

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Doing gender in segregated and assimilative organizations: Ultra-Orthodox Jewish women in the Israeli high-tech labour market

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Ultra-Orthodox Jewish (haredi) women in Israel, who are traditionally expected to be both mothers and breadwinners so as to allow their husbands to immerse themselves in religious studies, are recently entering the high-tech labour market in both segregated and assimilative organizations. This segmented labour market allows the constructed and intersectional character of doing gender in organizations to be examined, which in turn may also effect the ways in which such labour segmentation continues to develop. In 2014–2015, we administered a questionnaire to 119 haredi women working as computer programmers in assimilative and segregated organizations, and interviewed 42 of them as well as 16 of their managers. We describe the emergence of a dual pattern of employment with its benefits and disadvantages regarding pay, satisfaction, commitment and burnout. Findings are presented concerning the balancing of work and family as well as the professional/social conflict that is accentuated by working in an assimilative organization. Our findings show how the intersection of work, religiosity, class and gender is central to women's labour trajectories and identities, highlighting both the boundaries of gendered arrangements and their negotiability. We conclude by discussing how specific strategies of doing gender in segmented labour markets play out in/against 'global' norms of work and professionalism.

KEYWORDS

high-tech, intersectionality, segmented labour markets, segregated and assimilative organizations, ultra-Orthodox Jewish women

1 | INTRODUCTION

This study examines how women from an isolated religious community are entering the high-tech industry. The different strategies involved in the segregated as well as assimilative organizations in which these women increasingly work enable ways of doing gender in organizations to be explored, which in turn may also affect how these labour

markets continue to develop. To gain insights into these broader questions, we focus on ultra-Orthodox Jewish (haredi) women in Israel, who are traditionally expected to be both mothers and breadwinners, to allow their husbands to immerse themselves in religious studies. Recently, many of these women are also seeking employment in non-traditional jobs, most notably in the high-tech industry. We examine how these women's position in three different institutional spheres, structures their labour force participation: the political structure (of the Israeli State and the haredi community), the economy and the family. Following Flippen (2014), we argue that to fully grasp the employment position of haredi women, it is necessary to take the broadest view possible of labour force participation, considering multiple aspects of state and community policies, economic position, family status and gender roles. Following an intersectional approach, we expect that not only will these multiple dimensions cumulatively describe women's market position, their interaction will be central to women's labour trajectories and identities (Atewologun, Sealy, & Vinnicombe, 2016).

In 2016, the haredi community numbered approximately 950,000 people, 11 per cent of the population (Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 2016). While estimates on haredi (un)employment differ, they show recurrent patterns of poverty as well as an inverse labour division in terms of gender. Most families in the haredi sector in Israel live under the poverty line (Ouziely & Ifrach, 2007). Because many haredi men in Israel devote their time to religious studies, the burden of supporting families falls on haredi women. In the labour market, the prospects of haredi women employment are restricted by lack of training and child-caring. Haredi women's average wage is only 70 per cent of the Israeli average (Ouziely & Ifrach, 2007). In their own traditional male-dominated community, haredi women are relegated primarily to the private and domestic sphere (Friedman, 1988).

Despite the unique lifestyle of the haredi community, the conclusions as well as the implications of the present research may be expanded to other cases of women from segregated communities who are working in segmented labour markets. The study's gender lens highlights not only how work structures gender inequality, but also how work facilitates challenging gendered power relations (Flippen, 2014; McKay, 2006).

We use the case of haredi women in high-tech to highlight how class, ethnicity and religion intersect in the context of doing gender.

This setting, which has not been studied before, adds new dimensions to the theme of work–family conflict in bringing forward an example where work is not a goal in itself but an issue of securing a livelihood (Kulik, 2016). Furthermore, it enables women's choices, rationales and constraints in a setting of specific gender-traditional religious norms to be highlighted. It also shows how governmental strategies to support specific religious groups may lead to distortion of market principles – as when the women in these high-tech firms are paid less. As a background to the present work, we begin with a literature review of intersectionality and doing gender in segmented labour markets, and continue with an overview of gender and work in the haredi community.

2 | INTERSECTIONALITY AND DOING GENDER IN SEGMENTED LABOUR MARKETS

The benefit in using intersectional theory is that it moves away from a strictly gendered analysis to one that accounts for the multiple marginalized locations occupied by women from different class and ethnic backgrounds (Flippen, 2014). This is particularly relevant to understanding what happens in the context of ultra-Orthodox women in high-tech. The term *intersectionality* was used first by Crenshaw (1991) to denote the experience of black women's employment experiences. Ever since, an important and growing body of work on intersectionality emphasized the intersection of a broader range of oppressions (e.g., ageism, class) or social groupings (e.g., age, sexuality, disability; see Collins, 2000; McBride, Hebson, & Holgate, 2015). The lived experiences of labour market constraints cannot be neatly separated into those due to gender, race, religion or ethnicity; rather, they are 'intersectional' – inherently linked and experienced simultaneously (Acker, 2006; Choo & Ferree, 2010).

Class, gender and race/ethnicity are considered major organizational bases of inequality, reflecting patterns in wider society (Acker, 2006). With respect to the women in this study, the bases for their inequality also include religion. Intersectionality has traditionally stressed the simultaneous interaction of class, race/ethnicity and gender in the context of vulnerability and discrimination. However, this study shows how empowerment and agency can also be part of intersectionality. Women can be active agents who successfully use their (religious, class/ethnic, gender) agency to shape their work context to their needs and exhibit a form of intersectional empowerment (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1252). By exploring haredi women in high-tech as an example of both intersectional empowerment and disempowerment, this study joins several recent articles which have sought to identify the diverse choices that authors are making, or need to make, when applying the concept of intersectionality (Bilge, 2010; Choo & Ferree, 2010; Davis, 2008; Walby, Armstrong, & Strid, 2012). This study reflects yet another attempt to engage with the core principles of a concept that is rapidly being developed, problematized and deconstructed using increasingly specialist terminology.

'Doing gender' is now a widely used concept for theorizing and researching gender, in organizational and other studies (Butler, 2004; West & Zimmerman, 1987, 2009). Yet it is also a very heterogeneous concept which often follows the 'ceremonial use' of generally looking at gender as a social practice that is 'said and done' rather than a self-evident category (Nentwich & Kelan, 2014). Different ethnographic contexts enable a more fine-tuned, grounded examination to be provided of the inter-connected processes of intersectionality and doing gender by looking through and at these concepts (McDonald, 2013). The case of haredi women in high-tech problematizes and complicates the conceptualization of 'doing gender'. High-tech work requires a performance which is often cross-referenced with masculine identity. This organizationally structured form of doing gender can be conceptualized as 'doing structures'. When complied with, discriminating gendered structures also entail 'doing hierarchies' (Nentwich & Kelan, 2014, p. 133) such as when the workforce is highly feminized, engaged in 'feminine' work, receives low pay and is undervalued; see Ravenswood and Harris (2016) on aged care female workers. Yet when women negotiate and resist male-dominated structures, bringing in their own agency, they are notably also involved in doing identity work. In Israeli high-tech organizations, *secular* women programmers need to straddle the family centred Israeli culture and the masculine environment of the high-tech industry (Frenkel, 2008). In juxtaposing intersectionality and doing gender in the context of haredi women in high-tech, we ask: how do these women straddle their gendered job constraints, their authoritarian community expectations and their own agency?

Inequality in women's labour participation has been already theorized and documented extensively (e.g., Barron & Norris, 1976; Piore, 1980). In the software industry, globalization has been held up as a potential avenue for increased women's employment, empowerment and socioeconomic mobility (Yun, 1995). However, the fact that women are often allocated to less prestigious, non-unionized, relatively low-paid quality assurance (QA) work may intensify the exploitation of these women workers and exacerbate occupational gender segmentation (Fox, 2002). Women entering male-dominated industries thus highlight the cultural boundaries of gender as well as the cultural and intersectional negotiation of doing gender.

The intersectionality-underpinning processes of labour assimilation are highlighted in the context of women workers from segregated communities. Segmented labour markets also include low-paid workers (including employees working for temporary work agencies and subcontractors) that are not covered by collective-bargaining arrangements. This is the case in many segregated computer programming hubs in Israel. Such a triangular employment relationship (employee-contractor-client) involves precarious employment and is more common among the more vulnerable sub-populations of new immigrants, disabled individuals, ethnic minorities and foreign workers, and especially for women in these groups (Flippen, 2014; on segmented labour markets in Israel, see Maman, 1999). It should be noted that while segmented labour markets have been criticized because they constrain mobilization, they may also embody benefits. Segmented ethnic labour markets were shown to provide protection for women (Semyonov & Lewin-Epstein, 1994), for example, in the context of Israeli-Arab women employed in the public sector where – in the absence of competition – they can achieve high-status occupational positions that are typically denied them in the wider society. Adjusted work arrangements that develop as part of labour segmentation can also carry social benefits and may provide women with skills of work and communication that later enable them to find a better job in the primary market.

3 | THE FIELD: WOMEN IN THE HAREDI COMMUNITY

In 2005, 55 per cent of haredi women were working outside of the home, compared to 44 per cent of haredi men (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics [ICBS], 2007). In 2015, labour force participation rose to 75 per cent among haredi women while remaining steady for haredi men at 48 per cent (ICBS, 2015). Haredi men who go to work either dropped out of the (quite demanding) ultra-Orthodox educational institutes or juggle work and religious studies due to economic constraints. A much higher and ostensibly reverse proportion is typical for secular Israelis: 82 per cent of the women and 86 per cent of the men work outside of the home (ICBS, 2015). Since the establishment of the State of Israel, haredi women have become the family's main breadwinner to allow their husbands to dedicate themselves to religious studies. This is often presented as a general aspect of haredi life (Friedman, 1988). However, it is also a result of specific national policies, politically created and ideologically justified in the early years of the Israeli State by the urgent need to restore the spiritual Jewish world that was almost destroyed in the Holocaust (Shaul, 2015). The haredi male population in the United States and the UK is able to combine religious studies with earning a living. Most haredi men in New York have chosen to work for a living after completion of a certain amount of religious studies (Gonen, 2000). The unique social and economic seclusion of the haredi community in Israel is arguably the result of Israeli policy, over the last 60 years, to subsidize the secluded haredi school system, support large families with child allowances offered independently of employment and exempt (until very recently) haredi men from military or national service (Zion, 2012).

Although it might seem uniform from the outside, the haredi population in Israel is divided among three main ethno-cultural groups, differentiated by ethnic origin and attitude towards religious learning and work (Friedman, 1991). The *Lita'im* or Lithuanians, of Ashkenazi origin in north-eastern Europe, stress men's intensive engagement in the learning of religious scriptures, and encourage vocational learning for women as breadwinners (Hakak & Rapoport, 2012). *Hasidim* or Hasidic, also of Ashkenazi origin but from south-eastern Europe, originally grew and spread as a popular alternative to the scholastic character of the Lithuanian group. *Sepharadim* or *Mizrachim* (of Eastern origin), extending from Persia and Yemen to Morocco, have a positive inclination toward working for a living and are less inclined to be involved in intensive religious learning.

Traditionally, haredi women's employment was in the field of education, childcare and services in their communities. In recent years, computer programming has become another employment option, as well as small-scale entrepreneurship and the media (Kulik, 2016). Thus, haredi women are now more likely to seek jobs beyond the confines of their community, and some of them have integrated into the general Israeli labour market. The average number of children in the haredi community is very high, 6 per woman versus 2.4 among secular Israeli women in general (ICBS, 2012). Even when some haredi women dare to seek employment outside of the community, they have to tackle employers' stereotypes that they will dedicate themselves to the family (Malchi & Abramowski, 2015). There is a unique challenge of work-family balancing (rather than 'conflict') that arguably requires family support (from husbands, parents and older children) as well as maintaining a high level of employment 'hardiness' (Kulik, 2016). Most haredi seminaries and various colleges offer today vocational training in financing, graphics, office work and software programming (Tamir, 2010). Since 2006, haredi employment centres (Maft'e'ach) have been operating in many Israeli cities, and 70–75 per cent of those applying for jobs via these centres are young haredi women with post-secondary education (Neria-Ben Shahar, 2009; Sofer-Forman, 2007). A growing number of programmes offer programming training for haredi women, including JDC's Tevet programmes (Zion, 2012). Bereshit, a subsidiary of Manpower Israel, has placed some 8000 haredi workers — most of them women — on site at major companies.

4 | HAREDI WOMEN AS HIGH-TECH PROGRAMMERS

Estimates of haredi workers in Israeli high-tech are between about 4700 (60 per cent of them haredi women and 10,000 with 75 per cent women (<http://www.ishitech.co.il/0213ar4.htm>). The high-tech workplaces where haredi

female programmers work are predominantly segregated: hubs built in or near the haredi community for women workers only. These hubs rely on a relatively cheap, trained labour force for maintenance of existing systems and QA. Haredi female programmers who work in such hubs earn much less than their female secular counterparts (Rabin, 2015). According to recent ICBS data,¹ in the high-tech industry men in general earn an average of 17,879 NIS per month (about US\$4597), and women earn an average salary of 8771 NIS (about US\$2233); in the segregated hubs, however, the average salary of a female haredi high-tech worker is only 5600 shekels per month (about US\$1426) – a little more than the minimum wage (Rabin, 2015). With subsidies from the Economy and Trade Ministry for promoting the employment of excluded populations, many of these segregated hubs thus become an organizational solution for cost-effective, near-shore outsourcing that can compete with programming centres in India, China or Eastern Europe.

Criticism on low pay in the segregated hubs has been propounded in the press and in the Israeli Parliament, but has not led to public debate and has not changed the situation. Many segregated computer programming hubs, it should be noted, also belong to a segmented labour market in which low-paid workers (including employees working for temporary work agencies and subcontractors) are not covered by collective-bargaining arrangements. There are few haredi women with academic education (usually a degree in computer sciences) and only few of them work in assimilative, secular high-tech organizations. The majority of haredi programmers, who usually study practical engineering at the haredi seminaries and colleges, either prefer or are drawn into segregated hubs.

Computer programming appears to be an effective and empowering solution for assimilating haredi women in the labour market. In reality, it may also reproduce exclusionary labour practices, since young and professionally inexperienced haredi women usually prefer segregated haredi workplaces, and since such workplaces usually pay low wages in return for 'social benefits' such as flexible work hours and proximity to home. No study has yet examined the consequences of these new forms of employment for haredi women and their effects on family life and contact with mainstream Israeli society.

5 | THE RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Data for this study were gathered using a triangulated, mixed methods approach that included interviews with managers, a survey and interviews with haredi women. There were three stages to the research: first, background data collection through analysis of official reports of haredi-dedicated employment agencies (Maft'e'ach, Tevet and Bereshit), to establish baseline information on the employment of haredi women in computer programming. Second, following Institute Review Board (IRB) approval and management's consent, 16 interviews were conducted by the second author with managers in relevant segregated and assimilative organizations (senior managers and middle managers responsible for haredi workers). For this study, we define 'segregated' workplaces as organizations that are wholly owned and operated by haredi management (e.g., *Rachip*), as well as non-haredi organizations, which operate separate hubs for haredi women only, located in proximity to their communities (e.g., *Qualitest*, *Matrix*). In contrast, 'assimilative' workplaces are non-haredi organizations where haredi women employed as computer engineers and programmers work together with other (secular) employees, in the organization's regular centres, and not in separate hubs (e.g., *Intel*, *Cisco*). The third and final stage of the research consisted of a survey and interviews exploring the attitudes of haredi women working in assimilative and segregated high-tech workplaces.

6 | QUESTIONNAIRES

To allow comparability to other studies, the measurement of commitment, satisfaction and burnout was done by general questionnaires that were translated and adapted by the authors into Hebrew from the original instruments. The Hebrew versions of the questionnaires were validated with a small sample of the respondents and the questionnaires were checked for internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha reliability. The questionnaire was posted in 2015 for

several months at a specially designed Internet site, and a message announcing it was presented to the haredi female workers at the workplaces under study. One hundred and nineteen questionnaires (out of approximately 400 haredi women working in the workplaces targeted for the study) were filled in and analysed. The questionnaire consisted of the following segments:

- *Work commitment questionnaire.* This questionnaire (based on Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979) comprised 15 items on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (little extent) to 5 (great extent). One overall score was derived by calculating the mean of the responses to all the items in the questionnaire. The higher the score, the more the participant felt a high level of commitment. Cronbach's alpha reliability for the questionnaire used in this study was 0.62. The items included in the commitment questionnaire are shown in Table 1
- *Job satisfaction questionnaire.* This questionnaire was adapted from the general Minnesota job satisfaction questionnaire and consisted of 13 items. The response scale ranged from 1 (little extent) to 5 (great extent). One overall score was derived by calculating the mean of the responses to all of the items in the questionnaire. The higher the score, the more the participant felt a high level of satisfaction. Cronbach's alpha reliability for the questionnaire used in this study was 0.82. The items included in the job satisfaction questionnaire are shown in Table 2
- *Burnout questionnaire.* This questionnaire was developed by Pines (2005) and consisted of 13 items. The response scale ranged from 1 (never) to 7 (always). This questionnaire has been utilized frequently among researchers to assess the prolonged sense of daily pressure and has been validated in various populations (Pines & Keinan, 2006). One overall score was derived by calculating the mean of the responses to all of the items in the questionnaire. The higher the score, the more the participant felt a high level of daily stress. Cronbach's alpha reliability for the questionnaire used in this study was 0.87. The items included in the burnout questionnaire are shown in Table 3
- *Background and work-related aspects questionnaire.* Participants were asked to indicate socio-demographic parameters such as their age, marital status, number of children, education, spouse's education, religious affiliation and self-assessments of their financial situation. In addition, participants were asked to grade how much help they

TABLE 1 Items included in the commitment questionnaire (Mowday et al., 1979)

1.	I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organization be successful.
2.	I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for.
3.	I feel very little loyalty to this organization. (R)
4.	I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organization.
5.	I find that my values and the organization's values are very similar.
6.	I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization.
7.	I could just as well be working for a different organization as long as the type of work was similar. (R)
8.	This organization really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance.
9.	It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this organization. (R)
10.	I am extremely glad that I chose this organization to work for over others I was considering at the time I joined.
11.	There's not too much to be gained by sticking with this organization indefinitely. (R)
12.	Often I find it difficult to agree with this organization's policies on important matters relating to its employees. (R)
13.	I really care about the fate of this organization.
14.	For me this is the best of all possible organizations for which to work.
15.	Deciding to work for this organization was a definite mistake on my part. (R)

Note. An 'R' denotes a negatively phrased and reverse scored item.

TABLE 2 Items included in the job satisfaction questionnaire

1.	I feel a sense of achievement at work
2.	My contribution at work is appreciated
3.	My professional skills are being used properly in my current job
4.	I am being encouraged to show initiative at work
5.	My equipment and other facilities at work are suitable for the job requirements
6.	My co-workers provide me with social support
7.	My co-workers provide me with professional and personal help
8.	My manager discusses with us work-related decisions
9.	My manager provides me with feedback concerning my performance at work
10.	My manager is willing to listen to problems I have
11.	I am satisfied with the remuneration I get, considering my professional skills and the efforts I put in at work
12.	My remuneration is equal to or more than what other people doing the same job in other organizations get
13.	The organization tries to improve my work conditions

TABLE 3 Items included in the burnout questionnaire

During the last month, to what extent did you feel:	
1.	Tired
2.	Disappointed of other workers
3.	Hopeless
4.	Being captured
5.	Weakness
6.	Illness
7.	Sense of failure or worthlessness
8.	Sleep problems
9.	Being 'fed up'
10.	Disappointment with the management
11.	Lack of control
12.	Difficulty to concentrate
13.	How would you describe the general level of stress at your workplace (very high, medium, very low)

receive at home from their husbands, parents and older children. The questionnaires were analysed using SPSS version 22

7 | INTERVIEWS

Forty-two in-depth interviews were conducted by the second author in 2014–2015 with haredi women working as computer programmers in the five high-tech organizations under study: 23 interviews in assimilative organizations and 19 in segregated workplaces. The participants' names have been changed to preserve anonymity. Interviews were semi-structured. Respondents were asked how they decided where to work and how they feel about this decision, how they feel about their work, what are their thoughts about their educational background, how they view the influence of their work on their personal, family and social life, what was their experience as ultra-Orthodox women with professional and social activities at work, and how their community, spouse and children perceive their work.

Interviews were held in various places (homes, workplaces, cafés and parks) per the convenience of the respondent and lasted about one hour. Transcriptions of the recorded interviews were content-analysed to identify participants' views concerning their work, education and family life. The interview transcripts were organized and coded using ATLAS t.i. software for qualitative analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) in order to uncover discursive themes and categories of themes recurring within or differing across the groups (Strauss, 1988). Reliability was established by discussing, agreeing on and refining the major categories of meaning, the relationships between categories and the development of themes, while considering the range and variation in the data. The interview data was assessed and confirmed by the co-authors for thematic saturation.

8 | FINDINGS

In presenting the array of findings we seek to connect the indications provided in the questionnaires with the rich interview material. We begin with an overview of what it means to work in a segregated hub and the work adjustments needed for haredi women in both segregated and assimilative workplaces. We then describe the statistical indicators found in comparing haredi women working in segregated and assimilative workplaces, and proceed to the themes that were identified in the interviews. We focus on four themes: the 'trade-off' argument (concerning the pros and cons of each workplace); exploitation at the segregated hubs; negotiating the social and the professional in the assimilative organization; and assimilation from a social and personal perspective. The presentation of themes starts with the broader comparison between the two types of workplaces, and continues with exploitation in segregated hubs, which is connected to moving from them to an assimilative workplace. We then focus on themes pertaining to the assimilative workplaces: negotiating the social and the professional and assimilation from a social and personal perspective.

8.1 | Working at the segregated hubs

This section provides an overview, based on common descriptions in the interviews, of what it means to work in segregated hubs, which is probably the type of workplace most readers would be less familiar with. The women who worked in the segregated hubs shared a very similar background and path of recruitment. They joined the workforce usually at age 20–22, after completing their studies at the ultra-Orthodox network of seminaries for girls in which they had vocational training as computer programmers. Most of them came into the firm without employment experience and, mostly, before or at the same time they got married. The first two years at the company are a training period, during which all employees receive the same pay. The workday at the hub is eight hours long but it also promotes flexitime. Most women start early in the morning and finish at 4:00 p.m. to take care of their children. Transportation services are available to take the women home in case they stayed longer. Employees use 'kosher Internet' that is filtered and inspected. Work regulations at the hub are inspected by rabbis who, alongside HR personnel, are available for consultations. According to hub management, typically 10 per cent of the workforce is on a three-month maternity leave at any given time, but management says this does not constitute a problem since the women work in teams and can shift tasks to colleagues. High-tech executives have told the media time and again that what the haredi female programmers lack in experience they complement in intelligence and dedication, and that they are quite capable of doing everything from QA to software development.

According to common assertions found in interviews with managers, the major adjustments needed for haredi women working in either segregated or assimilative high-tech organizations include the following: proximity to home, a workday starting relatively early so they can finish early (around 4 or 5 p.m.), flexitime when needed, working with women only (in the segregated hubs) or in a mixed group of women and men (in an open space environment), and a flexibility toward relatively prevalent maternity leaves. The common workday at segregated hubs is eight hours long while in assimilative organizations it is (following customary norms) nine hours long. For haredi women in assimilative

organizations, such adjustments require working not for the more intensive, military-oriented and more masculine 'start-up' industry (Swed & Butler, 2015) but rather in the relatively more relaxed IT industry and in larger organizations that have already institutionalized an organizational culture favouring diversity.

Based on the questionnaires, respondents' mean age ($M = 26$ years) was similar in the segregated and assimilative workplaces we examined, as well as their average number of children (a little more than two), with a relatively similar marriage per cent (81 and 84 per cent in the segregated and assimilative organizations, respectively). Almost all (95 per cent) of our respondents' husbands were yeshiva students. However, relatively more women at the assimilative organizations indicated in the questionnaire that their husband is 'learning and working', compared to women at the segregated organizations (12 per cent versus 2 per cent, respectively). The education level of all the respondents was post-secondary, with the majority having haredi seminary education (an overall of 14 years in the haredi school system). Descriptive statistics of the main demographic variables among the respondents is presented in Table 4.

Women at the assimilative organizations had more haredi college education compared to the women working at the segregated organizations (14 per cent versus 9 per cent, respectively) and a higher percentage of a BSc in computer sciences (7 per cent versus 1 per cent, respectively). More women working at assimilative organizations indicated in the questionnaire that their education provided them with the required training and experience, compared to women who worked at segregated organizations (38 per cent versus 28 per cent, respectively). The majority in the two groups was Lithuanians, with relatively more Lithuanian women in the assimilative organizations as compared to the segregated organizations (75 per cent versus 69 per cent). This probably reflects the emphasis on studies in the haredi Lithuanian community. The average length of employment was similar ($M = 3.1$ years). The most blatant

TABLE 4 Descriptive statistics of main demographic variables among respondents in the segregated and assimilative organizations

	Segregated workplaces (N = 75)	Assimilative workplaces (N = 44)
Age	$M = 26.3, SD = 5.5$	$M = 26.25, SD = 5.67$
Married	81%	84%
No. of children per respondent	$M = 2.05, SD = 1.8$	$M = 2.25, SD = 2$
Education:		
Haredi seminary	90%	79%
Haredi college	9%	14%
University BSc	1%	7%
Origin:		
Lithuanian	69%	75%
Sephardic	15%	14%
Hassidic	16%	9%
Other	0%	2%
Length of employment	$M = 3.1, SD = 1.5$	$M = 3.1, SD = 1.7$
First work in high-tech	65%	58%
Income (in NIS)	$M = 8000$ More than 50% earning between 8500 and 20,000	$M = 15,000$ More than 50% earning between 11,000 and 28,000
My husband is:		
Yeshiva student	90%	83%
Studying and working	2%	12%
Working	5%	5%
Looking for a job	3%	0

difference looms large in the income category. Those working for segregated organizations earned a little more than a half (a median of 8000 NIS versus 15,000 NIS in the assimilative organizations).

8.2 | The trade-off: 'each workplace has its benefits and disadvantages'

Does earning less predict lower commitment and satisfaction? In what follows we present the statistical findings concerning commitment, burnout and job satisfaction in the segregated and assimilative organizations (see Table 5), and then proceed to elaborate on two major themes that were found in conjunction with these comparisons: the 'trade-off' argument (concerning the pros and cons of each workplace) and criticism concerning low pay at the segregated hubs. Women working at segregated workplaces were found to have a slightly higher level of work commitment than did women working at assimilative workplaces ($M = 3.08$ and 2.95 , respectively). In addition, women working at segregated workplaces were found to have an almost similar level of burnout as did women working at assimilative workplaces ($M = 2.42$ and 2.46 , respectively). For comparison, the national burnout average in Israel was measured as 2.8 , with high-burnout professions such as the police having an average of 3.05 (Pines & Keinan, 2006). The level of job satisfaction was similar for the two groups ($M = 3.55$ and 3.51).

These findings show that there are other factors besides the salary that influence the haredi women's job satisfaction. The following quote, from an interview with a female programmer working at a segregated organization, typically illustrates the 'trade-off' argument mentioned by many of the respondents:

Of course we earn less than the market. I saw that the market offers more, and I would probably expect to earn more but I also understand that once they give you special conditions ... the things they give you here are worth money. It's a very nice workplace, nice to work in, very uncompetitive. There is a lot of mutual help here. (B., programmer working at a segregated hub).

Indeed, considerably more women who worked at segregated hubs indicated in the questionnaire that working with women only was important for them 'to a great extent' and that working with haredi women was especially important for them, compared to women working at assimilative organizations (61 per cent versus 11 per cent, and 46 per cent versus 4 per cent, respectively). It was also not surprising that considerably more women who worked at segregated hubs indicated in the questionnaire that working in a kosher environment was important for them 'to a great extent', compared to women working at assimilative organizations (70 per cent versus 36 per cent, respectively). S., 26 years old, team leader for six years at a segregated high-tech organization, married with three kids, her husband a yeshiva student, learned practical engineering at the seminary where she was contacted by the hub manager. Her words typically convey the convenience of staying in the segregated hub, even though it also has drawbacks, salary-wise:

I have already settled down here ... I know that I earn less than what I could have outside. But outside I would not have 10 girls in my team ... Once I wanted to make a change, but now I prefer it like this. (S., team leader, segregated hub).

One of the prominent themes stressed by our respondents in the context of explaining the trade-off was that of work-family balancing. Many in the segregated hubs said that they prefer the steady pay cheques and flexible hours. Because their work revolved around deadlines – not in-office hours – many of them said they could accommodate

TABLE 5 Commitment, burnout and job satisfaction in the segregated and assimilative organizations

	Segregated workplaces (N = 75)	Assimilative workplaces (N = 44)	p-value
Commitment	$M = 3.08, SD = 0.15$	$M = 2.95, SD = 0.12$	0
Burnout	$M = 2.44, SD = 0.83$	$M = 2.46, SD = 0.8$	0.8
Satisfaction	$M = 3.55, SD = 0.61$	$M = 3.51, SD = 0.5$	0.66

work to their already busy schedules as wives and mothers, starting their days in the early morning so that they can leave in time for the afternoon car pool and then complete assignments from their home computer after tucking the children into bed. As the following respondent, a haredi woman, 24 years old, working at a hub for five years, typically illustrates:

... I didn't go to the university to do a first degree in computers. I didn't think a first degree was worth the investment. It's three years of investment that you undertake at the same time you get married in a time that is crucial for building the marital connection. That's why I didn't want it. My goal is the family's livelihood, because I want my husband to learn [at the yeshiva]. (B., hub programmer).

There were many similar assertions of the priority of family life and the husband's religious studies over the women's career. Interestingly, haredi women at both the segregated and the assimilative organizations agreed that family always prevails over work. The following quote, from an interview with a haredi woman working as a programmer in an assimilative high-tech organization, clarifies the meaning of 'commitment' for these women:

I am here for making a living, not for making a career. Of course, I am committed ... But there is a difference between commitment and career. Commitment is during the nine hours you work. This is where we (haredi women) are strongest ... No coffee breaks. No smoking. We are here to work, all the way. Career requires something else. (E., assimilative organization).

While for some women, the trade-off offered by the segregated hub was satisfactory, others became more critical. The theme of exploitation in the segregated hubs is discussed in the following section.

8.3 | 'I felt I was exploited': Leaving the segregated hub

The theme of exploitation at the segregated hub was mentioned by many of our respondents who moved from it to work in assimilative workplaces. M., 32 years old, with three kids, worked for about five years at a subcontracted segregated hub and then moved to another segregated company with improved working conditions. Her critical comments illustrate how even the segregated organizations are not made of one skin, and there is a big difference caused by subcontracting:

This organization had a haredi woman in a managerial position, and she pushed the idea of bringing in haredi programmers for less money. They take money from the Ministry of Industry [that subsidizes haredi employees] but they tell the girls, you need to be grateful because we made it possible for you to work here. (M., haredi programmer, segregated QA organization).

The following typical quote is taken from an interview with T., a 25-year-old haredi women, three years in an assimilative organization after 1.5 years in a segregated hub, who learned practical engineering in a seminary and later did a first degree in computer science at a haredi institute. Both her parents are North-American Jews, and she is married to a yeshiva student, with three children:

... I think it's exploiting the innocents. For me, the segregated hub was to begin with a stepping stone. Now that I'm in an assimilative organization, this is where I want to be. I remember when I wanted to leave the hub, there's a fee you have to pay if you leave before two years, and my father told me: it doesn't matter how much the fine is, move out, you need to find a place where you can develop. (T., assimilative organization).

Corporate managers at segregated organizations justified the low pay with the somewhat paternalistic argument that they hire 'underemployed and inexperienced workers' (see also Sandler, 2009) and invest in training them, and by the fact that workdays are shorter by one hour than what is customary in the industry. The following quote from an

interview with O., a 28-year-old married haredi women who worked for four years in a hub before moving to an assimilative high-tech organization, captures this criticism:

Why did I leave the hub? The pay was really low. Even though I was working in software development and not QA. I asked for a raise, and they said no ... Working at the hub, you should not expect any promotion. But it's really convenient and it's a good starting point.

Those haredi women who worked in assimilative organizations also encountered conflicts, but of a different nature, as the following section describes.

8.4 | 'I am not a loner, I'm someone with stricter boundaries': Negotiating the social and the professional in the assimilative organization

Did working in an assimilative organization have a positive effect on women's attitudes toward secular society? Did it make them feel more at ease when interfacing with secular people, or did it become a hassle and a source of stress? The answer seems to be a complicated 'yes and no' that revolves around doing gender through negotiating the boundaries between the social and the professional. All the respondents who worked in assimilative organizations spoke about how they actively define boundaries in order to remain haredi in a secular workplace. As the following respondent typically described this complex situation:

It's not black or white, working in a secular environment. You know that for me it's more pleasant to sit with women. You want me to have a nice time? You installed an A/C here to make me feel good? So don't put a man next to me. (E., assimilative organization).

More women who worked at assimilative organization indicated in the questionnaire that their husbands helped them at home 'to a great extent', compared to women working at segregated organizations (63 per cent versus 54 per cent, respectively). It appears that the ability to go to and stay in an assimilative (secular) organization also depended on greater support from the worker's husband. This is especially interesting given that more women who worked at assimilative organizations indicated in the questionnaire that their standard of living has increased and that they have hired help at home, compared to women working at segregated organizations (51 per cent versus 30 per cent, and 20 per cent versus 16 per cent, respectively).

In coming to terms with undesired social activities, one can evidently start with avoidance, and work one's way via selective to full assimilation. Many of the women who worked at assimilative organizations described how they emphasize a strategy of avoidance when it comes to social activities. S., 47 years old, senior engineer at an assimilative high-tech workplace, married with six children, typically described the common strategy of avoiding the social as much as possible:

I stay away from social activities. If it's defined as team building – I will go. Many haredi women do not want to sit together with men, and this can be practically solved with open space. The corporation encourages diversity, there are people responsible for that, so they will find solutions, and they ask you what else they can do to help. (S., assimilative high-tech organization).

Another respondent elaborated on the personal price that avoiding social activities carried:

No haredi woman will go out in mixed company. My boss really tries hard ... she once said 'let's go together to the kotel [the Wailing Wall, in Jerusalem]' – as if this would be okay because of the religious goal. I told her, it does not make any difference, even if we go out for a walk around the corporate building, in a mixed group it would be a problem. (E., assimilative organization).

Another respondent reflected on the different codes of language and behaviour that will by default manifest themselves when a haredi women finds herself in a mixed group working with men:

Communication with men at work is always full of problematic nuances. Men who come and shake your hand. Or touch you on the shoulder. My sister told me that she once said in the office how tired she was, and one of the guys told her, you're still beautiful, you're always beautiful ... as if in good spirits but for a haredi girl ... he probably thought he was complimenting her. But for her, she never had a boyfriend, you know? (F., assimilative organization).

A., 48 years old, married to a yeshiva student, with 11 children, software engineer in an assimilative IT organization who has worked in various positions from QA via software development to team leader, sums up her experience concerning the professional/social conflict as an essential culture clash that goes beyond the artefacts of dress, language or behaviour, reflecting a deep-seated difference in basic assumptions:

I had a really hard time throughout the years with my bosses. It was okay where they already were familiar with me and knew I was not a loner, I'm someone with stricter boundaries ... I call it the three circles: work, people, group. If it's about work, I will always say yes. In the outer circle of group life, in a mixed group, I will say no. The circle in-between, of interaction with co-workers, that's a gray zone. (A., assimilative organization).

8.5 | Assimilating the social

Although the common emphasis of most of our respondents in the assimilative organizations was on avoiding social activities, there were some respondents who argued for self-assimilation as well as assimilation by broader society. Intriguingly, respondents used in this context what could be termed a rhetoric of disability rights. Such an argument is expressed by the following respondent from an assimilative high-tech organization:

Now if I were to tell you how organizations might assimilate better, so that employers really know what's important ... it's like accessibility for people with disabilities. It doesn't sound good but it's like special accessibility. (M.L., working in an assimilative organization).

The self-assimilation of the social, once again reflecting on the social handicapping of haredi women, is exemplified by the following excerpt from an interview with F., 32 years old with two daughters, software engineer with a first degree in computer sciences, who has been working for seven years in an assimilative organization. Her parents are North-American Jews 'baalei teshuva' (penitents) and her husband (also a penitent, *Baal teshuva*) is a yeshiva student:

There are those who start in there [segregated hubs] and then look for something better. I don't know if legally you can call it exploitation ... but don't you think it is exploitation if they really make minimum wage, their production is worth much more, and the bottom line is that the organization makes lots of money on them, and only because of this religious thing they are disabled so it's a kind of exploiting their religious disability. It's taking advantage of someone's weakness. (F., assimilative organization; emphasis added).

This 'religious disability' was also mentioned in the context of cultural gaps in the assimilative organization. For example, respondents reflected on how they lacked 'self-promotion' and assertiveness, a lack which they explained as having been caused by haredi socialization which deems these traits to be in contrast with female virtues such as modesty and self-sufficiency.

9 | DISCUSSION

The case of haredi women in high-tech shows the plurality of options that can accompany the confluence of intersectionality and doing gender. The various ways in which gender is said and done in these organizations derive

from a complex interplay between organizational structures, social hierarchies and family relationships, yet also leaves room for (some) agency and choice. One of our main findings was that other factors besides the salary influence the haredi women's overall high job satisfaction and commitment. Haredi women who work in a segregated workplace may draw a sense of commitment from knowing that this workplace has been created especially for their religious needs. Not all women in this community have the possibility, skills and desire to work in assimilative workplaces, and some are hindered by family, cultural and religious limitations. One of the prominent themes stressed by our respondents in the context of explaining the trade-off was that of work–family balancing. Many women who stayed at the segregated hubs said they were happy to be able to find a balanced, community-approved arrangement enabling them to be all they wanted: breadwinners, mothers and wives. This was these women's way of 'doing structures and hierarchies' while at the same time 'doing identity'. From an assimilationist and secular perspective, however, they might be regarded as fearing that standing up for their right to equal pay for equal work could be interpreted as a betrayal of modesty or the de-prioritization of their family.

For all these haredi women, the notorious 'work–family conflict' has been apparently re-defined. Since family comes before work, there was no 'real' conflict but rather a need (urgent and complicated as it may be) to negotiate work arrangements that are conducive to sustaining family life. Furthermore, work is not perceived as a career, a goal in itself, but rather as a means for securing livelihood so that the husband can dedicate himself to religious studies in the yeshiva. In another study of haredi working women, while reasserting that family always comes before career, these women argued that accommodating work to family is actually more challenging for them compared to secular married women (Malchi & Abramowski, 2015). The reasons given were having many children, high expectations from the community concerning their role as wives and mothers, insecurity at work and also practical constraints such as a lack of a driver's licence and/or car. It appears that the segregated hubs reduced these constraints by providing work security, flexitime and transportation.

For the clear majority of our respondents, the 'real conflict' was not between work and family. Haredi culture has already resolved this conflict for them, prioritizing family over work. The segregated hubs have been built and arranged in a way that accommodates this prioritization. The ongoing conflict described by our respondents in the context of the assimilative organizations was the professional/social conflict. This conflict was not relevant to the segregated hubs due to their haredi, women-only nature; but it loomed large in the context of assimilative organizations – indeed, it was seen as the crux, or onus, of assimilation. Some haredi women who had worked for some years in assimilative organizations reflected on a process that they underwent, in which they became less critical of their own assimilation and more critical of self-segregation and segregation by their own community and by broader society. Interestingly, it reflected a process whereby the external distinction between segregated and assimilative organizations becomes internal – self-segregation and self-assimilation as a dynamic personality and behavioural change experienced by the person. This was these women's way of '(un)doing structures and hierarchies' while at the same time 'doing identity'.

10 | IN CONCLUSION

This study shows how labour segregation is enabled and promoted through a collaboration between the state, the community and the corporate world. The case of haredi women in high-tech highlights both the intersectional boundaries of gendered arrangements and their negotiability. In the segregated and assimilative workplaces, we see two distinct strategies of doing gender in organizations. In the segregated hubs, the boundaries are already built-in, set under the supervision of management as well as the rabbis. In this segregated pattern of employment, the work–family conflict was contained within the *status quo* of adhering to the traditional dictum whereby women are expected to do paid labour but not to have a *career*. The haredi media often reminds their readers that women's work is only the means to the end of their husbands' excellence in Torah study, and not a goal in and by itself (Neria-Ben Shahaar, 2009). The segregated setting was built on group solidarity, with women working in homogenous groups. In

assimilative organizations, in contrast, the boundaries were being constantly re-negotiated by women as individuals, exploring new ways to assimilate the social and the secular. Thus, we see how labour segmentation generates respective strategies of doing gender, which may further reinforce this segmentation. Women who prefer the benefits of the segregated hubs would arguably stay there, without having to worry about straddling the professional/social conflicts and challenges of the assimilative organizations. As has been shown, these benefits include not only convenience, but also family, religious and communal dimensions.

11 | IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Several caveats are in order. First, our relatively small sample size warrants caution when interpreting results. Second, these findings were obtained from women working in organizations who gave us permission to study them, and are not necessarily generalizable to all segregated and assimilative organizations where haredi women are employed. These findings add to works with diverse methodologies in demonstrating the utility of intersectionality for understanding segmented employment patterns of women from segregated communities.

The intersectional analysis of segmented labour also highlights how specific gender strategies play out in/against 'global' norms of work and professionalism. This leads to insights of gender and work on deeper levels, mirroring and subverting the global (masculine, western) taken-for-granted ways of 'how to perform in work contexts'. It is true that the segregated hubs are not meant to promote mobilization into high-status occupational positions, and instead they reproduce the gendered and religious subordination of haredi female programmers. In this light, some may question the use of terms such as 'empowerment' and 'mobilization' in the context of such work arrangements. Such critical reflection indeed has turned some of our respondents in the assimilative organizations into agents of change in their family and community environments. Only future research may reveal how these haredi women are 'reprogramming' their femininity and social roles, and how this may bring about change in their community.

We have tried to refrain from criticism that is biased by a 'romance of resistance' (Abu-Lughod, 1990) that ascribes women agency or victimhood by the degree to which they align with western liberal feminist progressive politics. The performance of gender-traditional religious norms is, in itself, an equal form of agency (Avishai, 2008; Mahmood, 2005; Zion-Waldoks, 2015). Instead of pitting the liberal western 'autonomy as free will' against religious 'agency as submission', we prefer to build upon the notion that agency is 'an action within relationship' (Gergen, 2009, p. 82; Zion-Waldoks, 2015). This approach emphasizes subjectivation as a form of agency, asserting it is more consistent with religious subjects' experience of complying for religious ends. Focusing on either empowerment or exploitation becomes an analytical dead end, given the variations in work arrangements, how workers make sense of their own employment and the gendered meanings that emerge from these intersecting processes within a specific socio-political context.

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ENDNOTE

¹ http://www.cbs.gov.il/reader/?Mlval=cw_usr_view_SHTML&ID=878

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