these differences can be either a self-selection process brought about through sex role socialization or from sexual discrimination in the labor market. To the degree it is self-selection, then changes in socialization that reduce gender differences should reduce the gaps. To the degree it is discrimination, then more rigorous investigation and elimination of sexual discrimination against men and women should be pursued (Stevenson, 1975). Certainly a mixture of self-selection and discrimination is working here; but if sexual equality in the labor market is as desirable a goal as racial equality (and the value-laden implications of such equality are far from
general agreement), then changes in both socialization and labor market allocation patterns must necessarily be achieved.

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