Dual Labor Market Theory and the Institutionalization of Farmers' Markets: Marginalized Workers Adapting to In hospitable Conditions in Louisiana

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ABSTRACT

There has been some evidence to suggest that women and people of color have optimized their status in the labor market by institutionalizing their participation in secondary labor market activity. To determine the validity of this claim, the author explores the historical antecedents of dual labor markets, describes the hegemonic patterns evident in industrialized nations that reflect bifurcated labor market patterns, examines the institutionalization of other second-tier industries that have facilitated improvements for marginalized laborers in the past, and suggests that the recent institutionalization of yet another industry, urban farmers' markets, provides compelling evidence that second-tier workers have successfully adapted under prevailing inhospitable and discriminatory labor market conditions. Data compiled from case studies drawn from registration lists and observational field techniques at two farmers' markets located in the State of Louisiana supports the author's second-tier adaptation paradigm.

Key Words: farmers markets, marginalized workers, institutionalization

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BACKGROUND

The distinct impact of industrialization by gender has been well documented (Chafetz, 1984; Dunn, 1988). Industrialization created tremendous changes in the nature of work for both men and women. Before the onset of industrialization, the character of women's work was largely based around the family unit and primarily involved in agrarian production (Adkins, 1996). Pre-industrial production was historically centered around the home in the raising of agricultural products for consumption by the family or for trade in simple, locally-based, primitive market economies. As sweeping changes surrounding the division of labor removed the location of production from the family domestic sphere to the exogenously-located firm, women alone were saddled with domestic responsibilities surrounding the family without the economic self-sufficiency previously available through simple agrarian production activity. Home-based production was replaced with geographically-separated, commerce-based firms outside the family unit, disproportionately affecting women who were incapable of sustaining agrarian household production functions alone. Skilled and unskilled men, conversely, had substantial advantages through opportunities to participate in the newly-industrialized economy, while women continued to be restricted from industrial activity. These sweeping changes consequently enabled men to make substantial status gains, while women became increasingly economically dependent for survival under the prevailing economic conditions. With these distinct arrangements based on gender activity patterns under industrial transformation, male status was elevated as control over economic resources became exclusively the domain of males. These early economic arrangements have not, incidentally, improved substantially for women since the onset of industrialization. Despite expanding labor markets, exploding numbers of vacancies in certain sectors, and rapidly advancing technology; women were systematically restricted from occupational participation until World War II (Tilly and Tilly, 1998), and were instead relegated to the role of consumer of goods rather than producer.

The changed status of women to that of consumer lowered their prestige and power in the marketplace. Since men maintained their status as the major producers and exchangers of goods, female power and prestige were relatively diminished.

Consumption of goods has since remained the primary responsibility of women in industrialized families.

As expected, increased female responsibilities surrounding consumption patterns has not resulted in gains of economic autonomy.
Advances for female employment since World War II have been similarly confined to a few limited, low-status, low-wage, non-managerial, gendered occupations. Thus, work-related institutions such as production firms, labor unions, and professional associations have not been effective for women and largely maintained restrictive mechanisms preventing women’s wider participation in contemporary economic production or advocacy activity.

DUAL LABOR MARKET THEORY

The solidification of distinct patterns of occupational participation by gender has resulted in the emergence of two unique labor markets in contemporary industrialized nations. Vacancies allocated for high-skilled, high-wage, permanent employees optimally utilizing their background and expertise is referred to as the primary labor market. All other temporary, seasonal, contractual, or other type of low-status, low-wage, underutilized marginalized labor is categorized as the secondary labor market. The creation of this two-tiered system is considered to be to the occupational detriment of women and is known as dual labor market theory. In dual labor market theory, the highest prestige jobs are allocated to a permanent group of workers who maximize their earnings potential fully and are otherwise unrestricted by job security, competition based on worker supply, or other source of occupational uncertainty. These jobs have been widely documented to be ascribed to men, who are overwhelmingly white (Sokoloff, 1992). This phenomenon is not attributable to differences in skill levels, because women and people of color who are highly educated and possess high technical skill levels are still perceived by employers and fellow employees of the primary labor market to be undesirable (Saint-Paul, 1996), and are thus relegated to the secondary tier as a marginalized labor force (Hakim, 1996).

This two-tiered labor market phenomenon is reflective of the solidification of women’s subordination in occupational opportunity structures, which became a galvanized feature of industrial societies around the world and permeated the fabric of occupational gender relations since the onset of industrialization. The dichotomization of the labor force into primary and secondary markets is considered to be such a permanent feature of contemporary industrialized nations, that complete and permanent workforce polarization is projected for the immediate future.

The key is that we are in the middle of a significant re-structuring of women’s social and economic position. The polarisation process that started in the 80’s has produced a sharp divide between these ... women for whom employment
is just as central to their lives as it is for men. Modern industrialized society creates [these] conditions.²

If dual labor market theory has shown the primary labor tier to be such a permanent impediment restricting women's wider labor force participation, then it may be useful to examine the impact of dual markets upon the modern industrialized workplace, the development of alternative strategies to circumvent existing dichotomized labor market limitations, and the institutional arrangements emerging to benefit from this arrangement. To that end, the goal of this paper is to explore the proliferation of marginalized institutions as innovative evolutionary adaptation strategy exemplified by second-tier workers to adapt to this permanent feature of the modern labor economy, discuss the emergence of farmers markets as the most contemporary institution to arise from the dual labor market model in recent years, and provide ethnographic case studies drawn from participants of two farmers' markets in the state of Louisiana.

THE IMPACT OF DUAL LABOR MARKETS

One feature of permanent dual labor markets has been job segregation in nearly all industries. There are currently so few gender neutral industries, and so little vertical gender integration at the higher managerial levels in all industries, that any occupational analysis examining attainment by gender must conclude that occupations are highly fractured along gender lines. A recent treatment (Sokoloff, 1992) used census data over a forty year period and reported that among technicians and professions, most industries are heavily male dominated (0-20% female) and only 24 professions of the 52 listed are gender neutral. Among technicians the numbers are even worse, where only 2 of the 17 industries classified are considered gender neutral. Of the 16 technical and professional industries considered to be female dominated, all in the United States are among the most poorly paid.³

Job segregation by sex is a highly complex phenomenon that has been shown to have significant determinants stemming from human agency. Recent studies focusing on preferential hiring patterns of managers and employees in many industrialized nations have indicated that human obstacles in the primary labor market are pervasive.⁴ Those individuals already occupying high status positions in industries report reluctance regarding job integration by gender as well as race. These personal preferences are not limited to the United States, where gender composition is viewed as more integrated than in other industrialized nations (Roos, 1985), but was also widely reported in Asian nations (Appold, Sienghaid, and Kasarda, 1998) as well as Scandinavian nations

(Blom, Kivinen, and Kasarda, 1998). To maintain male hegemony and cultural boundary demarcations to women, men in industrialized societies and Japan, men in industrial sectors industrial sector entry was found to be limited, employee stayed, and Kasarda, 1998). The prevailing sentiment is that of executives and others increased presence of women upon them or that women did little to be considered to be equal to the actual occupational content. Other decision-making American, Japanese, and European vacuums with the result of widespread redemocratization among existing jobs is the only dimension of the measurable redemocratization influx of females.

Results of studies common both to gender inequality and the result of the labor supply to managers in constraining social hierarchies,

This finding showed that all levels of industrial organization, the peer, the super, and the intermediary occupational level, had achieved. In effect, the achievement has been little progress.

Personal managerial preference to maintain male hegemony in the workplace is ubiquitous across many cultural boundaries and is a primary source of organizational impediments to women's broader occupational integration. In the US, Thailand, and Japan, men overwhelmingly perceived women's entrance to their industrial sector as being *harmful to the organization* at any level. Female entry was found to have a negative effect upon organizational commitment, employee attitude, and job satisfaction (Appold, Siengthai, and Kasarda, 1998). This discomforting finding was found to be the prevailing sentiment among rank and file employees, as well as upper level executives and at all ages. Surprisingly, women reported that the increased presence of other women did not have an advantageous effect upon them or their own attitudes toward their workplace. Therefore, women did little to hasten advantages to other women, and are considered to be liabilities to organizational harmony regardless of actual occupational contribution. When supervisors, managers, and other decision-makers see the effect that women have upon the American, Japanese, and Thai workplace, they are reluctant to fill vacancies with large numbers of female employees so as to avoid widespread reductions in job satisfaction, motivation and commitment among existing employees. It was clear that personal preference was the only dimension that was affected by gender integration, with no measurable reduction in the quality of firm performance based on the influx of female employees to justify these negative sentiments.

Results of an empirical test among firms operating in a common business environment suggest that, to the extent that gender inequality in the occupancy of positions of authority is the result of organizational practice, rather than women's labor supply decisions, the representation of women among managers and professionals may be a product of a mutually constraining relationship between market incentives and the social homophily preferences of male employees. This finding shows the pervasive institutionalized obstacles to women at all levels of industry, the 'taken-for-granted nature' of masculinity in organization, the desire at all managerial levels to maintain the status quo, and the implausibility of broader female participation in primary-fier occupations for the immediate future.

The prognosis for racial equality appears to be even gloomier. Despite Affirmative Action legislation designed to increase minority access to employment opportunities in all industries, parity by race has yet to be achieved. In examining entrance to industries by race, for example, there has been little progress made by people of color, particularly among the intermediary status occupations. One study comparing relative
advantage over the twenty year period that would capture labor 
opportunity improvements for blacks concluded that in nearly all 
industries, race remained a permanent occupational obstacle. The only 
exception was found at the lowest levels within technical fields, where 
black males were found to be entering positions on par with white 
males. In all professions, the only racially balanced representation was at 
the lowest levels (Sokoloff, 1992). Though it could be argued that this 
administrative imbalance is due to workers’ new entrance to these 
occupational sectors, or perhaps to an age-cohort effect; the dilution of 
existing Affirmative Action legislation is expected to minimize the 
modest gains that people of color previously achieved.

DEFINING THE SECOND TIER

Women and people of color have been relegated with such permanence 
to the marginal labor force, that the peculiar character of their 
subordinate work within a dual market economy has evolved into 
several powerful institutions. This relatively new phenomenon of 
women and black workers accepting their destiny as an inevitable source 
of contingent, marginalized, temporary labor force has resulted in the 
formation of strategic groups whose alliance is based on the absorption 
potential of the second tier of dual labor markets. Several of these 
marginialized sectors and related institutions have been classified in the 
eexisting literature. One researcher, for example, considered the criteria 
for classifying secondary labor market activity to be based on the 
presence of flexible staffing arrangements (Abraham, 1988). By this 
standard, the contingent sector would include temporary agencies who 
have professionalized temporary clerical workers, seasonal workers, 
summer workers, and on-call workers. Though this provides some 
indication of the features of the second tier, such a list would not be 
exhaustive. Part-time employees should also be considered secondary 
labor market occupants (Rebiter and Taylor, 1991). Similarly, British 
sociologists have contended that any labor which a worker does for one 
hour or more and receives compensation should be considered marginal 
labor force activity (British Royal Statistical Society in Hakim, 1996). 
Clearly, those engaged in some intermittent work of some market value 
with some degree of regularity should be considered to occupy the 
second tier within the framework of dual labor market theory.

One final theoretical caveat needs elaboration. The tier distinction is 
not merely one along professional and nonprofessional cleavages. 
Instead, the dual labor market provides the conditions that enable firms 
to dichotomize workers with the same levels of formal training, experience, 
and education according to the highest possible levels of 
exploitation based on Marx's reserve army of labor paradigm.

[Firms] were likely at least likely to identify 
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INSTITUTIONALIZATION

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[Firms] were likely to fill the worst jobs with those who were least likely to identify with advantaged workers. Gradually, as the composition of the American labor force changed, it became relatively easy for employers to reserve the most "secondary" jobs for ... women and minority group workers with quite confident expectations that they would not identify with more advantaged workers and develop a common consciousness about the disadvantages of their jobs.6

These labor market features emerged during conditions of late capitalism and have maintained themselves today. As such, any labor market activity publicly compensated by some wages or benefits on an intermittent basis where the employee does not maximize his or her earning potential or optimally utilize his or her background, experience, and education should be considered secondary labor market activity. By this generally accepted international labor criteria, seasonal or temporary work, voluntary work, and paid domestic labor including child care work can be considered marginal.

INSTITUTIONALIZING THE SECOND TIER

Just as structural impediments based on racial discrimination have resulted in distinct occupational participation patterns and coalition building among African-Americans (Wilson, 1997), so too does women's occupational involvement appear to be characterized by unique patterns of participation and organization (Sokoloff, 1992). As with blacks in late capitalism, women have begun to accept the impediments to fuller participation in the primary labor market, and have begun to embrace their status as permanent suppliers of a reserve source of second-tier, marginalized labor. To that end, they have begun to organize collectively around these activities, to construct organizations to more fully use the segmented market for their own interests, and to engage in institutional-building by which to effectively compete and inflate opportunities within the confines of the secondary labor market.

No one would argue against the phenomenal success that temporary service placement agencies have had on the character of corporate firms. Temp services revolutionized business environments by openly offering a steady supply of expendable, amicable, attractive, personable, temporary female clerical workers who were competent in a variety of tasks, and who could be frequently replaced with no obligation. The temp agency was the first industry of the second tier to organize strategically by accepting the terms of subordinate, contingent employment, and offer (overwhelmingly female) employees who embraced the existing power arrangements without question.
Evidence of the continued institutionalization of the secondary labor force also lies in another important, highly organized, industry. Seasonal workers of North America, who are overwhelmingly men and women of Mexican descent, have also organized and been able to influence migration policy into the United States, and the frequency and use of dangerous pesticides, prevent the continued widespread exploitation of Mexican child labor, and improved the conditions of millions of migratory agricultural workers around the world. Led by Cesar Chavez in the sixties and seventies, Mexican migrant workers have won substantial gains in wages and working conditions, as well as beneficially impacting immigration policies to the benefit of Mexican laborers.

Other part-time, marginal, second-tier workers such as substitute teachers and data entry personnel now enjoy formal institutional arrangements that have established job security and provided those with seniority some of the benefits associated with civil services laws designed to protect government employees. Domestic workers and au pairs even have elaborate agency networks representing their interests, who are particularly adept at locating families and matching compatible participants throughout the world.

Though all these evolving marginal employment sectors have organized at different levels and the extent of their institutionalization differs to some degree, they have recently been joined by another rapidly expanding, complex, secondary labor industry: the farmers market.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF FARMERS MARKETS

Legislation passed in 1991 known as the Farmers Market Nutrition Act established the role of the state in supporting agricultural production activity and facilitated the expansion of markets to provide alternative venues for sales and distribution of goods. With the act, nonprofit organizational activity was fostered to construct formal linkages from state to independent producer, and paved the way for women and people of color to return to agrarian production as a means for economic sustainability. Farmers' markets, with the help of government subsidies, organized domestic agrarian work in rural areas, and provided the impetus to bridge marginalized rural laborers with urban agricultural markets. This act authorized the construction of formal ties among marginalized workers, government officials, nonprofit volunteers, and urban consumers; leading to the development of complex economic agrarian networks which gave rise to institution-building.

The national success of the act was further facilitated by the compulsory use of farmers markets by welfare recipients in the mandate that receipt of federal support to producers was contingent upon acceptance of federal aid to recipients, as well as the program was designed and implemented, and the Farmers' Market Network in over 20,000 consumers and 72% of consumers reported at the time of the program at the time they wrote (and 72% reported at least some markets were supported by hormones) to the USDA. It also concluded that economic growth, sales, and many social primary motivators.

Another study found that workers into farmers' markets and rural vendors in 1997, full-time producers and researchers discovered that the workers gave to the farmers' market and provided justification for the workers' income and reported that economic growth and sales.

Of the four income, three groups, and economic motivation and a single, partial conformation that formal and nonformal.

The data clearly showed that three methods of employer was unusual, especially for the worker turned to the farmers' market.

With the establishment of the legitimacy through the market, of the creation of a farmers' market, and the other marginalized groups as part of the contemporary institutionalization of dual labor markets, have been systematically and engaged in coalition among the help of the
of the secondary labor market; industry, seasonal work, and women of childbearing age, were able to influence both the incidence and frequency of labor shortages and oversupply, and improved the wages and working conditions of agricultural workers around their regional and state labor markets. The study concluded that farmers' markets were superior (i.e., healthier and contained less pesticides and hormones) to that available through conventional sources. The study also concluded that producers and growers enjoyed tremendous economic growth. Of the 2,215 vendors surveyed, 87% reported gains in sales, and many stated that the existence of farmers' markets was their primary motivation to enter into agricultural production.

Another study was conducted in 1993 to explore pathways leading workers into farmers' markets and agricultural production. The researchers discovered that of the 115 producers surveyed, 95% of the rural vendors in three regional New York farmers' markets were full time producers of agriculture. Furthermore, of the eleven reasons why farmers gave to enter into agricultural production, six that were cited provided justification for dual labor market framework. Producers reported that economic dimensions of motivation were paramount.

Of the four reasons deemed to be most important across the three groups, the first and fourth reasons clearly tap economic motivations. Taken together, the [data] support the contention that farmers' markets bridge the gap between the formal and informal aspects of the economy.\textsuperscript{9}

The data clearly shows that the vendor, or spouse or other family member was unable to participate in the primary labor sector so the worker turned to growing as an alternative for economic sustainability.

With the establishment of the Farmers' Market Act, enhanced legitimacy through state welfare subsidies, the construction of complex public and private agricultural and economic development networks, the creation of advocacy associations, formal program efficacy and evaluation analysis, and the relative openness with which women and other marginalized workers can enter into agrarian production activity; the contemporary farmers' market has clearly developed features of institutionalization that are consistent with the secondary labor market and dual labor market theory. Women and people of color who have been systematically denied participation in the primary labor force have engaged in coalition-building, solidified the marginalized tier, and, with the help of the state and private, nonprofit organizations, have
strengthened their economic position by institutionalizing agrarian production.

**METHODOLOGY**

In attempts to isolate the racial effect of status differentials in labor markets, researchers examined earnings differences and race (Talley and Cotton, 1993) and concluded that the concentration of Blacks in the rural south is an extremely relevant feature of the marginalized labor force. As such, we determined that Louisiana would have all the necessary social, cultural, and demographic attributes necessary to extract relevant data, as well as the unique relationship between rural and urban areas that would be necessary to advance such an analysis. Louisiana, incidentally, has the highest poverty rate in the nation. In the last decade, a third of the children of the state have consistently lived below the poverty line. Also, 60% of the female-headed households here have incomes below the poverty line. The state is also sufficiently racially diverse. The latest census data available reports that 62% of the residents of the City of New Orleans are black.

To determine if farmers' markets provide evidence of expanding institutional opportunities among those workers relegated to the second tier, an analysis of two farmers' market cases in the State of Louisiana was performed to determine if there was any substantial representation of historically marginalized workers. To that end, we obtained data regarding the governing boards of each respective market, as well as the gender and racial composition of active vendors. Racial and gender features were extracted from over 100 individuals (n = 106) having either governance or vending functions at the two markets. The subject data extracted from the two markets were confounded only slightly by the sporadic registration of more than one person among the active vendor lists (usually families), which tended to fluctuate very little over time due to strict institutional controls.

When units of analysis listed were families, these cases were distinguished for the active participant so as to accurately capture female labor force participation. Using observation strategies, the family unit was coded for active participation. If any female market vendor listed in the family unit had no consistent market involvement, these cases were coded to reflect the female's noninvolvement status. This classification scheme enabled the family units to be recognized, while accurately reflecting labor force participants who may be female but who otherwise are reluctant to register businesses without their husband as shared legal representative. Incidentally, no family vendor case reflected female non-involvement status. Remaining cases were screened for racial composition as well, and subjects were coded as dichotomized, categorical variables weighted marginalization.

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**RESULTS**

An examination have concluded that Orleans Creole racial and governing boards have been Board member of Roule's Board of nearly 75% representation.

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variables with either having representation among historically marginalized workers [gender = 1; race = 1; female in family business = 1] or not having representation [white = 0, male = 0; family vendors with no observable female participation = 0]. Given the multiple levels of scrutiny using registration lists, coupled with cross-checks for accuracy using participant observation; the analysis reflects actual market activity by gender and race with a high degree of validity, and yielded striking results.

RESULTS

An examination of governance structures inherent in these two cases have significant representation by women and people of color. The New Orleans Crescent City Farmers’ Market, for example, shows striking racial and gender representation, with 63% of the members of the governing board made up of individuals who are members of groups who have been historically marginalized in the second tier. 19 out of 30 Board members are women and people of color. Similarly, Baton Rouge’s Board of Directors of the Red Stick Farmers’ Market is made up of nearly 70% women and people of color. 15 of the 22 Board representatives are second tier labor market participants.

Table 1

Gender and Race among Self-Employed Vendors and Board Members in two Farmers’ Markets in Louisiana

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<td>Board of Directors</td>
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<td>Percentages:</td>
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<td>Board of Directors</td>
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<td>Vendors</td>
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Missing Data: 0 cases

When examining the racial and gender composition of active vendors in each market, nearly 90% are women and people of color. These findings provide substantial support for the role of farmers' markets in the process of institutionalizing the second tier, and indicates high levels of organization and institution-building among marginalized labor.

When examining racial and gender composition by function (either Vendor or Board member), we initially postulated that Vendors would have more women and people of color represented than Board of Directors. Given the vast literature surrounding closed networks for second tier workers, the high percentage of members of historically marginalized groups among these governance structures indicates that second tier workers are creating their own networks of operational control. This provides preliminary evidence for processual institutionalization of the marginalized tier within the dual labor market model.

Although vendors have a somewhat higher composition of women and people of color, there is substantially more representation than would be expected in primary tier governance structures, organizations, and institutions where impediments to broader participation are prevalent.

We were also concerned that the market down in New Orleans would yield more striking representation of historically marginalized workers, due to the higher concentration of Blacks in and around the city. To our surprise, Baton Rouge had a substantial representation of historically marginalized workers, and was not far behind New Orleans. This finding may be due to the linkage between urban and rural communities that this newly emerging institution provides, and may indicate demographics of growers who are full-time residents of remote rural farm lands surrounding these metropolitan areas. More research is, however,

![Graph](image)

**Figure 1.** Historic Marginality in Louisiana Farmers’ Markets by Function.

**CONCLUSION**

There is often some resistance from farmers who have the potential to become Vendors. They often resist because they do not feel they are positioned to negotiate with the board of directors. This resistance can be seen in the data from the Shreveport, Louisiana market. However, the data also shows that farmers who do become Vendors are able to influence the board of directors to a certain extent. They are able to negotiate with the board of directors to some extent, even if they do not have the power to control the governance structure.

**Figure 2.** Historical Marginality in Louisiana Farmers’ Markets by Function.
tion of active vendors of color. These findings reflect the overarching reality that farmers’ markets in Louisiana are enriched by historically marginalized labor.

Contrary to what some might expect, Figure 2 indicates high levels of participation by historically marginalized workers. Unlike Board of Directors or Vendors, these workers hold a prominent place in the local food system, and their participation is instrumental in diversifying the market.

New Orleans would have the highest proportion of women in historically marginalized workers, followed by the Red Stick area. This suggests a skew in the distribution of historically marginalized workers throughout the city. To our knowledge, female vendors predominate in historically marginalized workers in New Orleans. This finding is significant because it may indicate demographic shifts, such as farmers’ markets being more popular in remote rural farm communities.

CONCLUSION

There is clearly evidence to suggest that historically marginalized workers are organizing effectively to develop institutions within which they can enhance their earning potential, despite pervasive occupational impediments to their participation found in the primary sector. The urban farmers’ market is an emerging institution which provides support for the continued adaptation by workers to the deleterious effects of segmented labor markets found in industrialized economies. These adaptation patterns can be expected to expand into other industrial sectors, and result in the continued institutionalization of secondary labor activity for the benefit of marginalized laborers in the years to come. The demise of Affirmative Action can be expected to facilitate these changes, as mandated opportunities for marginalized workers in the primary sector become systematically eliminated. Workers will respond to these increasingly inhospitable conditions in the first tier, and solidify their collective action through complex network linkages and institutionalization within the constraints of the second tier. Rather than passively wait for queuing signals to enter the few vacancies available in the primary labor market as a reserve army of labor as some would suggest, current economic conditions of modernity necessitate marginalized workers to create innovative adaptive responses to the prevailing deleterious environment. The institutionalization of farmers’ markets represents another example of successful innovative adaptive response to the permanent insubordinate position ascribed to women and people...
of color in the contemporary dual labor market under conditions of modernity.

NOTES

4. Appold et al., pp. 559.
5. Appold et al., pp. 599.
8. Lyson et al., pp. 111.

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Program Subsection (in) of "section (in)"

Female Earnings Gap in Press.


