

The Effect of Gender and Ethnicity and their Intersection on Work Satisfaction and Earnings in Estonia, 1993-2008

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Abstract

This article examines trends in the labour market position, defined in terms of three dimensions – earnings, perceived job security and overall job satisfaction – among four population groups in Estonia – Estonian men and women and Russian-speaking men and women. We explore how the labour market position of these groups changed between 1993 and 2008.

We used data from 1993 and 2008, collected in the population survey *Work, Family and Leisure*, designed by the Institute of International and Social Studies at Tallinn University. We carried out a two-step analysis: first, we conducted descriptive analysis to explore changes in the labour market situation of men and women of two ethnic groups in the period of 1993-2008; and second, we used models of multivariate analysis of variances to examine how gender, ethnicity and occupational status as well as the intersection of these variables are related to earnings, job security and job satisfaction.

We found that Estonian men have emerged as the most successful group in the labour market, while the labour market position of Russian-speaking women is the most disadvantaged compared to other groups in terms of earnings, job security and job satisfaction. We suggest that these labour market inequalities could be increasing, and that the interaction of gender and ethnicity might become increasingly important in shaping labour market outcomes.

Keywords: labour market inequalities, gender, ethnicity, Estonia, intersectionality.

Introduction

Over the last decades, there has been an increasing amount of research interest in the growing rate of female employment and the gendered aspects of labour markets (Baxter & Kane 1995, Ashwin 2000, van der Lippe & van Dijk 2002, Grönroos & Lorenzen 2003, Gonäs & Karlsson 2006, etc.). Studies have revealed that despite gains in women's educational levels, occupational status, and an increase in general opportunities, women continue to work in jobs that tend to be traditionally female and earn less than men (Hanson & Wells-Dang 2006, Gonäs & Bergman 2009, etc.).

Estonia, like other post-Socialist countries, has been characterised by high employment rates for both men and women (Pollert 2005). During the Soviet regime (1940/1944–1991), employment was not only available but also a social obligation for both men and women. Yet, full-time female employment coexisted with traditional gender roles and an unequal division of household chores and responsibilities in bringing up children (Narusk & Kandolin 1997, Narusk & Hansson 1999).

Researchers exploring changes in the post-communist countries in the early 1990s noticed surprising tendencies that differed from trends in the Western countries – a certain 'renaissance' of traditional gender role attitudes (e.g. Narusk & Kandolin 1997, Motiejunaite & Kravchenko 2008, Gečiene 2008, etc.). The trend of re-traditionalisation of attitudes was characteristic also of Estonia. Narusk and Kandolin (1997) suggest that this trend primarily stemmed from women rejecting the double burden and the former Soviet gender ideology that advocated full-time employment as a 'social duty'.

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Estonia is an interesting case for researchers in many ways. As mentioned, Estonia has a long history of high female employment. Although transformation into a market economy and reforms that started in the early 1990s provided more employment opportunities and choices for both Estonian men and women, today there are no signs of decreasing inequalities in earnings and in the gender segregation of the labour market. Recent data on inequalities in the national labour markets in the European Union indicate that the largest gender disparities exist in the Estonian labour market, at both occupational and sectoral levels. The concentration of women in certain occupational areas, such as healthcare and social services, is disproportionately large in Estonia (Sotsiaalministeerium 2010: 35). Such segregation of the labour market is one of the major causes of the gender pay gap in Estonia, which is currently the highest in the EU as well – on average, men earn 30.3% more than women in Estonia (Eurostat 2009). Also, the Estonian labour market is characterised by considerable ethnic segregation. Taking into account these large disparities in Estonia, it would be important to explore how and why labour market inequalities have emerged, and how they have changed over time.

A relatively big Russian-speaking minority group also makes Estonia an interesting place to explore variances in labour market outcomes among men and women of different ethnic groups. It has to be noted that the Russian-speaking population group in Estonia – almost 30 per cent of the population – is not a historic minority, but the result of the labour migration policy of the former Soviet regime (for more detail, see Katus, Puur & Sakkeus 2003).

The data from national population surveys 'Work, Family, and Leisure' (WFL), conducted in 1993 and 2008, provide the authors of the present article with a unique opportunity to examine the relationships between the changes that have taken place in the Estonian labour market during the above-mentioned period, and existing labour market inequalities. The following analysis will examine the impact of gender and ethnicity on earnings, job security and job quality in 1993 and in 2008. With different economic, social and institutional settings at these two points in time, the surveys of 1993 and 2008 can be viewed as belonging to different eras. For example, the years that predated the 1993 survey – the first years of independence – were characterised by radical structural and economic reforms and a transition to a free-market economy. The reforms resulted in an unstable and insecure labour market and economic difficulties for the majority of people in Estonia. The 2008 survey was carried out in an entirely different situation. The favourable economic trends of the early 2000s and the acceptance of Estonia into the European Union in 2004 had a stabilising effect on the labour market and on resulted in a significant improvement of the economic situation of people in Estonia. Furthermore, at the time of the 2008 WFL survey, the social impact of the economic crisis and recession were not yet experienced in Estonia. Instead of problems in the labour market, which were characteristic of many European countries, in Estonia several branches of the economy experienced a labour shortage. The aim of this article is to examine trends in the Estonian labour market and job quality, defined in terms of three dimensions – earnings, perceived job security and overall job satisfaction – among four population groups in Estonia – Estonian men and women, as well as Russian-speaking men and women.

Background

When analysing differences in the labour market situation and inequalities, it is important to understand the specific institutional settings of the period of interest in which people's work experiences occur. The institutional framework within which people act and form their values and attitudes, plays an important role in creating group differences in how work is perceived and valued (Svallfors et al. 2001: 139).

In the Soviet period, the official standpoint held that men and women were nominally equal. Although few sociological studies carried out at that period showed significant horizontal and vertical segregation, statistics reflecting the real situation in the labour market had not been developed (Narusk 1995).

Starting with the transition to a market economy to well into the early years of post-communism, Estonian economy underwent significant changes. The Estonian labour market in the early 1990s was going through restructuring and can be characterised by quite a high degree of instability.¹ With the transition to a market economy, privatisation of large enterprises took place, resulting in a loss of jobs, especially for the Russian-speaking minority. By the mid-1990s, the labour market had stabilised considerably (Lindemann 2011: 97). Between 2001 and 2007, Estonia experienced a rapid improvement of economic conditions or an economic boom, which resulted in more favourable labour market conditions and, along with this, a decrease in unemployment rates (*ibid.*). However, these favourable conditions gave an advantage mostly to the ethnic Estonians, as during the years of economic growth the disadvantage of Russian speakers compared to ethnic Estonians increased (*ibid.*). There were several reasons for that. First, during the Soviet period the Russian-speaking work force moved to Estonia to be employed in the 'strategic' branches of industry – military complexes, the machine building industry, the metal and chemical industry, mining companies, etc. Thus, already in the Soviet era the Estonian labour market was characterised by a degree of ethnic segregation, with most Estonians working in occupations related to education, culture and agriculture, while Russian speakers tended to be employed in the manufacturing sector (*ibid.*). During the reforms of the 1990s, the companies with Russian-speaking employees underwent major organisation changes such as closedowns, significant downsizing, etc. that affected the perceived job security of employees. Starting from the early years of post-soviet restructuring, the Russian-speaking labour force found themselves in a disadvantaged socio-economic position, characterised by higher unemployment and lower income (Krusell 2007, Vöörmann & Helemäe 2011). Second, compared to ethnic Estonians, new employment opportunities or career perspectives of Russian speakers were constrained first of all by insufficient language skills that restricted their ability to find and secure jobs with a higher status or higher level of rewards (for more detail, see Vetik & Helemäe 2011).

To give an overview of the labour market position of employees at the intersection of gender and ethnicity in Estonia, we present data on income and employment rates in 2008. In terms of the income in the four groups, considerable differences exist between the incomes of the highest earning group, Estonian men, and the lowest earning group, Russian-speaking women. According to Statistics Estonia, in 2008, the equalised yearly disposable income for Estonian men was 7815 euros, compared to 7404 euros for Estonian women, 6532 euros for Russian-speaking men and 6128 euros for Russian-speaking women (Statistics Estonia 2011). Data on the incomes of ethnic Estonians and Russian speakers indicate that ethnic disparities exist even in case of people who have obtained higher education – the incomes of Russian speakers remain lower compared to those of Estonians, even in the case of this well-educated group, who are highly qualified and have a good knowledge of the Estonian language (Krusell 2007, Lindemann & Vöörmann 2010). Thus, since the restoration of independence, there has been a considerable rise in the unexplained wage gap between ethnic groups in Estonia in favour of Estonian-speaking employees (Vöörmann & Helemäe 2011).

In 2008, there were some differences in the employment rates. The employment rates of women (66%) were somewhat lower than those of men (73%) (Ministry of Social Affairs 2009).

According to several studies (Lepik 2010, Marksoo 2010), the main obstacle of being employed for the Russian-speaking population is the lack of sufficient Estonian language skills. Around 29% of the Russian-speaking population claim that they do not have sufficient Estonian language skills

¹ For an overview of the Estonian labour market during the transition period, see Grishakova & Kazulja (2008). For an overview of Estonian labour market developments in the early postcommunist era (with the focus on the situation of minorities in the Estonian labour market), see Lindemann 2011.

(Lepik 2010). However, knowledge of the Estonian language among the Russian-speaking population has increased significantly during the last two decades, especially among the younger generation (Marksoo & Järv 2008). The fact that the disadvantaged position of ethnic Russians in the Estonian labour market has remained in place despite the considerable improvement of Estonian language skills among the (young) Russian-speaking population in recent years suggests that other factors besides language skills might play a role.

Theoretical framework

Research on work and employment (e.g. Swallfors et al. 2001, Hult & Svallfors 2002, Esser 2005, etc.) suggests that people view their work either as a job, a career or a calling. Accordingly, people value different aspects of a job and perceive their jobs differently – either by instrumental dimensions of work, like pay, or by non-instrumental rewards, like achievement of the status they can get through work. However, in normal labour market situations, most people prefer to be engaged in paid work even if it is not financially necessary (Nordenmark 1999, Hult 2008).

There is a large amount of scholarship from Western countries showing that men and women tend to work in different sectors, in different occupations and in different hierarchical positions (Acker 1998, Gonäs & Bergman 2005, Kirton & Greene 2005, Gonäs & Karlsson 2006, etc.). Researchers exploring post-communist regimes (e.g. Rotkirch & Temkina 1997, Rudd 2001, Lange 2008, etc.) have concluded that communist regimes were characterised by significant differences between gender ideologies and practices. The gender ideology emphasised the equality of women and men at the workplace, whereas in the family sphere traditional gender roles were seen as the norm (Narusk & Kandolin 1997, Rotkirch & Temkina 1997, Zdravomyslova 2004 etc.).

There are at least two standpoints in the debates on labour market inequalities. One line of argumentation (e.g. Pfau-Effinger 1998) says that there is a rather stable unwritten gender arrangement in a society that aims at reconciling the institutional structures with prevalent cultural norms and values. According to this argument, as far as all groups get equal pay for equal work, segregation in the labour market is not a problem. According to Pfau-Effinger, gender contracts are typically resistant to change, and it takes a high level of discontentment in a society before the existing gender relations are renegotiated. The other school of thought stresses the importance of desegregation. They argue that as long as the labour market is segregated and wage earners are sorted according to gender, ethnicity, education, etc., the increase of labour market equalities is just an illusion (Gonäs & Karlsson 2006).

Social and economic inequalities are often maintained and reproduced at the level of organisations (Hult 2004, Gonäs & Bergman 2009, Acker 2006). According to Acker, “all organizations have inequality regimes, defined as loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions and meanings that result and maintain class, gender and racial inequalities within particular organizations” (2006: 443). Inequality in organisations is defined by Acker as “systematic disparities between participants in power and control over goals, resources, and outcomes; workplace decisions such as how to organize work; opportunities for promotion and interesting work; security in employment and benefits; pay and other monetary rewards; respect, and pleasures in work and work relations” (Acker 2006: 443). These regimes are fluid and changing and are linked to inequality in the society at large (Acker 2006).

A number of scholars talk about certain gendered (and ethnicised, racialised, etc.) assumptions that have been institutionalised in many highly valued and professional fields, such as science and politics (Padamsee 2009), in other words, the concept of the ideal worker (Acker 2006, Williams 2000, etc.), as reasons why women continue to be underrepresented at the top of the job hierarchy. The *generic* categories such as, for example, ‘scientist’ or ‘politician’ are all implicitly masculine, because successful professionals are presumed to be entirely dedicated to work with no competing responsibilities

for unpaid care work at home (Padamsee 2009, Acker 2006), and also, being a scientist, politician or other professional at the top of the job hierarchy entails 'doing masculinity', as these professions are expected to talk and behave in ways that are associated with masculinity (Padamsee 2009).

In the Estonian context, these generic categories, besides being implicitly gendered, are also simultaneously ethnicised, meaning that, for example, the 'generic politician' is an Estonian male – unburdened by care work responsibilities as well as citizenship or language issues among others. These gendered and ethnicised assumptions regarding prestigious top positions in certain professional fields are implicit and not articulated and, therefore, remain unproblematised. So far, they have remained unexplored in research on labour market inequalities in Estonia.

The hiring decisions of employers are based on "images of appropriate gendered and racialized bodies" (Acker 2006: 449), or in the context of Estonia, ethnicised bodies. Thus, women, especially minority women, might be considered ideal workers for some jobs, especially low-wage jobs that require accepting orders (Acker 2006: 450).

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a theoretical concept and methodological approach that has attained an increasingly important position in the work of feminist scholars in the last two decades (see theoretical and methodological conceptualizations of intersectionality by McCall 2005, Bowleg 2008, Lykke 2010, Hancock 2007, Shields 2008, Yuval-Davis 2006, Choo & Ferree 2010, Winker & Degele 2011). At the level of theory, intersectionality has transformed how gender is being discussed (Shields 2008), as it suggests that along with gender, other socially constructed identity categories contribute to social inequality and, therefore, gender should not be taken as the sole or primary category through which to study social inequality. Intersectionality is conceptualised as "the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power" (Davis 2008: 68). Intersectionality helps uncover the experiences of disadvantage some groups in the society have, and it can also be used to explore how other groups retain and reinforce their position of power and privilege. Accordingly, intersectional analysis can be used to study how dominant groups are constructed (Kantola 2009: 16, Choo & Ferree 2010) or the so-called 'unmarked groups', which are defined as normative standards and, thus, remain unproblematised (Choo & Ferree 2010), for instance, white heterosexual elite masculinities.

However, experiences of marginalisation and privilege are not always mutually exclusive. Intersectionality is a useful tool to study how people's experiences of marginalisation stemming from one dimension of their identity are intertwined with privilege or opportunity in different contexts. People can simultaneously be members of dominant and subordinate groups (Bowleg 2008: 314), and, thus, individuals "can simultaneously experience disadvantage and privilege" (Browne & Misra 2003: 489).

Research (both quantitative and qualitative) on labour market inequalities using intersectionality as a framework of analysis have become more widespread, as have theoretical conceptualisations on how to study inequalities in the context of work using intersectional approaches, (see for example, Browne & Misra 2003, Acker 2006).

Within intersectionality, Dubrow (2008) has introduced an approach to cumulative disadvantage in terms of gender, ethnicity and social class disadvantages. Cumulative disadvantage means that each dimension and disadvantage creates some distinct advantage and disadvantage that combine by adding onto one another (Weldon 2006).

When inequalities in the labour market (such as the pay gap, employment rates, etc.) or people's experiences related to work in Estonia are analysed in labour market research or presented in statistics publications, comparisons are almost always drawn between people located at different dimensions

within one social category, such as gender, age or ethnicity, and little or no attention is paid to the intersections of these categories. In this article, we look at the labour market position of groups at the intersection of gender and ethnicity.

In the present study, we employ intersectionality as a perspective of research rather than as a theory that drives the research questions.

Objectives of the study

The majority of comparative studies on labour markets (e.g. Sundström 1999, Knudsen & Wærness 2001, Hult & Svallfors 2002, Heineck 2004, Lück 2005, Hanson & Wells-Dang 2006) have revealed significant differences between the work opportunities of men and women. Our study aims to add to existing research by focusing on differences in the work quality in which inequalities have been most often experienced – earnings, perceived job security and job satisfaction – of four population groups, with the main focus on the intersection of gender and ethnicity – Estonian women, Russian-speaking women, Russian-speaking men and Estonian men. Also, intersections with other categories, such as status, as well as their effect on work-related issues will be considered. The use of two comparable datasets drawn from population surveys conducted in different points of time – 1993 and 2008 – makes it possible to examine the time effect on job quality.

In this article, we seek to answer three principal questions:

(a) Whether and to what extent can we speak of the intersection of gender/ethnicity/occupational status disadvantages and advantages in the Estonian labour market?

(b) What institutional and structural factors contribute to these (dis)advantages and what implications do they have on the power relations in the Estonian labour market?

(c) How can the intersectional approach be applied to further studies on labour market inequalities?

Data and method

Data used in the present study were drawn from two waves of the nationally representative population survey 'Work, Family and Leisure' (WFL), designed and administrated by the Institute of International and Social Studies at Tallinn University and carried out with 5-year intervals since 1993. The WFL surveys were designed to collect data on different aspects of everyday life including individual and household characteristics, family life, employment experience, leisure time activities, attitudes and values, etc. In the surveys, research data were collected using mailed questionnaires. The questionnaires were posted with an invitation letter that explained the purpose of the study and emphasised the anonymity of respondents, and a pre-paid response envelope. The surveys used a multistage random sampling based on registry data from the population information system, including population aged 18-69 living at a residential address in Estonia. The final sample of the 1993 survey contained 1867 respondents and that of 2008 included 1541 respondents.

There were two types of questions used in the surveys: questions asked of all respondents and questions targeted at certain population groups. The questions concerning work, i.e. the issues of employment experience, current work situation, earnings, job characteristics, work satisfaction and attitudes towards work were asked only if respondents were currently employed. In the 1993 and 2008 surveys, identical modules of questions concerning work were used.

In the present study, we were interested in the module of questions asked of respondents who were currently employed. Accordingly, in the present study we are using sub-samples of 1197 respondents from WFL 1993 and 1063 respondents from WFL 2008.

Outcome variables

To examine labour market inequalities, we used three measures: net monthly earnings, perceived job security, and perceived job quality.

- *Earnings*: In both surveys, respondents were asked to report on their average net monthly earnings for the period of the past 12 months.
- *Perceived job security*: The survey item was formulated as follows: *At present, are you afraid of losing your job?* with response options: 1—no, definitely not, to 5—it is very likely.
- *Job quality*: The most general measure of perceived job quality is overall job satisfaction. In the WFL surveys, there was a correlation between overall job satisfaction with specific job quality variables like interesting job, prestigious job, independent job, etc., as well as with positive interpersonal relations among co-workers. In the present study, we used the summary measure of job quality, i.e. job satisfaction. In the WFL surveys, the question was formulated as follows: *Are you satisfied with your current job?* that had a 5-point response scale with 1—completely satisfied to 5—completely dissatisfied.

Independent variables

- *Gender*: male—1, female—2;
- *Ethnicity*: In 1993, ethnicity was assessed by asking respondents to classify themselves into an ethnic group: Estonians, Russians, others (specified). In 2008, ethnicity was constructed according to the respondent's first language used at home. A respondent who reported Estonian as his or her first language used at home was identified as Estonian, and a respondent with Russian as the preferred first language used at home accordingly as a Russian speaker. Coded Estonians—1, Russian-speakers—2;
- *Occupational status*: The self-reported occupational group was recoded with upper white-collar jobs—1, lower white-collar jobs—2, blue-collar jobs—3.

Analysis

The analysis of the data of two WFL surveys consisted of two steps. First, descriptive analyses were conducted to explore the changes in the labour market situation of men and women of the two ethnic groups in the period of 1993–2008. Second, models of multivariate analysis of variances were used to examine how gender, ethnicity and occupational status as well as the intersection of these variables are related with earnings, job security and job satisfaction. As Russian speakers live mostly in the capital city and other bigger cities, while rural settlements, where employment opportunities are limited, are mostly inhabited by ethnic Estonians, we added the variable of the place of residence into the analysis as a covariate. The data of the surveys of 1993 and 2008 were analysed separately.

Results

Major trends

The comparison of the data of the two waves of WFL surveys demonstrates several trends in labour market outcomes in the early 1990s and in 2008. Descriptive analysis revealed that among those in employment, the share of full-time workers increased, whereas the share of involuntary part-timers decreased. In Estonia, involuntary part-time means that an employee would have preferred to work

full-time but the employer, usually due to economic difficulties in companies, changed the full-time contract into a part-time contract. While the share of involuntary part-timers decreased, the share of voluntary part-timers, i.e. those who had chosen this form of employment, slightly increased, especially among women. However, in 2008, the share of involuntary part-timers was still considerably higher among Russian-speaking men (17%) and women (12%), and lower among Estonians (3-4%). Accordingly, it is not a surprise that in the context of a general increase in job security, perceived security among Russian speaking men and women stayed relatively low also in 2008. Table 1 includes information on relative wages, perceived level of job security (reversed scale, 5—not afraid of losing one’s job to 1—job loss is most likely), and job satisfaction (reversed scale, 5—completely satisfied to 1—completely dissatisfied).

As it is shown in Table 1, in 1993, the group reporting the most secure position was Estonian men, the most insecure – Russian women. By 2008, the general situation in the labour market had improved, and accordingly all four groups reported a higher level of job security than in 1993. However, like in 1993, Russian-speakers were more likely to be afraid of losing their job than ethnic Estonians also in 2008.

Estonia has always been characterised by significant wage inequalities between genders. The gender wage gap of 30% in Estonia is currently the largest in the EU (Eurostat 2009). To compare differences in earnings at different points of time, we used relative wages, i.e. the average of the year was equalled to 1. According to the relative wages, in the period of 1993–2008 the wage differences between the groups increased. Comparing the relative net monthly wages, we can see that in 2008, the most well paid group were Estonian men (1.39), whereas the group with lowest wages was Russian-speaking women (0.71).

The level of general job satisfaction was high in both surveys. 71% of respondents in paid employment in 1993 and 83% in 2008 stated that they were fully or mostly satisfied with their jobs. Table 1 shows the means for job satisfaction (scale from 5—completely satisfied to 1—completely dissatisfied). While in 1993 the Russian-speaking men reported the lowest level of satisfaction regarding their job, in 2008 it was the Russian-speaking women. The group reporting the highest level of job satisfaction was Estonian men.

Job satisfaction is a most general measure of job quality that includes satisfaction with different job characteristics. In 2008, the share of respondents who were engaged in interesting, prestigious and well-paid jobs had increased, and the share of respondents whose work was stressful or physically hard had decreased in all four groups. However, there have been also some negative tendencies. The share of people who characterised their work as independent and autonomous, which is among the most significant job quality characteristics, had decreased, whereas the share of respondents who

Table 1: Changes in work characteristics among those in employment, 1993 – 2008, means

	1993				2008			
	EM	EF	RM	RF	EM	EF	RM	RF
Relative monthly wages (Mean = 1)	1.13	0.85	1.23	0.79	1.39	0.90	0.99	0.71
Job security (5 = secure)	3.56	3.33	2.95	2.70	3.80	3.64	3.27	3.32
Job satisfaction (5 = completely satisfied)	3.86	3.84	3.77	3.82	4.01	3.82	3.89	3.67
Total N	439	397	180	181	389	379	142	253

EM—Estonian male; EF—Estonian, female; RM—Russian-speaker, male; RF—Russian-speaker, female.
Source: WFL 1993 and WFL 2008 surveys.

reported having competition and co-worker conflicts at work had increased. The latter tendency was mentioned most often by Russian-speaking women. Accordingly, when in 1993 different gender/ethnic groups reported a similar level of job satisfaction, by 2008 job satisfaction had decreased among Russian-speaking women.

Intersection of gender, ethnicity and occupational status

To examine the relationship of work-related inequalities to gender, ethnicity and occupational status, as well as their interactions, multivariate analysis of variances was conducted on average net earnings, perceived job security and perceived job satisfaction separately on the data of the 1993 and 2008 WFL surveys. The results of the analysis for the WFL survey of 1993 are presented in Table 2, and those for the WFL survey in 2008 in Table 3.

Average net earnings

To examine differences in net earnings, we submitted a 3-way (gender) x 2 (ethnicity) x 3 (occupational status) analysis separately for the data of the WFL surveys of 1993 and 2008. As can be seen in Table 2, in 1993 gender showed the strongest main effect ($F = 67.74$, $p < .001$), followed by occupational status ($F = 48.50$, $p < .001$). The main effect for ethnicity was statistically insignificant. The highest level of earnings was found among men engaged in upper white-collar jobs and the lowest level of earnings was found among women working in blue-collar jobs, regardless of their ethnicity. Gender, ethnicity and occupational status interactions were statistically insignificant. Overall, in 1993 the combination of the three variables – gender, ethnicity and occupational status – explained about 23% of the variance in average monthly earnings.

In the next step of analysis, a 3-way analysis was run, testing the effect of gender, ethnicity and occupational status on average monthly earnings in 2008 (Table 3).

Like in 1993, in 2008 gender showed the strongest main effect on earnings ($F = 65.90$, $p < .001$), followed by ethnicity ($F = 37.12$, $p < .001$) and occupational status ($F = 32.42$, $p < .001$). Accordingly, while in 1993 the main effect for ethnicity had been insignificant, by 2008 it had become significant. In 2008, there was also significant gender and ethnicity interaction ($F = 4.87$, $p < .05$), and ethnicity and occupational status interaction ($F = 5.61$, $p < .01$). In 2008, the earnings of Estonian men in white-collar professions significantly exceeded the earnings of all other groups. The difference in average monthly earnings of Estonian men (19,569 EEK or \approx 1,250 euros) exceeded the average earnings of the lowest

Table 2: Summary of multivariate analysis of variances, 1993 (F; p)

1993	Net earnings	Job security	Job satisfaction
Place of residence (covariate)	53.775***	.628	2.927
Gender	67.744***	4.699*	1.295
Ethnicity	1.598	28.462***	.927
Occupational status	48.498***	6.856**	2.170
Gender x ethnicity	3.516	.920	.646
Gender x occupational status	1.197	2.038	2.476
Ethnicity x occupational status	1.882	1.955	.776
Gender x ethnicity x occupational status	1.250	1.965	.479
R ² , %	23.1	6.2	1.5

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Source: WFL 1993 survey.

Table 3: Summary of multivariate analysis of variances, 2008 (F; p)

2008	Net earnings	Job security	Job satisfaction
Place of residence (covariate)	19.596***	.935	.903
Gender	65.903***	.743	2.609
Ethnicity	37.122***	7.934**	6.543*
Occupational status	32.420***	13.108***	18.281***
Gender x ethnicity	4.867*	.553	.856
Gender x occupational status	2.028	1.899	.427
Ethnicity x occupational status	5.612**	.395	4.964**
Gender x ethnicity x occupational status	1.508	2.775	2.739
R2, %	31.3	8.0	8.9

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Source: WFL 2008 survey.

earnings groups – Russian-speaking women (6,385 EEK, or \approx 408 euros) almost three times. In 2008, the combination of the three variables entered in the analysis – gender, ethnicity and occupational status – explained about 31% of the variance in average earnings.

Perceived job security

Tables 2 and 3 include information on differences in perceived job security. As can be seen in Table 2, in 1993 ethnicity showed the strongest effect on job security ($F = 28.46$, $p < .001$), followed by occupational status ($F = 6.85$, $p < .01$) and gender ($F = 4.70$, $p < .05$). The interaction effects were statistically not significant. In general, the highest level of perceived job security was reported by Estonian men engaged in white-collar professions (4.46 on 5-point scale), and the lowest – by Russian-speaking female blue-collar workers (3.72). The combination of the three variables entered in the analysis explained about 6% of the variation in earnings.

In 2008, related to perceived job security, occupational status still showed the strongest main effect ($F = 13.11$, $p < .001$), followed by ethnicity ($F = 7.93$, $p < .001$). In 2008, the main effect for gender was statistically insignificant. Similarly to 1993, there were no significant gender, ethnicity and occupational status interaction effects. Like in 1993, Estonian men reported the highest level of job security also in 2008 (4.55 on 5-point scale). However, the group in the most insecure position had changed. Among Russian-speaking, female, blue-collar workers, the level of perceived job security had increased, and the lowest level of job security was reported by Russian-speaking men engaged in blue-collar jobs. In 2008, the combination of gender, ethnicity and occupational status explained about 8% of variances in perceived job security.

Job satisfaction

In the present study, job quality was measured by the respondents' statements on their overall job satisfaction. As can be seen in Table 2, in 1993 related to job satisfaction, none of the independent variables entered into analysis showed a significant main effect. Accordingly, in 1993 the model explained less than 2% of variances in job satisfaction.

Unlike the survey of 1993, in 2008 there was a significant main effect for occupational status ($F = 18.28$, $p < .001$) and ethnicity ($F = 6.54$, $p < .05$), and also a significant ethnicity and occupational status interaction ($F = 4.96$, $p < .01$). Among Estonians the differences between the groups most satisfied with their job (males in white collar jobs – 4.12) and least satisfied with their job (females in blue collar jobs

– 3.65) were somewhat smaller than among Russian speakers. Russian-speaking males employed in white-collar jobs reported a considerably higher level of job satisfaction (4.53) than female blue-collar workers (3.31). In 2008, the variables entered into the analysis – gender, ethnicity and occupational status – explained 9% of variances in job satisfaction.

Discussion and conclusions

Our data indicate that some important changes have occurred between 1993 and 2008 in the labour market position of the four groups compared, in terms of average net monthly wages, job insecurity and job satisfaction.

Estonian men, especially those working in white-collar occupations, have clearly emerged as the most privileged group in the Estonian labour market, when we take into account average net monthly wages, job insecurity and job satisfaction. However, when gender, ethnicity and occupational status are considered separately, without looking at the intersections of these categories, this often remains unnoticed. While already in 1993, Russian-speaking women were at a more disadvantaged position compared to other groups, by 2008 their disadvantages compared to other groups seem to have increased further, as they reported the lowest income, lowest job security and lowest job satisfaction, compared to other groups.

Between 1993 and 2008, the gap between the earnings of the four groups increased considerably. According to our data, in 1993 Russian-speaking men as a group earned more compared to other groups, followed by Estonian men, while Russian-speaking women earned the least compared to other groups. By 2008, however, the situation had changed considerably, with Estonian men, particularly those in white-collar occupations, emerging as the highest-earning group, followed by Russian-speaking men. The wages of Russian-speaking women had decreased considerably in comparison with other groups. The wages of the highest earning group, the Estonian men, had become twice as high as those of Russian women by 2008. This is partly due to the increasing gender and ethnic segregation of the Estonian labour market, both vertically and horizontally. While Estonian men occupy the majority of elite and high-ranking positions and are employed in more profitable economic sectors, Russian-speaking women tend to be concentrated in low paying and undervalued economic sectors and jobs, such as manufacturing and wholesale and retail trade. Other categories, such as age and education, and their intersection with gender and ethnicity are important in this context. For example, blue-collar Russian-speaking female workers with lower education levels are often at the most disadvantaged positions in the Estonian labour market.

Compared to 1993, job security had increased for all groups by 2008. 1993 was the time of transition to free-market economy during which major labour market restructuring took place, which explains the lower job security of all groups compared to 2008, when the labour market had stabilized.

In 2008, job security was the lowest for Russian-speaking men, especially those employed in blue-collar jobs, compared to other groups. According to more recent data, Russian-speaking men are at a particularly vulnerable position in the labour market in terms of unemployment – in the first quarter of 2010, their unemployment rate reached 34,9%, which constitutes a sevenfold increase in their unemployment compared to the first quarter of 2008 (Lepik 2010). The high unemployment of Russian-speaking men during the economic recession is explained by a decreased demand for jobs they most often occupy, mainly in the construction and processing industries (Lepik 2010). This data suggests that the sectors where many Russian-speaking men were employed, such as construction and processing, showed signs of instability already in 2008, with the possibility of job loss impending, which accounts for Russian-speaking men reporting lower job security compared to other groups in 2008.

While in 1993 there were no significant differences in job satisfaction between the four groups, data from 2008 indicate that compared to other groups, Estonian men reported most satisfaction with their jobs, followed by Russian-speaking men. However, job satisfaction among Russian-speaking white-collar employees was the highest, compared to all other subgroups. In this context, their advantages as men in high occupational positions seem to minimise their disadvantage of belonging to an ethnic minority. Russian-speaking women were the least satisfied with their jobs in 2008, especially Russian-speaking, female, blue-collar workers. Job satisfaction is certainly affected by the size of income and job security, among other important factors, such as position in the job hierarchy, autonomy at work, etc. Thus, it is no surprise that the group reporting the highest average net monthly wage in 2008 and highest job security – Estonian men – were also the most satisfied with their jobs. For Russian women, low job satisfaction is likely to arise from their disproportionate concentration in low-paying and undervalued economic sectors and jobs, such as manufacturing and wholesale and retail trade, where work is often routine.

Between 1993 and 2008, the nature of work in Estonia changed significantly. The transition to a market economy brought along new economic sectors and jobs. For example, the service sector emerged as one of the largest sectors of the economy. The emergence of these new forms of work contributed to increased gender and ethnic segregation in the Estonian labour market. The increasing importance of the interactions of gender and ethnicity as well as the interactions of ethnicity and occupational status in influencing net earnings in 2008, compared to 1993 (Table 2), reflects increasing gender and ethnic segregation and their interrelatedness in the Estonian labour market. Women and especially Russian-speaking women increasingly became employed in the lowest positions in the job hierarchy, in undervalued and underpaid sectors, such as education, healthcare, manufacturing and wholesale/retail trade. In these sectors, the gendered and ethnicised assumptions of the employers (Acker 2006, Padamsee 2009) towards employees interact and Russian-speaking women might be considered by employers as ideal workers (Acker 2006) in lower ranking jobs in these sectors. These gendered and ethnicised assumptions were certainly present during the communist period in Estonia, but they did not give most people any significant advantages in the labour market; however, they began to matter much more in the free-market economy.

One of the reasons for the emergence of Estonian men as the most successful group in the labour market in 2008 has to do with certain processes and ideologies present in the Estonian society in the 1990s and beyond. For example, compared to other groups, Estonian men as a group profited most from the process of privatisation, which began in the early 1990s, by acquiring capital and accumulating wealth, which enabled them to improve their position in the social hierarchy (for example, they became the group most represented in political decision-making and leadership) and helped them gain a better labour market position by 2008. At the same time, revival of traditional gender role attitudes and the ideology of female domesticity led many women to devote themselves to homemaking and childcare, which pushed them out of the labour market or into part-time jobs and, simultaneously, helped Estonian men secure their position at the top of the job hierarchy. Compared to Estonians, Russian speakers, especially Russian-speaking men, were found to be holding more conservative attitudes towards gender roles (Järve 2006:134), which might be one of the factors influencing the more disadvantaged position of Russian-speaking women in the labour market.

Since the transition to market economy in the early 1990s, Estonian labour market policies could be characterised as liberal, with the state taking responsibility only for the most marginal groups in the labour market (such as the long-term unemployed, the poor and marginalised people), employment relations are decentralised and remunerations are often decided on the level of enterprises (Tallinna Pedagoogikaülikool 2002). These tendencies, along with belief in market competition and the superiority of those who succeed in labour market competition, help reinforce and naturalise inequality (Acker 2006).

In addition to the processes taking place at the societal level that affect the labour market position of the four groups, organisations are important locations where inequalities are maintained and reproduced, as Acker (2006) suggests. Inequality regimes (Acker 2006) are certainly present in organisations in Estonia. For instance, as wages for most positions, especially in the private sector, are not disclosed, employers are able to maintain or even increase existing inequalities by awarding different remuneration to workers based on their gender, ethnicity, age and other categories of difference.

One of the reasons why Russian speakers and women, and especially Russian-speaking women, at the intersection of the categories of gender and ethnicity, have not been able to secure more lucrative jobs in terms of remuneration and prestige may have to do with access to social networks. Some researchers suggest that different characteristics of the social networks of the Russian minority (such as the homogeneity of the networks), compared to those of Estonians, are among the causes of the more marginal position of Russian-speakers in the labour market, for example, in terms of pay and occupational position (Marksoo & Järv 2008, Krusell 2007, Hansson 2001). During the communist period, segregated networks did not translate into advantages in the labour market, as economic sectors and jobs were regulated by the state. However, they began to matter in the capitalist economy, which helps explain the more advantaged labour market positions acquired by Estonian men by 2008, compared to other groups.

Along with ethnicity-based networks, gender-based informal networks exist, which help exclude women from elite positions in the labour market. These networks overlap, producing intersecting exclusions based on gender, ethnicity and other categories of difference, therefore, maintaining and reinforcing the more privileged position of certain groups, such as elite Estonian men in the labour market and in the Estonian society at large. However, further research is needed on the role of gender and ethnicity-based social networks in recruitment and in shaping individual labour market positions.

In this article, we have shown how the labour market position for groups at the intersection of gender and ethnicity has changed between 1993 and 1998, and how Estonian men, especially those who work in white-collar occupations, have emerged as the most advantaged group, while Russian-speaking women, especially those employed in blue-collar jobs, have become the most disadvantaged group, when taking into account average monthly wages, job insecurity and job satisfaction of these groups. The processes and mechanisms on the societal, organisational and group levels that we have outlined to explain our results might reinforce labour market inequalities even further, unless specific efforts are made to reduce current inequalities in the labour market. As the Estonian labour market has become increasingly segregated by gender, ethnicity, etc., it is likely that labour market equality will not be reached as long as this segregation remains in place, as Gonäs & Karlsson (2006) suggest.

The majority of research on gender and ethnicity-based segregation (and their intersections) in the labour market focuses exclusively on the disadvantaged groups and their 'problems' in employment. When highlighting the disadvantages of the more marginal groups in the labour market, it should be kept in mind that their disadvantaged position is relational to the privileged position of the dominant groups in the labour market (Choo & Ferree 2010). In order to understand how certain groups in the labour market are left in an unfavourable position compared to other groups, it is important to study how the privilege of the 'unmarked' dominant groups is maintained (Choo & Ferree 2010) and to pay attention to ways how groups are constructed in the context of the labour market. If the emergence and persistence of advantages and privileges of the dominant groups in the labour market is not discussed, more marginal groups (such as Russian-speaking women in the Estonian labour market) will always be considered as the 'problematic' groups in the labour market, while the dominant groups are seen as 'unproblematic' and their privileged position is thereby legitimised. Thus, we highlight the need for further research, using an intersectional approach, on ways how the privilege of the dominant groups is sustained in the labour market.

In this article, we have limited our analysis to the interaction of gender and ethnicity in analysing changing labour market inequalities. Certainly, these are not the only categories that matter in shaping people's labour market positions. Other categories, such as age, class, education, heterosexuality, etc., and their intersections are important as well.

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