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ABSTRACT

As intersectionality gains more prominence, scholars still face difficulties of incorporating principles of intersectionality into empirical research. Key concepts of intersectionality theory include moving away from additive thinking, relationality, and social constructionism. An important challenge is how to incorporate these concepts into research design. While existing scholarship examines intersectional methodology, most of the focus has been on issues of analysis not data collection. I argue that some of the difficulties in intersectionality scholarship are not just issues of analysis but issues of data collection. In particular, I discuss how scholars can incorporate intersectionality concepts into research design by offering examples from my own research that used qualitative interviews to examine how race and gender influenced neighborhood experiences. I also present the obstacles I encountered in conveying the key concepts of intersectionality into language that is relatable to study participants.

Introduction

In recent years, many scholars have noted that inequality should be understood along not just one dimension such as gender, race, or class. With a growing emphasis on intersectionality, scholars now recognize that gender, race, and class intersect and interlock into complex forms of inequality and social relationships (Bowleg, 2008; Choo & Ferree, 2010; Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991; Landry, 2007; Weber, 2001). Intersectionality provides an important framework from which to understand the social world. However, there is a noticeable lack of dialogue on how to translate the core components of intersectionality theory into empirical research. McCall (2005) and Choo and Ferree (2010) are important exceptions who engage in insightful dialogue about the methodologies of intersectionality. These authors address the general challenges of conducting analyses that incorporate intersectionality. However, a discussion of research design and intersectionality is still necessary. This paper sets out to address some of the challenges of incorporating intersectionality into research design.

The paper addresses important concepts and applications of intersectionality methods. In the next section, I identify three core components of intersectionality theory particularly relevant for empirical research. In doing so, I provide a general overview of intersectionality theory in terms of: (1) moving away from additive thinking, (2) relationality, and (3) social constructionism. I then review existing literature on the methodological challenges regarding intersectionality. In particular, I focus on the

works of McCall (2005) and Choo and Ferree (2010) and address how most previous scholarship focuses on concerns of analysis not design. After providing a brief overview of my own research example, I then discuss the strategies I used to incorporate intersectionality into my research design. I provide specific examples of in-depth interview questions I created to address intersectionality and discuss challenges I faced in conveying the key concepts of intersectionality into language that is relatable and understandable to study participants. In the final sections, I discuss the lessons learned and how my research example addresses general qualitative methodological concerns. I conclude with a call for future discussion of research design concerns.

Intersectionality theory

Intersectionality scholars emphasize several components for practice ranging from applications to critical legal theory (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) to social activism (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Nash, 2008) to empirically-driven social science research (Christensen & Qvotrup Jensen, 2012; Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999; Landry, 2007; Shields, 2008). In line with the purpose of applying intersectionality to empirical social science research, the goal of this paper is to identify how key concepts from intersectionality theory can be incorporated into research design. As such, I focus on three key components of intersectionality: (1) moving away from additive analysis; (2) relationality; and (3) social construction of race and gender.

Intersectionality as an area of research and theory developed from scholarship by women of color who critiqued mainstream feminism and race/ethnic scholarship. Both areas of study were critiqued for not taking into account the experiences of women of color whereby women's studies and feminism often referred to a universal category of womanhood that usually gave primacy to white women, and race/ethnic studies often focused on racial inequality from the perspective of men of color (Baca Zinn & Dill, 1996; Crenshaw, 1991; hooks, 2000). Therefore, both women's studies and race/ethnic studies did not account for the experiences of women of color; instead women of color were asked to give primacy to either gender or to race and view their experiences as separable. Collins (2000) presents two important concepts – intersectionality and the matrix of domination. Intersectionality refers to 'particular forms of intersecting oppressions' since oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, while the matrix of domination refers to 'how these intersecting oppressions are actually organized' (Collins, 2000, p. 18). Intersectionality, therefore, may include such factors as race, gender, class, religion, sexuality, or citizenship status.

Moving away from additive analysis

A key insight of intersectionality is the call for research to move away from additive analysis, meaning analysis based on ranked, dichotomous thinking in which an individual is classified as more or less oppressed/privileged (Collins, 1993). From the additive perspective, an individual's race, gender, sexual orientation, social class, etc. are assigned a score of either oppressed or privileged and then added together to achieve a total score of oppressed/privileged. Collins (1993) critiques this approach as severely limited because it obscures important research questions. Another critique of additive analysis is that it does not account for the lived experiences of individuals such that race, gender, and class are not necessarily experienced separately but instead intersect in everyday life (Collins, 1993). Further, it is not just individual identity that does not map out clearly within additive analysis, but interactions and social structures also do not solely exist along the lines of race or gender or social class alone. Collins (2000) stresses that many individuals are able to locate themselves within a major system of oppression but typically fail to see 'how their thoughts and actions uphold someone else's subordination' (p. 287). Therefore, the matrix of domination does not contain many pure victims or pure oppressors but instead each person experiences different forms of domination and privilege from the multiple systems of oppression (see also Baca Zinn & Dill, 1996; Omi & Winant, 1994; West & Fenstermaker, 1995).

Relationality

A second important aspect of intersectionality scholarship is relationality, which refers to how categories of race and gender are constructed in relation to each other (Glenn, 2002). For instance, the gendered meanings of woman and femininity are meaningless without the corresponding meanings of man and masculinity (Baca Zinn & Dill, 1996; Kimmel, 2008). Glenn (2002) provides three reasons that relationality is important: (1) it problematizes dominant categories such as whiteness or masculinity; (2) it points out how group differences are systematically related; and (3) it helps to provide a solid basis for analysis while also recognizing that the analysis is not static (pp. 13, 14). In this regard, intersectionality as an analytic framework shifts away from a sole focus on oppression and directs researchers to take a relationality perspective that examines both privilege and oppression. By addressing privilege alongside oppression, intersectionality emphasizes that these experiences and dynamics are not separate but instead relational and directs research to examine both processes together (Baca Zinn, Hondagneu-Sotelo, & Messner, 2005; Harnois, 2013).

Social constructionism

A third feature of intersectionality scholarship is a social constructionist perspective that understands race and gender as social constructions not essentialist or biological (Anderson & Collins, 2001; Kimmel, 2008; Lorber, 1994; Nagel, 2003; Omi & Winant, 1994; Ore, 2009; Rothenberg, 2004; Weber, 2001; Wharton, 2012). Intersectionality theory addresses how meaning and categories of race and gender vary across social context. In explaining the social constructionist orientation, Ore (2009) states:

> Adopting a framework based on social construction theory means understanding that we are not born with a sense of what it means to be male, female, or intersexual; with a disability or not; black, Latina/o, Asian, white, or Native American; gay, straight, asexual, or bisexual; or rich, working-class, poor, or middle class. We learn about these categories through social interaction, and we are given meanings and values for these categories by our social institutions, peers, and families. (p. 5)

In this sense, characteristics associated with social identities such as masculinity or femininity are not rooted in some essential or biological quality but instead are inferred from the social context we experience. However, the social constructions of race and gender are not neutral but instead involve power and dominance such that some categories are ranked higher than others (Baca Zinn & Dill, 1996; Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Kimmel, 2008; Weber, 2001). Importantly, the social constructionist approach to race and gender reinforces the other core aspects of intersectionality. In particular, the social construction of race and gender is not monolithic but varies across other social identities such as class, sexuality, nationality, ability, etc. (Kimmel, 2008). While categories such as masculinity or femininity are social constructions, there is also variation within each of these categories such that we should address masculinities and femininities (Kimmel, 2008; Wharton, 2012). Further, intersectionality theory recognizes that not all social identities are prominent in all contexts. Instead, particular aspects of social identity may be more or less salient (Baca Zinn & Dill, 1996; Collins, 1993; Pyke & Johnson, 2003).

Taken together, these three core components of intersectionality theory, (1) moving away from additive understanding, (2) relationality, and (3) social constructionism, offer important theoretical concepts to guide empirical research. In particular, intersectionality theory directs researchers to capture more complexity of social life by problematizing the categories such as race and gender as more variable than static. However, intersectionality theory does not specifically describe how to incorporate these concepts into research design.

Intersectionality and methodology

As others have noted (Landry, 2007), intersectionality is now a prominent framework, but researchers still struggle with empirical applications of this framework. In her hallmark article, McCall (2005) addresses the methodological difficulties of intersectionality research. In particular, she highlights that because intersectionality is interested in multiple social identities and structures, complexity is a core

concern with which intersectional research has to grapple. McCall (2005) identifies three approaches researchers use to manage complexity: anticategorical complexity, intracategorical complexity, and intercategorical complexity. From the anticategorical complexity perspective, complexity is not reducible to fixed categories. Instead, the goal is to deconstruct analytical categories. The intracategorical complexity approach reduces complexity by focusing on particular social groups that highlight specific intersections, such as a particular group of women of color. This approach tended to be the prototype for early intersectional research and theory. Researchers using the intercategorical complexity approach examine relationships of inequality among social groups as the center of analysis with the goal of explicating these relationships. Instead of focusing on single groups or categories, the intercategorical approaches focus on the complexity of relationships 'among multiple social groups within and across analytical categories' (McCall, 2005, p. 1786). The focus is not on the intersection of race, class, and gender within a particular group but instead 'the relationships among groups defined by the entire set of groups constituting each category' (McCall, 2005, p. 1787).

Choo and Ferree (2010) also identify three types of intersectional research: (1) group centered, (2) process-centered, and (3) system-centered. Group-centered research aims to bring in the experiences of marginalized groups who have generally been absent from scholarship. In particular, group-centered research attempts to 'give voice' to women of color while highlighting their unique experiences and standpoints in order to better understand inequality. Process-centered research uses comparative analysis and a premise of relationality, and in doing so, demonstrates the context and comparisons of different intersections in order to better understand the structural and organizing processes of inequality. System-centered research 'sees gender and race are fundamentally embedded in, working through, and determining organization' of systems of inequality (Choo & Ferree, 2010, p. 135). In doing so, system-centered research does not give primacy to any particular hierarchy within an institution and focuses instead on interactional effects and not main effects.

In this regard, the group centered research that Choo and Ferree present is similar to what McCall refers to as intracategorical complexity. Choo and Ferree (2010) state,

> While we are sympathetic to the need to include the voices of the marginalized in mainstream sociological thought, we take these studies as evidence that it is still easier to include multiply-marginalized groups than to analyze the relationships that affect them intersectionally. (p. 145)

Choo and Ferree (2010) also address the issues of relationality by stating, 'it might be part of a methodological strategy to consider how a design will denaturalize hegemonic relations, particularly by drawing attention to the unmarked categories where power and privilege cluster' (p. 147). While McCall does not explicitly address the importance of studying privilege alongside of oppression, the intercategorical approach suggests the importance of including both in the analysis. Taken together, these two articles address some of the key issues raised by intersectionality theory and reiterate the importance of moving away from additive thinking, the analytical challenges in recognizing race, gender, and class as social constructions, and the need to include both oppression and privilege as part of the research. In doing so, McCall (2005) and Choo and Ferree (2010) also demonstrate the difficulties that arise in using an intersectional orientation, particularly regarding analysis.

While both articles provide important insights and convey the challenges of intersectionality research, they draw upon existing research to illustrate the concepts of intersectionality. As such, McCall (2005) and Choo and Ferree (2010) address issues of analysis of data, but their focus is not on research design. The concepts of intercategorical analysis and process-centered or system-centered research do lend themselves to issues of research design, but these authors do not specifically address how to collect data. In the next sections, I discuss some of the particular issues of research design that incorporates an intersectionality framework by providing examples from my own research.

Intersectionality and in-depth interviews

In this section, I briefly describe the research project that serves as my example of intersectional-oriented research. I then describe the specific strategies I used to design my research and collect data in

line with the core themes of intersectionality. First, my research design and sampling set out to ensure variability in the race and gender of interview participants. Second, I constructed in-depth interview questions that allowed research participants to address race and gender as social constructions. Finally, I constructed interview questions that specifically used an intersectionality not additive approach and allowed participants to discuss both race and gender together. Using these interview questions, I set out to explore race and gender as simultaneously lived experiences.

Overview of research project

The broader research project that serves as the basis for this article examined the social construction of neighborhood, race, and gender. In particular, I sought to explore how interactions and symbolic meaning of neighborhood were co-constructed with race and gender. The main research question for this project was: for a middle-class neighborhood with a relatively even mix of both whites and Latinos, what are the patterns of neighborhood experiences in terms of race and gender? Neighborhood experiences encompassed informal interactions among neighbors, evaluations of and sentiment toward the neighborhood, and participation in more formal neighborhood organizations.

In order to examine neighborhood experiences, race, and gender, I conducted a qualitative study of one neighborhood in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I refer to this neighborhood as Las Flores, which is a pseudonym to protect the identity of all research participants. I selected my research site using official records from the U.S. Census and the City of Albuquerque to identify a middle-class neighborhood that included a fairly even mix of Latino and white residents. Between April 2011 and May 2012, I collected data via in-depth interviews with 32 neighborhood residents. In designing my research project, I started with an intersectionality orientation for examining race and gender. In particular, I sought to collect data that allowed for analysis of race and gender as social constructions, that examined dynamics of relationality, and that moved away from understandings of race and gender as additive identities or separate dynamics.

Research design

Overall, this project aimed to conduct what McCall (2005) refers to as intercategorical complexity, which 'focuses on the complexity of relationships among multiple social groups within and across analytical categories and not on complexities within single social groups, single categories, or both' (p. 1786). This project captured complexity through the comparative research design in which I studied one neighborhood but addressed comparisons in terms of individuals who belong to different social groups in terms of race and gender. Therefore, my research strategy examined men and women and whites and Latinos within the context of a middle-class neighborhood. While this research design used preconceived categories to guide the selection of respondents, an intersectionality approach emphasizes the social construction of race, gender, and class. These preconceived categories were not viewed as static, absolute, or essentialist. Instead, this research problematized and critically examined conceptions of race, gender, and neighborhood.

Congruent with Maxwell's (2005) discussion of qualitative methods being particularly well-suited for certain research goals, the purpose of this study was to better understand context, in particular neighborhood context; to better understand neighborhood experiences as multi-dimensional, on-the-ground processes; and to better understand the social construction of neighborhood and the social construction of race and gender. Because qualitative samples do not use probability or random samples, selection of research locations and research participants uses a different logic. Maxwell (2005) defines purposeful or criterion-based selection as 'a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can't be gotten as well from other choices' (p. 88).

I used purposeful sampling by recruiting participants at neighborhood activities. Specifically, I attended neighborhood association meetings and elementary school Parent-Teacher Organizations

(PTO) meetings as my main sites for both observation of neighborhood events and recruitment of interview participants. Because my site selection process identified Las Flores as a fairly racially-mixed neighborhood, I was able to recruit both Latino and white residents from these neighborhood gatherings. I did have a gender skew in my sample because the PTO activities included more women than men, but I sought a balance of both men and women interview participants. I also used snowball sampling to find residents who were not active in neighborhood activities. For snowball sampling, I asked participants to refer me to other neighborhood residents and said I was specifically looking for residents who might not participate in the official neighborhood activities.

My research design specifically attempted to collect a range of neighborhood experiences and data that allowed for comparisons between white women, white men, Latino men, and Latina women residents (Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999; McCall, 2005). In addition to general research design concerns, it was necessary to address intersectionality within the in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews are well suited for developing detailed and holistic descriptions, integrating multiple perspectives, and describing processes (Weiss, 1994). In order to elicit detailed, holistic responses, I sought to convey intersectionality concepts into language that was understandable to non-academics. The goal was to allow participants the opportunity to share their lived experiences regarding race and gender while also using a social constructionist understanding of race and gender (Christensen & Qvotrup Jensen, 2012). Moreover, it was important to allow participants to reflect on intersectional and not just reductionist understandings of race and gender. To help achieve these research goals, my interview questions were open-ended and allowed participants to answer in a manner that made the most sense to them (Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999; Kleinman, Zstenross, & McMahon, 1994; Weiss, 1994). In the following subsections, I present the specific interview questions I created (see Appendix A).

Race interview questions

Incorporating a social constructionist perspective was a challenge of creating interview questions. This challenge was not as difficult for race as for gender. While 'commonsense' understandings of race often use a biological or essentialist underpinning (Omi & Winant, 1994), individual racial identity can be somewhat ambiguous, and this has been particularly documented for Latinos (Roth, 2012) and within the context of New Mexico (Gomez, 2007). My interview questions about race asked participants how they identified racially and/or ethnically, what race and ethnicity meant to them, and how they marked the 2010 U.S. Census questions on race and ethnicity. This last question was particularly relevant to the context of New Mexico and to Latinos since the U.S. Census does not include Hispanic as a racial category. While some participants commented that they did not really think about race, they were not confused by these questions. They were able to tell me how they identified racially and how they thought others identified them. They were able to discuss the Census categories, at times elaborating on why the classification did not make sense. Many participants critiqued that Hispanic was listed separately from other racial categories. These questions allowed participants to talk about their lived experiences tied to race. The questions were premised on a social constructionist understanding of race in which participants were asked how they identified, how others identified them, and how they were generally categorized by the Census. This allowed for responses that were not based on uniform answer choices and allowed participants to address how they might be classified differently upon the different contexts.

Gender interview questions

In regard to gender, I sought to ask questions on gender identity congruent with the questions about racial identity. However, gender is often conflated with sex, and the sociological understanding of gender vs. sex does not generally match how non-academics view gender. Therefore, a question about how do you identify yourself in terms of gender would be less effective as the corollary question about racial identity. Typical survey questions about gender attitudes were also not congruent with the question on

race and are less likely to address gender as a social construction. The purpose of interview questions about gender was to allow participants to talk about their lived experiences and the fluidity of masculinity and femininity. Ultimately, I used the following questions during the interview: 'Generally, we think of characteristics as masculine or feminine. When you think of these characteristics, do you think you have a lot of characteristics of either masculinity or femininity? Can you tell me more about those characteristics?' These questions did not have the same resonance as the race/ethnicity questions, but participants were able to respond in a way that addressed gender not just biological sex. While many participants would start with something like, 'Well obviously I'm a woman,' they would also elaborate on what characteristics they had that were feminine or masculine. I also asked participants whether other people in the neighborhood expected certain things from them because of their gender. As such, these interview questions encouraged participants to discuss gender as something that is 'done' not just a biological identity (West & Zimmerman, 1987). These questions on masculinity and femininity instead of male and female allowed participants to describe their own identity from a social constructionist orientation not simply as biological. Participant responses reflected the normative conceptions of gender and how they matched or challenged these normative conceptions (Deutsch, 2007; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Intersectionality interview questions

The interview questions discussed above asked about race/ethnicity and gender and addressed participants' identities and lived experiences. These questions allowed participants to share their experiences premised on social construction framework for race and gender. However these questions, in and of themselves, did not reflect an intersectionality perspective. These interview questions reduced participants' responses to race/ethnicity or gender as separate and did not specifically encourage participants to share their own experiences from an intersectional understanding. Therefore, it was still necessary to craft interview questions that specifically incorporated intersectionality.

After asking about race/ethnicity and gender separately, I then asked participants to respond using an intersectional orientation. This posed challenges of asking questions that encouraged an intersectional orientation without reviewing what academics mean by intersectionality. In other words, the challenge was to use everyday, non-academic language to encourage participants to move away from additive understandings. To do so, I told participants 'For the next set of questions, I want you think about both your race/ethnicity and your gender. However, if you find that either race or gender seems more relevant, you can talk about that.' I then asked participants to reflect on patterns of participation in neighborhood activities and if they ever felt that they were treated differently based on their race/ethnicity and gender. I concluded this section with the question, 'Do you think your gender identity is more important to you than your racial/ethnic identity or vice versa or is it difficult to think of these as separate identities?' These questions addressed intersectionality more directly because race and gender may not serve as distinguishable identities.

While the purpose of these interview questions was to specifically ask participants to use an intersectionality perspective, the actual resonance of the questions was mixed. Overall, the responses to these interview questions elicited more confusion and requests for clarification than the other in-depth interview questions. I did provide additional prompts to the questions such as 'For instance, do you notice women participate in some activities more than men? Do you notice that Hispanic women participate in some activities different from white women?' I was often asked to repeat the question about race and gender as separate identities as it was too long and difficult for participants to clearly understand. However, this question did elicit responses that reflected an intersectionality perspective. In particular, three themes emerged from the responses: (1) participants who articulated race and gender as inseparable identities, (2) participants who claimed that race and gender were not separate but were also not central to their identity, and (3) participants who described either race or gender as more important.

In regard to the first theme, participants described their race and gender as simultaneous identities that could not be separated.

> I'm a woman, but I'm a Hispanic woman, that's another kind of minority. I have different kinds of experiences being a Hispanic woman than I would be being the white woman or anything else, you know, a Native American woman. It's different. So, I think I identify myself as a Hispanic woman from America, an American Hispanic woman or an American woman who's Hispanic, but it's all tied in together. (#109, Hispanic woman)

> Yes, I think it's hard to think of them as separate. […] I've always been a woman, a girl, a female. I've always been an Irish American […] so I don't know. No, I don't think of them as separate. There's no way. They're together. (#127, white woman)

These responses most clearly reflect the core tenets of intersectionality theory. Importantly, these responses about not viewing race and gender as separate identities were apparent only because I directly asked participants to reflect on their own understanding of intersectionality. These participants did not articulate the simultaneity of race and gender when asked about these identities as separate questions earlier in the interview.

Other participants discussed how they did not think of race/ethnicity and gender as separate identities but this was not necessarily congruent with intersectionality perspectives. Participants did not describe a lived experience whereby they talked about both race and gender together. Instead, most of these responses stated that they were who they were or that they never really thought about either race or gender.

> Well, I think they're obviously different, but I don't, I've never really, I've never really given, I would say after the age of 25, I didn't really care as much. And didn't really I guess notice how they were different or how other people were affected by that. So, I mean, they're obviously, your gender and your ethnicity are different, but I just never, I just don't think about it. I just am who I am and you know go on about my day, and I don't really consider how it is that I'm different or what that means to other people. (#103, Hispanic woman)

> I don't see them as separate identities. I am me and I ain't changing. (#114, white man)

These responses again demonstrate some congruence with the core tenets of intersectionality but in fact do not articulate a full intersectionality orientation. Instead, these responses minimize race or gender as core aspects of participant's identities or lived experiences.

A third set of responses conveyed a view of race and gender as separate and giving primacy to one or the other. For participants who specifically said one identity was more important, the identity that was more important was almost always a subordinate identity. Participants who said race/ethnicity was more important identified as non-white.

> I think the ethnic identity is probably stronger than my gender identity. I think I would have a lot of the same feelings if I were a Hispanic male. You would probably react to things differently, or make different choices as a male, but with regard to ethnicity, I probably have the same feelings. (#123, Hispanic woman)

Most of the participants who said gender was more important were women. The two men who stated gender was more important described specific situations whereby their gender was noticeable because they were the only men in a given setting, such as at an elementary school activity.

> I think gender is more different than the others, than race and ethnicity […] Even though women, their difference is based on ethnicity but there are similarities based upon gender. So, women have that in common across cultural. It can kind of transcend the cultural differences oftentimes. (#139, white woman)

> Definitely separate but with I think the level of Hispanics in the community it's almost like that one's like an automatic. So when it's me bringing potluck to the school there's 15 moms going 'There's a dad bringing food?' You know, it definitely makes me feel, not weird but like, almost like in a proud type of way where … this is what should be happening because they are my kids and this is my school with them. So I think it's kind of, almost it's like 'that's kind of weird,' but it's not weird in a bad way it's weird in a good way. (#112, Hispanic man)

These responses illustrate how dominant categories are often taken as invisible, and it is only the non-dominant identity that is viewed as relevant (Johnson, 2006; McIntosh, 2001; Weber, 2001).

Overall, these interview questions provided additional data that did not emerge from responses to the interview questions that did not use an intersectionality perspective. However, these questions also elicited more uncertainty and required more prompts than other interview questions. As such,

there is a need for more explicit discussion of how to incorporate intersectionality into research design and in-depth interview questions. These interview questions provide one example of using an intersectionality framework to design in-depth interview questions. To a certain degree, they succeeded in obtaining responses where participants specifically addressed both race and gender. On the other hand, the responses to this set of questions were less clear and less patterned than responses to the other interview questions.

Discussion

Ultimately, my struggle to incorporate core components of intersectionality theory into my research design highlights some of the general concerns related to in-depth interviews. In particular, how should researchers design interview questions that reflect both the research interests and also allow participants to share their own experiences in the most valid manner? The struggle I faced was how to incorporate interview questions that allowed for full intersectional analysis and allowed participants the opportunity to share their own lived experiences? Should the themes of intersectionality be asked directly within the interview or should the researcher expect them to emerge without specific prompting? How should the researcher balance the task of allowing research participants to speak for themselves while also guiding the interview to address the specific topics of interest? Qualitative interviews are valued as more conversational than survey interviews (Christensen & Qvotrup Jensen, 2012; Kvale, 1996; Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006; Weiss, 1994). There is some expectation that research participants have more voice and can direct the conversation to the most relevant topics compared to close-ended, fixed choice questions. However, qualitative interviewers still direct the conversation to address pertinent research topics, and in-depth interviews are not true conversations.

In my own research design, I chose to guide the interview to directly address intersectionality. However, this decision did not necessarily ensure fuller data suited for intersectional analysis. My decision to specifically ask participants to discuss race and gender as simultaneous identities also meant asking interview questions that did not necessarily resonate with participants. Of all of the interview questions I asked, participants noticeably asked me to repeat the intersectionality questions and indicated more confusion over these questions than others. Another critique of my approach is that the intersectionality questions could be considered leading questions in that I directly asked participants about concepts more reflective of an academic understanding vs. an everyday, lived experience. In doing so, the responses I received may not accurately reflect whether and how race and gender simultaneously emerge throughout participants' everyday neighborhood experiences.

Of course, all interview-based research asks participants to share certain experiences and guides participants to discuss specific topics. The question remains how can social science research best capture the core components of intersectionality theory with empirical data? Instead of asking directly about race and gender as simultaneous identities, researchers may choose to incorporate intersectionality as an emergent theme (Bowleg, 2008; Christensen & Qvotrup Jensen, 2012; Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999). In this regard, the use of theory to guide research vs. theory emerging from data is a relevant concern. In-depth interviews allow participants to address themes that may not have been included in the researcher's original research design. As such, the importance of emergent themes gives more agency to research participants. On the other hand, researchers also seek to collect information that is theoretically relevant to their research project. To do so often requires that researchers identify some general theoretical concepts from which to start.

By starting with a premise that race and gender were critical to my research question, and more specifically by attempting to use an intersectionality perspective, my interview questions directed research participants to specifically discuss these topics. Moreover, my research participants were aware of these topics prior to the start of the interview because I included an informed consent form that specifically identified race and gender as topics within the interview. In this regard, I chose to use more of an a priori theory-driven approach to data collection. My approach was to be as transparent as possible with research participants by informing them in advance that the topics within the

interview would include discussion of race and gender. This reflects a particular stance on the ethics of conducting qualitative interviews whereby it was important to ensure that research participants were well informed of the interview topics in advance. My approach recognized that research participants may feel discomfort when discussing racial and gender issues as these topics are not part of everyday conversations. It is possible that the decisions to mention race and gender on the informed consent form and to directly ask about race and gender, separately and from an intersectional standpoint, may have lead participants to answer differently than if these topics were addressed in a less direct, overt manner. Researchers must strive to balance their research goals along with establishing rapport during intensive interviews and presenting accurate results.

In the end, my approach of directly asking research participants to discuss both race and gender was somewhat stilted but also resulted in responses that were distinct from the separate questions about race and gender. In this regard, my own research design did more fully incorporate an intersectionality approach that could result in richer data, but I urge scholars to continue to engage in fuller dialogue about research design. In particular, researchers need to consider the advantages and limitations of designing qualitative interview questions that directly address core theoretical concepts vs. interview questions that allow for these concepts to emerge without direct prompting. Overall, my research design decisions did provide important insights that would have been obscured had I not directly asked participants directly about intersectionality.

Conclusion

As scholars continue to address social inequality as complex and multifaceted, intersectionality offers important theoretical concepts to guide research across the social sciences (Demos & Lemelle, 2006; Dhamoon, 2011; Valentine, 2007). While my research focused on race and gender, the themes of intersectionality could be relevant to research on other social identities such as social class, sexuality, ability, and nationality. My research focused specifically on neighborhood context, but intersectionality offers important concepts for an array of research topics. I offered one example of how qualitative interviews are a useful method to directly incorporate intersectionality into research design, and I discussed the difficulties I encountered in translating intersectionality concepts into in-depth interview questions.

Importantly, my research decisions reflect a particular context. Because my study was U.S.-based, the interview questions on race resonated with research participants more so than some of the other interview questions. This was even more prominent because the context of New Mexico provides an interesting setting to examine Latinos as a racial or ethnic category (Gomez, 2007; Gonzales, 1997). While race, class, and gender are generally considered the cornerstones of intersectionality, social class is more often overlooked and less incorporated into research (Acker, 2006). My design decision to focus on a middle-class neighborhood meant that social class was not a topic that was directly addressed during the interview. Instead, my research design attempted to keep social class somewhat constant in order to more thoroughly examine variation in race and gender. However, social class did emerge within the interviews as participants provided a range of descriptions of the neighborhood as middle-class or working-class. Because my research approach started with core theoretical concepts and translated these concepts into my research design, I directly asked research participants about race and gender using qualitative interviews. Future research should continue to problematize race and gender but to also incorporate other dimensions of intersectionality such as social class, sexuality, ability, and nationality. Moreover, my research directs scholars to consider geographical context, such as neighborhood, as an important site for understanding and applying intersectionality theory.

I do not claim that these interview questions are the only option, much less the best option. Instead, I challenge researchers to continue to discuss methodological issues of both data collection and analysis when studying race, class, and gender. To do so, it is crucial that scholars engage in open dialogue about the methodological challenges of intersectionality. Without such dialogue, the research process becomes more difficult and opaque. A more transparent and honest discussion of how we design and conduct research provides a guide for future researchers to follow and improve. While intersectionality

has gained prominence as a 'buzzword' (Davis, 2008), much is needed in regard to how scholarship can fully incorporate intersectionality into research. This can be challenging and daunting, thus demanding more open discussions of the challenges of this type of research. The benefits, however, may be even greater for individual scholars who are able to conduct 'good' research and more broadly help to move toward a better understanding of complex social relations and fuller recognition of inequality across many social identities and institutions.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

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Appendix A. Sample interview questions

(1) To start with, I'm going to ask you questions about racial and/or ethnic identity. What do race and ethnicity mean to you? How would you define these terms?

(2) Can you tell me how you identify yourself racially or ethnically?

    (a) Do you think race and ethnicity are separate identities? Why or why not?

(3) Do you remember how you marked the census questions on race and ethnicity? If different from previous question, ask why. *(Interviewer Provides Handout with Questions from Census)*

Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin? No Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano   Yes, Puerto Rican,   Yes, Cuban   Yes, Other Please indicate_____
What is your race? White   Black, African American   American Indian Asian
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander   Other, please indicate _____

(4) How do other people usually identify you in terms of race and ethnicity? If it's different from how you identify yourself, do you ever correct them?

(5) Now, I would like to ask you a few questions about gender. Generally, we think of characteristics as masculine or feminine. When you think of these characteristics, do you think you have a lot of characteristics of either masculinity or femininity? Can you tell me more about those characteristics?

(6) Do you think other people in your neighborhood expect certain behaviors from you because of your gender? Can you tell me about those?

For the next set of questions, I want you think about both your race/ethnicity and your gender. However, if you find that either race or gender seems more relevant, you can talk about that.

(7) When you think of neighborhood activities, do you notice any patterns of who participates or what types of activities people do?

(For instance, do you notice women participate in some activities more than men? Do you notice that Hispanic women participate in some activities different from white women? Do you notice Hispanics participate in some activities more than whites?)

(8) Do you think you are ever treated differently because of your race and gender? Does this happen within the neighborhood?

(For instance, you identified as (RACE) and (GENDER). Do you think you are ever treated differently because you are (RACE)? Do you think this is also tied to being (GENDER)?)

(9) Do you think your gender identity means more important to you than your racial/ethnic identity or vice versa or is it difficult to think of these as separate identities? Why?
(a) Can you tell me about situations when your gender or race is more important? Why?

Handout of 2010 census questions about race and ethnicity

(1) Is this person of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

__No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin

__Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano

__Yes, Puerto Rican

__Yes, Cuban

__Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin

Print origin, for example, Argentinean, Columbian, Dominican, Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, Spaniard, and so on. _____

(2) What is this person's race? (Mark one or more boxes.)

___White

___Black, African Am, or Negro

___American Indian or Alaska Native

Print name of enrolled or principal tribe. _____

___Asian Indian   ___Chinese   ___Filipino

___Japanese   ___Korean   ___Vietnamese

___Other Asian

Print race, for example, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, Pakistani, Cambodian, and so on. _____

___Native Hawaiian   ___Guamanian or Chamorro   ___Samoan

___Other Pacific Islander

Print race, for example, Fijian, Tongan, and so on. _____

___Some other race

Print Race. _____