

Inequalities at Work

Race, Gender, and the Labor Market: Inequalities at Work. By Robert L. Kaufman, Boulder, CO, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010, 277 pp., \$62.50.

Sociology has developed a variety of theoretical explanations and empirical studies to understand persistent race and gender inequality in the labor market. Some studies narrowly focus on particular work structures while others only examine a specific measure or conception of inequality.

Robert Kaufman's sweeping *Race, Gender, and the Labor Market: Inequalities at Work*, avoids these narrow foci by examining many factors and interactions associated with occupational segregation and income gaps for Black and White American workers. Kaufman synthesizes theoretical threads into an integrated perspective that accounts for a wide variety of issues that affect segregation and income inequality, such as economic factors and regional distinction. Kaufman's book contributes analysis of race- and gender-typed (RGT) work tasks to the existing literature. RGT work tasks are based on stereotypes and the gender-typing at work found in seminal works like Reskin & Hartmann's *Women's Work, Men's Work* and Reskin & Roos' *Gender Queues, Job Queues*, and are extended here to the intersection of race and gender. These RGT work tasks can constrain Blacks and White women through lower placement on job queues for positions that are not considered to be race- or gender- 'appropriate,' in turn increasing employment segregation and income inequality

in broad expected ways and novel complex ways.

Kaufman begins by building his integrated perspective of race and gender inequality and discussing his methods. He contrasts supply-side explanations of inequality such as Human Capital/Status Attainment, and Worker Preferences with demand-side explanations such as Segmented Market Perspectives, Queuing Theory, and Devaluation. He contributes an integrated perspective that uses queuing theory as a base from which to add human capital differences in credentials, productivity and family status, segmented market theory's stress on job and firm characteristics, devaluation's emphasis on RGT work tasks in global and specific ways, and a *salience of preferences* that refers to employer power to rank and act upon their preferences. He tests his perspective on four groups (White men, Black men, White women, Black women) using the U.S. Census 1990 Public Use Microdata Sample files. I was troubled by the treatment of the measurement of RGT work tasks, a vital contribution in this study. There was little concerning what the size of the indicators mean beyond mention of the standardization of means. This led to likely errors regarding the measures in the Appendix. For instance, occupations heavily dependent on math skills such as Engineers and Mathematical and Computer Scientists do not appear to have any form of gender typing despite the inclusion of math skills as a primary measure of gender-typed tasks.

Kaufman examines segregation across labor market positions and its implications for theories of inequality highlighted earlier. The

results confirm that his integrated perspective represents an improvement over the piecemeal findings of other theories. Kaufman finds that gender segregation is most associated with RGT work tasks, followed by the desirable employment set of indicators measured as sufficient work hours, unemployment rate and self-employment rate, and the interaction of skill and employment growth. With employment growth, less represented groups (women and Blacks) gain greater representation in high-skilled positions while White men gain greater representation in low-skilled positions. Kaufman extends his analyses by looking at interactions between the RGT processes and employment growth, profitability and market power and finds that employment pressures can increase representation of women relative to men. Organizations that have higher visibility and slack resources use them to hire more Blacks and women. Market power and profitability can mute (less gender-typing of clerical aptitude and status in interaction) or heighten (more gender-typing of nurturant skills) inequality.

Kaufman next turns his focus towards stereotypical working conditions and income inequality. The initial models confirm that segregation devalues earnings paid to workers: female representation in an occupation depresses earnings for everyone while Black representation in an occupation depresses earnings for White men. In addition, concentrated market power is associated with comparative earnings increases for Blacks and White women which diminish earnings gaps with White men. Much like the previous chapter, this is not the whole story, as

Kaufman skillfully measures and shows greater complexity beneath the surface. For instance, two RGTs associated with women's work, dexterity and clerical perception, can increase earnings for men across the board, but can increase earnings only for women in male-typed occupational groups. When the analyses are extended to include moderating factors, Kaufman again finds that profitability helps reduce earnings gaps while market power can increase earnings gaps in gender- or race- atypical work settings.

Kaufman varies the segregation and income inequality analyses by region to see how geographical distinctions impact his models. He finds similar gender segregation across regions, but greater race segregation with respect to RGT especially among men in the South. He also finds that skill and growth outside the South open up jobs for only Black men while in the South, these open up jobs for both Black men and White women. Finally, he finds support for greater use of RGT in segregation and earning gaps for Black men especially, and to a lesser degree for Black women in the South.

Kaufman concludes his study by summarizing his findings and

providing theoretical, research, and policy implications from them. He supports his integration perspective by emphasizing how his models, based largely on race-sex queuing, explain inequality across all occupational and industry settings. He suggests that future research should determine if these processes vary over time and examine assumed differences in skills and working conditions by gender and race. His brief implications for policy note that job growth and external pressures, such as proactive enforcement, can help to reduce inequalities in the American workplace.

My central concern is that the book is neither timely nor forward thinking. While theory building and testing do not require up-to-date data and measures, this book provides analyses on data that were 20 years old as of its publication date with limited historical context. Future analyses using currently available resources such as the American Community Survey and O*NET would offer a wider distinction in race, ethnicity, and immigration status reflective of our current and future labor forces as well as occupational, industrial, and RGT measurement reflective of our current labor market. As mentioned in his directions

for future research, Kaufman would likely agree that an examination of his integrated perspective over time, including consideration of emergent industries and cultural trends since 1990, would benefit this line of research.

In sum, Kaufman's work serves as a vital building block for future studies. It is a book that academics and scholars on the topic should read. Scholars particularly need to consider his integrated perspective and the impact of racial and gender stereotyping of tasks on employment segregation and income inequality, and RGT's complex association with market pressures and regional differences. While this book is far too technical and specific for undergraduates or lay audiences, I highly recommend it for professional social scientists and graduate students interested in gaining a better understanding of the complexity of race and gender inequality in the U.S. labor market. □

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Note: The views expressed in this review are those of the author and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.