



Review Article

AN ANALYSIS OF WORKPLACE GENDER SEGREGATION AND ITS IMPACT ON WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Occupational gender segregation has been at the heart of debates about gender inequality. High levels of segregation have been considered to impose constraints on careers, and generally to be at the root of gender inequalities. This paper provides a detailed review of literature on occupational gender segregation in order to provide explanation from both economic and non-economic arguments of the continuous persistence of segregation in the workplace and how it impacts women's career advancement. It begins with an overview of the theoretical explanations of occupational gender segregation and what existing research suggests is responsible for the difference between the employment outcomes of men and women. The second section addresses the extent to which the attempt to discern a monocausal explanation for this phenomenon is flawed with the consideration that the phenomena inherent in gender segregation are too complex to be explained by a single argument in all cases. The paper concludes with a summary of policies and measures proposed by the literature to address segregation with a series of key issues and opportunities for women's workplace advancement.

KEYWORDS: Gender, segregation, advancement, inequalities, workplace

INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, one of the most consistent demographic trends over the last 50 years has been the increasing number of women in the waged labour force (Wirth, 2007). In the 1950s women comprised less than one third of the formal economy based labour force; however, by the start of the 21st century, women represented almost half of the world's waged workforce (ILO, 2009). Regardless of this increase in the number of women in the labour force, a study by the Hansard Society (2003) showed that across all sectors 70 per cent of women worked in lower-level clerical and service sector jobs and in any given occupation, the higher the rank the lower the proportion of women.

Until the 1970s, the term "segregation" signified separation of the races (Reskin, 2009). Gross (1968) introduced the concept of "gender segregation" into the sociological lexicon to describe women's and men's concentration in different occupations. His use was innovative both in treating the sexes' concentration in different occupations as sociologically important and in extending the concept to encompass functional differentiation (Acker, 2004). Although no formal distinctions are made between jobs for women and men, there is a fairly clear segmentation of the labour market in most countries (Watt, 2003). The segregation of the sexes into different occupational categories and within occupations is an enduring and pervasive feature of most workplaces. It persists across most countries, irrespective of the level of economic development, political and religious system, social and

cultural environment. It is an enduring characteristic of labour markets around the world (Anker, 2007).

Gender segregation refers to the tendency of women and men to work in different sectors and occupations. It relates to the different work that men and women do as a consequence of their patterns of socialization, identifying tasks traditionally seen as 'women's work' or 'men's work'. It is the tendency for men and women to be employed in different occupations across the entire spectrum of jobs caused by gender bias based on stereotypical, biological and social differences between men and women (Duncan, 2009). Frequently segregation is used in a broad sense, as a term to include both segregation in a narrower sense and concentration (Fiss, 2006). It is a concept that is inherently symmetrical. Concentration is about the sex composition of the workforce in an occupation or set of occupations, whereas segregation refers to the separation of the two sexes across occupations (Gold, 2003).

Occupational gender segregation has been at the heart of debates about gender inequality. High levels of segregation have been considered to be a significant factor in the discrepancy between the wages of women and men, to impose constraints on careers, and generally to be at the root of gender inequalities (Forret, 2004; Reskin and Roos, 2000). Segregation in the stricter, narrower sense is regarded as evidence of inequality, or even as directly measuring inequality. The inequalities of segregation are primarily located in market employment, but they spill over into all aspects of life. Thus, the subject raises significant questions of social justice, of the efficient utilisation of human resources, of the structuring of labour markets, and of wider social aspects of work and family life. This issue of inequality can be addressed through a distinction between the vertical and horizontal dimensions of segregation (Reskin, 2000).

Horizontal segregation is understood as under (or over) representation of a certain group in occupations or sectors not ordered by any criterion (Hoel, 2009). Horizontal segregation refers to the concentration of women and men in professions or sectors of economic activity. It is where the workforce of a specific industry or sector is mostly made up of one particular gender. An example of horizontal segregation can be found in construction, where men make up the majority of the industry's workforce, whereas childcare is almost exclusively a female occupation.

Vertical segregation on the other hand is where opportunities for career progression within a sector for a particular gender are narrowed. This type of segregation affects women far more than men. For example, women are less likely to work as managers or senior officials than men (Reskin, 2000). Vertical occupational segregation exists when men and women both work in the same job categories, but men commonly do the more skilled, responsible or better paid work. Tomlinson, Olsen & Purdam (2009) asserts that finding a significant cause behind the prevalence of gender segregation has proved difficult.

This paper provides a detailed overview of literature on occupational gender segregation in order to provide explanation from both economic and non-economic arguments of the continuous persistence of segregation in the workplace and how it impacts women's career advancement. It begins with an overview of the theoretical explanations of occupational gender segregation and what existing research suggests is responsible for the difference between the employment outcomes of men and women. The second section addresses the extent to which the attempt to discern a monocausal explanation for this phenomenon is flawed with the consideration that the phenomena inherent in gender segregation are too complex to be explained by a single argument in all cases. The paper concludes with a summary of policies and measures proposed by the literature to address segregation with a series of key issues and opportunities for women's workplace advancement.

Literature Review: Theoretical Explanations of Occupational Gender Segregation

There abound a variety of theories and positions attempting to explain the patterns of occupational gender segregation in the labour market from an economic point of view using neoclassical, human capital and labour market segmentation theories as well as non-economic approaches using different feminist perspectives. While both neoclassical and labour market segmentation theories make valuable contributions to how patterns of occupational gender segregation exist, it is argued that none of them successfully explain why this pattern is still present worldwide (Anker, 2007). As a result, the importance of non-economic and feminist theories as key influences is emphasised. However, even though the theories are separated for analytical purposes, some of the arguments and theories do overlap.

Economic Theories: The Rational Explanation for Occupational Gender Segregation

Two key lines of argument are identified within these theoretical frameworks. The first has a supply side focus on workers' skills which also emphasizes the choices of workers. The second approach has a demand side perspective which is built on the idea that the employer will try to maximise profits and minimise costs, which can potentially lead to discrimination against certain groups (Anker, 2007). Rubery et al. (2009) pointed out that sex segregated patterns of employment arise from a combination of the labour supply and labour demand conditions. The supply side often understands the gender segregated labour market as the result of preferences and free choices from men and women (Hakim, 2000) as well as that men and women might have different skills and qualifications, which can be seen as different investment in human capital (Becker, 1957).

Supply Side Arguments

Supply side theories focus on the characteristics of those supplying their labour and understand occupational gender segregation as an investment in human capital, which labour market forces have to accommodate. Gender

differences in interest in, preparation for, as well as willingness to participate in, various jobs are identified as supply side explanations (Ridgeway and England, 2007). They focus on why women 'prefer' certain types of occupations – for example, women may 'prefer' those with flexible working hours in order to allow time for childcare, and may also 'prefer' occupations which are relatively easy to interrupt for a period of time to bear or rear children (Anker, 2007). As a result, for explaining occupational segregation the assumption from the labour supply point of view is based on rational choice of individuals with regards to their occupations and education, which again is directly linked to differences in human capital. Two highly influential theories, human capital (Becker, 1964) and preference theory (Hakim, 2000; Hakim, 2006; Hakim, 2002) are explored further.

In one strand of the supply side literature, occupational choice and associated wage outcomes are viewed as the outcome of rational human capital investment decisions based on the different gender roles in social reproduction. Labour supply is differentiated, both between the sexes and within the sexes in the sense of skill and part-time and full-time status. It is claimed that women engage in less training, due to their shorter expected labour market tenure, and choose occupations for which interruptions to employment are not costly, due to low skill depreciation and flat age earnings profiles (Watts, 2003). This analysis is alleged to explain the tendency of women to locate in low skill jobs but it cannot justify why women are concentrated in a small number of female occupations at each skill level (Blau and Jusenius, 1976). Hakim (2002) notes the importance of convenient hours in women's choice of employment. England finds no evidence that women, planning non-continuous employment, choose traditional female occupations or that women with continuous employment have an occupational distribution similar to men.

From this point of view it is argued that in contrast to men, women have usually made fewer investments in education as well as having less work experience, which consequently is reflected in their lower pay and promotion.

Demand Side Arguments

Turning to the demand side of the economic theories, the key arguments are centred on the idea that the labour market and the employer will try to maximise profits and minimise costs, which can potentially lead to discrimination against certain groups, such as women. The demand side focuses more on institutional factors and preferences in addition to expectations within organisations and from the employer (Becker, 1971; Doeringer and Piore, 1971; Kanter, 1997; Acker, 2004, 2006, 2009).

A branch of theories building on economic logic is institutional and labour market segmentation theories. According to this position, the labour market is divided into two historically rooted sectors, primary and secondary sectors with little mobility between them. Consequently, it is difficult for workers to pass from one segment to another, especially it is difficult to pass from secondary to primary. Another school of thought related to labour market segmentation focuses on statistical discrimination.

Within the demand side strand of the choice theoretic approach, employers practice statistical discrimination against women by using gender as a cheap screening device. Individuals are assigned the real or perceived characteristics of the group to which they belong, such as high turnover and/or absenteeism rates (Chapman, 2002). It is then cost efficient for an employer to choose members of a group displaying the desired characteristics. In an environment of weak labour market regulation and unemployment, employers exercise significant discretion in their structuring of work (i.e. full-time versus part-time and the determination of when work is undertaken) and in their hiring behaviour, particularly with respect to women who seek part-time employment and constitute a relatively elastic supply of labour. Also the culture of the particular workplace can attract women or deter them from seeking employment (Watts, 2003).

In a study Riach and Rich (2002) demonstrated through correspondence testing that women and men with similar qualifications and experience were treated unequally in the hiring process. Since the discrimination occurred during short listing, the applicant was unlikely to realise that unequal treatment had occurred. Using a multinomial logit specification, Kidd and Meng and Gregory (2005) showed that personal characteristics and educational attainment provided a limited explanation of the differences in occupational status of men and women in 1981/82 and 1999/2000. This reflects two processes, namely employers' overt (statistical) discrimination, and limited expectations on the part of women, mediated by family influences and trade union attitudes.

Cultural, Feminist and Gender Theories: The Non-Economic Approach to Occupational Gender Segregation

One of the main criticisms of economic theories, both the neoclassical and labour market segmentation theories is that they have failed to consider non-economic and non-labour market variables and forms of behaviour (Anker, 2007).

Non-economic concerns are crucial for understanding patterns of gender segregation hence evolved the cultural and feminist theories. The feminist theory recognises the pervasive influence of gender divisions on social life and tries to understand women's oppression and the structures in society that espouse this oppression and subordination (Onsongo, 2004). The basic premise of feminist theory is that patriarchy is manifested in women's subordinate position in the family, the labour market and society as a whole (Anker, 2007). Under the gender division of labour the male is viewed as the breadwinner, whereas the female is assumed to be family centred, even though an increasing number of women participate in (fulltime) employment and also head single parent families. The lack of congruence between perceptions and reality are alleged not to detract from gender-based discrimination against women. Feminist theories also emphasise the enormous overlap in the abilities and preferences of individual men and women.

Feminists advance *three broad perspectives* in trying to explain the absence of women from senior management in

the public and private sector. The first perspective is *personal factors* in which the paucity of women in management positions is attributed to the psychosocial attributes, including personality characteristics, attitudes and behavioral skills of women themselves. Among personal factors are self-esteem and self-confidence, lack of motivation and ambition to accept challenges “to go up the ladder”, women’s low potential for leadership, less assertiveness, less emotional stability and lack of ability to handle a crisis (Bond 2006). On the other hand, it has also been argued that personal factors such as, assertiveness, confidence, resourceful creativeness, loyalty and trustworthiness do help some women to ascend to senior management positions (Singh and Shahabudin 2000).

The second is the *structural or institutional factors* argument which advances the view that it is the disadvantageous position of women in the organizational structure (few numbers, little power, limited access to resources) which shapes and defines the behaviour and positions of women. The underlying premise of this perspective is that men and women are equally capable of and committed to assuming positions of leadership. The problem is vested in the structure and the remedy is a fundamental change to eliminate inappropriate discrimination in institutional policies and practices. The structural factors that affect women negatively include: discriminatory appointment and promotion practices; male resistance to women in management positions; absence of policies and legislations to ensure participation of women; and limited opportunities for leadership training and for demonstrating competence as a result of power structure in the work place (Bond 2006). Structural factors affecting the participation of women positively include the presence of organizational guidance, good mentoring systems, proper staff development programmes for women, transparent appointment and promotion procedures, support services for women, access to information technology and flexible work schedules.

The last perspective is the one advanced by Smulders (2008). She explores the *cultural factors* which link gender factors and organizational structure factors. Her analysis is concerned with the social construction of gender and the assignment of specific roles, responsibilities and expectations to women and men. “The gender-based roles, irrelevant to the work place, are carried into the work place and kept in place because the actors involved, both dominant and subordinate, subscribe to social and organization reality” (Smulders, 2008). The cultural factors lead to stereotypical views about women’s abilities within the cultural context. The view that top management positions are only suitable for men relegates women to secondary roles. The emphasis is placed on women’s role as mothers, caregivers and nurturers.

According to these arguments, other factors than human capital, motivation and choice need to be used in order to explain why women struggle to climb the ladder and break the glass ceiling. Organisational structures and gender stereotypes are thus important for further examination into barriers of women’s workplace advancement.

Gender Segregation and Women’s Workplace Advancement

Extensive research (Oakley, 2000; Phillips, 2005; Reskin, 2009) demonstrates the lack of advancement opportunity for women in prestigious and high ranking positions in all types of organisations. For middle level and top managerial jobs in complex organisations, advancement typically means promotion to higher levels in the career ladder where the job incumbent has more autonomy, control, resources, and a higher salary. Central concerns in formal promotion systems include the selection of candidates based on merit and equal opportunity for women. Thus, the lack of opportunity that is inherent in the structure of the labour market is itself a barrier, one that becomes even more insurmountable as it intersects with the gender, race, and class of job incumbents.

"Advancement" must be considered in a broader context than simply movement up the hierarchy. In the best case, advancement means a job change that results in better pay, benefits, working conditions, or security. For women in the formal economy and those in the informal economy, upward mobility means any change that results in higher pay, not necessarily a promotion. Women face many systemic barriers that keep them from advancing to the top of the organisational hierarchy. These systemic barriers are discussed below:

Organisational Culture

Organisations mirror society's ideas about which groups of workers are appropriate for different kinds of jobs. Although hiring and promotion are supposed to be based on rational and universalistic criteria, they often express informal expectations about the gender of the people best suited for particular positions, producing gender stratified work forces. Most jobs are gender-typed, as appropriate only for one gender or the other. Consequently, people of a particular gender become identified with certain kinds of work, such as women with clerical work and its supervision and men with administration and top management.

Organisational Structure

Social norms, cultural stereotypes, and power and privilege in organisations provide the "invisible foundation" for organisational decisions about which jobs and how much opportunity are suitable for certain types of workers (Konrad and Pfeffer, 2001; Acker, 2006; Reskin, 2008). These decisions determine the ways that complex organisations structure works, creating barriers for women. Employers use administrative rules and procedures to regulate hiring, promotion, and wage systems in the "internal labour market" (ILM) of organisations (O’Reilly, 2006; Nielsen, 2009). The ILM theory is useful in analysing more formally and precisely the notion of the "pipeline" for career advancement. Ideally, a job ladder that links steps in a logical progression of skill, knowledge, and experience acquired on the job characterises an ILM. Formal rules govern who is eligible to move up the ladder and how promotion decisions are made. Hiring practices in entry level jobs determine access to the ladders. Complex organisations contain many subsystems of job ladders

(pipelines) to which different rules and procedures apply (O'Reilly, 2006). Promotion rates and access to the means of acquiring new skills systematically differ according to where one is located in the organisation. Certain career lines are blocked while others afford ample upward movement. The barriers that prevent women and minorities from moving through the "glass ceiling" often arise because the jobs in which these groups are concentrated either lead nowhere or have very short lines of progression. Discrimination against women becomes institutional and systemic in large bureaucratic organisations, as opposed to intentional and personal, by organising labour along job ladders in ways that segregate them according to the gender (Forret, 2004; Heilman, 2006; Bielby, 2006).

Strategies for Increasing Advancement Opportunities

The continued expression of gender segregation begs for redress within organisations, not only because it may affect the optimal movement of talent between organisational ranks, but also because it affects the quality of employees' organisational experiences. The presence of gender segregation causes women to experience work environments as exclusive and difficult to navigate (Catalyst, 2001; Mor Barak, 2008; Chang, 2000). Indeed, the pressure of operating within such a work environment exerts a toll for women employees beyond the segregation that they may experience there, engendering less-positive attitudes toward their jobs and less engagement in their work (Ensher, 2001).

Understanding the underlying dynamics of segregation is necessary before organisations can take effective action to reduce it. In other words, interventions that target root causes of these behaviours will inevitably prove more effective than those that target more surface-level indicators of disparate treatment (Catalyst, 2001). Research demonstrates that even well intended efforts to increase the access of women to opportunities may maintain or even exacerbate negative impressions of women's abilities (Catalyst, 2001; Mor Barak, 2008). They argue that the most effective strategies to reducing formal segregation will be those that provide accurate and objective information about organisational members, and then apply that information to decision-making processes (Catalyst, 2001).

Equality strategies have been seen as potential ways to counteract the strong patterns of occupational gender segregation, both from governments, policymakers as well as researchers (Seierstad & Opsahl, 2011). A variety of legislations and acts focusing on equality between men and women have for decades been in place in countries across the globe, yet, how organisations focus on and implement strategies for equality varies. As highlighted by Acker (2006b), these attempts do also often fail. Hence, whereas the idea and pursuit of equality have been a central goal for many countries for decades and a variety of policies for equality and diversity exist, how to achieve equality and strategies in use differ, both between and within countries. Several theorists (Chang, 2000; Acker, 2006b) highlight a need for greater use of strategies to challenge the existing and persisting pattern of occupational gender segregation in the labour market. Chang (2000) took the position that

states' interventions can focus on two main areas for tackling occupational gender segregation. First, governments can ensure equality of access. This refers to policies in which the state can intervene by passing legislation that either promotes or hinders women's access to participate in all occupations. The state can enhance women's economic status by passing laws promoting equality, such as equal pay and antidiscrimination laws. The second approach is substantive benefit which means that the state can interfere in the private or domestic sphere by taking over some of the responsibilities and thereby facilitating the combination of work and other social responsibilities.

Critique on theoretical explanations of occupational gender segregation

Explanations for the persistence of segregation are disputed; with the well repeated discussion of whether women's position is a product of their preferences (Hakim, 2001; Hakim, 2006; Hakim, 2004) or whether women make 'choices' under constrained (or enabling) circumstances (Crompton and Le Feuvre, 2006; Ginn et al., 2006). One of the main criticisms of economic theories, both the neoclassical and labour market segmentation theories is that they have failed to consider non-economic and non-labour market variables and forms of behaviour (Anker, 2007).

Rational choice theories have significant drawbacks in explaining gender segregation (Gonas and Karlsson, 2006). In the first place, this theoretical contribution tends to ascribe a significant amount of agency to the individual (Blackburn et al. 2002). This therefore reduces the effect of structure upon the effect (Gonas and Karlsson, 2006). It is assumed in rational choice theories from the outset that people will act in a way that will best serve their interests, and this means there is an argument that by spending time on domestic work, women are thus prevented in investing in human capital. Furthermore, the rational choice theory would suggest that there is rationalism for all aspects of human behaviour and if not, then the theory is changed in order to fit the phenomenon. Not all individuals will enter into professions that would provide the highest positions or the greatest chances of advancement (Radford, 1998). There may be gender differences in this type of occupation, which might result from the prevalence of female role models in some types of occupations and males in others, resulting in the notion of the type of occupations that might be considered attractive (Simpson, 2004). The notion that individuals have agency do not mean that they will go for what can be considered the most 'rational' course of action as many different views exist as to what might be considered the benefit of different jobs (Blackburn et al., 2002). The human capital argument would seem to be the most limited of the explanatory theses in many ways as it suggests that people are rewarded for their previous investment into their own education and training. There does not seem to be a consistent difference between the sexes that can bear out this argument (Miller et al., 2009).

These objections to the rational choice argument do not suggest that there is no logical place for this argument in the debate (Miller et al., 2009). In particular, there might be a different notion of the relationship between the

individual and the structures that affect occupational segregation (Blackburn et al., 2002). This can be seen in the argument of gender stereotypes prevailing in different occupations. The prevalence of gender segregation in occupations results in a class of jobs that is then subject to societal stereotypes (Miller et al., 2009). Segregation occurs and then this becomes embodied within the stereotypes and the cultural norms and expectations that then create a circular argument that results in reinforcing the process of segregation (Miller et al., 2009). This would suggest an implicit influence of the individual's perceptions of certain types of jobs and the roles that are inherent in different jobs, which would then result in the impression that certain jobs are differently desirable on the basis of gender (Tomlinson et al., 2009). This is an important aspect that is considered by a number of arguments in the field, and is supported by the notion of the relationship between gender and society as an interaction rather than one being imposed upon the other. Blackburn et al. (2002) point out that although adult female participation in the labour force has indeed become easier, we should not expect this to have immediately resulted in a sudden and abrupt change in the occupational structure. The prevalence of occupational segregation would seem an apt question to ask in a number of generations, but since the societal changes are relatively recent, there is a strong case to be made that the process is fluid, and is progressing in a direction that would suggest it would ultimately diminish.

The patriarchal explanation of gender segregation rests upon the notion that women are implicitly or explicitly given to consider that their nature is the domestic sphere (Blackburn et al., 2002). This can therefore result in several consequences. In the first place it can result in a structural relationship that means women are given less consideration for the more lucrative occupations (Tomlinson et al., 2009). It is the implicit consideration of the employer that female employees will not be as reliable as males in the long term and will ultimately result in long periods being taken off work, thus reducing their perceived value in the view of the employer (Radford, 1998). This element of a patriarchal structure and the way in which it affects the way individual employers function in society is given short shrift by Blackburn et al. (2002) among others, but it is certainly an element that has not fully been considered by them. First, this explanation depends upon the fact that the higher paid an occupation, the more likely it is that the employer is looking for a long-term commitment (Browne, 2006). The idea that women of a child-bearing age hold the potential to avoid making that commitment for the long term, and also result in some disruption through the provision of substitute work and the payment of maternity leave may well reduce the potential value of a female employee in such a situation (Miller et al., 2009). Secondly, the inability to maintain a consistent presence in an employment context that, if lucrative, may well be competitive, could also result in the reduced potential of the female employee to maintain an effective presence (Browne, 2006). This would suggest there is a strong potential for the selection theory that suggests that there is an element of biological determinism in a number of jobs (Tomlinson et al., 2013).

However, the view put forward by Blackburn et al., (2002) must be considered as rooted in the correct interpretation

of the evidence. Women are not necessarily pushed towards lower ranked occupations that will not 'mind' if they are absent through child-bearing; indeed it is such occupations that might have problems with the provision of cover or the cost of maternity leave (England, 2005). Although we might consider that such biological determinism has potential as an argument and even is one that holds the occasional declaration of support in 'big' business, it is important to note that it does not explain gender segregation as a prime mover (England, 2005). Arguments of patriarchal exploitation tend to be based on a selected rewriting of history and an interpretation of the past from a contemporary perspective' (Blackburn et al., 2002). It can be argued that it would be difficult to obtain explicit admission of the motivation for denying certain occupations to women, and therefore any argument that suggests that evidence needs to be supplied would seem to be an unfair reading of the evidence, but even the evidence that can be discerned does not support this element of a gender determinism caused by a patriarchal structure of society (Miller et al., 2009). It is, of course, easy to see patriarchy in every element of society, and although this theory may have much to offer as one element of the issue, it is not enough to explain the prevalence of gender segregation (Blackburn et al., 2002).

A particular opposition to this line of argument is in the element to which the agency is assumed as not being exercised by the women in question (England, 2005). This argument, of course, reaches the nub of the problem by the fact that on the one side, the idea that women are being forced into a course of action would seem absurd; but on the other, the notion that occupational structure is wholly a product of decisions made on a rational basis to be equally odd. Hakim's preference theory represented a method by which the rational choice and human capital theories could be combined into one interactive theory (Blackburn et al., 2002). Biological determinism is not ignored in this theoretical contribution, and from the perspective above it would appear that it may not be possible to entirely disregard the existence of this as a factor in affecting women's life chances as is often assumed. Most counter-arguments to this point of view rest on the notion that it represents the full explanation for the phenomenon (Miller et al., 2009). Therefore, in contrast to Blackburn et al.'s (2002) vilification for the thesis, it can be seen as a relatively useful concept. It is correct to suggest that individuals are not entirely autonomous and social context has an effect on life chances and in this department, Hakim's thesis is limited (Radford, 1998). However, it is not effective to suggest that because it does not take full account of the influence of social structure, the entire theory can be discounted.

The major challenge that appears to exist within the theories that try to explain gender segregation is that they all uphold monocausal explanations of the phenomenon. This means that they can all individually be discounted, as is done by Blackburn et al. (2002), who find it simple to propose that one theory is not effective on account of not being structural enough and considering that individuals are all autonomous beings when in fact their chances are empirically demonstrated to result from the social situation. It is also not an especially effective argument to show that any theories that place too much prominence

upon the structural features of the phenomenon run the risk of illustrating individuals as essentially following predefined destinies and are unable to reflect any control over their own options (Miller et al., 2009). It is problematic that many theories can be simply discounted through the use of effective evidence, or claims that such evidence cannot be found and therefore the theoretical contribution rests upon a naive presumption that such a phenomenon exists. Any attempts to synthesise the different theoretical contributions together would hold a significant problem in being prone to objections from two different perspectives. This is apparently the situation that occurs with reference to Blackburn et al.'s (2002) consideration of Hakim's preference theory, which attempts to tie together the human capital argument with the rational choice consideration; the flaw of the explanations is confirmed by the fact that they do not consider the power and choices of the employers (Blackburn et al., 2002).

This would suggest that the main difficulty in examining this situation lies in the consideration that there is a monocausal explanation for the phenomenon, or at least the tying together of a number of broad causes into one theoretical viewpoint. Monocausal explanations are rationally reductive, as it is considered relevant for us to understand different phenomena by the methodology of reduction to several broad areas, but it also would appear to be a limitation in that it attempts to suggest that there are basic elements to the argument to which a phenomenon can be reduced. In the first place, it is posited that the views of occupation are the same, and indeed the same between the genders (Blackburn et al., 2002). This might not be the case: occupations can be viewed as a vocation, or simply as a job. There might be a tenuous difference between the genders in the ways in which such occupations are viewed that might have a marginal effect upon any survey of attitudinal differences (Miller et al., 2009). This would allow this particular cause to be discounted in terms of it not providing an explanatory aspect to the debate. (England, 2005) However, it need not be the case that such a variable needs to explain the whole of the variation that is observed, but simply some of it. Other variables, such as the gender preference theory may also explain other aspects of it - but not all. When faced with a complex phenomenon of which there are many variables, some empirical and some qualitative, that contribute to the way in which this phenomenon interacts, it would seem remiss to attempt to reduce it to a theory that simplifies the notion. Occupational segregation is a significant element in a society, and perhaps there are as many explanations as there are views of occupation.

A result of gender segregation in occupations is the resultant uneven economic conditions that are suffered by different men and women. However, as has been suggested by Blackburn et al. (2002), we only know that women's jobs are worth less because they are paid less, and they are paid less because they are worth less. This produces a circular argument: gender segregation does not necessarily result in uneven economic conditions per se. Different preferences between different genders for different occupations would not result in an unequal economic condition should each occupation be valued in society by the same criteria which would result in economic pay

(Charles and Grusky, 2004). Furthermore, the different economic recompense offered to each occupation is not necessarily posited on the gender preferences of a role. A female dominated occupation is not necessarily considered to be of lower value because it is a female dominated occupation; the gender segregation may often come after the occupation is created rather than before. Restaurant work or service work, for example, was traditionally considered lower value work in contexts before it became an occupation that was dominated by women (Miller, 2005). The consequence of uneven conditions experienced by men and women according to different occupations does not strictly result from gender segregation as a structural influence. Different occupations do not result in different conditions unless there is an underlying cause that results in women's choice of occupations that do not receive the highest recompense (Miller, 2005).

The course of gender segregation would appear to be an ongoing process. It would seem unfeasible to recommend that it should not occur on account of the fact that there is no segregation in other areas of society, as it appears there is still an overall lag in women in terms of skills and training (Miller, 2006). The causes and effects of occupational segregation can only be evaluated when we have the potential for two groups of people who are equal in all other ways except for gender. At this point we would have to discount the effect of socialization, which may have resulted in differential impressions of the type of jobs that each individual is likely to hold according to gender (Miller, 2006). If there is gender segregation in the society's occupations during the socialization of the individuals, then there is likely to be gender segregation in the occupations that then develop. The notion of certain occupations drawing upon different skills that are more likely to be held by different gender groups may also be pertinent (England, 2005). The notion of intergroup theory may be relevant through its demonstration that common work and positions in an organizational hierarchy may result in certain gender-specific attributes being related to that group (Miller et al., 2009).

CONCLUSION

To this end, it can be concluded that explanations of gender segregation would most effectively take the position that societal change of this nature is not necessarily immediate. If individuals are given agency, a revolution is not immediate but gradual as the notion of an occupational group that demonstrates a limited level of gender segregation becomes normalized (Miller et al., 2009). Likewise the structures in society may be altered in an explicit legislative sense, but the culture that exists within certain occupations may take some time to become normalized (Blackburn et al., 2002). As a result, the questions that should be asked of this context are not simply the notion of why gender segregation still persists, but the extent to which it produces unequal outcomes for the sexes. In particular, alarm bells should not be ringing at the presence of occupational segregation, but at the notion that it is not proceeding effectively in the direction of more limited segregation. Likewise, it should not be presumed that occupational segregation can be represented as a negative aspect in itself, it is the accompanying problems

of barriers to women's access and poor conditions for female-dominated work that is actually the issue; occupational segregation is not the issue if the two varieties of work are valued in the same way (Gonas and Karlsson, 2006). Progress towards a lower level of inequality on account of gender in occupations appears to be proceeding in a relatively effective way, and therefore the results of occupational segregation are being slowly diminished. In the long term, therefore, it seems likely it will eventually cease to be a problem paving ways for promoting women's advancement in the workplace.

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