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Women, Work, and Occupational Segregation in the Uniformed Services

Beth Grube-Farrell

Occupational segregation is one of many reasons why women who move from welfare to employment fail to achieve self-sufficiency. It is particularly acute in occupations such as the uniformed services (the military, police, fire fighting, and corrections), which offer the salaries, benefits, and security necessary to make financial independence a reality. The evidence suggests that women continue to be underrepresented in these occupations, largely as a result of such barriers as bias, stereotyping, and tokenism; the existence of hostile workplace climates and the influence of workplace cultures; and the lack of adequate workplace supervision. The role of social work in addressing this problem is discussed, with particular attention to issues of public education, working with women and organizations, and policy change.

The subject of women and employment has been studied extensively as women have become a growing and increasingly important and influential part of the labor market. Today, women represent approximately half the labor force, largely as a result of evolving sex roles and the feminist movement; shifting economic realities and the emergence of dual-earner families; changes in definitions of family that have caused more and more women (single women, divorced women, displaced homemakers, and female heads of families) to be self-

supporting; and, more recently, pressures from welfare reform policies (Atwood & Genovese, 1997; Benokraitis, 1987; Blau, 1998; Dinerman & Faulkner, 2000; Hering & Wilson-Sadberry, 1993; Piotrkowski & Hughes, 1993; Schmitz, 1995; Waldfogel, 1998; Walsh, 1993). The challenges these women face, managing both family obligations and a "second shift," particularly in an era of the "sandwich generation," and struggling with problems of economic inequality and discrimination have been well documented (Fitzpatrick & Gomez, 1997; Kanter & Stein, 1979; Lechner, 1994; Waldfogel, 1998; Walsh, 1993).

Research has long established that there is a gap between the earnings of men and women (women earn 72 cents for every dollar men earn), that the gap is the greatest in female-headed households (55% to 66%), and that the gap helps support the continued feminization of poverty (Atwood & Genovese, 1997; Fitzpatrick & Gomez, 1997; Schmitz, 1995; Waldfogel, 1998). In addition, a number of systemic barriers have been identified that interfere with women's full participation in the labor market. Age, race, and gender bias have limited opportunities for women, creating glass ceilings and, in many instances, requiring the passage of laws to create opportunities and offer protection to female workers (Blau, Ferber, & Winkler, 1998; Brown & Pechman, 1987; Fitzpatrick & Gomez, 1997; Gibelman, 1998; Kanter & Stein, 1979; O'Donahue, 1997).

Despite some improvements, parts of the labor market continue to be divided by gender, reinforcing differential opportunities and pay inequalities (Abramovitz, 1992; Reskin, 2000; Women's Bureau, 2001). The result of such occupational segregation is that women who are the most disadvantaged have the fewest work options and end up with traditionally female "pink-collar" jobs, such as clerical or support services that are characterized by low salaries, few or no benefits, and little potential for advancement (Blau & Hendricks, 1979; Nichols-Casebolt, Krysik, & Hermann-Curie, 1994; Waldfogel, 1998; Wootton, 1997). Occupational segregation is one of many reasons why women who are "moved" from welfare to employment fail to achieve self-sufficiency; they are unable to obtain jobs with salaries that offset the costs of working (child care and

transportation) and provide adequate health coverage (Cancian & Meyer, 2000; Hardina, 1999; Iversen, 1998; E. A. Segal, 1997).

A number of public service jobs offer the salaries, benefits, and security necessary to make financial independence a reality. Several of them, including the traditionally all-male uniformed services (the military, police, fire fighting, and corrections), appear closed to women. This article begins with a brief discussion of occupational segregation and the reasons for continued inequalities. It then discusses the uniformed services, an area in which an extreme form of occupational segregation continues to exist. It explores these occupations as options for women, paying attention to women's ability and suitability for such occupations, as well the factors that continue to perpetuate their exclusion despite evidence that some women are more than willing to assume these jobs, particularly in tough economic times (Reixach, 1996). Finally, it identifies the role of social work in addressing the barriers to the integration of women into these and other segregated occupations.

OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION

Occupational segregation, the historical concentration of women in a few occupations, including domestic work, clerical/secretarial work, sales, teaching, and nursing, has been described as "a crucial barrier to the attainment of economic equality for women" (Blau & Hendricks, 1979, p. 197). Women first entered the labor market as domestic workers and a few as professionals (schoolteachers and nurses) and later as clerical workers/secretaries. Over time, some changes occurred, particularly in the mid- to late 1990s when an increasing number of women entered the labor market seeking different occupations and professions. Gains were noted in predominately male professions and managerial occupations. For example, by 1995, more than 20% of all architects, chemists, computer systems analysts, lawyers, operations researchers, pharmacists, and physicians were women; and by 2001, approximately half the physicians' assistants and veterinarians and one third of all

heads of governmental agencies and school administrators were women (Blau et al., 1998; McClain, 2001). Gains were also noted in some blue-collar occupations, although blue-collar men and women continued to be segregated, with women experiencing particular difficulty breaking into certain areas such as construction, mechanics, and fire fighting (Blau et al., 1998; Brown & Pechman, 1987; Women's Bureau, 2001).

As a result, there are now fewer exclusively male or female occupations, and gender segregation has lessened (Blau et al., 1998). Nevertheless, women continue to be employed largely in administrative, support, and service occupations. By 1999, the six most common occupations for women, in decreasing order, were school teaching, secretarial work, cashiering, management/administration, sales, and nursing/health care (Women's Bureau, 2001). Half of all women were in professions (dietetics, nursing, librarianship, and kindergarten/elementary school teaching) that were largely (at least 80%) female, and several occupations, including secretarial/reception work, nursing, health care work, hairdressing, and bookkeeping, remain almost exclusively (90% or more) female (Blau et al., 1998; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001a). The reasons for this situation remain unclear (Brown & Pechman, 1987; Reskin, 2000).

Improvements have been attributed to feminism and the empowerment of women, an increase in the number of women in the labor market, changing economic realities and evolving family structures, the passage of laws and policies that created opportunities for women, improvements in women's levels of qualification and/or education, and organizational restructuring and technical change (Beller, 1985; Blau et al., 1998; Brown & Pechman, 1987; Walsh, 1993). Continued segregation, however, has been linked with occupational niching/stereotypes, gender role socialization, and self-selection (women's need to balance work and family and concerns about their lack of knowledge and skills and about problems such as harassment); men's reactions to competition and in-group preference; employers' bias; and inequality in work organizations (Beggs, 1995; Blau et al., 1998; Brown & Pechman, 1987; Fiske & Glick, 1995; Reskin, 2000; Taylor, 2000; Walsh, 1993). It has also been suggested

that some of the gains are illusory, a result of occupational "transformation" that resulted in the downgrading of skills, pay, and opportunities in certain occupations/positions or the assignment of token women to nominal positions (Blau et al., 1998; Callender, 1985).

THE UNIFORMED SERVICES

Occupational Segregation

Women are underrepresented in the uniformed services (the military, police, fire fighting, and corrections), whereas men continue to view these occupations as a private resource or, particularly in the case of fire fighting and police work, a "family business." Despite some increases beginning in the 1970s, women constitute less than 25% of the workforce in the uniformed services, making these nontraditional occupations. Women are 14% of the total armed forces ("Military Women Fit In," 1999), 16.5% of all police personnel, 3.6% of all firefighters and fire prevention workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001b), and 17.5% of all correctional workers (Lawrence & Mahan, 1998).

The dearth of women in these occupations cannot be explained purely as a result of labor market concerns and issues of job opportunities. Strong employment growth is reported in the police and corrections fields (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001b), and a "severe shortage" of prison guards has been linked with reductions in the minimum hiring age (Belluck, 2001). Opportunities also exist in the military, in which the recruitment of women has proved critical to efforts to meet quotas in an era of open enrollment (Gruenwald, 1997). Nor can it be explained in terms of occupational requirements that appear to exclude women automatically from consideration. In all cases, the requirements are similar and reasonably fulfillable by a number of women: a minimum age (somewhere between 18 and 21); a high school diploma or equivalent; good health;

and, in the case of police work and fire fighting, strength, stamina, coordination, and agility.

The advantages are obvious. The earnings are good, well beyond the federal guidelines of \$17,600 needed to lift a family of four out of poverty. In 1998, the average annual salary of police patrol officers was \$37,710, of firefighters was \$31,170, and of corrections workers was \$28,540 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001b), with salaries higher in the urban areas where most of the opportunities exist. Military salaries, although somewhat lower, are supplemented with room and board or money for living expenses. For public servants and government employees, civil service systems or merit boards ensure a range of benefits (regular pay increases, paid vacation and sick leave, medical and life insurance, and retirement coverage).

These advantages are underscored by evidence of gains made by disadvantaged men as a result of employment in the uniformed services. For example, the military has offered "significant opportunities" to non-Hispanic White, Black, and Hispanic men whose "only other options were low-paying jobs with poor advancement potential" (Phillips, Andrisani, Daymont, & Gilroy, 1992, p. 354). These men, particularly those who are Black or Hispanic, benefited from training, education, and career opportunities while earning more than comparable workers outside the military (Phillips et al., 1992). These advantages, coupled with evidence of a healthy job market, suggest that the gender imbalance in the higher paying uniformed occupations may be attributed to a range of factors, including the presence of barriers to women in these occupations.

Creating Opportunities for Women

Perhaps "no occupations have been more effective . . . in excluding and discouraging women from joining" (Simon & Akabas, 1993, p. 301) than the uniformed services. Women were barred from the uniformed services until court orders and/or legal decisions mandated their inclusion in the 1970s (Lawrence & Mahan, 1998; Riley, 1999; Warner, Steel, & Lovrich, 1989). Once

they gained access, however, women typically found themselves restricted from regular participation. For example, women were initially segregated in "women's corps" or auxiliary branches of the military and then included in the regular branches but limited in their opportunities because of combat-exclusion laws and risk rules (Damiano, 1999; O'Neill, 1998; Sadler, 1999). Similarly, women were first excluded from correctional work and then restricted to work only with female prisoners until court orders supported female guards' rights to equal opportunities; today, they continue to have limited career opportunities (Jurado, 1999).

Women have also had difficulty obtaining employment and advancement in fire and police departments (Warner et al., 1989). For example, women were first excluded from police departments, then integrated in response to court orders but separated in "women's' bureaus" that had "social work"-type functions, and later permitted to serve on the regular force but restricted to "typically female" work—with juveniles or women offenders or assigned to community relations (Ricucci, 1986). Court orders, requiring the employment of women as patrol officers, are responsible for the recruitment of women in the six cities with the highest percentages of female police officers—Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Toledo, Ohio; Miami, Florida; Washington, DC; Detroit, Michigan; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Janofsky, 1998). Although Pittsburgh has the highest percentage of women, the number of female officers has been decreasing since the court order expired in 1991 (Janofsky, 1998). Thus, legal actions appear to be linked to the creation of opportunities for women.

The difficulties that women have experienced have been attributed, at least in part, to the fact that "public sector jobs are a scarce social, economic and political resource" (Warner et al., 1989, p. 565), especially in the case of these relatively high-paying, low-skill jobs (Crouch, 1985). Although men have resisted integration, even at times of economic growth, feeling that their exclusive territory is being invaded, problems are particularly acute when the economy is weak and employment

opportunities are limited (M. W. Segal & Hansen, 1992). The difficulties are further heightened when the political climate is conservative and opposed to affirmative action. Resistance is also reinforced by the presence of deeply rooted beliefs about what was or is exclusively a man's job.

Bias, Stereotypes, and Tokenism

The mechanism that created opportunities for women, consent decrees that circumvent routine hiring procedures by establishing separate entrance mechanisms, is the focus of many objections to integration. Opponents of these "unfair hiring practices" insist that the practice results in the employment of "less qualified" individuals, who are "too weak" or "too short," "emotionally unstable," or "sexually suspect" and raise issues of public safety and danger to themselves and other workers (Damiano, 1999; Floren, 1998; Lawrence & Mahan, 1998; Liou, 1998; Riccucci, 1986; Riley, 1999; Warner et al., 1989; Wilcox, 1992). For these individuals, the question is, Can women do the job?

It is true that not all women are able to do these jobs—women are disadvantaged in physical strength, particularly upper-body strength. Some women, however, do have the necessary physical strength and aptitude, and a variety of performance measures have established this fact (Craig & Jacobs, 1985; Weldy, 1976). Nonetheless, women typically report that their abilities are questioned and that they are challenged to prove they can do the job—at least the part of the job that requires physical strength. For example, experienced female police officers have stated that men's negative, sexist attitudes and the pressure to be exceptional to gain even minimal acceptance are the biggest barriers they face (Timmins & Hainsworth, 1990). As one woman said, "I love being a cop, but male [officers] talk down to women and you constantly have to prove yourself to some" (quoted in Timmins & Hainsworth, 1990, p. 202).

Working with women does not necessarily change men's beliefs. As one survey found, male guards continued to have

doubts about women even after they had served with them (Jurik, 1988). They believed that women were more likely to be assaulted by prisoners and were unreliable and undependable in dangerous situations, despite all evidence to the contrary. This finding suggests that objections, which appear to have less to do with actual ability and more with beliefs about ability, may stem from notions that women should not be in "men's jobs."

The influence of gender bias and gender stereotyping; the development of gender ideologies based on notions of women's domesticity, purity, and frailty; and the concomitant construction of occupational sex types are well established (Abramovitz, 1987; Brabant & Mooney, 1997; Davis & Hagen, 1996; Kulik, 1998; L'Heureux-Dube, 2001; Lipton, O'Connor, Terry, & Bellamy, 1991; Stiver, 1997). Such bias and sex role stereotyping significantly heighten resistance to gender integration, particularly in occupations such as the uniformed services that are defined in typically male terms (Deaux, 1995; Jurik, 1988; Lawrence & Mahan, 1998; O'Donohue, 1997). Police, fire fighting, corrections, and the military are all occupations that are concerned with protecting and serving the community. The work occurs in dirty, dangerous, violent, uncontrolled environments and involves managing life-and-death situations. With the exception of fire fighting, workers carry and at times use weapons, and in all cases, there is a real potential for severe injury and/or death. The chief job skills—the use of authority, physical strength, and verbal aggression—are characteristically male, not female. Because gender identity is stronger than professional identity, traditional norms (stereotypes) about male and female abilities and traits define workplace roles, and questions emerge about the ability of women to do the job (Abramovitz, 1987; Brabant & Mooney, 1997; Davis & Hagen, 1996; Deaux, 1995; Fiske & Glick, 1995; Lipton et al., 1991). The problems are made more acute when women are tokens—a small, extremely visible part of the workforce—and therefore are treated as symbols, not individuals, with differences further exaggerated (Kanter, 1977; O'Donohue, 1997).

RESISTANCE TO WOMEN

Creating a Hostile Climate

Stereotypes that exaggerate differences between men and women, defining women as unsuitable for the work, have been linked with the development of a climate hostile to women (Fiske & Glick, 1995; L'Heureux-Dube, 2001; O'Donohue, 1997). There are numerous examples of a climate hostile to women in the uniformed services that has diminished somewhat but still continues to exist (Damiano, 1999; Feldenes & Schroedek, 1993; Lawrence & Mahan, 1998; Pogrebin & Poole, 1998; Riccucci, 1986; Walters, 1990). Women have, and may continue to face, barriers, such as "filthy or nonexistent bathrooms, spiteful coworkers who create horrifying unsafe working conditions, isolation, lack of respect, [and] sexual harassment" (Riley, 1999, p. 7) as well as threats and/or actual physical violence. Despite policies and procedures and efforts to manage the problem, sexual harassment continues to exist in the uniformed services (Damiano, 1999; Floren, 1998; Lawrence & Mahan, 1998; Liou, 1998). Problems in the military have been so extreme that the 1990s were labeled the "decade of sex scandals," and a 1995 Department of Defense survey established that slightly more than half the women in the military had experienced harassment (Bastian, Lancaster, & Reyst, 1996; O'Neill, 1998).

In some cases, women may be set up to fail. More often, however, they are simply restricted from the real work or excluded from informal networks (Chetkovich, 1977; Floren, 1998; Jurik, 1988; Kanter, 1977; Riccucci, 1986; Timmins & Hainsworth, 1990). Thus, they have few opportunities to develop and practice essential work skills and gain confidence in their ability—the very things that are critical for acceptance in these fields (Chetkovich, 1977; Jurik, 1988; Kanter, 1977; Riccucci, 1986). All the uniformed services are performance occupations, "in which the ability to act the part is central; competence includes a posture of assertiveness and self-confidence," and success occurs when "veterans also take an active hand in building the

newcomers self confidence by conveying a sense of trust in him [by] letting [him] know we know you can do it and giving him the opportunity and support" (Chetkovich, 1977, p. 119).

The stress of functioning in this hostile climate can be great. Studies have found that resistance to women, sexual harassment, and discrimination resulted in female corrections officers having more job-related stress than male corrections officers, female firefighters enjoying their work less than male firefighters, and female police officers voicing doubts about their career choice (Lawrence & Mahan, 1998; Riley, 1999; Timmins & Hainsworth, 1990). Women in the uniformed services have reported experiencing pressure to be more masculine but being rejected when they attempt to do so, leaving many of them resigned to accepting roles as pets or mascots (Jurik, 1988). Although some say that the salary and benefits are the only things that make their struggles to keep their jobs worthwhile, others have pointed to the rewards of performing important, meaningful work; the chance to be part (albeit a lesser part) of a team; and freedom from the constraints of the typical office setting (Riley, 1999). Despite all this, some surveys have found that women are as satisfied as men with their jobs in the uniformed services (Dantzker & Kubin, 1998).

Organizational Factors

The problem, however, is not just that women violate norms defining men's and women's work but that they also violate the essential norms defining workplace culture. For example, studies have shown that male correctional officers are far more critical of female correctional officers' abilities than are male prisoners, perhaps because accepting women on the job not only violates a sense of masculinity but challenges "the macho image and norms of behavior that characterize the subculture" (Lawrence & Mahan, 1998, p. 66). The literature is full of examples of a strong pervasive culture in each of the uniformed services (Chetkovich, 1977; Damiano, 1999; Fiske & Glick, 1995; Floren, 1998; Jurik, 1988; O'Donohue, 1997; Pryor, Giedd, & Williams, 1995) that is based on "mutual trust" of those "who

have similar background, attitudes and values—including a shared definition of their masculinity—in order to reduce the dangers and uncertainties” (Martin, 1991, p. 500) of their work. This is a particular problem because stereotypic beliefs about the appropriateness of women in a field can be elicited in individuals who previously did not have such beliefs by the presence of such environmental or cultural cues (Abramovitz, 1987; Davis & Hagen, 1996; Deaux, 1995; Lipton et al., 1991).

Cultures in the uniformed services are “characterized by a stylized pattern of interactions; a pattern of practical jokes, [and] dismissiveness . . . subordinate and derogatory and abusive treatment of new entrants is typical” (Floren, 1998, p. 22). These cultures have elaborate mechanisms for enculturating new members and for managing problems that represent challenges to norms. Hazing, a technique used routinely to initiate, ensure compliance, and enhance teamwork, is also used to respond to any threats—including the implied threat that women represent (Fiske & Glick, 1995; Floren, 1998; Jurik, 1988; Martin, 1980). This leaves women with a dilemma. Because “social acceptance is a significant element of overall acceptance” (Pryor et al., 1995, p. 71) and hazing is an accepted part of the lifestyle, women need to find a balance between gaining social acceptance and protecting themselves from behavior and conversation that cross the line (are inappropriate, offensive, or even hostile).

The problems women face become particularly acute when in addition to the workplace having norms that encourage harassment, managers, supervisors, and fellow officers ignore or allow problems to occur (O’Donohue, 1997; Pryor et al., 1995). Whenever a majority controls the organizational group and new members who are tokens are being integrated, strong leadership is needed to manage difficulties that can be expected to arise (Kanter, 1977; Kanter & Stein, 1979; O’Donohue, 1997). Yet, such leadership often appears lacking, perhaps as a result of the mechanisms for selecting managers. Rising up through the ranks, already enculturated, the line managers lack experience working in a gender-mixed workforce and have few or no models for effective supervision of such a workforce (Fiske &

Glick, 1995; O'Donahue, 1997; Pryor et al., 1995; Timmins & Hainsworth, 1990).

STRATEGIES FOR CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

Issues of women, employment, and poverty are complicated and require multifaceted attention by social workers who have been challenged to meet the occupational needs of the unemployed and underemployed (Iversen, 1998). Interventions are needed that improve the likelihood of earning a living wage. One area that requires attention is the occupational sex segregation that limits some women's opportunities. Some strategies and tools that social workers can use in an effort to create more opportunities are discussed in the following sections. Although this article has focused on the uniformed services (police, fire fighting, corrections, and the military) as a virtually untapped resource for women, other stereotypically male public service jobs (such as train operators) also exist (Cahn, 1993). The challenge is to help women get and keep such jobs.

Public Education

If social custom and self-selection are barriers to the integration of women in some public service occupations such as the uniformed services, then social workers must aggressively pursue opportunities to challenge gender-based definitions of occupations and provide a more gender-balanced view. Surveys (Austin & Hummer, 1999; Fletcher, McMahan, & Quester, 1993; Lawrence & Mahan, 1998) have found that the public continues to see certain occupations as being for men only. Social workers must intervene, providing examples of women in these jobs as well as actual evidence that women can do the jobs.

Typically, women become visible only when there are problems (i.e., the sex scandals in the military), when women excel at stereotypically female parts of the jobs, or when women achieve a "first" (and then little attention is paid to their actual

performance). Social workers must help to normalize views of these women as workers, not novelties. In addition, a number of occupations (such as the uniformed services) continue to be defined by sex role stereotypes that no longer hold true. For example, physical strength was once seen as an essential trait for employment in the military, but today the greater sophistication of weaponry has made technical skills as important, or more so, than physical strength (Sadler, 1999). A change in knowledge and attitudes is critical to efforts to create opportunities for women—both in entering these occupations and in seeking greater opportunities for participation (Jurado, 1999).

Stereotypes exert a widespread influence. Caseworkers, staffs of work-enrichment programs, and other human service workers may be influenced by stereotypes and hence neglect chances to seek opportunities and support women or to advocate for critical policy changes. Stereotypes may influence employers, resulting in their failure to consider women for certain positions or to make necessary changes in organizational policies and procedures. Unfortunately, policy makers, both male and female, may also fall victim to these stereotypes, crafting policies that neglect the needs of these women and continue women's exclusion from such occupations. Social workers must educate and inform individuals at these critical access points.

Working With Women

Part of the problem is the influence that this gender role socialization has on women. Women may fail to consider or reject nontraditional careers, underestimating their ability to perform physically demanding tasks. Some women, such as those with low-paying clerical jobs, single mothers, and those who were tomboys in childhood who had stereotypically male pursuits, do become interested in such careers once they become aware of the possibilities and benefits (Reixach, 1996). Social work, with its historical interest in work, is the most logical profession to help women explore such career options. Social workers need to take advantage of any and all opportunities to

help women thoughtfully consider and evaluate the suitability of work in the uniformed services.

Because issues of physical strength are paramount, women must be helped to make realistic assessments of their abilities and potential. One technique for self-assessment may be to arrange meetings with women who are working in the uniformed services, who have a job-based accurate understanding of the physical strength and aptitudes required, and who could advise women about preparing, physically and mentally, to apply and enter these occupations. The importance of being able to do the job should not be minimized. Social workers should support women's efforts to develop the necessary skills, both physical (through programs of intense physical development) and technical-mechanical.

Once they are adequately trained, women can expect that the main obstacles will be psychosocial and organizational. Social workers must both ensure that efforts are made to prepare women for the realities of the workplace and work to change these realities. Even more than physical fitness training, women should receive training to develop "survival" skills (e.g., negotiation, conflict resolution, and the use of humor to diffuse tension) and advice about establishing roles they are comfortable with (neither superwoman nor helpless female). Women can benefit from identifying with mentors, well-respected (male) workers, who can be encouraged to help them learn to understand and negotiate the elaborate culture and/or tolerant supervisors. Recognition can be crucial to efforts to gain acceptance.

Women who are already on these jobs are not in a good position to help new entrants and typically are reluctant to do so because they believe that survival is linked to the ability to join the culture (Feldenes & Schroedek, 1993; Floren, 1998; Jurik, 1988). There is, however, a need to bring these tokens together and provide general support. A group for all women, held away from the job site and facilitated by a trained professional, such as a social worker, can help its members learn to manage stress, bolster their self-esteem and self-confidence, and solve problems.

Working With Organizations

As Reskin (2000) so aptly observed, "Inequality at work does not just happen; it occurs through the acts and the failure to act by the people who run and work for organizations" (p. 707). Because the organizational context can cause or deter problems, pressure must be brought to bear on organizations to ensure that individuals in leadership positions will support the development of an appropriate workplace climate. The emphasis must be on limiting the potential for abuse of power and requiring accountability for decision making. Leaders need to develop mechanisms for team building other than the time-honored techniques such as hazing and incorporate them into the workplace culture. Formal written policies and procedures, particularly those regarding the integration of women and sexual harassment, must be publicized and reinforced, and consequences for violations must be fair and swift. Because this represents a significant change for the supervisors, many of whom may never have managed a gender-integrated workforce, specialized training is needed. At the same time, efforts must be made to eliminate stereotypes in the organization by providing information about women's qualifications for and success on the job.

Policy Changes

Finally, some evidence has linked success with direct intervention in the labor market (Warner et al., 1989). The answer to problems of tokenism may be simply to increase the number of women until they reach a critical mass and hence end the segregation of these occupations. Efforts to create opportunities for women (in the uniformed services and elsewhere) have required the implementation of equal employment opportunity and affirmative action policies that no longer exist. The challenge to social workers in an increasingly conservative political climate is to struggle to find ways to continue to promote social equity, a chief mission of the profession. Social workers and women's organizations need to advocate for

legislation to continue to expand opportunities for women and to prevent a backlash and further discrimination. Warner et al. (1989) suggested that a critical strategy is to support women aggressively for political office because more benefits exist for women when other women are in decision-making positions. This strategy may be particularly critical in times such as these, when unemployment rates are increasing and the integration of male-dominated occupations represents a greater threat.

CONCLUSION

Today, women play a critical role in helping to ensure their own and their families' financial security, and women, particularly single women with children, are experiencing pressure to earn sufficient money to support their families. This pressure presents a challenge to those women who are undereducated and underemployed and earn significantly less than do men. Welfare reform policies have exacerbated these problems for many, if not most, of these women. Studies of the effects of welfare reform have established two main points: Women want to be employed in the labor market, and forcing women into the labor market simply to be employed is no answer to the larger problems of poverty and dependence (Blumenberg, 2000; Cancian & Meyer, 2000; Pearlmutter & Bartle, 2000; Riemer, 1997; Waldfogel, Villeneuve, & Garfinkle, 2000). At the heart of the matter are questions of the feasibility of finding and keeping jobs that pay living wages (Perlmutter & Bartle, 2000; Waldfogel et al., 2000) that may be addressed, in part, through ongoing efforts to reduce occupational segregation.

Welfare reform, one of the more recent attempts to change policies that affect the lives of women, has not improved the plight of poor women. Although some have attributed the failure of welfare reform to problems of "achieving economic self-sufficiency for women who have dependent children, few skills to peddle, and a dim view of their own prospects" (Gross, 1997, p. 390), others have pointed to the racism, bias, and stereotypes that impede the willingness to make real changes (Dinerman &

Faulkner, 2000). The same climate that produced policies to reduce welfare rolls at the expense of well-being will most likely make achieving policy changes geared toward greater occupational opportunities an uphill battle.

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