Introduction

This book explores gender segregation, individual and social aspects that influence career choice and progression, presenting literature from organizational and social psychology, business, and management research to give a rich and varied picture of the complex interwoven issues. The guiding message throughout is that there is a complex interplay of factors, internal and external to the individual which must be considered in gendered occupational segregation.

The global workforce is becoming more diverse. This is attributable to two key factors legislation and population change, currently many countries have ageing populations, greater ethnic diversity, and crucially more women seeking employment. Yet discrimination endures; it persists in education, training, and employment. Many areas of the United Kingdom (UK) job market remain strongly gender segregated. Men overwhelmingly dominate the manufacturing industry, construction, agriculture, and financial services. The science, engineering, and technology sectors are also predominantly male (Thewlis, Miller, and Neathey, 2004). This situation is reversed in the service sector, National Health Service (NHS), social work, and education, which is predominately female (Thewlis, Miller and Neathey, 2004). However, even in female dominated professions, such as nursing, men hold disproportionately more senior managerial positions than women do (Lane and Piercy, 2003; Miller et. al., 2002). This pattern is broadly repeated in the European Union (EU, 2011).

Figures from the United States of America (USA), also suggest that gender segregation and inequalities are evident in education and employment (US Department of Labor, 2010). In the UK for example, despite more than 40 years of legislation designed to remove gender inequity in society and the workplace (i.e. The Sex Discrimination Act, 1975; the Equal Pay Act, 1970), gender inequalities continue. America has also been trying to eradicate such discriminations through legislation (i.e. the Equal Pay Act, 1963, The Civil Rights Act, 1964, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, 1978). In considering issues of equality and diversity in the employment arena, employers must take account of the legal requirements for their Country (i.e. the UK, the Equality Act, 2010, the European Union, European Working Time Directive, 2004). Many people believe that these reforms have removed most of the inequalities faced by women at work. However, the reality is different. Women remain outnumbered at senior level and experience unequal pay and promotion prospects at all levels (i.e. see Sealy et al., 2008; Terjesen and Singh, 2008). Furthermore, it is apparent that entrenched views in relation to gender, role and performance are apparent. For example, take identification of leadership characteristics (Crolla, O’Sullivan, and Bogg, 2011), caring responsibilities (Hussain et al., 2011), equity beliefs (Bogg and Hussain, 2010), team role perceptions (Crolla, O’Sullivan and Bogg, 2011), and career beliefs (Prescott and Bogg, 2011a; Prescott and Bogg, 2011b).
THE DIFFERENT LANGUAGES OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY

In order to lay the foundation and framework of the book, the authors firstly provide the reader with a brief discussion on the language of equality and diversity, to distinguish between the two terms, which some individuals use interchangeably. This is not simply a case of semantics, as they reflect distinct concepts. The focus of equality relates to fairness. That is, developing policies and practices that address inequality, whereas diversity recognizes the importance of equality, but concentrates on the complex needs and rights of all sections of the community and recognizes multiple disadvantage and discrimination. Table 1 provides a summary of the authors’ viewpoint of the key differences between equality and diversity:

The terms equal opportunities and diversity have come to signify different things. While both attempt to remove discrimination, and be inclusive of all people, the terms equal opportunities and diversity can be interpreted differently. The terms equal opportunities and diversity are used together, separately or interchangeably. This has led to misunderstanding within organizations as the focus on equality has become confused (Sanglin-Grant, 2003). Similarly, in the USA with the move away from ‘affirmative action’ and the introduction of diversity, has caused confusion, with diversity coming to be associated with women or ethnic minorities, rather than inclusion for all (Sanglin-Grant, 2003).

Requiring organizations to produce their own equal opportunities policies has helped to embed the idea of equality of treatment and opportunities into organizational culture, as it is obligatory, by law, for organizations to comply with equal opportunities legislation. In addition, there continues to be some groups who experience discrimination in the workplace, and therefore need the protection of the law. However, it is important to remember that the focus of equal opportunities is to provide a framework for complying with the law, to ensure equal access to opportunities, afford legal protection from discrimination for particular groups, such as women, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities and to benefit everyone in being a visible symbol of fairness and inclusion. Equal opportunities has attracted negative press as difficulties arise from the word ‘equal’, which may become associated with focusing exclusively on only one group. In some organizations, equal opportunities have become associated exclusively with the group whose cause has received the most attention. This is often women or ethnic minorities and, increasingly since the Disability Discrimination Act (1995, 2005), people with disabilities. Equal opportunities emphasize a move away from discrimination, rather than moving towards diversity. For

Table 1. Distinctions between equality and diversity

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Equality</th>
<th>Diversity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Externally initiated</td>
<td>Internally initiated</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legally driven (focus on race, gender, and disability)</td>
<td>Driven by business (focus on a broad range of differences)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quantitative focus</td>
<td>Qualitative focus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem focus</td>
<td>Opportunity focus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difference perceived as a problem</td>
<td>Difference perceived as an asset</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group-focused</td>
<td>Individual-focused</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reactive</td>
<td>Proactive</td>
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example, many equal opportunities statements are designed to demonstrate organizations attempts to comply with the law. Whereas, equality is operational, reactive, and legally driven, diversity is strategic and proactive, with differences viewed as an asset.

Diversity is about maximizing the potential of the entire workforce as well as valuing individual contribution. It includes everyone, not just those covered by the legislation. Flexibility, innovation, and creativity can be enhanced by building a diverse workforce. It can help to create a culture that values individual differences, as well as developing a business case approach that connects diversity with success in the marketplace. However, use of the word diversity has led to the emergence of a large number of ‘qualifiers’ to indicate the kind of diversity being described. For example, age diversity, cultural diversity, cultural language, diversity of cultures, people and ideas, ethnic diversity, managing diversity, race and diversity, supplier diversity, minority supplier diversity, diverse marketplace, diverse workforce, and the business case for diversity. In turn this has created specific policies aimed at particular groups in a similar way to that of Equal Opportunities policy and practice.

True diversity should allow for a more inclusive approach that takes equal opportunities beyond specific groups and legislation. It focuses on creating a culture that is accepting of difference while embracing the value differences can bring to organizations and society. Many organizations have developed a business case for diversity. Often they will have looked at minority groups in terms of the benefits they can provide. Organizations will have considered how to attract and retain the best people, regardless of the group to which they belong, as well as seeking at all times to develop talent and potential. Unfortunately, diversity can be misinterpreted. Its use may cause confusion, as it is hard to differentiate it from the normal functioning of an organization, as most staff development departments and programs exist to maximize the potential of all employees. It can also be so all encompassing that it becomes meaningless and become a ‘smoke screen’ for inactivity. It may also be used to disguise what is essentially an equal opportunities policy masquerading as diversity.

Organizations involved in developing and implementing equality and diversity policies can sometimes experience difficulties. The words equal opportunities and diversity can become associated with certain groups. Furthermore, equality and diversity may be used interchangeably, leading to misdirected policies or employee misunderstanding. Therefore in the workplace, policy and practice can focus on being ‘fair’ (equality) and address inequality or concentrate on more complex needs, rights and possible multiple disadvantage (diversity).

Despite policy, procedure, and rhetoric many professions remain gender segregated. What is required is greater transparency in order to progress women in science (Bogg, 2010, 2007) and for policy makers and employers to really listen to the voices of women who work in the industry, to enable, encourage and empower the next generation of women workers (Prescott and Bogg, 2010). This book will explore gender segregation and the individual and social aspects that influence career choice and progression. The focus will be on diversity as positive for employees, the organization, and society. In times when the composition of the workforce is changing, embracing change presents a wonderful opportunity for the development of women in the workforce and for employers is a good business case.
REFERENCES

Bogg, J. (2007). Dr Jekyll and Ms Hide: Where are the women in science? And what would attract them from other sectors? *Nature*, 447, 114. doi:10.1038/nj7140-114a


