Intersectionality and Stratification Economics: Converging Approaches to Complex Identities

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Introduction

Prior to the emergence of stratification economics, socioeconomic differences were largely attributed to differences in group preferences, choices, and rational decision-making within economics. The predominant narrative as to why some groups had worse economic outcomes than others was because those groups had a preference for and committed to less responsible economic decisions. While other disciplines across the social sciences contemplated the social circumstances and contexts around disparate outcomes, economics was largely resigned to assigning blame to lower "performing" groups for "choosing" their lower stations rather than examining the social and historical contexts that give rise to the structural underpinnings of those very disparate outcomes in question.[3] Classically, economics has focused primarily on income inequality and has largely attributed inequality to variations in what it calls "human capital." (For a review and critique, see Bowles & Gintis, 1975.) In part due to the central focus on the individual as the unit of analysis, neoclassical economics has paid little attention to the role of group and social identity. However, when group identities are acknowledged, such as in racial/ethnic, gender, sexual preference, etc., they tend to be in the context of highlighting group-based dysfunction on the part of the disadvantaged (often referred to as the "subordinated") group or to attribute these outcomes to *individuals' preferences* (Becker, 1957).

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Approximately 20 years ago, stratification economics began to emerge as a response to the dysfunction narratives for observed economic differences across groups—which failed to consider the impact of historical and contemporary differences in group circumstances, advantages, and disadvantages on present outcomes. At its core, stratification economics provides an alternative explanation to this false narrative of differential group preferences as the reason for stark and persistent economic differences. Stratification economics also challenges the narrative that disparate economic outcomes are attributable to group dysfunction and will converge over time as 1) groups alter their "cultural preferences" and 2) competition erases the remaining gaps. For researchers in this tradition, economic differences are "driven by uneven intergenerational transmission of resources and advantages across social groups" (Darity, 2022). Stratification economics takes a critical approach to these explanations by challenging this narrative and examining how social (dis)advantages differentially pattern the choices available to groups, and the subsequent outcomes that are achieved. Stratification economists cannot quantify group differences in resources and advantages without first identifying the facets of social identity that best capture social differences. Due to this emphasis on differences in resources and advantages across social groups, classifying groups in meaningful ways is a prerequisite for this work. Thus, if the "starting point for analysis in stratification economics is disparity and inequity," another core tenet of stratification economics is social group identification that accurately reflects the social and historical (dis)advantages that impact their abilities to acquire economic opportunities and achieve similar economic outcomes (Darity, 2022).

Stratification economics calls for an intersectional framework for identifying meaningful social groups. Social scientists have continually proven over time that individual facets of social identity that yield differences in social (dis)advantage do not work in vacuums, but rather in tandem with one another. In other words, facets of social identity are *intersectional*, meaning that they operate concurrently to one another to produce a singular comprehensive effect instead of producing effects that can be parsed from one another in a straightforward manner. For example, if we consider race and gender separately, we generally find that Whites have superior economic outcomes than non-Whites and men have superior economic outcomes than women (Hegewisch, Petersen, et al., 2024). However, if we consider race-gender, a concurrent measure of group difference on the basis of both factors, we can observe patterns that sometimes contradict findings in the former analysis (Turner & White, 2023). Variations in findings that consider singular and concurrent facets of social identity extend far beyond race and gender to encompass educational attainment, rurality, immigration status, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, and caste, among others.

Intersectionality is a rich tradition of research that takes a critical approach to understanding group identity which can be used to guide stratification economists towards more accurate identification and analysis of social groups. In this chapter, we first provide a brief introduction to intersectionality for economists. Then, we review empirical findings to date as they relate to the intersectionality and stratification economics literature. To follow, we consider the implications of non-intersectional approaches to understanding social and economic disparities, especially for subordinated groups. We close with an overview of how intersectional approaches may allow stratification economists to better capture the complexities of social identity’s material impact on individuals' lives in research and practice. This chapter does not advocate for the use of intersectional frameworks in stratification economics, because this is already happening; rather, this chapter calls for *explicit* alignment with intersectionality and greater intentionality around the use of intersectional frameworks such that stratification economics can be clearly identified as a key contributor to the rich tradition.

What is intersectionality?

Intersectionality is a theoretical framework asserting that social experiences vary for individuals who occupy different concurrent social identities. While social identities are often conceptualized using group memberships (real or assumed) across individual social groups (like race, gender, class, education, etc.), social identity is comprehensive within the intersectional framework. This framework's core tenet asserts that all social processes, interactions, and experiences are embedded within systems of concurrent social advantage and disadvantage (Bowleg, 2012; Choo & Ferree, 2010; Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1991; McCall, 2005; Nash, 2008). Since axes of oppression operate concurrently as "reciprocally constructing phenomena," *intersectionality underscores the importance of properly contextualizing the groups within their social realities* (Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1991). Put differently, even though social identity can be broken down into facets of individual social identities or group memberships within specific social categories—categories that will differ in their composition and effects across societies—intersectionality prioritizes understanding how individual social identities work in tandem to shape lived experiences embedded in historical contexts.

When legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) introduced the term, she did so to articulate concerns over the precision of how antidiscrimination measures applied to Black women within a legal landscape that viewed race- and gender-based discrimination as separate occurrences. Crenshaw's 1989 paper highlights several court cases wherein Black women were unable to successfully file for discrimination on the grounds of race or gender due to a lack of discriminatory reports by or contradictory trends observed for Black men and White women. Her paper "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color" (1991) was a call to action for better ways to capture experiences at the intersections of race and gender, echoing sentiments of Hull, Bell-Scott, and Smith's 1982 book *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men: But Some of Us Are Brave.* While discourse about how facets of identity interact to produce varied social advantages and experiences were not new, Crenshaw's coinage of the term *intersectionality* provided a distinct phrase through which concurrent identities could be discussed and served as a launching point for intersectionality as a framework. In year 1990, Patricia Hill Collins employed critical social theory to ground Crenshaw, Hull, Bell-Scott, and Smith's calls for further attention to compounding social identities, reorienting towards a focus on intersecting systems of oppression that allows for individuals to occupy both advantaged and disadvantaged social statuses (that result in group-specific oppressions and privileges). McCall (2005) further develops the framework for research by proposing three specific intersectional approaches to research:

- Intercategorical: "requires that scholars provisionally adopt existing analytical categories to document relationships of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions"
- Intracategorical: "authors working in this vein tend to focus on particular social groups at neglected points of intersection"
- Anticategorical: "based on a methodology that deconstructs analytical categories"

Nash (2008) critiques approaches to intersectionality that contradict the theory's attempts to "disrupt cumulative approaches to identity," wherein scholars assume that comprehensive intersectional identities are the sum of their parts (*additive*) as opposed to the result of mutually reinforced facets of social identity operating in a *multiplicative* fashion. Nash warns against the pitfalls of research using the framework that treats Black women as the quintessential intersectional subject,[4] over-relies on race and gender while neglecting other facets of social identity, or ignores temporal (and contextual) variations in social processes related to social identity. In addition, Nash also urges for the practitioners of the framework to interrogate the norms around which social groups can be designated as intersectional (i.e., is intersectionality a "theory of marginalized subjectivity" [do subjects need to be multiply marginalized] or a "generalized theory of identity" [are all subjects considered because they occupy multiple concurrent social identities]).

Among researchers today, intersectional frameworks are employed to more accurately capture variations in lived experiences through comprehensive understandings of social identity and their complex interactions, rather than overlooking heterogeneity in an impossible attempt to isolate one aspect of social identity. Because of this emphasis on using concurrent social identities to approximate sociohistorical differences in access to resources and advantage, intersectional frameworks provide a methodological foundation for researchers' improved understanding of social and economic outcomes (Carastathis, 2013; McCall, 2005; Shields, 2008). Within social science research, intersectional frameworks are employed to address issues related to disaggregation—or to guide decisions regarding aggregation—and group specification. By failing to disaggregate beyond singular aspects of social identity when quantifying the impacts of social and historical contexts on life outcomes (e.g., health disparities, wealth gaps,

[4] Notably, Black women are often regarded as the *quintessential intersectional subject* for the following reasons, among others: 1) intersectionality was originally developed to address concerns over Black women's inabilities to have their concurrent race and gender identities recognized during anti-discrimination cases and 2) Black women occupy relatively disadvantaged race and gender statuses, two of the most pressing facets of identity historically examined by researchers.

educational attainment), researchers may miss the ways in which concurrent, rather than individual, social statuses moderate exposures to institutional (dis)advantages.

How is intersectionality essential to stratification economics?

Intersectionality-oriented research prioritizes a comprehensive approach to social identity to more accurately capture the multiple axes of advantage and disadvantage afforded to social groups in statistical models (Homan et al., 2021; Ifatunji & Harnois, 2016; Lett et al., 2020; Smith & Read, 2024). For Crenshaw, "any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which [social groups] are subordinated" (Crenshaw, 1989). Since stratification economists' primary goals are analyzing economic differences across social groups with uneven access to resources and advantages, intersectionality is a useful framework for identifying these groups. This is primarily because intersectionality calls for researchers to contextualize groups' access to resources and disadvantages within specific institutions and power regimes. In other words, intersectionality can help stratification economists understand the nuanced ways in which groups' access to (dis)advantage may fluctuate across time, space, and social context. In addition, intersectionality calls for a consideration of social groups' advantages as a function of the concurrent identities that they occupy, rather than the sum of individual social identities, to accurately capture their lived experiences. It is worth noting that intersectionality is a framework for thinking about distinct groups, while stratification economics is a disciplinary orientation within economics that emphasizes the persistence of economic disparities and inequities between social groups. Though there is great overlap in the priorities of intersectionality and stratification economics (classifying social groups based on the access to resources and advantages that they possess), they are not the same simply because they occupy two different uses within research: a theoretical framework and a subfield. However, due to the shared emphasis on understanding social groups in terms of shared access to resources and advantage, or lack thereof, intersectional frameworks can be, and have been, seamlessly integrated into the fabric of stratification economics.

Deepening the integration of intersectionality is essential for the continued disciplinary development of stratification economics as distinct from neoclassical economics in terms of disciplinary preferences related to the primary unit of analysis, methods and model design, and the relative importance of sociohistorical contexts. First, contrary to stratification economists' focus on group differences, neoclassical economists focus on the individual as the primary unit of analysis, essentially ignoring group identity via microfoundations. This is in stark contrast to stratification economists, who focus largely on groups. Stratification economists view groups as a more appropriate unit of analysis because social and historical trends in access to economic opportunities and outcomes tend to occur at the group level, allowing for the analysis of structural trends in the economy. Intersectionality can be used to properly identify groups with similar resource and (dis)advantage profiles.

Second, the methods employed by neoclassical economists to study group differences fail to account for concurrent identities within groups. When neoclassical economists account for inequality associated with one's group identity, they tend to focus on one facet of social group identity. For example, wage gap studies generally measure racial or gender wage gaps. Instead of taking other concurrent social group identities into account, neoclassical economists typically employ one of the following approaches: 1) controlling for social groups memberships beyond the primary facet of interest (e.g., holding race constant in regressions assessing the gender gap), 2) limiting study samples to groups that share one facet of social identity (e.g., focusing on one gender or racial group), or 3) excluding control variables altogether (e.g., not accounting for gender in analyses wherein race is the primary analytic focus). Such approaches are appropriate in some instances, though they may miss important nuances (for examples, see Becker, 1957; Blau & Kahn, 2017; Card & Krueger, 1993; Goldin, 2014; Lang & Lehmann, 2012). Approaches founded on intersectionality should operate from the assumption that key facets of social identity cannot simply be controlled for or ignored in subsequent analyses. Put differently, economists must think about comprehensive social identity as a set of concurrent and mutually reinforcing identities, rather than individual facets of identity that can be analyzed independent of one another or in an a-historic context.

Third, neoclassical economists' reliance on narratives that employ group preferences for dysfunction, irrespective of varied exposures to opportunities and social conditions, as the primary means of explaining socioeconomic disparities is incompatible with stratification economists' commitment to contextualizing disparities within intergenerational socioeconomic inequities. Stratification economics is tasked with adopting a more critical approach to sociohistorical contexts than what is typically considered in the neoclassical tradition. Intersectionality's emphasis on relative group differences is largely compatible with stratification economics' primary research commitment to economic inequities and relative group differences in access to resources and advantages that promote economic prosperity.

Neoclassical economists overwhelmingly refrain from analyzing how comprehensive social identity (which accounts for individuals' memberships in social groups with different degrees of social privilege or penalty) is associated with economic outcomes. Brewer (2002) acknowledges this limitation and the potential for the disciplinary integration of intersectionality in better understanding economic opportunities and outcomes, calling on economists to incorporate intersectionality into their analysis moving forward. Twenty years following Brewer's call to action, Darity (2022) explicitly asserts that the varied effects of sociohistorical context on socioeconomic outcomes are best examined using intersectional approaches to approximate relative group differences in access to resources and (dis)advantage over time.

Explicit and implicit groundings of economics research using intersectionality

While critical considerations of concurrent social identities may be a new phenomenon for neoclassical economists, it has been a core feature of stratification economics since before the term was coined. This is evidenced by the explicit and implicit emphasis on multidimensional considerations of social group identity in stratification research over time (Bueno, 2015; Darity & Ruiz, 2024; Davis, 2019; Lefebvre et al., 2024; Williams, 1993). For these reasons, we refrain from calling for an integration of intersectionality into stratification economics. Rather, this section highlights how intersectionality has been woven into the fabric of stratification economics, with an emphasis on studies that do so explicitly and implicitly.

Several studies by stratification economists explicitly underscore the importance of concurrent social identities in examining economic disparities through intersectional frameworks, primarily through a focus on concurrent racial and gender identities (Bueno, 2015; Chapman & Benis, 2017; Elu & Loubert, 2013; Kim, 2009; Paul et al., 2022). Elu and Loubert (2013) take an intracategorical approach to examine variations in gender penalties regarding earnings among different ethnic groups within Tanzania. The findings demonstrated a significant gender gap among manufacturing sector workers for 5 of the 14 ethnic groups represented. Similarly, Chapman and Benis's (2017) intercategorical consideration of race, gender, and region when studying gender wage gaps finds that, while the lowest gender wage gaps across racial groups occurs in the north east region, the gender gap is significantly wider for Black and Latino subgroups relative to Whites. Paul, Zaw, and Darity (2022) take an intercategorical approach to highlight differences in economic outcomes across Black and White men and women, demonstrating that there is no separate race or gender wage penalty, and refuting the additive understanding of social identity to underscore a multiplicative understanding that supports a truly intersectional understanding of facets of social identity as mutually reinforcing identities that produce effects that are not equal to the individual sum of separate aspects of social identity. Kim's 2009 examinations of gender wage gaps among Black and White workers, racial wage gaps among men and women, and wage gaps across concurrent race and gender identities take both intercategorical and intracategorical intersectional approaches, respectively. Findings from Kim (2009) and Paul, Zaw, and Darity (2022) both demonstrate that the effects of race and gender on economic outcomes are, at times, multiplicative, and not the sum of wage penalties associated with individual aspects of social identity (race or gender). Despite the lack of an intersectional framework among neoclassical economists, intersectionality has explicitly been adopted by stratification economists to examine intergroup and intragroup differences.

Although intersectionality is and has been integral to stratification economics, intersectional approaches are not always made explicit in economics research (i.e. not explicitly described as "taking intersectional approaches" even when studies examine economic outcomes across groups that occupy concurrent social identities). Notable examples are Chetty, Hendren, and Katz's (2016) Moving to Opportunity (MTO) study and Archibong's 2018 study of persistent inequality in Nigeria. Both of these studies take steps to consider within-group variations in their analyses, subsequently capturing differential experiences at the intersections of age and class and gender and ethnicity, respectively. Chetty, Hendren, and Katz (2016) consider the intersection of class and age for their finding that moving was more effective for outcomes among children younger than 13 vs older aged children. While the study does not explicitly set out to use intersectional approaches in understanding differential effects of Moving to Opportunity on outcomes, the methods employed align with an intracategorical intersectional framework that examines heterogeneity within children with shared class backgrounds. Findings demonstrate that the effects of upwards mobility (i.e., moving to higher opportunity neighborhoods) vary across age groups among children living in poverty. Archibong's 2018 study examines how variations in access to wealth, education, and public goods and services differ across gender and ethnic groups in Nigeria. This study essentially captures how education outcomes in Nigeria vary at the intersection of gender and ethnicity, which is similarly captured in Elu and Loubert's study of variations in earnings among Tanzanians at the intersection of gender and ethnicity. While Elu and Loubert explicitly ground their study using an intersectional framework and Archibong does not, the findings both underscore stratification economics's commitment contextualizing disparate outcomes among groups with varied sociohistorical access to resources and advantage and the usefulness of considering multiple aspects of social identity in analyses of economic differences.

Overall the explicit and implicit use of intersectionality in these studies did not change the types of findings uncovered in these analyses. However, there are some key differences in the studies that considered the importance of social identity at the project's conception relative to those that considered identity in secondary analyses. Studies that do not consider social identity during the developmental stages of research generally employ social identity when performing sensitivity checks during post hoc analyses, rather than to understand differences across groups. However, the varied use of social identity may be more reflective of the subdisciplinary orientation of the researchers conducting such studies. For example, Chetty, Hendren, and Katz's (2016) decision not to incorporate intersectional approaches in the primary analysis of the Moving to Opportunity study may be by design due to the authors' primary orientations within the neoclassical tradition. While the Moving to Opportunity study has made several major contributions to the field, its orientation towards behavioral economics rather than structural economics is reflected in the authors' emphasis on environmental factors rather than sociohistorical factors and social identity.

While findings from this study may be relevant for stratification economics, there is a clear distinction from core stratification economics principles. Consequently, stratification economics needs to have some boundaries around what studies are considered as part of the lexicon. Given stratification economics' core priority of situating economic trends with sociohistorical context, the boundary seems to be the explicit acknowledgement, and prioritization of this context. Derenoncourt's 2022 paper "Can you move to Opportunity" is a prime example of a study that is not explicitly grounded using intersectionality (or stratification economics for that matter) while taking intracategorical (e.g., differences across concurrent race and gender groups) and intracategorical (e.g., racial differences among men) approaches to group categorization informed by the sociohistorical context of the Great Migration. Putting Derenoncourt (2022) and Chetty, Hendren, and Katz (2016), two studies seeking to understand whether moving to places with greater opportunity can positively affect economic outcomes, into conversation with each other allows us to conceptualize the boundary between studies that prioritize social identity in primary analyses vs studies that employ identity in supplemental post hoc analyses as sensitivity checks. While studies that do the former can be included in the stratification economics literature, those which take the latter approach to social identity may be better situated on the periphery of the discipline. This difference is clearly demonstrated in the placement of the analyses that considers multiple identities: Derenoncourt's analyses are squarely in the text, while Chetty, Hendren, and Katz's analyses are relegated to the appendix. Though the findings of both studies are important to stratification economics as a subdiscipline, the former is more aligned with subdisciplinary goals.

Across both sets of studies, we find that the trends uncovered at the aggregate are nuanced by examining differences in associations and outcomes across groups with access to distinct sets of resources and advantages within specific sociohistorical contexts. For this reason, we do not make the same call for an integration of intersectionality into stratification economics, as Brewer made for economists in 2002; rather, we call for an explicit grounding of stratification economics using intersectional frameworks as opposed to the inconsistent explicit and implicit uses of intersectionality.

We argue for the importance of an explicit integration of intersectional frameworks into stratification economics for several reasons. First, the explicit grounding of research using intersectional frameworks is essential for interdisciplinary continuity. Given the interdisciplinary foundation of stratification economics, researchers that do not explicitly ground their work using intersectionality risk being excluded from related conversations. Second, explicitly grounding work that considers multiple facets of social identity to classify groups allows for stratification economists to build on methodological strides made within other disciplines. Stratification economics is relatively newer than other fields (i.e., sociology, psychology, public policy, anthropology) whose scholars have engaged in applying intersectional frameworks to analytical models. As such, there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Similar language allows for conversations and collaborations between stratification economists and scholars across other disciplines that employ intersectional frameworks and have already developed ways to navigate challenges related to studying group differences.

The Path Forward

Accounting for intersectional identities in economics research has the potential to deepen disciplinary understandings of economic, historic, and market dynamics. This approach also shifts how we think about the types of policy interventions needed to address the persistence of inequitable conditions. The real story lies within the complex and deeply intertwined details. The more nuanced analysis offered by stratification economics and intersectionality provide a much more enriching story. The empirical results generated by this work demonstrate just how much nuance can be lost. The path forward includes six key challenges that stratification economists should address.

First, there is no universally agreed upon empirical framework for how stratification economists employ intersectionality. As previously discussed, intersectional frameworks for research generally fall into one of three categories outlined by McCall (2005). While intercategorical studies that compare outcomes across groups with varying social identity overlap and intracategorical studies that compare outcomes within groups that share at least one common social group identity are commonplace within stratification economics, the anticategorical approach's usefulness within stratification economics will depend on the sociopolitical and sociohistorical contexts of the study at hand. For example, due to the rigidity of persistent relative advantage and disadvantage across social groups in the US, an anticategorical approach (i.e., emphasis on "deconstructing analytical categories" related to social identity [McCall, 2005]) is not as useful for stratification economics within the US context. Within the US, the anticategorical approach could oppose stratification economics's emphasis on sociohistorical context in favor of an approach intended to challenge the existence of social categories (and the systems that maintain them). Stratification economics within the US context is more concerned with the long-term impacts of persistent sociohistorical hierarchies on outcomes. Alternatively, an anticategorical approach could be effective within the context of societies where relative social group formation and (dis)advantage is more in flux (see Deshpande in this volume). While intercategorical and intracategorical approaches to the intersectional framework are more straightforward across settings, stratification economics research should still consider the usefulness of the anticategorical approach relative to the sociohistorical context of the sample population.

Second, stratification economists should reconcile methodological approaches with conceptual understandings of intersectionality. As previously alluded to, many neoclassical studies on group differences in economic outcomes focus on one aspect of social identity while controlling for other aspects of social identity, under the assumption that they can isolate the effects of individual facets of social identity. Stratification economics must abandon this methodological standard, because it opposes intersectional understandings of social identity and sociohistorical disparities pertaining to access to resources and advantage. In addition, given that the literature suggests that group differences along multiple concurrent social identities is often multiplicative rather than additive, controlling for individual aspects of social identity contradicts what we know about how individual aspects of social identity shape outcomes. Stratification economists must think about social position in terms of mutually reinforcing identities, rather than individual facets of identity that can be analyzed independent of one another. While controlling for aspects of social identity is not always the answer, there are practical limitations to the number of concurrent identities that can be considered in a given analysis due to statistical power. Stratification economics should consider a standard for how to approach concurrent identities in models that accounts for the multiplicative relationships between them.

Third, stratification economists should develop a standard language for discussing findings across intersectional groups that reflects the intersectional framework being employed. As previously discussed, economic outcomes vary across groups that occupy different comprehensive social identities. This suggests that economists must think about social identity as a set of mutually reinforcing identities whose (dis)advantages are context-dependent, rather than persistent across social contexts and economic outcomes. Plainly, there is an assumption that specific social identities always outperform others across the social sciences. This is evident in the assumptions that are made through the language used to describe differential experiences across concurrent social identities. For example, gendered-racism is generally used to describe the experiences of those who occupy both women and non-White social identities (Essed, 1991; Richardson & Brown, 2016). However, we know that the racial experiences of non-White men are also nuanced by their gender identity (Ifatunji & Harnois, 2016; Wilson et al., 2017). This is evident in literature that examines the differential experiences of racism for non-White men and women. The difficult part about this is that there are an overwhelming number of instances where those who occupy multiple disadvantaged social statuses have worse outcomes than those who occupy fewer (Kim, 2009; Paul et al., 2022). However, the assumption of persistent rankings of outcomes and advantages based on the *number* of disadvantaged social statuses has been contradicted by the literature (Drydakis, 2019; Klawitter, 2015). For example, a 2015 meta-analysis by Klawitter found that, contrary to contemporary understandings of sociohistorical disadvantages of sexual and gender minorities (SGM), lesbian women out-earn heterosexual women in the labor market. Alternatively, gay men earn less than their heterosexual counterparts. While findings among men align with the assumptions that groups with relatively more disadvantaged social identities have worse outcomes, contradictory findings emerged among women (i.e., the group with relatively more social disadvantage among women experiences a wage premium). When country of origin is considered alongside sexual orientation, the penalties for gay men and premiums for gay women vary. In addition, the meta-analysis revealed that the premium for lesbians was only observed in non-profit and private sector jobs, with no premium for lesbians working in government jobs. It is important to avoid quantifying disadvantage in ways that contradict substantive differences between groups.

Fourth, while "multiple disadvantage" may be a good way to refer to groups who occupy concurrent disadvantaged social identities, stratification economists must refrain from referring to disadvantage in terms of the number of disadvantaged identities. At the most basic level, counting disadvantaged social identities for the purpose of comparing outcomes across the number of disadvantaged identities ignores substantive differences between groups who occupy the same number of disadvantaged social identities. For example, Black men and White women would occupy the same number of disadvantaged social identities when race and gender are considered, but do not experience the same disadvantage. For this reason, they should not be grouped together on the basis of having the same number of disadvantaged identities. Conceptualizing identity in terms of the number of concurrent disadvantaged social identities directly opposes the theoretical goals of intersectionality, stratification economics' disciplinary emphasis on sociohistorical contexts, and cross-disciplinary findings that assert that the comprehensive effect of individual facets of social identity on outcomes is multiplicative (i.e., dependent on the interplay of individual facets of social identity) rather than additive (i.e., the sum of the effects of individual facets of social identity). Notably, the multiplicative effect of social identity is not always greater in magnitude than the additive effects; rather, individual aspects of social identity moderate the effects of the others to yield a multiplicative effect that differs from the sum of the effects of individual aspects of social identity. There are many studies across the social sciences that seek to quantify disadvantage (Grollman, 2012; Woodhams et al., 2015). An example from economics is a study by Woodhams et al. (2015) that acknowledges qualitative group differences in Table 2 of the paper, but goes on to aggregate these groups based on the number of disadvantaged statuses that they occupy for subsequent analyses. Counting disadvantage creates a fallacy where researchers may overestimate equivalency between groups because they assume that groups with similar numbers of disadvantages can be compared even though groups with the same number of disadvantages may have entirely different sociohistorical access to resources and advantages. In other words, the act of grouping this way does not make sense because the foundation of that group is anti-theoretical and counters our understanding of the comprehensive effects of social group membership on outcomes as multiplicative. Notably, this stance against counting the number of disadvantaged statuses is not absolute and depends on study goals. We need to adopt a means of conceptualizing concurrent identities in ways that reflect, rather than contradict, the core theories upon which stratification economics is built.

Fifth, stratification economists need to more clearly understand the tradeoffs that may exist regarding reference group designation. Stratification economics as a subdiscipline is primarily concerned with quantifying the gaps in economic outcomes across groups with different access to resources and (dis)advantages over time. This requires for there to be some consensus about to whom or what groups are being compared. There are two schools of thought for this issue. The first would suggest that all groups be compared to the median to create a neutral comparator. Studies that take the median comparator route would present all results relative to a group or value that may lack any substantive meaning regarding cumulative advantage and access to resources over time. Although a median comparator may allow researchers to capture absolute inequality in a way that more clearly considers both advantage—an idea largely left out of the economics discipline—and disadvantage in their analyses, it may not as clearly account for historic context or relative positioning compared to having a designated reference group. The second approach would suggest that, since stratification economics is most concerned about gaps between those with the greatest access to social and economic resources and those with relatively less access, the reference group should be the group afforded the most privilege and/or best outcomes because they represent what could be possible for other groups if they were afforded equal access to resources. Put differently, the least disadvantaged social group would be the reference group. In most cases, the reference group would be made up of individuals that identify as White and cis-heteronormative men, if we were to consider race, gender, gender identity, and sexual preference. Given the overwhelming amount of evidence demonstrating greater access to economic resources and better outcomes for White men, this would be the reference group in most cases. However, stratification economics research should first confirm that White men have the most advantaged social position relative to the study at hand. Simply, reference group selection should be context- and study-specific to allow for the possibility of reference groups outside of White men. When deciding between the two reference group norms, stratification economics must contend with the degree of importance it places on neutrality relative to comparisons between real groups. While the reference group will not necessarily change the findings that emerge from the data, it does change the way they are presented. Consequently, the question shifts from a matter of preference towards what approach is better for stratification economics as a subdiscipline that emerged to more strongly consider the role of sociohistorical norms. Stratification economics needs to determine the extent to which the way that the data is presented matters for the goals of the subdiscipline. Notably, it is our understanding that neutrality does not serve stratification economics nor its goals as a subdiscipline.

Sixth, stratification economists need to move beyond initial empirical works to produce more research that considers concurrent social identities. A large majority of stratification economics works that employ intersectional approaches focus on differences at the intersections of race and gender. While work at this intersection of social identities is valuable, stratification economists can build on this work by considering additional concurrent social identities beyond race and gender. For example, Holder and Aja (2021) consider differences in outcomes at the intersection of race, ethnicity, gender, and immigration status. The addition of immigration status and ethnicity allows for the researchers to consider how experiences of race, ethnicity, and gender are further nuanced by one's country of origin. In addition, Chapman and Benis (2017) considered gender, race, and region, allowing for a consideration of geography and rurality in conjunction with concurrent race and gender status. While sample size can serve as a serious limitation for this work, as considerations of concurrent social identities on the basis of multiple facets of identity may result in many small subgroups, it does not mean researchers should not attempt to classify groups beyond two facets.

We know that economic outcomes depend on the comprehensive identities of individuals navigating institutions rather than individual facets of the social identities that they occupy. Bringing these ideas into the core of economics poses substantial challenges to neoclassical economic models and therefore understanding of the world. However, stratification economics has a large body of literature from which to draw insights across the social sciences and humanities, which have employed intersectional approaches since before stratification economics emerged as a subdiscipline.

While these large bodies of research have a lot to offer stratification economists, they could also benefit from the unique perspective of stratification economists. Stratification economics perspectives enhance intersectional frameworks in 3 key ways. First, while intersectionality grounds group differences in differential access to broad notions of (dis)advantages, stratification economics grounds understandings of group difference in terms of quantifiable economic (dis)advantage. Examples include variations in abilities to acquire assets and risks of acquiring debts. Stratification economists' focus on economic outcomes can help to quantify returns to identity and better investigate potential policies to address these structural inequities. Second, stratification economics provides economic hypotheses for how group hierarchies and differences are maintained over time. Intersectionality encourages us to think about identity as a marker for differences in advantage and disadvantage while stratification (within the economic and social traditions) encourages us to think about the process through which these differences come to be and are maintained through economic and social power. As previously noted, the foundational texts outlining intersectionality were primarily concerned with differential access to legal recourse for discrimination; intersectionality's current reach exceeds the legal landscape. Stratification researchers within the sociological and economic disciplinary traditions resituate the study of differential access across groups using social and economic factors, respectively. Stratification sociologists contemplate the ways in which social dynamics maintain these differences and postulate theories for how social groups will adapt to maintain social hierarchies, while stratification economists focus their attention towards the economic drivers of group differences in (dis)advantage and how economic systems adapt to maintain these differences (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2008; Darity et al., 2021; Mills, 2014; Paul et al., 2022; Veblen, 2005; Weber & Kalberg, 2013). One hypothesis that is unique to stratification economics is that perceived economic distance between groups determines 1) how concerned individuals are with their relative inter- and/or intra-group positions and 2) the actions that individuals take to maintain their relative positions (Darity, 2022). This hypothesis can be used to propel intersectionality research towards a more robust examination of how variation and positioning in hierarchical rankings are maintained. Third, stratification economists' emphasis on intergenerational transfers of resources provides intersectionality researchers with a means of quantifying sociohistorical group differences in economic advantage and disadvantage over time and across generations. Wealth, for example, provides a throughline for understanding the tangible impacts of advantage and disadvantage in the present as functions of changing sociohistorical contexts.

We conclude this paper with a call for interdisciplinary collaboration that can be made possible through identification with intersectional frameworks by stratification economists. This explicit grounding in intersectionality can foster interdisciplinary discourse that pushes the boundaries of individual social science disciplines and the collective integration of intersectional frameworks into the quantitative social sciences towards its maximum potential.

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