Book review

***Occupational Ghettos: The Worldwide Segregation of Women and Men*, by Maria Charles and David B. Grusky. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004.**

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Maria Charles and David Grusky have assembled an important book, anchored by their analysis of data from 10 rich industrialized countries, with case studies of the U.S., Japan, and Switzerland by several other contributors. Charles and Grusky argue that gender segregation is not necessarily eroded by the march of modernity. In fact, post-industrial development (which pulls women into nonmanual jobs) and liberal egalitarianism (which protects access to jobs based on individuals' existing gendered preferences) together threaten to make labor market "hypersegregation" permanent. The book is essential reading for people interested in gender inequality in labor markets, and its importance has been recognized with the Max Weber Award from the Organizations, Occupations and Work section of the ASA.

Charles and Grusky propose to differentiate between "horizontal" segregation, which occurs between manual and nonmanual occupations, and "vertical" segregation, which sorts men into better occupations within these categories. Horizontal segregation is said to result from ideas of gender essentialism, while vertical segregation follows from cultural notions of male primacy. Thus, instead of a single index of segregation, which often has been used in segregation research, three parameters are necessary to characterize the structure of segregation: one for vertical segregation within manual jobs, a second for vertical segregation within nonmanual jobs, and a third for the strength of segregation between the two categories.

The authors illustrate these three parameters with schematic figures showing sex composition graphed against occupational categories, in what they call a "leaning-N" shape: female representation rises as socioeconomic status declines across nonmanual categories (professional, managerial, associate professional, clerical, service and sales), then drops sharply to the first manual category before rising again as status declines across manual categories (craft, operative, agricultural, laborer). However, in figures based on model coefficients from the 10 countries—which clearly show the "leaning-N" shape—the occupational categories are not in order of socioeconomic status. Rather, managers and agricultural workers are shown in the highest status positions for nonmanual and manual categories respectively. If the categories were ordered according to socioeconomic status, the figures showing data results would not conform to the "leaning-N" shape which is central to their theory.

Fortunately, agricultural occupations may be considered marginal. And their detailed analysis confirms the overall association between socioeconomic status and male dominance. However, the fact that women are better represented in professional than managerial occupations - even though the former rank higher in both prestige and socioeconomic status - does pose a problem for their approach. What managers have more of than professionals may be authority, which is not adequately measured by either prestige scores or socioeconomic status. The problem of ordering categories is not just an oversight; it represents a lack of critical attention to how "verticality" is measured, thus undermining its distinction from "horizontally."

Consider two segregated occupations that employ several million American workers: truck drivers (97% male) and nursing aides (89% female). The occupations are comparable in terms of education and strength requirements, but full-time nursing aides earn only 57% of what truck drivers earn (our analysis

of the 2004 March Current Population Survey). In what sense is one really “manual” and the other “nonmanual”-and how is this segregation “horizontal”? This case reflects the historical male advantage among low-skilled workers, codified in the manual-nonmanual dichotomy. On the other hand, many “vertical” distinctions follow from essentialist cultural constructions (for example, the gender segregation between pediatricians and surgeons).

The implication of the term “horizontal” is that some aspects of the gender division of labor reflect the individual preferences of men and women, and that this is separable from the rewards they receive. However, Charles and Grusky also refer to “horizontal inequality” (an odd term), and the book title includes “ghettos.” Maybe there is a distinction to be found between different kinds of segregating forces. But forcing the dichotomy of horizontal versus vertical segregation represents a failure to work through the implications for inequality of gender essentialism.

Methodologically, the authors argue that a comparative analysis of segregation requires “margin-free” measures, so that differences in observed levels of segregation resulting from variations in the size of occupations, or the gender composition of the labor force, are removed. For example, it is important to distinguish between desegregation that results from the changing composition of occupations versus that which results from integrated occupations growing. Essentially, margin free indexes substitute occupations for individuals as the unit of analysis. However, this approach can be misleading. For example, in Kim Weeden’s analysis of the U.S. over the 20th century, the margin-free measure shows a huge 30% drop in segregation in the 1930s, while the observed level of segregation did not change, because a small number of women entered all-male operative and craft occupations. A footnote reveals that one-third of the drop is accounted for by occupations with 10 or fewer incumbents of either sex in the sample. Thus, the measure records a massive shift in the level of segregation, although nothing changed for the vast majority of workers.

Charles and Grusky make a strong case that, although liberalism erodes pay and hiring discrimination, essentialism remains a basis for occupational segregation: “The insidiousness of essentialism is that it clothes segregation in voluntarist terms” (p. 336). But, if essentialism only contributes to “horizontal” segregation, why is it insidious? To avoid that pitfall we need a more gendered notion of status. The terms “vertical” and “horizontal” conjure axes on a plane defined by an economic outcome (socioeconomic status). But what about gender itself? We need to uncover gender’s own hierarchical logic, not just its effect on economic rewards. And in the autonomous logic of gender, essentialism and primacy are not so easily separable.