

History of occupational segregation



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Occupational Segregation

In the business world, gender discrimination undoubtedly is a hot topic as well as a tough problem. Such kind of discrimination leads to an unbalanced distribution of occupations in the workplace. Occupational segregation mainly involves channeling men and women into different occupations, or disproportionately into different occupations, or at different levels within the same industry. People tend to classify occupations to men's jobs and women's jobs based upon the job nature, the demographic characteristics and the previous decision-making. And such occupational segregation is most likely caused by gender-based discrimination.

The statistical data collected from the surveys can powerfully demonstrate the idea of occupational segregation. In the United States, 70 percent of the employees in the human resources department are females. According to “Proportion female for selected occupations US, 2006”, up to 88.9 percent of nursing jobs are taken up by women. If we take a look at the engineering or technological industries, the ratio will be totally different. Only 5.8 percent of mechanical engineers are females. From 2015 Stack Overflow survey result, it shows that 92.1 percent of the software developers are identified as male; only 7.9 percent of respondents are identified as female. Based on these statistical data, we can obviously find that there are respectively dominant fields for men and women. Take human resources as a typical instance. People constantly believe that women have the nature of caring and developing people; they are good at communicating with others as well as coordinating with interpersonal relationships compared with men. Thus they argue that HR is simply more suited for females. The belief

perseverance toward the gender traits greatly restricts the room of career opportunities for both men and women. Nowadays, we often hear that “ HR being female, IT being male”. In their subconscious mind, people are intangibly dividing the occupations according to the gender. With more and more females entering the workforce, human resources attracts more females in the male dominated business world from which men have no intention of letting the power and position slip away.

From my perspective, I attribute occupational discrimination into four underlying reasons that can be categorized as external ones and internal ones, firstly, the gender stereotype and the biological differences. Such discrimination originates from stereotypes prevailing about women’s inability to complete certain tasks (lack of a fit). Mostly, people tend to extend the roles that men and women play in the family into the workplace. The gender stereotype of men being ambitious and decisive and women as supportive and detail-oriented has shaped what is expected of women. The existence of biological differences (natural qualifications) between men and women do have impact on professional pursuit. Job allocation with respect to biological qualifications justifies low salaries and boring tasks for women, and at the same time, rationalizes men’s exposure to risky working conditions.

Secondly, occupational segregation, to some degree, should be traced back to the major decision people made in their college years. Women are more likely to choose arts, literature, language, social sciences, and international relations, which are branches of liberal arts and humanities; while men prefer to major in mathematics, science, engineering, computer sciences that belongs to science department. Women pay more attention to the

emotional education, whereas men are more concerned about shaping their logical thinking abilities. Major determines occupation to a great extent. It is understandable that most people choose their professional careers according to their previous majors. Since the major choices between men and women are disproportionately distributed to different fields, it is not surprising to discover that the occupational bias exists.

Additionally, personal psychological barrier is a significant factor. People may give themselves some psychological hints that silently influence their decision-making of college majors or their confidence of fighting for certain positions. This psychological barrier reflects the internalized sexism deeply rooted in people's mind. For example, when it comes to the IT industries, women often lack confidence and courage to have a try. Many external impediments cause them to hesitate, thereby neglecting the true feelings and passion toward the field. Meanwhile men, who think that IT is their dominant area of expertise, resolutely show their aggressiveness and ambitions when competing for the positions they want.

Last but not least, one of the personal-prejudice models employer discrimination does give us a glimpse of current occupational segregation. This model assumes that employers have prejudicial taste. They may hire people based on their personal preference and past experiences. If the employer has the decided preference for hiring males in engineering jobs despite the availability of equally qualified females, occupational discrimination occurs. Such employments mostly are irrational and limit the chances of maximizing the profit for companies.

Frankly, I do not know what is the best way to ameliorate occupational segregation. But personally, I think people do have to set aside their prejudice of gender differences both externally and internally. Instead of holding a conservative attitude toward occupations, we should be more flexible at facing the professional path, thus opening a wider spectrum of career opportunities.

Works Cited

“ Survey says: 92 percent of software developers are men”. Roose, Kevin. <http://fusion.net/story/115998/survey-says-92-percent-of-software-developers-are-men/>. Fusion. 8 April 2015.

W and B Presentation 1. Michael Robinson. Spring 2017.

“ Why are there so many women in HR?” Kamp, Morten. <https://mortenkamp.com/2013/07/15/why-are-there-so-many-women-in-hr/>. All about Human Capital. 15 July 2013.