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# Chicanas and Triple Oppression in the Labor Force

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The concept of triple oppression has been used by several feminist and minority scholars to describe the unique class, race, and gender subordination of women of color.<sup>1</sup> Ill-defined and misunderstood, triple oppression is a controversial issue that begs for further analysis. As one critical step in this direction, this essay defines triple oppression and reveals the extent to which it limits the options of Chicanas in the labor force.<sup>2</sup> Implicit in this analysis is the understanding that this essay is written to initiate a dialogue to provide one way for Chicanas to locate the structural limitations they face in order to overcome them.

The major dilemma in defining triple oppression is the complexity of the variables involved. Insofar as class is an economic category, it can be defined according to the common positions of individuals in regard to the social relations of production.<sup>3</sup> Although class provides the base wherein political and social privileges are differentiated, it cannot explain fully the variations in the status and power of different groups in our society. This inadequacy is particularly acute for women and racial/ethnic minorities.

Race, as a social category, exercises an independent influence on the social location of individuals according to a racial hierarchy. Chicanos as a subordinated minority group in the United States historically have been denied political power and relegated to inferior jobs relative to the white population. This racial hierarchy has been manifested economically and legitimized ideologically.<sup>4</sup>

Although class and race bestow and/or limit access to political and economic power, women within each class category and racial/ethnic group are subordinate relative to men. Gender, as a unit of analysis, acknowledges the fact that a specific (and unequal) set of socially prescribed behaviors and expectations has been attached to one's biological sex. The content of the definition of gender expands the options men have—at the expense of women in our society. The pervasiveness of gender inequality transcends class and points to the necessity of incorporating gender into social analyses of women, including Chicanas.

Consideration of any one aspect of the triple oppression of women of color is insufficient to explain the pervasiveness of their social inequality. Triple oppression, then, refers to the interplay among class, race, and gender, whose cumulative effects place women of color in a subordinate social and economic position relative to men of color and the majority white population. The significance of this concept for Chicanas lies in the recognition of their limited options compared to white men and women as well as minority men. Their inferior status is reproduced concurrently in the home and in all other social arenas.

One critical arena where all three aspects of triple oppression intersect is the labor market. The occupational distribution and earnings of Chicanas are important to examine because of their relevance to socioeconomic status and power in our society. The fact that Chicanas historically have been concentrated in low-paying jobs traditionally relegated to women and/or minorities suggests that the triple oppression thesis needs to be considered and developed.

To clarify the necessity of examining this concept with respect to Chicanas, the inadequacy of prevailing explanations of Chicana occupational distribution is discussed, based on research whose focus is the Chicano/a population. Second, relevant analyses of the structure of the labor market are assessed to determine their utility with respect to the Chicana population. Coupled with a brief empirical analysis, these examinations demonstrate the inability of each perspective to account fully for the limits in the range and scope of the occupational distributions and incomes of Chicanas.

It is suggested here that the concept of triple oppression can be useful in the reformulation of each perspective scrutinized. Although this paper is too brief to operationalize this process, sug-

gestions are provided for future research that, if addressed, will expand our data and knowledge of the manner in which triple oppression is realized in the lives of working Chicanas in our society. Furthermore, an understanding of the various manifestations of this interplay will enable us to begin to construct alternatives to bring an end to unequal power relations in society.

To begin our analysis of Chicanas in the labor force, it is necessary briefly to review relevant literature on the subject. To facilitate this task, the literature is organized into research on Chicanos/as and theoretical work in the fields of labor and gender. While the latter category does not utilize evidence from the Chicana experience, a certain universality is posited within each theoretical orientation that must be taken to its logical conclusion with respect to Chicanas. Furthermore, there is an unknown degree of explanatory power within each perspective that may be uncovered within the context of such an analysis.

### **A Legacy of Triple Oppression in the Labor Market**

Recently, studies of Mexican origin women and/or Chicanas have begun to examine critically the labor force participation of this population. Historian Albert Camarillo (1979) describes the work of Chicanas in the Santa Barbara area within the context of an emerging capitalist order at the turn of the twentieth century. He presents data that point to the development of a segregated work force that relegated Chicanas to low-wage, low-status jobs as laundresses and domestic and agricultural workers. Political scientist Mario Barrera (1979) has utilized historical evidence similarly to demonstrate the subordination of Chicanos (including women) in the southwestern part of the United States. He argues that convergence of political, social, and economic factors has formed the basis of Chicano subordination in the United States. This process resulted in the creation of a colonial labor force composed of subordinate labor "segments" that are hierarchically defined by race, class, and gender.

Both of these studies have provided valuable information on this small but economically critical segment of the U.S. population. Most importantly, each has demonstrated that the contemporary

lack of occupational options for Chicanas has historical antecedents that developed in the late nineteenth century.

With respect to studies of contemporary Chicanas, the scope and range of their labor force participation and their occupational distribution have been explained in several ways. The most popular approach discusses the limitations on Mexican women to enter the paid labor force as integrally related to their higher fertility (Alvarez and Bean, 1976; Fogel, 1967). This approach suggests that the higher fertility rates of Chicanas cause them to leave the labor force—sometimes for years at a time. This may cause reluctance on the part of employers to train them for career mobility.

Another approach attempts to locate various “cultural” patterns from Mexico that relegate women to the home and do not encourage them to seek career options (Mirandé and Enríquez, 1979; Grebler, Moore, and Guzman, 1970). Other scholars point out that entry and participation in the paid labor force depend upon a variety of factors, including acculturation and educational levels (Gandara, 1982; Vásquez, 1982; Melville, 1980). The role of discrimination based upon race and gender that effectively prevents high degrees of occupational mobility for Chicanos, male and female, forms the crux of still other analyses (Romero, 1979; Briggs et al., 1977).

The explanations presented tend to suggest that certain cultural and linguistic characteristics must be acquired for occupational integration in the larger society to occur. The applicability of acculturation approaches is questionable, given analyses which suggest that a “job ceiling” may exist for Chicanos (Tienda, 1981; Briggs et al., 1977; Ogbu, 1978). This means that Chicanos seek employment in those few job categories in which they have historically suffered less discrimination. Inasmuch as occupational and income mobility seems to level off to that acquired by the second-generation (native-born population), the job ceiling thesis should be carefully considered by scholars interested in the social and economic mobility of this population. For the implications of a job ceiling are extremely unfavorable for future generations of Chicano workers in the United States.

Persistent and unfavorable income differentials often are linked to educational achievement and aspirations. The “human capital” school of thought (e.g., Becker, 1975; Mincer, 1974) is devoted to closer examinations of this principle. The human capital argument

asserts that an open labor market operates where all applicants compete on an equal basis for jobs. Thus, to acquire better-paying jobs (where the competition is much keener), unskilled and semiskilled workers must increase those skills which will add to their job productivity and make them more attractive to employers. Theoretically, this can be done by investing in greater amounts of education and on-the-job training.

As an examination of the structure of the labor market, human capital theory fails to discuss those processes that inhibit the quest for acquisition of marketable criteria. The amount and quality of education in particular differ according to race, class, and gender, with women and minorities prepared for a relatively limited range of careers (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1978). In the same vein, Bowles and Gintis (1976) have presented evidence that educational success, including high school and college completion, is linked to the class backgrounds of different populations. Thus, the relatively poor economic backgrounds of the majority of Chicanos often will be reflected in their low level of education—which in our society is critical to gain entry into the higher-paying white-collar and professional jobs.

Other economists (e.g., Reich, 1981; Edwards, 1979; Sackrey, 1973; Gordon, 1972) argue that labor markets themselves have certain characteristics that make it difficult for significant numbers of women and minorities to improve their job options. Labor market segmentation theorists (Gordon, Edwards, and Reich, 1982) go to great lengths to establish what these characteristics are. These theorists posit the existence of a "primary" labor market containing relatively well-paying, stable jobs with promotional ladders. Historically, white males have predominated in this sector, which includes professionals, managers, and skilled crafts jobs. On the other end of the spectrum is the "secondary" labor market, which includes various semi- and unskilled jobs that are low-paying and offer few promotional opportunities. Until fairly recently, minorities and women have been limited to this sector, which includes seasonal factory operatives (including cannery workers), janitors, and other part-time workers.

Labor market segmentation theorists show that movement from the secondary to the primary labor market is rare.<sup>5</sup> Gordon (1972) notes that only white males seem to make this move successfully.

This can be illustrated by the case of high school students who work at fast-food establishments and then move on to jobs in the primary sector once they complete their education and seek full-time career jobs. Minorities and women, on the other hand, tend to become locked into these types of jobs, since historically they have not had the same job options as white males. Their lack of mobility between labor markets is verified by their continued overrepresentation at certain wage and occupational levels and an unemployment rate higher than the norm.

It should be pointed out that, although labor market segmentation theory describes the greater vulnerability of minority and female workers, race and gender are not the focal points of analysis for this theoretical orientation. The primary focus of this approach is tracing the development of a working-class divided within an occupational hierarchy. Race and gender within this model are mechanisms to divide the working class within and across occupational categories. Inasmuch as race and gender are subsumed under the larger "class" question by labor market segmentation theorists, the range of the processes whereby Chicanas are subordinated cannot be explained except insofar as they occupy a certain job or market sector. The processes leading to Chicanas' point of entry in the labor market, which is the culmination of the interplay among class, race, and gender variables, cannot be addressed without major revisions in this model.

Heidi Hartman (1976, 1981) in her examinations of the close connection between patriarchy and capitalism provides us with a key to understanding one aspect of triple oppression that labor market segmentation theorists have not analyzed. Although Hartman agrees that the interests of a capitalist mode of production have been served by the hierarchical organization of the labor force, she points out that this ordering was based upon the principle of male privilege, or patriarchy. All women, according to Hartman, share an inferior social status relative to men that is reflected in the lower wages produced by their occupational segregation into female-dominant jobs. This disadvantageous situation for women will not change, according to Hartman, unless women challenge the principle of male privilege in all social arenas, including the family.

Each perspective outlined above provides possibilities for the present task of understanding the triple oppression of Chicanas,

particularly their limited occupations and income. The information provided on Chicanos clearly articulates the historical and contemporary reality of their limited labor force opportunities and chances for mobility. Because of the pervasiveness of race, Chicanos are not viewed as "professionals" and usually are consigned to "unskilled" or "semiskilled" labor. This labeling process is disadvantageous to all Chicanos. But within this limited labor market are additional subdivisions, or domains of lesser status and/or lower pay. I refer, of course, to the female labor force (e.g., cannery "sorters" rather than line supervisors; garment "sewers" instead of pattern cutters, etc.). The existence of this domain points to the saliency of gender in affecting the labor market positions and job options of Chicanas. Thus, race, class, and gender at the same time impact on the reproduction of Chicanas as a subordinated labor force.

The other theoretical approaches presented can be extended to include the Chicana experience as well. The major postulates within each perspective need to be tested for their usefulness in articulating specific outcomes with respect to Chicanas in the paid labor force. A logical starting point for such an analysis is an overview of the income and occupational profiles of Chicanas in comparison to Chicano males, white women, and white males. This four-way comparison is necessary to demonstrate the importance of the relationship among the structural variables of race, class, and gender. In addition, this type of comparison will lead, necessarily, to questions for future work on Chicanas as the concept of their triple oppression becomes linked to their struggles for parity with the majority population.

### **Chicanas in the Labor Force: A Demographic Profile**

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the past decade has witnessed a significant growth in the labor force participation of all women, including Chicanas. In 1970, 39.4 percent of all Chicanas over the age of sixteen and 41.7 percent of all white women worked for wages in California.<sup>6</sup> White males and Chicanos had labor force participation rates of 78.0 and 79.0 percent, respectively.<sup>7</sup> These figures rose in 1980, to a 51.3 percent labor force participation rate for Chicanas in California—a ratio slightly smaller than the 51.7 percent of white female labor force participants.<sup>8</sup>



Although the labor force participation rates of all women registered major gains, it does not necessarily follow that their occupations and incomes were similar. The preceding theoretical overview suggests, in fact, that this would not occur. To demonstrate this view, I briefly examine empirical evidence from the U.S. Bureau of the Census on women with respect to their last job and full-time earnings.

**Table 1: Median Earnings of Full-Time Workers 15 Years and Over by Sex and Spanish Origin in the U.S.: 1981**

	White		Spanish Origin	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>TOTAL Private Wage and Salary Workers (numbers in thousands)</b>	27,880	15,043	1,813	909
Professional, Technical, and Kindred Workers	\$26,954	\$16,681	\$24,376	*
Managers and Administrators	27,290	14,998	20,981	*
Sales Workers	22,306	11,307	*	*
Clerical and Kindred Workers	17,794	11,687	11,962	11,471
Craft and Kindred Workers	20,812	13,133	17,066	*
Operatives (Including Transport)	17,650	10,464	14,361	8,739
Laborers	15,415	10,470	11,422	*
Service Workers in Agriculture	11,687	8,101	9,762	7,561
	10,583	*	10,738	*
<b>TOTAL MEDIAN EARNINGS</b>	<b>\$21,087</b>	<b>\$11,805</b>	<b>\$14,383</b>	<b>\$10,500</b>

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Money Income of Households, Families, and Persons in the United States: 1981," *Current Population Reports*, Series P-60, No. 137.

\*According to the Census Bureau, there was an insufficient data base (less than 75,000) to provide accurate income information.

**Table 2: Occupational Distribution of Full-Time Workers 15 Years and Over by Sex and Spanish Origin in the U.S.: 1981**

	White		Spanish Origin	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>TOTAL Private Wage and Salary Workers (numbers in thousands)</b>	27,880	15,043	1,813	909
Professional, Technical, and Kindred Workers	16.2%	13.7%	6.8%	8.1%
Managers and Administrators	18.6	11.0	7.3	5.5
Sales Workers	8.1	6.1	3.3	4.0
Clerical and Kindred Workers	5.8	41.3	6.5	34.7
Craft and Kindred Workers	24.0	2.7	21.8	3.0
Operatives (Including Transport)	17.2	12.6	30.0	25.4
Laborers	4.4	1.2	7.3	1.3
Service Workers in Agriculture	3.9	11.0	11.6	17.5
	1.7	*	5.4	*

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Money Income of Households, Families, and Persons in the United States: 1981," *Current Population Reports*, Series P-60, No. 137.

NOTE: All figures were rounded off to the nearest tenth. Approximately 60 percent of the Spanish origin population is of Mexican origin.

\*Less than 1 percent reported working in this occupational category.

Chicanas earn lower wages than white women. In 1981, the median income of Spanish origin women in full-time, year-round employment was \$10,500, and that of Spanish origin men was \$14,383. During this same year, the median income of majority-group men working full time was \$21,087, and that of white women was \$11,805 (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1981).

To understand why Chicanas have lower incomes, it is necessary to look at the types of jobs in which they work. This examination provides one outcome of their triple oppression as well as leading to fur-

ther inquiry into the process resulting in their limited labor force experiences. In 1981, the incomes of Spanish origin and white women in full-time, year-round employment in the United States can be compared only in three categories: operative, clerical, and service work (see table 1). Apparently the data base in the other occupational categories was too small for the Census Bureau to delineate income.

Table 2 indicates that in 1981, 17.5 percent of all Spanish origin women who were employed in full-time, year-round employment were service workers; 29.7 percent were blue-collar workers; and 52.3 percent were white-collar workers.<sup>9</sup> Only 13.6 percent of Chicanas worked at the better-paying white-collar administrative and/or professional levels. This is similar to the ratio of Chicano men in these jobs. Over 34 percent of Chicanas were clerical workers. When these job distributions are compared to those of white women, the contrasts are plain to see. White women have a much higher participation rate in the professional and the better-paying white-collar fields than do Chicanas and Spanish origin women. This demonstrates that Chicanas are more limited than white women in their range of careers.

In clerical jobs, Chicanas earned 98 percent of the wages of both white women and Spanish origin men; however, they earned only 64 percent of white male income. A similar pattern existed among service jobs. In operative jobs, the wages of Chicanas were 83 percent of those of white women, but only 42 percent those of white men. Overall, Spanish origin men and women were paid 68 percent and 49.8 percent, respectively, of the earnings of white men. White women earned 56 percent of the income of their male counterparts in full-time employment.

This income pattern is significant at several levels. First, the overall income statistics place Chicanos and women in similar situations relative to white men. Second, the income at each comparable level demonstrates a closer relationship among women than exists within each ethnic group under consideration, except at the clerical and sales worker levels. Further, the occupational distribution in the professional, managerial, and operative categories is more similar within each ethnic group than by gender.

With respect to unemployment, Chicanos, male and female, have much higher rates of unemployment than the majority-group population (see table 3). In 1980, 6.1 and 6.5 percent, respectively, of white men and women were unemployed as opposed to 9.7 and

Table 3: Unemployment for Selected Years in the United States

	White		Chicano	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1980	6.1	6.5	9.7	10.7
1976	5.9	8.7	11.1	14.9
1970	3.6	5.0	6.4	9.1
1960	4.7	4.7	8.1	9.5

SOURCES: For 1980: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment and Unemployment: A Report on 1980, Unemployment Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin," in *Special Labor Force Report 244* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, April, 1981). For 1960, 1970, and 1976: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Social Indicators of Equality for Minorities and Women* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, August, 1978).

10.7 percent, respectively, of Chicano men and women. The levels of unemployment for white women were closer to those of white men than to those of Chicanas. Similarly, the high unemployment levels of Chicanas are closer to those of Chicano men. This illustrates that Chicanas are affected by labor market processes to a greater degree than the other populations examined. This vulnerability is linked to the types of jobs in which they predominate, such as operatives or service workers in declining or unstable sectors of the economy (e.g., canneries, garment factories, hospitals, child care centers, etc.).

Statistics such as those presented above need more development than I can provide here, but they do clarify some of the issues involved in an analysis of the occupations and low income of Chicanas in the labor force. These data seem to verify labor market segmentation in that Chicanas are concentrated in limited occupational categories. Many of these jobs are in the "secondary" labor market, whose inherent instability leads to a higher level of unemployment as well as lower wages. High Chicana concentration in the gender-specific clerical work force also acts to limit their income levels. Thus, the wage levels of Chicanas are lower than those of Chicanos or white workers. Whether these differences are due to structural factors or individual choice and ability cannot be told, however, by demographic data. For this type of analysis, we must turn again to

the literature to gauge to what extent each perspective explains—or promises to explain—the lower incomes and limited jobs illustrated here.

### **Chicanas in the Labor Force: Toward an Understanding of the Process of Triple Oppression**

In the preceding section, a demographic profile of Chicanas in the labor force established one outcome of their triple oppression in society. As women they have been paid lower wages relative to men and limited to gender-specific jobs. As members of an ethnic/racial minority group, they have been relegated to jobs historically assigned to this group. This partially accounts for their limited job options relative to white women. Both factors, race and gender, utilized within a segmented labor market, interact and produce workers whose characteristics place a preponderance of minority female workers in “secondary” jobs or in the clerical sector of the primary labor market. Given the close connection between income and class position in our society, restricted job options within a segmented labor market have direct relevance to the Chicana population.

The present study has been concerned with the outcome of the triple oppression of Chicanas within the context of a segmented labor market. This type of economic structural analysis, although informative, is constrained by a lack of information regarding the process wherein triple oppression is reproduced ideologically and socioculturally. Drawing upon the theoretical positions previously discussed, the remainder of this essay presents possible approaches whereby this process may be unraveled.

To understand the subordination of women within a capitalist mode of production, Heidi Hartman (1976, 1981) examines the linkage of patriarchy (or male domination) to capitalism. She notes that women are subordinate to men within the family, as they continue to bear the major responsibility for unpaid household labor—a category of socially necessary work that both neoclassical and radical economists fail to include in their analyses. This inequality within the family is reflected in the society-at-large. Thus, to understand the inner workings of female subordinate status in the labor market, it is essential to look at the reproduction of the corresponding division of labor at home.

The relationship of family structure to the labor force position of Chicanas is a problematic issue. The reason for the hesitation of some Chicano scholars to confront this issue critically lies in the damaging early analyses of some researchers that depicted the Mexican family as rigidly patriarchal and pathological to a degree (Heller, 1966; Hayden, 1966; Madsen, 1964; Lewis, 1961).

As a response to this line of analysis, Chicano scholars have channeled their energies into analyses of structural factors such as labor market processes, education, and immigration. The maintenance and reproduction of a sex-based division of labor within the Chicano family is often obscured by Chicano/a scholars studying the "rise of egalitarianism" within that unit (Ybarra, 1977, 1982; Baca Zinn, 1980; Cotera, 1976; Sotomayer, 1971). By analyzing the growth of equality between men and women in Chicano families, these scholars can (and do) obscure the unequal gender role dichotomization and socialization practices that can adversely affect future job preferences and aspirations.

It is essential that the process of gender role socialization be scrutinized in order that a critical component of the triple oppression of Chicanas be understood. Chicanas are not "naturally" factory operatives or clerical workers. In addition to occupational segregation that locates them in these job categories, there are other factors, which may be familial, that can limit their job expectations.<sup>10</sup>

Research on Chicana high achievers (Gandara, 1982; Vasquez, 1982) illustrates that familial support (especially that of mothers) is an important factor in Chicana advancement. Even as families encourage high aspirations, they can discourage future expectations. An important task, then, for future qualitative work on Chicanas in the labor force should be to examine familial relationships with respect to their effects upon future job preferences. This type of question, combined with an assessment of institutional constraints and labor market structuring, can reveal a more complete picture of the manner in which gender operates to restrict the arena in which Chicanas compete.

The role of education in screening potential employees for employers makes it a logical point of departure for studies of the occupations and earnings of Chicanas in the labor force. Although lower levels of educational attainment are linked to lower-paying jobs by human capital theorists, class, race, and gender influence the

viability of higher education for Chicanas as well as the quality of education available to this population. By reducing the acquisition of education to individual initiative, human capital theory misses the fact that Chicanas, who tend to be working-class, are inadequately counseled in school and suffer various forms of discrimination that often prevents them from completing their education (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1972, 1974a, 1978). Although Chicanas do not have the same tools with which to forge a future as the white population has, their movement within the labor force—whether lateral or vertical—needs to be researched in order that the interplay among the structural variables of race, class, and gender be analyzed.

Racial discrimination by employers is essential to examine and operates to isolate the Chicana experience from that of white women. Although both groups of women are concentrated in the clerical occupations, white men and women tend to supervise, whereas Chicanas tend to be supervised.<sup>11</sup> The consistency of lower occupational and employment levels for Chicanas suggests that discrimination in the labor market, as well as in the acquisition of different educational levels, is critical to the race, class, and gender stratification of this group.

As an alternative to the human capital approach, the labor market segmentation theory deserves a prominent place in this analysis. This model shifts the locus of blame for lower wages from the individual to societal mechanisms. It suggests that the working class is divided by occupations which are themselves stratified by race and gender criteria. This process of segmentation is critical, because it prevents an organized, coherent challenge to the prevailing social order and ensures the continued existence of a reserve army of labor. Although this model lacks historical specificity to the Chicana experience, other works (especially Barrera, 1979) have refined it to emphasize race.

Barrera's (1979) reformulation of the labor market segmentation approach can serve as a point of departure to examine the Chicana experience. In his analysis of the historical development of capitalism in the Southwest, Barrera mentions that at every class or occupational level, Chicanas were among the most disadvantaged laborers in society. He does not, however, integrate this evidence into his theory of race and class inequality. For this theoretical

perspective to be relevant to Chicanas, patriarchy within the Chicano community and the society-at-large must be examined on an equal basis with race and class. The development of such an analysis remains for future researchers interested in this relationship.

The literature on the occupational distribution and incomes of Chicanas within a segmented labor market indicates that additional research in these fields is needed. Qualitative data must be gathered with respect to the job histories of Chicanas. This type of information can provide us with insight into the effects of the structural variables of race, class, and gender on their lives. Inasmuch as Chicanas are not passive actors in society, knowledge of the ways they act to modify their social environment can add a critical dimension to structural analyses that often fail to acknowledge the individual will and initiative that has been so important in the history of Chicanas in the United States.

## NOTES

1. With respect to Chicanas, Mirandé and Enríquez (1979) refer to this term within the context of Chicanas' oppression due to their colonized status as Chicanos, their gender, and their culture (chap. 1, pp. 12-13). This conceptualization differs fundamentally from the one I put forth in this essay, where *class*, as opposed to culture, is the arena in which triple oppression is organized and expressed.

In her analysis of the historical subordination of black women in the United States, Angela Davis (1981) utilizes a triple oppression framework, but does not specifically define the term. She hints at the linkage of race, class, and gender at various points in the book—ultimately subsuming gender and race to class concerns, as her critique of the suffrage movement demonstrates: "While their men's sexist behavior definitely needed to be challenged, the real enemy—their common enemy—was the boss, the capitalist, or whoever was responsible for the miserable wages and unbearable working conditions and for racist and sexist discrimination on the job" (Davis, 1981:142). My work departs from this conceptualization because I offer a view of triple oppression that stresses the importance of locating and analyzing the interplay among class, race, and gender as opposed to arranging each variable in an hierarchical manner.

2. In this paper, "Chicano/Chicana" refers to persons (male and female) of Mexican descent born in the United States and/or identifying themselves as such. Another, similar label is "Mexican American." The term "Mexican origin" refers to a person of Mexican descent irrespective of resident or citizenship status. "Spanish origin" and "Hispanic" are broader terms often utilized by state agencies to refer to persons of Spanish and Latin American heritage; 60 percent of all Spanish origin persons in the United States are of Mexican origin.



For additional information on the origins and use of the term "Chicano," especially the political implications of the term, see Tienda (1981), Peñalosa (1970), and Barrera (1979).

3. This brief definition is elaborated upon in Wright (1979, chap. 1). Wright also discusses the various perspectives within sociology with respect to defining and refining "class" within this chapter.

4. See Takaki (1979), for an intriguing comparative examination of early linkages between racial ideology and the economic subordination of conquered and enslaved nonwhite people in U.S. history. See also Acuña (1981, chap. 1) wherein the author in "The Rationale for Conquest" describes the power of the ideology of "manifest destiny" with respect to the legitimization of the war with Mexico. Also (in chap. 2), he discusses the subordination of Mexican American rights in the United States that was consistently culturally legitimized.

5. See Reich (1981:248-267), where he describes the occupational segregation of blacks to unskilled, low-paying jobs. See also Barrera (1979, chap. 3), wherein he discusses the establishment of an occupationally stratified colonial labor force occupied by Chicanos in the Southwest.

6. Briggs, Fogel, and Schmidt (1977:28).

7. Ibid., p. 28.

8. Composed from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census (1982:154).

9. White-collar workers include the following categories: Professional, Technical and Kindred Workers; Managers and Administrators; Sales Workers; and Clerical and Kindred Workers. Blue-collar workers include Craft and Kindred Workers; Operatives; and Laborers.

10. In her doctoral dissertation, Zavella (1982) found that patriarchy within the family as well as the organization of work restricted the freedom of Chicana cannery workers to enter the jobs for which they qualified.

11. An example of this hierarchical relationship is provided by employment figures for the civil employees of the State of California for 1978-1979 (California State Personnel Board, 1979). During this year, 30 percent of white clerical workers were supervisors, as opposed to 14 percent of Chicanos occupying similar positions.

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