

RACE, IDENTITY AND WORK

RESEARCH IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF WORK

Series Editor: Steven Vallas

Recent Volumes:

Volume 11: Labor Revitalization: Global Perspectives and New Initiatives

Volume 12: The Sociology of Job Training

Volume 13: Globalism/Localism at Work

Volume 14: Diversity in the Workforce

Volume 15: Entrepreneurship

Volume 16: Worker Participation: Current Research and Future Trends

Volume 17: Work Place Temporalities

Volume 18: Economic Sociology of Work

Volume 19: Work and Organizations in China after Thirty Years of Transition

Volume 20: Gender and Sexuality in the Workplace

Volume 21: Institutions and Entrepreneurship

Volume 22: Part 1: Comparing European Workers Part A

Part 2: Comparing European Workers Part B: Policies and Institutions

Volume 23: Religion, Work, and Inequality

Volume 24: Networks, Work and Inequality

Volume 25: Adolescent Experiences and Adult Work Outcomes: Connections and Causes

Volume 26: Work and Family in the New Economy

Volume 27: Immigration and Work

Volume 28: A Gedenkschrift to Randy Hodson: Working with Dignity

Volume 29: Research in the Sociology of Work

Volume 30: Emerging Conceptions of Work, Management and the Labor Market

Volume 31: Precarious Work

RESEARCH IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF WORK VOLUME 32

RACE, IDENTITY AND WORK

EDITED BY

ETHEL L. MICKEY

Wellesley College, USA

ADIA HARVEY WINGFIELD

Washington University, USA



United Kingdom – North America – Japan
India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2019

Copyright © 2019 Emerald Publishing Limited

Reprints and permissions service

Contact: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-78769-502-3 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-78769-501-6 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-78769-503-0 (Epub)

ISSN: 0277-2833 (Series)



Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001

ISOQAR certified
Management System,
awarded to Emerald
for adherence to
Environmental
standard
ISO 14001:2004.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

CONTENTS

<i>List of Contributors</i>	vii
-----------------------------	-----

Introduction

<i>Ethel L. Mickey and Adia Harvey Wingfield</i>	1
--	---

PART I IDENTITY AND IDENTITY WORK

“Coming Back to Who I Am”: Unemployment, Identity, and Social Support

<i>Lindsey M. Ibañez and Steven H. Lopez</i>	9
--	---

Sustaining Enchantment: How Cultural Workers Manage Precariousness and Routine

<i>Alexandre Frenette and Richard E. Ocejo</i>	35
--	----

PART II RACIAL EXCLUSION AT WORK

Social Capital, Relational Inequality Theory, and Earnings of Racial Minority Lawyers

<i>Fiona M. Kay</i>	63
---------------------	----

Racism, Sexism, and the Constraints on Black Women’s Labor in 1920

<i>Enobong Hannah Branch</i>	91
------------------------------	----

The Downward Slide of Working-Class African American Men

<i>George Wilson and Vincent J. Roscigno</i>	113
--	-----

Organizational Context and the Well-Being of Black Workers: Does Racial Composition Affect Psychological Distress?

<i>Kevin Stainback, Kendra Jason and Charles Walter</i>	137
---	-----

Occupational Composition and Racial/Ethnic Inequality in Varying Work Hours in the Great Recession <i>Ryan Finnigan and Savannah Hunter</i>	165
---	-----

PART III CHALLENGING RACIAL EXCLUSION

Does the Job Matter? Diversity Officers and Racialized Stress <i>Adia Harvey Wingfield, Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman and Lynn Smith-Lovin</i>	197
---	-----

Occupational Activism and Racial Desegregation at Work: Activist Careers after the Nonviolent Nashville Civil Rights Movement <i>Daniel B. Cornfield, Jonathan S. Coley, Larry W. Isaac and Dennis C. Dickerson</i>	217
---	-----

Framing the Professional Pose: How Collegiate Black Men View the Performance of Professional Behaviors <i>Brandon A. Jackson</i>	249
--	-----

<i>Index</i>	267
--------------	-----

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

<i>Enobong Hannah Branch</i>	University of Massachusetts-Amherst, USA
<i>Jonathan S. Coley</i>	Oklahoma State University, USA
<i>Daniel B. Cornfield</i>	Vanderbilt University, USA
<i>Dennis C. Dickerson</i>	Vanderbilt University, USA
<i>Ryan Finnigan</i>	University of California, Davis, USA
<i>Alexandre Frenette</i>	Vanderbilt University, USA
<i>Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman</i>	University of South Florida, USA
<i>Savannah Hunter</i>	University of California, Davis, USA
<i>Brandon A. Jackson</i>	University of Arkansas, USA
<i>Kendra Jason</i>	University of North Carolina-Charlotte, USA
<i>Lindsey M. Ibañez</i>	Washburn University, USA
<i>Larry W. Isaac</i>	Vanderbilt University, USA
<i>Fiona M. Kay</i>	Queen's University, Canada
<i>Steven H. Lopez</i>	Ohio State University, USA
<i>Ethel L. Mickey</i>	Wellesley College, USA
<i>Richard E. Ocejo</i>	John Jay College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), USA
<i>Vincent J. Roscigno</i>	Ohio State University, USA
<i>Lynn Smith-Lovin</i>	Duke University, USA
<i>Kevin Stainback</i>	Purdue University, USA
<i>Charles Walter</i>	Alice Lloyd College, USA
<i>George Wilson</i>	University of Miami, USA
<i>Adia Harvey Wingfield</i>	Washington University, USA

This page intentionally left blank

INTRODUCTION

Ethel L. Mickey and Adia Harvey Wingfield

In the wake of the 2016 election, there has been renewed attention to the relationship between adverse economic conditions and specific racial groups' frustrations, disillusionment, and ultimately, their voting patterns. Most of this focus, however, has been on the "white working class" and the perception that they channeled their economic insecurity into political action. Other arguments suggest that fears about growing racial and religious diversity crossed class lines, and that underemployed white populations were not motivated as much by declining occupational prospects as they were by cultural and social shifts. These competing claims differ on the specifics, but in both cases they remind us that while the idea of a "postracial" narrative has less traction, it is critical to think about how identities like race connect to work, how work is changing, and what that means for workers of various racial/ethnic backgrounds.

In this special issue, we take up this charge with a collection of chapters that have an explicit focus on the connections between race, identity, and work. Yet we take a broader approach than the simple view of the "white working class." Indeed, that term is itself a misnomer as, in an increasingly multiracial America, much of the working class is racially diverse and comprised of minority women working in low-wage service industry work with few benefits or labor protections (Wilson & Rodgers, 2016). Thinking about how the working class includes a broad array of people of color highlights how factors like social networking, wealth inequality, and racial wage gaps have incredibly important implications for how race and class overlap to create disparities within this group (Royster, 2003; Shapiro, 2004; Wilson & Rogers, 2016). With a wider view of race and the working class, then, we see a more comprehensive understanding of both the processes that perpetuate racial inequality and how these are embedded in labor markets, workplaces, and occupations themselves.

Of course, it is important to remember that not all workers of color are part of the working class. Racial minorities are (and have long been) an

underrepresented but vital segment of professional/managerial workers (see, for example, Kay, this volume, and Wingfield et al., this volume). The social processes that affect them in these settings are often understudied, but professionals of color frequently encounter racialized stereotypes that reinforce their isolation, exclusion, and difficulty advancing in these predominantly white settings (Cheng, 1996; Chou, 2012; Garcia-Lopez, 2008). They also undertake what legal scholars Devin Carbado and Mitu Gulati (2013) refer to as the “lumpy citizenship tasks” of mentoring other workers of color, serving on committees related to diversity, and other roles that often go unrewarded and unacknowledged in professional settings. While they may enjoy economic privileges associated with professional occupations, workers of color are not exempt from racialized challenges.

The racial issues present in contemporary workplaces also have to be examined in light of the major structural changes that are part of the new economy. Workers of color in the working class and in professional settings navigate an employment landscape that is quite different from that of previous generations. Work in the manufacturing industry has declined dramatically, with the service industry now employing the largest number of workers. Yet many jobs in the service industry pay low wages, set unpredictable schedules, and offer few benefits (Kalleberg, 2011). Unions are declining in number and strength, which leaves them less able to represent workers’ interests and help raise wages (Rosenfeld, 2014). These issues all have a marked impact on workers, but it is critical to connect them to the challenges and different outcomes that workers of color experience today.

In this collection of chapters, we address this by focusing on three themes: identity and identity work; racial exclusion at work; and challenging racial exclusion. To be sure, there is overlap, but together these themes highlight the multifaceted and complex ways that identities, and particularly race and ethnicity, shape the institution of work and the ways in which humans experience it.

IDENTITY AND IDENTITY WORK

The first set of chapters in this volume addresses subjective experiences of work and unemployment, demonstrating how individuals engage in various meaning-making strategies to sustain themselves in today’s precarious economy. First, Ibañez and Lopez examine the relationship between worker identities and social support networks in the context of unemployment following the Great Recession. They unpack the paradox of social support among the unemployed; that is, unemployed workers simultaneously need social support from their networks yet wish to avoid negative interactions that undermine their identities. The unemployed – and men in particular – self-isolate to avoid interactions that challenge their role as breadwinners and cast them as failed providers. But importantly, they also find that some identity shifts move toward a network-centered identity, which appears to challenge the individualism deeply ingrained in our society.

Frenette and Oejo unpack the strategies of workers in “cool” cultural industries – music and craft cocktail bars – to explore why workers choose to pursue such work despite precarious conditions, routinized work, and relatively

low pay. They identify how workers across sectors of “cool” jobs “re-enchant” their work lives to stay committed to their work and to perform the deep acting required for their roles. Through deep engagement, boundary work, and changing jobs, cultural workers create cycles of enchantment to sustain their careers. By attending to the worker subjectivities and identity management strategies of unemployed workers, record industry personnel, and cocktail bartenders, these two chapters together contribute to sociological knowledge of employment experiences in today’s postindustrial, postrecession economy.

The findings of both chapters have implications regarding privilege in the new economy. Identity management strategies are shaped by the structures of race, gender, and class, and social network structures continue to be affected by patterns of racial segregation, such that the type and level of support may vary across racial lines (Royster, 2003). Similarly, certain privileged statuses are almost required to gain entry into certain cultural jobs — as ideas about charisma, so important for workers in cultural occupations, often hinge on implicitly class-based and racialized criteria. Research on workers doing an esthetic labor similarly finds that racial identity poses a challenge to meeting occupational requirements (Williams & Connell, 2010). We expect that the ways workers deal with questions of identity in the workplace vary across intersecting identities, and studying the subjective experiences of racial minorities and women of color, for example, will reveal further inequalities in today’s labor market.

RACIAL EXCLUSION AT WORK

With this in mind, we next address ways racial exclusion occurs in jobs in the new economy. In previous years, racial exclusion was often much more specific, overt, and intentional. Historically, organizations could legally discriminate based on racial categories and explicitly exclude workers of color from certain occupations. This was buttressed by a system of segregation where racial minorities could be barred from educational institutions that provided training and connections necessary for a multitude of stable, well-paying jobs.

Today, companies and schools can no longer legally segregate or discriminate based on race. Of course, this does not mean that such processes have ceased to occur. Consequently, the second section of this special issue examines the processes by which workers of color encounter exclusion, marginalization, and sidelining in contemporary work. How does this differ based on occupational status? Industry? Studying the field of law, Kay (this volume) finds a sizeable earnings gap remains between racial minority and white lawyers. While social capital gives a leg up to law graduates by providing bridges to jobs and sponsorship after hire, racial minorities experience social closure practices by clients and colleagues after securing jobs that disadvantage them in their careers. Drawing on relational inequality theory and social capital research, Kay reveals how the story of racial discrimination continues after the hiring stages.

Branch takes a historical vantage point to better understand the exclusion of black women from desirable, high-paying work — with black women being

restricted across regions in the US to dirty work such as domestic service, placing them at the very bottom of the American labor market. Integrating queuing theory with consideration of black population size, she addresses why black women were uniquely unable to escape working poverty during the post-World War I period of economic progress. Blacks in states with smaller black populations had better access to desirable and lucrative jobs, but still black men experienced occupational opportunities from which black women were actively constrained. Branch's intersectional analysis reveals how race, gender, and place – including the composition of the labor pool by state – shape occupational opportunities.

Wilson and Roscigno examine the role of race on downward occupational mobility in the contemporary American labor market. Focusing on black and white working-class men, they find black men to experience higher rates of downward mobility than whites, and experience downward mobility that is less strongly predicted by human capital factors and job characteristics. By addressing the race-based stratification dynamics at the working-class level, this chapter casts doubts as to whether black men can continue to rely on working-class jobs to achieve relative economic success and stability in an era of deindustrialization, increasing automation, and globalization.

The next chapter, authored by Stainback, Jason, and Walter, offers insight on the health implications of racial discrimination. They draw upon the health-stress framework to explore how organizational context, in terms of workplace racial composition, affects experiential and health-related outcomes like social support and psychological distress. They find that black workers in black-dominated jobs experience significantly less psychological distress than those working in other compositional thresholds. This chapter draws attention to racial workplace relations by highlighting the organizational foundations of psychological wellbeing – a stratification outcome that has, to date, received little attention in the literature on organizations and workplace inequality.

The final chapter in this thematic section on racial exclusion at work focuses on the racial and ethnic differences in varying work hours in the Great Recession. Varying weekly work hours creates considerable hardships for workers, such as volatile earnings and work–family conflict. Finnigan and Hunter find that varying weekly hours became significantly more common for white and black, but especially Latino workers in the late 2000s. More so, these disparities in hours instability are structured by local occupational composition, extending research on occupational segregation beyond its more traditional focus on earnings.

Taken together, these chapters address different forms of racial exclusion that persist in today's workplace – from occupational segregation and earnings discrimination to unstable work hours – as well as the implications of racial discrimination.

CHALLENGING RACIAL EXCLUSION

The third and final theme of this special issue considers the strategies that minority workers use to combat and change patterns of workplace inequality. In the new economy, where workers arguably have limited power relative to organizations, the techniques of the past may not be as effective. Additionally, workers of color are underrepresented in high-ranking roles in organizations where they can enact institutional change. How do minority workers across the occupational spectrum react to the ways that organizations reproduce racial inequality?

The first chapter by Wingfield, Hordge-Freeman, and Smith-Lovin focuses on occupations requiring attention to racial inequalities and the opportunity to advocate for disadvantaged groups – using the case of organizational diversity officers. They find that this line of work constrains some work-related stressors typically found among minority workers in predominately white settings. Individuals experience satisfaction and fulfillment, and feel relieved from some of the pressures to manage negative emotions stemming from cross-race interactions. These emotions are achieved when minority diversity officers perceive institutional supports as buttressing their work. The racialized nature of a job, then, may change the ways in which minority workers perceive, experience, and manage stress.

Cornfield, Coley, Isaac, and Dickerson illuminate the role of worker agency and activism in desegregating workplaces and addressing racial economic inequality. Drawing on oral history interviews with veteran activists from the Nashville civil rights movement, they develop a four-part typology of values-centered occupational activism by which activists deploy their occupational expertise on behalf of a group of beneficiaries broader than their occupational community. Veteran activists draw on the values and tactics learned from their participation in nonviolent civil rights protests to engage in occupational activism throughout their careers. This chapter discerns the political potential of workers in the neoliberal economy, as the oppositional culture acquired from experiences in prior social movements mobilizes desegregationist forces today.

Finally, Jackson offers insight as to how black college men preparing for the labor market develop strategies to help navigate middle-class, white professional work settings. Black college men adopt the professional pose – styles, behaviors, and practices meant to assuage interactions with white colleagues and clients and to resist racial stereotypes surrounding black men. Instead of framing the professional pose as a burden, these men take pride in their ability to successfully perform white, middle-class culture and succeed in white workplaces.

In conclusion, the chapters collected here in this special issue offer valuable insights about a growing segment of the labor force. The US' racial demographics are rapidly changing in ways that are fundamentally going to alter many aspects of work, occupations, and organizations. It is thus critical to provide a more in-depth understanding of how race affects work for people of color across occupations, workplaces, and industries.

REFERENCES

- Carbado, D. W., & Gulati, M. (2013). *Acting white? Rethinking race in post-racial America*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Cheng, C. (1996). 'We choose not to compete': The 'merit' discourse in the selection process and Asian and Asian American men and their masculinity. In C. Cheng (Ed.), *Masculinities in organizations* (pp. 177–200). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Chou, R. (2012). *Asian American sexual politics. The construction of race, gender, and sexuality*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Garcia-Lopez, G. (2008). 'Nunca Te Toman en Cuenta/they never take you into account': The challenges of inclusion and strategies for success of Chicana attorneys. *Gender & Society*, 22(5), 590–612.
- Kalleberg, A. L. (2011). *Good jobs, bad jobs: The rise of polarized and precarious employment systems in the United States 1970s-2000s*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Rosenfeld, J. (2014). *What unions no longer do*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Royster, D. (2003). *Race and the invisible hand: How white networks exclude black men from blue-collar jobs*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Shapiro, T. M. (2004). *The hidden cost of being African American: How wealth perpetuates inequality*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Williams, C. L., & Connell, C. (2010). 'Looking good and sounding right': Aesthetic labor and social inequality in the retail industry. *Work and Occupations*, 37(3), 349–377.
- Wilson, V., & William, M. R. III. (2016). *Black-white wage gaps expand with rising wage inequality*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.