

Gendered mobility does not reduce horizontal job segregation. Renewed evidence on the “revolving door” effect from a cohort sequence analysis in a single organization.

Mathieu Arbogast (Cresppa-GTM & CEMS)

Extended abstract

Introduction

The sexual horizontal occupational segregation in the labour market is a well known phenomenon, which tends to diminish since the middle of the 20th Century. Few occupations are balanced, with a majority of women working in predominantly female occupations (either at a 60% or a 80% threshold) and men working in predominantly male occupations.

Beyond this macro-level approach, Jacobs introduced a life-course approach to understand whether men and women change jobs during their careers and what is the gendered dimension of these changes (Jacobs, 1989). His research showed that women working in male majority jobs tended to move out to get female-majority jobs. He concluded that male-majority occupations tend to exclude women or at least discourage them from staying in the long term. This research combines individual life course analysis with a structural approach of gendered values of occupations.

Building on this previous research, this paper combines the “revolving door” framework with a gender studies perspective. Hence, it is also based on the gendered organizations theory (Acker, 1990) and on the double-standard theory (Delphy, 1993), which both provide a deeper understanding of the revolving door phenomenon. According to the former theory, all work organizations are gendered, inasmuch as they follow and favour either masculine or feminine sets of values and valuation criteria (such as care in social services, strength in construction works). According to the latter, masculinity is valued over femininity.

This research focuses on “gendered mobility” defined as follows: moving from an occupation to another with a different gender status. For instance, moving from a predominantly female job to a neutral occupation or to a predominantly male job is a gendered mobility. On the contrary, moving from a 70% female job to a 80% female job is not a gendered mobility. Upward mobility is not taken into account when defining gendered mobility.

Classically, the occupational segregation is measured with the Duncan & Duncan dissimilarity Segregation Index (or Karmel & McLachlan) which is commonly

interpreted as “in order to achieve an integrated gender balanced labour market, X% of the women should change jobs”. The theory behind this interpretation is that gender mobility would be a way to increase the gender balance of the labour market. This key assumption is challenged in this paper, based on a cohort analysis within a single large organization.

Hypotheses

H1: Horizontal job sex-segregation decreases with time

H2: The gendered attractiveness of jobs is asymmetrical, hence women tend not to stay in male-majority jobs and men tend not to move to female-majority jobs.

H3: The trends in sex segregation evolution are not the same when considering medium (60%) and high (80%) thresholds of segregation.

H4: According to the revolving door effect, women are more affected by gendered mobility than men.

H5: Overall, the net effect of all the individual gendered mobility is to lower the level of occupational segregation.

Methods

This research is based on a cohort analysis in a life course perspective analysed through the “gender lens”.

Cohort: Using HR data of the organization ORGA, all the individuals working at ORGA from 2009 to 2021 are included in the cohort (n = 8251).

According to the percentage of women in the 40 “job families” (JF), each JF is coded as extremely-feminine (more than 80% female), feminine (more than 60% female), neutral (40-60%), masculine (more than 60% male) or extremely-masculine (more than 80% male).

Data are collected on an annual basis, as of December 31st.

Sequence analysis results are presented using chronograms.

Results

H1 is rejected. There are more men in predominantly male JFs in 2021 than in 2009, either at the 60% threshold (71.6% instead of 69.6%) or at the 80% threshold. There are also more women in predominantly female JFs in 2021, at both thresholds.

H2 validity is low. The percentage of workers leaving predominantly female JFs (2.15%) is only slightly higher than the percentage of workers leaving predominantly male JFs (2.02%). The percentage of workers leaving neutral JFs is much higher (5.60%).

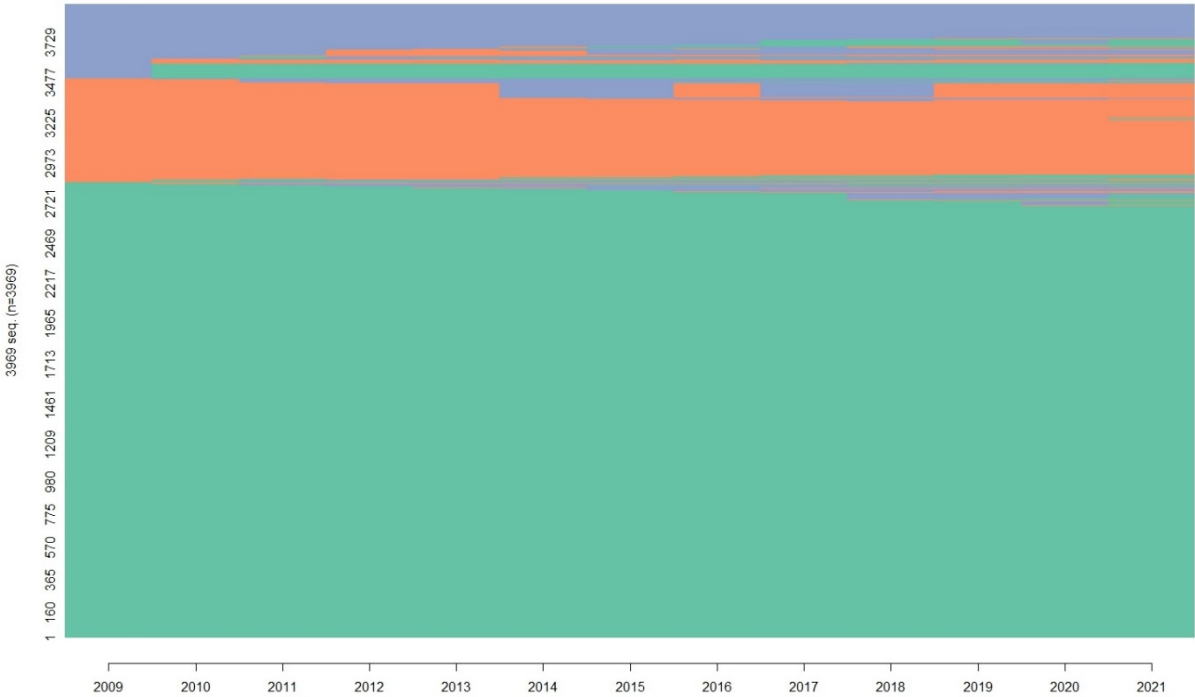
H3 is valid. The percentage of men and women in gendered JFs at 60% does not strongly increase between 2009 and 2021. The percentage of women in predominantly female JFs jumps from 35.7% to 47.3% over the period, while the rise is very limited for men in predominantly male JFs (from 50.0% to 50.4%).

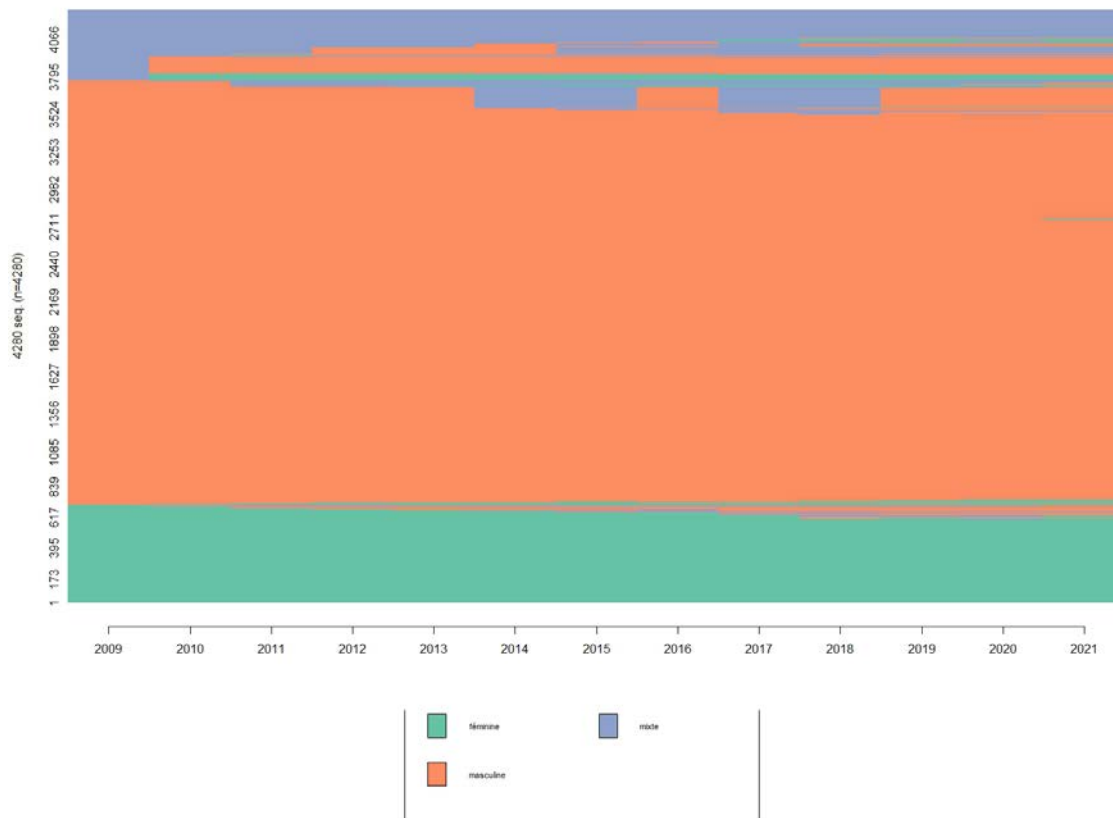
H4 is rejected. Men change jobs (change of job families) more often than women overall, and they have more gendered mobility than women. 16.7% of the men but only 15.0% of the women have at least one gendered mobility.

H5 is rejected. The net effect of all the workers gendered mobility is to increase the occupational segregation. Even though some workers have more than one gendered mobility with the effect of getting back to their initial position (e.g. predominantly female, then neutral, then predominantly female again), 10% of the workforce still has a net gendered mobility, contributing to the rise of the occupational segregation.

Thus, the classical formulation of the dissimilarity index is in contradiction with the empirical data of this single organization cohort.

In conclusion, internal job mobility does not have any mitigating effect on the occupational segregation.





Selected references

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