IVY LEIGH KENNELLY
Race, Class, and Gender in Women's Pathways to Occupational Gender Segregation
(Under the direction of LINDA M. GRANT)

Why do women work as secretaries? In this study I explore new ways to explain occupational gender segregation by focusing on women who work in the gender segregated occupation of secretary and the gender integrated occupation of furniture sales. My focus on these women allows me to isolate factors that have affected their pathways into and out of their occupations and to understand the ways their positions affect how they think about gender. This analysis addresses three primary issues: (1) the overwhelming commonalties along the pathways of women who currently work in either a gender segregated or a gender integrated occupation; (2) the conditions under which women who have done gender segregated work have been able to change occupations; and (3) the processes through which women use their occupations to construct and define their gender. I demonstrate that among the women in my sample, race, class, work histories, and access to networks are more important explanatory factors of occupational gender segregation than socialization, education, family responsibilities and orientation toward service. This is important for understanding how individual women may be able to escape gender segregated occupations and find work in higher-paying occupations with more opportunities for advancement. However, I also show that reducing occupational gender segregation through the integration of occupations is undermined by gender, itself, which necessarily entails inequality. My analysis suggests that while policies such as affirmative action and comparable worth, and strategies to give women time off from paid work, are important short-term steps in eliminating segregation, the integration of occupations will do little to eradicate labor market inequality as long as gender exists.

INDEX WORDS: Occupation, Occupational Segregation, Gender, Labor Market, Race, Comparable Worth, Secretary, Furniture Sales, Work.

RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER IN WOMEN'S PATHWAYS TO OCCUPATIONAL GENDER SEGREGATION

by

IVY LEIGH KENNELLY

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Approved:

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Major Professor

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Date

Approved:

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Dean of the Graduate School

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Date

For Mom and Dad

I am evidence of you

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Olivia Rondeau has been a secretary since 1970, when she graduated from college. A divorced African-American woman with a twenty-one-year-old daughter and one grandson, Olivia has worked in a total of six jobs, five of which have been at the company where she has worked for most of her daughter's life. "I always wanted to be a secretary," she says, or at least since she was in ninth grade, but since her racially segregated high school in Alabama did not offer advanced secretarial courses she was among the first African-American students to transfer to a formerly all-white high school in her town where the courses were offered. She then attended college in Atlanta and upon graduating took a secretarial job in an academic department at the school, where she stayed for ten years. Olivia has never applied for a job that is not secretarial.

Dana Matheson, a single African-American woman in her late 30s, has been the conference secretary for a large church in Atlanta for eighteen months. She moved to Atlanta from her small Virginia hometown with no job and worked as a temporary for about four months before landing her current permanent position. Dana went to college in Washington DC for a couple years after graduating from high school when she was 16, and then decided to work full-time instead of continue with college. At that time she had work experience as a salad girl in a restaurant and a parks and recreations laborer, but her first full-time paid position was as a mortgage loan verifier--a job she found after a temp agency allowed her to practice her typing skills on their typewriters. Since then Dana has worked as a receptionist, an assistant to a secretary, a data entry clerk, a driver, a word processor, an office manager, and an intake counselor. She has also completed her college education, owned a number of her own businesses, including a cleaning business and a

home lingerie party business, and managed her parents' religious bookstore for five years. In addition, she birthed a community organization in her hometown that hosts a large African-American cultural festival every year and now employs a full-time director and staff. Dana has no current plans to change jobs and sees nothing more concrete in her future than a possible move to California.

I asked Olivia Rondeau and Dana Matheson how they wound up in their current positions because I wondered why a woman would choose to work in an occupation, like secretary, that is predominantly filled by women. Most people in the paid labor market seem to realize that women-affiliated occupations tend to come with lower levels of pay than the occupations men fill, so I wanted to investigate the reasons why many--most--women might disregard the disadvantages that come with gender segregated occupations and work in them anyway.

As Dana and Olivia's stories make clear, women's pathways into gender segregated occupations are neither simple nor uniform. Their stories demonstrate that exploring these pathways from women's own perspectives is important for understanding why occupations continue to be largely separated into "women's work" and "men's work," since the people in these occupations can explain with the most complexity and subtlety how they wound up where they are. And while an investigation focused on women's self-disclosed life chronicles does not necessarily bring to light the plenary ways that discrimination by employers and institutionalized organizational structures shape women's pathways, since women might not be fully cognizant of everything that affects their life chances, we can assume that these structural processes lurk in the background as we turn the focus to women's lives in order to determine how the patterns that shape their individual pathways may affect the aggregate level of occupational gender segregation.

If we are to fully understand this segregation of occupations by gender we need to understand women like Olivia who love their secretarial jobs and have never wanted to work as anything other than secretaries. These women have not applied for jobs as

electricians or car mechanics and been denied. They have applied solely to women-affiliated occupations.

Yet we cannot assume that the reasons why some women aspire exclusively to women-affiliated positions are simple, or that these kinds of unswerving aspirations are the only reasons women come to work in gender-segregated occupations, as Dana's story makes clear. Many secretaries have worked in a range of positions throughout their paid work histories, and they still wind up in a gender-segregated occupation. Some of these women have faced poor treatment and limited access to occupations less affiliated with women, while others have seesawed back and forth between gender-segregated and nonsegregated occupations for reasons that may appear to be idiosyncratic.

It is instructive to understand all these women's situations if we want to fully explain why occupational gender segregation persists. By focusing first on women of various ages, races, and class and educational backgrounds who have stuck with women-affiliated occupations throughout most of their time in the paid labor market, and then on women who have taken a less direct track into these positions, we can forge an understanding of the context within which women come to work in gender segregated occupations.

In addition to exploring the various paths that women take *into* segregated occupations, however, this study reveals that it may be even more important to follow women's pathways *out* of segregated occupations. A comparison of women like Olivia Rondeau who currently work in a gender segregated occupation with women who formerly worked in gender segregated occupations but have now come to work in a gender integrated occupation demonstrates that there are structural factors, such as the opportunity to take time out of the paid work force, that can open the pathway out of segregated occupations for some women. The absence of these factors in some women's lives may help explain why they remain in segregated positions, and hence, why occupational gender segregation persists.

In the aim to eliminate the disparate effects that occupational gender segregation produces for women and men in the paid labor force, uncovering the conditions that allow women to escape from segregated occupations provides a clue that may allow more women to join more highly-paid and regarded occupations. Yet occupational gender segregation is an extremely resilient institution. The United States economy is built on the infrastructure of work being divided between men and women, and this segregation by gender has withstood many attempts to dismantle it. Within this context, this study provides evidence to demonstrate that the solution to occupational gender segregation may not be the mere integration of occupations by gender. That is, finding ways to provide more women access to less segregated occupations is undoubtedly important for those individual women, but it does nothing to eradicate the underlying foundation on which occupational segregation rests, namely, gender bifurcation. The insistence in this culture of dichotomously categorizing people as "men" and "women" is a strong factor supporting the persistence of occupational segregation, and while that gender bifurcation remains in place, very little will challenge the inequalities that it produces. Thus, the structural conditions I undercover in this study, which may allow some women to escape segregated occupations, can probably best be used in the short-term, while larger scale, long-term efforts to eliminate gender bifurcation get under way.

In this introductory chapter I describe in more depth what occupational gender segregation is, how extensive it is, why it matters, and then I briefly describe some of the ways other scholars have explained occupational gender segregation so that I may demonstrate what questions have been left unanswered. I then introduce the evidence this study provides to answer them.

Gender Segregation in the U.S. Paid Labor Force

"Occupational gender segregation" refers to the way paid work is split between men and women, and indicates the extent to which work categories, or occupations, are

disproportionately filled by members of one gender. While the focus of this study is on paid occupations, the paid labor market is also supported by informal work that is not accurately accounted for in examinations of the formal paid labor market, and by the unpaid family care and household labor that are disproportionately done by women. Increasing numbers of scholars now recognize that these informal and unpaid forms of work make it possible for some people to work in the formal paid labor market by freeing up their time and making the products and services they consume less expensive, and that the formal paid labor market is segregated by gender, race, and class in ways that reflect the converse segregation of informal and unpaid labor markets.

Measures of the extent of gender segregation in the formal paid labor force in the United States vary widely.[1] Part of what contributes to this variation are the many levels on which segregation may be observed: workplace, job, occupation, industry, economic sector, and public and private sector. For each of these levels, researchers often use the "index of dissimilarity" as their main measure, calculating a number between 0 and 100 that indicates what percentage of women or men, or minorities or whites, would have to change occupations in order for there to be no segregation.

One of the many ways the U.S. capitalist economic structure is split up is between public and private sectors. The public sector is made up of government-owned firms, where the private sector is composed of firms owned by individual people or groups of people. Gender segregation in public sector firms, especially large ones, has decreased since World War II more rapidly than segregation in private sector firms (Wharton 1989). This fits with neoclassical economic and neo-Marxist notions that public sector employers have less economic incentive to segregate workers since these employers do not have to contend with the same market pressures as private sector employers (Offe 1984; Fogel and Lewin 1974; Reder 1975). Wharton (1989) shows that many of the assumptions

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[1] While it would be very instructive to study gender segregation cross-nationally, I am limiting my focus in this project to the United States. Unless otherwise mentioned in the remaining text, I refer to occupational gender segregation only in the U.S.

scholars make about segregation are actually only accurate for private sector work. For example, the finding that there are lower levels of segregation among middle-class occupations than in blue-collar occupations, which has been well-documented (Beller 1982; Rytina and Bianchi 1984; Burris and Wharton 1982), is primarily a private sector characteristic. She notes that even working-class occupations are less likely to be gender segregated in the public sector.

Along with public and private sectors, the economy is broken down into the "sectors" of the dual economy. Dual economy studies focus on two sectors: an oligopolistic "core" and a competitive "periphery" (Wallace and Kalleberg 1981). In the core sector, made up of a relatively small number of interdependent firms, employers coordinate various levels of output and prices, which makes them immune to much of what goes on in the competitive market (Bronfenbrenner, Sichel, and Gardner 1990). The jobs they offer are generally stable and high paying (Rosenfeld 1983:639). In the peripheral sector, employers are said to have very little control over their markets, which makes them more concerned with making short-term profits to stay alive (Rosenfeld 1983:639). Thus, the jobs they offer are less stable, less well-paying, and more labor intensive than jobs in the core sector. Workers in the core tend to earn more than peripheral workers, even when worker characteristics are controlled (Beck, Horan, and Tolbert 1978). There is a good deal of evidence that women and racial/ethnic minorities are overrepresented in the periphery, and that African Americans, in particular, are more likely than whites to at least begin their careers there (Rosenfeld 1983; Wallace and Kalleberg 1981; Portes and Bach 1985; Howell and Reese 1986). One study also shows that women are more than twice as likely as men to take their first job in the periphery, and almost twice as likely to still be in the periphery at mid-career (Howell and Reese 1986).[2]

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[2] Within the dual economy exists the dual labor market, made up of primary and secondary job sectors (Beck et al. 1978). Thus, there are primary and secondary jobs in the core economic sector, and primary and secondary jobs in the periphery as well. There is some

In further narrowing down the structure of the U.S. economy, some studies focus on segregation in industries.[3] Studies from the early 1980s show that women are underrepresented in a number of industries, including durable-goods manufacturing, wholesale trade, and mining and construction (Bridges 1980), and that the difference in women's and men's employment in certain industries can be partially explained by the "structural characteristics of these industries" (Bridges 1982:289) such as levels of "market power" and unionization (Wharton 1986; Lyson 1986). While a number of recent studies focus on inequality--particularly earnings inequality--within particular industry contexts (Beggs 1995; Margery, Fix, and Struyk 1991), study of the level of segregation in industries has largely been left untouched since these analyses of 1970s data.

Most studies of segregation focus on the occupational categories detailed by the U.S. Census Bureau.[4] As Chart 1.1 in Appendix A illustrates, even though there is substantial variation in researchers' measures of occupational gender segregation, the range is modest.[5] Most agree that in 1990, between 55 and 57 percent of either women or

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possible conflation of the dual economy with the dual labor market in some studies, and the relationship of each to gender and race has not been completely explored (Rosenfeld 1983:639; Lyson 1985).

[3] There were 160 industrial categories for the 1970 census.

[4] There were 503 occupational categories for the 1980 and 1990 censuses, 438 for 1970, and 291 for 1960. The addition of categories over time makes it hard to track historical segregation trends, and researchers take different approaches to this. Some use only the 291 categories available in 1960 and compare those through 1990 (Jacobsen 1994). This may underestimate segregation, however, since the more detailed categories added later are more likely to be segregated. The aggregation of a number of specific jobs within larger occupational categories is believed to result in a smaller amount of measurable segregation.

[5] The researchers listed on this chart use a variety of different methods to calculate their indexes of dissimilarity. Some indexes are standardized, some weighted, and the data used to calculate them comes from various sources. Jacobs (1989), for example, uses data from three different sources and comes up with three different indexes. He then standardizes them, and also presents them for the whole labor force and the nonfarm labor force. I have only presented his standardized indexes for the whole labor force. My aim in presenting these various researchers' indexes here is not to enter into the debate on which method of index calculation is superior. Rather, it is to present the general range of indexes and give a broad historical picture of the level of occupational gender segregation.

men in the paid labor force would have to change occupations in order for there to be complete integration. Depending on the measures and techniques used, occupational gender segregation has arguably remained fairly stable over time, with a slight decline in recent decades.

Segregation is least detectable in occupations, easier to spot in jobs, and undeniable in job titles within particular workplaces. Each of these terms denotes a more specific and exclusive position, so that there are a number of job titles within any job, and a number of jobs within any occupation. For example, in a sample of general occupations and detailed occupations in 290 workplaces in California, Bielby and Baron (1986) find that 36.5 percent of men or women workers in the major occupation groups would have to change occupations to achieve integration, 75.1 percent in detailed occupations (something more akin to "jobs"), and 96 percent in establishment job titles. A recent comprehensive study of job segregation, based on workers in North Carolina, provides evidence that 77 percent of women and 55 percent of African Americans would have to switch jobs in order for there to be an integrated work force (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993:26). Levels of segregation within jobs may be higher than occupational levels because a number of segregated jobs can be contained within one occupation and cancel each other out. In addition, measures of occupational segregation do not pick up work done by all one gender and/or racial group in one firm setting and done by another group in another setting (Bielby and Baron 1988:764-65).

Tomaskovic-Devey's (1993) study, just mentioned, is one of few attempts to measure gender and racial segregation together. Jacobsen (1994a, 1994b) also looks briefly at racial segregation and finds that from 1960 to 1990 the index dropped from 45 to 31 for men, and from 50 to 25 for women (i.e., 25 percent of either white or minority women in 1990 would have to change jobs in order to achieve racial occupational integration). Although various measures are not in precise agreement, it is clear that

occupational and job segregation, currently and historically, are key characteristics of the U.S. labor force. In this study I focus on occupational gender segregation.

Effects of Occupational Segregation

The study of segregation by gender and race is an important component to the study of inequality generally, largely because segregation has been shown to have deleterious effects for white women and racial/ethnic minorities, especially in terms of wages. As Bielby and Baron (1986:759) note, "Whatever its causes, job segregation by sex is the principal source of gender differences in labor market outcomes."

The gender wage gap currently awards men $1.41 for every dollar women earn (IWPR 1997), and the relationship between earnings inequality and occupational segregation seems fairly simple: women are concentrated in occupations that pay less than the occupations in which men are concentrated, even when skill demands and working conditions are controlled (Kilbourne, England, and Beron 1994). Sorenson (1989), for example, reviews wage gap studies and reveals that between 10 and 30 percent of the gender gap in pay can be explained by occupational gender segregation, while Kilbourne et al. (1994) find that the percentage of women in an occupation explains between 3.6 percent and 12.2 percent of the gender gap in pay for whites, and 5.2 to 41.7 percent of the gender gap among African Americans. Other estimates from studies in the 1980s are that between 9 and 38 percent of wage disparity between men and women is due to their segregation into different occupations (Sorensen 1989; Jacobs 1989; U.S. Bureau of the Census 1987). Tomaskovic-Devey (1993:116) finds that "as the proportion minority and proportion female in the job rises, hourly earnings fall." He asserts that once human capital, job characteristics, and firm characteristics are controlled, 56 percent of the gender gap in pay is associated with the gender composition of jobs, and 21 percent of the race gap in pay is associated with the racial composition of jobs for workers in North Carolina (1993:120-121). Similarly, England, Farkas, Kilbourne, and Dou (1988) find that after

human capital, skill demands, and working conditions are controlled for young workers, those who work in occupations with more women earn less.

In contrast, Reskin (1988) argues that occupational segregation does *not* directly cause the wage gap. Rather, segregation merely appears to be the cause, and deflects attention from the real source: "men's propensity to preserve their position" (Reskin, 1988). Reskin and others like Tomaskovic-Devey (1993), Padavic and Reskin (1990), Stanko (1988), Cockburn (1983) and Hartmann (1979) point out the discriminatory measures men take to differentiate themselves from women, such as keeping women and men apart from each other at work and assigning men and women different tasks. Anything men can do to distance themselves from women physically, behaviorally, or socially, Reskin argues, allows them to assign different levels of value to the work men and women do, which results in the wage gap. Her argument establishes that it is men's ability to use occupational segregation as a power-maintaining tool, and not occupational segregation itself, that ultimately causes the wage gap. Reskin contends that the efforts and abilities of members of the dominant group (men) to maintain their privilege would result in income inequality regardless of the intermediary mechanism in place. Despite this, occupational gender segregation *is* the mechanism currently in place and, as discussed earlier, shows few signs of abating.

In addition to earnings, occupational segregation also affects the level of prestige attached to an occupation, and workers' chances for promotion. Xu and Leffler (1992) find that "the more exclusively an occupation is composed of white men, the higher its prestige." Even hypothetically, when research subjects are told that most of the workers in an occupation are women, they assign it a lower level of prestige than the occupations they are told are filled by men (Jacobs and Powell 1985). As part of this general system of devaluing, occupations filled primarily by women are part of shorter and more restrictive promotion ladders than men's occupations (Kemp 1995).

Because segregation in the labor force has such damaging effects for white women and racial/ethnic minority women and men in terms of pay, promotion, and prestige, and such simultaneous (and often contradictory) advantages for white men, white women, and racial/ethnic minority men, it is important to understand the mechanisms that keep occupational gender segregation in place.

Explanations for Occupational Gender Segregation

Occupational gender segregation, then, is pervasive and detrimental, but why does it persist? Why do women and men largely work in different jobs? As I have posed this question to my family and friends, one of the most common responses I have heard is that "women and men are just different." Women are more "nurturing" and men are "stronger," these people say, so the positions of men and women in the labor market simply reflect innate strengths and weaknesses like these.

Most feminist sociologists reject the notion that any division of labor is predicated on physiological differences between men and women (Lorber 1994; Collins 1991; Risman 1997; West and Zimmerman 1987). Gender, according to these scholars, is both a structural institution that guides our behavior and a process of redefinition in which we continually engage. While some scholars assume that gender is the social component that societies have created to deal with the biological differences of sex, increasingly more scholars work from the view that this social institution and process called gender is wholly separate from biological sex and stems from exercises of power rather than experiences linked to biology. In this way gender is coupled with race and class as social constructions that may appear to be "natural" but actually have no organic basis. The fact that the divisions between men and women, members of various races, and the poor and the rich are so commonly thought to be part of the natural order rather than recognized as artificial concepts that have been socially constructed speaks to the strength of the ideology and

structures that support them, and points to how effective power can be when it appears to have organic justifications.

Despite this contemporary view of gender, the idea persists that women's and men's current preponderance in segregated occupations must have some basis in biology and in the norms that our hunting and gathering ancestors established. Political economists, especially including Maria Mies (1986), have examined this issue from a feminist perspective by focusing on the division of labor between men and women as a facilitator of capitalism. A capitalist economic system embraces processes that divide

context that allowed men to have power over women, not any actual physiological differences. With this power established, men became able to dictate the forms of work they would and would not do, and also to establish various levels of value to different kinds of work, providing the roots for the forms of occupational gender segregation that exist today. Other political economists have demonstrated that this gender division of labor is also predicated on race, ethnicity, and class as, for example, many women in developing nations do different work than many women in developed nations (Boserup 1987; Fernandez-Kelly 1989; Moghadam 1999).

The United States' capitalist political economic system is certainly dependent on work's being segmented into different tasks, and most feminist sociologists would argue that class, race, and gender are created and maintained in part in order to support that system (Lorber 1994; Sokoloff 1980; Collins 1991). Gender, race, and class have been constructed in such a way as to make the division of labor seem part of the natural order of things. Thus, for example, during the period of slavery in the United States, those who had the power to perpetuate the social construction of race--namely, whites--believed that the division of labor between African Americans and whites was just, right, and predicated on natural, biological differences between these races. Many whites continue to believe this. Throughout the history of the United States, those who have had the power to perpetuate the social construction of class work from the myth that those who are in the highest paying occupations simply have superior drive, motivation, intelligence, and skill than those who work in other occupations. And those who have had the power to perpetuate the social construction of gender work from the idea that men and women, because of their obvious physiological differences, are best suited for different types of employment. As Mies and others have shown, divisions of labor are supported by these sorts of ideologies, or systems of beliefs about the way things are, about how work should be organized around factors that are assumed to be part of the natural order.

Yet what happens when ideologies change? Since the first and second waves of feminism, for example, most would argue that political, economic, and social gender relations in the United States have improved in some ways, especially in material ways for most women. With the right to vote, new laws against wage and hiring discrimination, and advances in the control of reproductive potential, women in the United States have gained economic and political power with corresponding changes in gender ideologies. If, as Mies argues, gender ideologies support the division of labor between men and women, it may follow that changes in gender ideologies will produce changes in that division of labor.

However, although gender relations, and hence gender ideologies, have certainly changed in a variety of ways, occupational gender segregation in the United States' labor force has largely held steady. Women have recently entered a wider range of occupations than ever before, and men have slowly begun to enter the realms of nursing, secretarial work, and other women-affiliated occupations, but the division of labor by gender is still quite solid and unfazed, as noted above, in part because even occupations that go through changes in gender composition almost inevitably resegregate (Reskin and Roos 1990). One of the questions I address in this study is why, despite changing gender ideologies, occupational gender segregation persists.

Scholars have approached questions similar to this in a variety of ways that they like to summarize as "demand-side" and "supply-side" approaches. Part of the answer to why gender segregation persists, the demand-side theorists argue, is because the structures of discrimination and existing organizational arrangements continue to make it hard for women to break into men-dominated positions. Once an occupation comes to be seen as "men's work" it is hard to change this association, especially since men usually do the hiring. Another reason segregation persists, according to supply-side theorists, is that women and men have been socialized differently, so that women come to want to be

mothers more than paid workers and do not, therefore, invest enough uninterrupted time developing what employers would consider marketable skills and experiences.

Another set of explanations for occupational segregation that receives much less attention are the processes that "link" demand and supply in the paid labor market. One such process is the result of networks, through which people tell other people about job openings. Some argue that the race, gender, and the type of relationship between people in networks creates patterns in who gets what jobs.

The perspective of cumulative disadvantage is another explanation for occupational gender segregation that links demand-side and supply-side factors. According to this perspective, women who enter gender segregated occupations accumulate disadvantages over time, which makes it likely that they will remain in a segregated occupation throughout their paid labor market careers. The thesis of "revolving doors" disputes this and suggests that workers go in and out of variously segregated occupations throughout their careers, and that spending time in a segregated occupation does not doom a woman to a lifetime of segregated work.

These supply-side, demand-side, and linking approaches to the gender division of labor do explain a lot, and there is validity in each of them. Yet most of what they explain is why men and women are largely represented in different occupations. They are less able to explain the variation within either one of those groups, such as who among women will work in gender segregated positions and who will work in more gender integrated occupations. Nor can these explanations fully account for the ways race and class shape women's pathways into segregated or nonsegregated positions.

Study Rationale and Design

In this research project I take these existing explanations into account as part of the context that surrounds, affects, and perpetuates occupational gender segregation. Yet

I examine segregation further by exploring individual women's circumstances and the factors that play into their decisions about what kind of paid work to take.

I conduct this examination through an analysis of in-depth interviews I carried out with women working in two occupations in a Southern metropolitan area. One of these occupations, secretary, is almost completely segregated by gender--98.5 percent filled by women. The other occupation, furniture sales, has been consistently gender integrated (averaging about 47 percent women) for at least the last sixteen years.

My initial purpose in interviewing women in these two occupations was to explore the reasons why some women would take gender segregated work and others would not, and I wanted to explore this in an urban context where, presumably, occupational choices are more plentiful than in rural areas. I became interested in gender segregated work during my four-year involvement in a research project called the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality, which studied the causes of urban inequality and made me privy to the labor market analyses of employers in the city of Atlanta. These employers discussed the people who applied for jobs in their companies, and two such jobs stood out in my mind: laundry production and pest control. An employer for a factory that processed laundry said that white women rarely applied for their production jobs that offered a wage of $5.45 an hour with no benefits, and men of any race were even rarer applicants. Most of the people who filled the job were African-American women and Latinas. Conversely, at the pest control business, where workers averaged $11.00 an hour and full benefits, few women ever applied, but there was a ready supply of white and occasionally African-American men.

When I found this out and thought about it, my initial research question was hatched: Why would women take these laundry jobs? Neither laundry production nor pest control seems like a particularly desirable job, but one pays twice as much as the other and includes benefits. Why would women not apply to the pest control business

instead of the laundry facility? And why did white women not apply at the laundry facility as African-American women and Latinas had?

These questions identify the supply of labor as an important and under-explained factor in continuing occupational gender segregation. While it is true that demand-side factors such as discrimination and social closure can prevent women from applying for jobs where they think they will face discrimination and poor treatment because of their gender, and perhaps their gender, race, and class combined, this has often merely been assumed rather than examined. Some researchers have done participant observation and used surveys to find out why more women *do not* enter men-dominated work (Padavic 1992; Kanter 1974), but few have sought to find out why women *do* enter work that is associated with women. Women like Olivia Rondeau and Dana Matheson, whom I introduce at the beginning of this chapter, can help us understand why occupational gender segregation persists. In my research, I use other studies of women in men-dominated occupations as part of the context needed to understand women who work in women-affiliated jobs and women who work in more gender integrated occupations. This allows me to look at a range of motivations and constraints that influence what occupations women end up in.

This study explicitly focuses on women's choices, and the role those choices play in the perpetuation of occupational gender segregation. Other scholars have shied away from such a focus, in part because they have recognized the importance of focusing on the parties most responsible for labor market inequality, and in part because they have not wanted to "blame the victim," and make women seem culpable in their continued disadvantage in paid labor. To the extent that women's choices have been studied, scholars have determined that three primary factors have weighed on their choices: socialization, family, and employers. I explore these in detail in the next chapter, but in general these explanations for why women make the choices they do focus on how women are in disadvantaged positions and can only make the choices that are available to them

within that disadvantage. Yet this tends to homogenize women and gloss over the relative advantages that some women may have based on race and/or class. If we are to fully understand occupational segregation, we need to examine the choices women make about paid work from their various positions of advantage and disadvantage.

Further, many studies of occupational gender segregation have focused on the entire occupational structure. These studies have been immensely important in determining the level of segregation and many of its causes. Yet few scholars have been able to account for the activity that is apparent when the camera zooms in. In this study I purposely focus on the lives of women in two occupations to forge an in-depth understanding of what affects these women, how they perceive their situations, and how they act within these contexts.

My choice to focus on nonprofessional jobs, which do not necessarily require training beyond high school but might nevertheless draw more highly trained workers, is due in part to the level of segregation in these jobs. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, professional occupations are among the least gender segregated, followed closely by nonprofessional service occupations. While analyzing gender segregation in professional occupations is an important task, for this study I felt particularly interested in women at lower economic levels, who have been studied less by sociologists. I made this choice largely because of the importance of understanding the processes women go through in finding work when they are limited by their levels of education and/or skill.

Atlanta, Georgia, provides an excellent setting for studying urban work force issues. African-Americans, other Black Americans, whites, and increasingly Latina/os are well represented in this urban center, even while Asian and Asian-American populations are comparatively low.[6] There is also substantial class variation among the metropolitan work force. Increasing numbers of studies are being carried out in Atlanta because of its

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[6] Among women in Atlanta's paid labor force, 24 percent are Black and 74 percent are white. Since 1990 the Latina proportion of the paid labor force is suspected to have grown (Georgia Department of Labor 1990).

growing importance in the South and the nation as a major urban center, and while it may not be representative of all other U.S. cities, its particular mix of Southern history, economic and population growth, and migrant attraction provides a good opportunity to compare the situations of women of many races, classes, ages, religions, education levels, and family backgrounds in the paid work force.

I choose to make women, a traditionally understudied group, the center of my study because occupational gender segregation produces the most severe disadvantages for them. Many explanations of occupational gender segregation tend to assume that women freely choose gender segregated work and thus must not mind the disadvantages these occupations bring in terms of earnings, promotability, and prestige. They simply want these jobs and are willing to accept the low pay that comes with them, or they are not qualified for other occupations, or their motherhood responsibilities prevent them from succeeding in non-gender-typed occupations, as much of this literature assumes (Gordon 1972; Featherman and Hauser 1976). By studying women of various racial, ethnic, class, education, age, and religious backgrounds, I have been able to examine these assumptions and determine the various reasons why women may choose or not choose gender segregated work. It is important to search for explanations for segregation that did not hinge on women's inferiority, socialization, or simple (and assumedly unconstrained) preferences.

Much social scientific research has either overlooked women or conceptualized their situations in inadequate and even damaging ways, which made me very cautious in my study of the literature and very critical in assessing how previous research projects had been done (Westkott 1979). However, many scholars, especially including feminists, have put women at the center of their research and made great strides in framing women's lives in holistic, contextualized, and more thorough ways (Cook and Fonow 1986; Reinharz 1992) that take into account the ways race and class shape women's lives (Collins 1992; hooks 1989). These scholars have also taken great pains to treat their research

participants with respect in ways that many others have not and have provided the examples I have needed to learn how to ensure that I treat the women in my study fairly and present their lives in ways that are not exploitative.

Study Synopsis

My focus on women in two occupations allows me to explore factors that have affected their pathways into and out of these occupations and to understand the ways their positions affect how they think about gender. My analysis addresses three primary issues: (1) the overwhelming commonalties along the pathways of the women who currently work in either a gender segregated or a gender integrated occupation; (2) the conditions under which women who have done gender segregated work have been able to change occupations; and (3) the processes through which women use their occupations to construct and define their gender.

Oppenheimer (1976) has shown that women's labor force participation in the United States has historically depended more on structural factors such as the availability of jobs than on ideological factors surrounding the appropriateness of women's wage labor. Blackwelder (1997) extends this analysis by demonstrating that throughout the 1900s in the United States, changes in women's labor force participation have been prompted by structural changes and have, themselves, produced the ideological changes that are commonly thought to have produced the labor force participation fluctuations in the first place. I advance this notion by asserting that structural factors are paramount not only in labor force participation rates but in the production and reproduction of occupational segregation as well. Yet the structural factors I examine are not macro-level changes in the economy or transformations to entire labor markets. Rather, I use evidence about women's lives to piece together the conditions under which they enter and exit particular occupations. These conditions, which hold systematic patterns, are the structural factors on which I focus.

Further, I examine how women understand their positions as women in the occupations they have, which allows me to pinpoint the ways that the segregation of work by gender may affect these workers' gender ideologies. Consistent with Mies's premise that capitalism is supported by a patriarchal division of labor that draws upon assumptions about biological differences between males and females, I agree that without the supporting structure of gender, the capitalist division of labor would have a much harder time existing. Yet my data indicate that the causal arrow does not just go one way: gender supports the division of labor, but the division of labor also supports the reproduction of gender ideologies that legitimate inequality in the workplace. Occupational segregation, itself, gives rise to gender ideologies about equality and difference among men and women, and these gender ideologies then operate to reinforce the segregation of work.

Mies provides the beginnings for this theoretical argument that gender ideology is an outcome of the division of labor, rather than just the cause of it. She takes the example of women's reproductive capabilities, in which the work involved in appropriating one's body for reproduction is ignored while the essential, organic, nonsocial processes involved in this activity are emphasized. She then argues that the reason reproduction is seen as simply "biology" and not "work" is because the division of labor between men and women compels us to ignore the uncompensated work women do:

> This view that the productivity of the female body is identical with animal *fertility*--a view which is presently propagated and popularized the world over by demographers and population planners--has to be understood as a *result* of the patriarchal and capitalist division of labour and not as its precondition. (p. 54, emphasis in the original)

Although the majority of Mies' work deals with the ways that men came to interpret and use women's bodies in a way that perpetuated a division of labor, in this passage she

reveals the theoretical notion that the division of labor actually also works reflexively, serving as the rationale for gender ideologies, and hence, for gender, itself.

My data, focused on the women who actually work in gender segregated and integrated occupations in a metropolitan area support this. I show how women who work in gender segregated and gender integrated positions understand "women's work" and how they interpret their own situations as women in the paid labor force. These women express gender ideologies that indicate how their current paid labor market positions influence their feelings about whether women are equal to men or largely different from them. The vast disparities between the gender ideologies of women in these two types of occupations indicate that occupational segregation provides these women with the vocabulary to frame and understand their own relationship to other women. In this way, the gender division of labor actually works to support and perpetuate gender ideologies that can, in turn, maintain a gendered division of labor.

In-depth interviews where these concepts can emerge generate a much better measure of "gender ideologies" than pre-formed attitudinal variables on a survey questionnaire. Interview data show not only what these are but how they are formed and elaborated in the process of work. And while I do not have macro-level data to determine all the mechanisms by which women's gender ideologies vary, the expressions of these gender ideologies by the women in my sample aptly demonstrate that occupational gender segregation affects the way they think about themselves as women in the paid labor market.

In the unfolding of my argument I discuss many of the structural and ideological factors that affect what occupations women take, and then explore how the gender composition of those occupations affects workers' gender ideologies. I show that in my sample, a woman's socialization, educational experiences, family responsibilities, and orientation toward service explain very little about why she ends up in a gender segregated or a gender integrated occupation. Previous work history, race, class, access to specific

types of networks, and the opportunity to take time off from paid work do much more to explain women's placement in one of these two types of occupations. Upon examining these factors I discuss how the possibility of eliminating occupational gender segregated by moving more women into gender integrated occupations is thwarted by the fact that most secretaries in this sample love their jobs. By exploring women's interpretations of their own situations once they become either secretaries or furniture salespeople, I am able to engage in the debate over comparable worth and provide evidence that suggests that the integration of occupations will do little to eradicate labor market inequality as long as gender exists.

In Chapter 2, I go into greater depth representing how scholars conceptualize existing explanations of occupational gender segregation. I detail the "supply-side," "demand-side," and "linking processes" explanations that are common in sociological literature today. In the Chapter 3 I describe my sample selection, research strategies, and data analysis. Chapter 4 is a history of secretarial work and furniture sales in the United States. Chapters 5 through 7 are analytical chapters in which I present the findings from my research, first detailing the structural factors that affect women's pathways into and out of segregated work, and then uncovering the ways occupational gender segregation affects gender ideologies. In the final chapter I discuss the theoretical and practical implications of these findings, using my evidence to describe immediate and long-term solutions to occupational gender segregation.

CHAPTER 2

EXISTING EXPLANATIONS OF OCCUPATIONAL GENDER SEGREGATION

Many researchers have studied occupational gender segregation to isolate its causes, effects, and the processes that sustain it. This past research is generally divided into three broad explanatory areas: supply-side, demand-side, and linking processes. "Supply" refers to the people who make up the available labor force. "Demand" has been conceptualized as a range of factors, including employers, organizations, and the market dynamics that affect what happens to the labor force. "Linking processes" are mechanisms that bring supply and demand together in ways that can affect labor market outcomes. Within my discussion I demonstrate that these theoretical frames are helpful but not completely adequate for understanding occupational gender segregation.

Supply

Research that focuses on how the supply of labor is related to gender segregation has been almost wholly focused on individual-level explanations, which emphasize individuals' particular preferences and levels of ability. "The *supply-side, individual approach* focuses on the role of personal qualifications in sorting people into jobs of different skill and pay" (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993:5, emphasis added). "Research ... has gradually moved away from *individual-oriented, 'supply side' models* toward analyses focused on the 'demand side'" (Wharton 1989, emphasis added). As these researchers' words make clear, "supply-side" and "individual" are almost synonymous. Researchers who focus on supply have asserted that when we study what goes on in the labor market, but we do not concentrate on employers or on the processes that occur at the

organizational level, what we are left with are individual persons' unique characteristics. Supply-side research relies almost solely on two explanations: socialization and human capital.

SOCIALIZATION Socialization explanations work from the premise that girls and boys are socialized differently early in life, which contributes to their differential representation in various occupations (Reskin 1993:260; Ireson and Gill 1988). Socialization theory specifically highlights how boys' and girls' childhood experiences develop their senses of what occupations are appropriate for their gender (Reskin and Roos 1990*;* Strober 1984; Strober and Arnold 1987; Abrahamson and Sigelman 1987; Lorence 1992; Semyonov and Scott 1983; Ireson and Gill 1988; Jones and Rosenfeld 1989; Marini and Brinton 1984; Subich, Barrett, Doverspike, and Alexander 1989; Waite and Berryman 1985; Padavic 1992; Goldin 1990; Reskin and Hartmann 1986; Jacobs 1989). Beliefs that are established early, according to this perspective, set formidable restrictions on what types of work youth consider and prepare for.

Ireson and Gill (1988) explain that a number of factors influence children's development in ways that have created and continue to reinforce gender segregation in the labor force. These factors include parents, schools, urban or rural residence, class, race, peers, and the media (1988:137-145). Ireson and Gill (1988) focus primarily on how these factors influence girls' choices about being housewives, attending school, working in the paid labor market, as well as choices regarding the particular occupations to which they aspire. Occupations remain segregated according to this view because of the pressure on women and men to enter only those lines of work that seem appropriate for their gender. The stereotyping of occupations as "women's" or "men's" is diminishing

This explanation for gender segregation is supported by a good deal of evidence. Waite and Berryman (1985) have shown a link between mothers' jobs and girls' aspirations. Jacobs (1989) has demonstrated that young working people's career aspirations are at least weakly correlated with their actual occupations. And in general, it is widely believed that encouraging girls to play with dolls and games about home, and boys to play more independent, competition-oriented games creates a labor pool of women who have strong ties to the home and men who are well-suited for the man-structured paid work force (Ireson and Gill 1988; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993:41; Subich et al. 1989; Lever 1976; Marini and Brinton 1987; Jacobs 1989).

Yet socialization explanations are not able to account for all the complexities of the segregated U.S. work force. Foremost, these explanations fail to account for the constancy of occupational gender segregation despite changes in gender socialization over the last thirty years. In addition, Padavic (1992) has shown that women's attitudes about gender-appropriate behavior are less important in their interest in working in men-dominated jobs than financial necessity. Knowledge of what jobs are available also shapes workers' job preferences (Reskin and Hartmann 1986). Further, many early studies on socialization only considered white children's socialization, implying that this is the norm and ignoring evidence that children of other races do not necessarily stereotype occupations in the same ways. Socialization explanations also fail to explain why women earn less than men and face glass ceilings even when they enter men-dominated jobs.

Perhaps even more strikingly, socialization explanations fail to show why many of the behaviors and attitudes girls are socialized to espouse do not grant women more success in the labor market. For example, researchers have observed girls being supportive of others, working to diffuse group tension, role-taking, and encouraging group solidarity (Beutel and Marini 1995; Davis 1983). All of these characteristics seem quite suitable to the job of CEO or Chair of the Board of Directors, for example. Yet these high-level managerial positions remain highly segregated by gender, to the exclusion

of women. Socialization explanations have not addressed this incongruity. While "socialization" does explain probably the most common notion for why the work force is so segregated by gender--that "men and women are just different"--its explanations in some sense seem too convenient: Women are in "support positions" like secretary because they are socialized to be "supportive;" Women are nurses because they are socialized to be "caring" and "helpful" (never mind that doctors presumably need to be caring and helpful as well). It seems that many researchers have found it difficult to give up the stereotypical images we have of men and women, boys and girls, when they construct research on the socialization of children, resulting in findings that over-stress gender differences and ignore similarities (Maccoby and Jacklin 1974). The idea that girls and boys are socialized differently is practically indisputable. However, future research on socialization and its effects on the labor market should strive to come up with novel ways to see and describe the characteristics that boys and girls exhibit, so that their explanations do not simply reinforce assumed gender differences.

Socialization explanations also suffer from a bit of misdirection. Most studies focus on the characteristics that boys and girls learn to exhibit, and use those characteristics as indicators of the occupations in which women and men will be successful once they enter the paid labor market. However, it seems clear that the segregated structure of the labor market is not simply dependent on the different characteristics that women and men exhibit because of their socialization. Women and men are also socialized to view the world in certain ways that make it seem appropriate for segregation to exist and persist. Thus, studies of socialization should not simply be directed to determining whether girls learn to be more "caring" and boys learn to be more "competitive." Research should probe the mechanisms by which boys and girls come to believe in adulthood that it is better for women to be cheerleaders and for men to be owners of sports teams. Explanations that probe the socialization of power would help our understanding of the segregated labor force better than the socialization of "caring."

While the effects of socialization on the jobs in which people end up cannot be ignored, existing explanations in this vein are not sufficient (Reskin 1993:261).

HUMAN CAPITAL Human capital explanations emphasize the importance of workers' education, training, and experience in their finding jobs. Individuals who desire paid labor market success make investments in these forms of human capital and reap the rewards. The distribution of people in the labor force, according to this perspective, can be explained by individual variation in these three areas. Where there are patterns in this distribution, such as racial or gender segregation, human capital theorists look for factors that would affect one group's levels of education, training, and experience, but not affect another group's levels.

Part of the reason why occupations are segregated by gender and race according to human capital theorists is that white men have the highest levels of education, and thus, the best jobs. According to this theory, high-paying and high-prestige jobs often require the cognitive and analytic skills that are said to come with higher levels of formal education, as opposed to the task-oriented skills one obtains at lower levels of the education hierarchy. Accordingly, anybody who attains higher levels of education should be able to compete better in the labor market than those who have not. However, racial and gender segregation are still quite apparent despite the fact that education levels by gender and between African Americans and whites have largely evened out, at least through high school. In 1990 the median level of educational attainment for Black men, Black women, white men, and white women over 25 years old was around twelve and a half years (Bernstein 1995:17). In addition, men's and women's college majors have begun converging (Jacobs 1989:116), so that members of these groups are acquiring many of the same skills. What is most striking about education, however, is that occupations that are predominantly filled by men and those predominantly filled by women require similar levels of schooling and skills (England, Chassie, and McCormack 1982). Reskin's (1993:257-258) review of studies on how gender differences in education affect gender

segregation shows that there is little support for the educational facet of human capital theory (see Abrahamson and Sigelman 1987; Jones and Rosenfeld 1989; Rosenfeld 1983; Rosenfeld and Spenner 1992; Reskin and Roos 1990). There is simply not enough variation in years of education obtained to explain the substantial differences in the jobs that women and men, minorities and whites, hold.

The second tenet of this argument is that the occupation one is able to attain is dependent on one's level of training for that occupation. If women receive specialized training in typing, and men are trained in fixing cars, then women will be secretaries and men, mechanics. In addition, human capital theorists assert that gender segregation occurs largely because of women's avoidance of occupations in which their skills depreciate when they intermittently leave the work force to raise children. This distorts the fact that women do not have higher turnover rates than men with comparable job types, education levels, and cohort (Viscusi 1980; Blau and Kahn 1981; Lynch 1991; Osterman 1982; Price 1994:40; Haber, Lamas, and Green 1983; Shorey 1983; Waite and Berryman 1985). Other studies demonstrate that the skills needed for women-affiliated occupations do not depreciate more during absences than skills for men's occupations (England 1982, 1984; Corcoran, Duncan, and Ponza 1984; England et al. 1988). In addition, the definition and valuation of skills is not gender neutral (Reskin 1993; Reskin 1998; Steinberg 1990). The work women as compared to men do is less often appraised as "skilled," and would therefore require less formal training. Thus, determining how training affects segregation must be coupled with determining how segregation affects training (Reskin 1993). More research on this relationship, and the factor of race in training, needs to be undertaken.

Human capitalists' final argument is that segregation can be attributed in large measure to women's having less experience in the labor market because they leave to raise children or devote time to other personal-life priorities (Reskin 1993; Mincer and Polachek 1974; Polachek 1979, 1981). Assuming that job seekers are cost-benefit analyzers, this theory argues that

> those who plan more years of employment will choose jobs with the highest returns to experience. Because on average, men anticipate more job experience than women, women will select occupations with higher starting wages but smaller returns to experience. This would lead occupations with these characteristics to become disproportionately female. (England, Farkas, Stanek, and Dou 1988:545)

Yet no studies have found that women's occupations have higher starting wages, while many document that for women's and men's jobs at the same education level, starting wages in women's jobs are lower (England et al. 1988; Greenberger and Steinberg 1983; England 1984). Further, Corcoran et al. (1984) find that "discontinuous employment has little effect on women's income" (Reskin 1993).

Reskin's (1993:259) review synthesizes research findings that run counter to human capital theory's assumptions about women:

> The probability of working in a nontraditional occupation increased with women's number of children (Beller 1982:383); being married did not affect the sex-typicality of women's job moves (Rosenfeld 1983); single women were slower than women with young children to leave female for male jobs (Rosenfeld and Spenner 1992); and motherhood predisposed women toward transferring to predominantly male plant jobs in the same firm (Padavic 1991).

This is not to say that there are not conflicts between women's families and women's paid work lives. These findings and others (Daymont and Stratham 1983; Jacobs 1989; Brito and Jusenius 1987; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993) simply point out that the assumptions human capital theory uses to explain gender segregation are not substantiated; thus the explanatory power of this theory is severely limited.

Regarding gender, this perspective is almost wholly fixated on women's choices regarding their families. In fact, as Tomaskovic-Devey (1993:50) points out,

> Family constraints are the building blocks from which the whole human capital, new home economics explanation of sex segregation and the male-female earnings gap is built. If family constraints are not associated with the sex composition of jobs, the foundation of the whole theoretical edifice is undermined.

However, "Many researchers have investigated whether sex differences in education, training, and experience contribute to women's underrepresentation in certain jobs" (Reskin 1993:257) and have not found adequate support for this explanation.

Regarding race, human capital theories focus less on Blacks' and whites' choices, as the theory does for women and men. It asserts instead that due to past discrimination, Blacks have had less and worse education than whites (Farley and Allen 1987; Jaynes and Williams 1989; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993).[7] This poor education has made it hard for Blacks to attain jobs in which they could acquire skills to move into better jobs. "According to this model both whites and blacks of low skill should be in predominantly black jobs" (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993).

However, individual choice is still a major factor in human capital explanations of race, as it is with gender. The theory assumes that as Blacks gain more and better education and skills, they should choose jobs predominantly filled by whites, and especially white men, since those jobs supposedly reflect workers' high commitment to and investment in the labor force. Yet these assumptions about choice do not account for persisting discrimination that limits Blacks' opportunities in the labor market. Neither does the theory account for the fact that the education gap between Blacks and whites has dramatically shrunk in the last two decades (Bernstein 1995) but racial segregation in the workplace persists.

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[7] Most human capital studies that deal with race have focused on African Americans and whites.

Human capital theory does provide us with some valid explanations of racial segregation, despite its faulty assumptions. Tomaskovic-Devey (1993:52) finds that although education and job tenure among whites has no effect on the racial composition of the jobs they are in, among African-Americans, education, job tenure, marriage, and parenthood are all significant predictors of their jobs' racial composition. Having a college education, a few years with an employer, no children, and being married increase the chances that an African-American would be in a racially integrated job. Being an African-American parent is also associated with being in an all-Black job. Tomaskovic-Devey (1993:52) only guesses that this may be because college-educated Black couples may constitute a "distinct lifestyle" among African Americans, which may be a factor in leading them into more integrated settings.

Tomaskovic-Devey's (1993) findings indicate that although the human capital model is more developed in its explanations of how gender works in the labor market, it might be better at explaining racial effects. Regarding both gender and race, however, human capital theory makes too many flawed assumptions and leaves too much about segregation unexplained for us to be able to rely on it completely. Further, human capital models that simultaneously take race and gender into account are virtually nonexistant, making their generalizability suspect.

Human capital and socialization theories remain the most prominent supply-side explanations for gender and racial segregation in the labor force. They also pull heavily on people's "common sense" and are thus hard to discard. However, Tomaskovic-Devey (1993:54-55), in an important studies of segregation, shows that

> There is almost no empirical support in my research or in the literature for the human capital explanation of how jobs come to be sex-segregated. There is support in this chapter and in the literature ... that socialization ... may play some role in creating sex and racially segregated employment

> structures. That role is a weak one, however, in that labor supply decisions are not the primary source of segregation at the job level.

Because existing supply-side explanations for segregation have been found to be inadequate, we must look to what researchers have found on the demand side.

Demand

Research that focuses on how the demands of employers affect and are affected by gender and racial segregation are almost completely focused on the structural aspects of the labor market. Tomaskovic-Devey (1993:5) juxtaposes demand-side explanations of segregation with supply-side:

> The supply-side, individual approach focuses on the role of personal qualifications in sorting people into jobs of different skill and pay. ... [M]ore structural, or demand-centered, approaches to labor markets focus their explanations of racial and gender inequalities on the organizational and job segmentation of the labor force along racial and gender lines.

As he makes clear, individual-level approaches seem to fit best under supply-side explanations, and structural-level approaches under demand-side explanations.

A number of demand-side explanations are prominent, including employers' preferences, stereotypes, and discrimination; dual labor market theory; the interest of men and whites in preserving their privilege; and the current gender and racial composition of jobs and occupations that supports norms about types of incumbents appropriate for types of jobs.

EMPLOYERS AND DISCRIMINATION Researchers have identified employers' preferences as one of the most important aspects in the determination of who gets what jobs (i.e., what employers *demand* translates easily into what employers *prefer*). In much economic literature, the employer's role as profit maximizer is assumed and defended. The desire to maximize profits is likely to have an effect on whom employers prefer to

hire, since they would presumably want to hire the people they feel will bring them the most profits, and this process of identifying workers who will best help maximize profits can easily result in a segregated workforce since the supply of labor with the necessary levels of skill tends to be organized by race and gender (Wallerstein 1974; Sassen-Koob 1980).

Employers' preferences may also be based on other factors, however, such as employers' blatant desire to hire or not hire members of groups, which would indicate a "taste for discrimination" (Becker 1957), and/or employers' stereotypes of groups, which can lead to statistical discrimination (Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991).

Employers engage in statistical discrimination when they use race and/or gender as proxies for measures of individual productivity. They make assumptions about the average productivity of the racial and gender groups to which an individual belongs, and attempt to minimize their training costs by hiring those whom they assume have the most satisfactory productivity (Thurow 1975). This process can easily lead to segregated workplaces. Bielby and Baron (1986) argue convincingly that the process of statistical discrimination works to almost completely gender segregate jobs within any particular organization. Their evidence focuses on women in mixed-gender occupations who, despite having taken seemingly nonsegregated positions, end up doing work that is different and separate from the work men do in the same occupation in the same organization. Bielby and Baron (1986:782) conclude that "small differences in job requirements get amplified into large differences in gender composition." Employers, based on their knowledge of the skills required to do particular jobs, and their perceptions of gender differences in skills, relegate women and men who are in the same occupation to do different work. "With few exceptions, a job was either inappropriate for women or appropriate only for women, regardless of the amount of overlap in the attributes of prospective male and female employees" (1986:782).

SOCIAL CLOSURE Tomaskovic-Devey (1993) argues that discrimination is much more intentional than simply guessing about skill levels, and that white employers use their power to maintain status differences between themselves and African Americans. His demand-side approach focuses on dual labor markets as the source of gender and racial segregation (Beck et al. 1978). Dual labor market theory asserts that "the quality of a job has to do with the power of the job in an organization and the resources of the organization in its regional and industrial environment" (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993:5). Women and men of different races are segregated into different jobs, according to this theory, because higher quality jobs (i.e., jobs with more power within the organization) are reserved for those employees whom employers prefer. The most powerful jobs, then, belong to the employers and the employees who "fit" with their idea of what a good worker is. Those who fit, not surprisingly, will often resemble those in power (Acker 1988). Discrimination, then, is not simply limited to employers' concerns over training costs, and is not a constant. Discrimination is an ongoing process that those in power--largely whites and men--use to preserve their power.

Tomaskovic-Devey (1993) describes this process as "social closure." Privilege is maintained by those in power by reserving the best jobs for those like themselves. White men employees also play a part in this social closure process when they are in powerful positions, since they may exert pressure on their bosses to maintain a work force of white men. This combination of racism and patriarchy (systems of preserving white's and men's privilege) translates into job and occupational segregation by taking opportunities away from white women and women and men of color, and forcing them to accept lower quality jobs.

This type of discrimination is mediated by the organizational characteristics of employers' firms. Large firms and those that have formalized hiring and promotion procedures tend to facilitate less discrimination by race and gender than smaller firms in which employees and potential employees are at the mercy of informal procedures

(Kaufman 1986; Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991; Bielby and Baron 1986; Stolzenberg 1978). Browne and Hewitt (1995:18) lend support to this thesis with their finding that in Atlanta, "African Americans working in small establishments are more likely to be employed in predominantly-black jobs compared to African Americans working in larger establishments."

According to the social closure theory, segregation will occur once the social closure process is active. Once segregation has been established, the given gender and racial composition of the jobs will also work to preserve disadvantage for white women and women and men of color (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993). That is, there are two main factors working to maintain segregation: social closure (whites and men actively working to maintain their positions of privilege, which leads to segregation) and "status composition" (once jobs are already segregated, the idea of those jobs as "women's jobs" or "white's jobs," for example, places further pressure on employers and potential employees to maintain that segregation). As Bielby and Baron (1986:787) explain, "Once established, sex labels of job titles acquire tremendous inertia."

While these explanations, which have been labeled as "demand-side" and "structural" are important and supported by a good deal of evidence, it is my contention that they are somewhat misconstrued. That is, the way researchers have framed these explanations obscures part of how the processes they describe work. Many of the factors outlined above are not simply about demand. That is, they are not simply about jobs, or

Linking Processes

NETWORKS Recent research links supply and demand by highlighting the processes that occur between them, matching people with jobs. Granovetter (1974) was among the first to highlight these processes by explaining "the strength of weak ties," a concept that emphasizes how the jobs people attain is directly related to how they find out about the jobs. Many people in search of work use their family and friends as sources of information about jobs. They "network." Granovetter (1974) finds that people who rely on their informal networks of family and friends find better (i.e., higher-paying and/or

employees informed of job openings, and possibly advocate the hiring of potential employees to their bosses. The person with the job, then, is the crux of the network. Rather than a constant, networking is seen as a continual process that keeps supply in touch with demand, through the mechanism of the people with jobs. Race is an important aspect of that mechanism, and can work to ensure the continuation of racial segregation.

Gender is also important in networks, and is somewhat different from race. In our racially segregated society, it is more the exception than the rule that people of different races are members of each other's networks. Yet women and men interact regularly within various friendship, family, and work relationships. The mere frequency of interaction between groups differentiates the mechanisms of race and gender in the process of networking.

Yet men and women's frequent contact does not necessarily translate into a uniform distribution of information about jobs among the genders. Ibarra (1992, 1993) demonstrates how women and men have a tendency to be members of groups in which most other people are the same gender as themselves. Leicht and Marx (1997) theorize about various forms of distance between the genders in their finding that men and women tend to get informal job leads from members of their same gender. They also find that men who inform job seekers of openings are less likely than women to refer them to gender-typical jobs. A more recent study shows that, much like Braddock and McPartland (1987) and Browne and Hewitt's (1995) findings regarding race, women who use informal contacts to find jobs end up in jobs with more women in them than women who use formal job search methods (Drentea 1998). These studies and other research on networks (Mardsen and Campbell 1990; Moore 1990; Morrison and Von Glinow 1990) make it clear that gender and race do affect the composition of networks and the effectiveness of networks in linking individuals with jobs.

By demonstrating that networks link people already in jobs with people looking for jobs, network explanations do the important work of showing that supply and demand do

not exist in isolation from each other. Rather, processes continuously in motion determine how supply and demand meet.

CUMULATIVE DISADVANTAGE A different linking process uses the factor of time to connect the constraints in women's structural opportunities with their own choices about occupations. The cumulative disadvantage perspective argues that gender segregated occupations are traps for women, since the disadvantages associated with them compound for their occupants over time (Chan 1999; Jacobs 1989). Gender segregated occupations, according to this perspective, easily turn into gender segregated careers. Kanter (1977) aptly describes how this process incorporates the dialectical relationship between demand and supply, as secretaries in the corporation she studies end up staying in their occupation in part because they get rewarded for the least transferable aspects of their job, such as loyalty to their bosses and proficiency at routine tasks.

In disputing this argument, Jerry Jacobs (1989) focuses on women who changed careers between 1967 and 1977 and finds that a woman's occupation at the first time point does not predict the level of segregation in her occupation ten years later. He calls this the "revolving door" hypothesis, and uses it to substantiate the notion that women make a lot of occupational shifts from segregated to integrated work throughout their lives. Rosenfeld and Spenner (1995) support that notion in their study of the transitions young workers make between occupations. They find that women often move between occupations filled primarily with men and women, although aggregate moves are skewed toward women-filled occupations rather than out of them.

A more recent study by Tak Wing Chan (1999) tests the revolving door hypothesis using recent data from Britain and finds that it does not hold up, especially for workers who start off in occupations that are 90 to 100 percent filled by women. The cumulative disadvantage thesis, in Chan's study, applies to women in these heavily woman-filled occupations, and neither cumulative disadvantage nor revolving door theories apply to women doing moderately segregated work. Thus, for those women working in

occupations like secretary, dental hygienist, family care provider, and other highly segregated occupations, Chan's evidence indicates that moves to more gender integrated occupations are unlikely.

Another British study on employment mobility finds that movement into and out of various types of occupations has different effects for men and women (Scott 1994). In this study, only one-third of men in the sample have been confined to men-filled occupations throughout their careers, while half of women have remained in women-filled occupations. Further, she finds that men's movement through gender integrated occupations is often a step on their paths to higher-paid, higher-prestige, men-filled occupations, while women's movement through integrated occupations is not as likely to result in the same subsequent career advantages, and sometimes even precipitates downward mobility.

These studies provide valuable evidence for our understanding of the processes through which occupational gender segregation is perpetuated. They suggest that women's mobility into and out of woman-filled occupations is normative, which indicates that many women, when given the opportunity, are interested in entering occupations that are not predominantly filled by women. Two points these studies fail to emphasize, however, are that (1) the benefits of working in gender integrated occupations, or those filled mostly with men, are apparently not enough to keep women in them, and (2) a large proportion of women in the paid labor force work in those occupations that are 90-100 percent filled by women. In 1997, almost one-quarter (23.3 percent) of women in the paid labor force worked in these highly segregated occupations (U.S. Department of Labor 1998: Table 11).

Another factor that these studies leave underexplored is the dynamic of women entering occupations that are predominantly filled by men compared to occupations that are more gender integrated. Most studies focus on movement into and out of men-filled and women-filled occupations, but they do not fully explore the meaning of movement to

and from integrated occupations. As Padavic (1991) and others have shown, the disincentives for women to enter and remain in men-dominated occupations can be very strong. But scholars have not systematically demonstrated that these disincentives exist for women in more gender integrated occupations.

Finally, because of data limitations these studies have largely left race and class out of their analyses. It is not clear, for example, whether women of all races and classes who work in heavily segregated occupations endure cumulative disadvantage, and whether race and class affect women's pathways into and out of various types of occupations.

In order to understand how the patterns in women's work histories affect occupational gender segregation, then, we must be able to make sense of the ways that race and class may affect the cumulative disadvantage that one-quarter of employed women hypothetically face along their occupational pathways, within the context of the movement that other women of various races and classes may make into and out of gender integrated occupations.

New Conceptualizations

While supply-side, demand-side, and linking-process approaches to the study of gender and racial segregation in the labor force are important, they do not present a complete picture. Studies using supply-side arguments tend to view segregation at an individual level, hence their focus on the human capital attributes and socialization of individuals. Demand-side arguments, on the other hand, tend to view segregation as largely structural, with their focus on the continuity of labor market structures and the pervasiveness and institutionalization of employer discrimination. Linking process arguments begin the work of showing the connections between supply and demand but have yet to make many of the subtle aspects of these connecting processes explicit.

One of the possibilities that these explanations leave wholly untouched is that there may be *structural aspects of supply*. What are the structural conditions under which the

supply of labor becomes or remains segregated by gender? To go beyond simply thinking about supply as the choices of individuals, and demand as a function of the market, this study reconceptualizes the current literature in a theoretically grounded way based on newly collected data.

In reconceptualizing the current frame, I argue that some explanations currently classified under either the demand side or the supply side are actually a function of both. For example, the argument that employer preferences based on stereotypes can lead to statistical discrimination is clearly not only a demand-side process. These preferences may be based on stereotypes about women's tendency to be intermittently out of the paid labor force caring for their children. Women's being out of the paid labor force affects their human capital offerings, especially experience, and human capital is supposedly one of the supply-side explanations for segregation. Thus, if employers avoid hiring women (statistical discrimination--demand) because they believe investments into training women will be wasted when women leave work to care for their children (human capital--supply), this would be more aptly described as an explanation that takes both supply and demand into account. It also incorporates both structural and individual-level aspects in both supply and demand, such as *individual* employers' preferences, employees' skills, *structural-level* stereotypes, and discrimination.

As this example makes clear, it is less meaningful to lump explanations under demand/structural or supply/individual categories than it is to figure out how supply and demand affect each other on individual and structural levels. If we are to truly understand why the current work force is as segregated as it is, we must go beyond current explanations. In this project, I search for the subtle aspects that may tie some of the existing explanations together, make them more complete, or transform them.

In order to do this, it may be necessary to do away with the current terms used to describe the various facets of labor force segregation. As I previously indicated, our definitions of "supply," "demand," and "linking processes" are not complete. In addition,

they are sloppy. What precisely is supply? I noted before that "supply" refers to the people who make up the available labor force. Is that a complete definition? Is that all supply is? Is it more than supply is? And what about demand? Is demand about employers? jobs? organizations? market processes? The concept of demand in studies of segregation, by default, seems to incorporate everything that is not supply. Thus, "the market" is part of demand, as in dual labor market theory. Jobs are part of demand, as in status composition. Employers are part of demand, as in statistical discrimination. While it is not problematic to use a concept that incorporates many dimensions, "demand" becomes unuseful when it is made up of so many facets that are not necessarily related in uniform ways.

The idea that factors about supply and factors about demand can help explain racial and gender segregation is not unreasonable. Yet these two terms, as previously used, perpetuate a dichotomy that is neither real nor useful in our understanding of segregation. Statistical discrimination is not solely about demand, nor is it solely structural. And socialization is not solely about supply, nor does it solely work at the individual level. Perhaps if we are able to clarify our concepts and think more about the ways they are linked than the ways they are distinct, we would further our understanding of segregation. Thus, we can talk about many players in this scenario: people looking for jobs, people in jobs, employers, companies, the market, and the many processes that work to bring these players together. This sort of reconceptualization encourages us to think about segregation in more complex and more complete terms. It allows us to see important interconnections that we were previously shielded from because of the dichotomous nature of the terms we used to think about things.

What then of this project to find "the structural aspects of supply?" I have previously used this phrase so that the gaps and incongruencies in current conceptualizations of segregation could become apparent. A better way to phrase what I am looking for is: the conditions under which women choose their occupation. In order

to find these conditions I study women in a gender segregated occupation and women in a gender integrated occupation and assess what factors have shaped their pathways into either of these occupations.

CHAPTER 3

DATA AND METHODS

In this study I explore why some women's pathways lead to gender segregated occupations like secretary, while others' lead to more integrated occupations like furniture sales. Within this examination I also uncover how the gender segregated labor market works to produce and preserve these workers' gender ideologies.

Because my research question necessitates that I learn from women themselves why they are in their current occupations, I use the method of intensive, in-depth, open-ended interviews within a grounded theory framework. Little could be learned to answer my research question through a survey questionnaire or through observing women in the work force since I am most interested in what occurred in these women's lives before they came to be in their current occupations, which they can best tell me in their own words. In what follows I describe my sample selection procedures, my research strategy, and the reflexive data analysis in which I engaged.

Sample Selection

My sample selection process is purposive rather than theoretical or random (Glaser and Strauss 1967; LeCompte and Preissle 1988) and reflects the premise that in order to understand why occupational gender segregation persists I need to understand the motivation and constraints of those women who choose gender segregated work, and compare them with women in a less segregated occupation. Part of the rationale behind engaging in purposive sample selection was to ensure that the participants would generally reflect the racial, ethnic, and age distributions within the occupations on which I focus.

My choice of which gender segregated and gender integrated occupations to study is informed by U.S. Census Bureau data on the percent of women and men in each occupation, as well as the racial composition of each occupation, since I wanted to find occupations that are filled by workers of various racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Since I am primarily interested in occupations that do not require more than a high school degree, I eliminated the managerial and professional specialty broad occupational categories from consideration, and then from the remaining categories[8] determined what the fifteen most and least gender segregated occupations in the U.S. are. I narrowed this list down by removing from consideration those occupations that do not have a fairly high representation of both Black and white workers, and from the remaining list I selected the gender segregated occupation of secretary and the gender integrated occupation of furniture sales.

SECRETARIES Secretary is a classically gender segregated occupation that has been studied extensively, although previous studies have primarily examined this occupation's place in a larger organization context rather than specifically focusing on the reasons why women become secretaries. The number of women working in Atlanta as secretaries is quite high (55,331 in 1990 [U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990]), making them fairly accessible and also making it possible to find participants all over the metropolitan area.

In the U.S., 8.7 percent of secretaries are Black which indicates that Blacks are fairly well represented among secretaries since Blacks' overall labor force participation rate in the U.S. is 11.3 percent (U.S. Department of Labor 1997a). In Atlanta, 14.8 percent of secretaries are Black, 1.1 percent are Latina, and .5 percent are Asian

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[8] The six broad categories into which the Bureau of Labor Statistics divides the U.S. labor force include (1) managerial and professional specialty; (2) technical, sales, and administrative support; (3) service occupations; (4) precision production, craft, and repair; (5) operators, fabricators, and laborers; and (6) farming, forestry, and fishing (U.S. Department of Labor 1998).

American. Compared to Black women's overall labor force participation rate in Atlanta of 11.2, Black women are slightly overrepresented in Atlanta's secretarial population. White women's overall labor force participation rate in Atlanta of 34.5 is well under their representation among Atlanta's secretaries: 82.2 percent (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990).

In Atlanta, 30.72 percent of white women and 30.16 percent of Black women in the labor force are in administrative support positions (U.S. Census Bureau 1993:Table 45). This compares with 28.06 and 25.83 percents nationally, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau 1993:Table 45). There is some evidence, however, that within the broad occupational category of administrative support, white women are more likely than Black women to work in the specific occupation of secretary: 9.79 percent of employed white women in Atlanta are "secretaries, stenographers, and typists," while 6.05 percent of Black women are (U.S. Census Bureau 1993:Table 45). Nationally, 8.99 percent of white women and 6.33 percent of Black women are secretaries (U.S. Census Bureau 1993:Table 45). These numbers do not speak to the segregation of occupations as much as they specify the occupations filled by two segments of the Atlanta labor force. However, they may indicate a pattern of racial segregation within gender segregation, and during my sample selection process I thought this would be interesting to look into further.

Furniture Salespeople Among the top fifteen gender integrated occupations, which represent about a ten percent margin from being either completely segregated (90-100 percent women) or completely integrated (45-55 percent women), furniture sales comes in at number thirteen. This, in itself, did not make it an obvious choice, but comparing this occupation to the others on the list based on the following criteria did rule out most of the others.

The question I considered when deciding on furniture sales largely had to do with the character of the work: Why would a woman be a secretary instead of a furniture salesperson? Secretarial work and furniture sales work seem very different, with one

involving a desk, computer, direct bosses, and the other involving a lot of contact with the public and more freedom of movement. This made me wonder whether the general character of segregated work is different from that of integrated work in general. And to the extent that it is different, I wondered if this should make me choose a particular integrated occupation because it is different from secretarial work, or because it has a lot in common.

Out of the fifteen most integrated jobs, only one--dispatchers--could be considered a full-time desk job, yet six out of the fifteen most segregated jobs, including secretary, stenographer, and receptionist, are desk jobs. This suggested to me that desk work might be a characteristic of much segregated but not of integrated nonprofessional work.

Working with the public is more evenly split. Based on my knowledge of the tasks involved in these occupations, I concluded that nine out of fifteen integrated jobs (including bartender, waitress' assistant, and advertising sales worker) and ten out of fifteen segregated jobs (including dental assistant, receptionist, and teachers' assistant) involve working with the public. Thus I decided that the integrated occupation I chose needed to involve working with the public.

Related to working with the public, part of secretarial work involves dealing with coworkers or bosses on a regular basis as part of the job. A few of the most integrated occupations, like bus driver, incorporate tasks that workers carry out either wholly in isolation or away from the organizational site, yet these occupations did not make up enough of the most integrated occupations to allow me to consider this typical of integrated work, so I took them out of consideration.

Another factor I had to consider, since I had already chosen secretary as my segregated occupation, was that compared to some of the integrated occupations like bartending, secretarial work seemed more like a career, or at least a long-term job. This is not entirely accurate, since many secretarial jobs are facilitated by temporary agencies (Parker 1998), but it seems to be more common for a worker to be a secretary all her life

than a bartender. Because of this I eliminated from consideration those few integrated occupations whose workers seem to have short tenure.

After going through these considerations I was left with four out of the fifteen most integrated occupations. I eliminated one more integrated occupation, postal clerk, because of the rigorous and lengthy testing process a person has to go through to be employed by the U.S. Postal Service, which would certainly affect a person's decision to take such a job. The three remaining integrated occupations were all sales positions: securities and financial service sales, advertising and related sales, and furniture sales. I found that most securities sales positions require a college degree, and that many advertising sales positions do as well. In addition, I suspected that all three sales occupations involve commission. I felt that this could potentially pose a problem since commission work may be different from non-commission work, but I could not avoid this problem by choosing any of these three occupations. Through the process of elimination, I was left with the occupation of furniture sales.

Furniture sales has been consistently integrated by gender in the U.S. since at least 1983, with an average of 47.5 percent women (U.S. Department of Labor 1984-1998). Unfortunately rates are not reported for this specific sales occupation farther back than 1983, although I suspect that at some point this was a job filled primarily by men. In Atlanta, 53.3 percent of furniture salespeople are women, and 10.6 percent of those 1693 women are Black (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990). Nationally, the occupation has not historically had high Black representation, but the racial composition of Atlanta's labor force makes this an amenable location to locate African-American furniture salespeople to interview.

The median weekly income for furniture salespeople in the U.S. is $474, compared to secretaries' $410. However, for women, the median for furniture sales is $423 compared to $409 for secretaries (U.S. Department of Labor 1998), indicating that the fact that most furniture salespeople work on commission does not lead to substantially

higher salaries for these women compared to secretaries. Thus, because furniture sales is a consistently integrated career-type occupation with income levels comparable to secretaries' that is not a desk job but involves contact with the public and contact with colleagues, I chose to study women in this occupation.

OBTAINING PARTICIPATION Finding participants--especially secretaries--was much more difficult than I had anticipated. Over the course of collecting data I approached, in various ways, hundreds of secretaries. Initially I sent out letters and followed up with telephone calls, but few of the people I reached by telephone had seen the letters I sent, so I did not continue this practice. I was able to find a number of participants through connections I have with people who know secretaries. In addition, a few of the secretaries I interviewed referred me to others they knew. One secretary in particular, Olivia Rondeau, is a member of a secretaries' organization called Professional Secretaries International--Association for Office Professionals (PSI), and she faxed me pages of names and phone numbers of women to call. I contacted each one of these women and was able to interview seven of them. After I interviewed these secretaries I sought out women who are not part of an organized group of secretaries, and who worked for smaller, less established companies than the PSI secretaries had.

Very often I went through the phone book and called any business that seemed as if it would have a secretary, and explained that I would like to interview any secretaries who would be willing. This, combined with simply walking into office buildings and asking secretaries face-to-face if they would be willing to be interviewed, were my most successful methods of securing participation. These are also very time consuming methods that only yielded successful results part of the time. Most who turned me down said they were too busy, so it is possible that my sample is skewed toward those secretaries who are less busy, although the interviews revealed that most of those who agreed to be interviewed are, indeed, very busy both with their jobs and their home lives. I did not keep a strict count of how many people I asked, but if I include the places I

visited and called that did not have any secretaries, as well as those where secretaries declined, my success rate for secretaries is probably less than half. I did not detect any skews by age, race, or type of organization in those who declined.

The furniture salespeople were much more amenable to being interviewed. I started out by going through the "furniture" heading in the Atlanta yellow pages to find stores where I could interview salespeople. Perhaps because it is salespeople's job to greet customers as they walk in the store, it was very easy to begin conversations with the people who approached me, and at least three-quarters of the women whom I asked agreed to be interviewed.

One of the techniques I used in asking both secretaries and furniture salespeople to be interviewed was to play up my status as a student and ensure them how much they were helping me by participating in my study. By doing this I felt like I was suggesting a potential relationship where I would be the learner, and the participants would be the sources of knowledge, thus moderating any sense of a power differential participants may have felt if I had presented myself in a more "official" way. The consent form that each participant signed (see Appendix B) clearly states that I am a student, and when participants did ask me more about my project, often after the interviews, I always told them specifically that I was a student in sociology attempting to write my dissertation for my PhD.

I searched for participants all over the Atlanta metropolitan area, although in my final sample some areas are better represented than others. Downtown, because of the great number of corporate offices there, is where a large percentage of the secretaries in my sample work. Because of the easy accessibility of furniture stores near large shopping centers, many of the furniture salespeople I interviewed work in the large, affluent mall areas north of Atlanta as well as one of the main shopping centers south of the city. For both occupations I tried to sample both large and small organizations all around the metro area, and I also targeted areas where the racial, ethnic, and class composition of the

neighborhoods would suggest a similarly comprised workforce. The number of interviews I conducted is fairly large (75), in part because as I attempted to reach saturation among women in any particular group. The groups I considered include racial groups, groups with particular class backgrounds, groups of particular ages, married, divorced, or single women, women with or without children, straight or lesbian women, women who had been working in this occupation for a long time or a short time, women who hated their jobs or loved them. I did not know the characteristics of each woman until I had interviewed her, so when I walked into an office building or a furniture store, I often simply asked the person I first encountered if she would be willing to be interviewed, and subsequently found out whether she was part of a group on which I had little information or had already reached saturation. It would have been impractical, rude, and probably ineffective to have gone through a checklist of criteria with potential participants before interviewing them.

Because of this, I have an overrepresentation of women in some categories, such as white furniture salespeople, and too few in other categories, such as lesbians. Overall, however, my sample is well-balanced and represents a large cross section of the working population of women in the Atlanta metropolitan area. In Appendix C I detail each participant's pseudonym,[9] position, race, class background, age, income from her current position, household income, level of education, marital status, and number of children. The summary table in Appendix D highlights these data in aggregate.

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[9] I asked each participant to come up with her own pseudonym. Only one person made up both a first and last name, so for all other participants I assigned a last name. As I report on our interviews in this study I use both first and last pseudonyms when I initially introduce a participant, and use her first pseudonym throughout the rest of the text. I am aware of that calling participants by their first names while I cite scholars using their last names is problematic in terms of reproducing hierarchy, and that it may also strike some as discourteous. However, this seems the best out of no good options since it is awkward to repeatedly use first and last names, and since the first names were chosen by participants, themselves. In an attempt to reduce the hierarchy between participants and scholars I try to use scholars' first and last names when I introduce them throughout the text.

This table shows that I interviewed women with a fairly substantial range of characteristics. Whites and African Americans are best represented in my sample despite the fact that I specifically targeted Latin and Asian American businesses to try to obtain better representation of Latinas and Asian American women. I had some success with Latina secretaries but was able to find only one Asian-American women in furniture sales and no Asian-American secretaries to interview.

Most of the furniture salespeople I interviewed are in their 40s, as are most of the secretaries. The range of incomes for secretaries is lower than furniture salespeople's incomes, which are fairly widely distributed. However, many of the furniture salespeople who were new to the occupation may have projected their earnings in a way that reflected their goals rather than the reality of fluctuating sales, so it is possible that the reported incomes of the furniture salespeople are inflated. Rates of education for both groups are similar, with furniture salespeople slightly more likely to have college degrees and secretaries more apt to have gone to business school. Most of the women I interviewed have children, and almost as many are married as are not. The similarity in the characteristics of both furniture salespeople and secretaries in my sample makes me fairly confident that these were two good occupations to compare.

Research Strategy

My research strategy evolved throughout the entire research process, generally moving from being fairly rigid to more informal. I first drew up a list of questions focused on what research participants had been doing immediately prior to taking their current job, and what led them to that current position. I began interviewing with this formal interview instrument but found after my initial few interviews that these questions were too inflexible and did not allow participants to talk as freely as I had hoped. Thus I continually reordered and changed my questions and worked in each interview to follow the participant's lead rather than imposing too much of my own agenda onto the interview.

Many of the secretaries fit the interviews into their lunch hours, while others were able to take time out of their work schedule to talk with me. Sometimes we sat at the secretaries' desks, sometimes in a nearby conference room, and other times at a public area somewhere in the building. The few interviews conducted outside participants' offices were at restaurants or outside in a park. It became clear after the first few interviews that the secretaries seemed most comfortable spending about an hour talking with me, but asking for much more time tried their and their bosses' and coworkers' patience, since the interviews were usually carried out at their workplaces. I could have altered my approach and asked them if they would have been willing to be interviewed after work or on a weekend, but I always offered to conduct the interviews wherever and whenever they felt most comfortable.

I quickly found that the furniture salespeople, probably because of the nature of their work, approached the setup for the interviews differently than the secretaries. Very few secretaries offered to conduct an interview on the spot when I made my initial attempt at visiting their office to solicit interviews. In fact it seemed preferable both to them and to me, especially in the beginning, that we set up an appointment when I could come back, giving me time to think about the setting and the questions I wanted to ask. When I visited furniture stores to meet people, however, almost every person who agreed to be interviewed simply said, "Sure, we can go over here."

These interviews were almost all conducted on the display furniture in the store, and a fair number of the women had to get up during the interview to help customers who came in while we were talking. Even though these interviews were not completely private and they sometimes had interruptions, they still felt very comfortable and the women seemed to speak quite freely.

One peculiarity that developed, which I would not have guessed at the outset of this project, is that I often decided not to interview more than one person at any particular setting. Trying to be very sensitive about how each participant felt about our interview, I

would take her cue as to whether I should ask if she could introduce me to somebody else in her organization or not. In a few places the participants helped me interview almost every woman who worked there as either a secretary or a furniture salesperson. They initiated introductions, gave me people's phone numbers, and suggested that I get in contact with specific women. More often, however, I got the impression after I talked with any one woman in an organization that she felt somewhat special for having been singled out to be interviewed. This was especially true for the furniture salespeople. I am not sure exactly what communicated that impression to me, but when I got it I did not ask a woman for help in securing other contacts. It seemed to make both the participant and me feel good for me to focus solely on her for. This undoubtedly resulted in my losing potential interviews with other women, but since the supply of potential participants was fairly large I do not feel this created any problems in my data collection.

During each interview with both secretaries and furniture salespeople, I usually started off by asking them what their position is, how long they had been there, and how they wound up there. Occasionally those were the only questions I asked, and the participants filled up an hour or more talking largely on their own. Usually this provided me with enough information to probe more deeply into their specific situations. I tried to get a sense of their entire paid work history, including how they heard about jobs, why they left, and how they decided what to do next. I also asked as much as I felt comfortable asking about their families, how they negotiate paid work with family responsibilities, and how they feel their families have affected their paid labor market moves and decisions.

Our interviews also usually included a chance for the participants to tell me what they think about the issues at the core of my project. When I had the chance I asked them why they thought some women take more "traditional" paths like secretary and others take other kinds of paths. I asked them why they thought more men did not go into secretarial work, and why women did not fill up the ranks of mechanics, carpenters, and

CEOs. While I did not ask many of the secretaries if they had ever considered a career in furniture sales since this is a somewhat obscure occupation, I did ask many furniture salespeople if they had ever considered becoming a secretary. In these questions I was able to elicit hints about the participants' gender ideologies and get a sense of how they view themselves in terms of gender.

Participants also got to dream a little bit during our interviews. I asked many of them to dream that they could wake up in the morning and have any job they wanted, and to tell me what that job would be. These answers were contextualized by other questions about what they as little girls had wanted to be when they grew up, whether their parents had particular aspirations for them, and what they plan to be doing in five years.

Although I consider the bulk of my interviews to have been "interviewee-oriented interviews" rather than "instrument-oriented" (Reinharz 1992:38), since I tried to follow the participants more than follow my own questions, when time and energy allowed I did ask as many questions as possible from the interview checklist which is included in Appendix E. These questions included specific information about past jobs, how participants feel about their current job, and who participants work with on a daily basis, among other questions. These questions, I should note again, changed throughout the research project, so the checklist included in Appendix E is the most recent draft. I also obtained from almost every respondent her salary from her current job, her total household income, and her age. In order to be sensitive to participants' need for privacy I asked these demographic questions by presenting them with a written list of categories to choose from and asking them to tell me the letter that corresponded with the appropriate salary, household income, and age category (see Appendix E).

Since I informed participants at the outset that the interviews would last for roughly one hour, very few were cut short or rushed. There were many people who I would have liked to continue interviewing for hours, but since I knew I only had one hour I always made sure to try to get the most valuable information I could within that time.

There were occasions when I felt that some of the questions I wanted to ask would have been intrusive because of what the participant had already told me. In the case of a woman in her late 70s whose husband had recently died and whose friends at the furniture store asked her to come in and help them out by working occasionally, for example, I did not feel comfortable asking her for her salary or household income information. Other women sometimes brought up events of their lives, like divorces or instances of abuse, that they did not seem to want to discuss any further than a brief mention, so I did not push. One woman, who had seven children and worked at a furniture store with her current husband, evaded my question about how long they had been married by saying, "Oh, forever," and it was only when she got up to help a customer and her husband came over and talked to me that I learned that she had recently divorced her first husband and married him.

In instances like these, I chose not to press the women and often left feeling conflicted about not having done so. I felt like I was not a qualified researcher if I could not make participants comfortable enough to tell me what was important to them. But I mainly felt as though there are limits to what any person wants to tell a stranger they have known for less than an hour, and that I wanted to convey to each participant the truth that I respected her right to privacy. I found solace in the latter feeling in Reinharz's (1992:19) discussion of how it is preferable to allow some questions to go unanswered in interviews and to report why that was done, than to bulldoze through all the questions for each participant without paying any mind to the context of the interview situation.

After almost every interview I sat down and thought about the questions I had asked, the questions I may have missed, and the parts of the interview that I may have handled less effectively by being too pushy with my own questions. I often felt torn between trying to get as much information as I could in a short amount of time, and chit chatting about things that seemed somewhat peripheral in order to establish a rapport. My constant revision of the questions and my growing ability to allow participants to lead the

interviews were two of the techniques I used to help ground my project in the data. I did not alter my plan of interviewing secretaries and furniture salespeople based on what I found in my interviews, but I did continuously modify what I was looking for and how I looked for it, based on what I had previously found. In this way, each interview built on the previous ones.

Reflexive Data Analysis

What I did upon obtaining "data" on each participant varied from case to case. In almost all cases, after leaving the interview site I recorded interviewer observations onto the end of the tape I used for the interview. These observations include the participant's appearance, a description of the interview site, as much detail as possible about the participant's work area, observations about coworkers, general impressions about how the interview went, specific aspects of the interview that stood out to me, particular problems with the interview including mistakes I made, and also a brief description of my own frame of mind that day. Toward the end of my data gathering process I typed my observations immediately after interviews rather than verbally recording them, simply to save time.

For the first few interviews, which were all with secretaries, I transcribed the tapes as soon as possible after the interviews. The faces participants made, their gestures, their tone of voice, and the setting of the interviews remained vivid in my mind, which helped me add a good deal of detail to the transcripts. I transcribed them word-for-word and included comments about the context that may not have appeared on the audio tapes, such as "[I couldn't understand why she was so upset about that job description so I kept asking her about it.]," and "[She pointed to the pictures behind her desk as she said that.]."

I made a transcript template in Lotus WordPro that designated spaces for the interview identification number, the participant's name, pseudonym, position, workplace, age, race/ethnicity, salary, household income, education level, the date of the interview,

whether this was the participant's first secretarial or furniture sales job, years at this job, years at current firm, years of secretarial or furniture sales experience, whether there are others at her firm in the same position, and the gender and racial/ethnic composition of the firm. Below this information, which I entered for each participant soon after my interview with her, was the verbatim transcript of the interview. I saved each transcript as a Lotus WordPro file, and also made a second copy in ascii format for use with NUD*IST qualitative data analysis software.

NUD*IST is a software program that allowed me to import all of my transcripts into one large data file. This enabled me to focus on each separate interview when that was appropriate, and also to search the verbatim text and the codes in the entire data set without having to individually open each transcript.

I imported each transcript into NUD*IST and went through it multiple times, devising codes and thinking about what seemed important in what each woman had said. I did not only code those things I thought were important, though; I also tried to code everything I could see, since at each stage I did not know what would emerge as important themes in my analysis. I did this for the first bunch of interviews and came up with a very long and elaborate coding scheme in NUD*IST that I would continue to use and modify in subsequent transcripts. In going through every transcript I thought about every phrase every respondent said and wondered what themes might emerge from it.

In these "open coding" stages (which, along with each of the other coding strategies, occurred throughout the entire research process in some form) I set out to "label" what I had heard from the participants (Strauss and Corbin 1990). As I explained above, my first attempts at this followed very closely, too closely, with the questions I had asked each participant. I labeled their answers strictly based on what I had asked them, since that was all I could see. Eventually I learned to hear a lot more in what participants said, either while they were talking, while I was listening to their interview tape, or while I was reading their transcript.

Because I coded the transcripts carefully and thoroughly in the beginning, I was able to think in depth about the entire research project and the data I was acquiring. This process helped me identify what I needed to learn from participants in order to be able to answer the questions I wanted to answer, and also what I was asking them that may have been less important.

Once I had discovered and named categories in open coding, and begun to use those categories when I interviewed subsequent participants, I also began the process of axial coding (Strauss and Corbin 1990). This process largely involved making computer files about topic areas and then coding what got put in the file. For instance, I found in the NUD*IST stage that participants talked about themselves as women in distinctive ways. I had a number of codes that dealt with women describing themselves as "ambitious," "proud," "valuable," and "hardworking," for example, which prompted me to compile these codes in the next coding stage under a category I labeled "gender ideologies." I then went through each transcript again and looked for anything that would give me a clue about the participant's gender ideology. Finding this information included reading through the entire transcripts, doing text searches for key words like "women" and "men," and reading through my summaries, participant observations, and stories about the participants. It also included generating NUD*IST reports based on previous coding passes.

As I looked for this information in each transcript, I had another file simultaneously open called "Gender Ideologies of FSP" and in that file I noted what I found in each transcript. This sometimes included short sentences I wrote to describe what I found, and also verbatim excerpts from transcripts. Once I found everything I could about gender ideologies and had a record of what I had found in the "Gender Ideologies" file, I printed the file out and coded what was in that file (rather than going back to the original transcripts and coding more on them at this stage). I often colored blocks of text on the printed pages using colored pencils to note common themes among

participants. Once I came up with a number of common themes, I went back to the transcripts to see if there was anything else related to the themes that I had not caught on the first general "gender ideology" coding passes. When there was, I made note of that in both the computer file and the colored hardcopy. I also looked more carefully for quotes in the transcripts that would exemplify the themes I found, copied those excerpts into the computer file, and made note of them on the hardcopy.

By bringing these bits of data together I was able to see the categories not just within the context of each case but as they contributed to something larger. However, I was also able to compare the contexts. For example, as I noted above, I have a word processed file called gender ideologies, where I brought together everything I could find that would give me a hint as to each participants' gender ideology. Once I compiled that, I was able to see that some gender ideologies were expressed through comparison to another group. As these patterns emerged, I was able to take note of who was saying what, and whether the patterns emerging in the ideologies coincided with patterns in other characteristics like race, class, age, job tenure, marrital status, and presence of children.

The axial coding process, as Strauss and Corbin (1990:107) note is very complex because the researcher is doing so many things at once: relating subcategories to categories, figuring out relationships, verifying emerging ideas with the data, continuing to search for the characteristics of the emerging categories and relationships, figuring out how and why categories vary, and beginning to fit it all into an overall scheme. These procedures, for each category that emerged, were both the most time-consuming and the most exciting, because I felt like it was here that something new was emerging from my data.

Once I had all the pertinent data organized by theme and color in the axial coding stages, I wrote to describe what I had found. The process of writing almost always helped me think about the data more carefully and thoroughly, and also sent me back yet again to

the transcripts for more information and context. It also often led me back into the field with different or more specific questions to ask the next participants.

The process of writing also helped me think about the data more theoretically, and move from simple description to analyses of what the descriptions meant in a broader sense. Based on what I found in the axial coding stages, I was able to go back to the literature and have a "dialogue." That is, I wanted to see if anybody else had already seen what I was just beginning to see. Had other scholars already addressed this? How? Sometimes I would realize how different or similar my findings seemed from other people's work, so I would write analyses about that. Most of the time, however, I would think about what I was finding out from my data that was new and that had not yet been covered in the literature. I spent a lot of time after writing descriptions thinking and talking about what I thought I was finding, and then writing preliminary stream-of-consciousness analyses. After days and weeks in this stage, I was usually led back to the library to double check if there was any other scholarship on this theme, and if so, how other scholars had handled it. Often, I found out that I was reinventing the wheel. Other times I found that other scholars had written on the theme in question but in very different ways from how I had been thinking about it. This helped me frame my concrete analyses.

This process went on simultaneously, in some variation, for each theme I found. At any stage of this process for any given theme, I would often figure something else out which would send me back to the "making a file" stage, or the NUD*IST coding stage, or any of the other stages, including writing and interviewing. In this way, my analyses built on each other and were often generated from each other.

Since many parts of these processes were also going on while I was still in the midst of data collection, the process also affected the data I obtained. When I was keyed in on a certain theme I would often spend time in the next interviews exploring that theme. This did not lead me to select specific new types of interview participants, as would have

been the case had I been doing theoretical sampling. However, it very much affected what I asked participants. After completing an interview I would often sit down either at my computer or with a pen and paper and describe how I thought that particular participant fit in with the theme with which I was concerned. Then I would go back to my written analysis and add, rewrite, or scrap.

Finally, and continuously, I engaged in selective coding (Strauss and Corbin 1990). As a natural extension of axial coding, the procedures of selective coding allow the researcher to put coded evidence back together in order to see it in a different context. This step allowed me to retreat back again from my data and try to make sense of it all by telling a story.

Once my data collection was complete, I took more systematic passes through the whole data set to make sure that my additive procedures had not been sloppy and that I was finding everything I could in the transcripts about each theme.

The techniques of grounded theory have been my guide in this project. What I have described here as my main sample selection, data collection, coding, and analysis processes are built on the basic premises described by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Glaser and Strauss (1967). I prepared myself at the outset of my research and all throughout the project by continually reading Strauss and Corbin (1990), Corbin and Strauss (1992), Becker (1998), Rubin and Rubin (1997), Reinharz (1989) Coffey and Atkinson (1996), and other methods books so that I would be continually reminded of what I needed to do, what I needed to avoid, and how I needed to go about my research. The procedures of grounded theory allowed me to explore the accounts of women working in one segregated and one integrated occupation, to better understand why they are in these occupations, and to help me connect their positions with larger structural conditions.

CHAPTER 4

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF SECRETARIAL AND FURNITURE SALES WORK IN THE UNITED STATES

Secretarial work is one of the largest occupations in the United States, and a substantial research literature examines many of the important aspects of this occupation, including its historical significance in the U.S. cultural and political economy. In contrast, furniture sales is a relatively obscure occupation and almost no scholarly work has been devoted to its study. In this chapter, in order to ground my evidence in the existing realms of thought on secretarial and furniture sales work, I present a description of each of these occupations with as much historical contextualization as is necessary and possible.

Cultural Representations of Secretaries: The Occupation and Its Incumbents

During the close of the nineteenth century clerical jobs began expanding in the United States' industrializing economy at the same time that white women began entering the paid labor force in increasing numbers (Davies 1982; Amott and Matthaei 1995). Prior to this, office workers had been white men who were "apprentice capitalists," with expectations of spending only a short period of time as clerks before their assent into management and ownership (Davies 1982:5). By the early part of the twentieth century clerical jobs simultaneously came to be filled by women, became dead-end positions, and began to offer no more than a working-class wage (Davies 1982; Pringle 1988). Most office workers during early 1900s were white women, who leapfrogged past the Latinas, African-American women, and Asian-American women who, unlike most white women, had been working in the paid labor force for decades, primarily in domestic and agricultural positions (Collins 1991; Amott and Matthaei 1995; Blackwelder 1997).

Culturally during this time, men and many women were unsure that women--espeically white women--should be in clerical jobs, or in the paid labor force at all. As Marjorie Davies (1982) notes, women, during the turn of the twentieth century, were thought to be inappropriately equipped emotionally and physically to handle clerical work, and perhaps more importantly, their employment potentially deprived men of jobs. Yet despite these ideological restrictions on women's abilities, labor shortages and expanding opportunities for men in higher paying occupations ensured that through the early decades of the twentieth century, secretarial work became the quintessential educated white woman's occupation (Lowe 1987). As the occupation feminized (Davies 1982; Reskin and Roos 1990), it became associated almost completely with white women, whose devalued gender status brought down the occupation's level of prestige.

The secretarial occupation and its incumbents have been represented culturally in the United States in enduringly negative ways. Pringle (1988) describes the cultural representations that have surrounded secretaries throughout most of this century. Once the occupation became cemented as "women's work," it was a short step for women to the role of "the office wife" (Pringle 1988:6; Kanter 1977:89). Faithfully ladylike and deferential, office wives took care of their bosses, who were almost always men, in ways that extended the relationships between heterosexual couples in the home to the workplace.

The office wife designation contributed to the image of clerical work as an admirable white collar alternative to the few other occupations women could enter, and many women were prepared and tracked for secretarial work as their best paid labor market option. Yet while women could be substitute "wives" to their bosses at work, they faced a stigma if they worked instead of getting married, or worse--worked in the paid labor force while they were married.

Around the 1950s the role of the secretary shifted from obedient and loyal to sexual. Kanter (1977:76) notes this switch in her study of a multinational corporation,

where an executive remarked to her that most executives did not want secretaries who could be mistaken for mothers. In this organization part of new secretaries' orientation to the company included personal grooming sessions "designed to make the secretary into a 'pretty package'." The "sexy secretary" was represented in the media, instructional materials, and even pornography during this time as "the blonde bombshell: not very smart but long-legged, big-bosomed and above all young" (Pringle 1988:13), further reinforcing the sole acceptability of white women in this position. Men in office settings generally referred to each other's secretaries as "your girl" (Kanter 1977), demonstrating a proprietary paternalism with underlying sexual connotations.

In the late 1960s and early 70s, as white women were slowly allowed to inch up the paid labor market hierarchy into low managerial and other professional positions, their growing absence in secretarial work provided more room for women of color to fill the secretarial ranks, which served to further devalue the occupation. Women began overtly challenging this devalued status, however, and worked to change the image of secretaries from "sexy" to "smart." Pringle (1988) describes this new role as the "career woman," who has gone from office wife to office manager, and insists on being treated as a professional. The 1978 movie, *9 to 5*, featuring Dollie Parton, Jane Fonda, and Lilly Tomlin as former sexy secretaries demanding to be taken seriously illustrates the transformations in the image of secretaries at that time, while also reinforcing the notion that the women who effected these changes in the occupation's image were white.

As white women and women of color have gained toeholds in a much broader range of occupations than ever before and the cultural emphasis on attaining equality with men has become more prominent, the secretarial occupation has dropped in status once again, especially for highly educated women. Since occupations that are associated with men are accorded the most prestige, educated women who become secretaries, much like women who become full-time mothers, are often culturally portrayed as having settled for something less than their capabilities would allow. This most recent status drop within the

continual process of devaluation of this occupation points to the vitiating progression secretarial work has endured by gender, race, and class: first men eschewed it (gender), then white women (race), and finally educated women of all races (class).

Despite these persistently negative cultural representations of secretarial work, which have been propelled by larger political economic factors, the occupation continues to expand in almost every labor market, and women still almost completely fill its ranks. In 1997, 98.6 percent of secretaries were women (8.7 percent of secretaries were Black, and 6.4 percent were Latina) (U.S. Department of Labor 1998:Table 11).

Secretarial Duties

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) puts out the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* each year that spotlights various occupations and describes the nature of the work, working conditions, training, employment outlook, and earnings. The *Handbook* for 1998-99 reports that secretaries are primarily responsible for working with technology, performing and coordinating office activity, and facilitating the transfer of information throughout the office. In their specific duties, secretaries may:

> schedule appointments, provide information to callers, organize and maintain paper and electronic files, manage projects, and produce correspondence for themselves and others. They may also type letters, handle travel arrangements, or contact clients. In addition, secretaries operate office equipment such as facsimile machines, photocopiers, and telephone systems. (U.S. Department of Labor 1999)

The secretaries in my sample indicate that their responsibilities range from stuffing envelopes to doing their bosses' work. One secretary who is involved in almost every aspect of her boss's activities says that she works in this occupation in order to learn how to run her own business some day. Other secretaries have discrete tasks like answering the telephone and typing meeting minutes, and they do not attempt to take on anything

additional because they care very little about their jobs other than the fact that they provide enough earnings to pay their bills. Most of the women in my sample, however, say that they enjoy being challenged, they like to do a good job and make things look nice, and they appreciate the autonomy they are given to complete their tasks.

The BLS (1999) indicates that executive secretaries often have more responsibilities than entry-level clerical workers, and that these responsibilities may be more difficult and more tailored to individual executives' needs. What the BLS does not mention, but that others like Kanter (1977) have shown and that is evident in my sample, is that higher-level secretaries are also often responsible for more "personal service" tasks. Some executive secretaries in my sample write their bosses' personal correspondence, plan private parties, decorate their bosses' offices, check in with their bosses' wives to coordinate schedules, and run extra-office errands. While none of the secretaries in my sample admitted to having romantic relationships with their bosses, two furniture salespeople who were previously secretaries left the latter occupation when they married their bosses.

Although these tasks, which have been the subject of complaints for decades, may indicate that secretarial work is static, the occupation is undoubtedly changing as a result of computer technology, as many have predicted (Garson 1977; Machung 1984). I asked a number of the women who have been secretaries for decades to describe the changes in the occupation, and they noted how shorthand is a thing of the past and Microsoft Windows is the current skill demand. Some like working with computers very much and find this the most enjoyable aspect of their jobs, while a minority of others prefer typewriting and writing by hand, and they have resisted switching their routines. Despite the change in the technological character of this occupation and its potential for replacing workers with machines, the BLS *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (1999) predicts that increased automation will not have a substantial effect on overall employment levels in secretarial work in the foreseeable future.

The secretaries I interviewed range from short-term, entry-level typists to executive assistants who have decades of tenure with their bosses and/or companies. Some of these secretaries work as part of a "pool" who share work tasks, but most directly report to one or more people and are solely responsible for meeting those people's administrative needs.

Furniture Sales

Studies of women in sales are relatively sparse. Aside from focusing on direct selling organizations, such as Mary Kay, and other women's sales niches, like residential real estate (Biggart 1989; Thomas and Reskin 1990; Wharton 1996), very few scholars have examined gender within the occupation of sales.

The study of furniture sales, in particular, is practically nonexistent. No published books deal specifically with the topic of furniture sales, and most of the small number of articles written about it are published in business magazines and deal primarily with topics like motivation and sales techniques. Even within the furniture industry, itself, attention is usually placed on production workers and craftspeople, while the salespeople are relatively ignored. In my search for existing documents on the historical context of furniture sales I asked a number of the participants in this study if they knew of any sources of information, and they each said that, to their knowledge, nothing exists. They say they have information on furniture, and information on sales, but nothing that combines the two.

Despite this, a good deal has been written about the occupation of sales, generally, and these studies help form the picture of women furniture salespeople, specifically. Women have been overrepresented in sales occupations compared to their overall representation in the paid labor force since the middle of the 20th century (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1960). Men and women have had roughly equal representation in sales occupations since about 1980, although the types of sales men and women do are strongly segregated, with women in sales fields like retail and men in more lucrative fields such as

commodities (Thomas 1990). In addition, women are often relegated to sales occupations in which women are the primary customers, since employers assume that women cannot effectively sell to men (Leidner 1989).

Many furniture salespeople in my sample see themselves on a sales progression, from clothing and cosmetics, to furniture, and eventually onto "bigger ticket items" like cars and houses. Some aspects of furniture sales are similar to real estate sales--a sales field that has been given much more scholarly attention. Thomas and Reskin's (1990) and Wharton's (1996) studies of real estate agents demonstrate that sales workers perceive many of the same potential advantages in these two occupations, including flexible hours, the opportunity to make as much money as one wants, and the autonomy of working in a fashion that is akin to owning one's own business. The reality of these "advantages," however, is that flexible hours often mean longer hours, salespeople's evenings and weekends are often filled with work responsibilities, and the chance to make as much money as one "wants" is highly constrained. While workers in both furniture and real estate sales do earn slightly more than women in occupations that are more gender segregated, they still earn less than men in their respective occupations (U.S. Department of Labor 1999).

Furniture Sales Duties

The salespeople in my sample work in settings that range from what some of them call "low-end" stores that emphasize bargain prices and long hours of operation, to stores that require that clients make appointments for furniture "consultations." I interviewed women at both home furniture and office furniture venues, and found that the office furniture salespeople spend the majority of their time out of the store making sales calls to potential and current clients. The home furniture salespeople almost always work in the store, although a few of the participants with "interior designer" titles are able to go to customers' homes and help them configure the layout of their new purchases.

Furniture salespeople's main responsibility is to sell furniture, which may involve showing and describing various styles and brands, demonstrating particular features, helping customers visualize how furniture may look in different settings, and persuading them to buy. Familiarity with different manufacturing companies' furniture lines is also important, and may require reading trade magazines, company literature, and even fashion magazines.

Many salespeople are also responsible for much of the behind-the-scenes tasks that furniture purchases involve. They often have to deal with paperwork, either writing invoices by hand or entering information into a computer; send out bills; schedule and coordinate furniture delivery; provide customer service to customers whose new furniture arrives with defects; mediate between managers, manufacturers, delivery personnel, and other salespeople; go around the store changing the price tags on the furniture; design in-store furniture displays; move the display furniture around; and greet customers at the door, serving them beverages and information. To a lesser extent, some of the office furniture salespeople have to take clients out for dinner and drinks, and organize yearly catered appreciation parties for top clients.

With these brief histories of these two occupations in mind, I now turn to a discussion of how women get into the segregated occupation of secretary, and how other women become furniture salespeople.

CHAPTER 5

PATHWAYS INTO TWO OCCUPATIONS

Red Thornton came to her job at a federal government agency one year ago through the Work First program--a government initiative that induces welfare recipients to find paid work. In the context of President Clinton's elimination of Aid for Families with Dependent Children, and the subsequent push of former recipients into the paid labor market, the Work First program forces people to look for "30 jobs in 30 days." Frantically trying to keep from losing her income, Red looked for jobs in fast food, customer service, construction, cleaning, and production. At that time, she says, "my dream was something secretarial or clerical." A woman associated with the Work First program became an informal mentor to Red and told Red when she heard that a federal agency was about to hire 40 workers from Work First. Among the 40 they hired one year ago, 37, including Red, are still there working.

Her position includes both paid employment and job training, and requires Red's three-year commitment to remain in her current job as an office automation assistant, which pays about $17,000 a year plus benefits. As part of the program Red receives continual training courses in computer skills, basic English, email, and other office skills. Red, a 36-year-old African-American woman, said she likes everything about the job, and is especially happy with the idea that she can move up into other support staff positions once she completes her three-year training period. She and the two other office automation assistants, who are also African-American women, support 35 people, almost all of whom are white, about half of whom are men, and many of whom, Red says, are gay. She was nervous about working there when she started, in part because most of her

previous jobs had been part-time, but the two other secretaries have helped make her feel less nervous by answering questions and being resources and allies to her.

Red's other clerical experience includes receptionist work at a tax accountant agency from January through April for the last three years. She used to work full-time for those four months but this year she worked there part-time at night after finishing the day at her main government job. The tax agency provides training for employees to become tax preparers, and Red has partially completed that training, planning to finish it within the next year or so. She has three children, ages 16, 13, and six, so holding down full-time and part-time jobs, attending training at both jobs, and taking care of her family made it too hard to complete the training this last year.

Her first child, a daughter, came after Red's third year at Clark College (now Clark Atlanta University). She had been studying mass communication and broadcasting, emulating her idol, Monica Koffman. Koffman is an African-American woman who anchors one of the local Atlanta television station news teams, and was the first Black woman Red had ever seen in broadcast journalism. Red's career plans went awry, however, when she began having complications with her pregnancy. In addition to having to manage that, her parents were elderly and sickly, and she needed to spend more time caring for them. Red knew that she wanted to be the only one to raise her child, so she did not feel she could spend the time on school that would be needed. She left Clark and got her first paid job as a part-time custodian for a school system.

After having her child and working a while as a custodian, Red moved into the position of teacher's aide, which was one step in a long dream she had to be a teacher. While she was growing up Red's role models were teachers and since there were many teachers in her mom's and dad's families, they all felt she would eventually become a teacher as well. Something happened while Red was a teacher's aide, however, that she was reluctant to discuss. She said in a very soft tone, almost under her breath, that she had gotten injured while on the job. In her next sentence she rose to a louder tone with an

almost proud edge to it and said, “So... I resigned.” I should have asked more about what happened, but seemed clear to me from the way she quickly moved on from this topic that she did not really want to talk about it, and I did not feel comfortable pushing it. Nonetheless, this may have been an important turning point in her life, since it seemed to have meant the end of her dream to become a teacher. Later in the interview she told me:

Red Thornton: I’ve always wanted to be a school teacher.

IK: Oh really? Hunh.

Red Thornton: [laughs] I had the opportunity when I resigned, but, during that time my kids were small, and it was like, I don’t want to deal with kids all day, then I got to come home and see about mine.

IK: Yeah. Yeah.

Red Thornton: But see now my kids are getting older now.

IK: Mmhm.

Red Thornton: And, that, that’s always been my dream.

IK: Really?

Red Thornton: Then I always liked the thought of working nine months and getting off three. [laughs]

IK: Yeah, that’s true too. [laughs] That’s not bad.

Red Thornton: Yeah.

Her talk about the headache of being around children all day seems convincing, but also seems like it may be a way of coping with the loss of one of her dreams. Being a teacher came up in different ways throughout the interview without my prompting, which makes it seem as though this unrealized dream has always stayed with Red.

After resigning from the school system Red found another part-time cleaning job for a large corporation downtown. She worked there, on-and-off, for ten to twelve years. Some time during these transitions she began to receive AFDC and also worked in other

part-time jobs such as construction on the Olympic Stadium. In that job, Red was paid twenty dollars an hour, but she did not enjoy working outside and having to do work that was physical, so even the good wages did not entice her to stay with that line of work. She wanted work that was inside, in air conditioning, where she could sit at a desk and wear her nice clothes, and since teaching and journalism were out of the picture, the job she dreamed of was secretarial.

Although many women in my sample have received unemployment benefits for various periods of time, Red Thornton is one of the few who mention having received AFDC. Red's life pathway puts any stereotype of secretaries as former bored, middle-class, white housewives in check. In part because of the initiatives of the agency where she now works, Red's situation seems like one of the success stories that the politicians who put "welfare reform" into place in 1996 want us to believe are typical of former AFDC recipients. Yet it is not so clear to me that her job is a happy ending. She works two jobs and still makes less than $20,000 a year. She receives health insurance benefits but is not able to spend as much time with her children and her parents as she used to. Red makes more money than she did as a part-time custodian but also has to spend more money to pay for appropriate clothes and transportation. The one aspect of her situation that seems positive without any catches is that she is able to receive training in the job skills that will help her advance either in the organization for which she now works or somewhere else. Three years, however, may be a long time to keep a worker in the same position in the name of "training."

The impression I am left with after talking to Red is that in many ways she is quite conservative. As their mother she wanted to be the only one to care for her children. She has had meetings with her children's teachers to tell them that it is okay with her if they spank her children when they act unruly. She was also a bit taken aback by the number of gay men and lesbians who work in her organization. In a time when conservative politicians are pitted against women who have ever received AFDC, it seems ironic that

many of the values Red espouses seem consistent with those politicians who forced her to "look for 30 jobs in 30 days."

Red's three brothers have each held down the same jobs for many years. One has worked for a national automotive parts chain for 30 years, another has been an electrician for 25 years, and the youngest owns a mechanic shop. Her father worked at a meat packing plant until he got glaucoma and retired, and her mother worked as a supply cook in the elementary school Red attended so that she could be around Red as much as possible. When her parents became sick it is not clear whether her brothers helped care for them, but it seems as though this responsibility fell primarily on Red, probably because of her gender. I am not sure whether anybody else in her immediate family attended college, but Red had made it through three years when she left to care for her parents, her child, and her own health. Up until that point Red had never had a paid job.

Red explained to me the reason why she became a secretary: "Since I'm not a teacher, this would be my second choice of work. And I love what I do. And I think that ... the people around me value what I do." Her pathway has been shaped by many role models, by the timing of her responsibilities to her family which have been tied up with class and gender, by events that have occurred in her job history, and by the people in her networks. She has abandoned her dreams to be a broadcast journalist or a teacher and has instead become content with her next choice: secretary.

Her story demonstrates that structural factors have played a large part in her current paid labor market position. The dream for her to work in what she and her family see as the very honorable job of teacher, and her further ambitions to work in broadcast journalism as prompted by an African-American woman role model, indicate that socialization has certainly influenced and shaped her choices. Yet supply-side theorists downplay the fact that the gender socialization she receives is shaped by the structural conditions of race and class. Similarly, demand-side theorists who focus on discrimination

and social closure can account for why Red may not have been offered particular jobs, but they cannot fully explain why she probably never applied for those jobs in the first place.

Red has made decisions that have, as Kathleen Gerson in *Hard Choices* (1985) would say, been constrained. She was able to go to college but had to stop, in part because she was the sibling who happened to be a woman and her parents needed a caregiver whom they could not pay. The structural factors of class and gender are wound up in all of this, as they are in the fact that Red is the sole caretaker and provider for her own children. Family, in itself, becomes a structural constraint on her work force options.

The primary job Red was able to find after having her first child and leaving college was custodial work, which, as it comes to comprise the bulk of her work history, becomes another structural factor that affects the subsequent jobs she may be qualified to obtain. Had she gotten to the point in college of being able to do an internship in journalism before her family demands encompassed her, her subsequent career path may have veered in a wholly different direction.

Right along with these structural constraints, however, are the ideological factors so apparent in Red's decision to turn down continued twenty-dollar-an-hour construction work because it was "too physical" and necessitated being outside. Her expression of wanting an inside job with air conditioning where she could wear nice clothes is one of the classic images of why women take jobs that are considered "women's work" over stereotypically grubby, dirty, strenuous "men's work." Red even mentioned that she actually likes to be outside and likes to do physical work in her own leisure time, but she does not want to have to rely on that type of work for her livelihood. And yet even though this decision seems ideological, it may be much more likely that this is a way of dealing with the injury she received in her teacher's aide job. This injury may prevent Red from doing work that is too physical or that is outside, and it seems as though she is latching on to the "good" things about secretarial work, like its clean, temperature-controlled conditions, as a way of reducing the dissonance she may feel in

that position. It seems, then, that ideology is helping Red enjoy her current position but was not necessarily the main guiding factor prompting her to get into it.

It is important to understand both the structural and the ideological factors that shape Red Thornton's life, and the lives of the women in my sample. The spaces where ideology affects structure are evident primarily in the norms of socialization these women internalize, and in the ways women use ideology to justify their current positions. Yet ideologically-shaped structural factors seem to have more to do with where a woman ends up in the paid labor market than does ideology alone.

I explore the dialectical relationship between these structural and ideological factors in this chapter as I describe how some women come to work in a gender segregated occupation, while others end up in more gender integrated positions. I begin by detailing the childhood aspirations of the women in my sample. These aspirations are, indeed, largely shaped by the gender socialization these women have received, but the women in my sample who have become secretaries and those who have become furniture salespeople report having very similar childhood aspirations, which indicates that gender socialization does not have strong explanatory power.

I then move from childhood into these women's educational experiences, primarily focusing on high school and the system of tracking most of the women have endured. My findings confirm much of the literature on tracking that finds systematic differences in the ways students who come from various socioeconomic class backgrounds are tracked. Yet I also provide evidence that suggests that the secretaries and furniture salespeople in this sample who come from similar race and class backgrounds were not tracked in highly differentiated ways. While tracking may be an important factor that guides men and women into different occupations, my evidence demonstrates that the effects of tracking within one gender group are not clear.

Before moving from education into a discussion of these women's work histories in the next chapter, I first describe two factors that underlie many of the women's

decisions about what to do with their lives. These include their families, and their orientations toward service. While neither of these factors has strong explanatory power for why work is segregated by gender, both emerge in my data as important aspects of these women's lives that they consistently bring up in our interviews. The examination in this chapter of women's childhood aspirations, educational experiences, families, and orientations toward service demonstrates that although each of these factors is important in women's lives, none of them satisfactorily explains why some women end up in a gender segregated occupation while others end up in a gender integrated occupation.

Childhood Aspirations

As children, many of the women in my sample who currently work in a segregated occupation aspired to segregated occupations, the most common of which being teacher, as Red Thornton's story exemplifies. Their career aspirations also include the occupations of secretary, beautician, nurse, and very commonly, wife and mother. For instance, Blanche Hopler, a 57-year-old white secretary says that becoming a mother has always been very important to her:

IK: When you were about like 9, 10, 11 years old, do you have any idea what you wanted your life to look like or what you wanted to be when you grew up?

Blanche Hopler: [slight pause] I can't recall that I really had anything that I decided that I was going to do at that particular time, ... other than get married and have children.

IK: Sure.

Blanche Hopler: Yeah. I mean, I always wanted to have children.

IK: Mmhmm.

Blanche Hopler: You know?

This sentiment is common and is not limited to older women who may have grown up without as many paid career options as women have more recently had. Melanie Yowell, a white secretary in her late 20s, says that when she was a child she aspired to at least three women-affiliated roles:

IK: So when you were like maybe 8, 9, 10 years old, did you have any dreams about what you wanted to do when you grew up?

Melanie Yowell: Yeah. At that time, I may have thought I wanted to teach.

IK: Oh, really?

Melanie Yowell: But everything I've ever really thought of probably falls under the stereotype of what we think of that females would do. It was probably about that, around then was to teach and raise a family. You know, be married and raise a family.

IK: Mmhmm.

Melanie Yowell: And then as I got a little bit older, it was to work in some kind of secretarial type. I never thought of--I don't know why--you know, like, you know, some people automatically want to be a lawyer or a doctor or anything like that and I just never have.

Melanie, who is conscious of how her childhood aspirations are gendered, also notes that within five years she would like to fulfill one of those dreams by finding someone to marry so she can have children and leave the paid work force.

The people Melanie Yowell describes who wanted to be doctors and lawyers as children show up in my sample of secretaries as well. As children, many of these women who are now secretaries wanted to be veterinarians, pediatricians, lawyers, psychiatrists,

and entertainers. Neva Salcedo, for instance, a 31-year-old Mexican-American secretary, wanted to be a doctor when she grew up:

> I knew, since I was very young. I wanted to be a pediatrician. I always wanted to do that. And um, I took um, when I was in high school, um, there was, um, I don't know if they have that here, like a, I think it's called like the Explorers or something. I was in the Medical Explorers group. And um, I ended up passing this test that they gave once a year in high school during your um, freshman, no during your senior, junior and senior year. And both years I passed it. And it wasn't until I was a senior when I decided to actually go into um, I used to go to the University of Illinois for um, it was like very basic first aid classes, and um, it was just relating to the medical field. But um, I'm sorry to say, I, I ended up getting married. So, I didn't pursue that anymore. But that was always what I wanted to do.

Some other secretaries, like Neva Salcedo, express regret when they relate the reasons why they did not pursue the careers they dreamt about as children. Most of them, however, accept the fact that the responsibilities of being an adult with a family are greater than they had anticipated as children, and while they regret that they cannot attain all of their childhood goals they seem resigned to finding happiness within the lives they have.

Overall, the balance between those current secretaries who dreamed of gender-segregated occupations as children, and those who aspired to gender-integrated or men-associated occupations, is quite close. It is also very close for furniture salespeople. As with the secretaries, the most common occupations to turn up in the salespeople's early goals are teacher and mother, and mothering actually comes up more frequently with the furniture salespeople than the secretaries. Alexis Perry, a white salesperson in her late 30s, for instance, says that she has known since she was very young that if she did not have to work for pay, she definitely did not want to:

Alexis Perry: Really, when I was real young, I wanted to marry somebody rich. [laughs]

IK: Sure, sure.

Alexis Perry: And not have to worry about it. But I don't know. I never really thought about it when I was real young, I don't guess. I just thought about being a mother or having kids, you know, and having a family. I really didn't think about working because I didn't like my mother working at all.

IK: Really?

Alexis Perry: Mm-mm.

IK: How come?

Alexis Perry: Well because, you know, back when I was little, I had to go to the nursery. You know, and you would be there from um... like before school until, you know, 6:00 and 6:30. And I mean that was a long day, and I didn't like it.

IK: Yeah.

Alexis Perry: So I didn't ever want to put my children in child care, in a nursery or anything. That's what we called it: day care. I always had either an individual or someone I knew [take care of my children], but I was very fortunate. And then my mother, um, she retired and then she watched them.

IK: Oh, really?

Alexis Perry: So that helped me to work in the retail business or I could've probably never... I probably wouldn't have done it.

Like many of the other salespeople in this sample, Alexis Perry describes how she has fulfilled her childhood dream of becoming a mother and then found ways to fit her paid work around her family. Thus while in some ways the salespeople in this sample

eschew women-affiliated roles, they proudly declare the importance of family in their lives and describe how they have struggled to find employment that allows them to be good mothers and good paid workers at once.

Although some of the other occupations that show up in furniture salespeople's childhood aspirations include lawyer, writer, secret spy, and designer, gender segregated occupations are slightly more prevalent, even for this group, than gender integrated or men-affiliated occupations. This points to an important flaw in theories of socialization that argue that women work in gender segregated occupations because of the messages they internalize as children about the work that is appropriate for them to do. In this sample, women who work in a gender integrated occupation are just as likely as women working in a gender segregated occupation to have aspired to women-affiliated roles when they were children, and yet they have not wound up in segregated occupations. Most of them have become mothers, but they have been able to find ways to be both mothers and paid workers. The childhood aspirations of the women in my sample demonstrate that we need to look further than the influences of early youth for explanations of why women do or do not come to work in gender segregated occupations.

Education

Many sociological studies have revealed the links between occupational placement and the formal and informal systems of tracking in schools (Bowles and Gintis 1976). Scholars often refer to the informal processes through which girls receive different treatment than boys the "hidden curriculum" (Sadker and Sadker 1991:57) and uncover it in classroom interaction, teachers' evaluations, counselors' guidance, and in the structure of schools' formal curricula that track students in ways that are meant to prepare them for what lies ahead in their lives. These gendered patterns in students' educational experiences tend to vary by race and class.

The hidden curriculum, and the more overt practices of tracking in schools, manifest themselves in a number of ways that affect students' eventual orientation toward and placement in occupations. When they are in elementary school, girls identify a limited range of occupations in which they would like to work, while the potential occupations boys of the same age name are more numerous and broad (American Association of University Women 1998; Sadker and Sadker 1991). Boys are more apt to take and like courses in math and science than girls, which affects their preparedness for a range of careers (American Association of University Women 1992; 1998). And generally, girls receive quantitatively less and qualitatively different treatment from educators than boys do, which affects their levels of self-esteem and identity (Sadker and Sadker 1991). Self-esteem and identity are linked to school-age girls' career aspirations (Schneider 1994).

These subtle forms of gender inequality in education combine with formal systems of "tracking," in which groups of students are encouraged to take courses that prepare them for a narrow range of occupations or for postsecondary study, to produce disadvantages for girls and young women in schools. Jane Gaskell's (1992) study of young women in high school explores why they take "business courses" rather than "industrial courses." Business courses, she explains, are specifically designed to teach typing and other skills that will prepare students for jobs as secretaries. Industrial courses begin to teach students skills involving mechanical repair and other trades, and are seen as preparation for vocational postsecondary school. As expected, business courses are almost completely filled by young women, and industrial courses by young men. Gaskell finds that young women have well-developed rationales for taking business courses, including the idea that industrial jobs are dirty and uninteresting, and women face discriminatory barriers to obtaining and being happy in such positions; the idea that secretarial jobs are plentiful and they offer more security and more status than blue-collar jobs; and the notion that they will not have to study beyond high school business courses

to obtain secretarial jobs, which allow them to quickly enter the job market after high school, make some money, and experience independence before they settle down and have a family.

In documenting these young women's detailed reasons for taking business courses, Gaskell clearly shows how, despite the women's insistence that they do as they please, schools track working-class girls at very early ages into these business courses to prepare them for the labor market. She shows how young women's "choices" are the logical product of the cumulative gender and class disadvantages they endure via disparate treatment throughout their tenure in the education system.

The wealth of literature on the gendered education system provides a necessary context for my study, in which I ask women about their perceptions of their experiences rather than observe them in educational settings. Based on the findings from existing studies, there can be little doubt that girls and boys in school are largely treated and tracked differently, and that race and class also affect the ways treatment is gendered (American Association of University Women 1992, 1998; Gaskell 1992; Grant 1994). I take this society-wide form of educational inequality as a given as I explore how women who have likely faced these systematic disadvantages end up in two different types of occupations.

Despite the fact that gendered treatment can be subtle and largely goes unnoticed, women's own reports of their educational experiences can be very revealing. Some women in my sample, for example, describe how their aptitudes in certain subjects led them into secretarial work, although their narratives make it clear that these aptitudes could have just as easily led them to careers as scientists or other prestigious and high-paying occupations. Reagine Draper, a 28-year-old African-American secretary, describes her relationship with math in school:

Reagine Draper: Um, I always loved numbers. I always was good in math. And um, my first job where I was a receptionist

for the ah, summer job, um, I always was in the bookkeeper's ah, office, and she would teach me little stuff about the budget and bookkeeping and accounting. So I really thought I was going to go in to be an accountant rather than a secretary.

IK: *Oh.*

Reagine Draper: But then, um, as we got more advanced in math, it kind of drew me away from, um, accounting, and more toward the office ... ahm, atmosphere ...

IK: *How did...*

Reagine Draper: ... secretary and the computers, aspect. 'Cause I flocked more to, wanted to learn more about computers rather than how to be an accountant.

Based on her "love for numbers" Reagine Draper could have become an accountant, a computer scientist, or any number of less segregated careers, yet somewhere along her educational and early work experiences she was "drawn away" from advanced math and into applied secretarial work. While my data do not allow me to directly observe what occurred along Reagine's educational pathway, research in this area leaves little doubt that the formal system of vocational tracking and the hidden curriculum that allows young women to be treated differently from young men has shaped Reagine's journey.

My data confirm Gaskell's assertion that one major determinant of the official kind of tracking women receive is class. Although there is not a great degree of difference between the education that the secretaries and furniture salespeople in this sample received, one glaring distinction is that many of the salespeople who grew up in affluent homes attended private college preparatory schools, which no secretaries in this sample attended. All of these college-prepared salespeople are also white. The women in these schools received no pressure to take secretarial or "business" courses, except those that

would help them excel in college. While some of the rest of the women now working as salespeople and secretaries were able to take college preparation courses, or managed to take both vocational and college prep, more of the secretaries than non-affluent salespeople took college prep classes.

The majority of women in both occupations describe how their schools were split up into different tracks, and that they did not question taking the "business," "office preparation," and "vocational" routes in part because it was the norm for girls at the time. Cela Kazin, a white salesperson in her 50s, sums up the experiences that many women of her generation have had:

IK: Did you have to take typing and stuff in high school?

Cela Kazin: Yeah. I took it. I took a course and barely passed. I mean, you know, it was like... I took home economics and all that kind of stuff. It was like, you know, what the girls back then did. I mean, these days you have so much more things that are open to you.

IK: Yeah.

Cela Kazin: Back then if a girl took anything other than, you know, home economics or secretarial stuff, then she was an oddball. Now, things are so wide open. You know, girls are allowed to play sports. It's a whole different ball game now.

Despite this optimistic assessment of the current educational system, many women who have gone through school more recently have faced some of the same tracking pressures that Cela Kazin and other women her age did. One African-American woman in my sample, who is now in her 30s, was forced to make a choice in high school between college preparatory and vocational classes:

Dominique Daigh: I always had office jobs because my mother was a secretary.

IK: Oh, really?

Dominique Daigh: And she was also the secretary of our church at the time. And then when it was time for me to go to college, I remember her telling me if I want to keep a job, I need to learn how to type. So what I did in high school was take a vocational plus my academic because I knew I wanted to go to college. My counselor told me I could not do that.

IK: Really?

Dominique Daigh: He told me, you're gonna have to take my vocational or I take my academic. Well, I don't believe that you can't do anything so I took the vocational and got a job myself in my junior year. That summer I got a job with [a large company]. It was really, I would say, my first job.

IK: And that job was?

Dominique Daigh: I was a secretary in the engineering department with one of the engineers.

While working this job Dominique Daigh also managed to sneak in the college prep courses she needed and she did wind up going to college and finishing her degree. Yet the administrators in her high school continuously hassled her for having one foot in each track in high school, which reveals the inflexibility of tracking systems for young women who need secretarial skills to work during school and who do not see that as contradictory to preparation for college.

Based on the evidence about the formal tracking and informal treatment girls receive in school, it seems apparent that education is one of the causal factors of occupational gender segregation. But scholars are increasingly demonstrating that inequalities in education and in the labor market are both results of the same structural pressures, which indicates that we have to look at the larger framework of gender, racial, and class inequality to understand what happens in both arenas. For example, if a person is discriminated against in school it may affect the occupation she enters, but discrimination occurs in both school and employment, indicating that the same structural factors are at work in both contexts. One woman in my sample, a white salesperson in her 40s, describes the treatment she received in her first semester of college in 1972:

> I remember going into that first day of class and the dean of the school, it was a home economics school, um, was talking to all the freshman girls in one class and asked the question, "How many of you came here to find a husband?" And every hand in that room went up except mine. And I thought, "Came here to find a husband?" I mean that's not what I went there for. I didn't think. [laughs] Isn't that amazing? I mean we're so programmed as young girls that, you know, to have a nice wedding and, it is just...

This form of discrimination, stereotyping, and tracking is blatant and must have a major influence on a woman's self-image. Yet it does not sound too much different from the discrimination that Janice Marber, another white salesperson in her 40s, receives from her current employer:

> *IK: Okay. So you said there are five... six women who work here, and then how many men?*
>
> Janice Marber: We have 32 salesmen.
>
> *IK: Oh my god. [laughs]*
>
> Janice Marber: [laughs] Little imbalance there.

IK: *So, why did this manager guy hire women in the first place? Or didn't he have anything to do with it?*

Janice Marber: I think he felt like he was supposed to.

IK: *Hmm, he was getting pressure from...*

Janice Marber: And we all got asked the same question: "When are you gonna make a family?" I was married for a while while I was here. I've been married twice. And um, finally one day, well no, he does this during the time that they hand out the bonuses. So I knew it was coming. In fact, it had been about the seventh year in a row that it was, you know, happening. So I quietly... I planned this. Got up out of my chair and went to the door, closed the door, and I looked down and I explained how I can't have children. "[Gasps] I'm so sorry. I won't ever tell anyone." I said, [laughing] "No you don't, jackass. You're not allowed to ask that question and don't ever ask me that again." And he said, "What? What?" I said, "You're an idiot. I could sue you for asking me that question. I could sue this company and take you under for asking that question, plus you've asked every other woman out there the same damn question. What's wrong with you? You can't ask that. I'm not going to have any [children], but that's none of your damn business."

IK: *Oh my god.*

Janice Marber: So...

IK: *So every day that he would hand out your bonuses, he would ...*

> Janice Marber: He would say, "Well, you know, you and, you and Bill have married now what? Three years? You thinking about having a family? I mean, you're not getting any younger." [laughs]

Discrimination and disparate treatment happen both in school and at work, and while this form of oppression in either context may influence the next opportunities a woman seeks, it is important to see both school and work as arenas where gender oppression can flourish. Radin (1991:203) synthesizes perspectives on this issue this way:

> ... the education sector--rather than being viewed as the causative sector--is also constrained by the same institutional barriers that limit employment opportunities. Educational inequalities, in this view, are *symptoms* rather than *causes* of occupational segregation.

Radin's statement rings true in this study, where differences in education may be precursors to differences in employment, but both are affected by the forces of race, gender, and class.

The women in this study describe childhood dreams and educational experiences that start off their pathways in an interesting way: both groups of women largely began their life courses with the same ambitions and with the same educational backgrounds. Thus, while their socialization and educational experiences are important, and show some slight variation by race and class, they do very little to explain why, across race and class, some women end up in a gender segregated occupation while others end up in a more gender integrated occupation. Focusing on socialization and education are undoubtedly important for uncovering inequality between boys and girls, and between women and men, but this focus is less helpful for understanding variation in the patterns of women's lives.

Family Decisions, Opportunities, and Constraints

Human capital theory, probably the most common supply-side explanation for occupational segregation, asserts first that women choose gender segregated occupations because these occupations allow them the flexibility they need to enter and exit the paid work force because of their family responsibilities, and argues second that women have to take gender segregated occupations that require little education, training, or experience because women are able to acquire less of each of these qualifications than men who have fewer family demands on their time.

The life pathways of the women in my sample do not lend much credence to human capital theory. As my evidence indicates, women with the same general levels of education, training, and experience work in different types of occupations--some segregated by gender and some integrated.[10] The two occupations in my sample require roughly the same degree of human capital, so this theory falls short of being able to explain why some women would work as secretaries and others would work as furniture salespeople.

Further, the fact that most of the furniture salespeople in my sample have children calls into question the argument that women end up in gender segregated occupations because of their disproportionate family responsibilities. Human capital theory does very little to explain why women with children are distributed among a range of occupations, and ignores the possibility that some gender integrated or men-affiliated occupations may be more amenable to women's family responsibilities than gender segregated occupations. This is consistent with Beller's (1982) finding that women working in nontraditional occupations often have more children than those in more women-affiliated occupations, as well as Rosenfeld and Spenner's (1992) finding that women in their sample with young children were quicker to leave women-affiliated occupations than single women.

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[10]See Appendix D for a breakdown of the educational backgrounds of the women in both occupations in this sample.

The incongruence between women's family lives and the predictions of human capital theory is clear in the occupation of furniture sales. Many women in this occupation unambiguously describe how they chose this occupation specifically because its schedule would allow them to balance the demands of paid work with the demands of their families. Emily Gray, for example, a white salesperson in her 30s, worked for years as a design engineer but struggled with both the hours and the fact that, as a woman, she felt she constantly had to defend herself and remind her coworkers and her supervisors that she was both a competent engineer and a mother. When her husband was relocated to Atlanta she thought about getting another engineering position here, but decided against it:

Emily Gray: It's just, right now in Atlanta, the demands mean that I go, you know, and hour, hour and a half in traffic. I'm not close to my kids. I'm not accessible to my kids. I can't just drop things and leave and go to the school for parties or whatever. Or doctor's appointments. In a lot of the engineering jobs I interviewed for it was at least an hour in traffic downtown. This, I'm seven miles away from home. I have to be here at 9:30 at the earliest, some days I don't have to be here 'til 12:30. And so I can get everybody ready in the morning, send 'em off to school. If they need me during the day I run home. I usually leave here about 3:00 and get my youngest off the bus, and stay with her until the middle child gets off the bus. So, this is flexible.

IK: And then what time do you get home at night?

Emily Gray: Different times. Um, if I, if my work schedule starts at 9:30 I'm home at 6. Sometimes I leave a little bit early. On Thursday nights I leave about 5:30 'cause my oldest has a

> football game at 5:45. Um, if I come in at 12:30 my hours are 'til 9.

Emily Gray's family responsibilities have necessitated her getting a job that is close to home, that has flexible hours, and that does not call her commitment to work into question when she leaves to attend to her children. In this scenario, the gender integrated occupation of furniture sales has been perfect for her.

Family considerations are definitely paramount both in women's choices about where to work, and perhaps more importantly, in their need to work. Many women, like Emily Gray, discuss how their work arrangements allow them to be with their children when they need to be, and remark that this was a major factor in their decision to pursue and accept their current position. Yet many also simply talk about how they need to provide for their families financially, and in this respect these women's orientation to work may not be terribly different from many men's. Interestingly, the secretaries--the women in the gender segregated occupation--are more likely than the salespeople to address their monetary financial obligations, putting them most in line with men.

When I asked the salespeople if their families had anything to do with their applying for or taking their current position, most who had families said, "Yes," for the type of reasons that Emily Gray gives. The flexible hours and proximity to home are appealing aspects of this occupation for women with disproportionate family responsibilities.

When I asked secretaries if their families had anything to do with their applying for or taking their current position, most said, "No." The way I phrased this question may have affected their responses, however, since in subsequent responses they made it clear that they have no choice about whether to work in the paid labor force or not since they need to bring money into the family.

Vanessa Holaday, for example, has been working as a secretary since she graduated from high school in Jamaica. She is now in her early forties with a husband and

three children, ages 24, 15, and 12. Much of her family immigrated from Jamaica and live near her in an Atlanta suburb. Throughout her whole life she has only had three jobs, all secretarial, and she has kept each one of them for at least seven years. She found her first position by walking around Jamaica filling out applications. The police department hired her as a secretary and she worked there for seven and a half years.

In Jamaica students who graduate from high school can attend higher education for free, yet there are only two universities in the country and the waiting lists for admission are years long. Vanessa did not want to sit around and wait after she graduated, so she found her civilian job at the police department. After she had been there a little less than a year she had her first son. She was able to take only six weeks off at the time of his birth and received no pay for that month and a half of maternity leave. A few more years on the job and on the college waiting lists influenced her to take the service exam to become part of the police force. She passed the exam and was ready to go, and at the last minute changed her mind. She realized it was still possible for her to get in school, so she let the opportunity to become part of the police force go. Not long after, she chose to emigrate to the United States.

When she arrived in New York her first impression was that here, race really matters. In her West Indian culture she feels that people do not care what race people are. Many races eat, live, work, and go to school together, and she says it is not an issue. Today Vanessa still does not pay much mind to matters of race or discrimination, saying that she has other things to worry about. Despite this, she was shocked by the immediacy of race in her experiences in the United States.

She obtained the job at the bank in New York by, again, walking around and applying. She worked there nine years and in that time got married, had two more children, and sponsored her mother to come to the U.S. from England. Vanessa had been raised by her grandmother in Jamaica because her mother had gone to England to work in a factory when Vanessa was young. Her grandmother worked as a maid and could not

read and write, so while she did not talk to Vanessa about her career plans, she did emphasize to Vanessa and her sister the importance of getting an education so that they would not have to work as maids.

In 1989 they decided that New York City was too much for them and their children so they came to Atlanta, where she found work at a nonprofit community organization as a secretary and her husband secured a job as a boiler operator. They seem to lead a working-class life, both making around $27,000 and using the health and dental insurance provided by her employer. She calls her life "generic."

Vanessa Holaday: I have a generic life. [laughs]

IK: [laughs] Why do you say that?

Vanessa Holaday: Aaaaah, go to work [laughs], go to work Monday through Friday. [laughs] Go to church on Sunday. [laughs]

IK: [laughs]

Vanessa Holaday: Take them [the kids] to their activities on Saturday. [laughs]

IK: Mmhm.

Vanessa Holaday: Go grocery shopping on this day. [laughs]

IK: [laughs]

Vanessa Holaday: When it's vacation time, go to this, you know... [laughs]

IK: [laughs]

Vanessa Holaday: ...to this uncle or to this aunt. [laughs]

IK: Mmhm.

Vanessa Holaday: So it's kind of generic. It's kind of generic.

IK: [laughs]

Vanessa Holaday: But um, but I enjoy it.

Despite her feelings that she leads a somewhat humdrum live, Vanessa enjoys both her family life and her job. One of the main things she appreciates in her current job is that it gives her the flexibility she needs to attend to her children's needs. "When you're in a job and you have kids too," she says, "you have to look at flexibility as opposed to um, dollars." Her boys are involved in sports and Vanessa often volunteers as a "team mom." One of her sons is also asthmatic so when he needs her she needs to leave work immediately to care for him, and this poses no problem for her at work. Her husband works from 5:00am to 5:00pm, so these child care responsibilities fall directly on her. Because of his twelve-hour shifts, Vanessa's husband is also off some weeks for three or four days at a time, but she does not mention what he does during these "off" days.

The education system in Jamaica seems to have had a lot to do with where Vanessa has ended up, and in some ways hearing her story helps illuminate both the restrictive and luxurious features of the U.S. education system. She took courses in the "college-bound" program in high school since she wanted to be a teacher, but she also took "commercial" courses like business and typing because she knew that her chances of getting into college right away were slim. It sounds as though she would have liked to attend college, but she chose to work while she remained on the college waiting list and wound up enjoying her work. Vanessa did not say if she ever made it to the top of the waiting list, but it is likely that she emigrated before she did.

Another factor that seems to have heavily influenced Vanessa's job pathway is the birth of her first son. She was not married when she had him and needed to work to support him. The police department gave her six weeks unpaid maternity leave, and I am not sure who cared for him when she went back to work. By the time Vanessa had her second and third sons she was married, and while she would have liked to stay home with them until they were each at least two, she and her husband did not feel that having her out of the paid workforce was a financially viable option.

Vanessa's mother, sister, and many other relatives and friends live in Atlanta now after coming either straight from Jamaica or from there via New York, and Vanessa has made many of her relatives' trips financially possible. Her mother, who does not live with Vanessa, is approaching retirement age and preparing to return to Jamaica to enjoy those years after having worked most of her life in factories in England, New York, and Atlanta. Vanessa and her immediate family do not get to return to Jamaica very often, but she wishes they could. As long as her bosses do not fire her she would like to retire from the organization for which she now works, and possibly then she and her family will be able to spend more time abroad.

Vanessa Holaday's primary concern when she graduated high school and became pregnant was financially supporting herself and her child. In this way her "choice" to become a secretary rather than continue on with school or receive training for another career was fully affected by her family, but not in the stereotypical way we may think. Her pathway into a segregated occupation was shaped by the structural factors of a dependent family and an economic system that does not allow people to survive if they are not completing wage labor. She remains in a segregated occupation because her family--both immediate and extended--needs the money she brings in. Therefore, although Vanessa responded, "No," when I asked her if her family had anything to do with her taking her current job, or with getting into secretarial work to start with, it is clear that she is compelled to work because of her financial obligations to her family. Vanessa is compelled to do secretarial work, specifically, because of the limited options available to her in Jamaica without a college education. Her experience as a secretary in Jamaica made her transition into secretarial work in the U.S. seem very natural.

The main exception to the response of "no" I received when asked whether women's families affected their getting into secretarial work comes from women who previously worked in other careers and chose to leave those occupations for secretarial work. In making that transition these women felt that the lower level of stress and the

shorter hours associated with secretarial work compared to their previous occupations would allow them to be better parents. Louise Jay, for example, a white woman in her late 30s, worked as an environmental waste investigator for years until she had a son three years ago. The stress of the job, the long hours, and the long commute from home all prompted her to leave that career behind and go back to what she had done after completing high school: secretarial work. She says the most important thing she wants out of a job is:

Louise Jay: As least stress as possible, for me right now.

IK: What makes that important?

Louise Jay: So I'm able to leave it here and not take it home. My family's very important, and that's one reason why I like working here, because you can leave it and not take it home with you.

A number of other women in my sample feel this way. Mel Rice, a white woman in her mid-30s, left her position in public relations to become a part-time secretary and devote more time to her young children. Myra Sprayberry, a white woman in her late 30s left her position in human resources to become a secretary with an 8-to-5 schedule. For some white women in their 30s with young children, choosing to become secretaries and leaving other careers behind is a conscious choice. Each of these women is married, and their husbands all earn enough income to allow these women to take a large pay cut so that they will have more time to spend with their families.

Children and families, then, are important factors in women's placement in various occupations. Yet the decisions women have to make in order to monetarily support their families and their negotiations regarding their hours, commutes, and future career possibilities do not provide much help in figuring out why some women work in a gender segregated occupation while others work in an integrated occupation. Women with high family demands in this sample are just as likely, if not more likely, to get into the integrated occupation of furniture sales than the gender segregated occupation of

secretary. Most of the women in this sample have to work to provide for their families, indicating that the decisions they make about what occupation to enter may be quite similar with the decisions men make, since men usually also feel the need to provide for their families financially. Women's decisions about their occupations, and the things they have to give up in order to make their occupations fit with their families, point to the problematic structure of the paid labor market that does not allow parents to satisfy the demands of their jobs and their families at once. Family responsibilities, however, tell us very little about why some women do gender segregated work and others at the same skill level do not.

Segregation and Service

The patterns in the childhood socialization, educational experiences, and family commitments among the women in my sample provide a small glimpse into what occurs along a woman's pathway that might affect her placement in a gender segregated or a gender integrated occupation. Yet as I have demonstrated, these factors reveal very little about why women do the work they do. Another factor to consider is women's overall orientation toward paid work. I asked each woman in my sample at the end of our interview to explain in a sentence or two why she is a secretary, or why she is a furniture salesperson. In combining these responses with what each woman had explained to me throughout the interview I found an interesting pattern that differentiates the secretaries from the salespeople.

A group of women in my sample speak in a similar way about how their occupations allow them to fulfill their desire to "serve." These sentiments are distinct from an enjoyment of the roles of nurturing and caretaking, and they are also separate from women's expressions of wanting to be helpful to their bosses. The character of their convictions about "service" incorporate these women's feeling that they are "on this earth for a purpose," and that the purpose is to "do good" in some way, which they have been

able to translate into tasks of service in their occupations. This type of service is also distinct from having a job in the "service sector" of the economy where job descriptions include being friendly, approachable, and conciliatory.

Many of the women in my sample who talk about service feel good about being part of a work organization that is specifically designed to serve various communities. Others are able to do things as part of their jobs that they feel provide services to those in need. Tellingly, twenty of these women are secretaries and only one is in furniture sales. In this section, after describing the more common notions of nurturing, helping, and working in the service sector, I explore what I term the "ethic of service" in these women's orientations toward work, and its implications for occupational gender segregation.

NURTURING The role of the caretaker and nurturer is often linked with the responsibilities of motherhood, even in the paid workplace. A number of scholars have detailed the ways that jobs associated with women incorporate different types of "emotion work" than jobs affiliated with men (Hochschild 1989; Kilbourne, England, and Beron 1994; Malveaux 1988; England 1992; Steinberg, Haignere, Possin, Chertos, and Treiman 1986). Since motherhood is one of the primary identities that has defined women throughout United States history, some of the characteristics associated with motherhood have followed women into the paid labor force and, in what Kelly (1991) calls a "sex-role spillover," become part of the work they are paid to do. This occurs in racially-specific ways, with negative imagery surrounding motherhood more likely to be associated with racial/ethnic minority women, and more positive images such as caring, nurturing, and protectiveness more likely to be latched onto white women, both inside and outside the paid workplace (Collins 1991; Kennelly 1999; Sokoloff 1980). Scholars have examined the process through which *employers* conflate women's mothering and paid work roles, but have not revealed whether women in the paid labor force engage in a similar association process.

Some of the secretaries in my sample discuss their enjoyment of the role of caretaker. Consistent with the premise that women bring unique characteristics into the workplace because of their gender, these women say that they feel comfortable as nurturers and even seek out work that allows them to play that role. Annette McCoy, for example, a white woman in her early 50s, had one son in the early 1970s and cared for him full-time for fourteen years. Her son was sick most of that time and died when he was in his late teens. Annette McCoy talks about how, after his death, her work as a secretary has "filled a spot" for her, and about how she has been able to continue to use her mothering skills at work:

Annette McCoy: I really like the work. I mean, I do like it. I like, I guess, the nurturing part of me and that's what a secretary does.

IK: Sure.

Annette McCoy: My boss Nancy, she keeps saying--we are the very same age--she says that I'm from the very, "the old world," as she calls it.

IK: What does that mean?

Annette McCoy: I still feel very nurturing. I still feel like, you know, people would probably, secretaries would probably be insulted today if they were asked to do, you know... Well she doesn't ask me to, you know, go get her coffee or anything like that, but I always make sure that she has certain things on her desk right. And my boss, I always make sure that he has... and I know the way he wants things. And I feel like that I'm just very nurturing and I know how he wants things rather than just saying, you know, "Go do it yourself." And if he asked me to do

something, you know I don't, I don't... He said, "If you're up there, get something for me while you're on your way back." You know. He's very, you know he's very considerate.

IK: Mmhmm.

Annette McCoy: But I guess that. And very protective, of being a secretary. I'm very protective. I'm very... You know, I keep them out of harm's way.

IK: Sure.

Annette McCoy: And I don't know if the modern secretary, you know, does that because I don't know. But around here we do. We're kind of very protective and very nurturing of our, of our team and the people that are on our team.

IK: That's good.

Annette McCoy: Kind of protective of them. And I think that goes along with the job. I mean, that I know anyway. Maybe not the, maybe in the new world of secretaries or whatever.

Annette McCoy appears to take comfort in the fact that she can be nurturing to her team members at work and continue the mothering role, which she did full-time for fourteen years, in her position as a secretary.

Tammy Yearby, a white 48-year-old woman, talks in a similar way about her 31-year tenure as a secretary. She and her husband of 26 years planned to have children but were unable to do so. In our interview Tammy directly relates her childlessness to the great satisfaction she receives from "mothering" the men at work:

Tammy Yearby: I like to take care of people. I don't.. I think, because I don't have children, I like.. I can mother my men in the office.

IK: Mmhm.

Tammy Yearby: You know?

IK: Sure.

Tammy Yearby: Keep everybody on track.

This expression is gendered not only in the fact that Tammy Yearby, as a woman, is taking on the woman-associated role of mothering, but also because she specifically names men as the people in her office who need and receive her caretaking.

Still another woman without children brings up the prominence of nurturing in her duties as a secretary. Margaret Loomis has been married a number of times and has cared for some of her husbands' children, but has not had any children of her own. Divorced now and living alone, this white woman in her late 40s discusses how she appreciates the fact that her work gives her a chance to be a "caregiver":

Margaret Loomis: I like ... I like helping my managers do their job better, and making them look good.

IK: Mmhm.

Margaret Loomis: Um, it also makes me look good.

IK: Mmhm.

Margaret Loomis: You know, when I do my work well, then, it's, it's, it's a give-and-take thing, you know.

IK: Sure.

Margaret Loomis: And that, that's what I like ... doing.

IK: Good. How many...

Margaret Loomis: What's that.. care.. that's called a caregiver? [laughs] No. [laughs]

IK: Ahhh. [laughs] Well ...?

Margaret Loomis: Care.. is that, is that the right term I want?

IK: It sort of sounds, like maybe.

Margaret Loomis: Yeah. [slight pause] Okay, I'm sorry, what were you gonna ask?

I*K: That's okay. Well, maybe say more about that? Do you, do you see yourself in that role generally?*

Margaret Loomis: To a certain degree, yeah. Even though I don't have ... kids, or any ... well I have, I had stepsons, from my second marriage. And I have a ... well, ex-daughter-in-law now, but [laughs]. She still calls me "Mom." And, I have, ... the two daughters that she had with my stepson, and now she's had another daughter by her next husband.

IK: Mmhm.

Margaret Loomis: But they all call me "Grandma." [laughs]

IK: That's great.

Margaret Loomis: So, you know, that's the family that I have, other than my brother. That family. But, um, ... to a certain degree, yeah. I like taking care of other people. [makes a face with crossed eyes, indicating that she thinks what she just said is dumb, even if it is true]

IK: Mmhm. Why do you make a face? [laughs]

Margaret Loomis: [laughs]

IK: It's a great thing to do.

Margaret Loomis: I guess. [not said as though she believes it]

Here, Margaret Loomis seems caught between how she enjoys nurturing and how she thinks she should somehow feel guilty for wanting to nurture, either because nurturing is not a desirable cultural role generally or because she feels that it is inappropriate for her,

specifically, to want to nurture since she has no biological children. Despite this, she indicates that this is one of the most enjoyable parts of her position as a secretary.

The women who say they like this sort of mothering role are all secretaries, but they comprise a relatively small portion of my sample. They tend to be among the older women in my sample, and almost all of them are white. One African-American woman, Mary Reynolds, who is in her late 60s and has two grown daughters, also speaks of how much she enjoys a secretary's support role since it is so closely akin to caring for and nurturing children. Yet it appears that among the older secretaries in my sample, African-American, Jamaican-American, and Mexican-American women are less inclined than white women to don the characteristics of motherhood, such as nurturing and caretaking, in their paid work positions. It is not clear from these data whether this is because these women do not encounter any expectations for taking on these "positive" motherhood roles because of their race or ethnicity, or because they reject the association for some other reason.

HELPING As Margaret Loomis's statements above reveal, part of these secretaries' desire to be nurturing is related to their wish to help their bosses. While the job description for any secretarial position probably includes some form of helping or assisting a boss, some secretaries talk about a type of help that goes beyond a formal requirement. They talk about wanting to stay in the background, working to ensure that their bosses receive hearty accolades, career success, and lightened burdens.

Susan Faust, for example, a white woman in her late 50s says she likes to "see the results of her work through the success of her boss." This is much like Olivia Rondeau, who describes herself as "a behind-the-scenes person" who enjoys taking the work load off her executive:

> Olivia Rondeau: Whatever I can do to relieve some stress from my executive is what I feel is my job. You know, and so, I try to do as best I can in terms of relieving him of some

stress. You know, there are some things that I can't do for him or help him do. But ah, some little things that would ordinarily kind of stress people out, I try to eliminate those kinds of things as best I can from, from his day. I try to make sure that um, his calendar is, um, correct, and that he knows where he's supposed to be, what time he's supposed to be, he has all the details he needs regarding those meetings or that meeting or, and he has directions on how to get there and so forth and who he's going to meet with and all of that. So, um, and then, you know, you have to, also, when you're keeping his calendar, you have to make sure that, um, the meetings, if they are such that people are not always coming in to him. You have to make sure that the time he needs to get to where he needs to get on time is allotted in his schedule, and um, be concerned about whether or not he's, 'cause some days he has some pretty long days that go from 7:30 in the morning until 10 at night. And sometimes he'll have weeks where, you know, he'll have meetings five days in a week, 7:30 in the morning, and two or three nights during the week he'll have to go until 10. You know, and so, you know, you try not to, ... the early morning meetings, um, he prefers. But, to have the late night meetings, you know, you have to be concerned about those because he's got, again, to get up the next morning for another meeting. So, you know, you have to kind of keep in mind what

kind of day he's having from early morning until late at night when you're keeping the calendar. So, ...

IK: *Sounds like a lot of planning on your part.*

Olivia Rondeau: Ohhh yes. Oh yes.

IK: *So what about* your *stress level, when you're taking on other people's stress?*

Olivia Rondeau: Some days it's better than others. [laughter by both] And some days it's less than others. Um, but um, I, it, it's okay.

Like the responsibilities for nurturing that the women in the previous section detail, Olivia's concern for her boss's well-being, and her desire to not simply assist him but take responsibility for his quality of life, also conform to the role of mothering. Olivia does not simply schedule her boss's appointments for him; she organizes and manages his life, taking on his stress so that he can squeeze all he can out of each work day.

Lil Kevane expresses the strongest sentiment for this type of "helping" in my sample. She is a white, 62-year-old secretary who does not like her current boss because his work style differs from her favorite boss's:

Lil Kevane: He [her former boss] was just perfect for me. His philosophy was, I would do everything I could do, all of my job and the part of his job that I could do, and then he would do what was left.

IK: *Hmph.*

Lil Kevane: Gave him time for creative thinking and planning and stuff like that.

IK: *Umhum. And you, that sort of arrangement ...*

Lil Kevane: Perfect. Absolutely perfect.

Very few women in my sample aspire to working conditions like these, and all who do are older secretaries, as in the section above. Almost all of the women who express joy in these nurturing and helping duties are also members of the Professional Secretaries International organization, although the chronology of their accounts indicates that they had these orientations toward work before they became members of PSI. It is possible that the reinforcement these women get from each other in their PSI meetings helps them take pride in being behind-the-scenes workers who enjoy "mothering" people at work.

Although both of these roles--nurturing and helping--are only expressed by secretaries in my sample and not by furniture salespeople, they do not greatly aid in determining why some women would choose segregated work while others would end up in an integrated occupation. Another sentiment that is much more common in my data is the "ethic of service" that I describe below. Yet it is also important to demonstrate that this ethic of service is distinct from another type of "service," namely, service-sector employment.

SERVICE-SECTOR EMPLOYMENT Service-sector work has come to be a vital foundation for the economy of the United States since the shift in the 1970s from domestic industrialization. This sector includes industries like beauty shops, computer consulting firms, hospitals, and automotive repair centers, and employs a large segment of "low-skilled" workers in the U.S. Many occupations in this sector are hourly and pay minimum wage without health or retirement benefits, which makes it unsurprising that these occupations also involve a great deal of turnover.

In an important recent study of work in this sector, Robin Leidner (1993) highlights the ways service work in the U.S. has come to be routinized. By focusing on fast food restaurant workers and insurance agents, Leidner demonstrates how service workers are expected to mediate between the organization and the customers through a series of scripts handed down to them from employers. These scripts include more than verbal lines, however: "Employers may try to specify exactly how workers look, exactly

what they say, their demeanors, their gestures, their moods, even their thoughts" (Leidner 1993:8). This may include even the smallest detail, such as folding the top of a customer's bag at McDonald's rather than rolling it up, or saying, "Can I help you?" instead of "Can I help someone?" However restrictive and authoritarian these details may seem, these are measurable aspects of service workers' occupations and are often written directly into job descriptions. Because of this documentation, workers are evaluated and paid in accordance with their performance on these factors.

Secretaries also have a responsibility to facilitate relationships between organizations and outsiders, yet secretarial job descriptions rarely include every dimension of service that their positions actually require, which means that secretaries often do not get evaluated or paid based on their performance in these service aspects of their positions (Kanter 1977). In this way secretarial work can provide much more autonomy than other service occupations, but it can also fail to reward occupants for the unrecognized service work they do.

When I discuss workers' "ethic of service," however, I am not referring to the aspects of their jobs that require them to be nice. This ethic of service is something altogether different from the duties of service workers.

THE ETHIC OF SERVICE Distinct from nurturing or helping, and also unlike routinized service-sector job tasks, a dimension of their occupation that a good deal of secretaries in my sample discuss is something I call an "ethic of service." This ethic involves the desire to be of service to other people in ways that stem from what some of these women term a "calling" to do good with their lives. Elise Cushman, for example, an African-American woman in her early 40s, says that among other reasons, she is an administrative coordinator because, "It is a profession in which I am able to be of service to others, which I see as my mission in life, is to be able to help others."

Meredith Taggart, like Elise Cushman, works for a branch of the government, and enjoys the opportunities she has there to be of service to others:

> I saw this ad in the paper and I thought, you know, my husband had been government, federal government work all his career, and I thought, you know, I really love people, I'm going to have to take a big, big salary decrease, but I did it. I, I got the job and so I've never regretted coming here. It's um, it's not the, the high pace, it's not the dog-eat-dog atmosphere. It's, it's service-oriented, it's people-oriented, and so this is where I fit, better than probably anywhere I've ever been. (Meredith Taggart, white, 53 years old)

For most of the women in my sample who express this ethic of service, their sentiments about service are tied up with the organizations for which they work. Many of them, like Meredith Taggart and Elise Cushman, work for the government. Some work for nonprofit agencies, some for churches, and others work in more corporate settings but are given opportunities to deal with people in ways that meet their desire to serve.

Reagine Draper, for example, a 28-year-old African-American woman, has worked for three major organizations throughout the Atlanta metropolitan area that provide social work services to children. She did not intentionally seek out an organization like this in her first job, but every occupational move she has made since gaining exposure to this kind of organization has been based in part on her desire to continue to serve children:

> Um, when I walked in [to interview for this job] I felt, um, a vibe of, of family, people caring. Um, when I was interviewed, the interview went good and um, it was still, I still wanted to stay in a field where I would be helping children. Um, I worked with [another children-centered organization], so I still wanted to be an active part in seeing, um, helping children or teenagers in our society. So this would kind of, um, the reasons why I got this job. Because they do, this company do work with the [school] system and, ah, we have academies in different locations um, that help kids that are, um, likely to drop out. So I'm still in that social ... work

position where I'm seeing the kids, or try.. people are trying to help the kids.

Reagine Draper would have liked to have stayed at either of the other organizations where she previously worked, but she reached the top of the administrative ladder at both places and had to look elsewhere for career growth opportunities. She feels that in her current organization there are a lot of opportunities for promotion to other secretarial positions.

Grace Perenich is another person who loves to help children and has even held off on her retirement in part because she cannot bear the idea of not continuing with this kind of service. She is a white, 68-year-old woman who has worked for a nonprofit organization for 26 years. A careful read of her story reveals that, somewhat like Reagine Draper, she loves the work that her organization does and is a vital part of it, although her efforts to take other, more service-orientated positions in the organization have been somewhat thwarted because of her competence as a secretary:

Grace Perenich: When I was in the service extension [of this organization], I was telling you, that I was for six years, we had 140 employees under us in the field, so the contact with them and their employees, each one. Then I would go in and visit the board meetings and fill in and visit them in the... and make suggestions. So I enjoyed that. So everything I've gone into, I really liked.

IK: Mmhmm.

Grace Perenich: And then they'll ask me to come do something else, so that's what I did.

IK: That's great.

Grace Perenich: Yeah. I didn't think I could ever leave the children. I enjoyed the work at the [children's branch] so much.

IK: Yeah.

Grace Perenich: And that was really hard because I couldn't, I had... Going out and spending... program, drug programs and then family relationships and getting those set up. Then we had parties for seven hundred children.

IK: Wow.

Grace Perenich: And another one for three and a half or four hundred teenagers.

IK: Wow.

Grace Perenich: So those, anything to... I love that. So once they find out that you can do it behind the desk, they don't like to lose you and let you leave them.

IK: Yeah, I bet.

Grace Perenich: There's always a struggle. Everybody wants to do the same stuff, I think.

IK: Yeah.

Grace Perenich: But this has been a challenge because I had worked with Offices Direct for eighteen years. So coming back now... And I don't know how much you know about [this organization], but we're worldwide.

IK: Mmhmm.

Grace Perenich: And the [founder of the organization] ... wanted to take on all of the people that nobody else would help. And so we have four territories here -- the southern, the central, the eastern and the western territories. We have 15 southern states so we have many offices all over Atlanta. The training school that they go to for two years before they become officers is here. And the adult

rehabilitation center is down on [a downtown] Street. They have stores everywhere, so there are so many. We have... [a place], where we take in the homeless people. Women and children shelter to keep them protected.

IK: Mmhmm.

Grace Perenich: And then programs where they come in and live in the facility and we provide, you know, all meals and lodging. And they get into a program and then they're sent out on jobs with specific people to see.

IK: Wonderful.

Grace Perenich: And they're taking a sack lunch and their children are taken to school or daycare. And we stay right with them until we get them to the point they can go into an apartment and have enough money set aside that they can start making it on their own.

IK: That's wonderful.

Grace Perenich: And a GED program. We have all kinds of things like that, that teaches them how to manage their money.

IK: Mmhmm.

Grace Perenich: Then to get... so they can get into a better job so they won't wind up there again.

IK: Mmhmm.

Grace Perenich: So that one, to me, is a wonderful program.

IK: Mmhmm.

Grace Perenich: So there's just lots of things.

IK: Yeah. Lots of things you can be involved in and have a hand in helping with.

Grace Perenich: Yes, yes. And we still get telephone calls all the time from people who just want to call in and talk, and I enjoy, you know, talking to them over the phone and trying to get them help or send them to one of the agencies under the [another service organization] umbrella.

IK: Mmhmm.

Grace Perenich: So we do a lot of networking with that organization. So that's always interesting.

IK: So they call in and are routed to you to talk with on the phone?

Grace Perenich: Yeah. Sometimes you get calls you're not supposed to get but sometimes I think it's an opportunity god gives you that, you know, you can, like can help that person. But ordinarily, they would only do things that comes to the division... and to me but I've been on so long, somebody might have a person that they think I can talk to and see if I can help in some way. So there are many ways to service if you really look...

IK: Mmhmm. You can find them, huh?

Grace Perenich: That's right. Yeah.

Clearly Grace Perenich does a lot of things in her position that are beyond normal secretarial duties, but that seem normal because of the organizational context in which she works. After 26 years and with all these additional duties, Grace makes about $29,000 a year.

Dominique Daigh, an African-American woman in her 30s, also incorporates extra service activities into her position as church secretary:

IK: So what are your normal hours here in this job?

Dominique Daigh: Normal? [laughs]

IK: There is no normal?

Dominique Daigh: No. There isn't. There isn't. [The bishop] is--he wouldn't like to admit it--he is a taskmaster because he's the type of man that's just a visionary. So you have to catch the vision when he gets it and it may be at 6:00 at night.

IK: Oh, wow.

Dominique Daigh: Because he just, you know, has a lot of responsibilities, period. You know, being the chairman of the board of [an organization]. You know, over [a] District, which has over 500 churches which has, you know, I don't know how many laypeople, and I end up doing ministering to laypeople. You know, his members of his church. You know, praying. Trying to get them... "Now you call in here complaining about something, is there any really god in what you're talking about? Have you prayed about that first before I even try to get it to the Bishop?"

IK: Uh-huh.

Dominique Daigh: Some of that is just stuff folks just need to let go of.

IK: Yeah.

Dominique Daigh: "Get over and move on and look to what you need to be looking to."

IK: Mmhmm.

Dominique Daigh: So I do a lot of that and with the ministers, too. Some of them have problems and things. So I do some ministering and counseling. Really it's what I should be in.

IK: Really? So why aren't you?

Dominique Daigh: Well, I kind of do it on a consistent basis anyway just with people I meet and in this job. But I have learned that a lot. And then I did it at my other job because I was in criminal law so I had a lot of prisoners that I talked to on a daily basis.

IK: Mmhmm.

Dominique Daigh: You know, [a famous convicted criminal] came to christ while he was in jail finally. You know, different things like that.

IK: Mmhmm.

Dominique Daigh: You know, so you get to talk to people.

Like Olivia Rondeau, Dominique Daigh shields her boss from aspects of his job that would consume his time, and she actually takes on part of his job to protect his schedule. This dimension of the ethic of service appears to be at least somewhat related to secretaries' desire to help their bosses, as described in the "helping" section above. Yet Dominique takes on a very selective piece of his work, the ministering, because she clearly enjoys it. Much like Reagine Draper, who has moved from organization to organization in search of the opportunity to be of service, Dominique has somewhat actively incorporated the aspect of ministering into her positions at different organizations.

Other church secretaries in my sample also indicate that "prescreening" people is part of their job, but some of them are much less fond of the task than Dominique Daigh. And unlike a job in the service sector, where norms for "serving" people are spelled out in

workers' job descriptions and are also compensated, these secretaries often do not find out about this requirement of their job until after they take the position. Every secretary does not revel in the "opportunity" to go beyond her assigned responsibilities in order to follow an ethic of service.

The proportion of secretaries who do enjoy this service aspect of their occupation is much higher than the proportion of furniture salespeople who do, however. Twenty secretaries, and only one furniture salesperson, discuss this ethic of service in relation to their current occupation. Compared to my whole sample of secretaries, more of these twenty service-oriented secretaries tend to be white and Mexican-American, be in their 30s and 40s, have some college, come from working-class backgrounds, and earn salaries in the $20,000s.

Not surprisingly, the salesperson who feels that her life's mission is to serve people does not do very well in her occupation, in terms of completed sales, and she is looking to move into something else. Paula Ray is an African-American woman in her mid-40s who envisions herself eventually becoming a minister. For now, however, she uses her occupation as a way to make connections with people:

Paula Ray: I think that this job allows me the opportunity to meet and talk to people and to be of assistance to them. My selling technique is different from the seminars' technique of how to sell.

IK: Oh really?

Paula Ray: I try to assist, and not try to force people into a purchase. I want people to be happy with their purchase. I try to assist them in any way I can, and not force them.

IK: Mmhm.

Paula Ray: My closing technique is not, [laughs] would not be a great salesman's technique. I don't force a closing. I let them close

themselves. It may not be that successful, but it is fulfilling to me. I feel that they have really, once they have, when the person comes in and has no idea, I try to pinpoint a contact to bring out what they actually want. So sales technique is used to bring out what they're looking for when they don't know. It's just a matter of asking questions.

IK: So do your managers think that's okay?

Paula Ray: No. [laughs] No.

IK: [laughs] Okay.

Paula Ray: They often tell me, "Paula, you know, close 'em out, close the sale."

IK: Mmhm.

Paula Ray: I just trust god, that he will, you know, he will always bring my blessings, and that the person will be satisfied if they make their own decision. And we're strictly commission, we don't get salary.

IK: So are you able to make a living?

Paula Ray: Mmhm. God meets all my needs according to his riches and glory. That's the way I see it in this business. He's proven himself over and over. He's a good god.

The ethic of service appears to be fairly incompatible with the occupation of furniture sales, except for the fact that the occupation allows a worker to come in contact with a lot of people on a regular basis. Paula Ray has attempted to transform her position into something that would allow her to be of service to people, but she realizes that the attempts are largely futile and does not plan to continue trying much longer.

Although in my sample Paula Ray is alone in using her sales occupation to enact her service orientation, a number of furniture salespeople do bring up this ethic of service

when they talk about either their past or future plans. Kerin Agrawal, a 29-year-old Indian-American woman, says that when she was growing up in India she wanted to become a lawyer so that she could help women, who she feels are treated unjustly in her society. As a teenager, however, she started buying clothes on one side of town and selling them to people closer to her home, and she found that so enjoyable that she eventually dropped the idea of working for women's rights so that she could sell.

An African-American salesperson in her 20s named Brenda Wilmot also wanted to be a lawyer when she was young, so that she could help solve race problems:

Brenda Wilmot: I've always wanted to be a lawyer.

IK: Really?

Brenda Wilmot: Always. Yeah.

IK: How come?

Brenda Wilmot: Because for one, the justice system isn't--and again, I'm not one to know that I can change it--but I know it needs help and I'm one of the ones that can, can do that.

IK: Yeah?

Brenda Wilmot: I mean, I can at least try to help and help the people that need help. You know, because the justice system isn't all for--and I'm not trying to make this a race issue--for Blacks all the time. You know, like I said, somebody does one crime and he's a different color than this person, but he gets more time than this person. You know, because of his color. So I just feel that the justice needs a little help and maybe my people can... I can be an asset to them in that.

Brenda Wilmot indicates that she still dreams of becoming a lawyer someday, although she is not sure when. She left college with one semester left when she took her furniture sales position.

Isabell Lake, a 46-year-old white furniture salesperson, grew up in a Catholic school and so admired her teachers that she wanted to become a nun. The entrepreneurial family she was raised in, however, influenced her career path and provided the necessary opportunities for her to be able to start owning her own businesses in her early 20s. Isabell Lake is working in a furniture store now as a transitional job between her own business ventures, but she says that she eventually wants to start a company that will help women in developing countries find economic independence from men. Tying back into her influence from the nuns, she sees this as a type of missionary work, and feels that at some point it is likely that she will, in fact, do it. Her long-term goals, incidentally, also include becoming a millionaire.

These furniture salespeople, then, do talk about this ethic of service, but unlike Paula Ray they do not see their current occupation as compatible with their humanitarian goals. Thus, they have either had to abandon their ethic of service, or figure out long-term plans that will allow them to eventually act on their service orientations.

The desire to serve people may be one of the reasons why a woman would become a secretary and not a furniture salesperson. The secretaries in my sample who talk about this ethic of service have clearly found ready ways to incorporate it into their occupation, while furniture salespeople who would want to do this face a much harder and less obvious task. None of the furniture salespeople who talk about an ethic of service, I should note, suggest that one day they may become secretaries in order to carry out that goal. As I discuss in a later chapter, this seems to have much to do with the overwhelmingly negative impression these salespeople have of traditional “women’s work.”

Because my data is not longitudinal I am not able to conclusively determine whether the secretaries I describe here had this orientation toward service before they became secretaries or whether it developed as they worked in the occupation, but from the chronology of their stories it seems likely that it is a mixture of both. It is also possible that although only one furniture salesperson brought up this ethic in relation to her current occupation, other salespeople may also have it and currently express it in forums other than their occupations, such as church-related activities or volunteer work, which did not come up during the interviews.

However, if we could assume from the evidence that the women in my sample who describe how they work this service ethic into their current occupations are the ones most committed to it, and that they had a sense of this ethic before becoming paid workers, or at least before becoming secretaries, we can imagine a situation where these women sought out occupations that would allow them to live in accordance with their belief systems. Secretarial work, at least within certain organizational contexts, allows them to do this. Other gender-segregated occupations, such as teaching and social work, would also fit in with this ethic of service, but many of the secretaries in my sample who wanted to be teachers or social workers did not attain those occupations largely because they were not able to finish the education they would have needed to do so.

This indicates that many secretaries are our would-be politicians, think tank activists, and secretaries of state--service occupations that require a degree of privilege to attain, and that come with the prestige that such privilege demands. Few people would put secretaries and policy wonks on the same plane, yet these data indicate that some of the rationale behind entering these types of occupations may be the same. Unsurprisingly, the service occupations with the most prestige are also mostly filled by men.

As in so many other studies that confirm the pattern of devaluation of occupations that are associated with women (Reskin and Roos 1988; Kemp 1994; Roos and Jones 1994; Corley and Mauksch 1988), these women's orientation toward the opportunities to

be of service in their occupations, and their subsequent placement in secretarial positions, should leave little doubt that the structural factors guiding women's and men's pathways into particular occupations are strong and steady. Class and gender combine here, in ways that are undoubtedly also racialized, to ensure that women from various class backgrounds will be more likely to live out their ethic of service in a devalued, gender-segregated occupation than in prestigious occupations that would allow them similar opportunities to serve. Some women did not enter or finish college because they could not afford to; some because their family obligations did not leave them any time; some because they never thought of it in the first place; some because they did not see any need to. Thus, when we try to imagine why a woman would become a secretary, when she knows that she could get a lot more money and prestige for doing similar tasks in a different occupation, it seems as though we do not have to look much farther than the structural factors of gender, class, and race.

Yet if all one needs to acquire a service occupation is a college degree, why did the college-educated furniture salespeople who have this orientation end up in an occupation where their opportunities for serving are very limited? Kerin Agrawal has a college degree and Brenda Wilmot and Isabell Lake both have some college. And while they seem to see their sales occupation as a transitional step in their lives rather than a lifetime career, their futures are not certain to include occupations of service.

This transitional orientation toward their occupation may also relate to why more

on the ethic of service, including lawyer and biology teacher. The fact that they do not see opportunities to serve in their occupations is somewhat inconsistent with Higginbotham and Weber's (1992) study of professional African-American women, who noted their sense of commitment to their communities much more than white professional women. It is possible, however, that young African-American women see their opportunities to serve as more valuable when incorporated into professional occupations like lawyer and teacher, but feel underutilized doing secretarial work.

In exploring women's orientation to their occupations I am not as interested in determining what prompts women to have or not have an ethic for service as I am in figuring out what factors would make somebody who has this orientation find an occupation that allows her to fulfill it, or an occupation that forces her to set her service ethic to the side. Psychologists may argue that the secretaries I describe here simply have a stronger commitment to service than the furniture salespeople, but this explanation ignores the important factors outside a person's motivation that influences her position in life.

In order to figure out how and why women come to work in certain occupations we have to look farther than psychological factors, but we also have to look beyond simply race, class, and gender. I intentionally structure the discussion throughout this study to emphasize the multi-layered effects that race, class, and gender have on women's life chances. Race, class, and gender affect women's childhood aspirations, their educational experiences, their family choices and responsibilities, and their orientations toward paid work, and each of these factors may affect women's placement in gender segregated or integrated occupations. Yet the causal relationship is messy and many of the factors I discuss here, including family responsibilities and orientations toward work, are constant features of women's lives that must be factored into their occupational placement at any point in their employment histories. The dimensions of race, gender, and

class are important explanatory concepts, but it is my aim in this study to illuminate the specific ways these dimensions are at work in women's occupational pathways.

Summary

I have demonstrated here that the socialization, education, family responsibilities, and orientations toward work among the women in my sample are organized in some clear patterns, but those patterns reveal relatively little about why these women have wound up in their current occupations. This evidence is important since it stands in contrast to many existing explanations of occupational segregation, such as socialization and human capital theory. In the next chapter I explore the next segment along these women's pathways, namely, their employment histories, in order to demonstrate that the occupations in which a woman has worked throughout her life appear to have a large impact on the occupations in which she is likely to work later on.

CHAPTER 6

THE MAINTENANCE OF OCCUPATIONAL GENDER SEGREGATION

Childhood socialization, education, family responsibilities, and orientations toward work among the women in my sample reveal little about why women come to work in either a gender segregated or a gender integrated occupation. In this chapter I move to the next stage along women's pathways, namely, their work histories, and demonstrate that unlike the previously mentioned factors, employment histories are very important in women's subsequent occupational placement. The evidence I present in this chapter about women's work histories supports theories about how work in highly gender segregated occupations accumulates over time to produce disadvantage for women (Chan 1999). Yet the analysis also indicates that it is possible to leave disadvantage behind rather than experience its accumulation. Indeed, some women in my sample have escaped gender segregated work, and a comparison of these women's work histories reveals that their escapes are patterned in subtle, yet important ways that include having the opportunity to take time out of the paid labor force altogether. In this chapter, I describe these patterns in depth, and then address the questions these patterns raise for established neoclassical economic theories such as human capital.

Women's Work Histories

SALES TO SALES; SECRETARY TO SECRETARY Secretaries' work histories are markedly dissimilar to furniture salespeople's. The furniture salespeople in this sample are likely to have had other sales jobs in the past in retail, cosmetics, cars, real estate, or furniture, while only four secretaries have ever done sales. Many of these furniture salespeople see a hierarchy of sales occupations, from "small ticket" items like cosmetics

and clothes, to "bigger ticket" items like furniture and cars, and ultimately houses. Thus, many of them feel that their current positions in furniture sales are transitional. Unlike the career ladders in other occupations, where an employee may work her way up to higher positions within the same organization, the only opportunity these salespeople say they have to move up involves moving to another company every few years to sell higher-priced items that bring more commission.

Like these salespeople with work histories in sales, many of the secretaries in my sample previously worked as secretaries, administrative assistants, clerk/typists, receptionists, and bank tellers, and their tenure in these positions is much longer than salespeople's time in previous sales jobs. The patterns in these secretaries' work histories is not surprising, given Chan's (1999) findings on the accumulation of disadvantage in highly segregated occupations. The employment histories of women who work in highly gender segregated occupations are likely to be primarily comprised of other highly segregated occupations, indicating that the disadvantages associated with working in a woman-affiliated occupation accumulate over time and effectively trap women in these occupations. Early work as a secretary, then, strongly predicts future work in the same occupation (Chan 1999).

This appears to be the case for the majority of the secretaries in my sample. Only eight secretaries (16 percent) in my sample are working in their first secretarial position, and most of them have not previously held many other jobs. Most have been working in segregated positions or have been in and out of secretarial work throughout their employment histories. Olivia Rondeau and Dana Matheson, who I introduce at the beginning of this study, have employment histories that are good representations of the occupations in which the secretaries in my sample have worked. A number of women's employment pathways closely resemble Olivia Rondeau's in that they include only secretarial work, and they start at an early age. Yet many more women in my sample are a bit more like Dana Matheson, who has gone back and forth between secretarial work and

other types of ventures. These women alternately work as cashiers, telemarketers, customer service agents, telephone operators, and a range of other idiosyncratic occupations like gift wrapper, carnival ride operator, and identification card laminator. This appears to support Jacobs' (1989b) assertion that women actually move in and out of segregated occupations throughout their careers. Yet even these women's employment histories are heavily skewed toward secretarial and other highly segregated positions, and at the time of my study that had again landed back in a segregated occupation.

Work histories, themselves, become a structural factor that propels women to stay in segregated occupations. The women in my sample who became secretaries at an early age express how lucky they felt to land a steady, good-paying job when they were so young. Yet they probably did not realize that their early secretarial positions would actually operate to produce disadvantages for them in the paid labor market later on in their lives. Many of these women truly enjoy their work and are not seeking to leave, so in some sense their solid placement in the secretarial occupation is positive for them. Yet no matter how much secretaries may love their positions, the low wages and limited promotion ladder that accompany the occupation because of its association with women render its occupants disadvantaged. Unlike sales, where the job ladder forces workers to zigzag between companies but, nonetheless, potentially reaches well-paying levels, secretaries who change jobs do not often receive substantial pay or prestige increases for doing so, and promotion into less women-affiliated occupations is unlikely (Kanter 1977; Chan 1999).

White Women, Class, and Business Ownership The work histories of the secretaries and salespeople in my sample differ along this predictable line: salespeople have previously been in sales and secretaries have previously been secretaries. A feature of their work histories that is less predictable is that those women currently working in furniture sales have more extensive experience than secretaries owning businesses and starting businesses that do not involve gender segregated work. With a few exceptions,

those secretaries who have owned businesses have focused on childcare, cleaning, and paralegal services, compared to the furniture salespeople who have owned businesses pertaining to clothing sales, magazine sales, mail orders, textiles, uniforms, and retail stores.

Not all furniture salespeople have owned businesses, however. No African-American salesperson in my sample has ever owned a business, while over half (9 out of 16 cases) of the white salespeople either previously or currently own businesses. The one Indian-American woman in my sample has also owned a business. While this discrepancy between white and African-American salespeople indicates that owning a business prior to becoming a furniture salesperson is strongly linked with race, it also appears to have a relationship with class. The white furniture salespeople come from the most affluent class backgrounds of anybody in my sample, while the African-American salespeople come from the lowest class backgrounds of any group in my sample.[11] Figure 6.1 graphically depicts the class backgrounds of these women.

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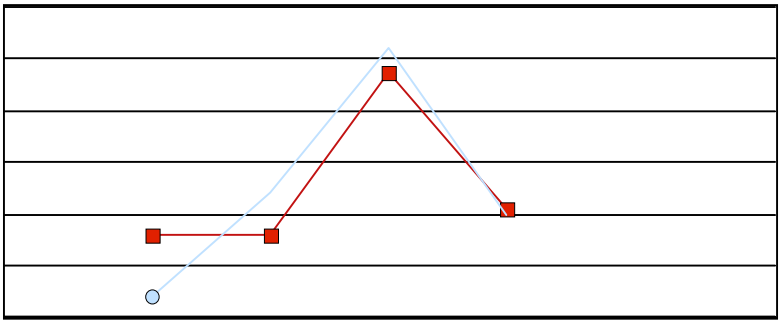
[11] To determine the class background of the women in my sample I considered their mothers' and fathers' occupations, education, and family backgrounds; whether their mothers worked while these women were young children; whether their mothers wanted or needed to work; and the degree and type of stress their parents placed on these women's education, careers, and other life plans. Since my interviews with participants were, by design, not uniform, the information I was able to gather varies from person to person, although most told me enough to allow me to make a solid judgment about their class background.

I divided class into seven categories including poor, working poor, working, lower-middle, middle, upper-middle, and upper. An example of someone growing up in a "poor" class background is Agnes Mackay, a furniture salesperson whose father died in a house fire when she was six months old, and whose mother struggled to support her ten children alone after having two heart attacks. I categorized a case like PJ Bailey's as "middle class" since her father was a banker and her mother was a teller until she got married, when she stopped working outside the home and became a full-time housewife. PJ Bailey's parents discouraged college for her sister (a nurse) and her (a secretary), preferring that they get married and have children instead, but told them that if they were boys they would have been expected to receive a college degree. And a typical "upper class" case like Elaine Redstone's includes parents who both have graduate degrees and whose families own large, successful business enterprises that have been passed down through generations. Elaine Redstone was expected to attend college and received her



consistently to other ethnic groups." The likelihood of obtaining capital either from formal lending institutions or affluent relatives is much higher for whites than African Americans (Ando 1988; Bates 1993; Fratoe 1988), and for women, these patterns are especially strong (Bates 1993; Inman 1997). Thus the patterns in my sample may reflect, in part, the greater ease with which white women with access to capital are able to become business owners.

This is born out in the life stories of the white salespeople in my sample. Most of them have come into business ownership with the financial help and business expertise of their parents or spouses. Valerie Jaggar, for example, a white woman in her mid-40s, has been married for fifteen years to an attorney who currently makes $400,000 a year. She and her husband opened an Italian ceramics shop in an affluent area of Atlanta a few years ago, which she says they were able to do because the bank approved their loan based on her husband's "good job." After they closed that shop, her husband sold an apartment complex he owned and let Valerie take the profit he made to open the furniture store where she now works.

Valerie Jaggar's access to financial capital through the network of her husband is similar to Isabell Lake's access to business knowledge through the experience of her family. Isabell, who is a 46-year-old white woman with Italian roots, came into business ownership after having grown up in an entrepreneurial family. Her father's family owned a great deal of property in Massachusetts that her father, upon finishing his college education funded by the GI bill after World War II, eventually bought out and used to run various businesses, including the sandwich shop on top of which Isabell grew up. While Isabell was in parochial school hoping to someday become a nun, her mother worked in the sandwich shop and her mother's brothers paid for her mother to go to hairdressing school. After a few years in the sandwich business Isabell's mother and father closed the shop and opened a hairdressing salon.

> And the hair salon took off like gangbusters. I mean, absolute gangbusters. She [Isabell's mother] went in with a partner and bought the partner out. Hired several people on. They [her parents] bought a home, so we moved out from being on top of one of the businesses, and that worked very well. But then as the salons became, you know, more successful, they found they had to expand. So one piece of this property that my dad hadn't bought, his sister still owned--it was a big, huge, huge old house--so they bought it and they completely gutted it and renovated it and put the hair salon underneath. And we moved into the two apartments that they had on top. And it actually had more apartments and they made one level just all business and then we moved up on top. That worked very well. They ended up expanding into five different locations.

In the meantime, Isabell says, she and her sister went to college and "hated it, hated it, hated it." She characterizes herself as a rebellious, "borderline proactive hippie" who opted to go to hairdressing school instead of finish college and eventually came to work for her parents. During this time Isabell also put her husband through college and had two children, and planned to go back to college once her husband finished his degree. The money in hairdressing was just too good though, she says, so she stayed in it and also worked at the uniform and maternity shop her mother had recently opened. She was able to just work nights and be home with her children during the day, which she says worked perfectly around her husband's schedule.

Eventually her parents began to consider retirement, so they started to sell most of their beauty salons. They also let Isabell and her sister take over the uniform and maternity shop, which had expanded into a children's clothing shop. Detecting another niche that needed to be filled, Isabell and her sister also opened a medium-priced lingerie shop that they were eventually able to place in their town's shopping mall, and it did very well.

After a series of events in their family members' lives, including Isabell's divorce, they sold all their businesses and Isabell moved with her two teenage children to Atlanta. She worked for a small company when she first arrived in Atlanta, but it eventually closed so she sent out her resume to a variety of companies, primarily looking for management positions. In sending out so many resumes she had not even realized that she had applied to a furniture store, but when they called her in for an interview she and the owner immediately "clicked" so she decided to take the job. She has been the store manager, which involves a hefty proportion of time actually selling furniture, at this upscale chain store for about two years and plans to stay until the business ideas she is developing gain some momentum. Isabell Lake feels that, mainly because of her family background, she has an entrepreneurial spirit and good business mind, and never likes to go long without a business of her own in the works.

The business ownership patterns among the white women in my sample, then, appear to be linked to their access to various forms of capital, made easier by their class background and their race. Indirectly, these advantages have also positioned these women for later placement in a gender integrated occupation. Most of them have never considered working in an occupation like secretary, and their experience as business owners makes it very unlikely that they would take an occupational step that would be perceived as "backwards" into secretarial work. Even if their businesses failed, their capital, their networks, and their race and class privileges would shield them from having to move to an occupation they did not want.

Race, Class, and Time Off In contrast to these affluent white salespeople, as noted earlier, no African-American salesperson in my sample has ever owned her own business. Rather, many African-American salespeople, along with a smaller number of white salespeople from less affluent class backgrounds, form a group in my sample whose employment histories are characterized not by business ownership but by a stint in a highly gender segregated occupation. These women have previously worked as dental assistants,

data entry clerks, and secretaries--all gender segregated occupations. As previously noted, early work in a highly gender segregated occupation strongly predicts future work in highly segregated occupations (Chan 1999), yet this group of women has worked in segregated occupations and escaped. It is important to understand what has allowed these women to avoid becoming trapped.

This group of women comes from the lowest socioeconomic class backgrounds of any group in my sample, which, when combined with their path's intersection with segregated work, might indicate that they would be the prime group to get stuck in segregated occupations. The reason why many of the secretaries in my sample became secretaries is that their financial needs necessitated their finding stable, steady employment. Red Thornton, for example, whom I describe in Chapter 5, comes from a fairly low socioeconomic class background and needed to find a job like secretary that would provide a regular, substantial paycheck that she and her family could count on. The cumulative disadvantage perspective predicts that in ten years Red will continue to be employed as a secretary. According to this theory, which is substantiated by the work histories of many of the secretaries in my sample, this group of primarily African-American furniture salespeople's flirtation with gender segregated work should have led to marriage. These women who come from disadvantaged class and race backgrounds should be among the most likely to get stuck in gender segregated work because their options for getting out are limited. What conditions need to be in place in a woman's life that would allow her to escape the embrace of segregated work?

My analysis indicates that women may be poised to leave a gender segregated occupation if some combination of at least four conditions are present. First, if a woman receives little intrinsic satisfaction from gender segregated work, she may be more likely to leave. Second, if a woman receives few extrinsic rewards from her job, such as accolades from her boss, she may be more likely to leave. Third, if a woman's network includes individuals who have the ability or resources to pull her into a different

occupation, she may be more likely to leave segregated work. And most importantly, if a woman has an opportunity to leave the paid labor force altogether because she her class status has been elevated for at least a short period of time, she may be more likely to leave gender segregated work and not return.

The stories of three African-American salespeople (Nell Akehurst, Paula Ray, and Roberta Bass) and two white salespeople (LeAnn Stone and Janice Marber) exhibit the ways these factors can combine to facilitate women's transition out of gender segregated work. Each of these women has gotten out of segregated work because of some combination of the conditions listed above, and since their exodus few have gone back to segregated work. Thus, these conditions not only make it likely that a woman will leave segregated work, but also that she will not return. This calls both Chan's (1999) cumulative disadvantage perspective and Jacob's (1989) revolving door theory into question. These women have neither become trapped in the building of gender segregated work, nor made a career of walking between the segregated work inside and the less segregated work outside. Rather, like prisoners who are released from jail, they have walked out of the building and the door has locked behind them.

Nell Akehurst, an African-American salesperson in her early 40s, worked in her first job as part of a training program in high school. She had done well in science and math, so she wanted training that might eventually lead to some type of medical career. Her school had a program to allow her to receive on-the-job training as a dental assistant, and she worked in that position, which she says was just like being a dental hygienist without having the license, during her entire senior year. After high school, she says, she got married, and "the rest is history." Nell says she found the dental assistant work "boring" and "monotonous," and did not pursue it after high school because she did not financially have to work right away when she got married, and she eventually became more interested in retail sales than medicine.

In Nell's case, the economic resources of her high school appear to have had a lot to do with getting her into the segregated occupation of dental assistant. If she had been at a more affluent high school and shown a competence and interest in math and science, she may have been given opportunities beyond a low-wage, segregated vocational training program. This highly segregated occupation did not grab her, she says, because she found it boring and did not enjoy it. When she decided to leave the occupation she was able to take time off before reentering the paid labor market. The man she married after high school was a musician who could afford to support both himself and Nell, so she left her job, left the state, and left segregated work.

One of Paula Ray's first jobs was as a files clerk in a bank. While she worked in that job part-time during high school to help bring money into the family, her guidance counselor at school directed her toward the field of data processing, since it looked to be an expanding field with plenty of job opportunities. Paula, an African-American woman now in her mid-40s, says that although she was not particularly interested in this field, it seemed like a good idea to get an associate's degree in it after high school:

Paula Ray: I just had to advance in my education in order to fit in society, and that was a very popular area, and I was more, at that time, just getting a trade. It really wasn't anything I was seriously interested in. Everyone just said, "You should go into data processing. That's a good field."

IK: Mmhm. So had you ever taken typing or anything like that in high school?

Paula Ray: No. I just, you know, I wanted something I would be able to be self-supportive, and that was just a good field that was recommended to me.

After working for five years as a data processor Paula says she found out that she "likes people better than computers," so she quit her job. She and her husband had a child soon

after that, and after Paula stayed home with the baby for six months she found work as an apartment leasing consultant, which allowed her to bring her child to work for years, and also allowed her to be around people instead of just computers all day.

As with Nell Akehurst, Paula Ray did not learn typing and office skills in high school, so in once sense she was not "tracked" into a segregated field like secretarial work. Yet also like Nell, people in her high school did encourage her to train for a segregated vocation, and Paula tried it because she felt that learning a trade would allow her to earn a stable income, but when she realized she did not like it she got out. Perhaps most importantly, like Nell, Paula did not financially have to work when she figured out that she wanted to quit her segregated occupation. Her husband made enough to support the family while Paula took some time out of paid employment and also had a child.

These two women provide strong evidence for the idea that part of what might allow a woman to escape the bonds of highly segregated work is a lack of intrinsic satisfaction with segregated work combined with a chance to exit the paid labor force for at least a short period of time. This is somewhat ironic, since neither woman comes from an affluent background, and since part of the reason they got into their segregated occupations initially was to learn a trade that would allow them to provide for themselves and possibly also help out their families. Yet when their family situations changed, their class situations changed--at least temporarily--and they were able to let their "steady" and "stable" work go in order to take the time to figure out what they wanted to do next. Class, then, seems to be an important factor in how a woman ends up in a gender integrated occupation. The most affluent group of women in this sample, the white business owners, are furniture salespeople. And even among the least affluent group, obtaining the class privilege of at least temporarily not having to work for pay in combination with their dislike for segregated work influences their subsequent occupational placement.

Roberta Bass, an African-American salesperson in her 50s, has worked in a long series of occupations throughout her paid labor market career. She worked in a restaurant in high school, sold cosmetics, worked as a motel housekeeper, became a mental health technician, and then settled into a job as a shipping clerk. This clerk job was largely a clerical position, requiring her to complete paperwork for transactions and keep the small office where she worked organized. Roberta worked there for years before she and her husband decided to start having children. When she got pregnant she quit her job, and had three children (including twins) in the span of about five years. As her children grew older, her marriage started falling apart and she knew she would have to find paid employment again, so she went to college and earned her associate's degree. At that time Roberta planned to continue on with her education so that she could become a teacher, but she needed to devote more time to making money, so she found a job as a retail cashier.

In accordance with revolving door theories, after her job in retail Roberta worked as a nurse, then a customer service representative, then in computer sales, and finally in furniture sales. She has gone in and out of women-filled occupations for much of her life, and some of the more gender integrated occupations she has entered, such as retail cashier, are not necessarily "better" occupations in terms of pay or promotion possibilities than the most segregated occupations in which she has worked. Yet like Paula and Nell, one important moment in Roberta's work history occurs when she leaves the shipping clerk position she dislikes and is able to stay out of the paid work force for some time. The next position she took after that time off--retail cashier--was not in a highly gender segregated occupation.

Nell Akehurst's, Paula Ray's, and Roberta Bass's work histories at least tentatively suggest that having the opportunity to take time out of the paid labor force after working in a highly segregated occupation may increase a woman's chances of reentering the work force in a more gender integrated position. If this is the case, the

chance to take time out of the paid labor force, which is tied up with socioeconomic class, is a very important structural factor in determining how the supply of labor will deal with gender segregation. There is no evidence that these women currently work in a gender integrated occupation because of their socialization, or because of their superior investment in human capital, or even their lack of training for segregated occupations, but there is evidence that the privilege of being able to step out of paid work for at least a short time might influence their later placement in a gender integrated occupation.

This structural factor--the opportunity to take time off--can only be understood here within the context of these women's broader situations. These women worked in segregated occupations and probably hoped they would like those occupations, but failed to develop a deep affinity for them. While I can only speculate about why that affinity did not develop, Kanter's (1977) work on secretaries provides some clues about why women come to love, and subsequently get stuck in, segregated positions. In the corporation she studied, secretaries were treated in ways that made them feel appreciated and loved. Bosses complimented and thanked them often, and the secretaries came to depend on that positive reinforcement. Although this type of treatment is patronizing, it provides the extrinsic rewards that make some secretaries feel gratified in their positions.

Nell, Paula, and Roberta were largely bored with their segregated positions. Paula notes that she interacted very little with people and mainly sat in front of a computer all day, which might lessen the interaction--positive or negative--she would have with supervisors or coworkers. Nell points out that as a dental assistant, most of the people she dealt with on a daily basis were children. She says she liked that aspect of her job, but children would probably not provide the same type of reinforcement that a boss would. Possibly for these types of reasons, these women did not develop strong feelings about their segregated occupations, and when the opportunity came to leave those occupations behind, these women jumped.

Many of the secretaries in this sample have also taken time off from paid labor, and the most common reason they have done so is to have and care for their children. Yet when they left their positions, they were not disgruntled. I discuss in the following chapter the fact that most of the secretaries in my sample, from every age, class, and racial group, love their jobs. They receive both intrinsic satisfaction from the tasks involved in their occupation, and extrinsic rewards from the people around them. The fact that Nell, Paula, and Roberta did not love their segregated jobs and eventually found a way out of them speaks to the importance of understanding the opportunity to take time out of the work force within the context of women's orientation toward and experiences in their occupations. It is possible that when women are treated well as secretaries, meaning that they receive accolades and "love" (Kanter 1977) from the people with whom they work, they will be more likely to stay, perpetuating occupational gender segregation.

The paths these African-American women took to the gender integrated occupation of furniture sales is, as discussed before, substantially different from the paths that most of the white women in my sample took to this same occupation. While two-thirds of the African-American salespeople previously worked in highly segregated occupations, about one-third of the white salespeople did.

One of these white women, Janice Marber, worked as a secretary for a men's clothing store after graduating from college, and she wound up marrying her boss. Like Nell, Paula, and Roberta, she took some time off once she left this segregated occupation and then her husband insisted that she get into clothing sales. Janice, now 55, left clothing sales when she and that husband got divorced, and has been in furniture sales for fourteen years. She made about $100,000 last year.

Another white woman now in furniture sales, LeAnn Stone, worked as an office manager after graduating from high school, but only planned to work until she found a man to marry. Once she got married she quit her job and moved with him to another city, where she did not work in the paid labor force. LeAnn got pregnant fairly soon and then

the marriage fell apart, so she moved back to Atlanta and started an in-home daycare business in her house, since she wanted to be the one to raise her own child. She was able to start this business in part because of the pension she receives from having sprained her ankle in a track meet when she was in the Army, which qualified her to receive disabled veteran benefits. Once her child was old enough to attend school she ended the day care business and met a man who encouraged her to work for him in the furniture store where he was a manager. LeAnn, now in her late 40s, and this man who eventually became her husband now co-own a furniture store where her primary responsibility is sales.

These white women's paths out of highly segregated occupations look similar to Nell Akehurst's, Paula Ray's, and Roberta Bass's in some ways, but they also have an added element that the other women's do not: networks with white men. Both Janice Marber and LeAnn Stone had the opportunity to take a short hiatus from paid work when they got married, and after these breaks they changed occupations--Janice to sales and LeAnn to business ownership. While LeAnn's day care business kept her in the realm of segregated work, owning a child care business is somewhat different from being an hourly child care worker. Further, after she took a short break from that somewhat gender segregated business, she met a man who pulled her into sales.

Janice Marber's and LeAnn Stone's paths suggest that their romantic relationships with white men have been pivotal in their entry into the general occupation of sales. Research on networks has focused almost solely on what occupation a person *enters* after having relied on a particular kind of network (Granovetter 1974; Drentea 1998; Braddock and McPartland 1987; Browne and Hewitt 1995), but little attention has been paid to the occupation a person *leaves* because of her network. My findings at least tentatively suggest that networks may be important in helping women escape the trap of highly segregated occupations.

These findings also point to the importance of focusing on the *racial* composition of networks when studying occupational *gender* segregation. Most network studies have

focused on how the racial composition of networks reproduces racially segregated workplaces (Braddock and McPartland 1987; Browne and Hewitt 1995; Tilly and Tilly 1998), but few have examined how racialized networks contribute to gender segregation. The evidence I present here indicates that networks have been somewhat successful in pulling white women, but not African-American women, out of segregated occupations.

Janice Marber and LeAnn Stone, and some other white furniture salespeople in my sample, describe pathways that provide a more complete and complex picture of why some women do not get trapped in highly segregated occupations. Nell Akehurst, Paula Ray, Roberta Bass, and other African-American women demonstrate that if a woman works in a segregated occupation that she does not care for, and she has a chance to take time off from paid employment, she may be less likely to reenter the paid labor force in a segregated occupation. The white salespeople who have done segregated work confirm this to some degree, although they also demonstrate that their pathways out of segregated occupations are paved in part by the white men in their networks.

Some of the white salespeople's experiences do not confirm the notion that time out of the work force is an important factor in leaving segregated occupations. In some cases I cannot verify what people did after leaving their segregated occupation, in part because some of the white salespeople make efforts to quickly skim by the parts of their employment histories that include that segregated work. Many of these white salespeople use the term "office work" to describe secretarial positions, a term that only one secretary in this sample ever uses, and others make funny attempts to gloss over their titles. Take this example of my trying to ask Blair Holland, a white furniture salesperson in her late 20s, to name one of her previous occupations:

Blair Holland: I had enough credits to graduate [from high school] but I didn't want to graduate early because I thought I'd miss out on things.

IK: Uh-huh.

Blair Holland: So I took half days my last year. I guess I worked as a cashier in a restaurant, I mean in a grocery store. And then I worked in a doctor's office. That's right.

IK: Doing what?

Blair Holland: At [Neighborhood] Hospital. They were ophthalmologists. They all had their specialty. I worked for the glaucoma and cataracts specialist. So I dealt with little old ladies all day. It was so funny. It was a nightmare scheduling appointments because if it rained they wouldn't come in. And if it was hot, they wouldn't come in. If it was cold, they wouldn't come in. I spent so much time. It was like trying to fit together a jigsaw puzzle.

The most I could get out of her here is that she scheduled appointments, which indicates that she was a receptionist. But these answers of, "At [Neighborhood] Hospital," "They were opthalmologists," seem like attempts at evading the question posed: What was your occupation?

Most of the white salespeople come from much more affluent class backgrounds than most of the African-American salespeople, and for the most part these two groups took highly divergent paths into the same occupation. The opportunity structures under which these women grew up and began their paid work histories are quite different, as indicated in the fact that women like Nell Akehurst had the opportunity to learn a vocation, where women like LeAnn Stone, Isabell Lake, and Valerie Jaggar had the opportunity to own their own businesses. A substantial literature documents the complicated ways that race and class affect each other in determining people's life chances (Collins 1991; Amott and Matthaei 1991; Wilson 1987). But although figuring out whether race or class is the primary factor involved is an interesting exercise, the

important structural factor here is opportunity, to which the salespeople in my sample have had different access because of the ways race, class, and gender are intertwined. And despite inequitable access to opportunity, both groups have wound up in the same occupation. This demonstrates that paths into gender integrated occupations vary by class and race, and that attempts to eliminate occupational gender segregation must take these differences into account.

In summary, the chance to take time off paid work must be understood to have a potential impact on women's chances of escaping the trap of gender segregated work, within the context of the opportunities made available to those women throughout their paid work histories in ways that are tied up with race, class, access to networks, and the receipt of intrinsic and extrinsic occupational rewards. This complex picture of what differentiates women who stay in segregated occupations from those who do not demonstrates that structural factors, like class, are paramount in the perpetuation of occupational gender segregation--even on the supply side.

Human Capital Theory on Women's Absences From the Paid Labor Market

Among the most interesting implications of these findings is that they directly dispute a central tenet of human capital theory. Human capital theory, as detailed in Chapter 2, argues that workers end up in occupations that reflect their variable levels of education, training, and experience in the paid labor force (Becker 1964). This theory uses women's disproportionate responsibility for childcare as the primary explanation for women's segregation into a small range of occupations, since this responsibility hinders women from achieving the same levels of human capital as men. More specifically, human capital theorists argue that women's need to take time off from paid work in order to give birth to and care for their children depreciates their human capital investments, and creates the need for women to find occupations that they can exit and reenter without severe wage penalties (Kemp 1994; England 1994).

This neoclassical economic theory works from the assumption that taking time out of the paid work force is a detriment to women's labor force position. Yet my data indicate that this widely-held assumption may be faulty. As the stories of Nell Akehurst, Paula Ray, Roberta Bass, Janice Marber, and LeAnn Stone demonstrate, taking time out of the paid work force after working in a gender segregated occupation may actually *improve* women's position when they reenter paid work. These women, and others like them in my sample, worked in segregated occupations, then left paid work altogether for as short as three months to as long as six years, and when they came back to paid work they entered gender integrated occupations. They left for various reasons, primarily including caring for children and not needing the income, and more research may be needed to ascertain exactly what occurred in their lives while they were out of paid work. Yet the important factor is that contrary to neoclassical economic assumptions, they reentered paid work in more integrated occupations, a move that usually translates into better pay, higher prestige, and better chances for promotion

Finding flaws in human capital theory after examining the life experiences of women is not surprising, considering that neoclassical economic theories like this were developed solely around the paid labor market experiences of men (Becker 1957; Ferber and Nelson 1993). Economists have accounted for the work force experiences of women by applying men-based theories to them, and augmenting the theories as need be. Yet since men and women largely have different relationships with work, this type of cross-application has produced faulty results.

My data provide evidence to suggest that the study of labor market experiences must be reoriented so that women are not simply forced into men-based models, but are the center of the models. Perhaps even more importantly, these data suggest that the work force experiences of African-American women from low socioeconomic backgrounds provide a vital clue for understanding how occupational gender segregation

is perpetuated. Examining the labor force with these women at the center alters the entire view.

In summary, I have demonstrated in this chapter that the way class affects women's employment histories is an important structural factor that operates to influence women's subsequent occupational placement. By examining the work histories of women who wound up in two occupations I have found some support for cumulative disadvantage theory (Jacobs 1989b; Chan 1999), which argues that working in a highly segregated occupation like secretary can trap women in segregated occupations over time. Yet I have also found evidence, primarily in the life stories of African-American women from low socioeconomic backgrounds, that calls cumulative disadvantage theory into question. These women have been able to escape gender segregated work because of the combination of their dislike for that work with the financial opportunities they have had to leave the paid labor force altogether for at least a short period of time. This suggests that even revolving door theory, which argues that women move back and forth between segregated and less segregated occupations throughout their careers, may need to be modified to account for the "locked door" that women are able to close behind them when they leave segregated work under the right conditions. The experiences of this group of women who have been able to escape segregated work through their absence from the paid labor force perhaps most forcefully calls the assumptions of neoclassical economic theories like human capital into question, which speaks to the need to theorize with groups other than white affluent men at the center.

Chapter 7

Occupational Integration and Gender

In the previous chapters I demonstrate that in my sample women's work histories, race, class, and access to networks are more important explanatory factors of occupational gender segregation than socialization, education, family responsibilities and orientation toward service. This is important for understanding how individual women may be able to escape gender segregated occupations and find work in higher-paying occupations with more opportunities for advancement.

Yet these findings ignore an important reality of the paid work force: many women working in gender segregated occupations enjoy their jobs. Other researchers have noted that due to perceived job security and noneconomic benefits like camaraderie with other women, women working in gender segregated occupations often feel resentful of attempts to move them from the work they love, even if such moves would entail higher pay, better chances for promotion, and more prestige (Blum 1991; Major and Forcey 1985). While the inequality that the aggregate level of occupational gender segregation produces is indisputable, segregation's effects on individual women is much more hazy.

This raises an important policy question: If occupational gender segregation is the problem, what is the solution? The range of policy programs currently in place or under consideration demonstrates that not everybody agrees on which strategies are most effective for dealing with occupational segregation. Affirmative action policies regard the integration of occupations as the primary goal, and hence work to provide women with access to previously restricted occupations, while comparable worth strategies stress the need to attach value and status to the work women commonly do.

Although research has unambiguously shown that occupational gender segregation has damaging effects for women in terms of pay and mobility (Tomaskovic-Devey 1994; Petersen and Morgan 1995; Reskin and Ross 1995), it is becoming increasingly evident that the solution to gender inequality in paid work may not simply be the integration of occupations by gender. Bielby and Baron showed in 1984 that even occupations that become integrated by gender can facilitate gender inequality since men in the same occupations as women find subtle ways of exercising domination over them. This is consistent with Reskin's (1988) premise that the wage gap is not a direct result of occupational segregation, but is more specifically the result of men's attempts to preserve their gender privilege.

Blum (1991:135) points out that incentives to encourage occupational integration have also sometimes had the effect of reducing women's job security by loosening their hold on the occupations they have historically filled without producing substantial opportunities for them in other occupations. In addition, occupational integration can facilitate the loss of some of the noneconomic benefits women enjoy in the segregated work they do, such as camaraderie with other women (Blum 1991).

Further evidence from Reskin and Roos (1990) and Blum (1991) demonstrates that the desegregation of occupations by gender may not be the solution to inequality in the paid labor market since occupations generally do not remain integrated for long. Occupational gender integration is often only a transitional interlude between the egress of men, who step up into higher positions, and the influx of women. Reskin and Roos (1990) and Roos and Jones (1995) also argue that under certain circumstances, when occupations that are men-dominated come to have too many women in them, the occupations become undesirable to men and end up resegregated. Their evidence also indicates that the integration of occupations by gender does not eliminate wage disparities.

The implication of these arguments is that the integration of occupations by gender may do little more than transpose relationships of gender domination from the structures

of power *among* occupations to the structures of power *within* occupations. This suggests that strategies of comparable worth, which would increase women's rates of pay in the occupations they disproportionately fill, may be more effective in eliminating inequality than affirmative action's goals of integration, especially for low-paid women who have received fewer benefits from affirmative action than women working in higher-paid occupations (Blum 1987, 1991; England 1992; Treiman and Hartmann 1981; Steinberg 1990; Feldberg 1984).

Despite the fact that my evidence points to ways that individual women might be able to escape segregated work, this study in its entirety supports the conclusion that the integration of occupations by gender may not be the most effective solution to the problem of gender inequality in paid work. Through my interviews with women in one gender-segregated and one gender-integrated occupation, I conclude that integrating occupations by gender does relatively little to undermine the harmful way gender, itself, has been socially constructed, and that integration can even work to support divisions of gender, which perpetuate inequality.

My argument based on the evidence in this study is quite direct: as long as there is gender, there will be inequality. Underlying this argument is the increasingly substantiated and accepted notion in feminist theory that gender is a social construction rather than a true biological divide (Lorber 1994). Gender reflects the way human beings have come to interpret our biology, and, as social constructions do, these interpretations have taken on a life of their own and produced pervasive notions about differences between men and women that have no organic basis. Through the process of "doing gender" (West and Zimmerman 1987), these interpretations are constantly in flux and often contested, but their presence has become so institutionalized that it pervades everything from day-to-day interactions to work organizations to state structures. History demonstrates that gender, as both a process and an institution, is consistently detrimental to women since the divisions it creates do not allow for "separate-but-equal" relationships and status

positions, but instead provide justifications for the continuation of men's power and privilege (Huber 1990; Lorber 1994; Amott and Matthaei 1991). Thus, much as with the social constructions of race and class, as long as gender exists, inequality will as well.

While this argument may sound extraordinary because of the pervasive and seemingly intractable way gender is embedded in our social relations, the argument has roots in the study of inequality by class. Even before Karl Marx, scholars of inequality have been arguing that as long as the economic system of capitalism is in place, inequality will persist (Wallerstein 1979). Few scholars would argue that the solution to the problem of class inequality would be to keep capitalism in place while working to make it possible for everyone in a world economic system to become members of a single class. This is impossible within capitalism since--by definition--the owning class can only attain its goal of profit maximization if it has another class of workers to exploit.

It is abundantly clear in class theories that the underlying system of inequality, namely, capitalism, needs to be eliminated in order for equality to prevail (Wright 1994). Yet in studies of gender, theorists are usually content with the goal of leaving the underlying system in place and altering dynamics of the unequal relationships that this underlying system--by definition--includes.

I provide evidence in this chapter to substantiate the notion that as long as gender is in place, inequality will persist. Attempts at integrating occupations by gender have largely failed to produce full occupational equity between men and women because even gender-integrated occupations exist within a gender system.

Gender theory has used the term "gender" to captures the simple but extremely complicated fact that we interpret biology in a way that splits people up into the categories of "men" and "women." Yet this term has both been popularly misunderstood and also perhaps used to describe too many phenomena. The fact that we bifurcate people into two categories--men and women--needs to be distinguished from the institutionalized, structural systems of gender that manifest themselves in everyday interactive processes

based on this bifurcation. Too many scholars take this bifurcation as a given rather than question its necessity in their studies of gender.

If the term "class" is analogous to "gender," then "capitalism" is analogous to this system of gender bifurcation that currently has no name, but that must be eliminated if equality is to fully have a chance. The word "patriarchy" comes closest to expressing this gender system, but even patriarchy does not fully account for the institutionalized system of gender that underlies our social lives since the term focuses on men's relationship to women, with the categories of "men" and "women" taken as a priori facts. For want of a better term, in what follows I use the term "gender bifurcation" when I refer to the underlying system.

This focus on gender bifurcation, however, does not mean that gender as a social process and an institution should be ignored. As other scholars have shown, in order to fully understand the complexity of gender, we must not simply think about gender as a variable that reflects the presumably dichotomous positions of men and women in society. We must, instead, be attentive to the processes through which gender is enacted, maintained, facilitated, and institutionalized within any group--including groups comprised solely of women. In this study I focus on groups of women in order to determine how they understand and deal with gender bifurcation.

Evidence such as Bielby and Baron's (1984) and Reskin's (1988) that demonstrates that men can exercise gender power over women in the same occupation is important, yet it leaves open for question the activities and thoughts of women in these occupations. We need to recognize the power men wield, but we must not assume that women are simply passive recipients of manipulation. In this chapter I highlight the ideological positions about gender equality expressed by women in a gender-integrated occupation so that I may demonstrate how it is gender, and not simply men, that perpetuates women's disadvantage in the paid labor market. Based on this evidence I argue that without eliminating gender bifurcation, attempts at producing equality in the

paid labor force--including findings ways to facilitate women's transition into gender-integrated occupations--will largely fail.

In order to highlight these women's gender ideologies I place them in the context of the historic debate their ideologies reflect, namely, whether women are equal to or different from men. I show how their positions in the paid labor market, and their interpretation of other women's positions, work to provide the justifications for their stance on either side of this difference/equality debate.

As the furniture salespeople and secretaries in my sample bring this debate to life through their understanding of themselves as working women, these women "do gender" in both institutionalized and liberatory ways that both ultimately operate to substantiate the continuation of gender bifurcation. This indicates that even when women work in a gender-integrated occupation and believe in the equality of women to men, their position does nothing to undermine gender bifurcation, and may even reinforce it.

The furniture salespeople seem to feel compelled to do gender in a way that degrades other women so that they may "get ahead" in a labor market that is dominated by the socially constructed characteristics and lifestyles of men. While women in this oppressed spot cannot be labeled responsible for their inequitable position in the labor market, especially when they think they are working to overcome such a position by declaring themselves equal to men and taking on the challenges and roles men value, they do demonstrate how it is not simply men but gender bifurcation that ensures inequality. Because of this, simply integrating occupations while the structure of gender bifurcation remains in place will do little to eradicate that inequality.

I will caution here that I am not in any way arguing that occupations should not be integrated by gender. Affirmative action and other policy initiatives have provided occupational opportunities for women that need to be in place and need to include legal recourse. In my conclusion I make policy recommendations based on the evidence in this study, and I will revisit the issue of how to deal with the segregation of occupations there.

My focus in this chapter, however, is on why the integration of occupations has not been effective in eliminating inequality.

I articulate this focus here by first highlighting two women from my study whose words exemplify either side of the difference/equality debate. I then draw out the gender ideologies of furniture salespeople and secretaries generally, in order to substantiate my argument that gender bifurcation, even within a gender-integrated context, perpetuates inequality.

Women and Equality, Women and Difference

> What is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing--the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in other. . . . [T]he principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes--the legal subordination of one sex to the other--is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.
>
> John Stuart Mill 1869

> We note in passing one early manifestation of the feminine predisposition toward connection and conversation. Three- and four-year-old girls are much more likely than their masculine peers to choose the telephone as a preferred toy.
>
> Mary F. Belenky, Blythe M. Clinchy, Nancy R. Goldberger, and Jill M. Tarule 1986

> [W]omen have been encouraged to recognize only one area of human difference as legitimate, those differences which exist between women and men. . . . But our future survival is predicated upon our ability to relate within equality. . . . Now we must recognize differences among women who are our equals, neither inferior nor superior, and devise ways to use each others' difference to enrich our visions and our joint struggles.
>
> Audre Lorde 1980

The debate over whether women are equal to or different from men stems in part from women's own perspectives and beliefs about their positions in life, and in part from the theories that feminists have developed for over a century. In science, law, and politics, feminists have articulated strategies on each side of this debate as either the best or the most likely way to garner rights for women (Cott 1987).

In this classic debate, all parties are interested in the welfare of women as a discriminated group, but one side feels that the reason women should be allowed unlimited access to previously restricted spheres is that women are equal to men and can, as the old saying goes, "do anything they can do." The other camp feels that women are either essentially or socially different from men and should be allowed that access because they embody characteristics that are unique. The end goal is the same, but these two camps have different rationales for getting there.

The issue of difference includes a great deal of subtext over whether the differences between women and men, or the differences among women, are essential, biological, and psychological, or social constructed but, nonetheless, real and powerful. If perceived differences are biological, some argue that it makes sense to play up those differences and value the unique perspectives and abilities of women (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule 1986; Chodorow 1978). If, on the other hand, perceived differences are a reflection of the different ways men and women are raised and manifestations of the different expectations placed on them, then the argument can either

fall toward accentuating and valuing those differences (Rosenberg 1983) or eliminating the socially constructed factors that produce them (Kessler-Harris 1986).

The latter strategy also addresses the issue of differences among women. Postcolonial feminists have argued that women are not a monolithic group who are united simply by their gender. Rather, women's gender oppression takes on various forms depending on the economic, political, and social contexts in which the oppression arises. Strategies for dealing with the contextual differences among women involve recognizing those differences and working to eliminate the oppressive contexts in which they have thrived (Mohanty 1991).

Those who argue the equality side of the debate firmly believe that any differences between men and women, or among women, are socially created and that the focus of legislation and policy should be the equality of all people. This is tricky, however, since the word "equality" begs the question: Equality *to whom*? Few have argued, for instance, that we should declare that everybody is equal to Taiwanese-American women. Rather, the standard of equality is usually affluent men of European-American heritage, since they have the most rights and privileges. Scholars have argued that those rights and privileges should be accorded to everybody, although they have cautioned that making white men the basis of equality makes it hard to avoid the idea that everybody should be *like* white men, and adopt their socially constructed perspectives, abilities, and characteristics.

I demonstrate here how women in the occupations of secretary and furniture sales embrace gender ideologies that largely reflect either side of this debate. Like women and women's rights activists in the past, they use these ideologies differently depending on the context and potential advantages they may gain from doing so (Cott 1987). I also argue that their ideologies are not as diametrically opposed as they may seem, and that this provides an important clue for why the gender integration of occupations has not been completely successful in eliminating inequality.

The ideologies of the women in my sample are of particular interest since the debate between women's equality and difference has largely focused on the views of scholars and policy makers, without much notice given to the perspectives of women in everyday life situations. I explore here not the views of public, policy-making feminists, but those of women who make up part of the paid labor force through their work in two types of occupations in the United States.

"WHAT DO YOU MEAN, WOMEN AREN'T SUPPOSED TO DO THAT?" Jessie Hughes, an African-American woman, has had a range of jobs throughout her 34 years, but she has always liked to sell. Even when she was a young girl she sold enough candy to completely fund a school trip to Canada. She has sold copiers, which she did not like because of all the travel involved. She has considered selling cars, but does not want to be out in the elements all day, so she was very happy to land an inside sales job in a furniture store. She says, "It just seems like it'd be a fun thing to do and I like to shop. So I thought I could shop all day long and not spend any money. I spend other people's money. I shop all day long."

Jessie feels that women and men are equally capable of doing any job, but women have been held back because of discrimination and stereotyping. She feels that she has broken through some of these barriers, however, and says she has always taken whatever job she wanted:

> A lot of people think that I take on a more male-like position in life and I just think I take on a more leadership position in life, not a male position. Because I know what I want to do. I know how to get it done. No, I don't need anybody. If I want to put up shelving or something like that, don't need anybody to do it. I don't need anybody to come over and kill a spider. But it works out now. It's great. Now my companion, he likes, you know, he's clean, clean, clean... He'll clean the bathroom. ... I had to clean the bathroom. He'll clean the bathroom. But he's clean. He irons.

> He irons my clothes before I go to work and then, you know, he goes. He's a loan officer so he goes to work. It's great. I could cook. He'll clean. I can put up shelving and stuff. I can kill a spider. I can do all that. He's not afraid to let me be the kind of person that I would be. Because I was married before and that kind of... I made more money than him... I knew I shouldn't have married a Southern man. And then if I would do things that were supposedly male, that was threatening. I had four brothers. I was one of two girls on the whole block. There was 11 people for football; I was the 12th person. Yeah, I was a tomboy all my life. I love it. I love doing that kind of stuff. And I don't like being put into positions that people think I should be in: "Oh, you should do this..." then I let you just step away.

Because women and men, in Jessie's view, are equal and largely interchangeable, they need to share roles, and both genders need to get past the stereotypes that might hold them back from doing what they want to do.

"WOMEN ARE BEST FOR THIS POSITION." Becky Suchman's take on gender is quite a bit different from Jessie Hughes's. Becky is also 34, is white, and, like Jessie, is a single parent. She loves her job as a public sector administrative assistant because "no two days are ever alike." Although she was home for almost five years caring full-time for her second child before taking this job, she has otherwise been a secretary since her junior year of high school.

I asked Becky if she thinks of secretarial work as "women's work" and she said:

> It's true that it is stereotyped for women. Um, but I believe, in my opinion, and I'm sure this is biased, that women are best for this position, simply because women are more detail-oriented, I feel, personally. Um, men, I think, have a lot more ego that they have to deal with. And these, these questions I'm sure would infuriate [laughs] a male if he was reading this.

> But um, at any rate, in, in this position you have to almost be subservient sometimes, and men don't deal with that very well. So I don't know that there are very many men that can do the secretarial position, well. Not to say that women accept being subservient. It's that I think that we feel sec... we're more secure with ourselves I guess. We don't have to have outside influences and, and a title to make us feel important. And I feel like most men do.

Men and women, according to Becky, do have to deal with stereotypes, but she feels that these stereotypes about the types of work that are appropriate for women or men to do have some basis in fact. Women and men, she says, have particular strengths that can often compliment each other, so it is the bringing together of their differences that is important, and it is okay for that to happen with women and men in different occupations.

With these two examples of Jessie Hughes and Becky Suchman in mind I now look more broadly at the gender ideologies of the women in these two occupations, starting with furniture salespeople.

Ideas About "Women's Jobs"

Segregation, Ideology, and Equality in a Gender-Integrated Occupation

Furniture sales, according to many of those who do the selling, is an ideal job. Like having one's own business without all the entrepreneurial hassles, selling furniture allows salespeople, they tell me, the freedom to come and go as they please, make as much money as they want, and practically be their own boss. These factors are consistent with the principles of autonomy and high earning potential that Thomas and Reskin (1990) and Wharton (1996) uncover in their studies of why women become real estate salespeople.

Most of the women I interviewed keep very long hours and almost always work weekends and evenings. More than three-quarters of them have earned at least some

college credits and most have children. Only about half are currently married. More than 40 percent are in their 40s and most of the rest are younger.

These women are furniture salespeople, they say, because they are hardworking and ambitious. From what they tell me about why they got into this occupation as opposed to a more "traditional" occupation like secretary, it appears as though they simply made career choices based on honest evaluations of their skills and preferences. They do not care to be closed in, encroached upon, told what to do, or bored, so they chose an occupation that would avoid these conditions.

A white woman in her late 30s named Alexis Perry, for example, who had once worked as a bank teller, will never take an office job again: "I just couldn't... I can't sit at a desk all day. Yeah, when I worked at the bank, we had to sit a lot and I hated it. I felt very confined." Others, like Tasha Bailey, an African-American woman in her late 30s, raise concerns about how women in office jobs are encroached upon by coworkers and bosses, a hassle they feel they do not have to deal with in sales:

> You know, [in furniture sales] it's not like no one's, you're not really ever punching a time clock, you know. No one's depending on your being there. You know like a secretary, I mean, if you leave your desk and go to lunch, they're like, "When is she coming back? 'Cause I've got to get a report out." You don't have any of that [in furniture sales]. You have the freedom, you know. (Tasha Bailey)

The stifling lack of freedom, privacy, and autonomy that furniture salespeople think secretaries endure is in accordance with how they think secretaries are treated by their bosses. Many furniture salespeople say that *they* could not tolerate being told what to do all the time, but they are glad *somebody* can. "I'm not good working for somebody that has their thumb on me. I will rebel," says Sandy Gilbert, a white woman is in her late 40s who has seven grown children and would never consider doing secretarial work. "I do have a mind of my own, um, and I'm not beyond voicing my opinion, whether it's

asked for or not." Describing a situation where a secretary does her boss's work for him while he is out playing golf, Blair Holland, a white single woman in her late 20s, says, "That just... I mean, I can't not say something. So I guess that's why I never did it [secretarial work] because I would've been fired." Jessie Hughes, introduced earlier, says that she is "So glad I was born when I was because I would be dead, hung from a tree, had I been born way back then. Because I'd be too rebellious. Be too rebellious. And I have to speak out when I see that something is not being done right."

Feeling that they are assertive, vocal, above being controlled, and equal to men, these women do not even momentarily consider secretarial work (or going back to it) in part because of the structural position they believe secretaries are in. As Janice Marber, a divorced white 55-year-old former secretary and current furniture salesperson, explains,

> The tedium would drive me, me personally, crazy. (Isabell Lake, white, 46)

A few of these women base their impressions of secretarial work on their past experiences as secretaries. Others work from a general impression of office work that they glean from other secretaries who they have known at times throughout their lives. The salespeople who feel this way comprise the majority of my sample and include women of various races, ages, and class and family backgrounds. Only one furniture salesperson, an African-American woman in her 50s, says that it is possible that at some point in the future she might consider secretarial work, but even she is hesitant and raises some of the same concerns as the other furniture salespeople about the occupation. The overwhelming sentiment among the furniture salespeople in my sample is that they will never do it (or never do it again).

Furniture salespeople's negative portrayal of the secretarial occupation reveals a judgmental stance toward secretarial work and secretaries, themselves. Furniture salespeople believe that secretaries are underachievers. For example, Blair Holland, who feels that she needs "*more*" in a career than predictable secretarial duties, suggests that some women may become secretaries because it is the only thing they think they can do. She would never do secretarial work because, she says, "I never grew up with any of those ideas that I couldn't do something." Her ambition to be able to do anything she could dream of, she thinks, led her on the lucrative path to furniture sales rather than a more traditional route, and some women simply do not have this drive.

Like Blair Holland, other furniture salespeople split the world of women up into two camps: those who strive to achieve and those who are complacent with the norm. They see themselves as self-motivated, hardworking overachievers who are equal to men and have always been able to see that there is something good waiting for them in the world. Kerin Agrawal, a 29-year-old Indian-American woman with two young children,

explains that women who choose not to do secretarial work “really want to achieve *more* than that” (italics mine).

Similarly, Lindsay Beckwith, a white 24-year-old furniture salesperson who has a college degree in design, a new baby, and makes $63,000 a year, pits complacency against

secretaries' lives, we may see that these women in furniture sales actually feel that they, as women, are not like other women because they are not stuck. They do not have to take a "common" job. They do not need to settle for "less" than they want. They are women and they can do whatever they want. Their rationales display a particularly contemptuous view of women who are secretaries because they feel that secretaries do not have the individual gumption that they need to succeed. But furniture salespeople do have it, according to furniture salespeople.

Most of the salespeople in my sample do not take much time in their explanations to propose reasons for why various women have what they see as such a range of different character traits, but many at least implicitly belie their faith in a meritocratic system of labor rewards: those who work hard and shun adversity, boredom, and stereotypes will succeed; those who are less ambitious and happy with mediocrity will get their just desserts. These furniture salespeople believe they have made it out of the gender ghetto because they want more for themselves than secretaries want for themselves, and they have the drive to go after it.

This is not inconsistent with Williams' (1989) findings about women in the men-dominated occupation of Marine. Williams describes how these women constantly face the paradox of being part of a subculture that devalues women and also believing that they, individually, are qualified to complete the full range of tasks required. For example, Wiliams (1989:137) asked one woman Marine:

[Williams:] *Do you think women should be allowed into combat?*

[Participant:] I believe that women cannot handle themselves under that much stress.

[Williams:] *How about yourself?*

[Participant:] I believe I could handle it. . . . I've always been really good under stress.

This demonstrates how women can simultaneously devalue "women" and value themselves--but they value themselves *despite* the fact that they are women, not because of it. They seem themselves as exceptions, and they judge themselves by the standards for men.

The accounts of the salespeople in my sample reveal that they have accepted and adopted the vocabulary of gender that occupational segregation provides. Many scholars have detailed the ways that occupations filled by women are accorded low status *because they are associated with women* (Coyle 1982; Game and Pringle 1983; Kemp 1994; Mies 1986; Phillips and Taylor 1980). As Kemp (1994:3) explains: "The degradation of women's work comes not from the tasks women perform but from the social relations within which the work occurs." Gender segregated work gives people a way of understanding women that seems to stem from rational, "natural," obvious social facts. The segregation-based rationale proceeds from the idea that women work in demeaning, underpaid, stifling occupations because they are unqualified to do something else. Furniture salespeople use this rationale in their explanations that women who work in occupations like secretary lack motivation, ambition, and drive. They are lazy. They do not want anything "more" for themselves or their families. They are content.

This rationale ignores the barriers that women face in the formal paid labor market. A few salespeople speculate that women become secretaries because their family obligations do not leave them with any time to tend to the demands of a higher status career, but these discussions are filled with contradictions as the women talk about how much easier it is for them to balance their personal and work lives in a career like furniture sales that gives them enhanced flexibility regarding working hours and also gives them a nice paycheck. According to these salespeople, women can find success in the labor market whether they have children or not, but they need to get over their own contentment and lack of ambition first.

These women's insistence that they, as individuals (but also women), are somehow set apart from other women, leaves little doubt that gender, far from being a biologically-based static fact, is in fact a socially constructed *process* (Hall 1993; Lorber 1994; West and Zimmerman 1987). Gender, much like race (Omi and Winant 1994), is a process of continual redefinition and transformation that must continually be accomplished through "socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities" (West and Zimmerman 1987:126). By engaging in this process we "do gender." Many scholars have observed the interactions between men and women in organizational settings and noted how workers in many types of occupations do gender as part of their jobs (Hall 1993; Hochschild 1983; Leidner 1991; Williams 1989). My data demonstrate that even when women pit themselves against other women, they are doing gender. They restructure the idea of "woman" based on their own experiences and act on the new definition, which points to the process aspect of gender since the category of woman is always slightly in flux, morphing by context.

While gender is constantly in flux, it is also institutionalized in various forms (Lorber 1994). Symbolic interactionists think of institutions as established patterns that "help ensure the continuation of society" (Charon 1992:88). We create institutions through our interactions and our need to establish regular ways of dealing with the issues we define as important. When ways of acting and interacting become institutionalized, they become more than simply habitual patterns of action and take on a character and power of their own.

Structural theorists focus less on the process of the creation of institutions and more on the pervasive role institutions play in societies. It is difficult to conceptualize how institutions such as the state, the education system, and the economy are created and maintained, but less hard to imagine the substantial effect they have. These institution's controlling and regulating functions are emphasized, as well as their relative inertia.

The institutionalization of gender reflects both of these perspectives, as it is both accomplished and pervasive. Through the process of doing gender, people define what they think is important, and develop ways of dealing with those aspects that eventually become routine--they institutionalize gender. For example, people may notice that to some degree the sizes and shapes of men's and women's bodies differ. Despite the fact that women's bodies also differ from each other's, as do men's, the perceived differences between men's and women's bodies become important aspects of gender that are then dealt with in ways that become regularized, such as in the shaping of clothes. The shape and style of clothes for men and for women then take on a character of their own that may or may not be based on any actual differences between men and women. Making, advertising, selling, and buying skirts for women and not men reflects the institutionalization of gender--a regular way of dealing with the created categories of men and women.

While all institutions are subject to change, their regularity and pervasiveness make them inherently somewhat static. Because we constantly "do gender," the ways we define and deal with gender change all the time, but because some of these ways have become institutionalized they are less receptive to changing forces. Thus, men who wear skirts are generally ridiculed, which works to keep that aspect of gender institutionalized, which is to say that it works to perpetuate the separation of the categories of "men" and "women."

The institutionalization of gender also necessarily includes the creation and perpetuation of inequality. Men and women are not simply split into separate categories of equal value. That which is associated with men in a patriarchal society--one in which men hold a disproportionate amount of political and economic power--is afforded more value. In some cases this means actively and passively excluding members of the devalued group from the domain of the valued. In other cases it means that men eschew that which is associated with women, such as skirts, while women come to value and adopt the same things the dominant group values, such as slacks.

These furniture salespeople, by accepting the idea of women's work as valueless and then portraying their own work, which is less gender-affiliated, as an exception to that rule, do gender in a way that indicates they have adopted the values and ideology of the dominant group. The mechanism that facilitates this is occupational segregation, since it gives them the vocabulary to do gender in a very institutionalized way. Their understanding of women, gender, and work is shaped by the framework that occupational segregation provides. Paradoxically, these women use the negative institutionalization of gender to their own advantage by proclaiming that it is true, while demonstrating how they, despite their gender, do not fit the depiction.

The ways that women in furniture sales place themselves in opposition to women who do "women's work" indicates the powerful influence of occupational segregation on gender ideologies. Compared with the descriptions of secretarial work that secretaries give, it is clear that the furniture salespeople's understanding of secretarial work lacks recognition of the hard work and skill it requires. So while it appears that in choosing an occupation these furniture salespeople simply evaluated their own strengths and ruled out occupations like secretary that would not enable them to capitalize on those strengths, most actually did not consider such occupations for themselves at all because of their belief that such jobs were worthless. By setting themselves apart from women in secretarial occupations and equal to men, these furniture salespeople do gender as they simultaneously uphold the image of women's work as valueless and proclaim that they, as women, are distinctive. Occupational segregation provides them with the vocabulary to do gender in ways that support not only divisions between men and women, but between women and an exceptional few.

Part of the evidence that indicates that these women simply grab onto the vocabulary that segregation provides to frame their impression of secretarial work is that none of the furniture salespeople I interviewed say that they are unaware of what secretarial work entails, although most of them display their ignorance of the occupation

in their descriptions of it. I did not hear anything akin to, "Secretary? I'm not really sure what is required to work in that sort of occupation so I don't know if I'm qualified for it or not," in my interviews with women in furniture sales. This sort of response, or something like it, might indicate that these women are capable of evaluating secretarial work in a way that does not conjure up the negativity that is associated with it because of its affiliation with women.

It is also noteworthy that furniture salespeople sometimes evoke negative images in response to questions about why they entered an occupation that is almost evenly split between men and women rather than following "a more traditional path" for women, so they often speak about women's work in general rather than the specific occupation of secretary. None indicate that traditional women's work is too difficult for them, or that they had tried it and failed. Most simply speak about the undesirability of such a path and relate stories about how they went to great lengths to avoid it or entered it obligatorily and escaped as soon as the opportunity arose. By doing so, these women reveal how deeply entrenched ideologies about women's work lie. In their attempts to escape the negativity associated with women's work they have had to both work in an occupation that is not associated with women, and through this occupation prove that they are not like most other women.

Gender ideologies gain salience through their usefulness, not their truth. If the idea of women's work as easy and unskilled were not useful, it would lose its salience and drop from common gender ideology. That men are able to use such an idea to rationalize their privilege is unsurprising, as Reskin (1988) notes. But women, too, are susceptible to the same messages and, as this evidence shows, come not only to subscribe to them but to attempt to use them to their own advantage.

This demonstrates why the gender integration of occupations has not been successful at eliminating inequality in those occupations. Even in a gender-integrated context, gender is present and active. From the accounts these furniture salespeople give

me there is little doubt that in at least some contexts men are, in fact, working to preserve their privileges even within this gender-integrated occupation. One furniture salesperson's boss, for example, demands that every year before he will write her a bonus check based on her sales for the year that she promise him that she will not become pregnant in the upcoming year. This boss also intentionally and admittedly gives every lead that comes in to the men who work in the store, making Janice Marber and the other women find their own leads. Men are certainly active in perpetuating inequality, and their efforts should not be dismissed. Despite her location in furniture sales, Janice is subject to some of the same encroachment on her autonomy that many furniture salespeople view as a negative aspect of secretarial work.

Yet the perpetuation of inequality cannot be solely linked to men's efforts. Inequality is, in fact, linked with the perpetuation of gender bifurcation. The furniture salespeople demonstrate this in the way they "do gender." In one sense they are trying to do away with the baggage that comes with being associated with a devalued status: woman. They partially try to do away with gender bifurcation in their explanations of why they chose this occupation as they explain the ways they are basically the same as, and equal to, men. Yet they also reinforce gender bifurcation by confirming that some women really are basically valueless. Both of these sides to their ideologies are harmful to women generally in their insistence that the only way for a woman to be valuable is to be more like a man.

Doing gender in ways that are harmful to women is institutionalized through structural mechanisms like occupational segregation. Yet even when work is integrated, gender is not eliminated. As the salespeople demonstrate, gender is as strong and as harmful in a setting that might be imagined to be potentially equitable as it is in less gender-integrated contexts.

But how are salespeople's negative portrayals of women working in a segregated occupation detrimental to themselves? I am not arguing that these women

single-handedly perpetuate their own oppression by doing gender in a way that is harmful to women generally. I am arguing that these women demonstrate that gender is present and active even in a gender integrated work context. When we think about why the integration of occupations by gender has not been successful in eliminating inequality even in those occupations, we must not only consider the ways men are active in preserving their privileges; we must consider the ways that the presence of gender bifurcation ensures the continuation of inequality.

Segregation, Ideology, and Equality in a Gender-Segregated Occupation

Women outside the realm of segregated work are not the only ones to accept the segregation-based rationale of gender, however. Even some secretaries express a disdain for secretarial work. These women, who find the work demeaning, unchallenging, or "beneath" them, also have concrete plans for moving into other occupations or obtaining more education. They explain very clearly that they are in secretarial positions only temporarily, either because they have been unsuccessful in obtaining other positions, they need to earn an income while they figure out what they want to do, or they are waiting to move up within the company.

Tracy Muse, for example, a single African-American woman in her 20s, got burned out after receiving her bachelor's degree in biology so she took a year off with plans to eventually go to medical school. In that year she got a job as an administrative assistant and enjoyed it, but the company for which she worked went bankrupt. Within the span of time between her senior year and her time on this job, she also lost both of her parents. Her current job as an administrative assistant for a nonprofit company has convinced her that this is not the line of work for her:

> Tracy Muse: And, working as an administrative assistant, it truly shows me [laughs while she says this] that this is not something I would want to do for the rest of my life.

IK: Really? Why not?

Tracy Muse: Because, ah, you're the lowest on the totem pole. And you get overlooked, but you have to be accountable for so much. There's so much work that you do that... you're overlooked. You know, you don't receive the acknowledgment that you truly should. And a lot of these... the women that I've come into contact with who really have been in these positions for like five or six years, they're somewhat frustrated, but at the same time, they don't want to move forward for whatever reason.

IK: Why do you think that is?

Tracy Muse: [exhales, struggles a little to find the words] I think one, you become complacent. You know, you really, you, you, you're comfortable, and it's safe. And I think a lot... the women that I've come in contact with, they're older, and I think, they don't feel they have the experience, or maybe the credentials, to compete with maybe someone like myself coming out of college. A lot of them haven't received college degrees. So you become comfortable with where you're... you know, and it's safe for you, you'll put up with it, but at times it can really stress you out. And for me I don't [laughs] I don't want the stress. I don't, you know, I... I want to move on.

Tracy evokes the same sort of impression of secretaries and secretarial work that many of the women in furniture sales do. To her, many secretaries are complacent, unappreciated, lack motivation, and work in jobs that she later describes as monotonous. She took the job because of the stressful events in her life, but does not plan to stay long.

It is difficult to distinguish whether Tracy bases her impression of secretarial work on her own experiences, leading to this negative portrayal of the job, or whether existing cultural representations of secretarial work affect the way she interprets her experiences, which leads to the negative depiction. It is likely a combination of both. To the degree that her secretarial experiences are colored by negative representations of this work, Tracy uses the vocabulary that segregation provides to do gender in an institutionalized way.

Like Tracy Muse, twelve secretaries in my sample dislike their occupation and plan to leave. Most of these women are African-American. All but one are in their 20s and 30s, and they are about half and half split between having grown up in working- and middle-class homes. These women plan to leave secretarial work to go to graduate school, start their own businesses, or get promotions in their current companies. Because of the wide variance in secretarial jobs, it is possible that these women who dislike their occupation truly work in worse conditions than other secretaries.. They, more than the rest of the secretaries I interviewed, relate more instances of bosses treating them in demeaning ways, of work tasks that are monotonous and boring, and of continuously going unrecognized for the hard work they do.

Since this group is mainly comprised of African American women, it is possible the negative treatment they have received in their secretarial positions is due to acts of racism combined with sexism, which might prompt them to leave the occupation. Half of those African-American women who indicate that they plan to leave report experiencing such discriminatory incidents at some point in their work history as secretaries.

Since gender is institutionalized in racialized and classed ways (Collins 1991; hooks 1984), which indicates that institutionalized forms of gender sometimes vary across the socially constructed categories of race and class, it is also possible that for some reason, young women, and particularly young African-American women, are less likely to see the value of “women’s work” than older women and younger white women. The extent to which these young women’s impressions of secretarial work are based on their

experiences versus their subscription to negative cultural representations of women's work is unclear from these data, but it seems likely that experiences with discrimination and bad working condition have combined with institutionalized ideas about women to form their negative impression of the work.

In contrast to these women who intend to leave secretarial work, a few women working as secretaries also dislike the occupation, but have *no* plans to leave. These women are all in their 40s, 50s, and 60s, and all but one of them are white. Most have plans to remain in their current positions until retirement, but seem quite unhappy about both their work histories and their current plight. With this group, like the young African-American women, it also seems likely that their experiences have shaped their impression of secretarial work. Many have been laid off, denied promotions, and treated poorly at various points in their work histories.

Discrimination and poor treatment, then, are important factors in women's impression of secretarial work. There can be little doubt that women in furniture sales are not the only ones who devalue women's work, and that devaluing by employers generally results in the poor working conditions and low structural position of occupations associated with women. But for almost all of the furniture salespeople and secretaries who speak negatively about secretarial work, even if their impressions are based on negative experiences, occupational segregation gives them the vocabulary to frame this occupation and their own labor market position in relation to it. The way they do gender is rooted in their own gendered experiences, but also in the institutionalization of gender, which affects the way they define and interpret those experiences.

Segregation, Ideology, and Difference in a Gender-Segregated Occupation

I argue above that occupational segregation provides furniture salespeople and some secretaries with a vocabulary to do gender in institutionalized ways. The structure of occupational segregation compels them, even though they are women, to accept the idea

that "women's work" is easy, unskilled, and valueless. This demonstrates that occupational segregation is one of the mechanisms through which gender, especially in its institutionalized forms, is supported. It shows how in a gendered occupational structure, the integration of occupations does little to eliminate gender bifurcation, which necessarily produces inequality.

Not all women, however, do gender in this way. While the women I describe above devalue women's work and proclaim themselves above it since they are equal to men, other women express delight in it. Of note, most of the secretaries I interviewed, from all possible race and class backgrounds in my sample, claim to love their work and never want to leave. So many of these women say the phrase, "Oh I love my job," without hesitation when asked about their feelings toward their work:

IK: So how do you feel about your job?

Olivia Rondeau: Oh I love it.

IK: Yeah?

Olivia Rondeau: Yes. I love, I love, I enj.. I really enjoy what I do.

IK: Would you say that you, um, you like your job, you dislike it, or you're sort of ambivalent?

Reagine Draper: Oh I love it.

Margaret Loomis: I really like my job.

Tammy Yearby: I really can say I love my job.

IK: Okay. So do you like the job?

Gloria Rains: Oh, I like the job. I really do.

Felecia: I love my job. Absolutely love it.

IK: So do you like your job?

Red Thornton: Oh yes. I love my job.

IK: How do you feel about the job? Like it? Dislike it?

Myra Sprayberry: Oh I love it.

IK: So do you like your job?

Lucy Horacek: I love my job.

IK: You love it?

Lucy Horacek: I love my job.

These do not appear to be the sentiments of women who feel oppressed, demeaned, and exploited in their jobs. These women go on in much more detail in the interviews to explain that they feel this way about their work because of the autonomy it allows, the sense of importance they gain from being such a vital part of their workplace, and the opportunities they have to grow and learn new skills, among other factors.

If we were to apply the frame that the furniture salespeople use, these secretaries who express such joy in work that is so commonly thought of as oppressive may seem like mere dupes who do not realize how they are being exploited. Their joy in their work could simply be false consciousness. Yet such a naive reading of their orientation toward their work fails to recognize the liberatory stance they are actually taking. Unlike the furniture salespeople and secretaries who uncritically accept the institutionalized image of secretaries as lazy, content fools, many women who are actually in this position everyday find their work rewarding, fulfilling, and exciting. Such feelings do not reflect a simple acceptance of the framework occupational segregation provides. Rather, these women

challenge oppressive gender ideologies by insisting that what they do is valuable, and they work with the confidence of knowing their own importance. Some of them also actively work to attain public recognition for their accomplishments, to create spaces for their bosses to note their contributions, and to increase the monetary rewards that should come with a difficult and vital labor market position. They work to value women and women's work.

One factor in my sample that is strongly linked to secretaries' satisfaction with the occupation is involvement in an organization called Professional Secretaries International (PSI). Each of the ten secretaries I interviewed who belong to this organization speak in glowing terms about secretarial work with a great deal of pride. It seems plausible that secretaries who feel this way about their work would be most likely to join such a group, but the group, itself, also works to foster women's commitment to the occupation. They women in my sample in PSI include both African-American and white women, and all of them are over 40. They all consider secretarial work a profession and a career, rather than simply a job, and they feel comfortable as behind-the-scenes helpmates who carry out their duties autonomously with excellence and pride. Olivia Rondeau, for example, introduced in Chapter 1, has one of the top secretarial positions in the Atlanta metropolitan area and she describes what she likes about her work:

> Olivia Rondeau: I, I'm a, a beh.. behind-the-scenes kind of person. And so I like to, I don't think secretaries always get ah, credit for everything that they do, but as long as somebody else shines, you know, I'm okay... with that. Because it's the... big picture, um, that I think we have the greater part in making it fit together. In the big puzzle. Um, certainly everybody has their individual part to play in the big picture, but um, I think where we help our executives do a good job, I, I used to hear, um,

um, my executive say, you know, "Olivia Rondeau is making me look like a hero." Or he, or he'll get a nice letter in saying, "Thank you for bla bla bla," or, "It was very thoughtful to get this." And I pass that along and he'll say, "Well I don't remember doing that. Olivia Rondeau made me look like a hero." *[I laugh]* The community sees those kinds of, of things as... caring, on our part. And so when I can do, go ahead and do that without him necessarily having to say, "Do bla bla bla bla," you know, that eliminates him having to deal with that piece of paper other than seeing the thank-you note that came in, and knowing that somebody somewhere out in the community now has a warm fuzzy in their heart about the [company]. So that, um, you know, that, that's great.

IK: Umhum. So it sounds like you do feel appreciated?

Olivia Rondeau: Oh, I think so. Yes.

The roles of helpmate and background worker are, of course, gendered. And the women in my sample speak about these roles in a ways that indicate that cultural messages about the appropriateness of these roles for them are very strong. Dominique Daigh, for example, and African-American woman in her 40s, explicitly acknowledges how she accepts the cultural messages sent to her:

IK: So why do you think more men don't do secretarial jobs?

Dominique Daigh: I think because they definitely look at it as a woman's job. And then really if you think about it, why were women created? To meet the needs of a man. When

> you think about why we were even created, it just kind of falls in the same line of, you know, that it was god's idea, not man's, to create woman. So we're helpmates and we can take your vision and implement it because that's what we were created to do, so we're good at that. I really, in that spiritual sense, I think that because it flows like that, and the majority of us are women.

The women in my sample truly express their enjoyment of these helping features of their job and recognize the value of these tasks for an efficiently run office. These women do not accept the idea that women are in low-paying, low-status, low-power occupations because that is all women are qualified to do. While they would like to earn more money, these secretaries recognize that their occupations, including the roles of helpmate and behind-the-scenes worker, are difficult, challenging, and demanding. They are confident in their excellence, they feel proud of the way they are different from men, and they feel rewarded.

Most of the secretaries who enjoy their jobs also take pride in the fact that they are "secretaries" and have little desire to be referred to with any of the newer terms like "administrative assistant" or "office professional." This is another example of the way they take what has been devalued about their occupation and rather than discarding it or separating themselves from it, instead embrace it and work to show how much value it has. In this way they do not accept institutionalized forms of gender, but do gender in ways that do not devalue women's work.

The secretaries who like their occupation have not accepted and adopted cultural representations of secretarial work as demeaning, monotonous, simplistic, and oppressive perhaps because of their experiences in the occupation. Many of those who love secretarial work are in their 50s and 60s. They describe how when they were growing up,

attaining a secretarial position was seen as very prestigious for a woman, so this has undoubtedly shaped their orientation to the occupation. Yet many of those who enjoy the work are also younger and grew up with a more mixed bag of representations. Many were tracked into secretarial work in high school and probably received messages about how admirable their future careers as secretaries would be as a part of the socialization that accompanies high school vocational training (Gaskell 1992). Yet many also received cultural messages about how secretarial work is oppressive and, as the furniture salespeople express, "beneath" women who are ambitious, goal-oriented, and smart.

The women in their 20s and 30s who think well of secretarial work and plan to remain in it are about evenly split among whites, African Americans, and Latinas, and they are much more likely to be married and have children than those in their 20s and 30s who plan to leave. Some of these women who plan to stay made the decision to give up other careers and take up secretarial work so they could spend more time with their families, and all of these are white. Others have a high school education and have worked their way up to their secretarial positions, so they have no designs to leave. A good number of these young women who plan to remain secretaries mirror the older secretaries by simply expressing an enjoyment for the tasks associated with their occupation.

Like these secretaries who think well of their occupation, a small number of women in furniture sales do not use the occasion of their interviews to speak negatively about secretaries. These women either simply say nothing derogatory about secretaries or give less disparaging explanations for why some women might become secretaries. Women may simply like secretarial work, a few of them say. Brenda Wilmot, an African-American furniture salesperson in her mid-20s says that her sister is a secretary because she was always "the smart type" and is good at organizing and writing, as opposed to Brenda who is "the athletic type" and does not have those organizing and paperwork skills. However, most in this group reveal somewhat contradictory feelings

about secretarial work, saying that they appreciate women who do it, but also that they think the occupation is beneath them.

That most secretaries and some furniture salespeople do not accept the same gender ideologies as the majority of furniture salespeople and the disgruntled secretaries does not mean, however, that the former group is not doing gender in an institutionalized way. It is possible that among women, the practice of valuing what they do is actually institutionalized. These secretaries, many of whom organize and seem to share a more collective identity than the furniture salespeople, get together through organizations like PSI or simply with coworkers and, with the vocabulary that occupational segregation provides, do gender in a way that is affirming and positive for them collectively. The furniture salespeople have felt that they have had to separate themselves from this collective vision of "women" in order to enter and succeed in a different sort of occupation. But occupational segregation provides both groups with the framework to understand "women's work" and to do gender.

Unfortunately, the ways occupational segregation works to institutionalize gender is also evident in less-than-liberatory ways for these secretaries. Even they latch onto the oppressive vocabulary that occupational segregation provides. At the same time they work to revalue that which is associated with women and has been devalued, they sometimes reproduce the exiting gender hierarchy by claiming that their bosses are qualified for their jobs in ways that they are not. Their bosses are smarter, harder-working, and better at dealing with pressure than them, they say. Most of their bosses are men, and these women say they would not like to be in their bosses' positions. Yet some of them also note that the most gratifying part of their job is to do as much of their bosses' work as possible to free them up for thinking and other "important" things. They feel they are unqualified to be in their bosses' positions, yet they do much of their bosses' work. Thus, even while they take steps to value women's work, these women still have to negotiate the oppressive ways that gender is institutionalized through occupational

segregation. Tasks are still associated with gender, and while these women insist that their own work is valuable, they sometimes also note that their bosses' work is "more" valuable.

The vocabulary that occupational gender segregation provides is extremely pervasive. Women in both segregated and integrated occupations grab onto it and use it, albeit in different ways. It frames for them ways of doing gender that are both oppressive and liberatory to women, but the fact that even women do gender in ways that support divisions between men and women by devaluing that which is associated with women speaks to the insidious ways that gender is institutionalized.

One other factor that should be considered here is that secretaries largely do gender in a way that is complementary to secretaries and that glosses over the inequitable aspects of their occupation. Similarly, furniture salespeople do gender in a way that is complementary to furniture salespeople and that glosses over the inequitable aspects of their occupation. That women in both occupations engage in this positive gender spinning indicates that people in almost any position are inclined to make the best of it and present it in a positive light to others. Mainly only the disgruntled secretaries point out problematic aspects of this occupation, and while the furniture salespeople present their occupation in a favorable light they also are more likely than the secretaries to details their plans to move on from this occupation into something "better."

Why are More Men Not Secretaries?

The secretaries in this sample express the ideology of difference as they explain why they are secretaries, yet they contradict this notion to some extent in their ideas about whether men should be secretaries. Many of these women have either worked with or known of men secretaries and feel that these men have done a good job and should be welcomed into the profession. They say that one of the main reasons why more men are not secretaries is the stigma that would follow them if they made that career choice:

IK: Why do you think more men don't get into secretarial work?

Grace Perenich: Probably because of what other men would think about it.

IK: Yeah.

Grace Perenich: They'd immediately think they were gay.

IK: Yeah.

Grace Perenich: That's the only reason I know of. I think a lot of men could do it very well.

IK: Mmhmm.

Grace Perenich: Because it's the personality. It's not the sex. It's what you like to do. It's so funny to me because way back I think in the '30s, men were the secretaries.

IK: Yeah.

Grace Perenich: And to see that's it looked down on now, I don't understand it. But that was a learning ground for a lot of the young men, doing that. And then they learned from that to go on into more executive jobs.

Like Grace Perenich, many of the secretaries in my sample are aware that the majority of secretaries used to be men, which they take as proof that men can capably do the job. Dana Matheson, for example, talks about her understanding of the history of her occupation:

> I think early on, to tell you the truth, I think there were men that were doing secretarial jobs. I can't remember exactly how women got into the field. Because it certainly had to be when the liberation movement came about and they needed to become a part of the work force. But I don't necessarily see it as women's work. It just happens that we tend to be the

larger group to be represented in the secretarial arena. (Dana Matheson, African-American, 30s)

The secretaries also commonly point out that the emergence of computers has changed norms about typing, since it is now acceptable for men and boys to learn to type for the purpose of working on a computer. PJ Bailey, for example, a white woman with two grown children--one man and one woman--says she demanded that her son learn to type so he could complete his assignments when he got to college:

PJ Bailey: I've never known too many men that like to type.

IK: [laughs]

PJ Bailey: Alt

back in high school, we probably had two boys in my typing class. We had none in our shorthand class. I mean, that just wasn't anything that they were interested in doing.

IK: Had you typed at all before you took your typing class or was that, was that your first ...?

PJ Bailey: I think I probably did because my father was big on typing and I can remember having this old, old typewriter even when I was a kid and we used to just bang on the keys.

IK: Umhuh.

PJ Bailey: And we did it, he probably had us doing it for our homework and stuff and learning letters.

IK: Oh wow. Sure.

PJ Bailey: That's the earliest recollection I can have of the typewriter. I mean, you had to stand on the key to get it to do anything.

IK: [laughs] Right.

PJ Bailey: So I was little and I could barely touch those keys. So he probably had us doing that as we were little.

IK: That's interesting.

PJ Bailey: So I grew up just thinking it was probably the thing to do. I don't know. But my son, I can remember by son just having a fit because in high school the typing class was split with like a home ec class so in order to do that for half a year of typing, he had to take a half a year of home ec.

IK: [laughs] How did he feel about that?

PJ Bailey: I said, "It won't kill you, and you'll learn how to cook."

IK: [laughs] That's right.

PJ Bailey: And now typing, I mean, he's more than thankful that he's taken typing because he's on the computer all day long. And you still see a lot of men typing with two fingers. You know, I mean, they get by and they get done what they want to do, ...

IK: I don't know how. [laughs]

PJ Bailey: ... but you know they've never learned how to type.

IK: [laughs]

PJ Bailey: So he thanks me now, but he didn't back then. [laughs]

IK: [laughs]

PJ Bailey: Plus he learned how to cook and he still cooks.

IK: That's great.

PJ Bailey: So there's something to be said for that.

The support these women express for men doing secretarial work, or at least secretarial-type tasks, is somewhat surprising to me since I imagined that women's hold on this occupation might incite them to protect their interest in it by keeping men out of it. Linda Blum suggests something similar in her work on comparable worth:

> Without other protections, might women have a stake in maintaining the monopoly over women's work simply to preserve their right to paid employment in times of economic retrenchment? ... In the context of today's economic climate, with contractions in the sectors that provide good male jobs, women might justifiably feel defensive about their jobs and their right to paid employment. (Blum 1991:154)

In fact, some women secretaries do express thoughts about not feeling comfortable with men secretaries, although they do not always cite worries about "economic retrenchment" as the root of this discomfort. Kay Moses, a white woman in her early 50s, for example, admits to thinking that it is not right for men to be secretaries:

IK: So some people think about administrative assistant positions as being like "women's work." Do you have any thoughts about that?

Kay Moses: I will admit that um, the company I was at before used a lot of temp agencies for fill ins. We had gotten through um, like I said, the merger and so there were no hirings allowed, so we used temp agencies. And they would send, a lot of times, men. I was just amazed at how many people actually go through temp agencies for regular work. And I always thought it was very strange.

IK: [laughs]

Kay Moses: I mean, they weren't all sissy looking.

IK: Yeah. [laughs]

Kay Moses: And some of them thought they were very wonderful.

IK: Yeah.

Kay Moses: And I will say most of them were very computer literate, but I don't think they were widely accepted with the customers, when a customer called in. And I don't know why. That was just the feeling I got. None of them worked with the people that I worked with. They worked for other people, but a lot of the reps that they worked for really didn't like them. They wouldn't come out and say, "I don't like him," but you could tell by what they gave them, that they didn't really want them to do any work for them. And I don't know if that's true everywhere, but where I was they could see.

IK: That's interesting. So you say that they were computer literate. Were the rest of their skills up to par do you think?

Kay Moses: [slight pause] They never got to the point where they actually had to do any filing or anything like that, so I never saw that end of it.

IK: My.

Kay Moses: But they could pull up things on the computer. They could type letters, things like that.

IK: So why do you think their supervisors didn't care for them.

Kay Moses: I really don't know if it was just the ... labeling that a secretary should be a woman, or what it was. I really couldn't say.

IK: Interesting.

Kay Moses: Mmhmm.

IK: How did other women who were secretaries feel about them?

Kay Moses: Probably we'd talk to them but never initiated, "Let's go to lunch," or anything like that.

IK: Really? So did the guys kind of hang out with themselves, or ...?

Kay Moses: There were a few of them, and none of them were in the same department so I don't know if they, you know... Probably did things on their own for lunch.

IK: Hunh. Interesting.

Kay Moses: Yeah.

IK: So do you think the other women sort of resented them, or just didn't really pay them any mind?

Kay Moses: I think they were so in the mindset of a woman that they couldn't relate to the man and felt like they couldn't really talk to them as loosely as they would a woman.

However strong this sentiment is, it is uncommon in my sample. And rather than wanting to protect their occupation from men, some women secretaries say they would actually like to see more men come into the occupation because such a move would bring a corresponding increase in the occupation's status. Susan Millar, a white woman in her 60s, expresses this notion:

IK: Um, well part of the reason I'm interested in interviewing women who are administrative assistants and secretaries, is that, some people think of the job of secretary as, quote-unquote, women's work. Do you have any thoughts about that?

Susan Millar: Well, it basically is, unless you're a man with a real strong ego.

IK: Yeah.

Susan Millar: Now I worked with some legal secretaries that were guys.

IK: Oh really?

Susan Millar: And ah, they, you know, did terrific jobs, and they had a lot of, took a lot of pride in their work.

IK: Mmhm.

Susan Millar: But, not many men would enjoy... would, would... It would do something to their own self-image to be a secretary.

IK: Yeah? Why do you think that is?

Susan Millar: I don't know. I really don't. Because really it's just as important as, you know, any other administrative thing.

IK: *Mmhm. Mmhm.*

Susan Millar: And we'd probably gain, actually, a lot more respect from the industry if more men did it.

Despite the fact that many of these secretaries' sentiments about welcoming men into the profession seems to suggest that they do not believe as much in "difference" between men and women as their earlier sentiments indicate, many of them do express a "difference" ideology when they explain why, despite the agreeable environment these women are willing to provide, more men do not become secretaries. Men are not good typists, some of these women secretaries say, nor are they as organized and efficient as women. Gloria Rains, for example, an African-American woman in her late 40s, says that men are not very good at secretarial tasks:

IK: *So thinking about the job of secretary sort of generally, some people think about it as like "women's work." Do*

Gloria Rains: I think. And then I think a lot of people think, look at secretaries as being degrading.

Another secretary, a white woman in her late 30s, expresses a similar sentiment about the tasks in which women and men excel:

IK: Why, why do you think more men don't do a job like this, for example?

Myra Sprayberry: Ah, well, you know, I have often claimed that women can do more than one thing at one time.

IK: Mmhm.

Myra Sprayberry: And it's just like, that you're expected to be able to handle three to five to six things at once.

IK: Mmhm.

Myra Sprayberry: Men, have a more single vision.

IK: Yeah.

Myra Sprayberry: And, um, they can concentrate, or... that's an over-generalization, but... Men tend to concentrate on their single function of doing this task, and then doing this task. And um, I, I don't know why that is. If it's genetic, or, ah, what.

IK: Mmhm.

Myra Sprayberry: You know, the synapses are that make you be able to handle one thing or six things.

IK: Right. [laughs]

Myra Sprayberry: But um, you know, [smiles] I have sat and said, you know, they, they came out with a study that said, I don't know if you're going to get into this, but um, more women end up with Alzheimer's.

IK: Really?

Myra Sprayberry: And, I said, back to the television or whatever...

IK: [laughs]

Myra Sprayberry: I said, "It's because women have to handle so many things."

IK: Uhhuh.

Myra Sprayberry: And there, it uses their brain up.

IK: Mmhm. [laughs]

Myra Sprayberry: [laughs] So...

IK: The kids and dinner and the phone and the...

Myra Sprayberry: Oh yes. Yes.

IK: Yep.

Myra Sprayberry: And uh, and uh, I've got an aunt who has Alzheimer's right now.

IK: Oh really?

Myra Sprayberry: And it's, I'm sure that's why.

IK: Mmhm.

Myra Sprayberry: So, um...

IK: Yeah, that makes sense.

Myra Sprayberry: You know, that's, that's just my philosophy, but it, it may [laughs] it may be proved right one day.

IK: [laughs] Probably.

As Gloria Rains' and Myra Sprayberry's responses indicate, many of the secretaries in my sample express somewhat essentialist notions of men's work abilities at the same time they bring up the issue of socially constructed roles and stereotypes about work. These seem to contradict each other, but the women in this sample play down this inconsistency and suggest that men's real abilities *and* the stereotypes about appropriate

work both play a part in the career decisions men make. In addition, these secretaries feel that more men do not become secretaries because they would not accept the low salaries that secretaries are paid. Tammy Yearby, for instance, talks about how different men and women are and then suggests an additional reason why more men are not secretaries:

IK: Mmhm. So do you feel like that's part of the reason why there aren't more men secretaries, or ... ?

Tammy Yearby: I do. And possibly the pay. 'Cause you know normally they're traditionally the, the money makers, to help with the family.

Tracy Muse, and African-American woman in her 20s, also thinks men would not accept the pay that secretarial work provides:

IK: So why do you think more men don't do work like secretary or administrative assistant?

Tracy Muse: Number one, it doesn't pay well. Number two, traditionally, it's still viewed as women's work. Pure and simple.

On this point about pay, the furniture salespeople in my sample are in agreement with the secretaries. Blair Holland, for example, expresses some "difference" ideology about men and women while she brings in men's unwillingness to accept low pay:

IK: Yeah. Why do you think more men aren't like a secretary?

Blair Holland: I don't think men are as detail-oriented.

IK: Mmhmm.

Blair Holland: For starters. And their ego. Certainly not a very big ego stroke. I mean, we all know to get men to do things in our lives you've got to make them think it's their own idea.

IK: Yeah.

Blair Holland: And that wouldn't work very well for the boss and the assistant.

IK: Right.

Blair Holland: Yeah. Not enough money.

IK: Yeah.

Blair Holland: What else... Probably just money, personality problems.

This is interesting in part because many of the furniture salespeople, as detailed above, seem to express an "equality" gender ideology when talking about themselves as women. Yet when these same furniture salespeople talk about men, they use much of the "difference" ideology--although their claims seem to center around how men and women are different *and* how they, themselves, are not like other women. Alexis Perry, for example, reiterates many of the secretaries' sentiments about how the stereotypes about "women's work" and the low pay attached to this occupation probably keep many men out of it:

IK: So why do you think more, more men don't do jobs like secretarial work?

Alexis Perry: Because I guess they would be considered sissies.

IK: Yeah. [laughs]

Alexis Perry: [laughs] You know, even now when my husband--he had a heart attack--and when we have a man nurse, it's like, Why is he being a nurse? You know, it's not because... We shouldn't be that way, but...

IK: It's normal. [laughs]

Alexis Perry: Yeah. You think, "Why is he a nurse?" Or, "I wonder if he's a little funny?" [laughs] You know. And it's just... I don't know. Don't you think it's just because society?

IK: Seems like it.

Yet Alexis goes on to detail the ways women and men are fundamentally different:

IK: So why do you think there aren't more women who do... Well I guess we've spoken about mechanic jobs a little bit. What about like CEO or something like that? Why do you think those are mostly men?

Alexis Perry: I think because they're too hormonal. I think that women, um... I know even with some of the decisions I've made, there's too many emotions. Women are much more emotional. And I think they have, women have a gift of being more wary, more, um... [tkst]... A fear factor more than men.

IK: Mmhmm.

Alexis Perry: And I don't know. I know... I don't think... Now, I know of some women that are in high positions but they don't show their emotions.

IK: Oh, really? Interesting.

Alexis Perry: Yeah. They're not as... In public. Now, 've seen them on private sectors and I see them and then they about collapse. I mean, I've known them to have, you know, real nervous conditions. They're on Prozac and everything else. So I think there's a reason that, you know, women and men are built differently.

IK: Yeah.

Alexis Perry: And uh, that men, you know, like that have nursing jobs and things that need more compassion, you know, they're not as good at it as women are. I think that women are good

doctors because they're a little bit more compassionate. But I don't think that men are as good nurses. [laughs]

IK: Mmhm. Mmhm. Uh-huh. [laughs]

Alexis Perry: You know. I think a lot of it has to do with the, with

energies of the salespeople in this sample are largely spent redefining this category and making it into something useful and positive for themselves. Yet they produce a catch-22, since by doing gender in a way that they feel is positive for themselves, they reinforce gender divisions be so strongly proclaiming their difference from other women. Integrating occupations does not work because even in a supposedly gender-equal context, gender is being reproduced. And as long as the larger context of gender bifurcation continues to be in place, an integrated context will not magically transform into an equal context. Gender is inequality.

Chapter 8

Conclusions: The Elimination of Gender

Occupational gender segregation has always been a feature of the U.S. paid labor force. Historically, laws have even been created to protect employers and companies that kept their workplaces segregated by gender and race. While there are now laws to protect workers who are denied access to occupations because of their gender and/or race, these laws have been only partially successful in lowering the overall level of occupational segregation. To the extent that they have been successful at all, laws and policies like affirmative action have generally been most effective in curbing the demand-side processes that perpetuate occupational gender segregation, such as discrimination and social closure. They have largely bypassed the supply-side issues that affect the fact that many workers do not take advantage of demand-side protections when they choose the occupations in which they work. In this study I have sought to answer why that is--why women would choose to work in a gender segregated occupation.

I argue here not that women have willingly and knowingly placed themselves in disadvantageous positions, but rather that even if we concede that structural constraints like discrimination, social closure, and gender-biased education practices limit women's opportunities in the paid labor market, there is still a lot of variation in women's labor market patterns that needs to be explained. Their positions in the labor market are constrained, and their choices about those labor market positions are constrained, but the activity that occurs within those constraints still needs to be accounted for.

In some ways, occupations that are segregated by gender may be the best choice among few good options for women constrained by class, race, discrimination, processes of social closure, family situations, and work histories. Secretarial work, for example, is a

step up from custodial work for a woman like Red Thornton, whose family circumstances necessitated that she work full-time and leave college. This occupation also allows women with an "ethic of service" to fulfill their desire to do valuable work in a way that some integrated occupations, like furniture sales, do not. Within constraints, women have the freedom to establish their own criteria for acceptable work.

Many theories that attempt to explain why women end up in segregated occupations focus on women's socialization, their educational experiences, and their responsibilities to their families as key determinants. Yet the evidence in this study provides little evidence to support these explanations. This is not to say that these factors have no bearing on women's work situations. As Red Thornton's example makes clear, women often do have to make adjustments to their paid labor market activities because of the combination of family demands and educational limitations. Yet among the workers in this sample, women who work as secretaries do not face substantially different socialization, education, or family pressures than those women working as furniture salespeople. Gender socialization is certainly part of the pathways of the women in my sample, as evidenced by their childhood dreams; most wanted to be teachers, secretaries, and mothers. Yet some of these women have wound up in a segregated occupation and some have not, making the explanatory power of gender socialization very weak.

Explanations that focus on women's educational experiences appear to be just as limited as gender socialization explanations for the women in my sample. Although one small group of affluent white women in my sample attended college preparatory schools and have now come to work in a gender integrated occupation, most of the women in this sample from both occupations took some mixture of college preparatory and vocational courses in high school and junior high. The women in this sample have been tracked somewhat differently according to class, but except for the highly affluent women, these differences have not resulted in patterned paths to either gender segregated or gender integrated work.

Similarly, the women in my sample who work in the integrated occupation of furniture sales have as many child and family responsibilities as the women in the segregated occupation of secretary. In fact, the salespeople often indicate that they have chosen their occupation specifically because it allows them to balance their home and work lives more easily than other occupations would. The secretaries in my sample who have responsibilities for caring and providing for their families also indicate that they need an occupation that helps them deal with their families, but their concerns are almost solely monetary and seem to have little to do with scheduling or other types of flexibility. Thus, while family responsibilities might affect what type of occupation a woman chooses, this seems to have much less to do with a difference between segregated and integrated work than between 8-to-5 and flexible-schedule work. The women in my sample have also found it just as easy to enter a gender integrated occupation like furniture sales after taking time out of the paid work force to care for their children as the women working as secretaries have.

With socialization, education, and family responsibilities largely eliminated as explanatory factors, we are left with race, class background, work history, and networks as the most important determinants of whether or not the women in this sample wind up in a gender segregated or a gender integrated occupation. The evidence in my study does not simply reveal what these factors are; it explores how these factors work to perpetuate occupational gender segregation. If the answer were simply "race," then all women of disadvantaged races would be in gender segregated occupations and all European-American women would be in gender integrated occupations. Clearly it is not that simple, and as my evidence demonstrates, race as a process combines with the elements of class and work history in ways that are particular for different groups of women. Under some circumstances and for some groups it produces advantage, while under different conditions and for different groups it produces disadvantage.

Race and class appear to combine for affluent white women in my sample to allow them to avoid gender segregated occupations. These women's work histories reveal that they have become furniture salespeople after having the opportunity to own their own businesses, which appears to preclude them from having any need or desire to work in a gender segregated occupation like secretary. In contrast, a group of primarily African-American women in my sample have come to the occupation of furniture sales after having first spent time in gender segregated occupations. Contrary to theories like cumulative disadvantage that would predict that these women would have gotten trapped in those gender segregated occupations (Chan 1999), they escaped that trap and wound up in a gender integrated occupation.

In comparing these escapees' situations it became clear that some combination of at least four factors had to be in place in order for them to leave segregated work: (1) a lack of affinity for segregated work tasks; (2) a failure to receive extrinsic rewards from bosses and peers in a segregated occupation; (3) the presence of people in one's networks who can pull a woman out of segregated work; and most importantly, (4) the chance, made possible by a bump up in class status, to leave the paid labor force for at least a short period of time. For African-American women the combination of the chance to take time off from paid work with the lack of intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction appears to be paramount; for white women, time off combined with the presence of well-connected white men in their networks is helpful.

The evidence from this study reveals that the reasons women come--and continue--to work in either gender segregated or gender integrated occupations are complicated, which means that we have to move past simplistic explanations for occupational gender segregation. Work is not segregated by gender simply because men and women are different; this tells us nothing about why some women work in gender segregated occupations while others do not. It is not simply that women are socialized in gendered ways; this socialization certainly occurs but has different effects for different

women. It is not simply that women's responsibilities for their families make it too difficult for them to work in anything but a small range of segregated occupations; some gender integrated occupations may actually be more amenable to hectic family lives than segregated occupations. Nor is it simply that employer discrimination or the structure of the labor market make it difficult for women to attain various positions.

By interviewing women in two different occupations I have uncovered some of the dynamic processes through which women come to work in different occupations. Race and class combine for women in different ways that affect their work histories and their access to fruitful networks, all of which help determine whether they will eventually work in occupations that are segregated or integrated by gender. Laws and policies that aim to eliminate the inequality that occupational gender segregation provides must take into account the way these combinations work, and the disparate ways they affect different groups of women.

The evidence in this study supports the notion that affirmative action and other community empowerment programs are important for creating opportunities for women who are disadvantaged either by race and class or by the accumulation of disadvantage that comes from living in society as a woman. While business ownership may not be the solitary key that either facilitates or inhibits women from working in integrated occupations, opportunities like business ownership seem to affect some women's occupational aspirations in a way that propels them to seek out higher-paying occupations, and possibly also occupations that have a longer career ladder than the ladders within and from segregated occupations. Therefore, the creation and facilitation of these opportunities could be an important element needed to help place women in a better position to receive equal treatment and pay in the labor market.

In addition, my findings suggest that women who dislike their job and have the opportunity to take a hiatus from paid work may be more likely to reenter the paid labor market in a less segregated occupation. This indicates that finding ways to facilitate this

sort of "cooling out" period for women, either through unemployment insurance or other types of state assistance, may be beneficial for individual women who want to leave their segregated occupations.

Perhaps most strongly, my findings indicate that strategies of comparable worth, in which women's work is valued at levels equitable to what men are paid, are important components to any initiatives regarding occupational gender segregation. While time out of the paid labor force and affirmative action programs may help women gain access to less segregated occupations, women who currently work in segregated occupations should be compensated at fair levels for their labor. These women should not have to leave the work they enjoy to receive just compensation.

Yet further evidence in this study very strongly indicates that programs like affirmative action and comparable worth, which attempt to weaken the barriers between women and labor market prosperity, may be nothing more than Band-Aid remedies for a problem that is much larger, much more structural, and much more pervasive than barriers. The women in my sample demonstrate that the problem to labor market inequality is gender, itself. Because of this, the primary focus of initiatives to eliminate labor market inequality must be the elimination of gender.

As the gender ideologies of the furniture salespeople and the secretaries in this sample indicate, gender bifurcation is present even in contexts in which it should theoretically be unnecessary and absent. Women who work in a gender integrated occupation should really have no need to do gender, and certainly no need to do gender in a way that denigrates other women. It is true that, as Acker (1988) and others argue, all structures are gendered. This includes workplaces, relationships, hierarchies--gender is always present. Yet if there were any situation in which gender should matter less than in other situations it might be in a context in which women and men are on equal footing. This "equal footing" is not, in the case of furniture sales, completely equal, since in aggregate women earn less than men even in this occupation that has been consistently

gender integrated for more than sixteen years. And a present condition of equal footing also does not erase the gendered context from which the men and women in that situation have come. Yet one might theoretically argue that in a situation where equity seems close to existing, gender bifurcation should be, at the very least, less stable.

This is not the case. In fact, the furniture salespeople in my sample reinforce gender bifurcation as much as, if not more than, the women working in a gender segregated context. These women in gender integrated occupations have not given up gender. They continue to see it, use it, fight against it, and reframe it.

The salespeople also provide a glimpse into the way that occupational gender segregation both undermines and perpetuates itself. Based on the negative imagery surrounding gender segregated occupations, the furniture salespeople largely scorn such work and the women who do it. This might indicate that the negativity associated with "women's work" will eventually compel women not to do it anymore, which would undermine segregation (at least as long as men stayed in the occupations women entered, which Reskin and Roos (1990) argue is unlikely). Yet these furniture salespeople buy into this negativity and use it to separate themselves from other women and make themselves appear to be more like men, who occupy a more valued status. This actually has the effect of perpetuating gender segregation because it perpetuates gender bifurcation. Salespeople's subscription to the idea that "women's work" is without value, and that the women who do "women's work" are without skill, initiative, and higher aspirations operates to support gender bifurcation, which cannot help but to produce hierarchical relationships that leave women at the bottom.

Not only is gender bifurcation present in a gender integrated context, it is enhanced. And while women have not been the primary creators of their own disadvantaged position, they do demonstrate that they engage in part of the ideological work required to perpetuate gender bifurcation. Their gender ideologies reflect this,

although it does not appear that women know they are participating in something so harmful to themselves.

As long as gender bifurcation exists, hierarchy will exist. And as long as one group--women--is on the bottom of that hierarchy, labor market inequality will exist. Women's devalued status follows them around, no matter what the occupation and no matter how gender integrated the context. Thus, the eradication of inequality in the labor market will only occur once gender is eliminated.

Strategies to Eliminate Gender

Collective Action Unfortunately, the evidence in this study indicates that one of the possible avenues through which gender could be eliminated, namely, collective action on the part of women, is all but closed. The tension among the gender ideologies these women describe indicates that collective action among women across occupations with different levels of gender segregation is unlikely. As one group asserts the importance of maintaining their uniqueness, and the other group scoffs at the first group for accepting what they see as a demeaning role, both groups are focused on their status as women compared to other women while they largely ignore the disparities between themselves and men. Neither the secretaries nor the salespeople in this sample strongly question the structure of patriarchy that forces them to have to deal with the barriers of gender as they attempt to attain success in the paid labor market.

Kanter (1977) notes that this blindness to the power differentials between secretaries and their bosses is actually built into the structure of the secretarial occupation, which is somewhat incredible considering the amount of access secretaries have to their bosses' displays of privilege. In order to receive the rewards of a "good" secretary, however, one has to demonstrate her loyalty to her boss by keeping his matters private--another factor that helps impede raised consciousness about the disparities between bosses and secretaries.

It may not seem that the occupation of furniture sales would include these kind of structural incentives to remain unorganized, yet consciousness is impeded in another way in this occupation. The culture of sales individualizes issues that may actually be more structurally based. Many of the salespeople I interviewed discuss the "sales boards" in their companies, where each salesperson's monthly, weekly, or quarterly sales figures are posted on a board in a communal room, such as the break room, where each salesperson spends time every work day. Discussions of the sales boards come up most commonly when the salespeople talk about how their men colleagues often feel jealous and threatened by the women's sales figures. No salespeople in my sample discuss that they have noted any systematic pattern in the figures by gender, race, or anything else. They individualize the sales boards by saying that some people sometimes have good months, while some people sometimes do not. They also express their feelings about how, if their own sales numbers are low in a particular month, they feel the need to work harder, do better, change their closing strategies, work more hours, or do something more effective to motivate themselves so that they can perform better. The way these salespeople talk about their sales figures indicates that they would interpret any aggregate earnings differentials between women and men in furniture sales purely as a function of how well individual men and women are able to perform.

Thus, both of these occupations include structural incentives to keep them from developing a collection consciousness around their status as women. And the gender ideologies from which the women in each occupation seem compelled to work indicate that they each focus their comparative energy on other women, rather than on the disparities between women and men, or on the gender bifurcated system in which their structures of disadvantage flourish. The hope of eliminating gender through women's collective action, then, is dim.

Structural Solutions It seems clear from social scientific research that structure and ideology are dialectically related. When we figure out how to eliminate

gender, then, we must consider both sides of this relationship. Ideologically, the goal of eliminating gender would have to involve finding ways to convince people that gender is not necessary and is actually harmful to us all. The dialectical relationship between ideology and structure, however, indicates that an ideological message like this may be

have material to draw from when they "do gender." Herein lies the crux of the argument that the gender segregated structure of the labor market actually operates to reproduce gender bifurcation, and gender bifurcation operates to keep the labor market segregated. In a world in which women and men do a similar range of activities in a similar range of ways, these furniture salespeople may not feel pressure to set themselves apart from a gender group that is currently devalued. Thus, structural change may indeed produce ideological change as long as the structural change is comprehensive enough.

In this discussion it may seem as though I, like the furniture salespeople in my sample, am simply taking the side of "equality" in the difference/equality debate. If this were true, my evidence might simply be playing into this dichotomous conception of the relationship between men and women in a way that would only work to further perpetuate gender, itself. Yet although I am arguing that there is no need for gender in the way it has been socially constructed since it has no organic justifications, I am not simply arguing that women are equal to men. This idea unavoidably sets men as the standard to which women need to be equal (MaKinnon 1990; Fargains 1994; hooks 1984), and further, it prompts the question, "Which men?" Are white women supposed to come to a point to be equal to white men? African-American women, to African-American men? Working-class women to working-class men?

Rather than engage in this problematic idea of equality, I am proposing that the entire classification system of men and women, boys and girls, be eliminated. My premise in this proposition is that if women and men *are* different--a conclusion not wholly supported by evidence but not impossible--it does not matter. People are "different" in uncountable ways in every society, and these differences are not always problematized because they are not always noticed. For the basic person in U.S. society, there is no need to distinguish between men and women for the purposes of employment, education, family, entertainment, or anything else. Outside particular specialty interest areas, we do not currently care about the differences among people in terms of ear shape, finger length,

liver production, or many other aspects along which people differ. These differences certainly exist, but we have not come up with any reasons to use these differences as the basis for decisions about who to hire, who to call on in class, or who to date. Thus, regardless of whether differences between men and women exist, there is no need for gender bifurcation. To get rid of occupational gender segregation we need to get rid of gender. Simultaneously, to get rid of gender, we need to get rid of occupational gender segregation.

LARGER ISSUES Gender does not exist in isolation. As many scholars throughout the past two decades have argued, gender supports and is supported by other systems of inequality including race and class (Collins 1991; hooks 1984; Mohanty 1991). Because of this, any attempts to dismantle gender have to include consideration of the systems of race and class.

A substantial measure of evidence in this study indicates that class is a nontrivial factor in the perpetuation of occupational gender segregation. Women who come from the most affluent backgrounds in this sample are the least likely to have ever worked in segregated occupations. These women are also the most likely group to have received training for postsecondary education rather than vocational skills. While the secretaries in this sample come from a range of class backgrounds, it appears likely that a very high class standing may shield women from this type of segregated occupation.

The issue of "class" is larger than this, however. Class in the United States in the late 20th and early 21st centuries is part of a system in which inequality is a vital component of its functioning. Within this system of capitalism, class, gender, and race are all mechanisms through which inequality operates. In order to eliminate class inequality, it would be necessary to eliminate capitalism. And while I argue above that in order to eliminate gender, it would be necessary to eliminate gender bifurcation, some would also argue that eliminating gender would be useless without dismantling the capitalist political

economic system that uses it. With gender eliminated, capitalism could conceivably simply find another mechanism to use to divide people and ensure inequality.

This argument is compelling, but it places primacy on the system of capitalism over the systems of race and gender bifurcation. Scholars like bell hooks (1984) have theorized that as long as any one of these systems is in place, inequality will always persist. Thus, if we eliminate gender without eliminating capitalism, we will have done little to shift the dynamics of power. However, it is also the case, according to race, class, and gender theory, that eliminating capitalism without eliminating gender or race will incur the same limitations. In order to avoid placing primacy on any one of these systems of inequality, the argument stresses the need to eliminate all of them.

In this study I have evidence to suggest that dismantling the system of gender would momentously alter the dynamics of inequality in the U.S. occupational structure. In moving beyond a liberal feminist perspective that pushes for important changes to be made but is content with leaving the underlying systems of inequality in tact (Lorber 1994), these findings also suggest that the systems of class and race need to be eradicated in order for full-scale change to occur.

As a white middle-class woman, a member of privileged groups, I do not feel it is my place to make recommendations about members of less privileged groups should act regarding the group associations that have served in their oppression. What I am suggesting here should not, in any way, be confused with the current rhetoric that white people promulgate about a “color blind” society. Yet if race, class, and gender theory is correct, then as we have gender, we will have inequality. And as long as we have class and capitalism, we will have inequality. And as long as we have race, we will have inequality.

Women, at many points throughout history, have become empowered through their associations with each other based on their oppressed status. Racial and ethnic minorities have as well. Yet I feel this has to be a transitory step. Eliminating race, class,

and gender does not mean forgetting what white people have done to racial and ethnic minorities throughout the history of this country and the world political economy, or what any other group with power has done to oppress people. Yet it does mean recognizing that race, class, and gender are not essentializing characteristics.

In the short term, eliminating race and class could be similar to eliminating gender in that we make sure historically oppressed groups are able to come to power first with the aid of comparable worth, affirmative action, and other policies. Then we can take pride not in what we believe we were born into, but in what we make the society in which we live.

Summary

I have demonstrated that women's socialization, educational experiences, family responsibilities, and orientation toward service explain very little about why they end up in a gender segregated or a gender integrated occupation. Previous work history, race, class, access to specific types of networks, and the opportunity to take time off from paid work do much more to explain women's placement in one of these two types of occupations. I show, however, that using these factors to simply integrate occupations in an attempt to solve the problems of inequality supported by occupational segregation will only have small-scale effects. Because gender bifurcation is present and strong even in a gender integrated context, attempts to eliminate inequality must address the underlying system of gender. Thus, while policies such as affirmative action and comparable worth, and strategies to give women time off from paid work, are important short-term steps in eliminating segregation, the integration of occupations will do little to eradicate labor market inequality as long as gender, race, and class exist.

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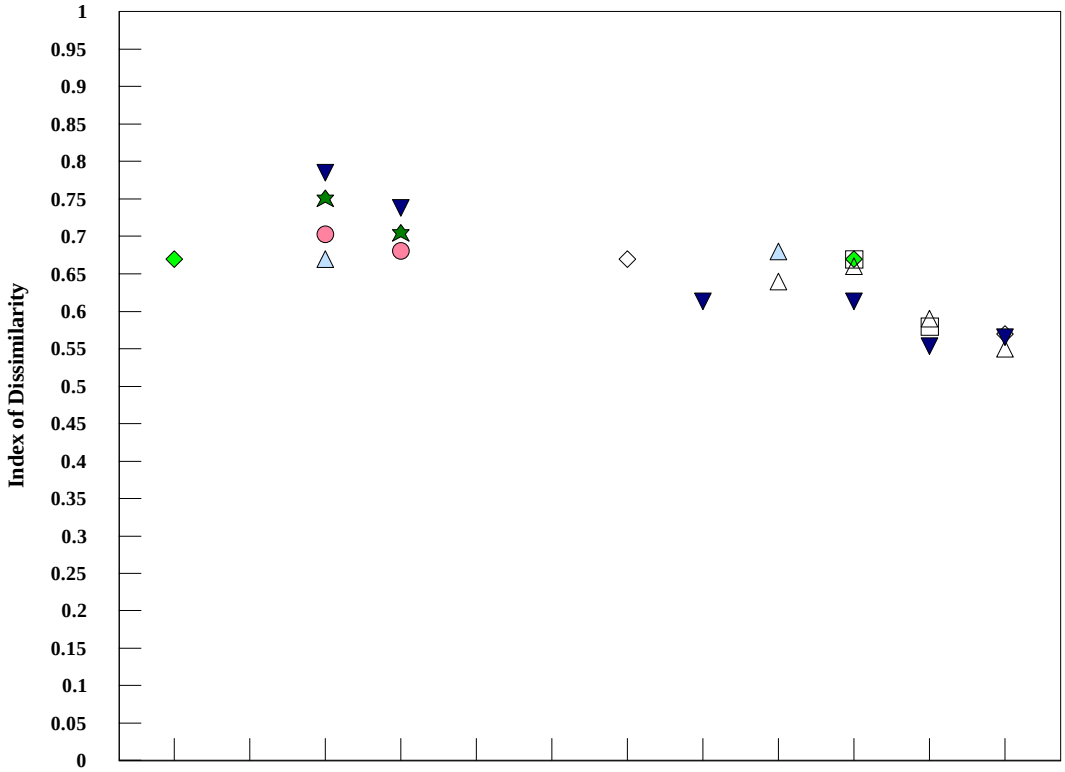
APPENDIX A

CHART 1.1

Occupational Gender Segregation



	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
◇ Bertaus	0.67									0.67		
△ Gross			0.67						0.68			
□ Fields/Wolf										0.67	0.58	
◇ King							0.67					0.57
△ Jacobsen									0.64	0.66	0.59	0.55
○ Jacobs 1			0.703	0.681								
☆ Jacobs 2			0.751	0.705								
▽ Jacobs 3			0.785	0.738				0.613		0.613	0.553	0.565

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in this research which is being conducted by Ivy Kennelly, Department of Sociology (phone: 404-874-2874). This project is being conducted under the direct supervision of University of Georgia faculty member, Dr. Linda Grant (phone: 706-542-3228). I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary; I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

1. Ivy Kennelly will interview me at a mutually agreed upon location for roughly one hour about my job.

2. No discomforts or stresses are foreseen.

3. No risks are foreseen.

4. The results of this participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. Ivy Kennelly will tape the interview and transcribe it, but all identifiable information in the typed transcript will be eliminated.

5. Ivy Kennelly will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date Signature of Researcher Date

Please sign both copies of this form. Keep one and return the other to the investigator.

Research at the University of Georgia which involves human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to Julia Alexander, Director; Institutional Review Board; Office of VP for Research; The University of Georgia; 606A Graduate Studies Research Center; Athens GA 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-6514.

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANTS

SECRETARIES

Pseudonym	Position	Race	Class	Age	Income	HH Income	Education	Married?	Kids?
Marie Agler	Administrative Assistant II	African American	Lower middle	44-46	$24,000 - $25,999	$25,000 - $29,999	Some college	No	3
PJ Bailey	Administrative Technician	White	Middle	53	$32,000 - $33,999	$100,000 - $149,999	CPS	Yes	Yes
Bonnie Baker	Administrative Assistant	Cuban American	Middle	40	$26,000 - $27,999	$60,000 - $64,999	College degree, studio art	Yes	4
Rosalyn Carillo	Administrative Assistant	Mexican American	Working poor	38	$17,000	same	High school	No	1
Elise Cushman	Administrative Coordinator II	African American	Lower middle	40-44	$34,000 - $35,999	$70,000 - $74,999	2 assoc degrees; CPS	Yes	No
Dominique Daigh	Office Manager/Admin Assistant	African American	Working poor	30s	$26,000 - $27,999	$35,000 - $39,999	College degree; paralegal	Divorced	2
Marie Domenico	Secretary to the Controller	African American	Working	45-49	$30,000 - $31,999	$30,000 - $34,999	CPS	Yes	Yes
Reagine Draper	Administrative Assistant	African American	Lower middle	28	$23,000	$48,500	Junior college degree	Yes	No
Susan Faust	Executive Secretary to SenVP of Res	White	Lower middle	55-59	$32,000 - $33,999	$100,000 - $149,999	Assoc degree, CPS	Yes	2?
Simone Gibson	Administrative Assistant	African American	Middle	23	$20,000 - $21,999	same	College degree, crim justice	No	No
Dionne Giddens	Supervisor	White	Lower middle	35-39	$20,000 - $21,999	$20,000 - $24,999	Some college	Divorced	1
Vanessa Holaday	Coordinator of Administration	Jamaican American	Working poor	40-43	$26,000 - $27,999	$50,000 - $54,999	Business college degree	Yes	3
Blanche Hopler	Senior Administrative Assistant	White	Middle	57	$36,000 - $37,999	same	Business college degree	Divorced	3
Lucy Horacek	Secretary	White	Lower middle	37-39	$10,000 - $11,999	$85,000 - $89,999	High school	Yes	2
Louise Jay	Administrative Assistant	White	Working	35-39	$22,000 - $23,999	$55,000 - $59,999	Some college	Yes	1
Lil Kevane	Administrative Assistant	White	Lower middle	62	$36,000 - $37,999	$90,000 - $94,999	CPS	Yes	1 died
Darlene Lathem	Administrative Assistant II	White	Lower middle	58	$30,000 - $31,999	$70,000 - $79,999	Business college degree	Yes	2
Margaret Loomis	Secretary	White	Lower middle	45-49	$28,000 - $29,999	same	Some college; CPS	No	No
Dana Matheson	Conference Secretary/Project Coordinator	African American	Middle	35-39	$32,000 - $33,999	same	College degree	No	No
Annette McCoy	Executive Secretary	White	Working	50-54	$32,000 - $33,999	$80,000 - $84,999	Some college	Yes	1 + 1 died
Keesha Meneely	Executive Assistant/Office Manager	African American	Working	32	$28,000 - $29,999	$55,000 - $59,999	CPS	Yes	1
Susan Millar	Executive Secretary	White	Middle	60-63	$30,000 - $31,999	$35,000 - $39,999	Some business school	Divorced	Yes
Kay Moses	Administrative Assistant	White	Lower middle	50-54	$28,000 - $29,999	$90,000 - $94,999	Some college	Yes	Yes
Tracy Muse	Administrative Assistant	African American	Middle	27	$24,000 - $25,999	same $20,000 - $24,9	College degree	No	No
Lynette Nichols	Executive Secretary	White	Working poor	40-44	$30,000 - $31,999	$30,000 - $34,999	Some college	No	1

Rosa Oliver	Administrative Assistant	African American	Lower middle	47-49	$24,000 - $25,999	$45,000 - $49,999	Some college	Yes	2
Grace Perenich	Executive Secretary	White	Lower middle	68	$28,000 - $29,999	$50,000 - $54,999	Some college	Yes	2 + 1 died
Teresa Plauche	Church Secretary	African American	Lower middle	24-26	$20,000 - $21,999	$40,000 - $49,999	College degree, biology	Yes	2
Risa Porto	Executive Director (former asst)	Mexican American	Middle	27-29	(asst) $18 - $19,999	same	College degree in Mexico, tourism	No	No
Sonya Pournaras	Executive Secretary	White	Lower middle	40-44	$30,000 - $31,999	$60,000 - $64,999	College degree, English	Yes	No
Gloria Rains	Legal Secretary	African American	Lower middle	45-49	$34,000 - $35,999	$30,000 - $34,999	Some college	Divorced	Yes
Mary Reynolds	Secretary	African American	Working	60-64	$24,000 - $25,999	$30,000 - $34,999	High school	Not sure	3
Mel Rice	Customer Service	White	Middle	34-36	$24,000 - $25,999	$125,000 - $129,999	College degree	Yes	3
Olivia Rondeau	Secretary to the Publisher	African American	Lower middle	45-49	$45,000 - $49,999	same	College degree, CPS	Divorced	Yes
Neva Salcedo	Payable Clerk	Mexican American	Working	31	$36,000 - $37,999	$70,000 - $74,999	High school	Yes	3
Cindy Scott	Secretary	White	Lower middle	35-39	$20,000 - $21,999	$20,000 - $24,999	High school	Divorced	3
Ginger Shelnut	Office Automation Assistant	African American	Lower middle	35-39	$20,000 - $21,999	$30,000 - $34,999	Some college	No	?
Marlene Sims	Administrative Assistant	White	Middle	50-53	$26,000 - $27,999	$25,000 - $34,999	High school	Divorced	1
Myra Sprayberry	Office Manager	White	Lower middle	37-39	$26,000 - $27,999	$80,000 - $84,999	College degree	Yes	1
Becky Suchman	Administrative Assistant	White	Working	30-34	$22,000 - $23,999	$25,000 - $29,999	Some college	Divorced	2
Meredith Taggart	Executive Assistant	White	Working	53	$28,000 - $29,999	$85,000 - $89,999	Some college	Yes	2
Felecia Templeton	Office Manager	African American	Middle	29	$30,000 - $31,999	$35,000 - $39,999	College degree	No	No
Red Thornton	Office Automation Assistant	African American	Working poor	36	$16,000 - $17,999	$15,000 - $19,999	Some college	No	3
Carol Vitale	President Assistant	African American	Lower middle	25-29	$28,000 - $29,999	$55,000 - $59,999	Some college	Yes	2
Shannon Westbrook	Administrative Assistant	White	Working	25-29	$24,000	same	College degree, psychology	No	No
Emma Whitaker	Assistant	Mexican American	Middle	40-43	$50,000 - $54,999	$65,000 - $69,999	Some college in Mexico	Yes	2
Carla Williams	Administrative Secretary	White	Working	40-44	$20,000 - $21,999	$30,000 - $34,999	High school	Yes	?
Tammy Yearby	Executive Secretary	White	Lower middle	48	$38,000 - $39,999	$85,000 - $89,999	Assoc degree; CPS	Yes	No
Melanie Yowell	Public Information Officer	White	Lower middle	27-29	$34,000 - $35,999	same	College degree, journalism	No	No

FURNITURE SALESPEOPLE

Pseudonym	Position	Race	Class	Age	Income	HH Income	Education	Married?	Kids?
Kerin Agrawal	Sales Consultant	Indian American	Middle	29	$24,000 + commission	$45,000+	College degree	Yes	2
Nell Akehurst	Sales	African American	Lower middle	40-43	$38,000 - $39,999	$70,000 - $74,999	2-year degree, fashion merchandising	Yes	2
Tasha Bailey	Sales Designer	African American	Working	35-39	$34,000 - $35,999	same	College degree	No	Yes
Liz Bannan	Lead Interior Designer	White	Middle	30x	$36,000 - $37,999	same	College degree, design	No	No
Roberta Bass	Sales	African American	Working poor	40-43	$24,000 - $25,999	$35,000 - $39,999	Associate's degree	Divorced	4
Daphne Baym	Contract Designer	White	Upper middle	25-29	$40,000 - $44,999	$45,000 - $49,999	College degree + design	No	No
Lindsay Beckwith	Interior Designer	White	Lower middle	24	$63,000	$115,000 - $116,000	College degree	Yes	1
Ivory Belfer	Sales/Design Consultant	African American	Middle	25	$60,000	$65,000	Some college	No	No
Sandy Gilbert	Sales	White	Working	47-49	$28,000 - $29,999	$70,000 - $74,999	High school	Yes	6 +1 adopt
Emily Gray	Sales	White	Middle	35-39	$38,000 - $44,999	$80,000 - $84,999	Tech degree, engineering	Yes	3
Blair Holland	Contract Designer	White	Middle	25-29	$36,000 - $37,999	$35,000 - $39,999	Some college	No	No
Jessie Hughes	Sales Associate	African American	Working poor	34	$50,000 - above	$95,000 - $99,999	High school	No	Yes
Valerie Jaggar	Sales	White	Middle	44-46	$0	$400,000	MA in advertising	Yes	2
Cela Kazin	Sales	White	Upper middle	45-49	$26,000 - $27,999	$45,000 - $49,999	College degree, later	Yes	Yes
Ada Ketner	Sales	White	Middle	76-79	?	?	Business school degree	Yes, widow	4
Isabell Lake	Store Manager	White	Middle	46	$45,000 - $49,999	$60,000 - $69,999	Some college	Divorced	2
Agnes Mackay	Sales Associate	African American	Poor	40-43	$44,000 - $45,999	$105,000 - $109,999	Some college	Yes	2
Janice Marber	Sales	White	Middle	55	about $100,000	same	College degree, psychology	No	no
Alexis Perry	Sales	White	Lower middle	35-39	$40,000 -$44,999	$150,000 - $199,999	Some college	Yes	2 + 2 step
Gwen Ravel	Sales	African American	Working	40-44	$36,000 - $37,999	same	Some college	No	2
Paula Ray	Sales Assistant	African American	Working poor	44-46	$18,000 - $19,999	$38,000 - $44,999	Business school degree	Yes, 2nd	3
Elaine Redstone	Sales	White	Upper	25-29	$50,000 +	$100,000 - $149,000	College degree, international business	Yes	Trying
LeAnn Stone	Sales/Owner	White	Working	45-49	$50,000 - above	$200,000 - above	High school	Yes	Yes
Ruth Taggard	Manager in Training	White	Upper	55-59	$30,000 - $31,999	$50,000 - $54,999	College degree	Divorced	Yes
Ann Thombley	Sales Designer	White	Middle	40-44	$14,000 - $15,999	$55,000 - $59,999	College degree	No	No
Brenda Wilmot	Design Consultant/Sales	African American	Lower middle	25-29	$40,000 - $44,999	same	College degree	No	No

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY OF SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

		SECRETARIES		FURNITURE SALESPEOPLE	
		#	%	#	%
TOTAL		**49**		**26**	
RACE	African American	18	36.7%	9	34.6%
	Jamaican American	1	2.0%	0	0.0%
	Indian American	0	0.0%	1	3.9%
	Cuban American	1	2.0%	0	0.0%
	Mexican American	4	8.2%	0	0.0%
	White	25	51.0%	16	61.5%
AGE	20s	9	18.4%	6	23.1%
	30s	14	26.5%	5	19.2%
	40s	14	26.5%	11	42.3%
	50s	8	16.3%	2	7.7%
	60s	4	8.2%	0	0.0%
	70s	0	0.0%	1	3.9%
	d/k	0	0.0%	1	3.9%
INCOME	$0-19,999	4	8.2%	3	11.5%
	$20-23,999	9	18.4%	0	0.0%
	$24-27,999	10	20.4%	3	11.5%
	$28-29,999	6	12.2%	1	3.9%
	$30-33,999	10	20.4%	1	3.9%
	$34-37,999	6	12.2%	4	15.3%
	$38-39,999	1	2.0%	1	3.9%
	$40-44,999	1	2.0%	3	11.5%
	$45-49,999	1	2.0%	2	7.7%
	$50-54,999	1	2.0%	0	0.0%
	$60-64,999	0	0.0%	2	7.7%
	$65-100,000	0	0.0%	3	11.5%
	d/k	0	0.0%	3	11.5%
EDUCATION	High school	5	10.2%	3	11.5%
	Business school (incl. CPS)	9	18.4%	3	11.5%
	Some college	12	24.5%	7	26.9%
	Associate's degree	5	10.2%	1	3.9%
	College degree	14	28.6%	9	34.6%
	d/k	4	8.2%	3	11.5%
KIDS	0	11	22.5%	8	30.8%
	1	5	10.2%	1	3.9%
	2	7	14.3%	7	26.9%
	3-4	10	20.4%	7	26.9%
	Some (did not specify #)	8	16.3%	2	7.7%
	d/k	8	16.3%	1	3.9%
MARRIED	Yes	24	49.0%	12	46.2%
	No (could include divorced)	14	28.6%	9	34.6%
	Divorced	7	14.3%	4	15.3%
	d/k	4	8.2%	1	3.9%

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW CHECKLIST
(September 1998 Version)

Name _____ Pseudonym _____

Organization _____ Know any other sec's or f. s. people?

Date _____ _____

Interview ID# _____ _____

- What is your position? (full-time or part-time)
- How long have you been in this position?
- **How did you wind up in this position?**
- What are your main responsibilities in this position?
- How did you hear about this position (being open)? (How did you get the job?)
- (If she heard about it from a person): What relationship do you have with that person? Was that a man or a woman? May I ask what race she or he was?
- What were you doing before you took this position? (Before that?)
    - How long did you work there?
- How did you feel about that job? (like/dislike/ambivalent)
- What were your main reasons for choosing that line of work?
- What were your main reasons for leaving?
- Have you had other [secretarial or furniture sales] jobs before? (if not answered above)
- How much total time have you been in [secretarial or furniture sales] jobs?
- How much total time in other jobs?

- What was it that led you to apply for this particular job?
- What were the requirements for this position? (Education? Experience? Specific skills? Other?)
    - Did you feel you met each of those requirements? (Go through each one)
- Did you apply for any other jobs at the same time you applied for this one?
    - What types of jobs?
    - Were you offered any of these jobs?
    - Why did you take this position instead of those others?
- How do you feel about this job? (like/dislike/ambivalent -- and why?)
- On the whole, would you say your job is really interesting, okay, or boring? Why?
- Different people want different things out of their jobs. What are the things you feel are most important in a job*?*
    - Are you getting those things at your current job?
- How long do you anticipate being in this position? (short-term / long-term)
    - Why is that?
- (If she does not anticipate being in the same position): What do you expect to be doing in five years?
- Do you have a "regular" 8 to 5 schedule? If not, what is it?
- Have you ever considered getting a job with more flexible hours? Is that important to you?
- Do you live near where you work?
    - How do you usually get to work? (Drive? Bus? Other?)
- What was the highest educational grade level you achieved?
- Was your high school divided into college-prep, vocational, or general diploma programs? Which were you in?
- When you were in high school, what sorts of options did you see yourself as having for your post-high school life?

- Are you now taking any classes?
- Have you had any other training for the work you have now?
- Do you anticipate attending any more school? What is that?
- I have a few cards here, and I'll give you the first one. If you don't mind, would you tell me the letter that corresponds with your salary from this job only?
- Here's another one. Now, if you'll tell me the letter that corresponds with your total household income?
- And finally, if you'll tell me which letter corresponds with your age category?
- Do you happen to remember what your salary was when you first started working in this position?
- Do you remember what your salary was in your first [secretarial or furniture sales] job? What year was that? Back then, did you think of that as being high, low, or just right?
- Would you say that you are more interested in having a high income or a stable income?
- Is that also how you felt when you took your first [secretarial or furniture sales] job?
- Is it monetarily necessary that you work?
- Are any of your friends or family in secretarial positions?
    - Were they at all involved in your finding or taking this job? How so?
- Some people think about positions like yours as being "women's work." Do you have any thoughts about that?
    - Agree/disagree? Why? Feel offense/Feel proud?
- Do you feel there are any advantages to working in a position, like [secretary in which most other workers in your position are women] or [furniture sales where there is a fairly even split between men and women]? (What are they?)
    - What about disadvantages?
- Why do you think there aren't more men secretaries?

- What about women mechanics or carpenters? CEO's?

- Before you became a [secretary of furniture salesperson], did you know any secretaries, or did you have a general image of [secretarial or furniture sales] work?
- How many people do you generally work with on a regular basis in this office? How many of those are in your same position?
    - May I ask their races and genders?
- Do you find that there are any advantages to working with members of your same race?
    - Disadvantages?
- What about advantages in working with people of other races?
    - Disadvantages?
- Was there anything about the racial composition of this workplace that either attracted you to this job, or made you hesitant about taking it or applying for it?
- So would you say that your image of this workplace racially had anything to do with your decision to either apply for or take this job?
- In the past when you have applied for jobs, has the racial composition of the workplace ever played into your decision about wanting to work there? (If so): What sort of job was that?
- If you could have any job in the world right now, what would it be?
- May I ask if you have children living with you at home? How many? What are their ages?
- May I ask if you have a significant other living with you?
- Are there any other people living with you?
- Or are there other people not living with you who you consider to be family?
- Was your family in any way a factor in your decision to take this particular position, or even to apply for this position? Why/not? How so?
- How are you able to manage your home and work lives?

- Have you ever had to be out of work for any amount of time because of children or family concerns? How much time? What were the circumstances?
- What sorts of things do you like to do for fun? Hobbies?
- Thinking back about when you were a child of about age 10 or 11, did you have an idea as a child what you wanted to be when you grew up?
- Do you think your life has or has not ended up looking like these early ideas? Why?
- Do you have any sense of what your mother hoped you would do when you grew up?
    - How about your father?
- What do your parents do?
    - Do you know what their educational background is?
    - Were they also doing that when you were growing up?
- Were your parents the primary people who raised you?
- Did you grow up here in Atlanta?
- Do you have siblings?
    - What do they do, if I may ask?
- One of the purposes of this study is to find out more about why women are in "women's jobs." Do you have any further thoughts about that?
- If you had to explain to somebody why you are [a secretary or in furniture sales], what would you say? Why are you [a secretary or in furniture sales]?
- Is there anything you would like to add that I have overlooked?

Your Income **From This Job Only**

A.	$0	-	$4,999
B.	$5,000	-	$9,999
C.	$10,000	-	$11,999
D.	$12,000	-	$13,999
E.	$14,000	-	$15,999
F.	$16,000	-	$17,999
G.	$18,000	-	$19,999
H.	$20,000	-	$21,999
I.	$22,000	-	$23,999
J.	$24,000	-	$25,999
K.	$26,000	-	$27,999
L.	$28,000	-	$29,999
M.	$30,000	-	$31,999
N.	$32,000	-	$33,999
O.	$34,000	-	$35,999
P.	$36,000	-	$37,999
Q.	$38,000	-	$39,999
R.	$40,000	-	$41,999
S.	$42,000	-	$43,999
T.	$44,000	-	$45,999
U.	$46,000	-	$47,999
V.	$48,000	-	$49,999
W.	$50,000	-	$54,999
X.	$55,000	-	$59,999
Y.	$60,000	-	$64,999
Z.	$65,000	-	$69,999
AA.	$70,000	-	$74,999
BB.	$75,000	-	$79,999
CC.	$80,000	-	$84,999
DD.	$85,000	-	$89,999
EE.	$90,000	-	$94,999
FF.	$95,000	-	$99,999
GG.	$100,000	-	$104,999
HH.	$105,000	-	$109,999
II.	$110,000	-	$114,999
JJ.	$115,000	-	$119,999
KK.	$120,000	-	$124,999
LL.	$125,000	-	$129,999
MM.	$130,000	-	$134,999
NN.	$135,000	-	$139,999
OO.	$140,000	-	above

Your **Total Household Income**

A.	$0	-	$4,999
B.	$5,000	-	$9,999
C.	$10,000	-	$14,999
D.	$15,000	-	$19,999
E.	$20,000	-	$24,999
F.	$25,000	-	$29,999
G.	$30,000	-	$34,999
H.	$35,000	-	$39,999
I.	$40,000	-	$44,999
J.	$45,000	-	$49,999
K.	$50,000	-	$54,999
L.	$55,000	-	$59,999
M.	$60,000	-	$64,999
N.	$65,000	-	$69,999
O.	$70,000	-	$74,999
P.	$75,000	-	$79,999
Q.	$80,000	-	$84,999
R.	$85,000	-	$89,999
S.	$90,000	-	$94,999
T.	$95,000	-	$99,999
U.	$100,000	-	$104,999
V.	$105,000	-	$109,999
W.	$110,000	-	$114,999
X.	$115,000	-	$119,999
Y.	$120,000	-	$124,999
Z.	$125,000	-	$129,999
AA.	$130,000	-	$134,999
BB.	$135,000	-	$139,999
CC.	$140,000	-	$144,999
DD.	$145,000	-	$149,999
EE.	$150,000	-	$154,999
FF.	$155,000	-	$159,999
GG.	$160,000	-	$164,999
HH.	$165,000	-	$169,999
II.	$170,000	-	$174,999
JJ.	$175,000	-	$179,999
KK.	$180,000	-	$184,999
LL.	$185,000	-	$189,999
MM.	$190,000	-	$194,999
NN.	$195,000	-	$199,999
OO.	$200,000	-	above

Your **Age**

A.	16	-	19
B.	20	-	23
C.	24	-	26
D.	27	-	29
E.	30	-	33
F.	34	-	36
G.	37	-	39
H.	40	-	43
I.	44	-	46
J.	47	-	49
K.	50	-	53
L.	54	-	56
M.	57	-	59
N.	60	-	63
O.	64	-	66
P.	67	-	69
Q.	70	-	73
R.	74	-	76
S.	77	-	79