

A new avenue in organisational research: blurring organisational boundaries and ethnic segregation of job quality

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While numerous studies show ethnic segregation in job quality, few studies focus on ethnic segregation of job quality in inter-organisational networks. This abstract shows the need for more studies regarding ethnic segregation of job quality in inter-organisational networks.

Greenan et al. (2013) describe that between 1995 and 2005 physical strain and job intensity have increased in Europe. In addition, the study of Greenan et al. (2010) notes that employees in Europe are increasingly working in jobs which are characterised by an imbalance between job demands and job controls. An imbalance between job controls and job demands increases the risk for physical health problems and mental health problems (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). Karasek and Theorell (1990) distinguish between four job types in regards to job content. Low-strain jobs are characterised by low job demands and high job control. In active jobs, employees experience high job demands and low job control. Passive jobs combine low job demands and low decision latitude. High-strain jobs combine high job demands and low job control. Karasek and Theorell (1990) underline that the balance between job demands and job controls, in active jobs, decreases the risk for job related health problems.

Along with this decreasing tendency in job quality, an increasing trend regarding inter-organisational restructuring takes place. Organisations are focusing more and more on their core activities (Marchington, 2005). Consequently, few organisations in our modern society accomplish all the tasks in the production process of one product (Cropper, 2008). This restructuring process causes inter-organisational production networks that cluster several organisational tasks in different economic activities (Lee et al., 1999). Holman and McClelland (2011) show that job demands and job controls differ across economic activities. As a result, we expect a shift from job quality segregation within an organisation to job quality segregation between organisations in networks.

Previous research indicates that ethnic minorities work more in jobs characterised by an unhealthy job content than the native population (Diaz-Serrano, 2013; Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993). Ethnic minorities fulfil for example more repetitive jobs, less complex jobs and less autonomous jobs (Diaz-Serrano, 2013; Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993). Wang and Pandit (2007) show that ethnic minorities are more allocated in specific economic activities. As such, ethnic segregation in job content can be explained by this allocation process. This explanation of ethnic segregation in job quality clearly complements with the segmentation theory. This theory explains ethnic segregation by the existence of clearly identifiable segments, with a different job quality, within the labour market (Reich, 2008). Ethnic minorities will then be allocated in different job quality segments (Piore, 1979). The segmentation theory is developed at the level of the labour market (Piore, 1979; Reich,

2008) and at the level of organisations (Atkinson, 1984; Friberg, 2012). Avent-Holt et al. (2010) examine that the impact of the inter-organisational structure on ethnic segregation remains underinvestigated. In short, this abstract poses that the segregation of job quality in inter-organisational networks and the allocation of jobs with a low job quality to ethnic minorities, can cause ethnic segregation in inter-organisational networks.

Ethnic segregation of job quality will be investigated by a multilevel and mixed method research design. Employee surveys gather data at the micro level of the workplace about job quality. Focus groups with trade union representatives and employers' representatives will be used to gather data at the macro level regarding inter-organisational networks.

At the conference we will outline a broader theoretical framework regarding ethnic segregation of job quality in inter- organisational networks. Simultaneously a research design for studying ethnic segregation in inter-organisational networks will be presented.

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