

Feminism and Poverty: New Directions in Advocacy and Public Policy

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Child and Family Policy Center



Seizing Opportunities to Reduce Poverty
and Build Community Prosperity

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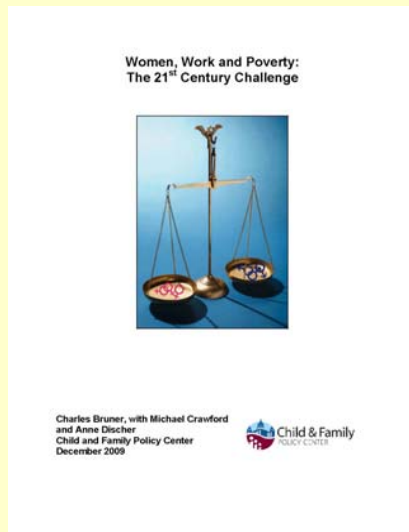
Child and Family Policy Center

- The mission of CFPC is to "better link research and policy on issues vital to children and families and to advocate for outcome-based policies to improve child well-being ."
- CFPC works at the community, state, and national levels on child and family policy issues, with a particular emphasis upon developing more asset-based and comprehensive approaches to helping children and their families succeed. CFPC carries out fiscal analysis that sheds light on how taxes and budgetary decisions are affecting families and children.
- CFPC conducts research, produces research syntheses, facilitates community and state forums on children's issues, and provides technical assistance to state and community policy-makers.

Problem/Opportunity: Gender Biases in Public Policy

- Separate But Equal? Current Two Policy Arenas: Economic Development and Poverty Solutions (Gender as Bridge)
 - *Salt of the Earth* – Striking miners in New Mexico (1954)
 - Family Preservation and Support Services Program and Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities Acts (1993)
 - Legislative Committees in Most States
- 2010+ — Opportunity for a Synthesis and Political Actions to Reduce Poverty and Improve Economic Security and Development

Awareness as Precursor for Mobilization and Action: *Women, Work, and Poverty Report*



- Historical Perspective: The Feminization of Poverty in the 1970s
- Trends Since the 1970s: Different Character of Gender Poverty
- Political and Policy Opportunities in 2010+
- Gender-Based Economic Development Strategies: An Example

Historical Context in the 1970s: Feminism's Link to Economic Development

- Wage Gap (59 cents)
- Impoverishment through divorce
- Glass ceilings/discriminatory employment practices
- Increase in single parenting

Historical Perspective: “Women’s Rights” Recommendations

“Sisterhood is Powerful”

- ERA/Equal Pay/Comparable Worth
- Child Support Adequacy and Enforcement
- Nontraditional Education/Employment Opportunities
- Child Care Subsidies

Gloria Steinem



Historical Perspective: “Family Values” Recommendations

“Stop the ERA”

- Marriage promotion/limitations on divorce
- Support for single wage earner family (marriage tax penalty)
- Consequences for single parents (welfare reform)
- Limited government intrusion in raising children (home schooling, child abuse laws)

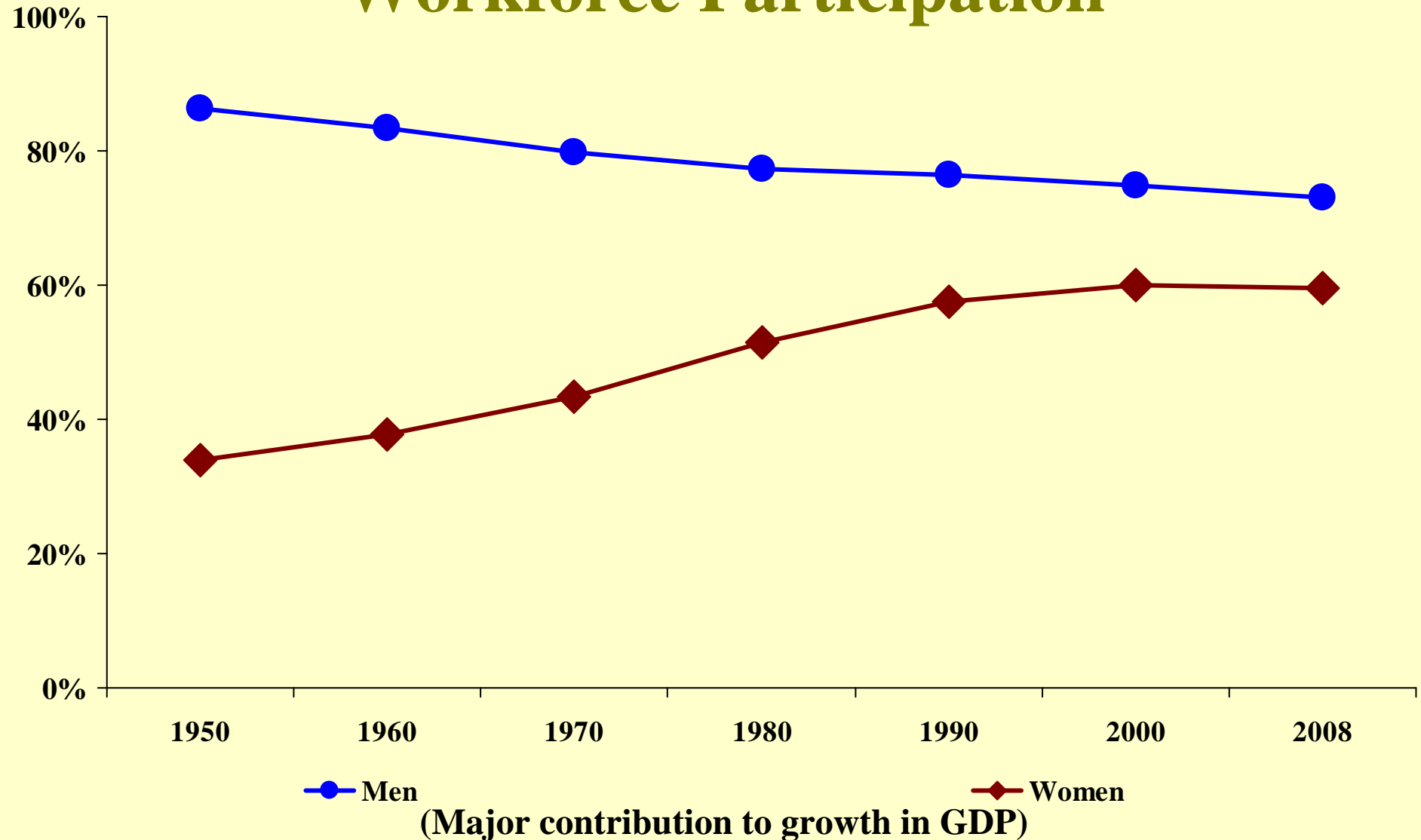


Phyllis Schlafly

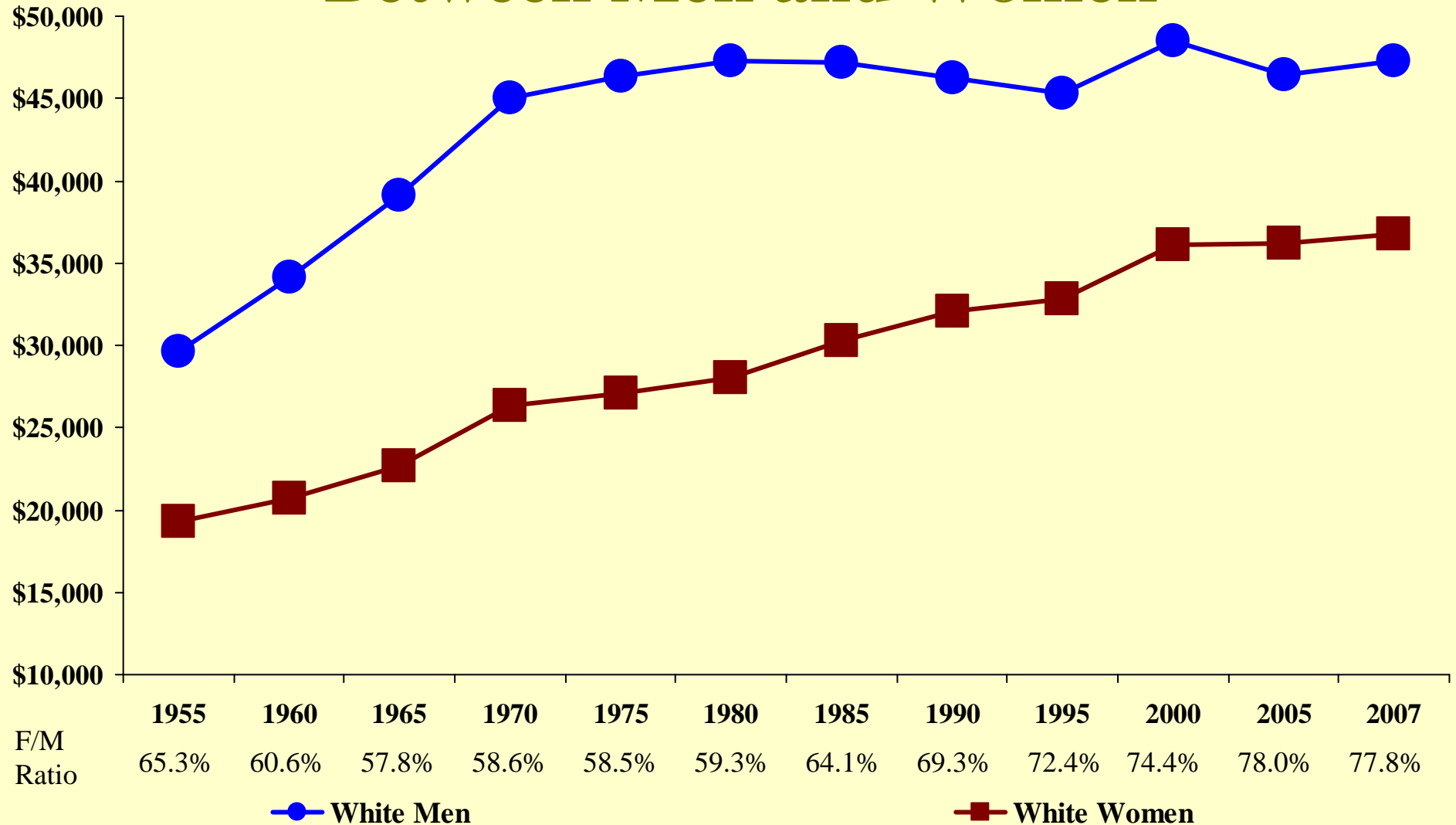
Mixture of Political Responses from 1970 to 2010

- Nondiscrimination in employment
- Educational opportunity
- Supports to working families (child care subsidies, EITC)
- Child support determination, adequacy, and enforcement
- Welfare reform (Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act)
- Fatherhood and marriage promotion
- Family leave

Trends: Substantial Increase of Women in Workforce Participation

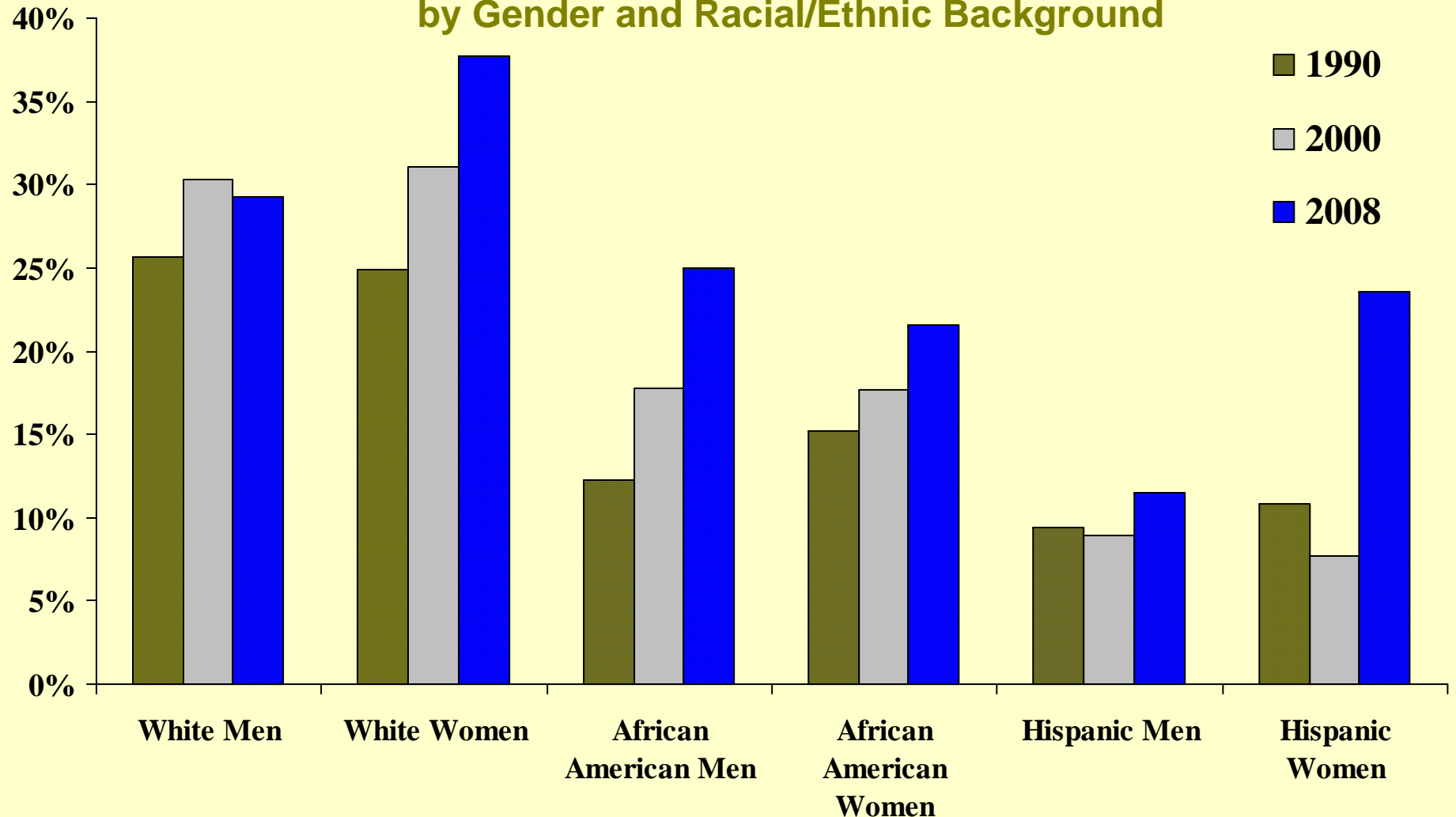


Trends: Narrowing of Wage Gap Between Men and Women

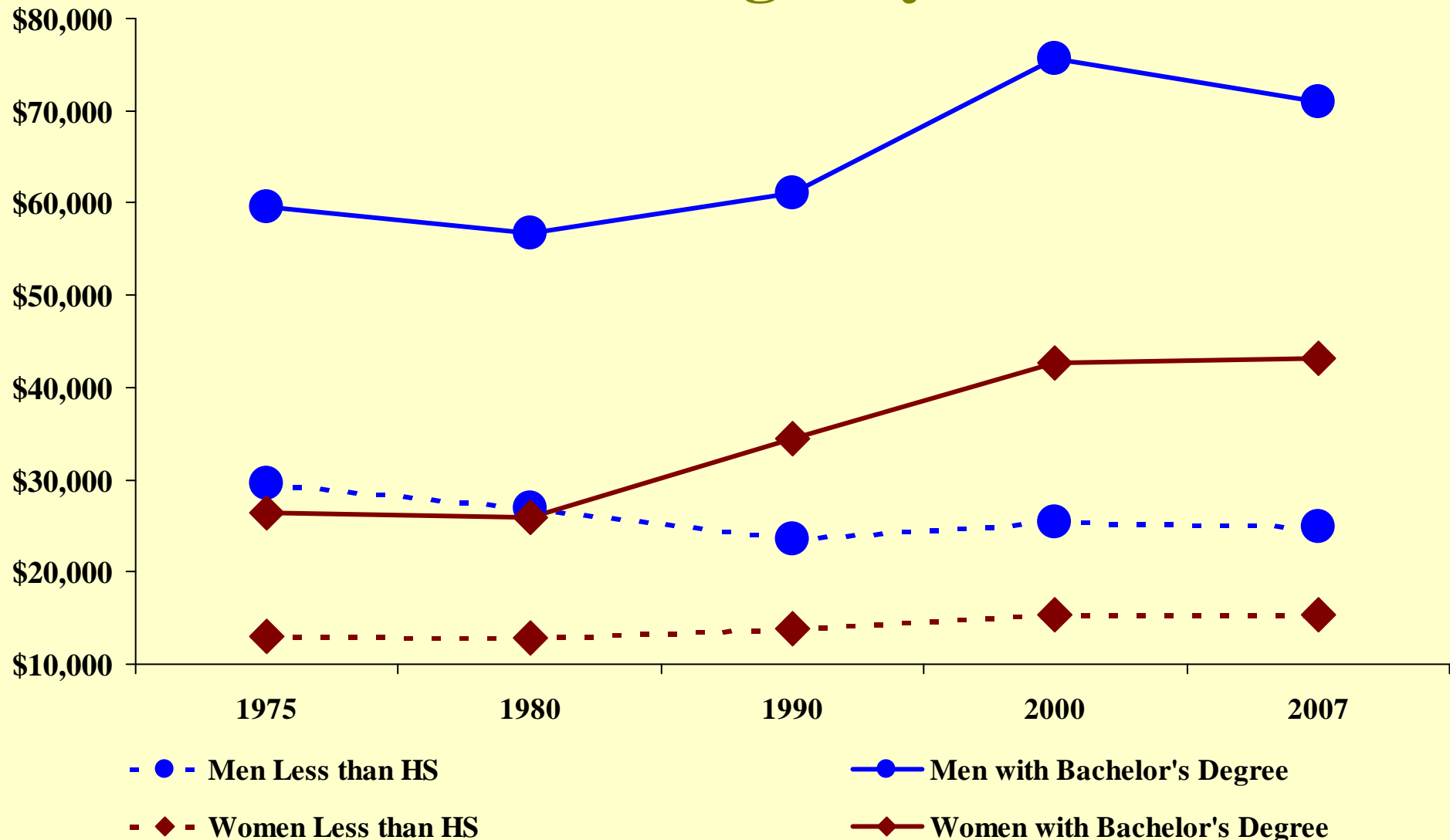


Trends: More Substantial Gains in Educational Levels for Women

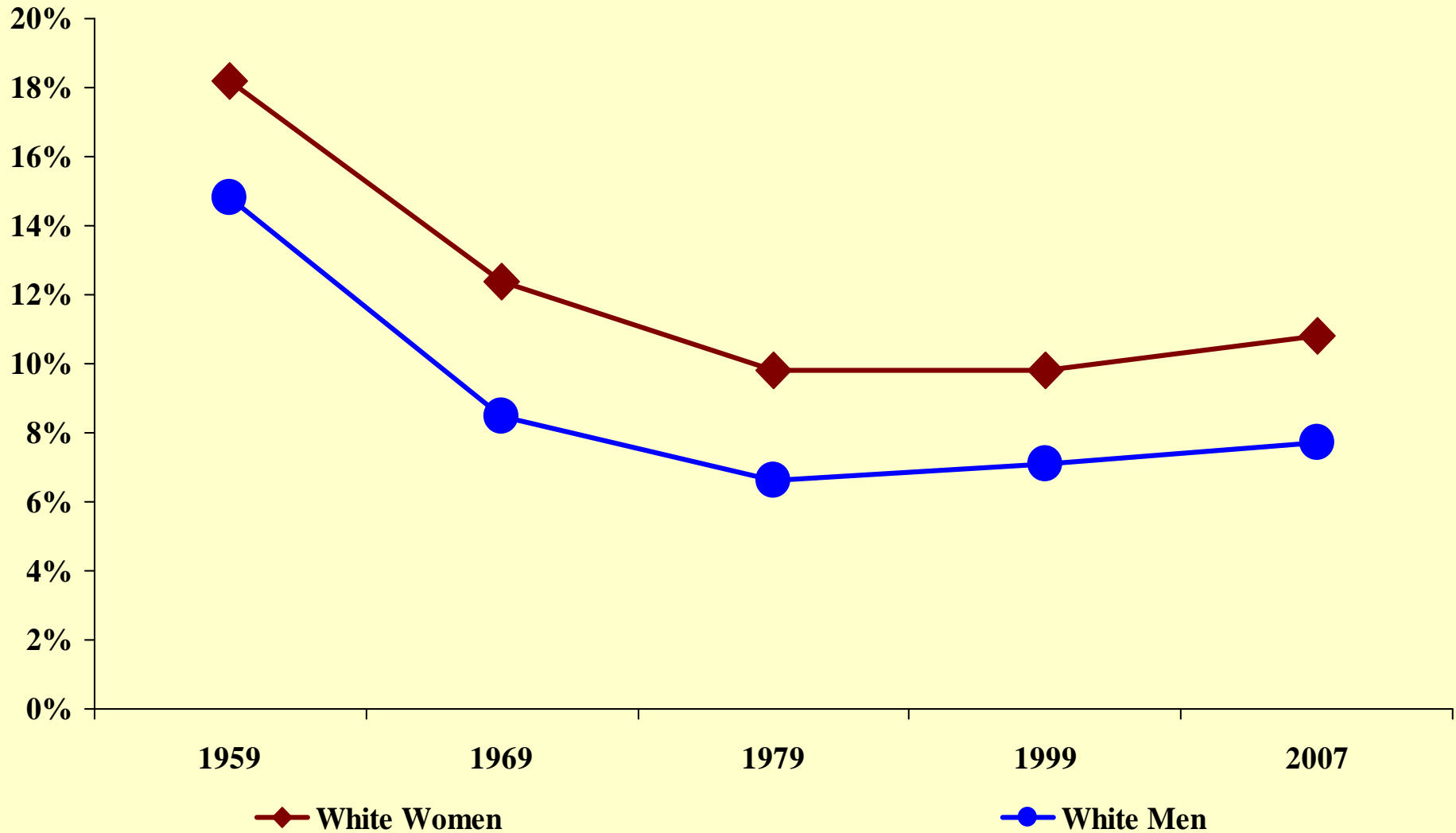
Proportion of 30-34 Year-Olds with a College Degree
by Gender and Racial/Ethnic Background



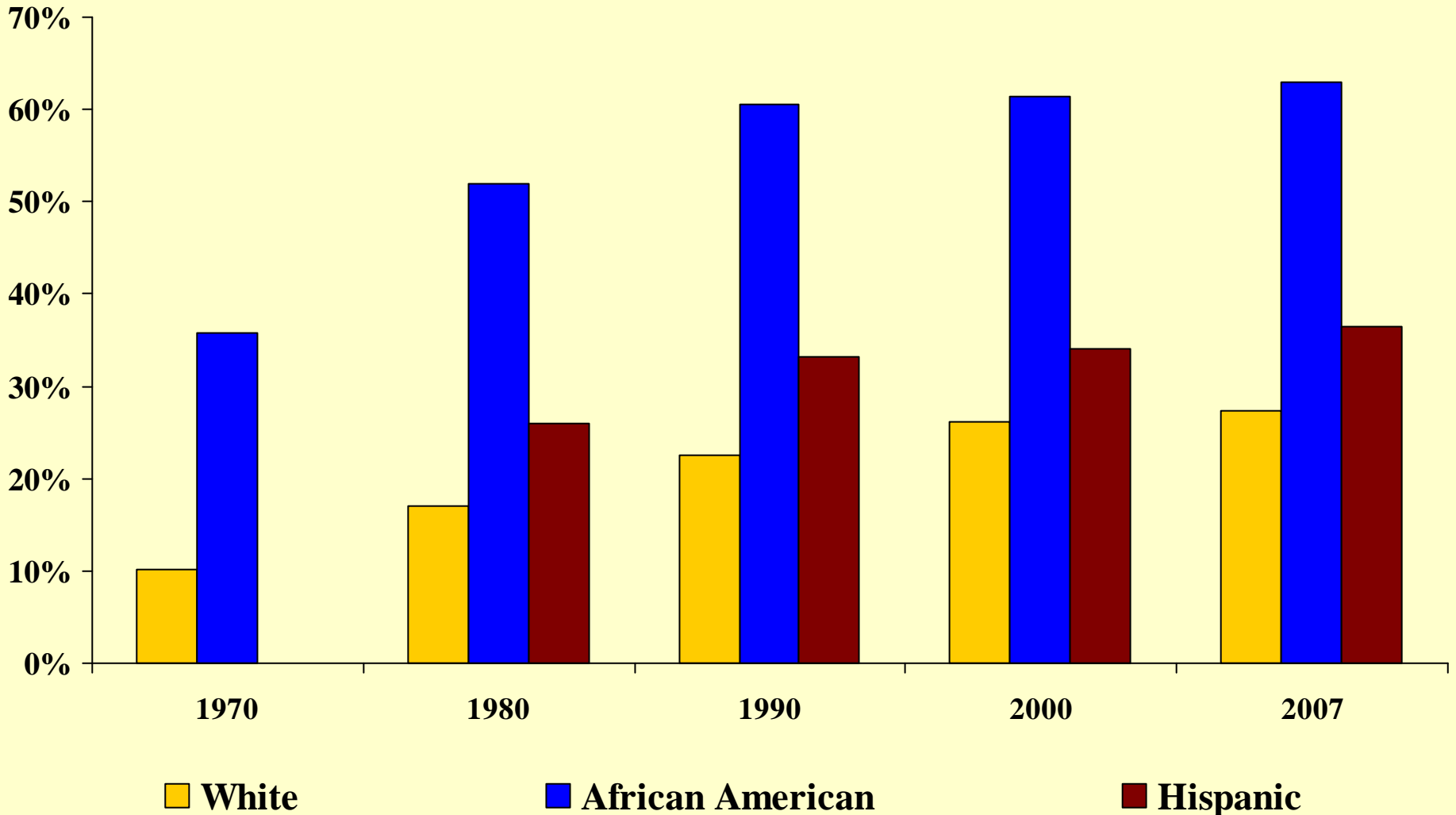
Trends: Less Gains in Wages by Education



Trends: No Gains in Poverty Gaps by Gender



Trends: Continued Increase in Single-Parenting



Particular Prevalence of Non-Married Parenting Among Lower-Educated Women

Fertility, Education, and Marital Status: 40–44 Year-Old Women

(2006 Current Population Survey Data)

Education Level	% Never Married	% Without Children	Children per 1,000 Women
Less than High School	16.6%	14.9%	2,447
High School Graduate	12.3%	18.3%	1,947
Some College	14.4%	19.4%	1,821
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	12.9%	25.2%	1,626

Less educated women have more children and at a younger age than more educated women. This translates into an overall reproduction rate twice as high for high school dropouts as college graduates, with many times the likelihood of never-married births.

Geographic Distribution of Disadvantage Mothers and Young Children

2000 Census Data—Analysis of Census Tracts

	Tracts with No Vulnerability Factors	Tracts with Six or More Vulnerability Factors
Poor Families with Children as % of All Families with Children	7.2%	41.4%
% 25+ No HS Diploma	13.5%	48.0%
% 25+ BA or Higher	28.7%	7.1%
% Owner-Occupied Housing	71.0%	29.6%
% Single-Parent Family	20.5%	53.1%
% 0–4 Population	6.1%	9.2%
% 16–34 Female of Total Population	12.0%	15.1%
% White Non-Hispanic Population	83.2%	17.6%

2000's CFPC Policy Solutions Frame (& Some Underlying Gender Aspects)

- Making Work Pay (child support assurance/allowance)
- Providing Needed Work Supports (child care)
- Improving Skills and Entrepreneurship (microenterprise)
- Promoting Savings and Reducing Debt (medical debt)
- Providing Equal Opportunities (accommodating workplaces)

Implications on Incorporating Gender Frames for Action in the 2010's

- Closing the political gender gap (through male enlightenment)
- “Sisterhood is powerful” vs. “Strengthening families”
- Security vs. profit motivation for economic development
- Business regulations/incentives based on balancing work and family

Frames for Engaging Women Activists in Economic Development/Poverty Solutions

- Balancing work and family as value in economic development policy
- Economic incentives directed to family-friendly workplaces
- Support for “mom and pop” venture capital

Microenterprise as Example of Gender-Based Economic Development

- Grameen Bank and microenterprise development internationally – gender approach
- United States microenterprise development – gender disproportionally and meeting balancing work and family needs for low-income women
- Challenge of getting microenterprise viewed as “real” economic development in Iowa – tenuous support from traditional (male dominated) economic development lawmakers

Current Action Steps in Iowa

- NWAFF grant to Iowa Community Action Agency to create a pilot microenterprise program for low-income women.
- Vetting gender frames and possible 2011 actions with women leaders/activists on women's issues in Iowa
- Seeking alignment on economic development reforms with poverty solutions groups
- Nurturing women business leaders as spokespersons

Lessons Learned to Date

- Gender disparities exist and must be addressed specifically in poverty solutions
- Reframing the economic development discussion essential to poverty solutions and incorporating gender provides key opportunity
- Potential exists to activate new leadership and response, but requires intentionality

Potential CPFC Collaborations with Poverty Solutions Activists

- *Women, Work, and Poverty* is easily adapted for production for other states.
- Presentations on gender-based poverty solutions and responses/lessons learned can and should be shared across states.
- Joint efforts can be undertaken to foster incorporation of ideas into national thinking and foundation poverty solution efforts.

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link to Women, Work and Poverty report:

http://www.cfpciowa.org/uploaded/WWP%20Full%20ReportDEC%202009_1.pdf



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