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Feminizing Paid Work

Thirty years ago an overview discussion of the economic aspects of gender inequality had a simple agenda. In industrial democracies, the influx of women into the labor force was barely 10 years old. The dominant analytical frameworks for understanding economic inequality were premised on the experiences of male workers and focused on labor market issues of employment, occupations and earnings. Given this context, the primary challenge for researchers was one of documentation and asking how the labor force characteristics of women compared with those of men.

From a feminist perspective, an analyst today has a far more complex task. Substantial growth has occurred in the questions asked, in the topics investigated, in sensitivity to race and class, and in the breadth and range of feminist theories and methodologies. The expansion of questions, areas of inquiry and approaches also has occurred alongside significant world-wide political and economic developments. Altered political regimes, such as the break-up of the former USSR and the emergence of the global economy, have extended inquiry into the interrelationships between gender and structural change, and emphasized the connections between family, households and employment.

In this paper, two themes are selected from the matrix of questions, topics, theories and/or methodologies found in current discussions of economic inequalities between women and men: feminization and feminist perspectives. The former is illustrated not only by the growth of the female labor force, but also by the concentration of women in part-time employment, and in select occupations. The latter theme of feminist perspectives emphasizes that these processes of feminization have not removed asymmetrical power relations between men and women. Instead, as women have moved into paid employment, the privileged position of men over women has been reconstituted in the paid workplace. The focus is on industrial democracies, primarily in North America (Canada and the United States), the United Kingdom and Europe, and Australia and New Zealand.

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Feminization and Feminist Perspectives

The term 'feminization' refers both to process and to outcomes. As a process, feminization refers to the growing proportions of a population or category that are women. Common examples are the feminization of the labor force, the feminization of occupations, and the feminization of poverty. In each case, women are increasing their numbers and their relative share *vis-à-vis* men. In the case of select occupations, such as secretaries or in the case of certain economically based categories such as the elderly poor, women in fact numerically and proportionately become the majority. In such instance, feminization refers to a statistical outcome. However, as an outcome, the term also frequently connotes economic disadvantage compared to men.

The term 'masculinization' is rare in discussions of economic aspects of gender inequality, simply because male presence in the labor force is assumed. Indeed, late 20th-century conceptualizations of 'standard' workers inevitably assume adult male members of dominant racial, ethnic or nationality based groups. Further, terms such as 'masculine' often carry images of power and privilege rather than disadvantage. 'Feminization' then goes to the heart of feminist concerns about the devaluation, exploitation and oppression of women (Acker et al., 1991). Feminist perspectives stress that women, and the work they do, are economically devalued; that women are in less desirable jobs than are men and are treated as marginal, or secondary workers; and that as a group, women are likely to be influenced and controlled by men.

Feminist Perspectives: Power, Patriarchy and Gender Relations

Feminist scholars view economic inequalities between men and women not only as the result of market forces but also as reflecting and reproducing asymmetrical power relations between women and men. Power is the capacity to influence and control others despite their resistance, as well as the ability to impose values, norms and standards of judgment and situation definitions on others (Chafetz, 1991: 77-8). Power can be further divided into types, depending on the resources used to impose an actor's or group's will over another actor or group: coercion, which derives from physical force; domination, which rests on the control of material resources; influence, which originates with argument; manipulation, which derives from the capacity to deliberately misrepresent; and authority, which derives from a consensus or system of meanings that legitimate the imposition of will (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, 1990: 336).

Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley (1990: 336) observe that feminist sociological theory on power emphasizes domination as a concept and thus the domination of men over women. From a sociological perspective,

domination is one form of power. However, in feminist writings, the concept of domination is broadly defined, and not always restricted to the capacity to influence or control others based on material resources. In feminist theory, domination is any exercise that involves actors imposing their will on others, regardless of whether or not 'the dominant puts a gun to the subordinate's head, withholds money, argues, plays with emotions', or uses shared beliefs about rights and privileges associated with position (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, 1990: 336).

During the past four decades, feminist approaches to understanding and diminishing male power have changed. Both Acker (1989) and Pringle (1995) review these theoretical strands where patriarchy is diversely viewed as a system and as a set of gender relations (also see: Beechey, 1987; Walby, 1986). As a term, the precise meaning of patriarchy varies according to its conceptual use. In the 1970s and early 1980s many feminists viewed patriarchy as 'a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women' (Walby, 1988: 214). Debates existed over whether patriarchy as a system rested on a material or ideological base, and whether or not it was a relatively autonomous system, independent of other sources of structured inequality (such as capitalism).

Within these debates, Marxist and socialist-feminist frameworks pointed out key dimensions of economic inequalities between men and women. Classical Marxist theory saw capitalism as the source of the public-private sphere split (women's exclusion from the labor force and restriction to the home). Since the control of material resources necessary for survival was largely outside the home, the location of women in the private sphere became the source of their dependence on men and their subordination to men. Capitalist economic systems benefited from this arrangement since the costs of reproducing the next generation of workers and of maintaining the capacity to work of the current workforce was supported through the unpaid work of women. However, in emphasizing the benefits of this arrangement for capitalism, the Marxist perspective pays little direct attention to the interest and roles of male workers in preserving the benefits derived from women's domestic labor and in maintaining power within the household.

Socialist feminism emphasizes that gender inequality reflects not only the type of economic system in place but also the power that men have within the household and in the economy. In her influential 1976 article, Hartmann traces how men's control over women was altered but not eliminated by capitalism. She suggests that prior to capitalism as an economic system, a patriarchal system existed in which men controlled the labor of women and children. Men's economic and political roles also privileged them in learning techniques of hierarchical control and exclusion, and they have used these techniques during capitalism to exclude and disadvantage women in the labor force. Similar ideas are expressed in discussions of the transformation of

private patriarchy rooted in the family to public patriarchy, in which the state and economic institutions recast the conditions under which male domination of women prevails (Brown, 1987; but see Mann, 1986).

Although feminism remained focused on understanding male dominance and power over women, by the end of the 1980s, the emphasis shifted to the process of domination embedded in gender relations. This shift highlighted certain concepts and processes and altered questions. With the foci on male domination and male power over women as representing generalizations about social relations that called for a sociological explanation (Curtis, 1986: 171), gender and gendering emerged as central concepts and areas of study. In a pathbreaking article, the historian Joan Scott (1986) observed that the term 'gender' instead of 'sex' explicitly rejects biological explanations for female subordination and becomes a way of denoting the social construction of identities, behavior and power relationships that emphasize and legitimate differences between the sexes. As a social construction, gender is ever present. In the context of everyday life, individuals behave in ways that reaffirm their gender identities and conform to expected gender-specific stereotypes. The concept of gender is reconstituted continually. West and Zimmerman note (1987; also see Fenstermaker et al., 1991; West and Fenstermaker, 1993) that gender is something that one does in interaction with others. From this perspective, 'doing gender' is an accomplishment, consisting of undertaking activities within the context of beliefs, attitudes and expected behaviors in order to display conduct that confirms being female or male.

The foci on gender relations and doing gender have increased, if not recast, the questions asked about male dominance over women, particularly with reference to economic issues. Acker (1989) suggests that the central questions asked by many feminists have shifted from asking how the subordination of women is produced, maintained and changed to those that asked how gender is involved in the processes and structures that previously have been conceived as having nothing to do with gender. Rather than treating the labor process, organizational structures or the wage gap as gender-neutral, the task is to show how integral and embedded gender is in these areas, and how gender defines, perpetuates and recreates the disadvantaged situation of women vis-a-vis men (Acker, 1989, 1990; Pringle, 1995). One result is the rethinking of organizational theory and the ways that bureaucracies, trade unions and other associations incorporate gender into hierarchies of power and authority. Acker (1990) and Witz and Savage (1992) discuss this new agenda for organizational research in detail.

The study of gender, gender relations and 'doing gender' forces the analyst to recognize that gender is not a separate dimension of inequality but is linked to and embedded in other sources of inequality such as families, workplace organizations, the class structure, the state and capitalism. Although this approach moves beyond earlier debates over patriarchy versus

capitalism as systems of oppression and focuses attention on how gender is an integral component of all social interactions, it has its critics. Beechey (1988) suggests that the approach has not yet generated a theory of gender inequality. In similar critiques, both Thana (1993) and Wilson (1993) observe that the focus on gender risks being descriptive without attempting to explore why gender is relevant for the accomplishment of tasks and why men have power over women. Acker (1989: 239-40) also warns that the term 'gender' lacks the critical and change-oriented tone that characterized the concept of patriarchy. Her warning parallels that of Pringle (1995), who observes that the very real structures of power may be underestimated with a focus on how women are disempowered in certain situations.

Going to Market

Labor Force Participation

By the mid-1990s the feminization of the labor force was a fact in most western industrial democracies. From the 1950s on, labor force participation rates for men actually declined in many western democracies, reflecting higher levels of university attendance among the young and, more recently, the earlier retirement of older men. In contrast, female labor force participation rose in response to growth in service industries and in government and public sector jobs (Bakker, 1988; Smith, 1984). The growth in the percentages of women employed outside the home was not uniform for countries, and even today wide variation exists between countries (see Bakker, 1988; United Nations, 1995b: 30-1). Globally, differences exist by region and between countries within regions (United Nations, 1995a: Tables III.1, III.2).

Such variations reflect many factors, including the character of country-specific economies and the collection of labor force data which can underestimate women's productive work, either by refusing to count certain activities as part of the formal labor force (such as unpaid family workers) or neglecting to consider certain occupations as 'work' (such as taking in laundry) (Bose, 1987; Folbre and Abel, 1989). Statistical data collecting systems also can fail to enumerate work in subsistence production or in the informal sector. This underenumeration appears to be at least partly behind the lower levels of economic activity reported for women in developing countries than in industrialized countries. None the less, in all regions of the world female labor force participation rates have risen dramatically since the 1950s (United Nations, 1995a: 48-53, 58, 114-7).

Increased female labor force participation rates frequently are attributed to transformations in national economies and the resultant shifts in the type of demand for labor (for a detailed readable account of changing economic relations and restructuring, see United Nations, 1995a: Chapter 1). Western

democracies experienced substantial post-war employment growth in health and educational services, in retail and personal services and in government. Reflecting the low birth rates of the 1930s and early 1940s, the labor force entry of young men was insufficient to meet the expanding demand for labor in this service economy, and employers turned to the sizable numbers of women who worked in the home. Study after study shows that the move to the service economy in industrial democracies went hand in hand with increased labor force participation of women in service industries (Boyd et al., 1991; Hagen and Jenson, 1988; OECD, 1994: Chapter 4).

Other important pressures behind increased female labor force participation arose from fundamental changes in family structure and in the family-work nexus. Lowered fertility from the 1960s on in industrial democracies minimized the length of time spent in infant child-care and in child-raising more generally. Such reductions facilitated the entry of women into the paid labor force and minimized the magnitude and length of labor force exits. However, if changes in reproduction 'freed' women to become waged workers, concurrent trends in divorce, with the associated loss of male earnings, demanded their labor force involvement. As well, altered economic conditions increased the pressures on many two-adult families to have two wage-earners.

State actions also facilitated the increased feminization of the labor force although the extent and type of state involvement differed between countries. A first step was the revoking of legislation and personnel rulings that forbade hiring married women. Protective legislation that ostensibly was designed to protect women from the rigors of industrial life, but also restricted their employment to certain jobs, industries and hours also was altered, although again, considerable inter-country variability existed in the degree and timing of changes (see Heitlinger, 1993: Chapter 7).

Partial Participants

Although women's share of the labor force increased in the second half of the 20th century, the amount of time spent in paid work is gendered. In virtually all industrial countries women are more likely than men to be in the labor force as part-time workers. As a result, the part-time workforce is highly feminized. In the early 1990s women represented between 63 and 90 percent of the part-time labor force in OECD countries (OECD, 1994: Table C).

With the exception of a few countries (Denmark, Norway, Sweden), where part-time employment has fallen from relatively high levels, part-time work has increased its share of total employment over time in most OECD countries. This increase is associated with growing employment in service industries (see OECD, 1994: Table 4.2). Continued economic restructuring associated with the economic crises of the 1980s and 1990s underlies additional changes within the world of part-time work. In some countries

part-time work is becoming polarized along two dimensions: shorter versus longer hours (where a higher proportion of part-timers are either working less than 15 hours or more than 20–29 or more than 30 hours per week); and voluntary versus involuntary. In the latter case, workers indicate they wish to work longer hours than currently employed or want a full-time job (OECD, 1994: Chapter 3).

From a feminist perspective, the concentration of women in part-time employment highlights three concerns: the constraints of domestic labor; the marginalization of women in the labor force and their continued subordination to men; and the process of gendering. The feminization of part-time work reflects the feminization of domestic responsibilities. In its 1995 report on women, the United Nations (1995c: 106 and Table 8) observes that between two-thirds to three-quarters of household work (including child-care) in developed regions is performed by women, who average 30 hours or more per week in most countries compared to 10–15 hours for men. The division of household labor is highly gendered. Women do the laundry, clean house, make meals, shop and have child-care responsibilities. Most men do repairs and household maintenance. The greater responsibility of women for housework and child-care persists even when they have paid employment. As a result, in many countries, women work more hours than do men when both paid and unpaid work are combined (United Nations, 1995b: 18; 1995c: 105).

Part-time work is a strategy for reconciling the tripartite demands of housework, child-care and paid work. However, feminist perspectives caution against interpreting decisions to enter part-time work as derived from individual and voluntary decisions. Labor force data reveal that some part-time workers in fact seek full-time employment but find none available. Furthermore, people make choices within the context of expectations and existing social structures. Part-time work in fact is a privatized solution to gender inequalities in division of labor in the home, to the organization of industrial economies around the 'standard' male worker who, unencumbered by domestic responsibilities, is available for employment seven or eight hours a day, five days a week, and to the often limited availability of child-care and family services (Duffy and Pupo, 1992: 77).

Part-time work is not only a strategy used by women; it also becomes a mechanism for continued gender inequality. Duffy and Pupo (1992: 81–2) observe that part-time work leaves intact the organization of domestic labor; existing power structures and relations of male control and dominance. This continuation is accomplished because part-time work in a two-adult family context elicits little modification in patterns of interaction and power relations. In the labor market, part-time work is distinguished from full-time work and represents diminished access to wages, benefits and other economic resources and rewards. Without sufficient resources to alter the gendered

hierarchies of power in the family (see Curtis, 1986), women continue to be responsible for domestic work.

Why do women in part-time work lack resources to alter established gender relations and relations of male dominance? In most industrial democracies, part-time employment is not simply employment that is part-year or employment that has fewer hours of work. In many countries,

[T]he majority of part-time work remains organized in low-paid and low-skilled sections of service industries. Most women working part-time are therefore relegated to the peripheral sections of the labor market which employers draw from as the need arises. (OECD, 1994: 92)

Part-time work frequently is remunerated at lower wage rates than is comparable full-time work. Part-time work may not be covered or only partially covered by national unemployment or pension benefits, by employer or work-related health plans and maternity benefits. Only in terms of the integration of part-time into labor law and collective agreements has progress been made, and even then part-timers who work below a set number of hours may not be eligible for bonuses, vacation leave and overtime wage rates (OECD, 1994: 94–5; also see Duffy and Pupo, 1992: 55–165). The feminization of the labor force and the feminization of part-time work thus represent a paradox: the entry of women into the paid labor force has gone hand in hand with a segmented participation that has marginalized women in part-time employment relative to full-time male wage-earners (Bakker, 1988: 31; Smith, 1984). The state also may enhance this marginalization. Government regulations can determine what groups are included in bargaining units and what interests are privileged (Duffy and Pupo, 1992: 97).

From the employers' perspective, part-time work achieves flexibility in producing for a changing and uncertain market. However, to explain the growth in part-time work as a consequence of economic restructuring and the need for a flexible labor force may be too facile. In their study of part-time work in Britain, Beehey and Perkins (1987) argue that employers devised gender-specific ways of attaining flexibility. In establishments where full-time employees primarily were women, employers used part-time work as a way of attaining flexibility. When men constituted the majority of the full-time employees, flexibility was attained by overtime work and sometimes through the employment of temporary workers (also see Leach, 1993). The research conducted by Beehey and Perkins indicates that employers do not use gender-neutral strategies to attain flexibility. Gender enters into the construction of part-time jobs, with the result that women, not men, constitute the majority of the part-time work force in industrial economies. More generally, part-time work illustrates that far from being gender-blind, economic processes of production incorporate gender, and in so doing use gender to generate inequality (Scott, 1986).

Contingent Work and Moving Back Home

In an era of economic restructuring, part-time work is an important sub-set of non-standard or 'contingent' work used by employers to attain flexibility in the face of changes in costs, demand and technologies. Contingent work is defined as employment that has at least one of the following, potentially concurrent characteristics: part-time, self-employment, multiple job holding, and temporary or contract work. Countries differ in how these characteristics are defined and how well they are measured. Most available statistics are only for part-time work (see OECD, 1994). However, one Canadian study (Krahn, 1995) that uses a broad definition of non-standard work reaches three conclusions. First, the percentage of the labor force employed in contingent work increased between 1989 and 1994, a period that covered a recession beginning in 1990. Second, a larger percentage of women than men are employed in contingent work, and thus contingent work is highly feminized in the traditional sense of the term. Third, the gender gap is narrowing among young workers aged 15-24, suggesting that a new variant of feminization is occurring in which the work characteristics of men are becoming more like those of women.

The Canadian study reveals that women predominate in contingent work in large measure because they predominate in part-time employment. However, the concept of self-employment is increasingly important in discussing the gender inequalities in waged work for two reasons. First, in the restructuring process, many employers reduce the size of permanent employees and out-contract work. The state can be part of this process through public sector downsizing and out-contracting. Acker (1992) correctly observes that such government actions have particularly negative effects on women, given their concentration in the public sector, including education and health in some countries. Second, out-contracting raises the issue of where the work is to be performed, with increases in homework as one possibility. Certain kinds of activities are highly portable. In this day and age of computers and modems, the technological office makes it possible for clerical work to be done in the home. Similarly, telephone work, machine and hand-knitting, garment making and the stitching of shoe uppers can be easily contracted out and located in the home. All these activities are overwhelmingly done by women, and in the case of garment making, often by minority women and working-class women.

To date researchers and policy makers have focused primarily on work outside the home and not on paid work in the home (but see Lozano, 1989; Chapter 5; Phizacklea and Wolkowitz, 1995). Waged work in the home raises at least five questions of great importance from a feminist perspective. First, how is homework gendered? When productive activities move from the factory or office to the home, in what industries, occupations and jobs does this take place and how is the paid work of women affected? Do employers use homework in areas that already have a high percentage of female

employees or do they hire women to undertake work in the home that previously was done by men outside the home? Second, is homework racialized? When employers out-contract, are some racial or ethnic groups more likely than others to become homeworkers? Immigrant women are particularly likely to work in garment making in out-sourcing conditions (Phizacklea, 1990; Phizacklea and Wolkowitz, 1995). Third, what are the conditions of work and the impacts regarding stress, health (including that of other family members), pay rates, vulnerability to the demands of the contractor, future re-employment in the formal sector of the economy? State regulation and union representation tend to be notoriously absent in homework. Fourth, what effect does homework have on the mixing of social relations of commodity production with family relations? More specifically, what are the implications of homework for the exercise of male power? Work in the home takes place within the context of the domestic division of labor and the patterns of authority in the household. In her study of homework in Spain, Benton (1990: Chapter 5) observes that in homework the socially sanctioned authority of the head of the household translates into authority over the activities of members engaged in homework. Such authority also can be invoked by male kin outside the household unit, particularly when male kin act as subcontractors. One implication is that homeworking brings with it a use of the personal familial forms of power rather than the formal workplace uses of male-female power that tend to rely on bureaucratic rules and hierarchical structures.

Homework also raises a fifth question of interest to feminists: what can be done to prevent its invisibility and unproblematic nature? Domestic, unpaid work in the home has a long history of being ignored by statistics collectors and devalued relative to paid work. Only recently has the underestimation of women's economic activity both in informal work (agriculture and trading) and in the home been treated as problematic by national and international data collectors and users (Nuss, 1989: 14-19). And only recently has attention turned to the task of measuring women's productive activities in the informal sector and in the household (Statistics Canada, 1995; OECD, 1995; Waring, 1988). This relative neglect suggests that homework risks inadequate enumeration and measurement. The 'home' in homework feeds into an existing ideology that homebased activities are unproblematic, 'natural', and thus unimportant as activities (Phizacklea and Wolkowitz, 1995: 15).

Feminization of Occupations

Definitions

The discussion of part-time and contingent work demonstrates that rising levels of female labor force participation cannot be equated with a gender-neutral economic structure. Investigations into the paid activities that women

perform also reveal a gender division of labor. Women and men often perform different activities which in turn are associated with differences in responsiveness, autonomy, and social and economic rewards. Phrases such as 'the sex segregation of occupations' or 'gender segregation' refer to the different occupational concentrations of men and women in the labor force. Data from a United Nations report (1995a: 122-7) show that in all regions of the world, women far more than men are found in clerical and service occupations and are much less likely than men to have administrative and managerial occupations. However, as a result of differences in histories, cultures and economies, variations between countries do exist with respect to which occupations are primarily held by women or by men (United Nations, 1995b: 38-40; United Nations, 1995c: 126-7).

When men or women numerically predominate in a given occupation, that occupation is said to be sex typed (the use of the term 'sex' rather than 'gender' is a legacy of studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s before gender was a commonly used term). Because occupations with a high percentage of female workers tend to be characterized as low skill, and have lower wages, fewer benefits, on-the-job training, mobility opportunities and authority, high levels of occupational segregation in a society are considered highly problematic from a gender equality perspective and indicative of the general devaluation of women's labor (Reskin, 1993: 242).

Most investigations of occupational segregation by sex compare the distributions of women and men across a set of predetermined occupational titles. Such studies of occupational segregation are very much influenced by data availability. Excluding a few innovative exceptions (Bielby and Baron, 1984, 1986) most studies rely on data collected by national statistical agencies such as the US Bureau of the Census or the New Zealand Department of Statistics. Occupational titles, however, merely represent similar activities attached to jobs found in a variety of firms. One consequence of using titles rather than jobs can be the underestimation of the amount of difference in the work performed by men and women in the labor force (for further discussion on the use of titles see Crompton and Sanderson, 1990: 26). In the United States, Bielby and Baron (1986) used data from a 1960s survey of California firms to calculate indices of segregation for jobs versus occupational titles. They found the sex segregation of jobs was substantially higher than the index calculated from occupational titles. As well, subsequent research found segregation by firms. Many firms hired only women while others hired only men. Such findings generate three conclusions: (1) occupational segregation measures will underestimate the actual amount of job and firm specific segregation; (2) ideally data should be collected on jobs, not transformed into occupations, that are 'bundles' of jobs; and (3) firm specific research can usefully inform the study of sex segregation of occupations.

Occupational Segregation: Current Findings

Methodological issues aside (see: England, 1961; Reskin, 1993), four main conclusions emerge from the post-war empirical research on gender segregation in industrial democracies and to a lesser extent in other regions. First, race and migrant status can combine with sex segregation to the detriment of minority women. Although indices of occupational dissimilarity often are higher between men and women than between racial or ethnic groups of the same sex (see Agocs and Boyd, 1993; Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993; also calculations based on Walby, 1986: Table 7.3), minority women differ occupationally from majority or mainstream women, often concentrating in manufacturing or personal service occupations, including domestic or office cleaning work. In the United States, research suggests that over time black women have moved out of domestic employment into white-collar jobs although they still are more concentrated in relatively low paid female dominated jobs compared to white women (Albelda, 1993; Power and Rosenberg, 1993). Carlson (1992) cautions that the declining race gap occurred in the two decades preceding the 1980s, with change between 1980-89 being minimal.

A second conclusion of recent research is that the magnitude of gender segregation has declined although relatively high levels of gender segregation remain. These conclusions are reached by studies on changes over time with respect to individual countries (Cotter et al., 1995; Fox and Fox, 1987; Gwartney-Gibbs, 1988; Rimmer, 1991) as well as with respect to a comparative analysis of 56 countries (Jacobs and Lim, 1995). The latter study provocatively asks what evidence exists for the argument that with development women's status declines and sex segregation of occupations increases. Although economic restructuring certainly has brought many third-world women into export-oriented industries and privatization has turned many to the informal sector (United Nations, 1995a; Ward, 1990), more research is needed on the implications of temporal trends in the gender segregation of occupations in these countries. Jacob and Lim (1995) argue that strong evidence does not exist for the proposition that women's position in developing countries has declined. But they do not argue for an optimistic scenario either, noting only minor fluctuations in levels of sex segregation for many countries between 1960 and 1980.

Cross-national comparisons of occupational segregation focus on variations between countries, usually at one point in time. In one of the more comprehensive studies to date, Charles (1992) not only documents the magnitude of occupational segregation between men and women in 25 industrial countries in the mid-1980s, but also seeks to explain such variation in terms of cross-country variables in economic structures, women's domestic responsibilities and gender ideologies. Based on her research, a third conclusion is that levels of occupational segregation reflect a complex interplay of factors that both increase and decrease occupational segregation levels. Charles (1992)

finds that low fertility rates and favorable gender ideologies partially offset the negative effects of a large service sector and a large employee class. She also finds that how interest groups are articulated in the political system affects levels of segregation with corporatist systems (represented by an institutional process of negotiations involving the state, employers and labor unions) having higher levels of segregation (also see Rosenberg and Kalleberg, 1991). This latter finding invites further research into the ways in which interest groups and the state support a gender division of labor in the market.

A fourth finding of research on occupational segregation is that most of the temporal decline found in post-industrial societies such as the United States and Canada has occurred as a result of women moving into previously male-dominated occupations, rather than men entering previously female-typed occupations. The inflow of women into a previously male-dominated occupation raises a number of questions, at least partially answered in the literature but also in need of additional scrutiny. First, what causes a previously male-dominated occupation to become feminized? One possibility is male flight from an occupation which is declining in status, creating a labor shortage leading to the subsequent hiring of women (Reskin and Roos, 1990). Second, does this represent progress in the sense of women attaining higher wages, access to promotions and other labor market rewards? Does re-segregation, represented by a previously male-typed and -dominated occupation becoming highly feminized, occur? When women enter a previously male occupation, does ghettoization occur whereby women are found in the lower status rungs of an occupation? These questions elicit mixed answers in one study of change in 11 occupations in the United States between 1969 and the early 1980s (Reskin and Roos, 1990). More recently, Wright and Jacobs (1995) analyze the feminization of computer work asking if the feminization of the occupation during the 1980s also meant re-segregation and ghettoization. Their answer is no. The various conclusions suggest that the entry of women into male-dominated occupations still remains a much-needed area of research. Left relatively unattended, however, is the equally important question of why men are not entering female sex-typed jobs. In her study of male secretaries, Pringle (1993: 131) suggests that deep connections exist between gender identities and occupational identities. She asks why the title 'secretary' is reserved almost exclusively for women, and she urges the study of how gendered titles affect workplace identities and power relations.

Explanations for Occupational Segregation

Studies of occupational segregation have at least one out of two objectives: to document the differences in paid work performed by men and women and/or to explain why such differences exist and persist. Excellent overviews exist regarding the causes and persistence of occupational segregation (and its

consequences) (Crompton and Sanderson, 1990: Chapter 2; Mumford, 1989; Reskin, 1993; Walby, 1988).

Drawing largely, but not exclusively, from the disciplines of economics and sociology, these explanations can be categorized into those that emphasize the activities and characteristics of women and those that emphasize the activities and characteristics of the market, including factors such as demand for labor, the system of production and changes therein and state actions. For example, Reskin (1993) calls attention to the following factors: the preferences of men and women for certain jobs (preferences established from expected family obligations, sex role socialization, work values, the job opportunity structure, and job characteristics), employer preferences and practices (including sex discrimination, sex stereotyping when hiring workers) as an outcome of economic change, costs of hiring, training and paying workers, and employer personnel practices, where statistical discrimination may exist (statistical discrimination refers to treating individual members of a group as if they had the real or assumed characteristics of most members of the group). Working with theoretical paradigms, Walby (1988) follows a similar supply-demand classification placing human capital theory and cultural theories in the former and segmented labor market theory and feminist dual systems theory in the latter.

No one factor or theoretical perspective completely explains the origins and persistence of occupational segregation. Indeed, as Crompton and Sanderson (1990: 36) observe, it is a difficult, if not impossible task, to separate out and evaluate the relative contribution of socio-cultural and economic factors that influence the occupational division of labor and situate men and women within it. However, one can ask what do feminist perspectives emphasize when seeking to explain the origins and persistence of occupational segregation? The broad feminist agenda of explicating male power and dominance over women generates an attentiveness to the historical context of women's subordination and the implications for occupational segregation.

Historical studies point out that the designation of certain jobs or occupations as male or female is highly conditioned by the era in which the process began, the available supply of female and male workers, the state of the economy and the organization of work within a given industry (for examples, see Milkman, 1987). Historical accounts also reveal the ideology of domesticity in which women's domestic roles were emphasized, along with the importance of male worker resistance to the inclusion of women as fellow workers, and the roles played by industrial unions in excluding women from certain jobs. Such exclusion was accomplished directly through employer-employee negotiations and terms of hiring, and directly by supporting protective legislation that made hiring women less desirable for employers (Kessler-Harris, 1982; Hartmann, 1976). Women frequently were

hired in jobs that represented extensions of work performed in the home. In non-agricultural production sites, they worked in textile mills, food processing, sewing and shoe-stitching work. Women also were hired as teachers, nurses and clerk-typists, not only because of their presumed 'domestic management skills' but also because they could be hired more cheaply than men (Lowe, 1980; Reskin and Roos, 1990: 10-15). Cheaper wage rates reflected legal-political-religious ideologies and structures emphasizing the lesser worth of women as well as the ideology of the family wage, which assumed that men earned a wage adequate for family survival and maintenance and used these wages to provide for women.

Historical studies of 18th- and 19th-century capitalism provide the grist for the construction of materially based explanations of occupational segregation. According to this view, well summarized in the socialist feminist perspective (Hartmann, 1976; also see Acker, 1988), the existing gender division of labor prior to capitalism provided the base for the reconstruction of an asymmetrical gender hierarchy of power in the labor market, largely through the actions of employers and male workers. Contemporary perspectives also emphasize exclusionary tactics in creating and maintaining the occupational segregation of women and men and in ensuring that primarily white and non-immigrant men have the monopoly of good jobs (Reskin and Roos, 1990; Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993).

Contemporary analyses of how male hierarchies of privilege and power are maintained, and how the gendered division of labor reconstitutes itself during change usually are studies of particular occupations, industries and/or firms. For example, in her initial study of technological changes in the printing industry and in subsequent research, Cockburn (1983: Chapter 6, 1985, 1991) documents men's resistance to gender equality expressed in part by trade unions and in part by reaffirming masculine stereotypes about work performed by men. Padavic (1991) also documents how masculinity displays are used in blue-collar work to convey powerful messages that such jobs are 'off limits' to women. However, as Bagguley (1991) observes, the emphasis in many case studies is on women entering male-dominated jobs either in trades or in select professions. He and McIlwee (1988) call for new conceptualizations to explain why occupations that are not gender-specific become so, and why women have made inroads into managerial and professional jobs rather than into blue-collar jobs. The organization of decision-making - whether it is centralized involving all members or channeled through a leader - appears to be a key variable in whether or not male-dominated occupations emerge or are maintained in times of technological and economic restructuring (Bagguley, 1991). McIlwee also stresses the relations that work-based interest groups have with groups external to them. She argues that these external relations can reinforce male dominance (as in the case of trade unions articulated with national organizations) or minimize them (such as in the case

of using educational credentials or state-generated affirmative action programs to enter male-dominated white-collar jobs).

Power at Work

For feminists, occupational segregation not only illustrates the exercise of male power through exclusionary actions, but also the continuation of hierarchies of male power and privilege. This maintenance is achieved indirectly by the association of female typed occupations and jobs with lower wages. Studies of earnings inequality show that occupational segregation is one of the most important factors explaining the lower wages of women compared to men. American research finds that the higher the percentage of women in an occupation the lower the wage rate. This relation holds when worker characteristics and occupational skill levels are taken into account, thus challenging alternative arguments that the lower wages paid in women's jobs reflect the educational and experience characteristics of (women) workers, the skill requirements of occupations (England et al., 1994), or a willingness to trade off 'amenities' (such as schedule flexibility) for lower wages (Glass and Camarigg, 1992; Jacobs and Steinberg, 1995). In fact, analysis of 1977 data finds that predominantly female jobs in the United States are not high in schedule flexibility and do not appear to be jobs that accommodate family responsibilities (Glass, 1990; Glass and Camarigg, 1992).

The maintenance of male power and dominance over women is also achieved by occupational segregation because occupations themselves differ in the capacity that incumbents have to impose their will on others. Occupational classifications, however, are only crude indicators of power differentials. Occupational contrasts between management and clerical work appear to be intuitively obvious demonstrations of differences in decision-making powers, in the capacity to influence others, and in supervisory responsibilities. But, such equating of power differentials with occupational differentials becomes problematic when extended to other occupational categories (professional workers versus managers; transportation workers versus clerical workers). The proliferation of 'professional' and 'manager' in many job titles also makes suspect the equation of such terms with power (for example, retail sales staff are called floor managers in some stores).

While not always easily deduced from occupational titles, power is ever-present in the workplace. The organization of work includes not only a technical division of labor but also a social dimension. Paid work can be classified as clerical work or as nursing, depending on the activities performed. But paid work also involves social relations of power. Workers may or may not have power over the technical aspect of work and they may or may not have power over other workers. Scholars working in the tradition of class analysis have

measured power relations in surveys. Not all analysts use the same survey questions, the same terms, or study the same groups (the entire labor force versus full-time employees) when describing these power relations. Nonetheless, distinctions usually are made between three major types of activities that involve the capacity to impose one's will or affect outcomes: authority, autonomy and decision-making powers (Boyd et al., 1991; also see: Adler, 1993; Jaffe, 1989; Jacobs, 1992; McGuire and Reskin, 1993; Reskin and Ross, 1992). Class analysts have used these conceptualizations of power to depict the social relations of production. However, as several researchers have observed (Acker, 1988; Clement and Myrles, 1994: 140) class relations are gendered—that is, gender-based asymmetries in power also are an integral part of the relations of production.

What power relations are described by terms such as authority, autonomy and decision-making powers? Having a supervisor-subordinate relationship is perhaps the most commonly experienced form of power. Because this form of power is legitimated by the organization of work, it frequently is described as authority, implying that some workers have the duty to comply with the requests and commands of others (Chafetz, 1991). Different forms of authority can exist, of course, ranging from sanctioning authority (the ability to impose positive or negative sanctions on others) to task authority (co-ordinating the activities of others). The second form of power, autonomy, reflects the extent to which employees are able to exercise control over their own work, either in terms of conceptualizing or designing important aspects of a product or service, or in terms of the control a worker has over the conditions of work (the capacity to control pace or to regulate working hours, introduce new tasks on the job). Still another aspect of power is whether or not an employee can be a decision-maker with respect to activities such as policy decisions, budget setting and the organization of the workplace.

Not only are authority, autonomy and decision-making part of the social relations of production, but also they are constitutive elements of a gendered economic structure. In such an economy, men are more likely than women to exercise authority, autonomy and/or decision-making, and men are more likely to have power over women than are women to have power over men. Is this in fact the case? Sociological studies certainly support the asymmetry in the distribution of power between men and women. Analyses of five nations (Canada, the United States, UK, Norway and Finland) show that men compared to women are more likely to be in positions of middle and upper management, to be decision-makers, and to hold positions with sanctioning authority and to have task authority (Clement and Myrles, 1994: Chapter 6). The similarities are impressive given that these five societies differ considerably in industrial relations approaches (Goldthorpe, 1984), in gender equality policies and in rationales and programs governing welfare assistance (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Heitlinger, 1993; Sainsbury, 1994).

Other American studies add to these conclusions. Jaffe (1989) directly links occupational segregation to the unequal distribution of power by asking if women in the United States are less likely than men in the United States to possess sanctioning authority, task authority and decision-making autonomy. He finds that the higher the female composition of an occupation, the lower the task authority and conceptual autonomy. He also finds no support for the argument that lower levels of autonomy and authority result from women's household and marital responsibilities. Women, not men, incur penalties by virtue of occupational segregation. Men experience no loss in autonomy and decision-making authority when they are in female-dominated occupations while women are negatively affected by being in female-typed occupations.

Using somewhat different measures from the same United States data, Adler (1993) invites researchers to rethink the influence of occupational segregation, arguing that when firm size and union membership are taken into account, no relationship exists between gender composition and job autonomy (defined as control over scheduling the work pace and conceptual initiatives at work). However, multivariate studies often risk committing the error of what Sorensen (1996) identifies in her critique of gender stratification as 'too many variables'. It is possible that significant differences exist between men and women in 'job autonomy' (a combination of decision-making and conceptual authority) but that such differences reflect the employment of women more than men in smaller sized firms that are not unionized. Research by Bielby and Baron (1986) supports this interpretation since they observe that women and men are highly segregated by firm rather than occupations. First assessing the relationship between gender composition and measures of power, and then reassessing the relationship after controlling for other variables would indicate the segregating and mediating role of firm size and unions.

Boyd et al. (1991) also find that compared to men, Canadian women are employed in positions with fewer decision-making powers. In examining gender differences in autonomy, authority and decision-making by industrial sector, they conclude that the service economy has not served women well. The growth of employment in service industries, associated with post-industrialism, has reproduced and even accentuated the pattern whereby men are more likely than women to be employed in positions that permit the exercise of power. These results are subsequently replicated for the United States, Norway, Sweden and Finland (Clement and Myrles, 1994: Table 6.6).

Gender differences in the distribution of power are strong indicators of gender inequality at work, but they only indirectly measure the center of feminist concerns: the power that men have over women. The Canadian Class Structure project asked questions not only on various kinds of power but also on supervisory relations, including the sex of the supervisor and the subordinate. In asking 'Who supervises whom?', Boyd et al. (1991) found that

women rarely supervise only men and most often women supervise only women. In contrast men supervise both men and women. Two additional observations emerge from this investigation. First, the gendered pattern of supervisor-subordinate is most accentuated in the service sector of the Canadian economy. This finding suggests that women have not converted their numerical strength in service industries into power, and that the post-industrial society represents both the continuation and consolidation of the male power over women in the workplace. Second, the findings on the near absence of men being supervised by women suggests a very powerful 'law of anti-matriarchy'. The principle that women are subordinate to men also includes the converse, that men are seldom, if ever, subordinate to women.

Studies of gender differences in the distribution of power are similar in design to studies of occupational segregation. Both usually rely on survey data, often nationally representative, to document economic aspects of gender inequality. However, just as case studies are used to understand the exclusionary process that produces and maintains occupational segregation, case studies also are used to extend conceptualizations and knowledge about power. Sociologists focus almost exclusively on the power of domination – of inflicting one's will on a subordinate – and they neglect the powers of the weak (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brandley, 1990: 336). Case studies partially correct this emphasis on the position of the dominant, illuminating the power exercised by women who are in subordinate positions. Studies such as those by Hosfeld (1990) on women factory workers, by Pauls (1991) on waitresses, and by Pringle (1989) on secretaries examine the coping and empowering strategies employed by women in circumstances where they are relatively powerless. Case studies on women who work as domestics also reveal their resistance to the power of the employers, who are often white middle- and upper-class women. Since many domestics are immigrant women and/or women of color, such studies also indicate the dynamics of race and class in the exercise of power by women over other women (Rollins, 1985; Romero, 1992).

Conclusion

During the second half of the 20th century, women in industrial economies entered the labor force in ever-increasing numbers. Although such movement provided access to the material resources of the market, gender relations assured the maintenance of gender differences and gender asymmetries. The feminization of the labor force has been accompanied by the continued feminization of domestic labor in the home, the feminization of part-time work and by sex typing of occupations and gender segregation of occupations. Viewed through the lens of feminist analysis, such trends indicate that economic structures are far from gender-neutral. Gender is part of workplace

identities; it is the basis of worker actions and reactions to change, and it is ever-present in power relations in the workplace.

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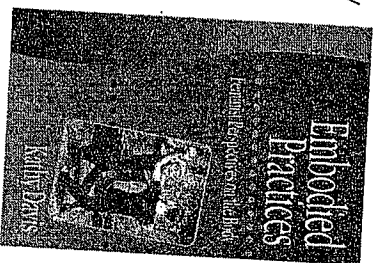
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Embodied Practices

Feminist Perspectives on the Body

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In recent years, the body has become a 'hot item' in both contemporary social theory and research. This renewed interest in the body has received a mixed reaction from feminists. While the body may be back, the 'new' body theory often proves to be just as disembodied as it ever was. The body revival seems to be less an attempt to re-embodiment science than just another expression of the same condition which evoked the feminist critique in the first place: a flight from femininity and everything that is associated with it in western culture.

Embodied Practices offers a critical appraisal of the recent 'body revival'. It draws upon insights from contemporary feminist theories on gender and power to explore the subject. The book sets an agenda not only for research about the body but for an embodied perspective on the body as well.

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