[2]: Critically Evaluate The View That Gender Can No Longer Be Seen As A Significant Factor In Terms Of Divisions Within The UK Labour Market.

Defined as an "individual's social identity and personality or behavioural tendencies" (Chrisler & Lamer, 2016), gender is the nexus of predominantly feminist geographical theories which look to observe and explain inequalities within the labour market (Bennet, 2015; Walby, 2009). In recent decades, divisions within the UK labour market have undergone significant transformations (Razzu, 2014; Jenkins, 2017); marked by "record high" female employment rates of 72.7% in 2020 (Clark et al, 2022, P.6) and a persistent narrowing of the gender-pay gap (Blau & Kahn, 2006; Graf et al, 2018). This has led some commentators to question the continued role of gender in modern, neo-liberal labour market divisions (Hakim, 2007). This essay will explore the view that gender can no longer be seen as a factor of division within the UK labour market, by first establishing an understanding of the 20th century labour market and the deep-rooted nature of gendered divisions. Subsequently, the continued role of gender in the full-time labour market will be explored via gendered segregations across and within industries, understood respectively as horizontal and vertical segregation. Finally, the part-time/full-time labour divide will be explored, with additional discussion over unemployment and labour market access. Holistically, this essay will argue against the view, asserting that gender has always been a significant factor in creating and sustaining both structural and performative divisions in the labour market and has vital relevance today; echoing Bennett (2015) and Walby's (2009) use of the term 'intergenerational, complex inequalities'. This argument is supplemented by the recognition of changing performances of gender, which further evidence its continued significance, despite structural changes to the market.

The 20th century UK labour market was marked by male dominance built on pre-capitalist patriarchal foundations (Middleton, 1981; Bennett, 2015; Nickell, 2001); with social, economic, and legislative barriers to female entry. Women were largely associated with a private role, centred on housework and childcare (Stark, 1991), while men were associated with public economic activity (Hubbard, 2005). In 1975, 92.3% of men were in employment

compared to only 59.4% of women (Desai et al, 1999; Nickell, 2001), showing a significant gendered difference. This difference was largely analysed by feminist geographers, initially synthesising structural theories which focus on institutions, social structures and demographic characteristics. After the cultural turn and rise of post-structuralism in geography, theories became more focused on the performance of "women's agency, identity practices and points of difference" (Bennett, 2015, P.1288). This has been used in conjunction with intersectional approaches, which make clear the "multiple positioning" of individuals who may be affected by several forms of oppression (Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006, P. 187); such as seen with gender and race (McDowell et al, 2007; Shutes & Chiatti, 2012). This foundational understanding of the patriarchal labour market provides evidence for the intergenerational and deep-rooted nature of gender as a point of division; additionally defining structural, performative, and intersectional theoretical frameworks.

The 21st century labour market presents a more equal landscape with reference to certain metrics. In March 2022, there was only a 6.6% difference between men and women in employment (ONS, 2022) *[Male: 78.8%, Female: 72.2%]*. Furthermore, the gender-pay gap has been reduced to 7.9% for full-time employees (ONS, 2022), compared to roughly 16% in 2000 (Jones, 2018). These improvements in equality have largely resulted from increased women in higher education (Crofts & Coffey, 2017; Morley, 2007), changing attitudes towards paid childcare (Van Gameren & Ooms, 2009) and modern neo-liberal economics enhancing meritocracies (Hakim, 2007; Dalingwater, 2018). This led to a body of work on post-feminism, which states women "have attained equal access and opportunities in education and the labour market" (Crofts & Coffey, 2017, P. 503). Therefore, some structural metrics do indicate a normalisation of gender within the labour market; evidencing the view in question. Despite this, specific metrics are not reflective of the whole labour market, as absolute structural labour market equality has not been achieved (Blau & Kahn, 2006; Graf et al, 2018). The Government Equalities Office illustrates this, identifying in its 2019/20 objectives the continued need for female empowerment within certain sectors of the labour market (GOV, 2019). Therefore holistically, the view that gender is no longer a significant factor of division is incorrect, with analysis of such gendered divisions being subsequently explored.

As evidence of the lack of labour market equality, gendered perspectives can identify segregation of the workforce across industries: understood as horizontal segregation. This occurs via the social-construction of jobs as being respectively "men's jobs and women's jobs" (Bennett et al, 2010, P.17), generally based on traditional gender roles (Stark, 1991). Care workers illustrate this, where currently 82% of the workforce is female (Walker, 2017), as the industry is socially constructed as feminine; resulting from traditional understandings of care as an unremunerated task within the home (England & Henry, 2013). Conversely, only 14% of construction workers are female (ONS, 2022), with the industry tracing its masculine roots to the industrial revolution. These statistics demonstrate the significance of gender in identifying divisions within the labour force, in addition to providing explanations for their existence. These structural divisions can be further enriched by performative theories of gender division, which make visible the 'lived experiences' and social consequences resulting from such divisions. McDowell's (2020; McDowell & Bonner-Thompson, 2020) work observes the intersection of class and gender, noting that the form of masculinity primarily adopted by working-class men is often incompatible with the socially-coded feminine traits assigned to service sector work; therefore creating problems of access to the labour market. For men who do enter these workspaces, performances of gender must be reimagined to match the societal characteristics associated with the job. These performances are often racially and ethnically stereotyped (Sarti & Scrinzi, 2010; McDowell et al, 2007), demonstrated by the employment of mainly migrant workers in care and domestic work (Shutes & Chiatti, 2012). This subsequently creates social pressure and judgement over workers who do not suit this intersectional stereotype. Therefore, the existence of gendered horizontal segregation in the labour market argues against the view, as intergenerational structural inequalities and everyday performative biases come together to produce systems of gendered segregation; synoptically referencing Walby (2009) term 'complex inequalities'. Moreover, the demonstration of new performances of gender further increases its significance, as traditional understandings are subverted to overcome problems of access; a notion also explored through vertical segregation.

Supplementing discussions of horizontal segregation, gender can also uncover divisions within industries through observing the vertical segregation of individuals at different career levels. This allows for exploration of industries which may have parity in gendered

employment rates, such as banking (Wilson, 2014). Feminist literature has engaged with widespread discussions of the 'glass ceiling' which limits career progression for female employees, resulting from *[un]*conscious gender biases and intergenerational impacts of the patriarchy (Stroh et al, 1996). There are various examples in the labour market, such as: the "armoured glass ceiling" in the British Army (Dunn, 2007, P. 468); "concrete ceiling" of female coaches in sports (Norman, 2018, P. 403); and the "glass escalator" which men experience in female-dominated workplaces (Woodhams et al, 2015, P. 278). Holistically, women find it consistently harder to benefit from neo-liberal meritocracies due to intergenerational systems of inequality and societal biases (Wilson, 2014). This is supplemented by discourses on the gender-pay gap, where women are occasionally paid less than their male counterpart (Blau & Kahn, 2006; Graf et al, 2018); evidenced by female bankers earing 55% less in 2014 (Wilson, 2014). These examples demonstrate the continued importance of gender as a structural factor of division within industries. Additionally, as women are acutely aware of such structural inequalities and traditionally masculine working environments, performances of femininity in the workplace have been reenvisaged. Termed 'new femininities', some women now display a "hybrid femininity characterised by traditional masculine and feminine traits" (Crofts & Coffey, 2017, P. 504) in order to maximise their corporate potential. This creates a highly paradoxical gender discourse, balancing traditional feminine and corporate masculine performances of gender, consequently evidencing gender as a factor of division through the need for ambiguous performances. Moreover, the clustering of males at the top of corporate structures has informed performative discussions of toxic masculinity in corporate workplaces. McDowell (2010) and Sibert (2010) reference such performances of masculine gender having profound impacts on creating overly masculine work environments; evidenced as a possible factor in the 2007 financial crisis. With the introduction of more women into the upper tier of corporate structures, these typical performances of gender must also be reimagined. Therefore, gender remains a highly significant factor of vertical division within the labour market, because of systemic complex inequalities which affect both structural and performative vectors. This is further supplemented by the discussion of new femininities and toxic masculinity in corporate structures as evidence for the continued importance for gender as a divisive factor.

Prior explorations of horizontal and vertical segregation in the labour market have been in reference to full-time employees. However, there are also vast gendered differences in part-time workers and the unemployed population. Female part-time employment rates are 25% higher than male, with 5.84 million women working part-time roles (ONS, 2022). This gendered division occurs due to the intergenerational impact of socially constructed gender roles (Stier & Lewin-Epstein, 2000). These social constructions determine a traditional female role as one marked by domesticity, housework, and childcare (Stark, 1991); rather than full-time employment. The impacts of these gender roles are still present today (ONS, 2022; GOV, 2019), creating significant problems of access for women seeking full-time employment (Booth & Van Ours, 2013) as it can prove difficult to balance an unremunerated family role with full-time employment. This can force some women into unemployment, with Dale et al (2002) adopting an intersectional approach to uncover the problems faced by Pakistani and Bangladeshi female migrants, who struggle to find employment due to language and education barriers, alongside family time constraints. For women who do engage in part-time roles, they often experience poorer working conditions when compared to full-time work (Fagan et al, 2014; Booth & Van Ours, 2013). Part-time roles are associated with less clear career progression structures, referencing prior notions of the glass ceiling, and usually provide fewer benefits: like healthcare or car allowances. This highlights the importance of gender as a factor of division within the labour market, as intergenerational gender roles still impact the career choices can women make, leading to wider socio-economic consequences limiting social mobility or change. This has been questioned after the COVID-19 pandemic, with the introduction of hybrid and remote working environments allowing for more freedom over working hours; increasing flexibility around family duties. This has occurred alongside a questioning of traditional gender roles within the home due to changes in paid workload (Vandecasteele et al, 2022; Reichelt, 2021), which may aid in reducing gendered divisions in the future. However, the extent to which this will be successful is still unknown, with some commentators referencing more negative gendered impacts associated with the post-COVID labour market. Bluedorn et al (2021) notes the unequal, gendered experience of post-COVID recessions, citing larger drops in women's employment rates when compared to male; evoking the term 'she-cessions'. Therefore, the part-time and unemployed populations evidence the importance of gender as a current factor of division, despite new performances of gender potentially leading to increased future equality.

Holistically, the UK labour market is still significantly gendered, with the existence of structural and performative divisions coming together to produce intergenerational systems of oppression and inequality; understood as complex inequalities. Hence, this essay has argued against the view that gender is no longer a factor of division within the UK labour market. The contemporary labour market presents a variety of divisions which are highly significant: as explored through both vectors of segregation, part-time workers, and the unemployed populations. Critically, the labour market cannot rid itself from the impacts of its deeply gendered patriarchal foundations; as evidenced by new or changing performances of gender. These help to capture the qualitative experiences of the "multiply marginalised" (Bennett, 2015, P. 1289) and make clear the continued relevance of gender today.

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