

ABSTRACT

How Segregated is the Barbadian Labour Market?: An Examination into the Extent of Gender Differences in Employment in Barbados, 1946 and 1980.

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This thesis attempts to assess the differential impact of changes in the occupational structure on male and female employment in Barbados at two periods in time - 1946 and 1980. For this purpose an analysis is undertaken of the degree of segregation within the labour market. The model - a modified socialist feminist framework - was chosen after an extensive review of all existing theoretical positions led us to believe that, if modified, the socialist feminist position was the one most likely to fit the Barbadian situation. One modification made was to incorporate an analysis of the International Division of Labour as it affects the employment of females in the island. The perspective is only partially applied as the study makes no attempt to determine the extent to which household dynamics may affect the positions which Barbadian women hold in the labour market.

Analysis involving the use of the Index of Dissimilarity, Representation Ratio and Shift-share

analysis, permitted us to arrive at the conclusion that there is a high degree of gender segregation in both time periods. The analysis indicates that the position for women in the labour market has changed only marginally over the period, despite the expansion in main economic activity in the economy and improvement in women's education. We argue that this lack of change cannot be attributed purely to gender specific factors, but could also have been determined in part by the operations of the International Division of Labour and by technological improvements within particular industries.

Data provided point to little change in the index of dissimilarity between 1946 and 1980 and showed that women tended to congregate in occupations already heavily dominated by their gender, although a small proportion had begun to move into traditional 'male' occupations. The data also revealed that the changes in economic activity were more beneficial to male employment than to that of females.

The study concludes that the partial application of the socialist feminist framework does not permit definitive statements to be made on its suitability to the Barbadian context.

Finally some recommendations are made concerning areas for further research.