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Transforming Poverty-Related Policy with Intersectionality

Canan Corus, Bige Saatcioglu, Carol Kaufman-Scarborough, Christopher P. Blocker, Shikha Upadhyaya, and Samuelson Appau

Despite progress toward poverty alleviation, policy making still lags in thinking about how individuals experience poverty as overlapping sources of disadvantage. Using the lens of intersectionality, this article identifies the gaps that arise from a conventional focus on isolated facets of poverty. Insights generated from an analysis of extant scholarship are used to develop a road map to help policy makers develop programs that address the complex experience of poverty and promote transformative solutions.

Keywords: poverty, public policy, intersectionality, vulnerability, policy invisibility

Getting traction against poverty requires increasing investments and sophisticated policy. Business has a key role to play alongside governmental agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (Giesler and Veresiu 2014). Yet, despite the best intentions, many domains of poverty risk being mired in stagnation unless fundamental changes transform the nature of policy making.

In particular, a large number of policies rely on single-factor triggers, for example, low income or unemployment. This approach sidesteps the possibility that individuals can be vulnerable without necessarily residing in the lowest-income strata and that others with low income are not necessarily vulnerable if they are supported by ample social networks and resources (Viswanathan et al. 2012). Furthermore, intersecting vulnerabilities often create life deprivations that are far greater than the sum of their single-factor parts and that shape lived experiences whereby one factor amplifies the experience of another deprivation. As depicted in Figure 1, individual sources of vulnerability (e.g., economic) overlap within the lived experience of an individual and produce a kaleidoscope of intersectional vulnerability (left side of Figure 1). However, policy is often designed or implemented

in ways that address these sources of vulnerability in isolation and neglect their intersections (right side of Figure 1).

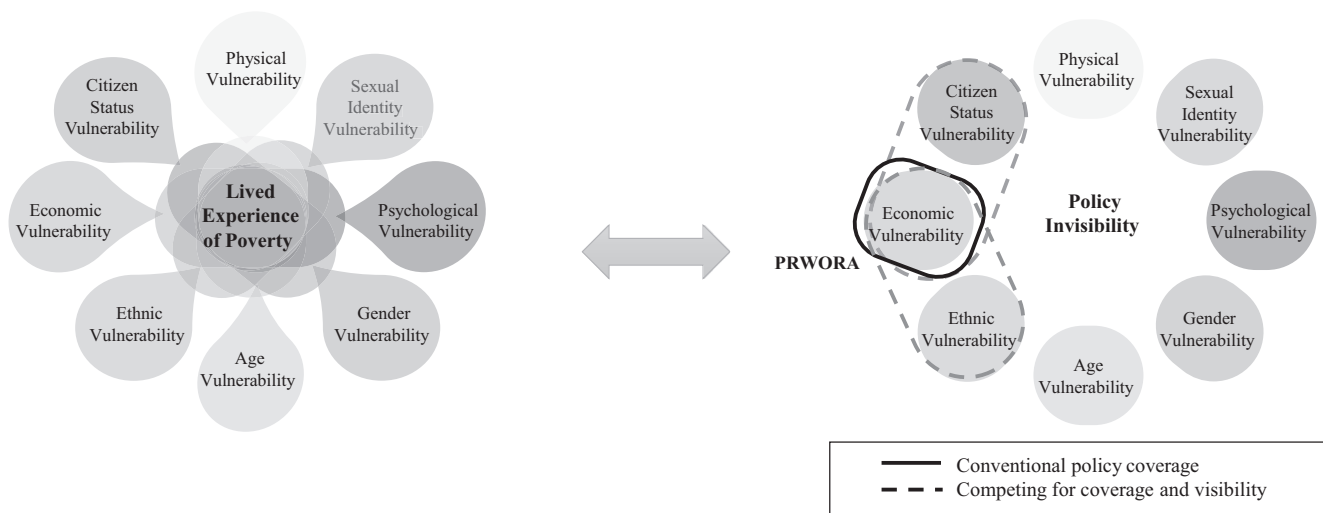
For example, individuals who are financially deprived and who have immigrant status are especially vulnerable in the area of health care under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 (PRWORA). This welfare reform act was shaped by discourse that portrayed aid recipients with pejorative and unidimensional labels, such as “welfare queen.” As such, provisions and guidelines under the act lacked sensitivity to intersecting vulnerabilities, in this case, restricting Medicaid eligibility for immigrants. In many states, this policy inhibits access for and/or fosters tension between impoverished immigrants and impoverished minorities (Filindra 2012; Ku and Matani 2001). Thus, immigrant status exacerbates the experience of low income (and vice versa) in the area of health care. It is important to note that the influences of these two disadvantages are hardly distinct. Rather, the way that a person experiences one disadvantage is inevitably shaped by the other present disadvantage(s).

Individuals who are at the intersections of disadvantages may struggle to meet their needs when policies are (1) developed using a single-factor lens, (2) activated by single-factor trigger points, and/or (3) developed to offer single-factor interventions. While there is value in concentrating on a specific facet of poverty and creating policy to address an area of disadvantage, this approach can also systematically constrain our understanding of a more complex reality and may render some groups “invisible.” That is, groups of vulnerable people can be overlooked at the margins of society and fall outside the domain of poverty policies due to the omission of intersecting factors. In order to examine this issue, we adopt the definition of policy invisibility offered by Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach (2008): a “condition where a person or group experiencing multiple disadvantages finds themselves outside the umbrella of policy benefit or protection.”

Our manuscript is a call for policy researchers and policy makers to consider intersectionality in the research, design,

Canan Corus is Associate Professor of Marketing, Pace University (e-mail: ccorus@pace.edu). *Bige Saatcioglu* is Associate Professor of Marketing, Ozyegin University (e-mail: bige.saatcioglu@ozyegin.edu.tr). *Carol Kaufman-Scarborough* is Professor of Marketing, Rutgers School of Business–Camden (e-mail: ckaufman@camden.rutgers.edu). *Christopher P. Blocker* is Assistant Professor of Marketing, Colorado State University (e-mail: chris.blocker@colostate.edu). *Shikha Upadhyaya* is Assistant Professor of Marketing, California State University, Los Angeles (e-mail: nepal.shikha@gmail.com). *Samuelson Appau* is Lecturer in Marketing, RMIT University (e-mail: samuelson.appau@rmit.edu.au). The authors would like to thank Professor Julie A. Ruth for her comments on a preliminary draft of this manuscript. Ronald Paul Hill served as associate editor for this article.

Figure 1. How Can Poverty-Related Policy Be Transformed Through Deeper Understanding of Overlapping Vulnerability That Translates into Greater Policy Alignment and Coordinated Action?



Illustrative Case

Policy	Who Is Invisible?	Who Is Fighting for Similar Resources?	What Are the Transformative Policy Possibilities?
PRWORA	Impoverished immigrants who need health care	Disadvantaged U.S. citizens and noncitizens living in the United States with health care needs, e.g., Somalian immigrants or Puerto Ricans competing with minorities in many states	Integrative federal health care with nuanced immigrant policy that provides inclusion and also reforms aspects that implicitly promote competing coverage

Notes: PRWORA = Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.

and implementation of poverty-alleviating initiatives. We first explicate the problem of policy invisibility and use an illustrative example. We then emphasize that multiple vulnerabilities are likely to occur and that the omission of one or more factors may oversimplify the understanding of experienced vulnerabilities and exacerbate policy invisibility. Next, we draw upon the theory and methods of intersectionality to develop an approach that can identify policy invisibility and enhance the effectiveness of poverty-related policy and interventions. This approach brings novel insights by highlighting the heterogeneity of variables that shape the experience of poverty in life, consumption, and the marketplace. In our framework section, we select three poverty- and policy-relevant articles and expand their analyses through an intersectional lens. In the “Implications for Public Policy” section, insights are synthesized to propose a road map for analyzing policy for unaddressed needs and opportunities of the impoverished. We propose that poverty research and policy making must be guided by the premise that the multiple factors associated with poverty can create a complex set of intersecting vulnerabilities that may be difficult to remedy if policy is developed using a single-factor approach.

Intersecting Disadvantages in Poverty and Policy Invisibility

The diversity of impoverished experiences has been increasingly recognized. Scholars have analyzed economic,

cultural, and social factors, including capabilities (Sen 1999), physical segregation (Crockett and Wallendorf 2004), and social exclusion (Crockett et al. 2011; Lee, Ozanne, and Hill 1999), in order to account for idiosyncratic needs of impoverished communities. Researchers advocate examining “double or multiple jeopardies” to understand how disadvantage accumulates and shapes life experience (Hancock 2007). The more socially disadvantaged identity markers that a person possesses, the more cumulative discrimination he or she will face.

An “additive approach” assumes that a person with two or more devalued social identities, for example, a young girl belonging to an ethnic minority, may experience distinct forms of oppression associated with each subordinate identity, “summed together” (Hancock 2007; Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach 2008). Alternatively, intersectionality researchers have argued for a mutually constitutive model of disadvantage. People experience subordinate identities in a holistic way and, thus, contend with disadvantage and vulnerability in an overlapping, interlinked fashion (Crenshaw 1991). For example, the national missing persons policy (United States National Crime Information Center 2016) prevents law enforcement from classifying many homeless people with mental illness as “missing” and reporting their whereabouts to concerned family if they are older than 21 and not considered dangerous, even though a mentally ill and missing homeless person is likely to experience greater vulnerability than someone experiencing any of these factors in isolation

(Phillips 2010). Individuals at the intersections of multiple disadvantages are often vulnerable to “policy invisibility” because they are inconspicuous to policy and thus unsupported. Work remains to be done to better understand how multiple disadvantages influence the life experiences of the poor.

Intersectionality as a Lens for Rethinking Poverty-Related Policy

Intersectionality is a comprehensive research paradigm that investigates how multiple social categories (e.g., gender, class, ethnicity) come together to shape life. It has begun to attract interest in research on consumer culture (Gopaldas 2013; Gopaldas and Fischer 2012) and consumer vulnerability (Crockett et al. 2011; Saatcioglu and Corus 2014). We provide an overview of intersectionality, its fundamental premises, and its classifications.

The Concept of Intersectionality

With roots in early black feminist thought, the term “intersectionality” was initially coined to articulate how race and gender interact to shape black women’s experiences (Crenshaw 1991). Numerous conceptualizations exist, such as intersectionality as a “matrix of domination” (Collins 2000), a “complex inequality” (McCall 2001), and a shift from adding independent strands of inequality toward a holistic approach to vulnerability (Choo and Ferree 2010). Intersectionality is a theoretical argument and an empirical approach that emphasizes the synergistic effect of categories of difference (Hancock 2007). “Categories” refers to the ways of classifying particular social groups (e.g., women, homeless, immigrants) according to shared commonalities (Cole 2009). Categories can highlight either the oppressive nature of social relations (e.g., low-income, single, African American women facing multiple degrading stereotypes; Collins 2000) or, far less commonly, the experience of multiple advantages (e.g., upper-middle-class men in professional sectors; Henry 2005). Gopaldas and Fischer (2012) define intersectionality as “a social identity space demarcated by one or more social identity categories that are mutually constitutive and interdependent.” Thus, each person is positioned at the intersection of multiple social categories, leading to unique experiences of advantages and disadvantages.

Premises and Objectives of Intersectionality

Intersectionality’s foundational premises include diversity within social groups, critique of an additive approach, and an exploration of multiple categories at multiple levels. We outline these premises next.

First, intersectionality challenges the notion of essentialism that treats social groups as unified and homogeneous (Choo and Ferree 2010; McCall 2005). The assumption that the members of a social group can be categorized under the same identity with similar privileges and disadvantages is rejected. Instead, social groups are heterogeneous and can be divided into distinguishable subgroups, each with their own realities. In addition, different contexts (e.g., cultural, historical) and different social practices reveal different forms of inequality (Hankivsky et al. 2010).

Second, an intersectionality-driven approach does not seek to simply add up categories (e.g., race, gender) but instead seeks to untangle the combined effect of two or more categories on people’s lives and experiences (Grzanka 2014). For example, while it is assumed that an impoverished individual is mainly affected by low income, he or she may also face several other disadvantages related to mental health, health care access, and employment opportunities.

Third, intersectionality goes beyond “poverty as multiple disadvantages approach” with its focus on exploring overlapping categories at multiple levels. At a micro level, an intersectional analysis investigates each individual’s multiple interconnected identity categories (Gopaldas 2013), similarities/differences, and social positions of (dis)advantage. At a macro level, institutional practices, contextual social processes, and power relations are analyzed with particular attention to policy-level dynamics (Hankivsky et al. 2010).

Types of Intersectionality

Different theoretical and methodological classifications of intersectionality have been developed. While some scholars have focused on the conceptual dimensions and have proposed classifications such as “structural, political, and representational intersectionality” (Crenshaw 1991; Verloo 2006), others have blended theoretical aspects with methodological tools (see, e.g., Choo and Ferree’s [2010] classification as inclusion-centered, process-centered, and system-centered intersectionality). We draw from a widely accepted classification developed by McCall (2005) that provides a set of theoretical and methodological tools. The following approaches to intersectionality provide three distinct ways to examine interconnected disadvantages within a single social group, across groups, or at a more macro level whereby the effects of underlying structures rather than categories of difference are more prevalent.

Intracategorical Intersectionality

The intracategorical approach focuses on the overlapping categories of disadvantage within the same social group, untangling similarities and distinctions within the same social context (McCall 2005). This perspective seeks to explore the heterogeneous complexity of one particular social group in a social setting. Consumer research that explores the ways in which a particular social group, such as the homeless, the welfare mothers, the rural poor (Lee et al. 1999; Hill and Stephens 1997), and subsistence marketplace consumers (Viswanathan, Sridharan, and Ritchie 2010), experience poverty can be construed as examples of such an approach. Methods such as in-depth interviews, case studies, and ethnography are widely used to explore the unique experiences of marginalized groups and how they diverge from one another (Gopaldas and Fischer 2012).

Intercategorical Intersectionality

When the goal is to compare and contrast two or more social groups and/or settings within the same research study, researchers turn to an intercategory perspective. Here, the realities and experiences of more than one oppressed group are investigated through an analysis of the most dominant categories of similarity and difference and multiple inequalities (Winker and Degele 2011). This type of analysis

focuses on questions such as “What are the divergent experiences across social groups?” and “Which diverse groups are connected by common relationships to social and institutional power?” (Cole 2009). Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies may be used, such as surveys, in-depth interviews, and comparative case studies. In consumer research, Hill (2001) is an exemplar of an intercategory view, in which ethnographic data from six different poverty subgroups are used to untangle similarities and differences among the subgroups to arrive at a holistic understanding of poverty.

Anticategorical Intersectionality

Unlike the two previous views of intersectionality, the anticategorical focus does not foreground the use of social categories in the analysis. Rather, this approach highlights the ways, practices, and social processes through which analytical categories are constructed. Instead of analyzing multiple inequalities through such categories as race, gender, and socioeconomic status, an anticategorical view focuses on social processes (e.g., racism, gender discrimination, geographical segregation), often using historical and longitudinal analyses (Gopaldas and Fischer 2012). Powell (2007) conducts a historical analysis of voter registration laws in the early 1900s in light of unequal social status and literacy skills among the white and black voters. He does not derive from identity categories such as ethnicity or class but examines the inherent regulatory discrimination within the voting process. Anticategorical intersectionality studies the forms of power within the given context and how multiple inequalities and disadvantages are created, reproduced, and transformed over time.

How Intersectionality Can Inform Policy

Policy makers and researchers have yet to integrate the multidimensional aspects of poverty into policy development. We flesh out three policy-related core tenets of intersectionality: overlapping categories, structural forces, and the role of power.

Overlapping Categories

At the core of the intersectional perspective lies a deep analysis of overlapping categories of difference and similarity within social groups. Consumer research has examined the role of identity categories such as social class (Henry 2005) and ethnicity (Crockett and Wallendorf 2004) in explicating the marketplace experiences of consumers. Integration of multiple identity categories can help unpack the experiential differences among members of the same group. For example, while African American consumers apply black consumer ideology to navigate the marketplace (Crockett and Wallendorf 2004), an intersectional perspective could prompt important questions, such as whether African American women experience, understand, and navigate the marketplace in the same manner as African American men, and whether low-income African American women experience the marketplace differently than their affluent counterparts. Analyzing the overlapping disadvantages facing the poor has direct implications for remedying policy invisibility in that it provides a more refined tool for identification of beneficiaries and better targeted intervention. For instance, remedies for

alleviating poverty can vary in their effectiveness in different sociocultural settings. Governmental assistance and programs may be useful for the extreme poor (Kotler, Roberto, and Leisner 2006), whereas microcredit may provide the marginal poor with the means for more security and stability (Bornstein 2005).

Structural Forces

Intersectionality reaches beyond the micro-level analysis of intersecting categories of dis(advantage). Intersectionality researchers perceive social categories as the by-product of multiple intersecting, contextual, relational, social, and structural dynamics and power relations. From this perspective, interlocking systems of privilege and oppression (e.g., elitism, racism, sexism) are explored at the macro level. For instance, due to historical and structural differences, wage inequality may take different shapes depending on race, gender, and class in different geographic locations. McCall (2005) demonstrates that unionized blue-collar cities with a history of deindustrialization (e.g., Detroit) have less class and racial wage inequality among employed men but more gender wage inequality and class inequality among employed women. In contrast, in a postindustrial city such as Dallas, an opposite trend is visible: it is marked more by class and racial inequality than gender inequality.

Structural intersectionality analysis seeks to understand the relationship across processes of inequality. An intersectional policy analysis seeks to explain how structures of oppression play out. Without a close look at the structural institutional factors, the needs of some of the most vulnerable persons will not be addressed. For instance, under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, schools provide data separated by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and disability. Most underperforming students are members of two or more subgroups, but their experiences may be considered separately or overlooked. Ethnic stereotypes often play a role in disability and proficiency identifications; for instance, immigrant, Latino students are more likely to be diagnosed with learning disabilities, whereas Asian American students are more likely to be underidentified (Garcia and Ortiz 2013).

The Role of Power

Analyzing policies with an intersectional lens would involve recognition of power relations. Attention to power foregrounds the relationship between processes of domination and their role in creating and perpetuating structures of marginalization. For instance, the influence of power is evident when advocate groups with established links to politically and economically influential actors (e.g., lobbyists, corporations) prevail over those who are not well connected in getting response to their demands. As a result, control over decision making and resources concentrates in the hands of the dominant social groups.

Furthermore, power relations may obscure certain issues faced by people with multiple disadvantages and may consequently impede interventions. For example, women were invisible in 1980s HIV/AIDS prevention policies because symptoms in men were used as defining criteria of the

disease. Numerous conditions have been noted in which women were excluded (Weber and Fore 2007). An intersectional policy analysis would help illustrate how attention to power relations can have direct implications for the understanding of public policies and practices. We propose that a focus on overlapping categories, structural forces, and the role of power can be beneficial for understanding the intricate and complex nature of poverty.

Reimagining Poverty and Policy Through an Intersectional Lens (Framework)

To demonstrate the contribution of intersectionality to poverty policy analysis, we review three consumer research and policy articles: Chaplin, Hill, and John (2014), Grier et al. (2007), and Viswanathan et al. 2012. The articles were selected from a larger pool assembled by the authors from a multidisciplinary set of journals that included *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Macromarketing*, and *Journal of Business Ethics*. The three selected articles study impoverished consumer groups who are characterized by overlapping vulnerabilities.

From here, we adopt the approach taken by scholars with research objectives similar to our own (e.g., Crockett et al. 2011; Ozanne and Saatcioglu 2008) and utilize the three articles as illustrative cases to reimagine with an intersectional lens. We illustrate the analytic value and additional policy insights to be gained, an approach that may encourage policy makers to imagine a series of small, simple, and doable wins identified by incrementally untangling and unpacking the complexities of two or more overlapping categories on consumers' lives (Weick 1984). In doing so, we seek to use intersectionality to conceptually "envision" and "identify" (MacInnis 2011, p. 138) novel and previously veiled aspects of consumption in poverty.

Table 1 provides key insights from the original studies, along with opportunities to extend the original studies using an intersectional approach, according to intersectionality's three tenets (i.e., overlapping categories, structural forces, and the role of power). We highlight possible overlapping categories that may result in policy invisibility, the implications of societal processes on inclusion and exclusion, and the impact of power relationships among stakeholders.

"Poverty and Materialism: A Look at Impoverished Versus Affluent Children" (Chaplin, Hill, and John 2014)

In studying children's experience of materialism and self-esteem, Chaplin, Hill, and John (2014) examine the market-related perceptions of children living in affluent and in impoverished neighborhoods. Findings suggest that impoverished youths, especially adolescents, are more likely to develop materialistic values; this effect is mediated by self-esteem. Deprivation may reduce one's sense of self-worth; impoverished children are more inclined to rely on material goods to reconstruct positive identities. The recommendations include community- and school-based programs to provide esteem-building activities for youth in low-income neighborhoods.

The children in the study are grouped across two categories (i.e., affluent and impoverished), controlling for other

variables (e.g., ethnic groups). Statistically controlling for membership in categories is useful for building models that account for alternative explanations of effects. From an intersectionality perspective, however, such practices may translate to systematically overlooking the experiences of oppressed groups who have overlapping disadvantages, where the meaning of one category, such as income level, is constructed on the basis of another category, such as race (Cole 2009; Gopaldas 2013). Thus, young adults' identities may be subject to different patterns of development depending on their race, class, and gender (Battle, Alderman-Swain, and Tyner 2005; Frable 1997). These categories mutually constitute one's sense of self; one category may reinforce the effect of another (Frable 1997; McMullin and Cairney 2004). Such distinctions affect self-worth (Frable 1997) and family experiences (Battle et al. 2005), as well as shaping materialistic values (Richins and Chaplin 2015).

In addition, treating race, class, and gender as independent variables presumes that these social categories are essentially individual characteristics rather than indications of structural-level forces that are ultimately linked to social inequality (Hankivsky and Cormier 2011). Children from different economic backgrounds or ethnic groups have very different levels of access to good nutrition, family support and time, and early exposure to educational material. Their access to such resources is fundamentally affected by structural forces such as segregation, financial lending, and welfare policies (Banerjee and Duflo 2011). Teens' restricted access to secure housing or healthy foods would make for substantive points for analysis because these factors influence child development, academic achievement, and anxiety (Kiernan and Mensah 2009).

While material goods can provide a temporary sense of status and accomplishment, they do not create skills to build students' self-worth, coping strategies, or drive to pursue excellence. Policy makers have the opportunity to expand the areas in which youth can define their self-concept by developing small, innovative, and economically feasible wins (Weick 1984). For example, rather than cutting arts programs in order to improve district budgets, initiatives might be created that build on families' ethnic heritages, the region's local strengths, and a strong commitment for students to graduate with job skills. A prime example is an innovative program in the Salinas, California, schools. Their performing drum line, started as a summer-school program, has mushroomed from 20 students to numerous performing groups with several hundred students enrolled overall. The program is noted for its ability to cultivate community, confidence, and responsibility. Another program, in culinary arts, is aimed at providing nutritional knowledge together with employment skills while engaging disenfranchised youth (Margonelli 2015).

"Fast-Food Marketing and Children's Fast-Food Consumption" (Grier et al. 2007)

Grier et al. (2007) examine the relationship between the fast-food marketing exposure of parents and the fast-food consumption by children. The respondents were parents of children aged 2–12 years from eight community health centers with predominantly poor and minority clients, in medically

Table 1. Reimagining Poverty and Poverty Policy Through an Intersectional Lens

Study	Key Findings	Overlapping Categories	Structural Forces	The Role of Power
Chaplin, Hill, and John (2014)	Impoverished youths, especially adolescents, are more vulnerable to developing materialistic values; this effect is mediated by self-esteem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the impact of other overlapping factors in the youth's lives: race, class, gender, education, ethnicity, family structure, immigration status, etc.? • How does the length of time of a prolonged stigmatization and discrimination reduce self-esteem? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the impact of physical segregation of low-income neighborhoods, poor school systems, and lack of positive social ties? Do youth perceive limited available opportunities (e.g., academic, vocational, social)? • Can the structure of community and school activities be created to increase self-esteem of impoverished children? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are residents of low-income neighborhoods empowered to have a voice in school policies? • Do communities have power to affect educational programs? • Do local governments and political parties influence the allocation of financial support to school enrichment programs?
Grier et al. (2007)	Fast-food marketing to children and their parents contributes to child obesity and varies by ethnicity. No impact of retail environment is found. Key measures: parents' fast-food related attitudes and perceived social norms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do a lack of medical care, low income, ethnicity, and a sparse restaurant context combine to affect food choices and child obesity? • Do a lack of nutrition education programs in schools, public health campaigns, and exercise programs affect the formation of food norms, leading to an increase in fast-food choice? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an impact of family structures, parenting styles, and social mobility, as well as intergenerational dynamics? • How does structure of the retail food "market" influence choices? • Are local food co-ops, community gardens, and produce distribution programs part of the neighborhood? • Does the existence of food banks in neighborhoods influence food choices made? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do residents have the power to determine whether fast-food or healthy food retailers become part of low-income neighborhoods? • What types of food businesses (e.g., groceries, convenience stores, restaurants) do local governments seek to attract and reward? • Does social power affect the process for acquiring health care and nutritional information? Is there greater "red tape" and inconvenience?
Viswanathan et al. (2012)	What might be the policy toward subsistence markets (and largely toward the poor) to adopt a bottom-up approach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the interconnecting roles of gender, age, level of education, local cultural knowledge, and caste/tribe in the poor's ability to build social capital for use in subsistence markets? • How can women leverage their social capital to empower themselves? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do formal market structures fail the poor? • Do informal structures exist within impoverished communities as <i>bona fide</i> systems that can be leveraged to assist poverty alleviation? • How are they created? By whom? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does agency within impoverished populations suggest the need for localized empowerment of the poor? • How can the economic and social empowerment of women be enabled through their dominant role in subsistence markets? • How can policy makers and formal businesses leverage social capital in designing policies to empower the poor?

underserved communities on the East Coast. Parents were surveyed about fast-food access, promotional exposure, attitudes and social norms, and children's consumption. The children's body mass index and demographic and behavioral data were also collected. The findings indicate that parents' perceptions of social norms toward fast food mediate the

relationship between parents' exposure to fast-food marketing and children's consumption. Policy interventions to address social norms are discussed as viable mechanisms to better inform parents of the consequences of frequent fast-food consumption.

The article also reports that ethnicity moderates the identified effects and that the patterns are complex and need

further attention. We suggest that an intersectional approach would be useful for analyzing and addressing precisely this kind of complexity. One social category, such as ethnicity, is often not sufficient in explaining multifaceted decisions such as family food consumption (e.g., Carney 2014). Consider, for instance, the possible influences of gender or immigration status. Studies in impoverished communities consistently find that, compared with men, women have limited access to economic opportunities, transportation, child care, and services (Reid and LeDrew 2013). They are likely to hold multiple part-time jobs and have few employment benefits (Reid and LeDrew 2013), which in turn affect the amount of time spent in meal preparation (Carney 2014) and access to healthy food (Martin and Lippert 2012). Gendered social norms could bring substantial insights; the assumption that family health is the responsibility of women is likely to further marginalize women (Carney 2014).

Immigration status also shapes how other disadvantages are experienced. Immigrants may have limited access to welfare or housing, putting further strain on their access to food, resulting in long working hours, and leading to more fast-food consumption (Carney 2014). Additionally, parental identities shaped by gender and ethnic background affect what parents feed their children and their interference with their children's diet habits (Carney 2014).

The interrelations between multiple social disadvantages, such as gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and immigration status, need to be addressed if we are to meet the challenge of alleviating the disparities facing the poor. An intersectional analysis may also bring under scrutiny previously overlooked but still vulnerable communities. For instance, middle-class black or Hispanic families may be vulnerable to similar fast-food marketing practices. Prior research has shown that being middle-class is a distinct experience for racial minorities as compared with whites due to decades of redlining practices and ongoing residential segregation. Minority middle-class communities are relatively less well-off and are often geographically surrounded by poor communities (Patillo-McCoy 1999), possibly leaving them with similar issues of food access, information, and social norms.

Structural disparities in access to food stores based on the racial and economic composition of communities are highly evident: large supermarkets that provide a variety of food items are located in affluent, predominantly white areas, whereas convenience stores are in predominantly poor, minority communities; fast-food promotions such as in-store deals reach specific groups more easily (Crockett and Wallendorf 2004).

Intersectional and holistic analyses can begin to guide policy to attract healthy food businesses to low-income areas. Innovative policy makers have identified a number of successful initiatives by examining the mutually constitutive intersections among fast food–dominated neighborhoods, widespread poverty, multigenerational nutrition deficits, and long-term health issues. The Food Desert Oasis Act, proposed in 2009, advocates the use of tax credits, building of rehabilitation funds, and establishment of empowerment zone status. This act aims to attract sources of fresh food, develop healthy living practices, and create local jobs. Even though it is not yet a law, it has continued to generate ideas

and solutions. For example, urban policy makers applied some of its principles in poverty-stricken cities, utilizing city planning tools such as zoning, tax-exempt bonds, and redevelopment funds to recruit groceries, supermarkets, and healthy fast-food providers to low-income areas in large cities (Donald 2013).

Similarly, Baltimore has adopted an approach centered on the principle that stores selling healthy food can have a significant impact on economic development. Supermarkets can attract other businesses to a specific area, increasing housing values and creating jobs through a win-win cycle. A recent proposal adopted by Baltimore City Council in December 2015 attempts to attract supermarkets by simple policies such as cutting the taxes grocery stores pay on personal property like cash registers, freezers, and other equipment by 80%. Similarly, programs run by Whole Foods Market in Chicago and Detroit create growth and development due to increases in nutrition, cash, and pride (Badger 2014).

“Marketing Interactions in Subsistence Marketplaces: A Bottom-Up Approach to Designing Public Policy” (Viswanathan et al. 2012)

Drawing on research on social capital and informal economies, Viswanathan et al. (2012) examine a South Indian subsistence context over five years to explore how low-income consumers and microentrepreneurs navigate the marketplace. The authors identify seven themes that characterize micro- and macro-level marketplace encounters and use their insights to advocate for a “bottom-up” public policy formulation. At the micro level, empathy, strong relationships, and responsiveness define buyer–seller encounters. At a structural level, interdependence and orality emerge as the key elements that characterize the marketplace.

Intersectionality researchers share an interest in untangling micro- and macro-level dynamics for a holistic understanding of poor consumers' lived experiences (Saaticioglu and Corus 2014). It is through these processes that the workings of power and different forms of capital (e.g., social capital, symbolic capital) are negotiated.

Informal markets develop in the absence (or failure) of formal market structures to meet the needs of the poor, who, in turn, adopt an active role of developing alternative market systems. From an intersectionality perspective, including both subsistence consumer groups and microentrepreneurs, the study is consistent with an intercategory approach (McCall 2005; Viswanathan et al. 2010), which compares the realities of two or more groups who share some commonalities (e.g., being low income) yet might differ in other ways (e.g., being a consumer vs. being both a consumer and an entrepreneur). This comparison might reveal the nuances that exist between two similar groups who are part of a larger group, the poor. Consequently, these groups might benefit from different public policies.

In addition, policy can benefit by consideration of which overlapping categories (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, health status) influence social capital so that policies can supplement or leverage accordingly. For instance, research has consistently shown that women dominate subsistence markets (Sachs 2005). Considering the vulnerability of women in

such developing countries as India (Banerjee and Duflo 2011), policy can leverage the social capital women enjoy in subsistence markets to empower them. Policies can incentivize practices that would widen women's opportunities in the marketplace. For example, in subsistence-level markets, one of the most popular market-based social innovations has been the availability of microfinance and microcredit solutions. However, the vulnerability that women and young girls may experience at the hand of misogyny is "invisible" to these programs that offer benefit in one domain (economic deprivation) but not in others (e.g., pressure from male family members). A case in point is the Grameen Bank, founded by Muhammad Yunus. Although the majority of the bank's loans have been made to women, many of these women were acting as collecting agents for their husbands or for other, more affluent parties. Women had to accept responsibility for repaying the money that had been spent, leaving them in worse financial straits (Karim 2008) than they began.

Finally, Viswanathan et al. (2012) call for "marketing-oriented public policy that is more democratic (i.e., involving businesses, communities, and nongovernmental organizations) and more contextually-oriented (i.e., observing the specific marketing exchange mechanisms that operate locally and adjusting to them), and more interpretive" (p. 173). An intersectional perspective could help untangle such contextual dynamics through intra-, inter-, and anticategorical approaches and the use of multiple methods (e.g., archival data, regional data, qualitative, action research methods).

We note a more holistic approach than the Grameen Bank: that of Gram Mooligai Limited Company (GMCL), an intermediary between local farmers of medicinal herbs and Indian pharmaceutical enterprises that provides affordable health care to the rural poor, enabling local markets to gain higher margins from their sales (Torri and Martinez 2011). The organization incorporates overlapping disadvantages of gender and caste; it is a female community enterprise entirely formed and managed by women from the Dalit caste. Dalits are one of the most socioeconomically oppressed groups in countries such as India and Nepal, where the caste system is still pervasive, and they are thus excluded from the majority of socioeconomic privileges. Dalit women hold the majority of shares in GMCL and have control over its resources and production processes. Thus, GMCL helps counteract the vulnerability faced by these women, who are often used as proxies by the "upper poor" to get microloans and who find themselves in even deeper poverty if these more affluent clients default. Furthermore, the impact of structural power disparities is alleviated through the elimination of the negotiation process with intermediaries in a male-dominated market.

Cross-Comparison of Illustrative Cases

Our discussion of three articles serves as an illustration of how an intersectional lens helps foreground overlapping disadvantages, structural factors, and the role of power (see Table 1 for a summary). A central theme that resonates through each article is that the experience of poverty is context dependent and shaped by other overlapping disadvantages. We show how these disadvantages may cocreate layers of vulnerability and inequality. We elaborate on the

new insights that might be gained by including overlooked categories such as ethnicity (Chaplin, Hill, and John 2014), immigration status (Grier et al. 2007), and gender (Viswanathan et al. 2012). Our illustrations point at how overlapping categories create a more complex vulnerability that can be only partially addressed by "single-factor" policies.

We include a range of previous studies and findings in order to make suggestions about additional layers of difference that could have been explored in each article. We provide a glimpse of how the findings in each article might differ across subgroups (in line with an intracategorical approach). For instance, past research has shown how immigrant adults' identities and food rituals may be interlinked (e.g., Vallianatos and Raine 2008). Depending on their immigration status, parents may have drastically different food norms or behaviors, which may in turn affect their children's consumption, as the study by Grier et al. (2007) finds.

In our analysis, we also point out potential structural forces and power struggles at play. Social categories are reflections of macro-level social forces linked to power differentials, not independent constructs or individual characteristics. For each article, a more deliberate focus on macrostructures and power can be essential in identifying subtler layers of inequalities than those that are initially detectable. We emphasize social, cultural, and historical accounts for a more nuanced analysis of each context. For instance, the locations of grocery stores and health care providers can be analyzed in connection to historical segregation and years of redlining practices. Such macro-level analysis can explore the disparities in parents' norms regarding food and health.

We especially emphasize that policy makers need to have a full understanding of such historical precedents. This is important for policies with action-oriented platforms that seek to transform structural effects. For the Chaplin, Hill, and John (2014) study, we elaborate on factors such as access to secure housing and community networks, as well as educational and recreational spaces that shape aspects of socialization. Rich and meaningful educational experiences and interpersonal connections may help alleviate low self-esteem and, consequently, materialism. Low-income school districts, however, may lack access to such opportunities. Similarly, for the Viswanathan et al. (2012) article, we highlight that women's empowerment programs that teach small-business skills can alleviate the additional gender-related burdens related to income and training disparities.

Implications for Public Policy

Policies that are developed on the basis of singular categories of disadvantage may create "policy invisibility," whereby those who experience multiple disadvantages find themselves excluded from the benefits or protection of the said policies. An intersectionality framework accounts for the complexity of overlapping, multiple forms of inequality and disadvantage.

Road Map for an Intersectional Approach to Poverty Policy Research

Our road map, shown in Table 2, presents an intersectional approach to poverty and public policy research through several broad areas: research goals, research questions,

Table 2. Road Map for an Intersectional Approach to Poverty Policy Research

Topic	Guidelines
Premise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-trigger points for poverty assistance may miss populations made vulnerable by the intersection of more than one vulnerability-generating factor. • When vulnerability-generating factors intersect, their effect is greater than the sum of the parts, potentially creating an elevated vulnerability.
Research goals	A call for makers of poverty policy to consider intersectionality in the design and implementation of poverty-alleviating initiatives.
Research questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can using intersectionality provide policy makers with a broadened perspective and toolbox capable of examining identity-shaping mechanisms, leading to opportunities for social benefits that are otherwise being missed? • Can single-factor studies of poverty be reimagined by focusing on multiple interconnected vulnerability-generating factors? • Can program development be enhanced by considering a more complex experience of poverty, leading to transformative solutions?
Literature review	<p>Identify studies on poverty that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are interdisciplinary; • have several identity categories (e.g., age, gender, race); • discuss policy development related to poverty alleviation. <p>Examine conceptualization of poverty and vulnerability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are single trigger points established for assistance? • Can other intersecting trigger points be identified that create vulnerability? • Which identity categories are related to the lived experience of poverty? • Can endogeneity of identity categories mask/create additional vulnerability? • What can be learned by examining the impact of multiple interconnected factors?
Theory development	Identify whether mechanisms exist that exacerbate negative effects from overlapping, structural, and power-related factors on vulnerable populations
Sampling	<p>Identify groups made vulnerable by poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the life domains in which vulnerabilities have been created. • Examine groups' identity categories in relation to poverty and vulnerability. • Determine whether connections exist among the resulting vulnerabilities that lead to an overall, or "general," vulnerability.
Methodology	<p>Choose the type of intersectionality depending on the interconnected disadvantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intracategorical: categories of disadvantage overlap within the same social group or social context. • Intercategorical: disadvantages of two or more social groups are compared and contrasted. • Anticategorical: social process is the center of analysis, rather than social categories.
Analysis	Can programs be designed and implemented that address the complex experience of poverty and promote transformative solutions?

literature review, theory development, sampling, methodology, and implications. It delineates an intersectional approach and the pitfalls of treating the mutually constitutive disadvantages of poverty as additive.

An intersectional lens should resonate in all aspects of a research program for truly transformative analysis and meaningful impact. Analyses should involve identifying which populations, processes, and structures are invisible to current unidimensional and additive perspectives on poverty. Moving beyond singular approaches, researchers would be well advised to clarify research goals in relation to the concurrent social disadvantages that affect the lives of the impoverished. This should also resonate in the framing of the research questions and may guide the theoretical framework as the researchers attempt to obtain a deeper analysis on the structural, institutional forces and power dynamics that limit the poor's choices.

Importantly, who is included or excluded from the study will depend on the researcher's understanding of overlapping

disadvantages that may affect the groups they are studying. With a more holistic understanding of the poor, the researcher can decide to study less visible groups. Once the sample selection is made, it will be important to account for the contextual social structures and power dynamics that envelop the population(s) of interest.

The three intersectionality types can guide researchers' methodology. If the goal of the research is to study one disadvantaged group (e.g., homeless) in depth, then an intracategorical approach may be beneficial. An intercategorical approach will be more suited to a cross-group comparison study, such as understanding of stigma of living with HIV across white and African American women. An anticategorical approach is useful for untangling processes, including power dynamics, rather than specific social identity categories. Researchers interested in studying racism, homelessness, or incarceration could benefit from an anticategorical approach. Policy researchers can select the

intersectional approach that allows them to most effectively examine the vulnerabilities that are often identified in markets wherein poverty is experienced.

Finally, researchers should use their findings and study implications to contribute to social justice and more effective policies. Following Stewart (2014), researchers should be able to contribute to a better understanding of social problems, the processes that create and reinforce them, and the specific policies that can address them effectively, as well as better tailored policy procedures and protocols. In addition, researchers must consider making contributions not only to policy formulation but also to policy implementation and assessment.

Implications for Policy Makers

For policy makers to benefit from this view, intersectionality should be consistently employed in poverty policy formulation, implementation, and assessment processes. We outline these implications next.

Policy Formulation

The precursor to policy formulation is the process of defining a policy problem. Even at this preliminary stage, policy makers should consider an intersectional approach because the given problem could be experienced quite differently by different groups. This involves probing beyond single-category definitions of vulnerable groups and examining what other layers of vulnerability may be interacting to create a situation of disadvantage (Hankivsky and Cormier 2011). Furthermore, an intersectional lens for the problem definition will affect who is involved in agenda setting, as well as which issues related to the policy are emphasized. Situating the policy issue within broader historical and social context is also integral to an intersectional policy lens; how a given problem is represented or viewed sets important limits to the ways in which policies will address it. As a case in point, Bishwakarma, Hunt, and Zajicek (2007) provide a case study of policy processes to address the literacy of Nepali Dalit women. Often, policies in this area have involved only solutions to increase women's (as opposed to men's) access to educational opportunities. In this case study, an intersectional lens helps policy makers identify discrepancies in the literacy levels of women in different communities. This "visibility" helped integrate the issue and the objective of serving the citizens from different castes equally, especially by taking into account in the policy discourse the distinct cultural norms of Dalit families regarding girls' education.

Policy Implementation

In the implementation stage, policy is carried out by an administrative body or a government profile. This phase involves evaluating whether the allocation of resources is in compliance with the intersectional characteristics of the formulated policy (Hankivsky and Cormier 2011). For instance, an intersectional lens in policy implementation would specifically address and strive to continuously incorporate the ways in which public policies affect people differently because of differences in their social positions. Realizing intersectional policy in multiple, diverse communities requires collaboration among government bodies (e.g., departments of health and education), NGOs, business organizations, and

other interest groups (Hill and Gaines 2007; Weber and Fore 2007). Also important to the effective collaboration of these bodies within multiple contexts and cultures are training, moderating institutions, and well-planned implementation plans.

Policy Assessment

Through policy evaluation, administrators can determine whether the policy enactment is in compliance with the goals of the policy. This should include assessing whether policy objectives have been achieved for a range of constituents who may differ in their social positions, particularly given the intersectional nature of the problem (Hankivsky and Cormier 2011). Measures and markers that reflect improvement in social equality goals that were set during the formulation of the policy should be identified according to the overlapping disadvantages. Given the intersectional characteristic of the policy, it is important to understand that different social categories may call for different indicators and may show varying degrees of policy effectiveness. Indicators of equality might include measures of increase in the use of a service, improvement in quality of a service, or the extent to which subgroups use the benefits granted by a given policy.

A consideration of the ways in which individuals and communities respond to policies is fundamental for effective implementation and assessment of policy. Individuals in different social positions will experience diverse outcomes (even among similarly situated groups). Manuel (2006) illustrates the example of the U.S. Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 to demonstrate how intersectionality informs policies. The objective of the FMLA is to ensure continued employment of workers who have newborns or illness in the family, for up to 12 weeks.

The FMLA has distinct outcomes for families in different social positions. For one, the poor are less likely to be covered. Many families fall into poverty upon the birth of a new child because they cannot forgo their wages and still afford a baby's needs. Given how vulnerable low-wage workers who are new parents are to poverty, it is especially important to understand how their circumstances are affected by policies. In addition, a closer look reveals that ethnicity plays an important role in the outcomes of the FMLA. This policy makes almost no difference in medical leave-related outcomes for Hispanic women, whereas it significantly lengthens the leave taken by white and black women, and it is most impactful for Asian and Native American women (i.e., significantly increasing their time away after childbirth). This is simply one example of the potential insights that can come from examining policy through an intersectional lens, illustrating how a single policy can have very different outcomes for different communities. An intersectional analysis of such across-group divergences would provide crucial insights for effective implementation of public policies.

Conclusion

An intersectional lens can help researchers and policy makers recognize the mutually constitutive facets of poverty and marginalization and interrogate the invisibility of disadvantaged populations. Future work should aim to reach a

nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of the poor. Doing so would expand the current paradigms of poverty policy design and research, with the aspiration that policy makers and researchers fulfill their roles as transformative players in the development, implementation, and evaluation of policy.

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