

Impact of intersectionality on the labor force



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Question 1: How does the intersectionality of being a person of color and a woman affect them in the labor force?

The term intersectionality is intended to understand the social categories of minorities such as class, race, and gender and how they intertwine and overlap with various interdependent systems of discrimination. It highlights the disregarded experiences of groups of minorities in several ways.

Intersectionality provides insight on the struggles faced by being both a person of color and a woman. These women face a double disadvantage. For instance, women in the workforce are already undervalued and undergo various types of discrimination compared to men but now there is also the addition of having the hardships of being part of a minority. Women of color share a collective experience through generations of oppression.

Did you know that “ women of color only make up 0. 4% of S&P 500 CEOs” according to the Catalyst? Catalyst President Sheila Wellington coined the term “ concrete ceiling” which labels the barriers faced by women of color in the workforce. As indicated in the figure from the U. S Bureau of the Census regarding male versus female earnings and various demographic groups, there is an exceedingly evident wage discrimination between people of color especially apparent when comparing Black and Hispanic women to White men. Black and Hispanic women make roughly \$30, 000-\$40, 000 dollars less than the mean that White men earn a year. According to a study in Harvard Business Review, there is a shortage of women working in STEM mainly due to five biases. One being that women of color, especially Black women, have to “ repeatedly prove their competence” by providing more evidence of their abilities than their peers. The study also revealed that that

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Black and Latino women surveyed said that they felt like they were walking on eggshells when it came to refusing to “reform to the restrictive norms” or the work industry. They felt that they were at risk of losing their jobs and to being portrayed as the “angry Black/Latina woman” for not abiding by the social norms of women not challenging a male dominated industry.

Although there is published research of women in cooperate America, there’s an absence of data focusing on the challenges faced by women of color.

While I conducted online research, the majority of articles written about the struggles of women of color in the workforce in depth, were mostly interviews. From my exploration, there were minimal surveys conducted regarding these women’s experiences. The surveys that were taken were too broad to understand the depth of the struggle that they go through. Most surveys only have a small section including women of color and graze over the topic. Women, especially women of color, face challenges on daily basis in the workplace and in general. There may be general awareness that this marginalized group experiences unfairness in the workplace but one cannot truly understand without the legitimacy of living through their struggle.

Question 2: What advice would you give to women of color in the workforce?

Dear Women of Color,

We should follow the footsteps of Audrey Lorde, a Black writer, feminist, and civil rights activist. Lorde addresses the institutionalized silence of women of color and encourages them to voice their experiences through their own struggle to prevent others from taking it from you. For example, if you find out that you are not making as much as your white male colleague for doing

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the same work, you should speak out about it. As women of color, you should share your stories so there will be a variety of narratives to reference from and bring to light the discrimination brought upon women of color. There is historical and present oppression faced by groups with intersectional identities that need to be addressed. With more publicity on the topic, it could encourage and drive people towards focusing on change in the workplace for women, especially minorities.

You'll face frequent obstacles along your road in the workforce but with continuous effort and persistence, I am confident that you will persevere regardless of the ignorance around you. Through sharing your personal experiences on discrimination regarding your work in the labor force, not only will it act as a great push for changes in corporate America but it was also create a supportive network of women of all backgrounds and encourage more women to share their experiences. By joining this united front, you can be apart of creating change in labor forces for women of color!