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*Title:* ***Impact of transition economy on gender composition in employment in the Russian heavy industry***

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**Abstract**

The emergence of the Russian Federation, as an independent country, has resulted in vast social, political and economic change for example economic instability has led to the diminution of women’s labour market participation. The most affected industries were government structures such as transport, education and health sectors and heavy industry such as mining, steel working which had been under total government control.

Sixty-five percent of work placements are legally prohibited for females under the National Labour Law of the Russian Federation. Prohibited placements are classified as professions with harmful or dangerous working conditions for women’s reproductive health so the majority of these work places are in heavy industry. As a result of this protective legislation women are often excluded from numerous skilled jobs. In addition women are categorized as workers, who require more social benefits and following of strict rules for their employment thus they become a second class group of workers.

Through in-depth interviews with fourteen managers, twenty six employees and three Trade Union officials of a case study organization '`Ruscoal`' this research examines the social and economic dimensions which impact on gender composition of employment in the Russian coal industry. It will also explain continuity and changes of gender composition within a period of transition, which has implications for both female and male employment within the '`Ruscoal`' mining company. Through the theoretical lens of patriarchy (Cockburn 1991, Walby 1996, Catherine Hakim 1995, Heidi Hartmann, Jeni Harden 2008), this research draws attention to the experiences of women, their interaction with the environment and explores their employment and work experience subsequent to transitional restructuring in Russia.

The early findings suggest that experiences of gender discrimination are influenced by respondents’ age. Employees over 50 years old had no concept of gender discrimination, while younger workers age 23-35, and reported cases of gender discrimination on the workplace. Additionally this research shows that pressure of the double burden of paid and unpaid work for women during transition is not only preserved, but has increased. Gender inequality was present in the Soviet Union, and during the transition period it has been reinforced not only by objective problems of the transitional period, but also by a reassertion of the patriarchal system of Russian society.

**Introduction**

The main aim of this research is to examine through a patriarchial lens the transition period within the Russian mining industry and what this means for male and female employees. The current research identifies changes in men’s and women’s responsibilities for work and home; how it has transformed during the past two decades when the country have changed the economic regime, labour law, etc. The overall research question is: *How do the relevant stakeholders of the Russian coal mining industry perceive the impact of the transition economy on employment gender composition employment?*

The concept of patriarchy will be used to explain/understand the phenomenon of gender inequality in Russia during and post communism. Patriarchy has been used in various ways to provide an explanation of gender inequality. This study is informed by the works of Walby1986, 1996), Cockburn (1983, 1991, 1998), Hakim (1991, 1992, 1995, 2000, 1996), Mead (1970), Hartmann (1976), Harden (2008) and others. Although patriarchy is built upon a concept of gender domination, in a broader sense, patriarchy emphasises the analogous structures of power in a society such as the king and his servitors, the lord and his serfs, the husband and his wife, the master and his apprentice, the officer and his soldiers, and so on. In other words, patriarchy presents various forms of domination (Morrissey, 2003).

Thus through the use of the patriarchal lens this research explores transitional change in gender employment as well as continuity in respect of how changes in the gender composition of employment are being experienced. This reassertion of patriarchy may have implications for other industries in Russia than just the heavy mining sector and shows the persistence of inequality in respect of women's and men's employment in transitional economies when equality is not politically or socially scrutinized.

Change Continuity

Dual burden

Household/Family roles

Occupational sex segregation

Division of labour

Wage gap

Community/Society roles

Social changes

Economic changes

Changes in Labour Law

Political changes

Patriarchy

*Figure 1. Diagrammatical representation of the conceptual framework*

This conceptual framework permits the researcher to investigate changes in the Russian political situation (government structure, law, and labour norms), social payment system such as maternity leave, pensions, medicine and education, as well, as Russian pay system and changes in wage inquiry and women wage discrimination (Figure 1) (Maltseva, 2005). The research also considers the role of trade unions and their position and status in the process of managing gender diversity and how its role has changed during the transition time (Clarke et al., 1995). In Russia the trade union is the biggest national societ organization and represents the majority of the labour force as well as playing an active role in employee-employer relations within the coal industry and other industries (Clarke, 1995).

Heavy industry is the best example of the sexual occupation and gender division of labour as it is predominantly occupied by men and thus, this industry has a high potential for discrimination against women (Blau, Simpson, and Anderson 1998; Cotter et al. 1995; Reskin 1993; Wells 1999). Coal production is a key sector in heavy industry and is the focus of this paper. This research which aims to shows the experiences of men and women following transitional restructuring in Russia.

**Method**

This study presents a triangulation of viewpoints (organizational, employees and trade union viewpoints) on gender diversity in an transition economy (Cooper and Schindler, 2003) within a dynamic and continuously changing social setting (Neuman, 2003).Qualitative empirical research aims to understand a social or human problem from various subjective perspectives (Walker and Myrick, 2006). In this research, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the research method as they allow the interviewee the opportunity to consider things he/she had not previously considered about gender diversity in the Russian coal industry on governmental, organizational and individual levels (Saunders et al, 2007, Halmi, 1996).

The case study approach was chosen for the exploratory study as detailed knowledge about one or two chosen units is more helpful for answering question than fleeting knowledge about a larger number of examples (Gerring, 2007). 'Ruscoal' (not the organisation's real name) mining company is the case study organization. It is a large company with more than 3000 employees and it has experienced several stages of privatization and reconstruction from the state to private company. `Ruscoal` has a strict division of labour, between men and women. Sixty-five percent of work placements in Ruscoal are legally prohibited for females under the National Labour Law of the Russian Federation as they are classified as professions with harmful or dangerous working conditions for women’s reproductive health. Data was also gathered from other mining companies in the region to help compare Ruscoal attitudes to other coal producers.

A thematic analysis was chosen which enables the identification, analysis and reporting of patterns (themes) within data. It organizes and describes data sets in rich detail (Daly, Kellehear, & Gliksman, 1997).

Interviews were conducted with nine managers, three employees from the Human Resource (HR) department and two section managers from the production department were interviewed. These interviewees were chosen as they are directly connected with employees’ recruitment and retention and were able to describe main changes and dynamics in the organization for the last 20 years. Of the fourteen managers seven were female and seven were men. Additionally, the two female Head of HR departments from the two other coal producers (both female) were interviewed. Twenty six production and supportive employees of the `Ruscoal` mining were also interviewed. A cross section participants of different ages were purposively chosen (working age, from 21 to 70) in order to understand views and relation of different generations to gender employment and gender equality in work.To show the main changes in company`s social politic, national labour politic and labour law the Head of 'Ruscoal' Trade Union and another two union representatives of two other coal producers. For further details of interviewee’s profile see Appendix Three .

**Findings and discussion: Coal Towns and Women’s employment**

The following sections outline the preliminary findings from the fieldwork. It analyses, within the context of the extant literature, the themes of gender diversity, the role of patriarchy in a transition period, men’s and women’s responsibilities for work and home, the sexual division of labour and how it has transformed. Appropriate quotes from interviewees are used to illustrate the key themes emerging from the data. All names are changed to preserve anonymity (Appendix 3).

**Women in Coal Mining and a Transition Economy**

The preliminary results of fieldwork suggest that transition from The Soviet Union communist system to a free market economy has had a huge impact on employment rates and on the proportion of male and female workers. The interviews have led to a number of significant findings.

The majority of respondents of the current research highlight the decreasing number of female workers within the mining industry during the transition period. For example, according to Russian Recession Report (February, 2009) employment rates in Russia for men have risen from 78% in spring 1984 to 80% in autumn 2004, with a peak in 1990 of 82% and a low in 1993 of 75% - following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The `Ruscoal` mining company and mining industry in general has a strict sexual division of labour because of the National Labour Law of the Russian Federation. According to a list of professions developed by the Russian National Labour Law, it is prohibited to apply female labour in jobs with harmful conditions (Appendix I). In `Ruscoal`, 65% of jobs appear on this list. Thus, the company has only 35% of jobs in which it is legal for women to work. As a result women are often excluded from numerous skilled jobs.

Harden (2008) states that the legal ‘protection’ of women depends on needs for female labour. She argues that in time of high labour demand, labour legislation regarding female employment is relaxed, and when demands fall it is re-introduced. Government states that this labour regulation was intended to protect women as mothers or potential mothers from the damaging effects of paid labour (Harden, 2008). However, government’s use of this legislation and the timing of female employment have alienated women as a separate group of employees whose participation in the labour force was regarded as transitory (Harden, 2008).

**Women, Coal Mining and Technology**

Technology development also played a big role in gender diversity. During the last twenty years, machines and equipment become much easier to manage (physically), however this has not been recognized in the Labour Law restriction or challenged traditional thinking about men’s and women’s work roles. Cockburn (1983, 1985, 1992, 1994) and Wajcman (1991, 2000) both theorize gender-technology relations and argue that technology in itself is not gendered but how it is used is gendered. Cockburn’s research shows that men historically have placed themselves in key technological roles: `*metal working in feudal times, and machine tooling in industrial times*` (1985, p. 38). While Wajcman (1991) reminds us that current technology is supported and directed by powerful institutions and interests. Thus, technology is predomenantly male dominated in this industry because it historically demands some essentially masculine traits and put 'simply' technology is also where the power is. Consequently, technology development can reinforce the patriarchical systems of work as technology used by men is considered to require more skills /strength and thus receives a higher paid reward. However, Cockburn (1992) also claimed that while male employees were evicted, women did not gain commensurately because when jobs using technology become feminized at the same time the labour is cheapened (Cockburn, 1994).

Current research shows that during the transition period views on occupations with traditionally male or female predominance are changed, some male occupations become associated with women and vice versa. The privatisation and reorganization of the companies and general structural changes have led to a modification of the labour force. The increase of competition in the labour market has forced employees to accept low-paid and less prestigious jobs which traditionally were occupied by female workers. Eisenstein ([1993](http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/section?content=a723748299&fulltext=713240928#CIT0010)) claimed that about fifty percent of women were employed in unskilled manual labour and Pavlychko ([1997](http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/section?content=a723748299&fulltext=713240928#CIT0019), p. 224) argued that those another part of women, who are well-educated and professionally qualified, could have become *'a substantial force of the feminist message and changed the stereotypes of women; but in the political sense they were mostly inert and silent, they belonged to that type that could be called 'a woman-man', who achieved high positions but did not change the nature of authority or its ideology in the interest of women'.*

This research shows that pressure of the double burden for female employees during the transition time is not only preserved, but also increased. Gender inequality was present in Soviet Union before, when women were essential not only as workers but also as child bearers, especially in conditions of labour shortage. During the transition period it has been reinforced not only by objective problems of the transitional period, but also by women's conservative views which have been shaped by the reassertion of the patriarchal system of society.

Gender equality was not evident under the communist regime although women had a duty to work and women were still doing the most of the domestic responsibilities. Therefore, it can be concluded that communist ideology and its definition of equality in work obscured the patriarchal nature of Soviet society in which women still retained responsibility for the domestic domain. The transitional literature (Lafont 1998, 2001, Predborska, 2005) suggests that despite transitional change in gender employment there is still continuity for women in employment in respect of a patriarchal society and this is evidenced in Russia in the exclusion of women from certain job roles because of the perceived dangers to their reproductive system, thus once again separating men and women because of biological differences in relation family and home. Consequently this has implications for women's experience in employment and how managers may visualise women's employment.

Despite the labour laws equality for men and women in the workforce and equal access to all types of occupations, it appears that the earning level of women in Russia is lower than that of men. During the transition period the salary structure was totally changed *with the* the wage gap between male and female remuneration becoming more obvious. In Soviet Union the salary was calculated on the basis of the wage scale or government tariff netting, so everyone earned more or less the same. In modern Russia adoption of a free market economy salaries are set up according to the owner’s calculation, so some occupations become less paid and less attractive for male workers.The Russian example of a transition economy shows that during the significant structural salary changes in the labour market up to 22% of employees changed their occupation. Thus, it can be concluded that economic, political and social changes can force people to relocate their labour across sectors, industries, as well as between the state of economical activity and non-activity.

**Gender discrimination Terminology**

Experiences of gender discrimination appear to be strongly influenced by respondents’ age. Employees over 50 years old had no concept of gender discrimination, while younger workers age 23-35, and reported cases of gender discrimination on the workplace. In Soviet Union communist ideology equated employment with emancipation, and the worker-mother contract was institutionally embedded within communist work regimes (Standing, 1994; Puffer, 1996). On pictures and leaflets which government used to propaganda the communist ideology women usually were illustrated as doctors, engineers, farmers or technicians (LaFont, 2001). The communist ideology emphasizes importance of female labour as the key factor for communist industrial development (LaFont, 1998). Consequently, as equality was the main characteristic of the communist ideology and a work was a duty, not a right; women worked the same hours as men in the labor market plus were still responsible for domestic labour (Korovushkina, 1994). Moreover, the wage level in Soviet Union was comparatively low, so it was hard to support family only on one income. So women in Soviet Russia were not concerned with gender discrimination as they lived `in the most equal society in the world`. At the beginning of the transition `perestroika` period government emphasized the importance of allowing women ‘to return to their purely womanly mission’ in home. In this time, government prohibited women employment in works with harmful and dangerous conditions and transferred women to more suitable work in the service sector. In other words, older people were socialized within a communism system that emphasized by law that there was no gender discrimination but at the same time did not make equality of men and women a right, which has meant that in a transition economy young people are seeing the reassertion of a patriarchal thinking in relation to men’s and women’s employment.

**Women’s Employment in Coal Production**

As has been claimed by Cotter et al. (1995) the main issue of gender diversity is that female workforce is that women often experience discrimination within the workplace. Many women work in deskilled data entry positions with few opportunities for career development.

Female workers in the `*coal towns*` find it difficult to secure employment as mining it industry with predominantly male occupation during the Soviet era as well as today. However, the Head of production department of 'Ruscoal' stated that the Soviet Union government supported the employment of women, `*because it was impossible to not* *work in the Soviet Union- you can be judged by law and society for unemployment, and now it is a free market economy and company not going to employ the* *`weak`* [physically and employees with additional social benefits] *worker as everything subject to business needs*` (Sergey, 53).

In the production department of 'Ruscoal' there are 1600 employees; just 30 of them are women. `*In my department female labour is mainly prohibited or undesirable. Thus, from 1600 employees in my department just 30 workers with female gender (10 engineers and 20 mountain dispatchers)*` (Sergey, 53). Furthermore, in the future, the interviewee wants to minimize the number of female workers in his department because in his opinion `*mining production process is `not a `good` workplace for women*` (Sergey, 53). This statement is supported by Boldyreva (1989) who argued that women's labour force participation within Russia is manipulated by the state in the form of 'protective' legislation which provides both a legal and ideological justifications for excluding women from the labour market when deemed necessary. Managers see women as a workforce with the limited abilities or additional needs to the main male workers.

The Kuzbass region ('Ruscoal's' location) has one industry- coal mining*,* so women find it quite difficult to get a job*.* This is compounded by social changes within Russian society. Although women in the Soviet Union enjoyed greater equality than in other industrialised countries, (Pollert, 2003), they still undertook most of the domestic work (Harden, 2008). The double-burden for women workers (paid work and caring responsibilities) has increased as a result of the transition to a capitalist state (Predborska, 2005). A female HR specialist argues that within modern Russia these social changes particularly affect women: *‘In this case for females’ employees’ stability is more important, because now* [Modern Russia] *it is really common to have a civil marriage. Children are born; the women raise children alone more often, so they are responsible for the family, for their children and breadwinning. And if they lose their job, they find it much harder than men to find work*` (Ira, 33). Pollert (2003) stated that average working hours for women in Soviet Russia was approximately 70 hours per week, about 15 hours more than in Western Europe (UNICEF, 1999). Moreover, she claimed that in Soviet Union there were high levels of occupational sex segregation and women were mainly employed in ‘light’ manufacturing, the services and caring professions, and overrepresented at the bottom of job hierarchies. Consequently, women`s earnings were twenty percent lower that men`s.

Interviews with managers of the mining companies shows that gender proportion in mining industry during transition changed` *in the direction of the predominance of males*`. The reason of this change is ` *the* *fact that nowadays owners of the company set up the salary structure…, in Soviet Union salaries calculated according to the government standards… Today, we combine several professions, with traditionally low level of remuneration, in one. Expanding the service area and using complicated machines and mechanisms*. *Therefore, the same professions are becoming more and more high-paid and become more attractive for male candidates*`(Irina, 52).This statement is confirmed by Oglobin (1999) who suggested that most of the total wage gap between genders in Russian Federation is attributable to occupational segregation and in some cases is a legacy of the Soviet era.

From the Human Resources manager`s perspective, gender diversity plays an important role in the `Ruscoal` mining company and in the whole coal industry, because 50-60% of workplaces in the `Ruscoal` mining company `*are prohibited for women workers (for example, drivers of technological transport, machinists of a dredge, chisel machine tools and locomotives)*` (Irina, 52). Women comprise 25% of ‘Ruscoal’s’ workforce (668 people) and their main occupations are `*administrative work, cleaning, working with documents, accounting, and supervision (operators) over the equipment*`. `*The percentage of female employees is decreasing*` during transition time because first of all the company has made `*redundant supportive employees who were traditionally female* ` (Irina, 52).

During the transition period gender proportion in some departments completely changed. *`When I came to the company 30 years ago* [respondent working in HR department], *the surveyors were mostly all men, now we have 11 surveyors* [those who engaged in planning and monitoring of mining operations, and measuring the volume of work performed]*, and 100 percent of them - are women. Why is that? In my opinion, due to the fact that this kind of job become less important for the company performance'* (Raisa, 55)*.* In the Soviet Union surveyors were controlled directly by the government, it was control under the volume of production, as all produced goods belong to the government, `*Nowadays we have other controllers - the owners. They are primarily interested in money. They are mainly organizing control under economic, accounting, commercial and financial services*, *areas with traditionally female occupation, so gender proportion in this department fully changed as changed worked by itself` (*Natalya, 42). Accordingly, `*men had worked in this department for good money, now* [since owners set up the salary by them own]*,* *everyone understands that lower level of salary is enough for women. And wages of a good surveyor with extensive experience could be less than an assistant of engineer excavator, which came directly after school and works only one or two years` (*Natalya, 42). This example confirmed the argument claimed by Maslov (2007) that despite the fact that the level of education among employed men is slightly lower than among employed women, male employees are usually concentrated in sectors with traditionally high level of remuneration, which is not necessarily linked to education.

Over the last 20 years the technical progress and political and social changes let women to contribute in all spheres of business. ` *Twenty years ago, heavy BelAZ (cars) were quite hard to drive, now to drive this 30 tons machine easier than driving a normal car. So now the owners gave us a task - to create a team of women who will work on heavy vehicles on the BelAZ. However, at the moment these works are forbidden by law for female labour, but we try to decide this question*` (Valentin, 57). This statement shows that technology is advancing more quickly than the legislative framework and some restrictions of women employment are irrelevant so companies have to prove on the government level that by using new technology some professions are not `hard` any more. Therefore, it is a contradictory situation; women are able to increase their presence in many occupations, including those that were considered traditionally male domains — such as mechanical trades and construction but the rules of the Russian labour law do not allow them to do so.

The main feature of the communist ideology was equality (Ashwin, 2002; Standing, 1994). The gender equality was mainly based on women's equal role in economic production alongside men. Commitment to the ideology and to the country was placed above the family interests. According to the communist statement every citizen had both a right, and an obligation to work (Grapard, 1997). After the Second World War the number of working women rapidly increased, as both social security of working women and the Communist ideology supported it. Communist ideology equated employment with emancipation, and the worker-mother contract was institutionally embedded within communist work regimes (Standing, 1994; Puffer, 1996). The Communist ideology emphasized the importance of female labour as the key factor for communist industrial development (LaFont, 1998). Consequently, as work was a duty, not a right; women worked like men [the same hours] in the labor market for low returns but still maintained responsibility for hearth and home maintaining the link with pre-communcism patriarchy (Korovushkina, 1994).

The majority of employees of 'Ruscoal' claimed that for the last 20 years gender diversity changed towered increasing number of male employees, because, `*they began to occupy positions formerly occupied by women` (*Lubov, 70). *`Men now no longer want to work physically. Physical labor is now so devalued! It is not because men are bad, on the contrary, they get a couple of additional educations in order to not do physical labour and women can’t do so because they are responsible for family, children, cleaning, cooking… they simply do not have time for further education`* (Olga, 38).

Moreover, women cannot apply for some highly paid production positions because of the *`labour law restriction, additionally psychologically to employ men is more comfortable as employer always think … to employ women means possibility of 3 years absence* [Maternity leave]*, children are going to be sick all the time and she definitely not going to work overtime`* (Ekaterina, 24)*.* This argument is supported by Darity and Mason, (1998) who claimed that, according to stereotypes and prejudices, employers ‘arrange’ male and female employees into different occupations. Moreover, sex role stereotyping has a negative bias for women’s career development, as career is perceived to be their second role (Kramer and Lambert, 2001). Women are usually channeled into occupations with low-pay, fewer responsibilities and poorer promotion opportunities. In contrast, male employees are more likely channeled into occupations with high remuneration and promotion opportunities. Thus, women have an obstacle created by stereotyping gender roles within society that stops them from entering in sectors with higher level of remuneration.

About 45 percent of respondents claimed that they or their friends had a situations when their working rights were impaired, 90 percent of them are women. Also, the experience of gender discrimination was influenced by the respondent's age. Employees over 50 years old had no concept of gender discrimination (or even what this term means), while younger workers age 23-35, and reported cases of gender discrimination on the workplace. *‘In Soviet Union times salaries in the same positions were paid the same regardless who was man or woman*` (Nikolay, 46)*.* Another respondent claimed that `*nowadays if owner see that the work performed by women, not worse than men work performance at the same position, he can pay less for female worker, then to hire a male who need to breadwinner for his family’(*Tatyana, 47). This confirmed the arguments of Teresa Ebert (1988) that women still be used as a cheap and available source of wage-labour at various levels of the economy.

Additionally, current research shows that women are working the same 40-hours week as their husband’s do, however, time which they spend on taking care of children and household responsibilities is two and a half times longer. Women spend about 20 hours a week on household duties and men only 6 hours. `*Both my mother and I working women and I bear the same responsibilities that were previously carried by my mother in the family. She also took care of the children, was cleaning house, cooking….. Yes, I think I am taking a double burden of responsibilities and I think it is a discrimination from the side of my husband, but I can’t impact on this situation, probably because of my personality, anyway I can’t force him to do household responsibilities`* (Veronica, 33).

**Trade Unions and Women’s Work**

The trade union in `Ruscoal` and in the mining industry in general hasa large impact on labour relations and on the management decision-making process. The trade union usually takes an active conciliatory position in the worker`s interests, with the company`s management. However, the role of the Trade Union organization during transition has completely changed. In Soviet Union the trade unions organizations mainly were used for `*registering n company`s employee with the communist party, distributing the communist ideology between the workers, distributing social service vouchers, shelter and other social benefits, such as placing kids into kindergarten, organizing a queue for housing…it means that Trade Unions absolutely were not engaged in labour regulation and analysis and deciding labour conflicts* ` (Grigory, 41) [head of trade union].

However, in 1991 with the end of Soviet era the trade unions had to find themselves a new role. `*In 1991-1992 `free` Trade Union organizations were established which are not based on the company`s platform* [financial support], *they become a the self-taught organization supported by members. Since when Trade Union had two main roles, the protection of the employee rights and ensuring in normal working conditions, wage levels, as well as the expression of the `employee`s voice`, however, at the same time Trade Union do not confront, the social forms of work such as* *providing additional financial support for low-income employer, mothers of large families and distribution of social service vouchers as it was in Soviet Union`* (Grigory, 41)*.*

Trade Union representatives claimed that general trend of gender proportion after collapse of the Soviet Union in the coal mining industry is *` an increasing number of men…as labour law was changed`* (Dmitry, 58)*.* AnotherRespondent agreed that *` the number of women in this particular industry decreased during the transition period and it was influenced*… *by a government decree which prohibited use of women labour in heavy and dangerous conditions…but in my opinion this is a positive factor `* (Anton, 28).

Secondly, women were forced to leave their jobs due to amendments of the labour law which restricted the rights of women. For example, in the Soviet Union labour it was written that lone mothers `*can’t be used for night shifts or business trips without her personal consent until her child reaches age 12, the new amendments of the labour law reduce this age till 6 years*` (Anton, 28). In other words, employer offering a job for female workers `*but it involves traveling and work in a shift operation, so women have to refuse it `*(Anton, 28)*.* In other words, managers saw women as a workforce with less flexibility than male workers. Therefore, female workers often were restricted, by managers in getting professional training and so had a limited access to the male dominated skilled jobs (Harden 1998). Furthermore, women's position can be seen as a result of paternalistic approach and the discriminatory practices regarding women employment. Gender was an important element within the Russian and Soviet Union systems of production relations and the labour hierarchy was at the core of this. By forcing managers to provide additional benefits for female workers such as kindergartens, paid maternity leave, time off for sick children in addition to restriction in their employment was not create a privileged class of employees as they claimed. For employers women became a second class group of workers who require more social benefits and following of strict rules for their employment.

Trade Union Representatives argued that by labour law regulation women are excluded from the areas of the labour market and have to work in occupations with lower level of remuneration.` *Male employees can be employed as miner and women can't. They* [women] *have to work as supportive function, for example, in a boiler room, where job is not much easier but lower paid`* (Grigory, 41). This structure of payment it’s mainly heritage of the Soviet Union time `*where the salary is calculated on the basis of the wage scale or government tariff netting and it have not changed yet. Among the production specialties for women, compared to men, it is very difficult to find a high pay job as they have many restrictions in employment`,* moreover for employer to employ women for employer mean *`…to have more problems, the child get sick, kindergarten is closed, or parent’s meeting at school`* (Anton, 28) *.* Thus, can be concluded, that *gender* inequality was present in Soviet Union before, and during the transition period it has been reinforced by the social construction of legislation that emphasis women’s reproductive role and the patriarchal system of the society means it is difficult for women to challenge this situation (Predborska, 2005).

**Originality/value of the paper**

The current Russian literature, compared to the Western literature, has little information about gender diversity in Soviet times and also in post-Soviet society. In the Soviet Union gender research was limited as it was considered unnecessary in `equal` communist society (Sperling, 1999). Only since 1990s has gender inequity research appeared and universities have started to promote gender studies (Sperling, 1999; Zdravomyslova and Temkina, 2003). In spite of the lack of own literature, on gender diversity and women question within the workforce, in Russia, the `best` western literature does not translate well into Russian (Sperling, 1999; Ashwin, 2002; Temkina and Zdravomslova, 2003). According to Metcalfe and Afanassieva (2005) `*the commitment to equality between the sexes endorsed by state political ideology reinforced the view that Western female experiences and Western feminism were irrelevant to everyday Russian females*` (p. 56). Thus, Western feminist philosophy is not embedded within the Russian social, political and economic context (Metcalfe and Afanassieva, 2005).

A new Russian gender literature exploring differentials in labour market employment (Linz, 1996; Standing, 1994) has developed, although it is not highly esteemed in Russian society (Metcalfe and Afanassieva, 2005). However, a positive movement has also taken place. In 1997 the Russian State Commission of Statistics for the first time published a complete set of gender and employment statistics (Gvozdeva and Gerchikov, 2002; Chirikova and Krichevaskai, 2002). This project will develop knowledge in this field by collecting primary data in `Ruscoal`mining company to explore continuity and change within women employment within Russian heavy industry. Moreover, this research will contribute to the literature about patriarchy in transition period for male and female employees.

**Conclusions**

This paper has reported on preliminary findings from a study which aims to understand how the transition from a Communist state (the Soviet Union) to a capitalist state (Russia) has influenced the gender diversity within one particular sector: heavy industry. Using interviews within a case study organization '`Ruscoal`' this study has demonstrated that women continue to be excluded from prestigious and highly paid roles. Rather, due to paternalistic labour laws, women are focused in support roles which have limited career development opportunities. Trade union representatives did not show any inclination to challenge this discriminatory status quo. The older workers in the current study had no concept of gender discrimination, while younger workers could readily identify examples of discrimination against women but lacked the social and political resources to be able to challenge the gender discrimination.

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**Appendices**

**Appendix 1**

**THE GOVERNMENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

**THE DECREE**

**From February, 25th, 2000 N 162**

**ABOUT THE LIST OF PROFESSION S WITH HARMFUL OR DANGEROUS WORKING CONDITIONS**

**WHERE PROHIBITED TO APPLY FEMALE LABOUR (part which can be apply to `Ruscoal`mining company, full version of this document consist 456 professions)**

1. Works connected with lifting and moving weights (manually)
2. Underground works
3. Metal working
4. Building, assembly works
5. Mountain works

Open cast mining works and surface of the operating

Construction mines, enrichment, agglomeration,

Briquetting

53. The borer

54. Shotfirer of coal levels, the master - shotfirer

55. The miner under the prevention and suppression of fires

56. The supplier of fixing materials in mine

57. Timberman

58. The smith – drill filler

59. The machinist of chisel installation

60. The machinist of a loader

61. The machinist of installation on drilling of trunks of mines by full section

62. The machinist of a dredge

63. Working with trolleys

64. The drifter

XXX. Railway transport works

368. The machinist of the diesel train and his assistant

369. The machinist of a motor-cart and his assistant, working on broad gauge railroad lines

370. The machinist of a steam locomotive and his assistant

371. The machinist of a diesel locomotive and his assistant

372. The machinist of the traction unit and his assistant

373. The machinist of an electric locomotive and his assistant

374. The machinist of an electric train and his assistant

375. The adjuster of a way (at excess of the established norms of maximum permissible loadings for women at lifting and moving of weights manually)

376. The porter occupied with moving of luggage and hand luggage

377. The inspector - the repairman of cars

378. The mechanic on the rolling stock repair

379. A conductor on support of cargoes, occupied with support of cargoes on an open rolling stock

XXXI. Motor transport

387. The driver working on the bus with quantity of places from above 14

388. The driver working on the car as load-carrying capacity over 2,5 tons

389. The car`s mechanic, carrying out manually a sink of details of the engine of the car working on gasoline

390. The mechanic on the fuel equipment, occupied in motor transport services on repair of fuel equipment of the carburetor engines

**Appendix 2**

**Information about Case Study Company**

Heavy industry is traditionally the main source of income for the Russian government`s. Thus, Russia’s future growth prospects will depend on the productivity of this industry (Ahrend, 2006). The case study- the `Ruscoal`mining company, is situated in the Kuzbass region. The Kuzzbass region is the largest coal-mining region of the country, the largest centre of the metallurgical and chemical industry of Siberia. About 20% of the employed population of the Kuzbass region is working in the coal industry (approximately 200 0000 people). In the last ten years, the coal industry of Kuzbass has had a high rate of development. Since 1999, annual volumes of output have grown on average by 4.2%, and in 2008 reached 184.5 million tonnes (Russian Government Committee of Labour Statistic, 2009).

The `Ruscoal`mining company commenced operations in 1964 with a production capacity of approximately 2 million tons per year. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, in 1991 `Ruscoal`mining company was owned 100% by its employees as a result of the privatization of the Russian industrial organizations. The period from 1991 to 1994 was marked by the deterioration in technical and economic performance due to overall recession in Russia's economy as a result of the collapse of the planned economy and transition to a market-based economy (Tekton Group, 2006). In 1994, the current management team took control over business operations of the mine, and developed and implemented a program of production efficiency enhancement for the period from 1996 through 2005 which sought to increase production volume, increase labour productivity and reduce production costs: renovate existing facilities, purchase new equipment, as well as acquire new production and processing assets. Today, open-cast mining conducts coal in the Mezhdurechensk and Novokuznetsk areas of the Kuzbass region (situated in Eastern Siberia) on two separate sites. The annual productivity of `Ruscoal`mining company in 2008 was more than 6 million tons of extracted coal (Tekton Group, 2006).

**Appendix 3**

**List of respondent**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Gender, age** | **Position** | **Department** |
| *Managers* | | | |
| Irina | F, 52 | Head of HR department | HR |
| Raisa | F, 55 | Engineer of employee trainings | HR |
| Galina | F, 48 | HR specialist | HR |
| Ira | F, 33 | HR specialist | HR |
| Sergey | M, 53 | Head of production department | Production |
| Vladimir | M, 55 | Director of maintenance equipment | Production |
| Roman | M, 31 | Head of Supply | Supply |
| Evgeniy | M, 34 | Site leader | Production |
| Elena | F, 46 | Head of accounting department | Accounting |
| Maxim | M, 50 | Financial director | Finance |
| Valentin | M, 57 | CEO |  |
| Viktor | M, 49 | Head of Sales department | Sales |
| Maria | F, 70 | Head of Financial Department (do not work atm, pension) | Finance |
| Larisa | F, 56 | Head of Planning | Finance |
| *Employees* | | | |
| Alexander | M, 26 | Engineer | Production |
| Polina | F, 25 | Supply specialist | Supply |
| Nina | F, 74 | Enrichment plant operator (do not work atm, pension) | Dressing mill |
| Olga | F, 46 | Boiler Machinist | Boiler room |
| Anatoly | M, 52 | Rig operator | Department of drilling and blasting operations |
| Tatyana | F, 47 | Storekeeper | Supply |
| Lubov | F, 70 | Crane operator (do not work atm, pension) | Department of drilling and blasting operations |
| Veronica | F, 33 | Economist | Finance |
| Vera | F, 46 | Accountant | Accounting |
| Katya | F, 23 | Planner | Supply |
| Peter | M, 27 | Excavator operator | Site 8 |
| Evgeny | M, 21 | Excavator operator | Site 3 |
| Mihail | M, 30 | Foreman | Site 8 |
| Nikolay | M, 46 | Foreman | Site 7 |
| Lera | F, 58 | Planner | Supply |
| Ekaterina | F, 24 | Economist | Finance |
| Olga | F, 38 | Head of Cleaning work | Cleaning |
| Evgeniy | M, 23 | Assistant of excavator operator | Site 8 |
| Alenka | F, 24 | Doctor (production) |  |
| Ekaterina | F, 21 | Intern in accounting dep | Accounting |
| Natalya | F, 42 | Mining surveyor | Surveyor |
| Katya | F, 29 | Mining surveyor | Surveyor |
| Nikolay | M, 38 | Bulldozer operator | Site 7 |
| Peter | M, 27 | Driver of technological transport | Site 5 |
| Konstantin | M, 34 | Drivers of technological transport | Site 3 |
| Sergey | M, 55 | Machinists of a dredge | Site3 |
| *Trade Union* | | | |
| Grigory | M, 41 | Head of Trade union organization | Trade union |
| Anton | M, 28 | Trade union representative | Trade union |
| Dmitry | M, 58 | Trade union representative | Trade union |