

CHAPTER 16

Sex, Race, and Ethnic Inequality in United States Workplaces

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The last third of twentieth century witnessed revolutionary reductions in sex and race inequality in the workplace. At the beginning of the 1960s, employers legally could refuse to hire people, assign them to jobs, and set their pay on the basis of their sex and race. The first signs of change were already present: married women had begun to catch up with their single sisters in their participation in the labor force, and African-Americans with their migration North were also pursuing different kinds of work from when they were in the South, especially women who were abandoning domestic work as other opportunities opened to them. But it took the Civil Rights Movement of the early 1960s, the Women's Liberation Movement of the late 1960s, and a series of federal and state laws to challenge the race and sex discrimination that were customary in the United States.

As we will see in this chapter, sex, race, and ethnic inequality persist in the kinds of paid work that people do, their advancement opportunities, and their earnings. We shall also see, however, indications of the erosion of these forms of inequality since 1970. We focus on two forms of employment inequality: the differential distribution of workers across occupations and jobs based on their sex, race, and ethnicity, and pay disparities associated with these characteristics. In a departure from most research, we consider three important bases of inequality: sex, race, and ethnicity. Although workers' sex, race, and ethnicity jointly affect their work experiences, few quantitative studies have simultaneously considered both sex and race, and only a handful of studies have examined the

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joint effects of sex, race, and ethnicity (see Reskin & Charles, 1997).¹ Within the constraints of the available research, we discuss the extent and causes of sex, race, and ethnic inequality in the workplace.

1. JOB SEGREGATION BY SEX, RACE, AND ETHNICITY

Workers are not distributed across jobs based solely on their qualifications and interests; their sex, race, and ethnicity exert strong effects on the industries and occupations in which they work and thus the jobs they hold.² Job segregation is the linchpin in workplace inequality because the relegation of different groups to different kinds of work both facilitates and legitimates unequal treatment. Segregation facilitates unequal treatment in part because the jobs to which women and people of color are assigned are inherently less desirable than those open to white Anglo men. In addition, jobs that are filled predominantly by women and perhaps by minorities are devalued because society devalues women and minorities. Segregation legitimates unequal treatment because both U.S. values and the law permit unequal pay for different work. For these reasons, segregation generates pay and status disparities between persons of different sexes and races.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Asians, African-Americans, and white women were confined to a limited number of occupations. A straightforward indicator of the degree to which workers are segregated based on some characteristic is the index of segregation (Duncan & Duncan, 1955). The value of this index, which ranges from 0 to 100, indicates the proportion of one of two groups that would have to change to an occupation in which that group is underrepresented for the two groups to be identically distributed across occupations. As Fig. 16-1 shows, between 1900 and 1970, the index of occupational segregation hovered around 70 for women and men (Gross, 1968). In fact, the sexes and races were so segregated that until 1940 the U.S. Census Bureau treated census returns with atypical worker-occupation combinations, such as female train engineer, as errors (Conk, 1981, p. 69).³ Sex and race discrimination gave white men a semimonopoly over most technical, managerial, and professional jobs until the middle 1960s.⁴ Race discrimination confined most blacks to menial agricultural and service jobs, and custom and law closed all but a handful of occupations to women.⁵

After 1940, however, the occupational race segregation index declined among both sexes, from 44 to 24 for men and from 65 to 22 for women. Race segregation began declining at this time because the labor shortage brought on by World War II forced factories to hire blacks. The effect of these new opportunities was revolutionary for black

¹ Space limitations and limitations in available research preclude our considering other factors that influence workplace outcomes, such as social class, sexual orientation, or disability.

² An occupation is a collection of jobs involving similar activities within or across establishments (Bielby & Baron, 1986, p. 764). The 1990 census distinguished 503 detailed occupations. In contrast, a job is a specified position in an establishment in which workers perform particular activities (Bielby & Baron, 1986, p. 764). *The Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (U.S. Department of Labor, 1977) distinguishes more than 20,000 jobs.

³ The Census Bureau instructed its coders in 1930, for example, to "look up any occupations which involve responsibility and high standing in the community, if the person is colored, Chinese, Japanese, or other" (quoted in Conk, 1981, p. 68).

⁴ Exceptions were teaching, nursing, and social work for white women, and professional jobs serving black clientele for blacks.

⁵ Among the occupations that some state laws closed to women were bartending and street car conductor.

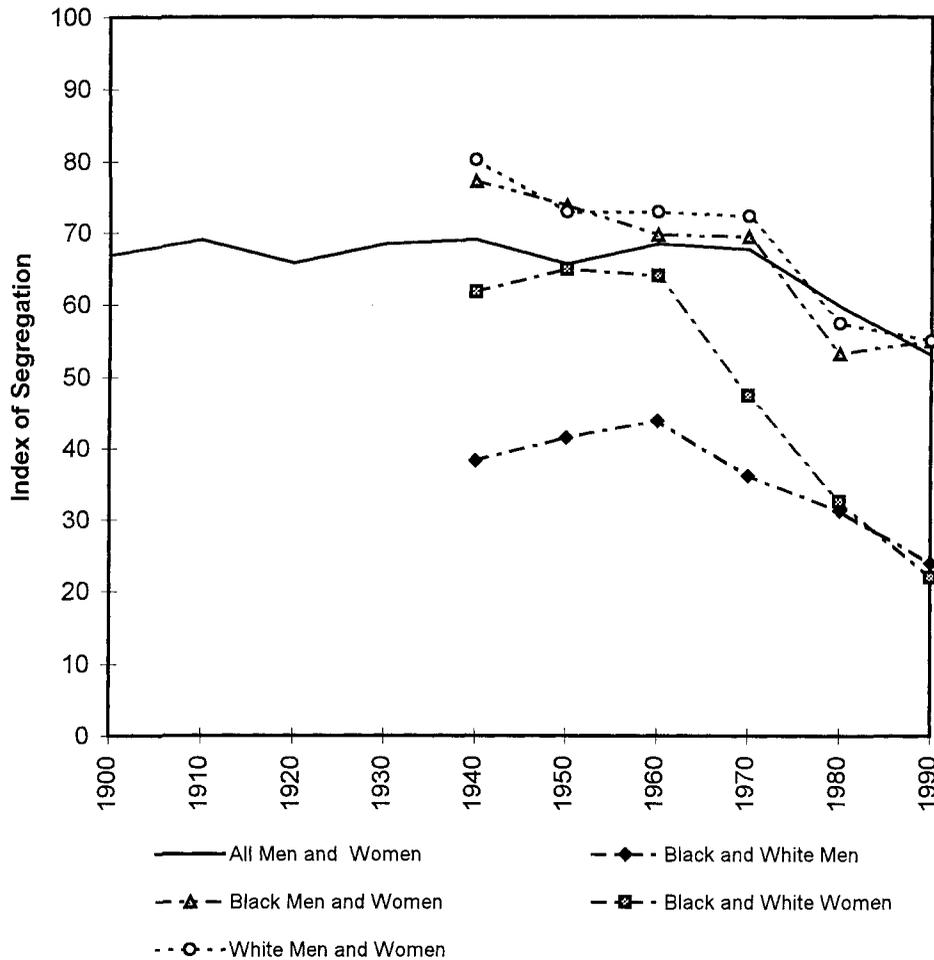


FIGURE 16-1. Indices of occupational sex and race segregation, 1900 to 1990. (Sources: Data from Gross, 1968, Table 2; Jacobs, 1989a, Table 2; Jacobsen, 1997; King, 1992, Chart 1; Reskin & Cassierer, 1996).

women who formerly had few options apart from working in white people’s homes.⁶ In the 1970s, sex segregation also began declining. About one quarter of the drop in the segregation index was due to the shrinking proportion of the labor force working in occupations that were heavily sex segregated, such as heavy manufacturing, and the increasing proportion in occupations that were moderately integrated; the other three quarters resulted as women began integrating customarily male occupations, such as manager (Spain & Bianchi, 1996, Table 4.6). As a result, between 1970 and 1990 the index of occupational sex segregation fell from 67 to 53 (50.5 for blacks, 53.6 for whites, and 52.7 for Hispanics; Jacobs, 1989a; Reskin, 1994; additional computations from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992a). In 1990, to fully sex-integrate occupations would have required that 53% of all female workers—more than 32 million persons—shift to mostly male occupa-

⁶ Despite the existence of better opportunities, some southern white women were able to hold on to their black cleaning women through the passage of local Work or Fight ordinances (Rollins, 1995, p. 163).

tions. Eliminating segregation among whites would have required that 25% of Asians (29% of men and 21% of women), 26.5% of African-Americans (28% of men and 25% of women), and 27% of Hispanics (29% of men and 24% of women) change occupations (Reskin, 1994; additional computations from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992a). To eliminate both sex and race segregation across occupations in 1990 would have required 60% of black women, 58% of Hispanic women, 53% of white women, and 30% of black and Hispanic men to shift to occupations in which white men predominated. Asians tend to be less segregated from same-sex whites than are blacks (Reskin, 1994).

Interpreting segregation indices as the proportion of members of a sex/race group that would have to change occupations is a convenient way of summarizing the extent of occupational segregation, but in reality such shifts would take generations under the best of conditions. In 1990, for example, almost 14 million black and white women—about one fifth of these women—held administrative-support occupations (in other words, they did clerical work) compared to 8% of black men and 5% of white men, while almost 19% of white men and 14% of black men held skilled blue-collar jobs, compared to 2% of both white and black women (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1997, Table 10). To bring women's representation in administrative-support and skilled blue-collar occupations in line with that of white men would have meant the transfer of more than 10 million female clerical workers to skilled blue-collar occupations.

Regardless of their race, most women work in predominantly female occupations. Of the 57 million women in the labor force in 1990, one third worked in just 10 of the 503 detailed occupations (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1996a),⁷ and only one woman in nine pursued an occupation that was at least 75% male (Kraut & Luna, 1992, p. 3). Men likewise remain concentrated in predominately male occupations: one quarter of the 69 million men in the labor force worked in just 10 occupations in 1990. Only two occupations appeared on both sex's top 10 list: "manager or administrator, not elsewhere classified" and "sales supervisor or proprietor" (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1996a), and these two heterogeneous categories conceal substantial job-level sex segregation. The large number of women working as managers, administrators, sales supervisors, and proprietors are disproportionately white. Neither manager or administrator (not elsewhere classified), nor sales supervisor or proprietor was among the five largest occupations for black women or Latinas (or Latinas) in 1995 (see Table 16-1). Except for black female nurses, none of the occupations that employed large numbers of Hispanic or black women or men were professional or managerial.⁸ Black women were overrepresented in just a few professional occupations—dietitian, educational or vocational counselor, and social worker in 1995 (computed from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1996a). Hispanic men and women were underrepresented in all professions (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996b, Table 637). Most of the top five occupations for black and Hispanic women and men involved cleaning or personal service (maid, private household servant, janitor, cook, gardener, nursing aide); a few involved unskilled labor (farm worker, laborer; see Table 16-1).

Ethnicity also affects workers' occupational outcomes. For example, Filipina, Ameri-

⁷ The most common lines of work for women in 1990 are all but identical to those that employed the most women in 1940. The only recent addition to women's top 10 occupations is the census category "miscellaneous salaried managers."

⁸ African-American female professionals were concentrated in two customarily female professions—nursing and elementary school teaching (computed from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1995), Asian-American women were concentrated in only one profession—accounting.

TABLE 16-1. Top Occupations for Black, Hispanic, and White Women and Men, 1995

| White Women | | | White Men | | |
|-------------------------------|--------|-------|-------------------------------|--------|-------|
| | Number | % | | Number | % |
| Secretary | 2942 | 6.1 | Manager, n.e.c.* | 4503 | 7.7 |
| Manager, n.e.c.* | 1741 | 3.6 | Sales, supervisor, proprietor | 2483 | 4.3 |
| Cashier | 1709 | 3.5 | Truck driver | 2301 | 4.0 |
| Registered nurse | 1600 | 3.3 | Engineer | 1593 | 2.7 |
| Sales, supervisor, proprietor | 1566 | 3.2 | Vehicle mechanic | 1516 | 2.6 |
| Total labor force | 48344 | 100.0 | Total labor force | 58146 | 100.0 |

| Black Women | | | Black Men | | |
|-----------------------|--------|-------|------------------------------|--------|-------|
| | Number | % | | Number | % |
| Nursing aide, orderly | 482 | 7.0 | Truck driver | 352 | 5.5 |
| Cashier | 349 | 5.1 | Janitor | 267 | 4.2 |
| Cook | 166 | 2.4 | Manager, n.e.c.* | 198 | 3.1 |
| Maid | 151 | 2.2 | Cook | 187 | 2.9 |
| Registered nurse | 150 | 2.2 | Laborer, except construction | 159 | 2.5 |
| Total labor force | 6857 | 100.0 | Total labor force | 6422 | 100.0 |

| Hispanic Women | | | Hispanic Men | | |
|---------------------------|--------|-------|-------------------|--------|-------|
| | Number | % | | Number | % |
| Secretary | 210 | 4.8 | Truck driver | 285 | 4.2 |
| Cashier | 205 | 4.7 | Farm worker | 279 | 4.1 |
| Private household servant | 130 | 3.0 | Janitor | 267 | 4.0 |
| Janitor | 128 | 2.9 | Cook | 263 | 3.9 |
| Nursing aid, orderly | 126 | 2.9 | Gardener | 196 | 2.9 |
| Total labor force | 4403 | 100.0 | Total labor force | 6725 | 100.0 |

Note: Blacks and whites include people of Hispanic origin.

*The abbreviation "n.e.c." refers to occupations that are not elsewhere classified.

Source: Unpublished tabulations of 1995 Current Population Survey data by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (1997).

can Indian, and Puerto Rican women resembled black women in that nursing aide was among their top three occupations in 1995. Among the top three occupations for Central American, Chinese, Cuban, Korean, and Southeast Asian women was textile operative. The top three occupations for Mexican and Central American women and for Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Southeast Asian men included janitor (the second largest occupation for black men). Cook was among the top three occupations for Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Southeast Asian, and Central American men, as it was for black women (computed from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1996a).⁹ All recent data on race and sex workplace segregation are for occupations—a category that combines jobs involving similar activities in the same and in different establishments (Bielby & Baron, 1986, p. 764). Thus, most nominally sex or racially integrated occupations include predominantly female and male specialties (Bielby & Baron, 1984). For example, although the occupation of real estate sales has become sex integrated, women are concentrated in residential sales, while men dominate the more lucrative commercial sales (Reskin & Roos, 1990). Occupational specialties may be differentiated as well by workers' race and ethnicity. For example, black workers tend to hold jobs in which they are more intensely supervised than are white workers in the same occupation (Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993, p. 148). Often members of different race/sex groups perform the same occupation in different establish-

⁹ It was the fourth largest occupation for black and Hispanic men.

ments or even different parts of the country (Reskin, 1997c). Although declining occupational sex and race segregation signals some job-level integration, the extent of job segregation far exceeds measured levels of occupational segregation (Peterson & Morgan, 1995). In general, women and people of color—regardless of their sex—are underrepresented in desirable and lucrative jobs and disproportionately concentrated in low-status, low-paying service jobs.

1.1. Hierarchical Segregation

Because the desirability of the jobs in which group members are concentrated is positively correlated with the social status of the race/sex group, job segregation is often expressed hierarchically, with women and people of color concentrated in the lower ranks within occupations and organizations and white men dominating the top positions. Hierarchical segregation—by which we mean the segregation of workers across different ranks in the same job (e.g., assistant manager versus manager)—consigns members of favored groups to jobs that are higher in occupational or organizational hierarchies and hence confer more status, authority, and pay. Thus, hierarchical segregation further exacerbates the earnings and authority gaps (McGuire & Reskin, 1993; Reskin & Ross, 1992).¹⁰ Hierarchical segregation—as expressed in the differential distribution of the races and sexes across vertical levels within organizations or occupations—includes both “glass ceilings” that exclude minorities and women from the top jobs in organizations and “sticky floors” that confine women and minorities—especially women of color—to low-ranking jobs (Berheide, 1992). A mere handful of minorities and women have reached the top of corporate hierarchies. In 1990, only five of the 1000 CEOs listed in the *Business Week* 1000 were nonwhite, and only 2.6% of senior managers in nine Fortune 500 companies that the U.S. Department of Labor studied were not white (Bell & Nkomo, 1994). In 1995, only 57 (2.4%) of the 2430 top officers in Fortune 500 companies were women (Catalyst, 1996). Other work settings show variations on this theme. In 1990, one in 11 partners in large law firms was female, compared to one in three associates (Epstein, 1993). Although corporate sales offer a fast track to management, only one in seven saleswomen get beyond the level of district manager (Catalyst, 1996). While women held half of all federal government jobs in 1992, only one quarter of supervisors and only 10% of senior executives were women, and fewer than 2% of senior executives were minority women (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1992, p. 33). Even in traditionally female occupations such as librarian or social worker, men advance more rapidly than women (Williams, 1995).

Minorities' and women's representation in managerial jobs offers a summary indicator of hierarchical segregation. Women and people of color remain underrepresented in management compared to white men, although the disparities have been shrinking since 1970. In 1990, almost 13.1% of non-Hispanic white workers held managerial jobs (14.1% of men, 11.8% of women), compared to 12.3 percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders (13.4% of men, 11.1% of women), 7.9% of Native American groups (7.2% of men, 8.7%

¹⁰ Even women in high-level positions seldom have as much authority as men at the same level (Reskin & Ross, 1992). For example, McGuire and Reskin (1993) found that if black and female workers had received the same authority returns to their experience and other credentials as white men, the authority gap with white men would have shrunk by 62% for white women, 71% for black women, and 93% for black men.

of women), 7.3% of African-American workers (6.6% of men, 7.4% of women), and 6.5% of Hispanics (6.2% of men, 7.0% of women; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992b, Table 2). Although the representation of African Americans has been increasing, as Fig. 16-2 shows, African-American men's progress stalled during the 1980s, and by 1990 African-American women were more likely to work in managerial occupations than African-American men.

While the trends depicted in Fig. 16-2 show marked progress, we must remember that women and minorities tend to be low- rather than high-level managers. It is white male managers who usually have the final say in important decisions such as hiring, firing, promotions, raises, and issues that affect other units. A study comparing the sexes' roles in decision-making found that female managers' input was more often to provide information or make recommendations while male managers more often made final decisions (Reskin & Ross, 1992). Indeed, other evidence indicates that women and minorities are ghettoized into less desirable managerial jobs that white men eschew (Collins, 1989, p. 329; Reskin & McBrier, 1998). In addition, these and other findings suggest that some of women's and minorities' gains in managerial occupations represent "job-title inflation"—managerial titles without managerial authority—in response to increased federal scrutiny (Smith & Welch, 1984).

The patterns by sex and race in Fig. 16.2 depart from the tendency for the effect of sex to exceed that of race that holds for occupational segregation and therefore for earnings. This departure probably reflects employers' practice of selecting managers of the same or a more highly esteemed sex and race than the workers who will be their subordinates.

Group differences in promotion rates also indicate hierarchical segregation. In the early 1990s, whites were twice as likely as blacks to have been promoted and men were almost twice as likely as women to have been promoted, after taking into account education, training, experience, and type of firm (Baldi & McBrier, 1997; see also Kalleberg & Reskin, 1995). In eight New York law firms, male associates were three times as likely as female associates to be promoted to partner (American Bar Association, 1996). In 1995, minority women were less likely to be promoted than white women with equivalent experience, although minority men in the federal government were promoted at the same rate as white men (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1996).

1.2. Explaining Sex and Race Segregation

Workers' sex and race are linked to the kinds of jobs they do because of employers' and workers' characteristics, preferences, and actions. However, some explanations for the relationship between workers' ascriptive characteristics and their jobs differ for race and sex. Explanations for segregation in general, and hierarchical segregation in particular, emphasize workers' characteristics and preferences—"supply-side" explanations—by assuming a two-step process: (1) people decide the kind of work they want to do, and (2) they obtain the necessary credentials. These explanations treat getting a job in one's preferred line of work as nonproblematic. Supply-side explanations for sex segregation tend to stress the first step in this process—work preferences, whereas supply-side explanations for race segregation emphasize the second step—obtaining qualifications. We review supply-side explanations first for sex segregation and then for race segregation. We then review explanations that emphasize employers' characteristics, preferences, and actions.

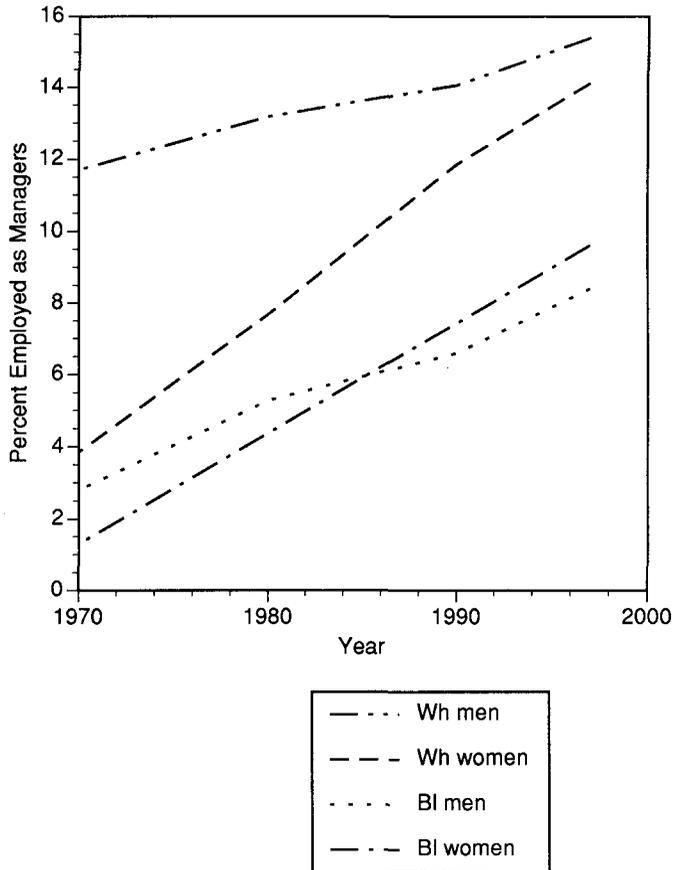


FIGURE 16-2. Percent in managerial employment, by sex and race, 1970 to 1997. (Sources: Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1972, Table 2; 1982; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1998.)

1.2.1. WORKERS' CHARACTERISTICS AND PREFERENCES. The sexes are concentrated in different kinds of work, according to supply-side approaches, because women and men prefer different kinds of jobs. Social scientists have proposed two reasons the sexes' preferences differ. According to a socialization perspective, men and women pursue different kinds of jobs because gender-role socialization induces in them different life goals; instills in them different values regarding the importance of occupational success, autonomy, or high earnings; teaches them different skills; fosters different personality traits; and induces a distaste for sex-atypical activities and for working with members of the other sex (Marini & Brinton, 1984; see Chafetz, Chapter 1, *this volume*). To the extent that gender-role socialization has these effects, the kinds of jobs that attract men should disinterest women and vice versa.

Although gender-role socialization may incline young people toward jobs that society labels as appropriate for their sex (Subich, Barrett, Doverspike, & Alexander, 1989), young people's occupational aspirations are both quite unstable and unrelated to the occupations they hold as adults (Jacobs, 1989b). Moreover, adults—especially women—move between predominantly female and predominantly male occupations (Jacobs, 1989b).

Despite gender-role socialization—and readers must bear in mind that no systematic data compare the socialization of contemporary women and men—the sexes tend to value the same job rewards: good pay, autonomy, and prestige (Jencks, Perman, & Rainwater, 1988; Marini, Fan, Finley, & Beutel, 1996). With respect to vertical segregation, women are as likely as men to value promotions (Markham, Harlan, & Hackett, 1987, p. 227). These and other findings suggest that early gender-role socialization is not an important cause of job segregation. Far more influential are the opportunities, social pressures, and social rewards workers face as adults (Reskin & Hartmann, 1986).

The neoclassical economic perspective, another supply-side approach, assumes that occupational preferences are sex differentiated as a result of women's and men's conscious decisions to maximize household well-being. Hypothetically, in response to their different roles in the sexual division of labor, men and women pursue different employment strategies. Men's role as primary breadwinner induces them to maximize their earnings by pursuing jobs that pay well and reward experience and by maximizing the amount of time they spend doing paid work. Women's primary responsibility for homemaking and child-rearing and their recognition that their husbands will earn enough to adequately support the family hypothetically lead women to select jobs that are compatible with domestic duties, both in scheduling and ease of reentry after time out of the labor force (see, e.g., Polachek, 1981). If women can rely on economic support by their husbands, they can eschew lucrative jobs that require overtime, continuous labor force participation, and the exertion of considerable effort, thereby reducing conflict between paid and family work. In anticipation of their differential involvement in labor-market and family work, this approach also assumes that men invest in more education and training than women, making them more qualified for jobs that require skills.

Most research evidence is inconsistent with the neoclassical explanation of sex segregation. First, researchers have found that single women are as likely as married women to work in predominantly female occupations (Reskin & Hartmann, 1986, p.71–72). In any event, women who plan to leave the labor force to have children earn more in customarily male than female jobs. Second, predominantly male and female occupations require similar levels of education and skills (England, Chassie, & McCormack, 1982), and most workers acquire their skills on the job. Contrary to the neoclassical theory, women are more likely than men to obtain training before employment (Amirault, 1992). Thus, there is little evidence that men's and women's concentration in different jobs results from their responses to their anticipated or actual family roles. The human-capital account of occupational sex segregation is problematic on other counts as well. If women place family responsibilities ahead of their careers, they should evidence less job commitment than men; yet women's commitment does not differ from men's (Marsden, Kalleberg, & Cook, 1993). Women also expend as much energy on their jobs as men do (in fact, net of family responsibilities, women expend more effort on the job than men; Bielby & Bielby, 1988). Both sexes aspire to advance at work and will work hard for a promotion (Markham et al., 1987; Reskin & Cassirer, 1996). Compared to 74% of male federal employees, 78% of women (and 86% of minority women) were willing to devote as much time as necessary to advance in their career (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1992).¹¹ Finally, the characteristics of predominantly female jobs are not especially compatible with stereotypical female domestic roles: jobs in predominantly female occupations are no more flexible, easier, or cleaner than those in predominantly male occupations (Glass, 1990, p.

¹¹ The publication did not report the proportion of minority men who were willing to work hard for a promotion.

791; Jacobs & Steinberg, 1990). Two types of evidence are consistent with the neoclassical explanation of sex segregation. First, women are more likely than men to work part-time (in 1990, 22.4% of women and 7.6% of men worked part-time; computed from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992a), and part-time employment is associated with higher levels of occupational sex segregation. Second, sex differences in college majors are consistent with the neoclassical explanation (Jacobs, 1995). For example, women earned 47% of the bachelor's degrees in business administration in 1992, but only 34% of the master's degrees. Also, the greater workers' education, the less segregated the sexes are. In 1990, the index of sex segregation was considerably lower for college graduates than for high school graduates: 16.5 points lower for blacks and 18.5 points lower for whites (computed from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992a; see also Jacobsen, 1997, p. 235). Nonetheless, we must be careful not to overstate the effect of education on sex segregation. Even among college graduates, the sex segregation index is 38 for blacks and 44 for whites.

The occupational preferences of men and women might differ for a reason unrelated to their domestic roles: people pursue jobs that they believe are available to them (Reskin & Hartmann, 1986; Schultz, 1991, p. 141). Prospective workers do not apply for jobs unless they have reason to expect that they might be hired. Just as the sex-segregated help-wanted ads, common before the enactment of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, steered workers into sex-typical lines of work, the sex and race composition of jobs signal would-be employees whether they have a reasonable chance of being hired and being accepted by co-workers. Minorities and women who are pioneers in occupations typically reserved for white men often encounter resistance—heckling, sabotage, and worse—by supervisors, co-workers, or customers (Bergmann & Darity, 1981, Padavic, 1991a; Schroedel, 1985; Swerdlow, 1989; U.S. Department of Labor, 1996), contributing to the “revolving door” that returns women to sex-typical occupations (Jacobs, 1989b). When employers make customarily male jobs genuinely accessible to women and mostly white occupations accessible to minorities, the attractiveness of these jobs draws plenty of women and minorities (Reskin & Hartmann, 1986; Reskin & Roos, 1990).

The neoclassical approach to race segregation emphasizes workers' qualifications rather than their preferences. Blacks and Latinos/as have less education and job experience than whites (England, Christopher, & Reid, 1997; Kilbourne, England, & Beron, 1994a, Table 1). Increasing parity in educational quality and quantity appear to have contributed to the occupational integration of black and white women between 1940 and 1990 (King, 1992). For example, in 1990 the segregation index for black and white women was 10 points lower for college graduates than for high school graduates (King, 1992; additional computations from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992a). However, men's educational attainment had little effect on the extent of race segregation—the index of race segregation for male high school graduates was 28.2; for college graduates it was 25.4 (computed from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992a). Also, 1990 census data indicate that race and ethnic differences in educational attainment—as well as nativity and English fluency—played only minor roles in occupational segregation by race and ethnicity (Reskin, 1997a).

In sum, the neoclassical approach is consistent with white males' concentration in customarily male occupations and their underrepresentation in predominantly female occupations: white men—whose options are not limited by discrimination—pursue the most desirable jobs and eschew predominantly female jobs because they pay less and offer fewer opportunities for advancement. However, the value of neoclassical approach for explaining women's and minorities' concentration in some occupations and

underrepresentation in others is limited and largely inconsistent with our understanding of how workers get jobs.¹²

1.2.2. EMPLOYERS' PREFERENCES AND PRACTICES. A major reason women and minorities are concentrated in different jobs than white men is because employers prefer persons of different sexes and races for different jobs. They do so because of their stereotypes and biases and out of deference to their customers' or employees' biases. Employers also segregate workers as a result of superficially neutral employment practices.

One reason employers consider sex and race in filling jobs is out of loyalty to their own group—usually white men. Although little research has focused explicitly on the segregative effects of in-group preference, several studies suggest its importance for the degree of segregation in organizations. First, the sex and race of decision-makers affect their responses to members of their own group and other groups. For example, having a female agency head was associated with progress toward sex integration in California state agencies (Baron, Mittman, & Newman, 1991). In addition, a review of more than 70 studies found that evaluators rated same-race persons higher than other-race persons (Kraiger & Ford, 1985). Second, the nepotism characteristic of small firms and some industries such as construction is, of course, for one's own group (Waldinger & Bailey, 1991), and its effect is segregative. Third, a shortage of white male workers is a major reason firms employ female and minority workers in customarily white-male occupations (Padavic & Reskin, 1990; Reskin & Roos, 1990). Fourth, by restricting cronyism—that is, in-group favoritism—formalized personnel practices appear to have reduced job segregation (Dobbin, Sutton, Meyer, & Scott, 1993).

According to several recent studies, race and sex stereotyping and bias contribute to sex segregation. For example, comparisons of the job-search outcomes of white-minority pairs in "audit" studies in four cities revealed that white men were substantially more likely to receive job offers than their minority matches (Fix & Struyk, 1992).¹³ Qualitative studies in several cities reveal the reasons for the patterns from the audit studies. Employers, most of whom are white men, frankly admit their reluctance to hire black workers based on their stereotypes of blacks as lazy, unintelligent, insubordinate, and prone to criminal acts (Bobo, 1996; Holzer, 1996; Kasinitz & Rosenberg, 1996; Moss & Tilly, 1996; Neckerman & Kirschenman, 1991; Smith, 1990; Wilson, 1996, Chapter 5). The refusal of some employers to hire minorities or their willingness to hire them for only menial jobs inevitably segregates the races. Stereotypes also restrict women's employment opportunities. Stereotyped as unable to do physically demanding jobs, lacking career commitment, and disinterested in advancement (Bielby & Baron, 1986; Fiske, Bersoff, Bogida, Deaux, & Heilman, 1991; Reskin & Padavic, 1988; Segura, 1992, p. 173; Williams & Best, 1986), women are excluded from rewarding white-collar and blue-collar jobs.

Sex and race stereotypes affect hiring and promotion decisions through statistical discrimination, a process in which employers impute to individuals stereotyped or actual attributes of the group to which the individual belongs to avoid the cost of screening applicants' qualifications (Bielby & Baron, 1986; Braddock & McPartland, 1987; Holzer,

¹² Few job seekers have their choice of jobs; most receive only one or two offers and accept the first offer that meets their minimum acceptable pay (Gera & Hasan, 1982; Kahn, 1978).

¹³ An audit of sex discrimination found that more expensive restaurants favored males as server, whereas cheaper ones favored women (Newmark, Bank, & Van Nort, 1995).

1996, pp. 83, 103; Messick & Mackie, 1989; Williams & Best, 1986). Employers' and supervisors' stereotypes also bias their evaluations of women and minorities, thus reducing their chances for promotion (Baron & Bielby, 1985, p. 243; Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992, p. 14; Fiske et al., 1991, p. 1050). Evaluation bias leads supervisors to evaluate whites and men more positively than equally qualified blacks and women (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1993; Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990, Table 1; Pulakos, White, Oppler, & Borman, 1989; Sackett, Dubois, & Noe, 1991, p. 265;), in part because they hold the latter groups to higher standards (Cox & Nkomo, 1986).¹⁴ Hiring and promotion practices that rely on informal networks are highly subjective, and the more subjective the evaluation, the greater the risk of bias (Braddock & McPartland, 1987, p. 22; Deaux, 1984; Deaux, 1985; Eagly & Wood, 1982; Pettigrew & Martin 1987, pp. 55–58). Queuing models provide a theoretical approach to the effect of employers' race and sex preferences for workers—as expressed in their ordering of the labor queue (Lieberson, 1980, p. 296; Reskin & Roos, 1990; Thurow, 1969, p. 48). According to a queuing approach to occupational segregation, the higher workers stand in labor queues, the greater their access to jobs near the top of job queues. As low-ranked groups, women and minorities obtain access to jobs usually filled with white men when those jobs become less attractive to white men compared to their alternatives. This approach makes sense of the different distributions of the sexes and races across different industries and occupations. For example, white men are overrepresented in the private sector, the highest-paying sector, leaving public-sector and government jobs for women and minorities (historically the only place outside the black community where African-Americans could find work as managers and professionals; Higginbotham, 1987; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1996).

Regardless of their source—in-group preference, out-group antipathy, stereotypes, or biases—race and sex discrimination significantly restrict workers' options. The large number of formal complaints to antidiscrimination agencies, in combination with employers' candid reports of their stereotypes, suggest that discrimination is widespread: The federal government received more than 91,000 such complaints in 1994 (Leonard, 1994, p. 24; U.S. Department of Labor, 1996).¹⁵ When enforced, antidiscrimination laws, such as Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (which banned employment discrimination based on race, national origin, or sex) and affirmative action requirements for federal contractors, opened thousands of semiskilled and skilled blue- and white-collar jobs to black men and women (Burstein, 1979, 1985; Donohue & Heckman, 1991; Heckman & Payner, 1989; for a review, see Badgett & Hartmann, 1995). Federal scrutiny helps to reduce sex and race segregation. The requirement by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC; the agency charged with enforcing Title VII) that firms with at least 50 employees annually report employees' distribution across broad occupational categories by race and sex has been an incentive for employers to place more women and minorities in managerial and administrative jobs. Thus, in 1960, 2% of black women, 4% of black men, and 5.5% of white women worked in the broad occupation of managers; by 1996, 9.6% of black women, 8.3% of black men, and 14% of white women were managers (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1961, 1997, Table 10).

Recent history shows that when the government enforces antidiscrimination and

¹⁴ Employers in the suburbs, who hire mostly white workers, have lower standards than those in the central city, who draw more heavily on minorities (Holzer, 1996).

¹⁵ Approximately 3% charged "reverse discrimination" (Bendick, 1996; Blumrosen, 1995).

affirmative-action regulations, minorities' and women's representation in sex- and race-atypical occupations increases (Ashenfelter & Heckman, 1976; Leonard, 1984a, b). More generally, sanctioning discriminating employers reduces job segregation (Badgett & Hartmann, 1995; Martin, 1991; Leonard, 1994, p. 21; Reskin & Roos, 1990). The uneven enforcement of the affirmative action required of federal contractors by Presidential Executive Order 11246 (11374) provided a natural experiment. During the 1980s, when there was no presidential mandate to enforce the executive order, minorities were more poorly represented at federal contractors than at noncontractors (Leonard, 1994), suggesting that federal contractors had reverted to the discriminatory practices that had prompted President Nixon to issue the executive order in the first place. Without the threat of governmental intervention, most employers do business as usual, which means making hiring and promotion decisions that are influenced by sex and race biases (Kern, 1996; Leonard, 1994).

1.2.3. STRUCTURAL DISCRIMINATION. Employers' personnel practices—even those that seem to be race and gender neutral—nonetheless affect race and sex segregation in firms. The clearest example is filling jobs through referrals by current workers. This common recruiting practice perpetuates segregation because workers' social networks tend to be sex and race segregated (Marsden, 1994, p. 983). In contrast, open-recruitment techniques, such as posting all job openings, can reduce segregation by allowing everyone to learn of sex- and race-atypical jobs.

Requiring credentials that are more common among white men than women and minorities also contributes to segregation. Sometimes segregation itself prevents women and minorities from acquiring qualifications. For example, the military's past exclusion of women from combat positions has blocked their advancement in military careers (Williams, 1989, p. 51). Analogously, blacks' exclusion from apprenticeship programs has kept them out of well-paying unionized craft jobs. Required credentials also can disproportionately affect women and minorities because employers more frequently exempt white men than others from formal requirements (Baron & Bielby, 1985, p. 243).

Pervasive sex segregation has prompted employers to organize work schedules and the labor process on the assumption that men will do some jobs and women will do others. The result can be barriers to women performing some customarily male jobs. For example, most machinery is designed to accommodate white, Anglo men. As a result, people who are shorter than the average white, Anglo man—including many women and some Latino and Asian men—cannot operate it safely or efficiently. Some companies design plant jobs so that workers rotate across different shifts—day, evening, and graveyard—which can discourage women from these jobs by making childcare arrangements difficult (Padavic, 1991b).

Segregated entry-level jobs maintain hierarchical segregation by disproportionately concentrating women and minorities in jobs with limited opportunity for mobility because they are on short ladders, restrict workers' opportunity to acquire skills, and lack visibility (Marsden, 1994, p. 983).¹⁶ Firms tend to employ female and minority managers in staff positions, such as personnel or public relations, while male managers are concen-

¹⁶ Many employers adhere to what Bermann (1986, pp. 114–116) called an “informal segregation code” that prohibits women from supervising men and reserves the training slots leading to higher-level jobs for men. Men rule over women and junior men, women rule over women, but women rarely if ever rule over men. This code applies to minorities as well: minorities may give orders to other minorities, but not to whites.

trated in organizationally central line positions, such as sales, finance, and production, from which senior managers are selected. Employers often assign African-Americans to positions that deal with other minorities, such as community relations or affirmative action, regardless of their areas of expertise (Collins, 1989, p. 329, 1997). While staff positions provide few opportunities for workers to display their abilities, complex and challenging line jobs give incumbents a chance to develop and display their skills, such as exercising authority, supervising subordinates, or dealing with difficult situations (Bell & Nkomo, 1994, p. 39; Tomaskovic-Devey, 1994). Thus the segregation of minorities and women into nonchallenging jobs reduces their chances of being promoted by restricting their chances to acquire or demonstrate skills (Erdreich, Slavet, & Amador, 1996, p. xiii).

Minorities' and women's relegation to dead-end or short-ladder jobs is critical for hierarchical segregation (Bell & Nkomo, 1994, pp. 32, 39; Collins, 1989, 1997). To improve advancement opportunities for clerical and service workers, some companies have created "bridge" positions that help workers to switch job ladders—for example, move from a clerical job ladder to a production or administrative one—without risk or penalty (Kanter, 1976; Northrup & Larson, 1979; Roos & Reskin, 1984). Seniority systems can also affect the amount of hierarchical segregation in an organization (Kelley, 1984). For instance, USX (formerly U.S. Steel) helped to integrate customarily male production jobs by altering its seniority rules to allow workers to transfer to plant jobs without losing their seniority (Reskin & Hartmann, 1986, p. 93; Ullman & Deaux, 1981). Other case studies also demonstrate that organizations can eliminate structural barriers that exclude women and minorities from jobs (Badgett, 1995; Deaux & Ullman, 1983; DiTomaso, 1993; Northrup & Larson, 1979).

The segregation of women and men into different kinds of establishments also contributes to hierarchical segregation. The sheer size of large organizations lets them create more opportunities to promote workers, and they are more likely to have job ladders (Kalleberg, Marsden, Knoke, & Spaeth, 1996). Therefore, women's concentration in small, entrepreneurial firms and nonprofit organizations and men's concentration in large corporations and for-profit companies reduce women's odds of promotion relative to men (Kalleberg & Reskin, 1995). Some industries are better than others in promoting women. In female-intensive industries such as apparel, banking, retail trade, and insurance, women are more likely to be high-level managers (Shaeffer & Lynton, 1979). For instance, in 1990 women were only 2.2% of the officers in the chemicals industry, but 10% of the officers in the apparel industry. Although only five percent of the directors in the electronics industry were women in the late 1980s, almost 17% of the directors in the cosmetics and soap industries were (Von Glinow, 1988). Why do women have greater access to high-level jobs in female-dominated industries? Jobs in female-intensive industries pay less and are thus less desirable to men. Furthermore, firms' experience with female workers makes them less likely to stereotype women.

In sum, workplace segregation is largely due to employers' use of workers' sex, race, and ethnicity in assigning workers to jobs because of stereotypes and outright bias. Pressure from regulatory agencies, internal constituencies, and the public has prompted some employers to reduce stereotyping and bias by replacing informal personnel practices, such as word-of-mouth hiring, with formal ones, such as advertising and posting all openings, reassessing the qualifications jobs require, and using objective criteria for hiring and promotion (Roos & Reskin 1984; Szafran, 1982).

2. SEX, RACE, AND EARNINGS

White men outearn men of color and women from all racial and ethnic groups. In 1995, for example, Hispanic women employed full-time year round earned just 53% of what white men earned, Hispanic men earned 61%, black women earned 63%, white women earned 72%, and black men earned 74%. These disparities translate into a \$14,994 pay gap with white men for the average Hispanic woman and a \$7,744 gap for the average black man (Institute for Women’s Policy Research [IWPR], 1996, Table 3). In general, the disparities between the earnings of white men and those of other groups have closed since 1970, as Fig. 16-3 shows. Black women show the most progress relative to white men. However, some reversals of some slopes from positive to negative indicate that gains are not necessarily permanent. Closest to earnings parity with white men were

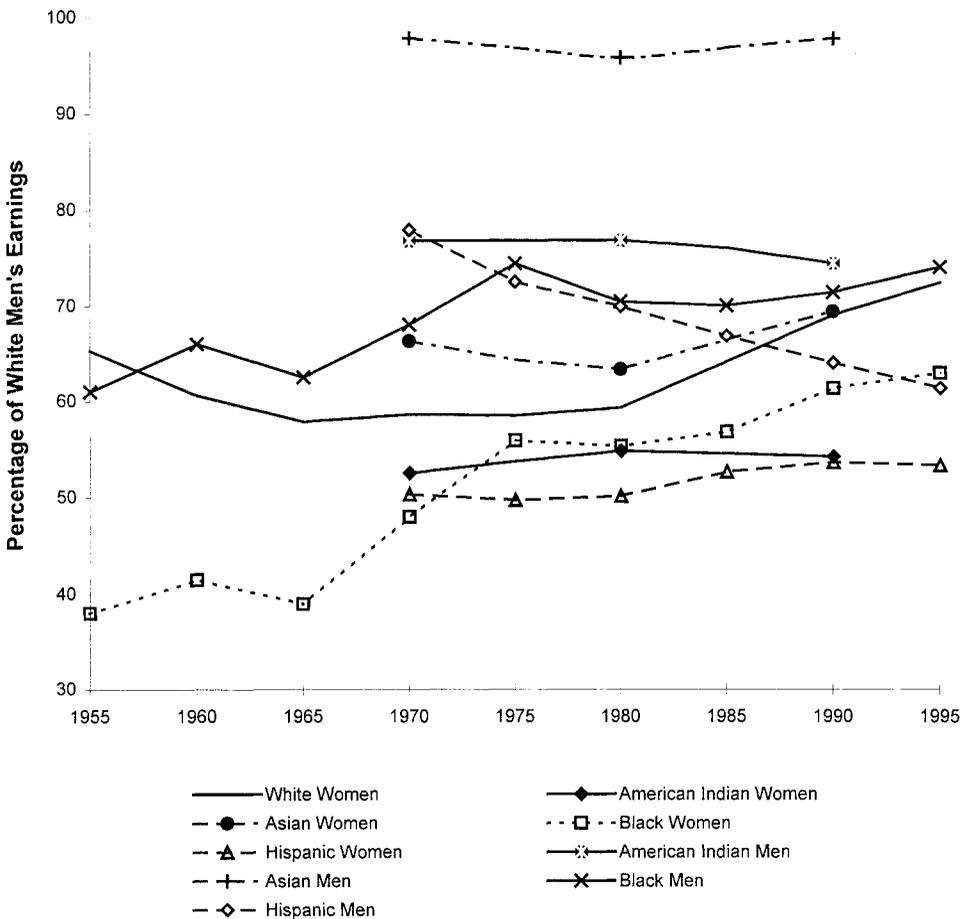


FIGURE 16-3. Median earnings of Asian, American Indian, black, and Hispanic men and women and white women as a percentage of white men’s earnings for full-time, year-round employed workers, 1955 to 1995. (Sources: Data from Farley, 1984, Fig. 3.2; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1981, Table 6; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983, Tables 37 and 39; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988, Tables 27 and 29; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991, Table 24; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995, Table 7; data for American Indians, Asians, and 1970 data for Hispanics from Harrison & Bennett, 1995, Table 4A.1.)

Asian men employed full-time year round; their median earnings were almost 98% of white men's in 1970 and 1990 (computed from Harrison & Bennett, 1995, Table 4A.1). No other group achieved even three quarters of white men's 1990 earnings.

The trends in racial differences in earnings summarized above are disconcerting. Although the black-white earnings gap shrank between 1965 and 1975, black men's earnings relative to white men deteriorated between 1975 and the late 1980s (Bound & Freeman, 1992), and by 1995 black men still had not regained their 1975 earnings relative to whites (see Fig. 16-3). Figure 16-3 also displays the substantial shortfall of female and male Hispanics' earnings relative to white men. The pay difference between Hispanic and white men widened by 15 percentage points between 1970 and 1995. Young black women's position relative to white women has been deteriorating since the early 1970s, especially among college graduates (Bound & Dresser, 1997, Fig. 1). Although Hispanic women narrowed the gap with white men between 1975 and 1990, they have not continued to do so at the same rate. American Indian women, who earned a little more than half of what men made in 1990, have closed their earnings gap with white men by less than one percentage point per decade since 1970, and American Indian men, who earned three quarters of what white men made in 1990, were relatively worse off in 1990 than in 1970.

Sex differences dominate earnings inequality. In every racial group, men outearn women. The pay gap between women and men who worked full-time, year round did not start to close until 1975 when women earned 58.8% of what men made, the largest disparity since 1920. Although the gap in the median earnings of men and women who worked full-time year round narrowed by more than 11 percentage points between 1975 and 1995, in 1995 men who worked full-time year round still earned \$1.40 for every dollar a woman earned (computed from IWPR, 1996, Table 1). Within broad race categories, the sex difference in annual earnings is greatest for whites (\$9261) and Asians (\$8740; computation based on median income from Table 4A.1 in Harrison & Bennett, 1995), reflecting white and Asian men's high median earnings, and smallest for Hispanics (\$3201) and blacks (\$3763), reflecting the low average earnings of Hispanic and black men (computed from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996a). American Indian women's shortfall relative to same-ethnicity men was intermediate: \$5400 (computation based on median income from Table 4A.1 in Harrison & Bennett, 1995).

2.1. Explaining Sex and Race Differences in Earnings

Explanations for sex and race disparities in earnings emphasize group differences in workers' education, experience, and jobs, as well as the earnings payoff for these factors. They include differences in (1) group characteristics that hypothetically affect workers' productivity; (2) group rewards for productivity-enhancing characteristics; (3) group distributions across occupations, industries, firms, and jobs; and (4) group payoffs for the same kind of work. A fifth explanation attributes part of the sex gap to sex differences in orientations toward monetary versus nonmonetary rewards. In the following sections we review the evidence for each of these explanations.

2.1.1. PRODUCTIVITY DIFFERENCES. To the extent that employers reward productivity, differences by race and sex in productivity will give rise to pay differences across groups. The difficulty of measuring productivity has led researchers to use as proxies for produc-

tivity the amount of time and effort workers spend at work and characteristics that hypothetically increase workers' productivity, such as education and experience.

In general, men are employed more hours per year than women, because they work more hours per week and more weeks per year.¹⁷ Even among workers employed full-time year round, men averaged 3 hours more per week than women in the same broad racial group (computed from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992a). Whites tend to work more hours per week than people of color, although this does not hold for Asian compared to white women and is a reversal from the past for African-American compared to white women (Farley, 1984, Table A.2).¹⁸ Whites work more weeks per year than same-sex Asians, Hispanics, or African-Americans (computed from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992a).¹⁹ Although the proportion of women employed full-time year round has been increasing since 1970 (Spain & Bianchi, 1996, Table 84) and has helped to reduce the pay gap between the sexes, men's greater average number of hours of paid work per week explains a little of the sex gap in pay: the sexes' earnings ratio tends to be 2 to 4 percentage points closer to equity for hourly earnings than weekly earnings (Bianchi, 1995, p. 129; IWPR, 1996, Table 1; Mishel & Bernstein, 1994, p. 125). As Fig. 16-4 shows, in 1995 the sex gap among full-time workers was smallest for hourly pay, slightly larger for weekly earnings, and slightly larger for annual earnings. The pattern in Fig. 16-4 for all workers varies by race. Although the sex gap in median earnings in 1995 was 12.6% larger for annual earnings than weekly earnings, the difference in weekly and annual earnings explained just 2.4% of the gap between Hispanic women and white men and 9% of the gap between white women and men. Black women's, black men's, and Hispanic men's gaps in weekly pay compared to white men are larger than their annual earnings gaps because white men average more hours (IWPR, 1996, Table 3; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1996b, Table 37).

Differences in the extent of employment across groups are not solely a consequence of workers' preferences. Although some people deliberately limit their paid work in response to other demands on their time, such as education and family, others cannot obtain as many hours of paid work as they want or need (Carnoy, 1994, p. 82). In 1995, for example, one in five part-timers (17.5% of women and 27.7% of men) could not find a full-time job (computed from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1996a). Thus, variation in the earnings gaps explained by group differences in extent of employment may not reflect group differences in preference for paid work time.

¹⁷ In 1990, all employed men averaged 6 hours more per week than all women (42.3 compared to 36.3 hours), and they worked, on average, 2 more week per year (46.4 compared to 44.5), according to unpublished analyses of the 1990 census data (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992a). The sex differences in hours was smallest among African-Americans (2.8 hours per week) and largest among whites (6.6 hours). Hispanic and Asian men averaged 3.5 to 4 more hours per week than did same-race women. In terms of weeks per year, black men worked only .4 more weeks than black women, Hispanic and Asian men worked about 1.5 weeks more than same-race women, and white men averaged 2.1 more weeks than white women.

¹⁸ According to unpublished analyses of the 1990 census data (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992a), white men employed in 1990 worked an average of 42.7 hours per week, compared to 41.6 hours for Asian men, 41.3 hours for Hispanic men, 39.9 hours for black men, 37.9 hours for Asian women, 37.1 hours for black women, 37.0 hours for Hispanic women, and 36.1 hours for white women.

¹⁹ Employed white men averaged 46.9 weeks per year, compared to 45.7 for Asian men, 44.8 for white women, 44.2 for Asian women, 44.1 for Hispanic men, 43.9 for black men, 43.5 for black women, and 42.5 for Hispanic women.

²⁰ The hourly pay of minority women—except for American Indians—slightly exceeded that of white women in 1989, when education region, occupation, and industry were controlled (Harrison & Bennett, 1995, Table 4.5).

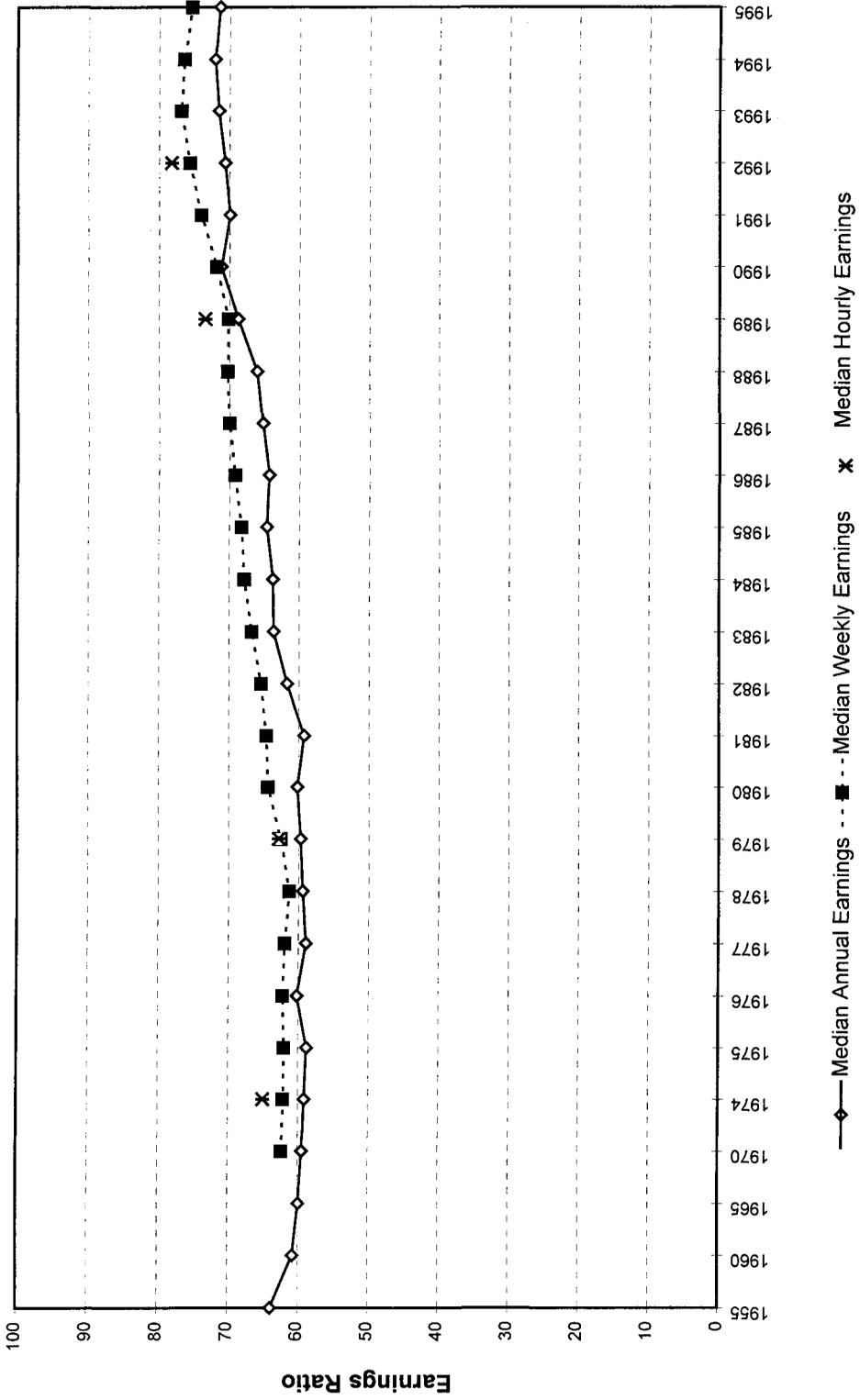


FIGURE 16-4. Women's median annual, weekly, and hourly earnings as a percentage of men's earnings, 1955 to 1995. (Sources: Data from Institute for Women's Policy Research, 1996, Table 1; Mishel & Bernstein, 1994, Table 3.9.)
Note: Annual and weekly data are for full-time workers.

Although group differences in effort could give rise to unequal pay, there is no evidence that differences in work effort explain white men's higher pay. In fact, the few studies that compared the sexes suggest that women work at least as hard as do men (Bielby & Bielby, 1988; Major, McFarlin, & Gagnon, 1984); we found no similar studies by race.

Neoclassical economists assume that workers' education, training, and experience affect—and are thus proxies for—their productivity. If so, then sex and race differences in education or experience could explain part of the earnings gaps. Overall, women workers have one month less schooling than men, although the difference varies by race, with whites averaging the same number of years of schooling (13.3), Asian men averaging about a half a year more than Asian women (14.0 compared to 13.4), and African-American and Hispanic women averaging slightly more years schooling than their male counterparts (black women average 12.7 years, black men 12.2, Hispanic women 11.3, and Hispanic men 10.5). On average, men are less likely than women to have completed high school and more likely than women to have postgraduate education (Bianchi, 1995). The sexes and races also tend to major in different subjects, but over the past 20 years, college majors have become more similar across sex and race categories (Jacobs, 1995), and women have been catching up with men in the likelihood of postgraduate education. According to O'Neill and Polachek (1993, p. 221), 17% of the declining sex gap in pay between 1976 and 1989 resulted from the convergence in women's and men's years of schooling. However, by 1990, educational differences played a minor role at most in the earnings gap between young-to-middle-aged women and men (England, Reid, & Kilbourne, 1996; England et al., 1997, Table 7).

Race differences in education contribute to racial disparities in earnings, because blacks and Hispanics average less schooling than whites (Mare, 1995, p.158).²¹ During the 1980s, whites pulled further ahead of blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians in college graduation (Harrison & Bennett, 1995, Fig. 4.5). This difference—a consequence of past discrimination and an indicator of ongoing residential and economic disadvantages of people of color—may contribute to whites' higher earnings, either by making whites more productive or because employers require degree completion for well-paying jobs. One way to assess the importance of race and sex differences in education on the earnings gap is to compare how much minorities' earnings would increase if they averaged the same amount of education as white men. (Equalizing education with white men would not reduce the gap between white women and men because white females workers had as many years of education as white males in 1989.) Having white men's years of schooling would have raised black females' 1989 earnings by 7 percentage points, black males' by 9 points, Latinas' by 13 points, and Latinos' by 19 points (Carnoy, 1994, Table 4.6). Among workers who were 28 to 35 years old in 1993, schooling differences explained about one sixth of the race gap between black and white men, one eighth to one fifth of the gap between black and white women, three eighths to two thirds of the gap between white men and Latinos, and four fifths to 100% of the gap between white women and Latinas (England et al., 1997, Table 3).

Because college graduation strongly affects earnings, the growing black-white disparity in college completion works against reducing race differences in earnings. Discrimination in apprenticeship programs further inhibits minorities' representation in high-

²¹ In 1990, blacks averaged 12.5 years of education and Hispanics averaged 10.8 years, compared to 13.3 years for whites and 13.7 years for Asians (unpublished analysis, U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992a).

paying jobs (Waldinger & Bailey, 1991). Minorities also tend to be underrepresented in occupations that allow them to acquire skills on the job. For example, people of color in contingent work are disproportionately concentrated in occupations that involve tasks that are less complex than those in which white men work; such jobs are less likely to provide the opportunity to acquire job skills that could lead to regular jobs (Reskin, 1997b).

Men average more job experience than women, although the difference has been declining. This convergence has contributed to the narrowing of the sex gap in pay (Mishel & Bernstein, 1994, p. 119; O'Neill & Polachek, 1993). The declining sex difference in work experience produces a positive association between workers' age and the size of the pay gap. In 1995, for example, the median weekly earnings of 25- to 29-year-old women employed full time was 80% of what same-age men earned, while 40- to 44-year-old women earned just 62% of male age peers' wages (IWPR, 1996, Table 6; see also O'Neill & Polachek, 1993, Table 2).²² Among mature workers surveyed between 1966 and 1988, experience accounted for one fourth to one third of the sex gap in earnings among African-Americans and one third to one half of the sex gap for whites (Kilbourne et al., 1994a). In contrast, among workers who were ages 14 to 22 in 1979, sex differences in experience explained just 1% of the gap among whites and 9% among blacks (England et al., 1996; see also England et al., 1997, Table 4 for race-specific results).

Race differences in experience—although small (Farley, 1984, Table A2)—contribute to the earnings gap among men. Among mature workers, race differences in experience explained two fifths of the gap between black and white men (England et al., 1996, Table 1). In the past, black women had more job experience, on average, than white women, but young white women are now more experienced than young black women (England et al., 1996, Table 1). Black women's declining years of experience relative to white women contributed to the increasing earnings gap with white women during the 1980s (Blau & Beller, 1992). Experience differences explain 6% to 30% of the pay gap between young Latinas and white women, and 13% to 17% of the gap between young Latinos and white men (England et al., 1997, Table 7). Experience explains between 7% and 20% of the pay gap between black and white women and men (Anderson & Shapiro 1996, p. 277; England et al., 1997, Table 7; Kilbourne et al., 1994a).

In sum, race and sex groups have become more similar in their education and experience (with the exception of black men's falling rates of college participation in the early 1990s), and these changes have contributed to shrinking earnings disparities between groups. Importantly, the extent to which these differences affect workers' productivity depends in part on employers' decisions regarding the organization of work and the use of technology, as well as race and sex segregation in job assignments. The disappearance of educational and experience differences across groups cannot produce earnings equality unless employers assign workers to jobs without regard to their race and sex and compensate workers at the same rate for their education and experience. In the following section, we assess the importance of the last factor for race- and sex-based earnings disparities.

2.1.2. UNEQUAL RATES OF RETURN TO EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE. Pay disparities between groups stem partly from employers rewarding workers from different race-sex groups unequally for the same credentials. Schooling, for example, has a smaller payoff for women than men and for nonwhites than whites (Farley, 1984, p. 68). In 1995, white

²² The low pay that young workers of both sexes command necessarily restricts the size of the pay gap among younger workers. The larger gap among older workers also reflects the positive association between the extent of sex segregation and workers' age and men's greater returns to experience (reported below).

female college graduates who worked full-time year round earned \$500 less, on average, than white male high school graduates who worked full-time year round, and white male college graduates outearned white women with postgraduate degrees by almost \$12,000 (computed from IWPR, 1996, Table 4). Black and Hispanic women with high school and college diplomas earned 70% to 75% of what same-race men with the same education earned, and Hispanic and black women with postgraduate degrees earned around 85% of what similar men earned (IWPR, 1996, Table 4).

Blacks have been falling behind whites in returns to education—especially for college graduates—offsetting their increasing parity in schooling. The earnings of young blacks have been lagging behind whites with the same amount of education (Carnoy, 1994, pp. 121, 123). For example, in 1985, young black male college graduates earned 89% of the earnings of white male college graduates, but by 1991 the ratio had fallen to 76%. Young black female college graduates slightly outearned white female graduates in 1976, but earned 13% less in 1991. During this period, Latinos/as also lost ground relative to Anglos with equal years of schooling, although the amount varies across Hispanic groups (Carnoy & Rothstein, 1996; Corcoran, Heflin, & Reyes, 1997).

Young Asians with at least some college were the only racial group who enjoyed higher returns to education than comparably educated, same-sex whites (Mare, 1995). At the other extreme are American Indian women, who were furthest from parity, followed by African-American and Hispanic women. American Indian college graduates who were 16 to 34 years old, for example, earned 86% of the earnings similar white women, black women earned 92%, Hispanic women earned 99%, and Asian American women earned 105% (see Carnoy, 1994, Table 6.2). Among men, blacks received the lowest rewards for their education relative to whites, followed by American Indians, and then Hispanics (Mare, 1995, p. 207; see also Harrison & Bennett, 1995, pp. 174–176). In 1995, men of color earned two thirds to three quarters of what white men with the same degrees earned, while women of color earned between 90% and 100% of what white women earned (computed from IWPR, 1996, Table 4). White male high school graduates without any additional schooling were particularly overrewarded for their schooling compared to minority men (Harrison & Bennett, 1995, pp. 174–175). The same patterns hold after controlling for experience and region: in 1973 blacks at all educational levels earned 10.3% less than whites with the same education, experience, and region, compared to 16% less in 1989 (Mishel & Bernstein, 1994, Table 3.9). These trends mean that additional education will not be sufficient for minorities to catch up with whites in earnings (Harrison & Bennett, 1995, p. 175).

Group differences in payoff for hours worked and years of work experience also contribute to the pay disparities that we have been examining. Net of other factors that affect earnings, men received higher returns to both hours and weeks worked in 1990 than did women (Harrison & Bennett, 1995, Table 4.5), and a year's experience was worth considerably more to men than women (Farley, 1984, Table A.3). Men's greater returns to experience mean that the sex-linked pay disparity increases as workers age. Workers' payoff for experience also differs by race. Although this difference shrank during the 1960s and 1970s—contributing to the declining earnings gap between blacks and whites—in 1980 whites still received about twice the payoff to experience that blacks did (Farley, 1984, pp. 68, 78, Table A.3), and this difference held for young to middle-aged workers (England et al., 1996, Table 2).

These race and sex differences in how employers reward workers' education and experience almost certainly result partly from discrimination. Of course, unequal rewards

for the same levels of schooling or experience may reflect unmeasured differences in the quality of education or experience, but sex differences in the returns to experience probably derive largely from job segregation. Whether discrimination stems from segregated jobs that do not provide incumbents with equally valuable experience or from employers' failure to reward education and experience equally for persons regardless of their race or sex, actions by employers perpetuate earnings disparities.

2.1.3. JOB SEGREGATION BY SEX AND RACE. The sex and race composition of jobs is associated with incumbents' average pay for two reasons. First, segregation disproportionately relegates women and minorities to the kinds of jobs that employers compensate poorly. Second, employers devalue workers' achievements in jobs filled primarily by women and minorities. Although each of these mechanisms reduces the pay of women and minorities relative to white men, each affects the earnings of white men as well.

Employers' allocation of workers into higher- and lower-paying jobs based on their sex or race guarantees unequal pay across sex/race groups (England, 1992; Hirsch & Schumacher, 1992; Sorensen, 1989).²³ For example, if a retail store employs minority women as janitors, minority men as stock clerks, white women as cashiers, and white men as managers, white men will outearn the other three groups and minority women will earn the least. The relationship between the proportion of women in an occupation and its earnings particularly disadvantages women for two reasons. First, women are more likely than men to work in heavily female occupations, and second, the penalty for holding a mostly female job is stronger for women—especially women of color—than for men (England et al., 1996, Table 3; Kilbourne et al., 1994a). If young women had been distributed across more and less female occupations in the same way as young men in the 1980s, the disparity in the sexes' starting pay on a job would have been at least one fifth smaller among both blacks and whites (England et al., 1996, p. 519).

Comparing the median weekly earnings of female and male workers employed full time all year in the same occupations illustrates the more negative effect of a female-dominated job on women than men. For example, in the mid-1990s, the median weekly pay of female sewing-machine operators was about 86% of men's earnings of \$280, and female cashiers averaged 87% of men's \$265 (computed from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 1995, 1996b, 1997, Table 39). The larger penalty of working in a female occupation for women than men can have two sources: (1) employers pay men more than women who do identical tasks, and (2) employers segregate men and women in the same occupation into different jobs. The first alternative is illegal under the 1963 Equal Pay Act. In the second instance, although taking into account sex and race in assigning jobs is illegal under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, it is legal under the Equal Pay Act, and high levels of segregation are common. The more workers earn, the larger the sex pay gap tends to be. According to a 1993 survey of corporate executives, women at the vice presidential level and higher earned 70% of what their male counterparts earned (Brooks, 1993). Women who sold securities and financial services, for example, earned 55% of men's \$951, and female financial managers averaged two thirds of men's earnings of \$937 (computed from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1995, 1996b, 1997, Table 39).

Women's concentration in low-paying service jobs has insulated them from the big pay cuts that some men experienced as the United States lost well-paying manufacturing

²³ Although neoclassical economists and sociologists disagree regarding the causes of occupational sex segregation, they agree that it is an important mechanism in the pay gap between the sexes.

jobs. Almost three fourths of the decline in the wage gap between the sexes between 1979 and 1993 resulted from the decline in men's wages stemming from the loss of traditionally male blue-collar jobs and from falling pay in surviving male blue-collar jobs (Mishel & Bernstein, 1994, pp. 124–125). In response, many men entered service work that was overwhelmingly female. Therefore, although women's likelihood of employment in a job with poverty-level wages is 10 percentage points higher than men's, their likelihood of holding such a job has been declining since 1973, while men's likelihood has been growing since 1979 (Mishel & Bernstein, 1994, p. 127).

Racial segregation increases racial differences in earnings: the more black workers in a job, the lower the pay for black and white women and men. Given the size of estimated effects, working in all-black jobs would lower the pay of white women by 15%, that of black women by 24%, that of black men by 39%, and that of white men by 52% (Hirsch & Schumacher, 1992). Moreover, the narrowing of the earnings gap between black and white women between 1940 and 1980 was due largely to declining race segregation by occupation and industry (Cunningham & Zalokar, 1992, p. 548). Minority workers' concentration in unskilled labor and service occupations and in low-paying specialties within more skilled occupations lowers their pay. For example, more than half of black, American Indian, and Hispanic male college-educated professionals worked as elementary or secondary teachers, social or religious workers, writers, artists, or entertainers—all low-paying professions (Harrison & Bennett, 1995, p. 181). Blacks'—and presumably Hispanics'—concentration in low-paying, nonunionized industries and in occupations and cities with low wage growth has exacerbated the black–white wage disparity (Mishel & Bernstein, 1994, pp. 188–189). The loss of manufacturing jobs that reduced men's average earnings in the late 1980s and early 1990s also adversely affected women of color, who were disproportionately concentrated in these industries (Bound & Dresser, 1997; Mishel & Bernstein, 1994, pp. 124–125).

2.1.4. THE DEVALUATION OF FEMALE- AND MINORITY-DOMINATED JOBS. Given the societal devaluation of women and minorities, employers may devalue and hence underpay jobs that are performed primarily by women or minorities. Sociologists have argued that predominantly female jobs are underpaid relative to the skills and responsibilities they involve because the devaluation of women leads to the undervaluation of stereotypically female work (Acker, 1989, 1990; England, 1992; Reskin, 1988). Although the same logic holds for people of color, their small numbers may prevent occupations from being labeled minority and hence devalued. In sum, although all workers in a devalued job earn less than their job warrants as reflected in its qualifications and duties, the predominance of women or minority men in devalued jobs means that the effect of any devaluation will fall disproportionately on women and minorities and hence contribute to earnings disparities. This tendency to underpay jobs solely because of their sex or race composition has been termed “comparable-worth discrimination.”

Comparable-worth discrimination is apparent when an occupation's sex composition affects incumbents' pay, net of measures of workers' education, experience, and job complexity (England, 1992; England et al., 1996; Kilbourne et al., 1994a; Kilbourne, England, Farkas, Beron, & Weir, 1994b; Treiman & Hartmann, 1981). For example, among middle-aged workers, performing nurturing tasks customarily sex-typed as female—such as nursing or childcare—is associated with pay losses for all workers, but especially women (Kilbourne et al., 1994b). In other segments of the population, occupations' sex composition explains up to 30% of the pay gap between the sexes (England,

1992, p. 181; Sorensen, 1989). Among workers in their late 20s and early 30s in 1993, sex composition explained between 10% and 42 percent of the sex difference in hourly wages among whites, 45% to 73% among blacks, and 3% to 21% among Latinas/os (England et al., 1997, Table 6).²⁴ Whether the race composition of occupations or jobs contributes to the racial gap in earnings because predominantly minority jobs are devalued has not been established, because the few studies of the earnings effect of race composition have not controlled for occupational skills. Controlled studies have found no effect of minority composition on earnings, net of job characteristics (England, 1992), presumably because minorities make up too small a proportion of the labor force to comprise a majority in any occupation. (Even in occupations in which minorities are concentrated, such as nursing aide, janitor, or cook, the majority of workers are white.) According to appellate and Supreme Court decisions, the 1963 Equal Pay Act does not prohibit employers from paying workers in predominantly female jobs less than workers in equally demanding but different jobs dominated by men. For instance, the U.S. Court of Appeals allowed the city of Denver to pay nurses, 97% of whom were female, less than tree trimmers and sign painters, male-dominated jobs (*Lemons v. City and County of Denver*, 1978). These rulings have led to pressure for laws that require employers to provide equal pay to workers in different jobs that involve similar amounts of skill, effort, and responsibility. Such laws could reduce the pay gap between the sexes by one third (IWPR, 1993, p. 1). Indeed, a Minnesota pay-equity law for state workers reduced a 28-point pay gap to 18% in 4 years (IWPR, 1993). However, bureaucratic inertia and political resistance have set limits on the effectiveness of pay equity as a widespread solution to the pay gap (Bridges & Nelson, 1989; Steinberg, 1987).

2.1.5. COMPENSATING DIFFERENTIALS. Some neoclassical economists suggest that the pay gap between the sexes may stem partly from different job values held by male and female workers. They argue that men seek jobs that will maximize their earnings, even when they involve physically difficult, dirty, or dangerous work; women, in contrast, trade off pay for job characteristics that facilitate combining work and family or for desirable working conditions. There is almost no support for this explanation of the pay gap, however (but see Filer, 1989). Researchers have found that female occupations pay less, net of working conditions (England et al., 1996; Glass & Camarigg, 1992), and that undesirable working conditions are associated with lower, not higher wages (Jacobs & Steinberg, 1990).

3. CONCLUSIONS

Workplace inequality by sex, race, and ethnicity is linked to inequality in all social institutions because people's jobs distribute so many social and economic rewards. Jobs are mechanisms that govern workers' access to earnings, authority, status, and mobility opportunities as well as their exposure to pleasant or unpleasant working conditions. Job segregation is a key mechanism in workplace inequality. Although few data exist on the extent of job segregation, occupations—which aggregate similar jobs—are substantially segregated by workers' sex and somewhat less so by their race and ethnicity. A variety of

²⁴ The racial disparities in earnings in this sample did not stem from comparable-worth discrimination (England et al., 1997, Table 5).

factors affect the extent of segregation. Workers' education and experience play a limited role in sex segregation and a slightly larger one in race/ethnic segregation. Although workers' preferences matter, most workers "choose" between options that are constrained by employers' preferences and employment practices. Indeed, employers' personnel practices shape workers' preferences (Schultz, 1991, p. 141), as do antidiscrimination and affirmative action regulations that open sex- and race-atypical jobs to minorities and women.

The importance of segregation is seen in its effect on earnings disparities between sex, race, and ethnic groups. The concentration of men and women of different races in different occupations, industries, and jobs is the foremost cause of the earnings gap between the sexes and races. Race segregation contributes to the earnings gap between whites and minorities by disproportionately relegating people of color to lower-paying jobs that prevent incumbents from acquiring and using skills that employers compensate. Sex segregation contributes to the pay gap between the sexes both by concentrating women in jobs that do not reward or enhance their productive capacity and because of the devaluation of predominantly female jobs. Anything that fosters job integration helps to reduce the pay gap between the sexes and races. Thus, the enforcement of antidiscrimination and affirmative action regulations has induced employers to integrate jobs, thereby making a dent in the pay gaps between sex/race groups. Eliminating all of the barriers to women's and minorities' employment in the full range of jobs would go far toward reducing the pay gap. However, job segregation by sex is still the rule, and race segregation—while less extensive—is prevalent. Job segregation means that equalizing human capital will not remedy the earnings disparities across race/sex groups. Pay-equity laws that cover public employees in some states have had a modest effect in reducing the sex gap in earnings.

Sex and race differences in productivity play a minor role in the pay disparities across race/sex groups. Although white men outperform other groups on one or another measure of productivity, the differences are small and have minor effects on earnings differences. However, women and minority men receive lower payoffs than white men for some of the factors that researchers treat as proxies for productivity, and these differences contribute to earnings disparities.

Discrimination is an important source of the earnings disparities between race-sex groups (Anderson & Shapiro, 1996, p. 286; Cunningham & Zalokar, 1992, p. 554; Farley, 1984, p. 68; Gill, 1994; Mishel & Bernstein, 1994, p. 189). First, some group differences in indicators of productivity, such as job experience, result from earlier discrimination by employers, and their contribution to earnings disparities between groups must be chalked up to discrimination. Discrimination also occurs when women and minorities are compensated at a lower rate than white men for the same inputs.²⁵ Sex and race segregated job assignments also contribute to pay discrimination by denying female and minority workers access to well-paying jobs or jobs in which they can acquire skills that will enhance their future earnings. These discriminatory effects are seen in the association between occupations' sex and race composition and incumbents' pay. When the sex composition of a job is associated with incumbents' pay, net of job demands, discrimination results from the devaluation of female-dominated tasks. Legal prohibitions against most of these forms of discrimination have contributed to the declining rate of wage inequality, but the

²⁵ To the extent that different returns to productivity reflect unmeasured differences in productivity, treating these differences as indicative of discrimination will overestimate the amount of discrimination.

effectiveness of laws depends on good faith efforts by enforcing agencies and the ability of victims to detect their discriminatory treatment (which is impaired by social psychological processes; Clayton & Crosby, 1992, pp. 72–79) and to challenge it.

In the 35 years since the 1963 Equal Pay Act outlawed unequal pay for equal work, women have been catching up with men in earnings at a rate of one third of a percent a year, and the pay gap between the sexes has declined by about 13 cents on the dollar. If this rate of progress continues (and it appears to have slowed in the early 1990s), the sexes would not achieve earnings parity until almost the end of the twenty-first century. Achieving earnings equality more quickly will require women to accumulate work experience more in line with that of men, employers to integrate customarily male jobs, and the spread of pay-equity principles that compensate workers for the worth of their job and not the sex of their co-workers. Racial disparities in earnings also declined in the 1970s and early 1980s. Although minorities are closer to earnings parity with same-sex whites than women are to same-race men, the trend toward declining inequality changed direction in the late 1980s, making it impossible to predict when racial equality in earnings might cease to exist.

Finally, we believe that progress depends in part on the evidence that researchers bring to bear on the extent of inequality in work opportunities and rewards by sex, race, and ethnicity. As we noted at the outset, little research examines the joint effects of race, sex, and ethnicity. Race is typically treated as black/white or minority/white. Available data indicate that the economic situation of groups that are neither white nor black differs from the situations of both blacks and whites. Variation exists, too, among different Asian and different Latin national groups. We encourage researchers to compare the situations of as many groups as their data allow. Such comparisons are essential for identifying the greatest needs for policy intervention and for recommending policies that can reduce workplace inequality.

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