

such, the book would be very informative to those less familiar with the concerns discussed, but would be less beneficial to persons with a lot of knowledge about the topic.

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**Bette Woody. *Black Women in the Workplace: Impacts of Structural Change in the Economy.* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992) xii, 211 pp., \$45.00.**

Bette Woody's latest book is an incisive attempt to particularize the economic effects of structural changes in American society. As the title suggests, the book explores changes in the work content, job opportunities, and wages of Black women as a result of the trend towards a service economy in America.

Woody makes a significant contribution to the literature by bringing the plight of the Black woman to the forefront of labor theory and practice, especially as she confronts employment discrimination, conservative public policies, and traditional stereotypes. Replete with much standard research on labor economics and sociology, her book employs the methodology of radical political economy (RPE) literature on labor markets, where discussions of market processes are mutually inclusive with institutional arrangements. Such institutional arrangements may enforce the authority of dominant groups with respect to minority groups in a manner that is less efficient or less just. In this context, the author is critical of mainstream labor economics for its emphasis on market efficiency and competition as a basis of wage determination, its concentration on the supply side of the labor market equation, and conservative politics and public policy.

The book is commendable in its recapitulation of other gender specific works on labor theory (Phyllis Wallace, *Black Women in the Labor Force*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982; Margaret C. Simms and Julianne Malveaux, eds., *Slipping Through the Cracks: The Status of Black Women*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1987), but it reflects several shortcomings usually evident in RPE literature and biases inherent in the utilization of action theory to belie seemingly objective treatises. While attacking conventional labor theory, the author, like some RPE theorists, fails to critically address issues of individual preferences and attitudes which, in theory, are assumed to be fixed. Thus, the author seems to suggest fixed Black female preferences for traditional service and manufacturing jobs which are being eroded by technology and mechanization. But, as

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Rebitzer (James B. Rebitzer, "Radical Political Economy and the Economics of Labor Markets" in *Journal of Economic Literature*, XXXI, 1993, 1393-1434) mentions, such an abstraction is not satisfactory if one wishes to introduce the political process into an analysis of the microeconomics of the labor market, which is the general thrust and intended outcome of the book.

Action theory bias is evident in an interview with four women (Chapter seven). The interview seems to be crafted in a manner to fit assumptions adumbrated in earlier chapters. Moreover, this bias is also reflected in the author's attempt to utilize interviews of four women to generalize the major labor market perceptions and problems related to Black women. This shortcoming is not excused by the author's comment that there is no typical Black woman (128).

The author also heavily relies on Current Population Survey (CPS) data from 1982 in evaluating labor market trends affecting the Black woman, but fails to present similar updated data for conjectures with respect to the mid-1980's and the beginning of the 1990's

Although the book is based on seemingly painstaking research, the author sometimes comes across as making unverifiable statements, particularly on critiques of neoclassical theories. For example, she sheds light on "new evidence" that challenges neoclassical theory without citations or an articulation of such evidences (28-29).

Woody has called for increased government action to address the problems of the Black woman in the labor market without clarifying the role of the private sector. Such sentiments have continued to polarize the public policy arguments in terms of liberal and conservative prescriptions. The future of the Black woman in the labor force is dependent upon enforcement of civil rights legislations, a commitment to policies of equal pay and equal employment opportunity, and improvement in school quality and training programs. This can only be accomplished with proactive public sector undertakings that are identified with private sector initiatives, i.e. government incentives to businesses, a factor Woody does not adequately address in the book.

The book, however, is a useful resource material for sociologists, economists, and social scientists interested in gender and racial disparities in the American labor market.

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