

Introduction

Latinas and African American Women in the U.S. Labor Market

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More than thirty years after the passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964, economic inequality in the United States continues to be inextricably linked to both race and gender. The groups facing the greatest risk of poverty and lowest wages are Latinas and African American women.¹ And their plight appears to be getting worse. Women of color are increasingly responsible for supporting their families at a time when all individuals at the bottom of the income distribution are slipping further behind those at the top (Danziger and Gottschalk 1993; Levy and Murnane 1992). The economic prospects for Latinas and African American women who have few marketable skills are especially bleak, as shifts in the industrial mix of the economy and the rising demand for highly educated workers are pulling wages and employment rates downward for the unskilled (Holzer and Vroman 1992).

Despite their acute economic vulnerability, very little is known about the underlying conditions shaping labor market disadvantage among Latinas and African American women. The majority of studies investigating the relationship between race and industrial restructuring focus on men, with particular emphases on the problems of joblessness and falling wages among black men (Holzer 1991). Economic hardship among Latinas and African American women is often framed as a welfare issue or as a problem of the lack of a male wage earner rather than a question of female labor market dynamics (Mead 1992; Wilson 1987). Studies of racial inequality in the labor market that do consider women tend to use theories developed from male employment patterns, which leads to conflicting and inconclusive results (Bluestone, Stevenson, and Tilly 1992; Ihlanfeldt and Sjoquist 1989).

It is not surprising that Latinas and African American women are relatively scarce in studies of race and rising inequality in the labor market. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, black and white employment and wage inequality in the labor market was a problem confronting primarily men—

particularly young men (Bound and Freeman 1992). While black male joblessness was growing and the wage gap between blacks and whites was widening among men, the position of women was actually improving. By 1979, earnings for African American women were approaching white women's earnings, and the two groups had similar rates of employment (England 1992). Labor force participation among Latinas was also increasing, and the earnings gap between white women and Latinas was closing (Bean and Tienda 1987). Although the race- and ethnicity-based gap in wages among women narrowed throughout the 1970s, all groups of women continued to earn less than men did (England and Browne 1992). Among the employed, for instance, black men outearned white women. Thus it was gender inequality, rather than racial or ethnic inequality, that distinguished the overall labor market patterns of Latinas and African American women during the late 1970s.

As the 1980s approached, the labor market future of women of color therefore appeared to be much brighter than that of their male counterparts. By the end of the 1980s, however, indications were that something quite different had transpired, and a few researchers began to uncover a dismaying trend. There were reports that the advancements in the labor market status of African American women had stalled or reversed direction in the 1980s, creating especially harsh consequences for the most economically vulnerable—the young, the unskilled, and single parents (Corcoran and Parrott 1992). Although Latinas continued to show economic mobility, some groups were suffering the effects of industrial restructuring within large cities and were facing rising unemployment and poverty (Moore and Pinderhughes 1993; Ortíz 1996).

Because the slowdown in economic progress among some Latinas and the growing disadvantage for African American women have been recent, and because economic theories on race and labor market inequality tend to be based on male experiences, little is known about the dynamics underlying the employment prospects of Latinas and African American women. Any explanation of patterns of female labor market activity must consider two fundamental differences between women's and men's lives. First, jobs continue to be segregated by sex, with women concentrated in service occupations and industries (Reskin 1993). Second, women are primarily responsible for raising children and increasingly are the sole family heads. Yet the racial stratification in U.S. society, which includes residential segregation and discrimination, suggests that job segregation and family structure should play out differently for women depending on their race or ethnicity (Glenn 1985). Unfortunately, we lack both the empirical studies and the appropriate theoretical models to explain adequately how race and gender *combine* to create labor market inequality for Latinas and African American women.

A literature on race, gender, and economic inequality exists within the

interdisciplinary fields of African American studies, Chicano or Latino studies, and women's studies, but these contributions have not been systematically incorporated into policy debates or writings on the impact of industrial restructuring on labor markets. Feminist scholars in particular have been attempting to develop new theoretical insights in the study of women of color, offering trenchant critiques of the biases in economic and sociological traditions that assume male experiences as normative and render female experiences marginal or invisible (Beasley 1994; England and Kilbourne 1990). For instance, theories of racial inequality in labor markets often presuppose a "typical male worker," who continuously works for pay throughout his lifetime in a full-time job and can find employment across a wide range of occupations and industries. Blue-collar jobs have historically been his mainstay, and his family life interferes little with his "work" life.

The "typical female worker" does not fit this model, partly because women's employment histories vary so much. A woman often moves in and out of the labor force or engages in part-time employment as she cares for her children. She is most likely to be employed in a clerical job or to find herself in one of the "female-dominated" occupations. Not only is she concentrated with other women in sectors where men are absent, but the experiences and opportunities she encounters on the job are qualitatively distinct from those of her male counterpart (Hochschild 1983; Williams 1992). And her family situation is intimately tied to her attachment to the labor force.

Although debates on the relationship between race and gender are at the heart of current feminist theorizing in the United States, feminist scholarship has not been integrated into the labor market literature (some post-Marxist work is an exception to this; see, for instance, Beasley 1994). In addition, there is a methodological divide between the labor market literature and feminist scholarship, as the feminist claims are most often supported by ethnographic, case study, or descriptive research. Thus quantitative approaches to the intersection of gender, race, and class are rare (but see Kilbourne, England, and Beron 1994 and Tomaskovic-Devey 1993).

The studies of Latinas and African American women that emerge from the different corners of the social sciences thus tend to appear as rich ethnographic studies (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Romero 1992; Rollins 1985; Zavella 1987), investigations within particular locales (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993; Zsembik and Peek 1994), or single chapters in volumes on the labor market and women (Stromberg and Harkess 1988); African Americans (Jennings 1992); or Latinos (Bean and Tienda 1987; Knouse, Rosenfeld, and Culbertson 1992). Few comprehensive investigations provide a comparative perspective on Latinas and African American women and speak to the current debates on the labor market problems that industrial restructuring has generated for these women.²

The question remains: Is the story of the labor market fortunes of Latinas and African American women over the past quarter century one of expansion and progress or of stagnation and decline? The literature suggests an answer that is not "either/or" but rather "both/and" (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1997; King 1988). Changing populations and opportunities have been accompanied by growing diversity among groups of women, producing important contingencies in the ways that race or ethnicity combines with gender to ameliorate or intensify labor market disadvantage. Thus far, knowledge of these contingencies remains incomplete. To understand where Latinas and African American women stand in relation to the eroding labor market position of men of color, scholars must construct analyses for women that parallel existing analyses for men and train their sights on aggregate trends. Also necessary is attention to the diversity among women, with consideration of particular groups whose severe deprivation may be hidden within the broader patterns (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1997).

The chapters in this book contribute to the accomplishment of both these tasks. The authors build upon and often challenge the prominent frameworks currently used to explain the position of Latinas and African American women in the U.S. labor market. Below I review these frameworks. I first set the stage by describing patterns in female employment and wages, the increasing racial or ethnic diversity within the U.S. population, and the changing structure of the U.S. economy. I then turn to the theoretical debates about how race or ethnicity and gender affect women's experiences in the labor market. Finally, I highlight the contributions of this volume to these debates.

EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE PROFILES OF LATINAS AND AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

The overall picture of wages and employment creates an impression of progress for Latinas, African American women, and white women. Real wages among all groups of Latinas rose steadily between 1969 and 1996 (table I.1). The wages earned by African American women increased sharply in the 1970s compared with the much more modest increases for white women. Thus, scholars in the early 1980s had reason to be optimistic about the labor market prospects for African American women in relation to white women and to expect the imminent elimination of racial inequality in women's wages.

Many trace the improvements in earnings among Latinas and African American women during the 1970s to increases in their years of education and experience and to their entry into better-paying clerical jobs as they departed domestic service and agricultural work (King 1993; Bean and Tienda 1987; O'Neill 1985). Barriers to employment mobility also lifted

Table I.1 / Median Annual Earnings Among Individuals Employed Full-Time, Full-Year, by Gender and Race or Ethnicity, 1969 to 1996

Gender and Race or Ethnicity ^a	1969	1979	1989	1996
Women				
African American	17,101	21,190	21,890	21,000
Mexican-origin	9,619	11,638	18,980	17,000
Puerto Rican	14,322	14,713	22,776	22,000
Cuban	10,643	14,058	22,738	22,000
Central and South American	11,319	12,978	18,154	18,720
Other Latina	10,305	10,256	22,775	18,300
White ^b	21,376	21,622	24,041	25,000
Men				
African American	25,651	25,945	26,572	26,000
Mexican-origin	21,590	20,780	22,776	19,900
Puerto Rican	21,590	20,903	27,609	25,000
Cuban	23,727	24,659	30,368	28,000
Central and South American	25,865	21,622	23,408	20,000
Other Latino	25,865	24,140	29,102	26,000
White ^c	36,767	38,912	37,456	35,000

Sources: Bean and Tienda (1987, table 10.8); U.S. Department of Commerce (1992, 1998).

^aEarnings in real (1996) dollars.

^bWhite, non-Hispanic.

during the 1970s with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the enforcement of equal opportunity legislation (Leonard 1994; Wilson 1996, 193). Wages were expected to rise with the retirement of older cohorts of Latinos and African Americans whose labor market position was forged during times of extreme racial discrimination (Smith 1984).

During the 1980s and through the 1990s, the progress for African American women appears to have stalled, however, as their wages barely trickled upward. In contrast, Latinas and white women experienced much steeper increases in their wages between 1979 and 1989.³ While Latinas' wages fell slightly in the 1990s, earnings for white women continued to rise. Men's earnings showed distinctly different patterns from those of women, dropping or rising only slightly in the 1970s among all groups, improving between 1979 and 1989 and then falling in the 1990s.⁴ In every decade, wages remained higher for men than for coethnic women (women from the same race or ethnic group).

Wage inequality among women appears as a variegated landscape, with the shape and extent of the wage gap differing over time and across race and ethnic groups (table I.2). In 1979, for instance, African American women earned nearly as much (98 percent) as white women did, while African American women earned only 82 percent of the wages earned by

Table I.2 / Earnings Gap, by Gender and Race or Ethnicity, 1969 to 1996

Women ^b	Earnings as a Ratio of the Earnings of							
	White Women				Coethnic Men ^a			
	1969	1979	1989	1996	1969	1979	1989	1996
African American	.80	.98	.91	.85	.67	.82	.83	.81
Mexican-origin	.45	.54	.79	.68	.45	.54	.83	.85
Puerto Rican	.67	.68	.95	.88	.66	.70	.75	.88
Cuban	.63	.65	.95	.88	.57	.57	.75	.79
Central and South American	.67	.60	.76	.75	.55	.60	.62	.94
Other Latina	.61	.60	.95	.73	.50	.54	.78	.70
White ^c	—	—	—	—	.58	.56	.64	.71

Source: Ratios computed from median earnings estimates reported in table I.1.

^aMen of the same race or ethnicity as the women in each group. For instance, the African American men are coethnic with respect to African American women; Mexican-origin men are coethnic with respect to Mexican-origin women.

^bAged sixteen to sixty-four.

^cNon-Hispanic.

their male counterparts. By the end of the next decade, however, the gender gap had closed while the race-based gap had widened. In contrast, all groups of Latinas saw a reduction in wage inequality as the gap between their earnings and those of white women and coethnic men narrowed.

Employment and unemployment rates also tell a mixed story of expanding employment opportunities alongside continued disadvantages for Latinas and African American women. Among all groups of women, employment increased between 1979 and 1996; among men, it decreased (table I.3). Although a growing number of women were working during that period, some found it more difficult to obtain a job in the 1990s. Unemployment rates fell among all groups of women between 1979 and 1989 but then rose among Latinas and remained constant among white women. Thus, while Latinas achieved wage gains in the 1980s, their advances were tempered by a rising unemployment rate. African American women, in contrast, were slightly more able to find employment in 1996 than in 1989. For most women, the gender gap in unemployment favored men, so that male unemployment rates were lower than female rates (Mexican-origin and Cuban individuals were the exception to this pattern). The wage and unemployment figures in table I.3 also reveal an enduring advantage of white women vis-à-vis Latinas and African American women in the labor market. In every year, white women not only earned the highest wages among women but were also much more likely to find a job when they were searching for paid work. Unemployment rates for white women in 1996 were less than half the rate for Latinas and African American women.

Table I.3 / Employment and Unemployment Rates by Gender and Race or Ethnicity, 1979 to 1996 (Percent)

Gender and Race or Ethnicity ^a	Employed			Unemployed		
	1979	1989	1996	1979	1989	1996
Women						
African American	49.3	54.6	57.1	10.8	9.8	8.7
Latina	43.6	54.9	50.2	8.9	8.0	9.2
Mexican	43.5	50.8	49.3	9.9	8.8	9.7
Puerto Rican	31.9	40.2	45.3	9.3	8.5	10.0
Cuban	50.9	48.0	50.0	7.9	5.9	8.3
White	47.4	54.9	57.0	5.0	4.0	4.3
Men						
African American	69.0	67.0	65.5	9.1	10.0	9.4
Latino	80.4	79.4	77.3	5.7	6.6	6.9
Mexican	83.3	80.4	78.7	5.4	8.8	7.0
Puerto Rican	71.9	72.8	68.5	9.9	8.5	7.0
Cuban	79.1	75.3	70.9	4.9	5.3	6.3
White	77.3	75.4	74.2	3.6	3.9	4.1

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor (1980, tables 44, 45; 1990, tables 39, 40; 1996, tables 5, 6).

^aIn 1979, individuals aged sixteen to nineteen were not included in the reports. Therefore, the table includes only women and men aged twenty to sixty-four to allow comparability across years. Note that employment rates are higher for every group when individuals aged sixteen to nineteen are included. For instance, the unemployment rate in 1995 was 10.2 percent among African American women aged sixteen to sixty-four.

The unemployment figures suggest that Latinas and African American women may still be facing barriers in the labor market that belie the rosy image portrayed in the general wage trends. The broad earnings profiles may actually mask disadvantage within races or ethnic groups of women, and substantial pockets of growing wage inequality between women may be hidden in the composite numbers. Feminist scholars would look to social class as a third dimension of inequality and argue that disadvantage by gender and by race or ethnicity may vary along class lines (King 1988). In particular, poor and working-class women of color are vulnerable to “multiple jeopardy” stemming from their gender, race or ethnicity, and class combined (King 1988).

Economists interpret “education” as an indicator of “skill” rather than as the more complex sociological concept of “social class.” From either theoretical orientation, the data reveal that education represents a salient axis of inequality—one that appears to have grown in importance for women during the 1970s and the 1980s. The data in table I.4 provide a simple indication of how women at the lowest end of the educational distribution have fared in relation to coethnic women at the highest end. With one exception (the “other Latina” group), the education-related discrepancy in wages

Table I.4 / Earnings Gap between Women at Lowest and Highest Education Levels, by Race and Ethnicity, 1969 to 1996

Group ^a	Median Earnings of Women with Less Than Twelve Years of Education as a Ratio of Median Earnings of Women with at Least Sixteen Years of Education			
	1969	1979	1989	1996
African American	.42	.60	.48	.50
Mexican-origin	.30	.46	.47	.36
Puerto Rican	.60	.57	.50	.44
Cuban	.63	.56	.44	.43
Central and South American	.68	.65	.47	.40
Other Latina	.41	.41	.47	.47
White	.51	.63	.49	.44

Sources: Bean and Tienda (1997, table 10.8); U.S. Department of Commerce (1992, 1998).

^aIncludes only women employed full-time, full-year.

widened between 1979 and 1996 among Latinas, African American, and white women.

Thus, consistent with trends occurring within the labor market as a whole in the 1980s, wage inequality between women with the least education and women with the most education grew, with the gap especially pronounced for young workers (Blau and Beller 1992; Karoly 1993). More comprehensive studies of the growing disparity in wages show that the underlying patterns of increasing wage inequality between “low-skilled” and “high-skilled” workers have differed by gender *and* by race or ethnicity (Karoly 1993; Morris, Bernhardt, and Handcock 1994). Among the least educated, for instance, men’s wages eroded more rapidly than women’s did (Blau and Beller 1992). In addition, black and white women experienced earnings declines at the bottom of the distribution and earnings gains at the top (Blau and Beller 1992). Latinas achieved increases at both ends, but the rise was faster among those at the top (Karoly 1993). The evidence therefore suggests that Latinas and African American women may be under the sway of distinctive forces that are creating inequality within their ranks and fueling their declining labor market status in relation to white women (Karoly 1993; Morris, Bernhardt, and Handcock 1994). Because of the complexity of these trends, the determinants of these contrasting pathways are not fully known.

WHY DOES RACIAL AND ETHNIC INEQUALITY PERSIST IN THE LABOR MARKET?

Latina, black, and white women are located in different sectors of local labor markets, bring differing sets of skills into their jobs, and potentially encounter different types of reception by employers, coworkers, and customers. Scholars are just beginning to appreciate the diversity among black women and Latinas in terms of their personal and family characteristics—skill and education levels, age, status as head of the family, social resources—their class background, and their exposure to local labor market opportunities. The patterns of inequality among Latinas and black women thus vary within these groups and appear to be linked to the substantial changes altering the landscape of the social and economic institutions within the United States. Debates over the causes of the continued advantage that non-Hispanic whites enjoy in the labor market center on several key processes: population changes, industrial restructuring, disarticulation, and discrimination.

The Increasing Diversity of the U.S. Population

The labor market fortunes of Latinas and African American women occur within a backdrop of a society marked by racial inequality. In 1944, Myrdal derided the “treatment” of African Americans as “America’s greatest failure” (2021) that was engendering a fundamental social struggle. Fifty years later, this struggle continues; African Americans are segregated into predominantly black neighborhoods (Massey and Denton 1993); their children often attend schools that provide woeful preparation (Farkas and Vicknair 1996; Orfield 1992); and over one-third of African American families live in poverty (U.S. Department of Commerce 1997).

Although many of Myrdal’s insights about the disjuncture between the ethos of equality and social conditions for African Americans are relevant today (Clayton 1996), the simple black-white distinction of “race” is now inadequate to characterize the U.S. population and the dynamics of social inequality. First, many African Americans have entered the middle class, so that there are wide economic disparities within the African American community (Wilson 1978). Second, gender is recognized as an important axis of inequality that intersects with race (Collins 1990; King 1988; Baca Zinn and Dill 1996). For instance, African American men and women hold jobs in quite different occupations and industries. African American women are employed within the female-dominated service sectors of urban areas, with clerical work representing the largest single occupational category that they fill (Reskin and Padavic 1993).

Third, conceptualizations of “race/ethnicity” are supplanting older no-

tions of "race" to capture the "multiethnic" diversity within the United States (Bobo and Suh 1996; Nelson and Tienda 1985). Latinos and Latinas represent one of the most rapidly growing "ethnic" groups in the United States. Between 1990 and 1994 alone, the Latino and Latina population increased by approximately 28 percent, reaching over 10 percent of the U.S. population (Day 1996). Social scientists estimate that if current immigration and fertility trends continue, by 2010 Latinos and Latinas will surpass African Americans to become the second largest race or ethnic group living in the United States (Day 1996). Approximately one-third of Latinos and Latinas in the United States are immigrants, and Latinas sustain the highest fertility rates of any major race or ethnic group in the United States (U.S. Department of Commerce 1997).

While "Latino" or "Hispanic" is considered a single ethnic category for political purposes and bureaucratic record-keeping, many question the utility of a single analytic construct, arguing that race or ethnicity is not just a demographic descriptor but a theoretical construct that is forged through political, social, and cultural contestations (Nelson and Tienda 1985). That is, "ethnicity" is a socially produced category, changing with social conditions.⁵ The groups that fall under the cognomen "Latino" vary widely in their experiences, identities, characteristics, histories, cultural heritage, and place in local economies (Bean and Tienda 1987). Consequently, the labor market profiles of Latinas vary by their national origin and nativity (Bean and Tienda 1987).

Men and women of Mexican origin constitute the largest group of Latinos and Latinas. According to Nelson and Tienda (1985), a main force drawing Mexicans into the United States has been the need for cheap labor. Concentrated in the Southwest, the Mexican-origin population is rapidly increasing as a result of the recent influx of immigrants. The new arrivals tend to have low levels of education and are hired to fill the worst jobs within the fields and factories of California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. Those who were born in the United States or who arrived there as children occupy a different niche in the economies of the Southwest (Ortíz 1996). Although they have made some inroads into professional and managerial positions, Mexican Americans whose families have been in the United States for several generations are still concentrated in relatively low-status occupations (Knouse, Rosenfeld, and Culbertson 1992; Ortíz 1996; Scott 1996). Overall, Mexican-origin women are overrepresented in agricultural and manufacturing employment.

In contrast to individuals of Mexican origin, Puerto Ricans reside primarily in the large cities of the Northeast and Midwest and share a distinctive set of historical circumstances (Bean and Tienda 1987). The commonwealth status of Puerto Rico allows unrestricted migration between the island and the U.S. mainland. Puerto Ricans have sought employment on the mainland as economic opportunities on the island have evaporated

with rapid industrialization and have become the second largest group of Latinos in the United States. They have flowed into the economies of cities such as New York and Chicago as low-wage workers (Bean and Tienda 1987; Nelson and Tienda 1997).

The circumstances bringing Mexicans and Puerto Ricans to the mainland United States are grounded in economic hardship and economic necessity. These groups have encountered barriers to advancement in the labor market from several directions, including the low levels of human capital they possess, the types of jobs that are available to them, their limited political clout, and the degree of prejudice they endure from their neighbors, employers, and fellow workers (Bean and Tienda 1987; Dovidio et al. 1992).

Cubans, the third largest group of Latinos, are distinguished by their relative economic success and by the welcome that they received from the U.S. government following the Cuban revolution in 1959. Middle- and upper-class Cubans fled the Castro regime in the 1960s. They settled in Miami, Chicago, and New York with the assistance of government programs that developed as part of the U.S. anti-Communist policy agenda. In Miami especially, Cubans created an enclave economy that generated capital for Cuban entrepreneurs and provided jobs to newly arrived Cuban workers (Portes and Bach 1985). The relatively salubrious employment opportunities for Cubans are reflected in the small wage gaps between Cubans and non-Hispanic whites of the same gender (table I.1).

Many Latinos and Latinas from Central America entered the United States as political refugees in the 1980s, fleeing war, violence, and political repression (Moore and Pinderhughes 1993). However, their status has been much more tenuous than that of Cubans. These groups have lacked economic and political resources and have often found employment in the lowest-paying sectors of local economies. Latinos and Latinas from Central and South America and the Caribbean represent 12 percent of the U.S. Latino and Latina population (U.S. Department of Commerce 1998a, b).

The geographic concentration of African Americans and groups of Latinos and Latinas in particular urban centers and regions implies that their labor market fates will be shaped by labor market conditions within distinct local areas. Changes in the structure of opportunities within those areas should thus affect their labor market profiles relatively strongly.

Changes in the Economy

Current studies identify major shifts in the industrial structure of the U.S. economy since the 1970s as a leading explanation of persistent race and ethnic inequality in the labor market. These shifts have included a shrinking share of low-skilled manufacturing jobs (deindustrialization), an increase in demand for skills (skills mismatch), and a decline in the availability in low-skill jobs in the central city (spatial mismatch). Many scholars

argue that these changes have combined with other processes maintaining racial stratification—including residential segregation, the concentration of poverty, increased competition for low-skill jobs from immigrants and other groups, and workplace discrimination—to intensify disadvantage among Latinos and African Americans (Moore and Pinderhughes 1993; Wilson 1987, 1996).

Economists contend that the industrial restructuring of the U.S. economy took at least two forms that contributed to rising inequality (Holzer and Vroman 1992). First, the types of jobs available changed as the economy moved from manufacturing to services. Second, there was an upgrading of skill requirements for jobs, and the returns to higher education increased (Juhn, Murphy, and Pierce 1993). Both of these processes were especially detrimental to African American and Latino men, who were more likely than white men to be employed in declining industries, to have low skills, and to reside in geographic areas undergoing the most rapid economic transitions (Holzer and Vroman 1992; Ortíz 1996). There is some evidence that industrial restructuring also undermined the wage and employment prospects of Latinas and African American women. Although men and women are employed in different industries and jobs, within their respective race or ethnic group they tend to have similar levels of education and to reside in the same locales.

Deindustrialization did not occur evenly across the United States. In the cities of the Northeast and Midwest, manufacturing jobs disappeared as companies moved their operations to the West and South (the “Sunbelt”) or overseas. The cities of the Sunbelt actually added manufacturing jobs to their total employment and benefited from the largest relative job growth overall within the nation. However, in every region, services became a greater share of total employment while the share of manufacturing declined (Kasarda 1995).

Substantial evidence indicates that declining labor market opportunities associated with deindustrialization played an important role in the rise in black male joblessness in the 1980s (Holzer and Vroman 1992; Juhn 1992; but see Krugman 1996). The effects of deindustrialization may be largely relevant to men, however. A much larger proportion of women than men are employed in the service sector, so that the shifts away from manufacturing toward service industries may actually have boosted female employment and wages. Between 1970 and 1980, three-fourths of the increase in women’s nonagricultural jobs occurred in service industries (Tienda, Ortíz, and Smith 1987). Although there is little evidence from studies of national trends that women’s employment or wages suffered as a result of deindustrialization (Browne 1997), within services women remained disadvantaged relative to men. Industrial restructuring redrew the boundaries of the sex-based segregation of occupations, so that women continued to earn less than coethnic men (Tienda, Ortíz, and Smith 1987).

The loss of manufacturing jobs may have hurt women within particular local labor markets. Factories within some metropolitan areas employ a large proportion of women, the majority of whom are racial or ethnic minorities. For instance, in Los Angeles, 75 percent of operatives in apparel firms in 1980 were women of Mexican origin (Fernandez-Kelly and Garcia 1990).

In addition, there is a debate about the extent to which the increase in services represented a shift from "good" jobs to "bad" jobs (Meisenheimer 1998). Traditionally, factory workers with few years of schooling could still acquire upward mobility and move into positions that offered security and relatively high pay. Harrison and Bluestone (1988) claim that the "middle-level" jobs have disappeared. What remains are high-paying jobs that demand high levels of technical expertise and low-paying, "dead-end" jobs that require minimal education.

The skills mismatch thesis posits that there has been an upgrading of the skill requirements for low-skill jobs, so that opportunities for the least-skilled workers are fewer and fewer (Holzer 1995). Those groups with the lowest levels of education, such as African Americans, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans, should be especially vulnerable to lost opportunities arising from skills mismatch.

There is some evidence that Latinas and African American women are affected by a skills mismatch. In his study of jobs requiring a high school degree or less, Holzer (1995) finds that jobs entailing reading and writing, arithmetic, or computer skills are less likely to go to African American than to white women. Latinas are less likely than white women to be hired for jobs involving daily interaction with customers or computers. White women's relative advantage in hiring for these jobs could be due either to actual differences in skill levels among white women, Latinas, and African American women or to negative employer biases regarding the skills of the latter two groups (Dovidio et al. 1992; Kirschenman and Neckerman 1992).

Residential segregation by race and ethnicity compounds the difficulties that Latinas and African American women encounter as they navigate through a restructuring economy. Proponents of the spatial mismatch thesis suggest that deindustrialization was especially pronounced in large metropolitan areas, as low-skill jobs in manufacturing left the central cities and moved to the suburbs or overseas (Holzer and Vroman 1992; Ihlanfeldt and Sjoquist 1989). As they followed the jobs, the move of many central-city residents into the suburban hinterlands precipitated a decline in the demand for services, further reducing the number of low-skill employment opportunities in the central city (Kasarda 1995). Competition for a smaller number of jobs decreased wages for those positions that did remain. Low-skilled African Americans were especially hard-hit by the departing jobs; they were more likely to reside in the inner city compared to similar white families and were restricted by persistent residential segregation from following jobs to the suburbs (Zax and Kain 1996).

Spatial mismatch may be less relevant to poor families of Mexican and Puerto Rican origin. Moore and Pinderhughes (1993) suggest that only some Puerto Rican communities resemble African American communities in the concentration of poor residents within the inner city. Housing discrimination is less severe for Latinos and Latinas than for African Americans, and even segregated Latino neighborhoods experience continual inflows and outflows of families through immigration. Discrimination by employers may also operate in favor of some Latinos and Latinas; even within the central city, employers may hire Mexican immigrants before they hire native-born African Americans residing in adjacent neighborhoods (Moore and Vigil 1993).

Human Capital

The restructuring of the U.S. economy appears to have increased the prominence of individual "skill" in determining a worker's lifetime chances in the market, as disparities between the requirements for low-skill and high-skill positions stretch farther apart and the availability of "middle-level" jobs shrinks (Bluestone and Harrison 1982). Without additional training, it is difficult for low-skilled workers to advance into higher-paying jobs and approach a middle-class standard of living for themselves and their children. Education is one of the foremost indicators of skill for employers and for researchers (Becker 1964). On average, Latinas and African Americans possess fewer years of education than whites do (Robles 1997).

Although there is agreement that these intergroup differences in skill contribute to economic inequality, debates abound over how important the skill differences are—that is, to what extent does skill explain labor market stratification by race and gender?—and what causes the differences in educational attainment—specifically, are the differences the result of individual choices or structural constraints? (Cancio, Evans, and Maume 1996; England 1992; Farkas and Vicknair 1996; Tam 1997). These debates are important for policy; if most of the wage gap between whites and other races or ethnic groups arises from skill differences, then interventions should be geared toward training and supplemental education programs. If skill is just one facet of the problem of inequality, and individuals with equal skill encounter different chances in the labor market because of employer practices and discrimination, then policy must address the demand-side aspects of the labor market.

Adherents of orthodox human capital theory would counter that anti-discrimination policy attempts to ameliorate skill discrepancies would be unwarranted. According to that theory, individuals make choices about the amount of time they want to invest in developing their human capital (Becker 1964). Thus, labor market stratification does not reflect any systematic biases against women or racial or ethnic minorities but is the result of

individual choice and the impersonal forces of supply and demand. And although some studies find that African Americans and Latinos and Latinas receive lower returns to education than whites do (Cotton 1988), this discrepancy is interpreted within the human capital tradition as the result of differences in "unmeasured skills" and school quality rather than of discrimination (Smith 1984).

The human capital perspective is challenged by scholars who claim that skill differences are actually an outcome, rather than a cause, of racial or ethnic and class stratification (that is, that skills are "endogenous") (Roscigno 1995). For instance, residential segregation creates disadvantages that are more often the result of structural constraints than of individual decisions; Latinos and Latinas and African Americans dwelling in segregated urban neighborhoods often attend schools of poor quality (Farkas and Vicknair 1996; Orfield 1992; Bean and Tienda 1987). In addition, scholastic achievement may drop when there is little expectation that efforts will be rewarded in the labor market (Baker and Jones 1993).

Disarticulation

Wilson (1987) contends that residential segregation and concentrated poverty have not simply depleted resources for inner-city schools but rather have led to a breakdown, or "disarticulation," in the social processes linking low-skilled blacks to the labor market (Browne 1997). For Wilson (1987), industrial restructuring fueled the exodus of middle-class residents and middle-class institutions from black neighborhoods in the central city, leaving behind the "truly disadvantaged." His thesis turned the debates on race and inequality toward impoverished blacks who were concentrated in inner-city neighborhoods where deindustrialization was eliminating the low-skill manufacturing jobs in which residents were traditionally employed. High-poverty neighborhoods further separated residents from the labor market by isolating them from the institutions and social networks that could provide the information and role models necessary to secure a job (Wacquant and Wilson 1993). African American women were indirectly affected by the lack of viable employment opportunities. Fewer employed black males reduced the pool of potential marriage partners for black women. Women thus had to become state welfare recipients to support themselves and their children.

In contrast to Wilson's view, theorists such as Murray (1984) posit that welfare is a cause rather than a consequence of lower employment for black males. According to Murray, the availability of welfare to single mothers provides a disincentive for men to seek paid work, marry, and become the head of a family. Welfare not only erodes the Protestant work ethic, it also rewards poor teenaged mothers for having babies out of wedlock.

In Murray's formulation, the disincentive to work among the poor is characterized as a rational response to the choice between welfare and low-wage work. Others argue that the poor are motivated by a value system in which premarital sex, out-of-wedlock births, and welfare dependency are normative for young women (Anderson 1991). According to Lewis, "One can speak of the culture of the poor, for it has its own modalities and distinctive social and psychological consequences for its members" (1962, 2). In his ethnography of five Mexican families, he describes one family as especially typifying the "culture of poverty": "In this family there is almost complete absence of the middle-class values which are beginning to spread throughout the lower strata of Mexican society. The parents show little drive to improve their standard of living and do not place high value on education, clothing, or cleanliness for themselves or their children" (1962, 15). While Lewis's studies focused on low-income Mexican and Puerto Ricans in the 1950s and 1960s, more recent adaptations of the culture-of-poverty thesis have centered on impoverished inner-city African Americans—the "underclass"—and their dependency on welfare (Auletta 1982; Banfield 1974).

Neither the "structural" (Wilson's) version nor the "cultural" (Lewis's) version of the disarticulation thesis considers the direct relationship between women's labor market activity and their reliance on public assistance. Yet it seems reasonable that if employment opportunities in the inner city are dwindling and wages for low-skilled workers are falling, then poor Latinas and African American women may be pushed out of the labor market and onto the welfare rolls out of economic necessity. The evidence suggests that, in general, women are not opting for welfare as a "lifestyle" in an effort to avoid paid work, as the culture-of-poverty thesis would suggest. Over half of welfare recipients exit the program within two years (Bane and Ellwood 1986). Many long-term recipients actually cycle between spells of being employed and receiving aid to families with dependent children (AFDC), since the level of benefits that women receive from welfare is insufficient to sustain a family (Spalter-Roth, Hartmann, and Andrews 1994; Edin and Lein 1997; Harris 1993). In fact, the majority of women on AFDC engage in some form of additional income-generating activity—either through formal employment or in the informal economy (Edin and Lein 1997). African American, Mexican, and Puerto Rican women are more likely to receive welfare than non-Hispanic white women are, and the literature indicates that social class factors rather than race account for this difference (Harris 1993).

The AFDC program has been replaced by the much more restrictive temporary assistance to needy families (TANF). With a five-year lifetime limit on benefits, many poor women will be forced to seek alternate means of supporting their families and should enter the labor market. If Murray (1984) and the culture-of-poverty theorists are correct that welfare recip-

ients simply do not want to work, then the elimination of support through federal transfers should induce former beneficiaries to get jobs. However, if industrial restructuring has limited the employment opportunities for low-skilled workers, then single mothers with few skills will be unable to find jobs, and poverty will rise (Burtless 1995). Mexican-origin, Puerto Rican, and African American women, who most often serve as the single head of a family and have the lowest levels of education, will be in the most precarious labor market position.

Discrimination

Theories of disarticulation focus on impoverished African Americans and Latinos living in blighted urban centers (Moore and Pinderhughes 1993). Yet labor market inequality by race (and gender) is not just the province of the poor. Even among those with the highest levels of education, inequality between the wages of blacks and whites is increasing, and there is a gender gap in pay (Blau and Beller 1992; Levy and Murnane 1992).

Theories of labor market discrimination posit that ongoing labor market disadvantage among Latinas and African American women cuts across social class lines (although discrimination may be articulated differently for each class) (Feagin and Sikes 1994). Discrimination can appear in many guises, including the use of group averages as proxies for human capital attributes of job applicants ("statistical discrimination"), insidious biases in the evaluation of skill and performance by employers and managers, and more blatant prejudice against individuals based on their gender and race (Becker 1957; England 1992; Feagin and Sikes 1994). Since discriminatory practices in the workplace are illegal, it is difficult to cull direct evidence that employers, workers, and customers favor some groups, especially white males, over other groups. Audit studies provide one test of the extent of employer discrimination in hiring. In typical audit studies of employment, individuals with identical résumés apply for jobs. These studies reveal that whites are more likely to be hired than "equally qualified" African Americans and that men are more likely to be hired than "equally qualified" women (see Fix and Struyk 1993). In-depth interviews with employers and personnel managers also reveal that many employers hold negative stereotypes of African American workers, particularly young African American males (Kirschenman and Neckerman 1992).

If discrimination is implicated in the growing labor market disadvantage of African American and Latino and Latina workers, then it would have had to increase during the 1980s. A reduction in the enforcement of affirmative action guidelines appears to be one avenue through which this increase could have occurred (Bound and Freeman 1992). Leonard (1994) argues that improvements in the labor market status of blacks in the 1970s were due to the enforcement of affirmative action guidelines. With the en-

try of the Reagan administration in the 1980s, this enforcement slackened, reversing African Americans' earlier progress. In a recent study of employers, Holzer (1995) also finds that minorities and women are generally more likely to be hired in firms that have affirmative action policies in place.

Studies of employees and job seekers also provide evidence for the continued presence of discrimination in the labor market. Many workers of African American and Latino descent report that they have been passed over in hiring, raises, and promotions because of their race or ethnicity (Bobo and Suh 1996; Feagin and Sikes 1994; Segura 1992; Suh 1996).

Women of all backgrounds also perceive that they are facing gender discrimination at the workplace, as evidenced by the large number of Title VII suits brought before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Goldin 1990, 203). Researchers are only beginning to consider how Latinas and African American women face the combination of racial or ethnic and gender discrimination. What they are finding is that discrimination occurs along the entire continuum of occupation and skill levels—from blue-collar work to professional employment (Tallichet 1995; Segura 1992; Higginbotham 1997; Zavella 1987). In fact, there is some evidence that racial or ethnic and gender discrimination is most prevalent within those jobs that bring the greatest amount of interaction with white or male coworkers, supervisors, and customers (Suh 1996).

NEW INSIGHTS

The literature suggests that the labor market experiences of Latinas and African American women over the past twenty years have been molded by the substantial upheavals within economic and social institutions in the United States. The growing racial and ethnic diversity within the U.S. population has created a more richly textured society while increasing the potential for conflict over resources and jobs (Laslett 1996); the changing industrial structure has fostered remarkable technological expertise while depressing wages among the low-skilled (Holzer and Vroman 1992); and the relaxation of traditional gender roles has opened new opportunities for women in the public arena while shifting onto their shoulders a greater share of the financial responsibility for their families (Danziger and Gottschalk 1993).

Yet the answer to the question of how these changes in social institutions are affecting the labor market experiences of Latinas and African American women remains incomplete, and the available knowledge is piecemeal. Written by scholars from a variety of disciplines using a range of methodologies, the chapters in this volume fill some of the gaps and bring fresh, innovative perspectives to bear on the issues.

The chapters in part I systematically examine and compare the contours of labor market outcomes among Latinas and African American women, exploring the extent of inequality between these women and white women, white men, and coethnic men. The contributions reveal the wide range of experiences and outcomes within populations of Latinas and African American women and demonstrate the need for theories that can take into account the processes that lead to inequality among women within particular races or ethnic groups as well as across genders and races or ethnic groups.

Mary Corcoran (chapter 1) addresses the question of whether the labor market fortunes of African American women have improved or deteriorated since 1970. Focusing on the young, a group whose experiences particularly capture the effects of industrial restructuring, the author describes trends in employment and wages among African American women from 1970 through 1990. She finds that the general picture of absolute economic progress among African American women pertains only to those who are well educated. A growing disparity between black and white women is quite pronounced among the young; wages for African American women under the age of thirty-five declined in the 1980s, while wages among young white women increased. Corcoran emphasizes that the extent and pace of black-white inequality are great among the young; these trends are missed in investigations that focus on the entire population and do not take age into account.

In analyses that complement the findings of Corcoran, John Bound and Laura Dresser (chapter 2) assess the underlying causes of the erosion in the wages and employment of young African American women relative to white women from 1973 to 1989. The authors uncover the distinctive ways that industrial restructuring has undermined economic progress among young black women both nationally and within particular regions of the country. When the authors focus on regional patterns, they discover that black women in the Midwest actually suffered wage losses with the decline of manufacturing employment. In all regions, young black women have been entering those sectors of the economy in which opportunities are shrinking. In fact, it is among the college-educated that the wage gap has eroded the most rapidly. Bound and Dresser trace this pattern to the influx of African American women into low-paying occupations; about one-third of African American women with college degrees are employed in clerical occupations. Other factors associated with industrial restructuring, namely, declining unionization and a reduction in the real wage, have contributed to the widening black-white wage gap among women.

In chapter 3, Mary Corcoran, Colleen M. Heflin, and Belinda L. Reyes follow trends in employment and earnings for young Mexican and Puerto Rican women and offer analyses that parallel Corcoran's examination of Af-

rican American women. They also reveal the relative advantages that white women enjoy but that are hidden within trends for the total population. The authors show that the economic fortunes of Mexican-origin women deteriorated between 1970 and 1990 while those of Puerto Rican women improved. Both these groups, however, continue to lag behind white women in terms of employment and wages. Similar to the case of African American women, individual Mexican-origin and Puerto Rican women vary markedly in their labor market profiles, with marital status, education, geographic location, and nativity creating divergent pathways toward a bettering or a worsening of their labor market position. In particular, wage inequality between those with low levels of schooling and those with high levels of schooling has increased for both Mexican-origin and Puerto Rican women. These groups diverge, however, in the predominant issues that define their labor market disadvantage in the 1990s; for young Mexican-origin women, low levels of schooling and high immigration rates are shaping wages and opportunities. The economic condition of young Puerto Rican women, in contrast, is characterized by relatively low employment and high unemployment.

Employment and earnings differences across groups of African American, Latina, and white women are explored by Paula England, Karen Christopher, and Lori L. Reid (chapter 4) and Barbara F. Reskin (chapter 5). England, Christopher, and Reid focus specifically on wage inequality and probe the "intersection" of gender and race or ethnicity in the labor market. They ask whether the determinants of the gender gap in wages differ for African American, Latino and Latina, and white workers in the United States and whether the determinants of the race- or ethnicity-based gap in wages differ for women and men. They find that the answer to these questions depends on the particular labor market influence being considered. On the one hand, men's higher earnings within all ethnic groups are strongly related to the segregation of occupations and industries by sex. On the other hand, experience and seniority differences between men and women contribute to the gender gap in pay among whites much more than among African Americans or Latinos and Latinas. The pay gap between various ethnic groups is primarily driven by "human capital" for both men and women, although the strength of the effect varies by gender. In particular, a combination of education and cognitive skills appears to explain more of the difference in earnings among white women, African American women, and Latinas than between races or ethnic groups of men.

The segregation of jobs into male- and female-dominated positions is one of the main avenues through which the gender gap in wages is maintained (Reskin 1993). As Reskin notes, comparatively little is known about occupational segregation based on race and ethnicity beyond black-white distinctions. In chapter 5, Reskin explores current patterns of occupational segregation by race or ethnicity and gender to describe the labor market

position of Latinas and African American women in the United States. She demonstrates that occupational segregation occurs along at least two important axes; women are allocated into positions on the basis of their race and ethnicity as well as their gender. The segregation of occupations by race and gender contributes to earnings inequality. The implications of Reskin's descriptive findings are that Latinas and African American women face dual constraints on their opportunities representing dual forces that push their wages downward: they are segregated into the lower-paying "female-dominated" positions, and they are further drawn into occupations that are heavily represented by coethnics (see also Browne, Tigges, and Press forthcoming).

The chapters in part I, which provide a context for understanding the labor market fortunes of Latinas and African American women, miss important distinctions among races or ethnic groups of women. The chapters in part II use an array of methodological tools to understand specific groups and theoretical issues to delve into the processes that underlie the national trends.

Aixa N. Cintrón-Vélez (chapter 6) recounts the narratives of Puerto Rican women in New York City to follow the avenues through which industrial restructuring affects their labor market status. She casts employment as a dynamic process in which women enter and exit jobs as they face changing opportunities, family situations, and personal needs, abilities, and expectations. The oral histories reveal the myriad strategies that Puerto Rican women devise to cope with constricting market opportunities in New York and demonstrate how these strategies are contingent; the pursuit of one path, such as migration, opens new options and closes others. Despite the multifaceted nature of the personal accounts of Cintrón-Vélez's respondents, two clear patterns shape employment among Puerto Rican women in New York City: the importance of the birth and migration cohort and the salience of a woman's family situation. The women's response to the dramatic shift in New York's economy away from manufacturing industries depended upon the age and year at which they entered the labor market, the jobs they initially took, and the responsibilities they carried for maintaining their households.

Susan González Baker (chapter 7) takes on the controversial question of the potential economic problems that arise from the recent influx of immigrants into the United States. She investigates whether the earnings prospects of Mexican-origin, African American, and white women in the Southwest have been hurt by the increasing immigration of women from Mexico. Her chapter speaks to the debate over whether immigrants are directly competing with native workers for jobs and thus pushing wages down, or whether immigrants are actually contributing to economic growth and filling positions that native workers do not want. She finds evidence for both sides of the debate. In 1980—but not in 1990—an increase in Mexican-

origin women reduced wages among Mexican American women. The chapter's descriptive evidence provides a ready interpretation for the shift: between 1980 and 1990 the disparity between the individual, family, and labor market characteristics of Mexican-origin women and Mexican American women increased. In contrast to the experiences of Mexican American women, non-Hispanic white women actually benefited from the growth in the population of employed Mexican-origin women in 1980 and 1990.

Kathryn Edin and Kathleen Mullan Harris (chapter 8) grapple with the important policy issue of how women who leave welfare programs for a job cope financially and stay off the welfare rolls. Combining survey data from a national sample with interviews with former welfare recipients in four cities, the authors uncover striking differences in white and black women's ability to resist cycling back from employment to welfare. Although black and white women who leave welfare for paid work earn equal wages, black women are more likely to return to the welfare rolls. The authors find that this difference is the result of the greater social resources available to white women, which help to keep them economically afloat. For all women with low skills, employment is not a sufficient source of income. However, white women can avail themselves of wider and more ample financial assistance from ex-partners and relatives than can black women.

Edin and Harris's study suggests that social class differences translate into more restricted opportunities for black women with low skills. In chapter 9, Irene Browne and Ivy Kennelly provide evidence that race itself may also play a role in reducing opportunities for black women through processes related to discrimination in the workplace. In their study of in-depth interviews with employers in Atlanta, Browne and Kennelly find that employers speak of black women in low-skill jobs using common stereotypes. One of the most prevalent stereotypes that employers invoke to describe black women is the single mother whose child-care responsibilities often inhibit her ability to perform her job. Data from surveys of employed Atlantans support the authors' contention that, rather than simply describing their workforce, employers are attending to partial information that is consistent with common stereotypes. The survey data reveal that although employed black women are more likely than white women to be single mothers, the majority of black women in the labor force do not have any children living at home. In addition, employed white women are as likely as black women to report conflicts between child-care responsibilities and their jobs.

In their chapter on professional women (chapter 10), Elizabeth Higginbotham and Lynn Weber discern that race- and gender-based discrimination is also common within the middle class and investigate how discrimination is linked to perceived opportunities and career plans. African American women in professional and managerial occupations reported in-

stances of racial discrimination that ranged from blatant to subtle. They also endured gender discrimination—as did white female professionals. Even when they did not personally experience direct incidents of discrimination, the women in the sample perceived group discrimination; the majority of African Americans believed that they were treated differently in the workplace because of their race. These perceptions influenced the women's career plans. The authors emphasize that striving toward career success is a central concern among professional women and that decisions about career paths are strongly influenced by where the women perceive the best opportunities to lie. White women were much more likely than black women to be content with their current place of employment and sought to move up within the organization. Black women anticipated moving to a new firm to advance their careers. Although all of the women possessed professional degrees, black women were much more prone than white women to perceive the need for further education in order to advance their careers.

The contributions in the first two parts of the volume raise the questions of what more needs to be known and what needs to be done to improve the economic prospects of Latinas and African American women. The chapters in the part III respond to these queries, drawing out the implications of the empirical results for theory, method, social action, and policy making.

For Delores P. Aldridge, the changes in the industrial structure of the United States spur a call to action for African American leaders and citizens. In chapter 11, Aldridge emphasizes the need for African American women—and men—to prepare themselves for the technological advancements of the future. Aldridge claims that the development of scientific and technological expertise will not only enable African American women to become fully incorporated into the labor market but will also strengthen the political and economic leverage of black communities and thus pose a challenge to current systems of racial inequality. This perspective moves past the narrow confines of the skills mismatch thesis and draws upon Afrocentric and African womanist theories to craft an agenda for self-empowerment within the African American community. Aldridge constructs a heuristic model that stresses “historical-cultural experiences, equity, and action for the labor market” (HEAL). The HEAL model fuses theory and action, outlining a strategy through which African Americans can effectively take control of their own economic destinies.

In “Now You See ‘Em, Now You Don’t” (chapter 12), Barbara Reskin and Camille Charles interrogate the common methodological practices in studies of Latinas and African American women. They uncover important pitfalls in current research on women of color in the labor market and discuss how blind spots can frequently distort or inhibit knowledge. One problem is the separation of the literature on gender on the one hand from

the literature on race and ethnicity on the other hand, with little connection between them. This leads to theoretical models that focus mainly on one axis of inequality, such as gender, while ignoring other axes, such as race. The unique constellation of opportunities and outcomes that arise from the intersection of gender, race, and ethnicity are sidestepped. The authors identify five problems that these incomplete models can create. For instance, limiting the study to the dominant social groups—such as men or whites—precludes generalizing to the omitted groups. In addition, the failure to consider how gender and race may jointly determine labor market outcomes casts doubt on the accuracy of standard labor market analyses based on a single group (the problem of specification error). Of more sweeping import, the authors emphasize that the groups that benefit most from labor market stratification control the institutions that regulate that stratification. Scholars must more directly integrate the issue of power into theoretical models of the labor market in order to develop adequate understandings of labor markets and design effective policies to meet the needs of Latinas and African American women in the labor market.

Joya Misra (chapter 13) deftly synthesizes the empirical results from the chapters to reflect upon the public policies that could alleviate the persistent disadvantage that Latinas and African American women encounter in the U.S. labor market. Policies must be multifaceted, taking into account the great diversity in experiences, needs, and labor market outcomes *among* races or ethnic groups of women. Misra discusses the possible benefits of specific policy efforts such as skill and education enhancement, comparable worth, desegregation, wage and tax legislation, day care, and welfare. She engages arguments against these approaches, drawing upon the successful experiences of western European policies that intervene in the economy by regulating wage and employment practices or that directly provide funds to poor women and their households. Improving the labor market prospects of Latinas and African American women is imperative for reducing poverty in the United States.

As an increasing number of Latino and Latina and African American families are raised by single mothers, these women need the resources that will allow them to sustain their households. In addition, enforcing policies such as antidiscrimination legislation aimed at eliminating disadvantage based on race, ethnicity, and gender throughout social institutions will reduce inequities along the entire class spectrum. The chapters in this volume provide new and vital information that will facilitate policy making and planning in the public arena and within local communities. They suggest that while Latinas and African American women have gained ground in some corners of the labor market, they have lost ground in others.

Amidst these changes, racial and ethnic inequality is strongly embedded within the processes distinguishing women's life chances. Many white women are advancing in the labor market at a rapid pace, creating greater

inequality between themselves and Latinas and African American women. What is needed are theories that more adequately explain the position of Latinas and African American women in the U.S. labor market. The contributions to this volume should aid scholars in articulating how race, ethnicity, and gender intersect in social institutions to create or restrict economic opportunities for Latinas and African American women.

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

Although the main focus of this book concerns the dynamics of race and gender as they are played-out in the labor market, it should be noted that there are debates over how the discourse about these processes can itself be a source of inequality. The concepts of “race,” “ethnicity,” and “gender” are contested and politically-charged. Debates over whether or not to capitalize the word “black” are especially relevant to this volume. The editorial guidelines used by the Russell Sage Foundation and many other major publishers specifies that as an adjective or a noun, “black” should appear in lower-case letters. Some scholars disagree, arguing that “Black” designates a social group that has claimed its own identity. Rejecting the appellations that white people have historically created and imposed, many African Americans have chosen the moniker of “Black” when referring to a racial-ethnic group. The authors in this volume hold a range of views on this issue. In accordance with Russell Sage Foundation policy to maintain consistency throughout the book, “black” appears in lower-case in all of the chapters.

I extend my gratitude to the Russell Sage Foundation, which afforded me the time and resources to conduct the preliminary work for this chapter during my residence as a Visiting Scholar at the Foundation. The Foundation also awarded me a grant to hold a conference in preparation for this volume. I would like to thank Paula England and Mary Corcoran for their assistance with all phases of the project, and Barbara Reskin, Joya Misra, Jerry Jacobs, and an anonymous reviewer for their comments on the manuscript.

NOTES

1. Native American women are also among those with the highest adult poverty rates.
2. Some excellent comparative analyses do exist, but they use data from the 1980s and before. For instance, see Amott and Matthaei (1991) and Tienda, Ortíz, and Smith (1987).
3. Yearly data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) show that wages among African American women dropped between 1979 and 1985 and that African

American women still earned lower wages in 1986 than they did in 1976. Earnings among white women and Latinas rose steadily after the recession at the beginning of the 1980s (England and Browne 1992).

4. Yearly data from the CPS show that wages among white and African American men actually fell slightly during the first half of the 1980s and then rose slowly in the latter part of the decade (England and Browne 1992).
5. According to Yinger (1985), an "ethnic group" is "a segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves and/or others, to have a common origin, share important segments of a common culture, and . . . participate in common activities in which the common origin and culture are significant ingredients" (cited in Bean and Tienda 1987, 8B9).

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