

Moving Up Down in the Mine:
The Preservation of Male Privilege Underground

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Introduction

Due mostly to the anti-discrimination litigation of the late 1970s, an appreciable number of women have joined the underground coal mining workforce. However, as the institutional barriers to their entry were greatly reduced, those affecting their integration into that workforce were hardly eliminated. According to Blau and Ferber (1985:44), in many nontraditional blue-collar occupations "hierarchical differences between the sexes still appear quite pronounced. It may be that the resistance to upward mobility of women is even greater than their entry." When members of a previously excluded group, such as women, gain entry into a workplace where managers felt initially pressured into hiring them, job-level sex segregation typically results (Harlan and O'Farrell 1982; Reskin 1988). Thus, coal mining men continue to dominate the channels of upward mobility and to retain the better jobs, while women are disproportionately found in jobs that are lower-paying, feature less autonomy and status, and allow fewer chances for promotion due to both the organizational and cultural practices of the workplace.

Members of work organizations experience both formal and informal types of contact with one another through which conflicts develop and are resolved based on the parties' differing interests and amounts of power (Etzioni 1964). Men have greater access to organizational resources because they occupy positions of authority at work. As a result, both formal and informal processes and structures found there are biased in their favor (Taylor 1988) making them relatively more powerful than women in the workplace. Thus, despite the emphasis on the consistency of organizational rules which are assumed to have universalistic consequences, internal labor markets are disparate in terms of their impact on the sexes

(Hartmann 1987). Indeed, the very creation of an internal hierarchy provides the tools necessary to discriminate, either on the basis of merit or on other worker characteristics, such as gender. For example, in previous studies, women miners have complained about not getting the on-the-job training they needed to advance based on the qualification requirements of the seniority system (Mahoney 1978; Yount 1986; Moore and White 1989). Having the necessary skills also affects their subsequent work assignments when management periodically realigns the underground working force (Tallichet 1991).

Formal barriers do not operate alone in order to constrain women's advancement. Informal processes can directly and indirectly alter "the machine-like structure of the formal organization to fit the very human proclivities of its members, especially those in dominant organizational positions (that is, men)" (Taylor 1988:181). Numerous studies have focused on the nature of women's informal relations with coworkers and supervisors as central to understanding their relative lack of success (For a review, see Roos and Reskin 1984). Specifically, men's gendered expectations and reactions to women and women's social accommodations to a male-dominated workplace are essential for understanding the emergence of a sexual division of labor underground (Tallichet, forthcoming).

The research findings presented in this chapter consider how the formal procedures of the internal labor market upon which the job hierarchy is based and the informal relations which reflect the effects of gender in the workplace combine to result in job-level sex segregation among underground coal miners. The analyses of data demonstrate the problematic nature of the women's struggle to prove themselves to men, other women, and themselves, as competent for performing male-identified work in a male-dominated work setting. They also

reveal the power of males' negative stereotyping of female work behavior sustained by men's (and sometimes women's) sexualization of the workplace (Enarson 1984; Swerdlow 1989) as results in the twin processes of "objectification" and "stigmatization" (Schur 1984) of women miners. These processes affect the structure of women's opportunities for advancement as they are mediated through the formal procedures of the mining establishment's internal labor market.

Methodology

Primary data were collected through from in-depth, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, on-site nonparticipant observation, and archival research done at a large coal mine in southern West Virginia during October and November of 1990. Fieldwork lasted one one month. All of the aforementioned techniques were used together in order to cross check data gathered from multiple sources. My goal was to gain a full understanding of the women miner's beliefs, values, and perspectives about their work, their advancement, and their experiences with coworkers and supervisors. Thus, the case study design and the techniques used were best suited for this investigation because they allowed me to get close to the data and develop explanations directly from them. These techniques also provided an understanding of culturally-prescribed and temporally-bound social phenomena resulting from the constant flow of interaction based on the power relations between actors within the context of the workplace.

I first learned of the case study site from a contact, a former miner herself, at the 1990 annual Coal Employment Project's National Conference of Women Miners held in Norton, VA, in June. After writing the coal company's human resources officer and receiving

permission from the home office in a neighboring state, at that time I was given access to restricted areas at the site, such as the women's bath house and the miner's lamp house, where miners gathered between shifts. I was also granted tours of the compound and a tour of the mine.

Before the early to mid-1970s women's inroads into mining were slow and sporadic. However, in 1978 lawyer Betty Jean Hall, then director of the Coal Employment Project (CEP), successfully filed with the Office of Federal Compliance Contract Programs a massive lawsuit against 153 coal companies. As a result, women who had previously and unsuccessfully applied for coal mining jobs were awarded back pay and along with other women were hired according to newly established affirmative action quota guidelines. Similar to other large coal companies involved in the hiring discrimination litigation of 1978, the case study company did not begin employing women in appreciable numbers until it was forced to do so. In 1975, only three women were working there. By the early 1980s, out of 800 miners, between 80 and 90 were women. However, several years later, the industry's economic slump forced the company to lay off almost half its miners, including more than two-thirds of the women. Thus, at the time of the study, the company employed 466 miners, including 23 women. All the miners were members of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). The company also employed approximately a dozen men as assistant foremen or "bosses." Their duties underground were strictly supervisory, so they were not members of the UMWA.

Based on my observations, the case study mine, like any coal mine, was a dark and damp environment where miners were working side by side often in cramped areas. Shift work was

performed on several different sections simultaneously. Miners depended on each other for their collective safety and productivity, and miners and their foremen were mutually dependent. Foremen counted on their crews to meet production quotas in exchange for fair treatment and occasional favors.

During their first few months on the job, new miners were considered trainees and were assigned to Grade 1 jobs, such as general inside labor ("GI") or beltman. At the end of this period, they received their miner's certificate meaning they could go on to bid on any newly-posted higher-graded jobs in the mine. Jobs in Grades 2 through 5 required operative skills usually, but not exclusively acquired on the job. By UMWA contract, jobs have always been awarded by seniority defined as length of service and a miner's ability to perform the bid job. However, since the mid-1980s, new job postings had been infrequent and realignments of the working force were occurring regularly. At the time of the study, the concentration of women in Grade 1 jobs at the mine was substantial. Eighteen of the 23 women miners (78 percent) were so classified compared with 148 (33 percent) of the men.

All my interviews with the women were solicited in the women's bath house, usually before rather than after their shifts. My contact at the women's conference strongly advised against the latter since tired miners coming off their shifts might be less cooperative. Sampling among the women miners was a combination of snowball and purposive techniques. The snowball technique was used when I asked the first few women I interviewed to give me the names of other women. From these names I used the purposive techniques by selecting certain women to be interviewed by virtue of their tenure, job rank or other job-related experiences, such as sexual harassment or discriminatory treatment. All of these

women consented to be interviewed. Every effort was made to conduct interviews in quiet private settings, such as my motel room or in the womens' homes, at times when the respondent would be at ease and feel free to provide information and her opinions about sensitive topics. The in-depth interviews with the women lasted up to two hours. All except two of the interviews were taped with the interviewee's consent as the setting would allow. One of these interviews was conducted in a diner and the other took place in the women's bath house. In both cases, I decided not to tape record these interviews in order to avoid intruding upon others' privacy or to call attention to the interview process and those involved.

The first few interviews were crucial to establishing rapport and trust with the women in the sample because, as I learned from women interviewed later, the earliest interviewees assured the others that their interview experience had not resulted in any ill consequences. Moreover, from the earliest interviews, I attempted to diffuse any class-based social distance which might also lead to resentment or distrust between us through my dress and demeanor. Being a woman in my early thirties whose usual dress was a faded army jacket, flannel shirt, jeans and boots, facilitated my initial contact with the women miners. Most of the women were my age and dressed in a similar manner. I asked for interviews by explaining that I was a graduate student working on my thesis and not a representative of either the company or the union. By making the women aware of my student status from the outset, I literally established myself in the role of "student" eager to "become educated" about mining from my interviewees whom I dubbed "my teachers." I also likened getting my degree to them getting their "mining papers," the certificate of training needed to become a coal miner.

Those women who granted interviews were often as curious about me as I was about them. After some discussion about the rigors of mining, two of the women in the sample, noting my interest in mining and my "athletic build," exclaimed that with the required training: "You could be on our crew!"

In total, interviews were conducted with 10 women. Additional contact with them was initiated either by me or the women themselves. Moreover, on numerous occasions brief 20-minute discussions were held with seven more women who were either unable or unwilling to speak at greater length. These women were willing to discuss various topics briefly in the bath house, but begged off in-depth interviews fearing possible reprisals from the company. Their classic response was: "Sorry, but I need this job." Only a few women flatly refused to be interviewed.

The women in the sample were diverse in terms of their age, education, marital status, and child bearing. The youngest woman in the sample was 29; the oldest was 50. One woman finished the 10th grade, seven had high school diplomas, and two had attended college. At the time they were hired, six of the women were either single or divorced. Four of these women had children. All of the women in the sample said they needed a coal-mining job to support either themselves or their families. By the time of the study, two of the divorced women had remarried and one married woman had divorced, so that half the sample was married with children. Three of the other five single women had either one or two children to support. Two had remained single and childless. The youngest woman, one of the single mothers, was African American. The rest of the women in the sample were white.

As previously mentioned, coal-mining jobs are arranged according to five ranks each containing job families. Grade 1 jobs are laboring jobs usually involving mine maintenance. These jobs require few skills and more physical strength and endurance.¹ Higher grade jobs are more closely involved with coal production and require operative skills or certification, or both. Six of the 10 women in the case study sample were classified in laboring jobs, three of whom were certified for higher grade jobs. The four other women held jobs in each one of the higher grades. The women's experience in mining ranged between 9 and 15 years. Two of the women in the sample had been working together. The rest were working as token members of their crews, as did most women at the mine.

Unlike interviewing women miners, interviewing the men was considerably more difficult. Thus, sampling among men was based solely on convenience. As one man told me, they believed I was only interested in "women's problems" and not in their experiences. This was not surprising given that I was referred to repeatedly by the secretary who initially showed me around the compound as "the lady here to talk to our lady miners." Nonetheless, I was able to have brief conversations with several different male miners and the local union president in and around the lamp house which was the common meeting area for all miners because it was accessible from either the men's or the women's bath houses. It was also where miners congregated before shifts because it opened out onto a large porch from which miners got into the "buses" that took them into the mine. The union president agreed to speak with me in lieu of granting me admittance to a union meeting because of what he termed the "controversial" nature of the topics on the agenda. One of those topics was the company's plan to lengthen shifts from 8 hours as provided in the current contract to 10

hours. However, one women told me that the union president did not want me observe him make a fool of himself which she and other male miners felt he often did. Finally, I also interviewed and had repeated conversations with the mine superintendent in his office.

My own field experiences gave me insight into the highly segregated and male-dominated nature of the workplace. It was made clear to me that certain places were "off limits," but more importantly, certain people were unavailable to me because I was a woman.

For example, during my initial contact with company personnel I was warned to stay clear of the men's bath house because, as it was implied, I might get more information than I would want to receive. Likewise, several of the women told me than impromptu union meetings were often held in the men's bath house which insured their exclusion, as well as mine, unless we were willing to take on the challenge such an action posed. During one of my tours around the mine compound, my guide, a male security officer, took me through the the empty men's bathhouse at his suggestion. He indicated he had done so as as a special favor to me. Another male-identified place was underground at the face where coal was actually being sheared from the seam. When I requested to go there during my underground tour, the miner who was giving me my gear tried to talk me out if it. He asked several times why did I want to go there seeing how it was dirty, cold and if I was going that far underground for that long I would be cold, hungry, and uncomfortable.

Theoretical Perspective

Social closure theory asserts that "a status group creates and preserves its identity and advantages by reserving certain opportunities for members of the group" using exclusionary and, thus, discriminatory practices (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993:61). Based on the concept of patriarchy, Reskin and Roos (1987) have developed a theoretical perspective for examining how men act to preserve their privileged positions in the workplace. In a given culture, status hierarchies are systems of stratification "prescribed in a supporting ideology and maintained by mechanisms that physically or symbolically set apart members of dominant and subordinate status groups" (Reskin and Roos 1987:5). Physical segregation is one such mechanism which literally sets dominant and subordinate group members apart. However, when physical segregation breaks down, other mechanisms, such as functional differentiation, operate to reestablish the existing status hierarchies found in the larger culture.

When the sexes are physically integrated in a single work environment, functional differentiation leads to a sexual division of labor that is "grounded in stereotypes of innate sex differences in traits and abilities" and operates through "various social control mechanisms" (Reskin and Roos 1987:9). Under these conditions, "men will tolerate women in predominantly male work settings if they work in 'women's' jobs ..., but resist women doing traditionally male jobs in male work settings" (Reskin 1988:67). Thus, although women are accepted into the hierarchy, they still occupy subordinate positions which require their deference to males and creates a social separation of the sexes.

The gendered status hierarchy is preserved through certain "social practices that create or exaggerate the social distance between status groups" (Reskin and Roos 1987:7). These

practices dictate subordinates' behavior in the presence of dominant group members and shape the casual interaction between them. When gendered status hierarchies are maintained this way, they are usually seen by both men and women as natural and, thus, appropriate, because they recreate gendered social relations occurring in the larger culture. Because women who do "men's jobs" are challenging the routinization of the presumably natural order of gendered relations, they are "at risk of gender assessment" (West and Zimmerman 1987:136). They are held accountable for engaging in gender inappropriate behavior through other women's and men's (as well as their own) evaluations of their behavior based on "normative conceptions of appropriate attitudes and activities" for their gender category (West and Zimmerman 1987:139). Thus, these women are under pressure to prove their femininity, particularly as it is defined by the standards of "womanhood" and "manhood" in more traditional rural Appalachian culture.

Kanter (1977a, b) was among the first to document that token women's conspicuous presence leads to men's exaggeration of the differences between them. Men's behavior toward token women leads to the establishment of gendered boundaries. Such polarization can result in a token woman's social and physical isolation on the job. According to other researchers, polarization is accomplished via men's "sexualization of the workplace" meaning that work relations between men and women are "sexualized" (Enarson 1984; Swerdlow 1989). Sexualizing the workplace and work relations consists of behaviors that express "the salience of sexual meanings in the presumably asexual domain of work." (Enarson 1984:88). As the literature on women in nontraditional blue-collar occupations has shown, most men engage in at least one of several forms of workplace sexualization using sexual harassment,

sexual bribery, gender-based jokes and comments, and profanity in order to make sex differences a salient aspect of work relations (Enarson 1984; Gruber and Bjorn 1982; Swerdlow 1989). These behaviors, according to Enarson (1984:109), "constitute a continuum of abuse" and reflect "a cultural tradition which sexualizes, objectifies, and diminishes women."

Men's sexualization of work relations directly expresses the expectation that women should "act like women" by making their integration into a sexualized workplace contingent upon their production of gender as they interact with men. Because men's sexualization of work relations identifies women primarily by their gender category and not by their work roles, it objectifies them. As Schur (1984) has pointed out, this "objectification" of women workers leads to their stigmatization by men about their work-related inferiority. Objectification and work-related trivialization are mutually reinforcing processes (Schur 1984:142), which is how women workers are "appropriately" matched with gender-typed jobs requiring few specialized skills. Often jobs to which women are assigned mirror their relations with men in that these jobs require women's support and service to men occupying more skilled jobs. Because there are simply too few women present in a workplace dominated by men, women are usually unable to directly counter men's expressions of the negative stereotypes upon which this gender-typed matching process is based (Kanter 1977a).²

Studies have shown that men's gender-role expectations of women as workers negatively affect their success in nontraditional employment because these expectations color the men's perception of either women's potential for, or actual, job performance (Reskin and Padavic 1988). Those women who disconfirm the stereotypes by successful advancement have been

regarded by men as "exceptional." But for most women, the stereotypes for their presumed incompetence can also affect how some of the women have come to perceive themselves and each other. Accordingly, "... male workers may inhibit integration both by their ability to shape employer's decisions and by affecting the preferences of female workers" (Reskin 1993:248). In examining women miners' day-to-day social relations with men co-workers and supervisors in several western states, Yount (1986:29) found that "women are assigned to positions that are conducive to perceptions of sex-stereotypical traits. In turn, these perceptions (based on the work they perform) provide legitimation for the assignments." That is, jobs underground become gender-identified and workers are matched accordingly through the operation of the formalized provisions of the workplace.

Findings and Analyses

Beyond the physical challenges they faced in the workplace, the women miners had to adapt to the male-identified culture of mining by establishing and maintaining cooperative, if not amicable, work relations with male coworkers and supervisors. Although most of the men treated them with some measure of respect, all the women in the sample reported that during their first few years underground they encountered men's sexualization of work relations in the form of either sexual harassment, propositioning, or sexual bribery. In particular, some foremen misused their authority by initiating sexual bribery in exchange for easier work assignments. In response to the women's complaints about the men's behavior, the company issued a formal set of rules forbidding the use of obscene or abusive language. According to the women, these more direct forms of sexualization became less prevalent, in part, because of the men's fear of sanctions. However, other forms of workplace

sexualization, such as sexual jokes, stories, and profanity have persisted. These conditions, the women said, have contributed to the endurance of the negative stereotypes which were the basis for assigning women to lesser-skilled lower status jobs involving manual labor. Moreover, these gender-typed assignments which severely reduced the women's promotion prospects were made according to several formalized procedures of the workplace, such as training opportunities, seniority, posting and bidding practices, temporary assignments, and realignments of the working force.

Sexualization of Work Relations and the Workplace

Half of the women in the sample said they had been sexually harassed by either male coworkers or foremen (bosses), using verbal innuendo and body language to convey a sexual message (Gruber and Bjorn 1982). For example, one woman reported an incident of homosexual buffoonery with a particularly potent message exaggerating men's sexuality and solidarity because of its contamination by an intruding female:

They was pretending they was queers in front of me. It was like one was humping the other one, but they had their clothes on. And the boss said, "You scared of us, ain't you?" I said, "No, I'm not scared of you all." And he said, "Well, this is our little world down here and you don't belong."

Some male coworkers and foremen either directly solicited sexual favors from the women or repeatedly asked them for dates. When women first started working at the mine, one woman said that they were treated "like a piece of pussy." Another recalled that "a boss (once said) all the women made beds out of rockdust for the men. You know, like that's all

we did was go in there to sleep with them?"

Because of the power differential, sexual propositioning by foremen posed a much greater threat to a women's work status than propositioning by men coworkers. It was well-known by women in the sample that when a woman failed to capitulate to a foreman's sexual demands, she usually faced the prospect of getting a more difficult work assignment. One woman who had been reassigned for such an offense was told by a man coworker "if you let these bosses pinch your titties, you'll get along. If you don't, you'll get the awfulest job that ever was." She allowed that she preferred the "awful" job every time.

Another form of punishment used by a foreman was social derogation designed to humiliate the woman who refused his sexual requests:

One time (foreman) told the guys behind my back that I had sucked his dick, is the way he put it. It came back to me about a week or so later. I went through pure misery for about a year because the boss lied to the crew that I worked with, telling them (other) stuff. I didn't even know why everybody all of a sudden quit speaking to me, giving me the cold shoulder.

In front of her men co-workers, she retaliated:

I walked up to him and I said, "When did I suck your god damned dick down the jackline?" He goes, "I don't know what you're talking about." I said, "You're a god damned liar. You told everyone of them and you didn't think that they'd find out I'm not doing the shit you said I was doing and come back and tell me things, did you?" Right there it proved

to the guys (he was lying) because some of them actually believed it!

In the above case, the foreman's rumors led to her isolation by virtue of her coworkers lack of on-the-job cooperation. But even in the absence of rumors, the women's potential for becoming socially isolated was especially great because of their token status. This seriously hindered their ability to do their jobs adequately and made them vulnerable to the perception that they were incapable of doing the work. A miner's reputation is important not only for being respected and appreciated by coworkers, but also for gaining the opportunities necessary for advancement, such as temporary assignments. Thus, men's sexualization of work relations underscored the women's sexuality at the expense of their work role performances and promotion potential.

When the company issued its mandate against harassment, the superintendent told me it was necessary to "teach the men what harassment was." His remark implied that the men were so accustomed to regarding women in terms of their sexuality that they would find it difficult, if not unnatural, to develop egalitarian work relationships with them. Although the rule has effectively eroded these incidents, the women added that its enforcement has a double binding or "damned if you do, damned if you don't" quality because it was the women themselves and not other men, such as foremen, who were solely responsible for reporting harassment. Those women who reported infractions said that it was they, not their harassers, who ended up being transferred to other work locations. Other women indicated that they were often reluctant to do so because it created tension among crew members. Moreover, it violated a UMWA oath of solidarity, thus, defeating the women's attempts to become socially integrated underground despite the union local's lackluster support for the

women and the workplace issues which directly affected them. In sum, the women miners are caught in the power struggles between the sexes and between labor and management in ways which doubly disadvantage their own ploys for gaining power in the workplace.

Even though the women in the sample recognized that the men's sexual harassment was usually unprovoked, some of them tended to place the responsibility for the men's actions on themselves and each other. This was especially true for those women who had received little or no sexual harassment. According to one woman:

The majority of the men up there are good to you if you let them.

But they'll treat you how they see you act. See, men, they tend to watch women more, I believe it's just the male in them.

When the women were treated as sex objects, each woman was regarded by the men as a representative of her gender category. Hence, each woman was made to feel that she had a moral responsibility to all the other women for avoiding "loose" behavior.³ As a result, some of the firmest friendships and the bitterest of on-going battles between them have been over the sexual indulgences of other women, particularly when any one of these women were perceived as "sleeping her way to a better job."

In order to thwart the men's sexual advances and uphold the image of fidelity, several of the women reported doing the following:

When I first came here I set myself up right away. I've made it known: Don't bother me, I'm here to work. I'm not here for romance, (but for) finance. Once you establish yourself, they know your boundaries and they respect them.

Because of her behavior, this single and childless woman had challenged men's heterosexist beliefs about women's sexuality. As a result a male coworker once asked her if she was a lesbian, to which she responded: "What difference does it make what I tell you? You already have your mind made up." She was never asked that again. She explained that not only were the men intimidated when women could handle coal mining jobs, but they were also intimidated by the possibility of a women's homosexuality. In this case, a woman could remain not only financially independent, but also sexually independent of men and their control.

But typically, men will continue to relate to women in sexual terms as long as the division of labor provides the potential for women to be equal to men (Reskin and Roos 1987); when women are present men have a "status stake" in the sexualization of the workplace and work relations (Swerdlow 1989). Thus, over time it had become clear to the women that although the men had accepted them, their presence had done little to seriously disrupt men's sexualization of the work place. As one woman put it:

It's a man's world. And when I started I knew I was going into a man's world and men have their ways. When the first women went into the mines, it was hard for a man to change his ways.

Continuing to relating to women in sexual terms reinforces gender-based boundaries and reasserts male solidarity underground. As one woman explained:

"It's the pal system, like if there're two young men, they stick together, and they stick up for the boss. I found out if you knowed a lot about football, baseball, basketball, how to deer

hunt, or how to go to a club and drink a lot of booze (said grinning)--if you was a man (chuckles). Well, that's what the bosses like.

Two types of men's behavior that contributed to the sexualization of the workplace were sexual jokes and stories, and profanity. Gutek (1985) has concluded that sex in the forms of graffiti, jokes, comments, and metaphors for work, are a part of workplaces dominated by men regardless of women's presence. However, as women enter the work setting, they are obligated to set limits on some of the men's activities in order to avoid being degraded. Sometimes the male miners were careful about telling jokes in the women's presence. At other times the women found themselves in the position of having to "draw the line" on men's unacceptable behavior. On her crew, one woman said that although she generally "laughs stuff off," she was careful not to "get rowdy with them" because invariably the action would escalate. She commented that occasionally if they got carried away, she would "make them stop." Another woman tried to curb the men's "sex talk":

They would start making sexual remarks about their girl friends and women and I'd say, "Hey, you shouldn't talk like that! What's the matter with you guys? You ought to be ashamed of yourself," just to get them to watch what they say.

Similar to other workers employed in dangerous occupations, coal miners are notorious for using profanity. The women said that men would apologize if they thought a woman had overheard them using foul language. Their apologies strongly imply that there is a difference between men's and women's language. Language serves to maintain role boundaries. If

profanity is not fit language for a woman to hear, then certainly she should avoid using it. The women varied considerably in their use of foul language and in their willingness to tolerate it from others. A few women did not swear and had no tolerance for it. However, most of the women miners admitted to using what constituted "men's language," but said they were careful to conceal or curtail their profanity it. For example:

There's a lot of stuff I will say. I used to not cuss too bad, but I'll cuss now. I'll say it under my breath. I don't think they've ever heard it. They'd die if they heard me say what I say to myself.

Another said: "I cuss some when I get mad, but I always try to watch what I say because I'll lose that edge." That "edge," she explained, was the men's respect.

The emphasis some men place on sexuality and gender differences in the workplace reasserts the subordinate status of women by focusing on their gender role behavior at the expense of their work role performances. As one woman put it: "The men look at our bodies and not at what we can do." Thus, the sexualization of work relationships and the workplace had the effect of stigmatizing women as a group, allowing the imputation of stereotypes about women's inferiority relative to men when it came to doing "men's work."

Stereotypes and the Sex-Typing of Jobs

In a masculine-identified workplace, men's sexualization maintains the gendered relations between women and men. But it also defines women's appropriate positions in the work hierarchy based on the culturally-defined stereotypical differences in women's and men's respective abilities. In the Appalachian coalfields, gendered interaction based on

on gendered "ways" is highly "conventionalized" and "dramatically performed" according to universal claims about gender differences (Stewart, 1990). All of the women in the sample identified men's negative stereotypes as a means for justifying women's work assignments. These stereotypes were expressed verbally by some male coworkers, but were also demonstrated by foremen's behavior toward the women. In turn, the women perceived limited opportunities for advancement, emphasizing the power foremen and other managerial personnel had for either directly or indirectly determining their status in the job hierarchy.

During their first few years at the mine, all of the women I interviewed complained that at least some male coworkers had made derisive remarks questioning the appropriateness of their presence:

Even some of our union brothers (said) I don't think women ought to be in here. They ought to get out of here and let a good man have this job. They said we should be home cleaning house, raising kids.

Several of the women also said that when they first started working, some of the men told them that mining jobs were too physically difficult for them. One woman was asked why she had taken a coal job if she couldn't do the work. She said "they didn't want you to (work). They don't even want you to try because you're crowding in on their turf." Other women also reported that their male coworkers made their jobs unnecessarily difficult by ignoring them or reducing their own efforts. Other men responded in a chivalrous fashion by offering women unnecessary assistance. The women recognized the implication this had for their presumed inadequacy and refused their help. Moreover, even at the time of the study, men

miners were still expressing the same views. The women felt that these men had exaggerated their claims and likened these ideas to the superstition that women were bad luck in a coal mine. Under these circumstances, most of the women agreed that establishing a good work reputation was harder for women than it was for men. Thus, in order to avoid fulfilling the men's prophecies about their presumed incapability, the women felt they had to constantly prove themselves.

Some foremen gave the women the more physically demanding jobs underground, imposed higher work standards on them, or tried to mar the women's work reputation as described below:

I had put up some ventilation (but) the curtain wouldn't reach the bottom. So I went off hunting another piece to attach to it. [The foreman] came up and I wasn't there. I got my ventilation and put it across the bottom. It was quitting time. Everybody was going (out), so I got my stuff. [The foreman] didn't say nothing to me. Outside he told [superintendent] that I didn't do my job right. I never had this problem with nobody except [the foreman] and you couldn't please the man no matter what you did or how hard you worked. He just had this thing against women coal miners. Wouldn't never admit it, but it was obvious.

Other foremen communicated to the women that they were not suited for running machinery. Half the women in the sample said that they had been passed over for a man when skilled work was being assigned. As one women commented:

We've had a couple of bosses up there that thought that women could do nothing but shovel. I had one foreman (who) had me on a section as an extra person to hang rag. I roof bolted before that and roof bolters would be off. He would send the other (men) GIs to roof bolt. Well, I went to the union to file a grievance on it. After that night I roof bolted until they sent me to (another shift).

And:

This one boss just bypassed me on a job he knew I could do for another guy who never even run a motor. He just looked at me and went on. Now I've been on a motor taking it in and out wasn't a problem. The boy that I work with just looked at me after we got around to the other side and started laughing. He understood.

Most of the men (co-workers) did.

Finally, not only did foremen "have it in their minds that we are the weaker sex," as one woman miner said, but the superintendent insisted that "men had a more mechanical approach" to their work and the women had more menial mining jobs due to "the natural settling of their skills and their application."

As documented elsewhere in the literature on women in nontraditional occupations (Deaux 1984; Harlan and O'Farrell 1982), the women miners perceived having less opportunity for advancement than men. Before the company implemented its training policy, getting on-the-job training on mining machinery was almost impossible according to one of

the earliest women miners. Although she had heard that some women had been shown how to run equipment, like others, she had not.

I was put on the beltline shoveling and then on the belthead running the coal into the cars. As far as running equipment, I didn't get that (because) we were kept out of the face. They didn't offer us any chance to run any equipment. I don't know how to today and I don't care. I like my job. Stay where you're at and you really know what you're doing.

But even after the policy instructing senior miners to honor new miners' requests for on-the-job training was established, the women said that getting the training or the temporary assignment to get the experience was rare. Male coworkers and foremen "think women are harder to train," one woman said, "like we're dumb or something."

Three Grade 1 women in the sample said they had the skills to run machinery, but were not really interested in bidding on higher grade jobs requiring operative skills. They said that the few higher grade operative jobs that were posted were on night shifts and conflicted with their family responsibilities. Others indicated that they did not want the added pressures and responsibility that those jobs entailed. As one woman explained:

Sometimes a general inside labor job (Grade 1) is not easy, but there's no pressure. There's no major head busting decisions to make. Somebody else tells you what to do and takes the blame if it does not get done right. Sometimes it's easy to fall into a

situation where I don't have to make any decisions. If you don't advance you don't take a chance on being wrong or messing up.

She added that when a woman did operate machinery and made "a mistake, (the men) really don't let you live it down." She concluded by saying that the women were less likely to take such a chance "probably because we are women and we're feeling inferior." Likewise, those women who had jobs operating machinery said they were more closely scrutinized than the men working in similar jobs.

Some women who had once held operative jobs had been reassigned to Grade 1 jobs as the result of workforce realignments. They contended that women were disproportionately downgraded relative to men. Like these women, another women miner who had once bid unsuccessfully on a higher grade job had become discouraged at the prospect of trying again. Another said that one time she had bid on a job knowing that she had the necessary seniority and skills, but was turned down. When she complained to the foreman who had assigned a man in her place, "he went over (to the posted assignment sheet) and rubbed his name off there and put mine on it." As another woman who had advanced concluded: "The women have to stand up for their rights. If you wanna advance, you got to make waves." Most of the women, she contended, weren't willing to risk the men's hostility by doing so. Thus, even when these jobs came up for bid, they did not bid on them. As one woman miner said about most of the women in Grade 1 jobs:

I think they just accept theirself in that position. They like it (or) they don't like it, but they're there, and they're afraid to advance theirself.

About herself she said:

For the past ten years I felt like I was the underdog, that I shouldn't be stepping on their toes. I haven't felt like a I was a person. They tell me to go shovel and I used to stand back and let things (jobs) go by. If there was a top paying job, if I thought I could do it, most of the time I'd say let him do it.

Some of the Grade 1 women also said they could not compete with the men's greater seniority. However, one women who had advanced said that "a lot of them women got the seniority to bid over half them guys out." Document study data substantiated her claim. As previous studies on women in occupations dominated by men has shown, "the perceptions of opportunities are in part dependent on evidence that members of one's own group occupy particular positions within the organization" (Deaux 1984:292). Indeed, the women in Grade 1 jobs were unable to name any, or only one or two, more advanced women at the mine, even though there were five women so classified at the time of the study.

The sex bias occurring at the mine also substantiated the suitability of assigning women to certain jobs requiring those characteristics which women are presumed to possess in relation to men. During one of my conversations with several men miners, one exclaimed that "there are some jobs women can do in the mines!" According to women in the sample, they were often expected to perform duties which mirrored the work they traditionally performed in their homes in service to or in support of men.⁴

Sunday I carried cinder block and rockdust behind them, I cleaned up the garbage, I carried their junk to them if they wanted it.

It's just like you're a gofer or something. When they set up, they throw down everything. It's up to us to go clean up their mess. I know all the women experience the work discrimination because most of us are gofers, hard manual labor.

And:

I've had bosses that treat you worse than the men. They make you go pick up things. When I was general inside labor it didn't matter what section I went to they'd expect me to clean the dinner hole.

When I asked one woman if there were "women's jobs" in the mine, she exclaimed: "Oh yeah! You got yourself on the belt, that's a woman's job. You go shovel the belt, you help the mason build stoppings." Conversely, these jobs, such as general inside labor and beltman, carry a certain stigma. The same woman told me: "(As a GI) you're the flunkie. I mean you're the gofer. It's real hard." And another said: "It's just like you don't have no sense to do nothing else."

Over time the men's, particularly foremen's, gendered stereotyping about women's work capabilities have remained prevalent, making a token women's negotiations with men over how she evaluates herself and other women as miners highly problematic. Moreover, their expectations that women should perform gender-appropriate support activities requiring few, if any, technical skills have resulted in the sex-typing of jobs at the mine. Using the formalized procedures of the workplace, foremen and other managerial personnel have

successfully acted to restrict the women's advancement by redefining the sexes' respective places in the underground work hierarchy.

Additionally, because those men in control of the local union have continued to regard the women with whom they work as women first and miners second, several of the women recognized that their sole remaining source of power in the workplace will only come from one another. However, as previously mentioned, serious social cleavages have developed between some of the women over each other's real or perceived laziness, infidelities, and preferential job assignments. As one woman told me:

If the women would stick together we would be recognized as different people. There would be new meaning up there and the men know that, too. But right now, I don't know what they think of us.

Still, friendships have flourished and enough of a sense of camaraderie was in evidence in order to foster a collective consciousness regarding their subordinate status as women doing a "man's job." The women's resistance was reflected in their awareness of the consequences of men's negative stereotypes and of the process by which the gender-typing of jobs occurred. In this case, their continual individual efforts to prove their competence as coal miners represented their solution to a collective dilemma.

Conclusion

As the women pointed out, men's sexualization has reinforced men's, particularly supervisors', stereotypical beliefs about women's incapability for doing more masculine-identified work. Stereotypes, they said, have influenced foremen's job assignments and have

contributed to the gender-typing of jobs. The women's perceptions of opportunities and, for some women, the availability of necessary training and experience also constituted barriers to their advancement. Moreover, certain organizational constraints, such as realignments of the workforce and shift work have negatively influenced their advancement decisions. Specifically, women's initial work assignments and subsequent physical or social isolation, affected their on-the-job training opportunities. Having the necessary training, according to seniority provisions, virtually eliminated the possibility for women to get temporary assignments to jobs requiring operative skills. Moreover, realignments of the working force tended to disadvantage women who did possess the necessary training and experience for the better jobs.

Accepting the differences between women's and men's capabilities as natural implies that their consequences, such as job-level gender segregation, are beyond organizational control. But as the findings of this research have shown, sexualization and the resulting stigmatization of women as inferior to men maintains the potency of sex stereotypes about women's competence that affect their employment outcomes through the application of organizational procedures. The strength of job-level gender segregation rests on upon the endurance of men's stereotypical beliefs about women's capabilities for doing "men's work." These beliefs, behaviors, and corresponding organizational outcomes constitute the preservation of men's privilege. As long as these beliefs are also supported by management in the form of reactive as opposed to proactive anti-discriminatory policies and their enforcement, advancement for women miners will continue to be difficult.

Over the years, despite the women's pessimistic advancement attitudes, they have been tireless in resisting men's attempts to stereotype their abilities through their own hard work. However, their resistance can be strengthened in at least two ways. First, the women could gain an even greater collective consciousness by forming a support group at the mine, overcoming their workplace-imposed social isolation among themselves. Then, as one woman told me, "we'd be a force to be reckoned with." Second, there was also strong evidence that nonsexual, egalitarian relationships had developed between at least some of the men miners and their female coworkers. Despite the women's disillusionment with weak local leadership, their allegiance to the union and their union brothers has remained strong. Thus, the bonds between women and men miners could be furthered through union solidarity. Hard times in the coal fields have changed miner's definition of a "good union man" (Yarrow 1991). During the more prosperous and turbulent 1970s, it meant standing up to the boss. Since the bust of the 1980s, marked by greater cooperation between operators and miners and management's co-optation of local union leaders, being a good union miner is now based on her or his willingness to work hard. This is much to the women's advantage because it allows them to separate the connection between manliness and unionism (Yarrow 1991). Today, being union means being a good union brother and sister.

Conversely, the women could also remind their less accepting union brothers that their entry represents the inevitable changes in the larger culture; that their presence should be regarded as a source of strength and not weakness; and that while some men are busy looking at women's bodies, management is busy using all miners bodies to their own advantage. Specifically, management's use of making selective job assignments has always

been a power- ful tool for dividing and controlling miners. The belief that an injury to one, is an injury to all needs to be reasserted because the exclusion of women as union members diminishes the potential effects of union solidarity. Together, miners could pressure the company to more vigorously enforce it's own policies for all miners thereby recognizing that women deserve to be accepted as competent and not merely tolerated as "here to stay."

ENDNOTES

1. Typically, the jobs to which beginning miners are assigned consist of rockdusting, hanging ventilation curtain, setting timbers for roof support, shoveling coal along a beltline, moving the beltline structures and power cables, laying track, and keeping the mine free of debris. Many of the structures and equipment which are manually disassembled, moved, and reassembled by general inside laborers (GIs), are heavy and cumbersome by any standards. Top rollers on a beltline weigh 150 pounds and power cable which relays approximately 7,000 volts of electricity to heavy coal-cutting and loading machinery is 750 feet long.
2. When women's resistance to men's stereotypically negative expectations for their work behavior is minimal or nonexistent, they often fall victim to what Kanter (1977a, b) calls "role entrapment" and Nieva and Gutek (1981) have labeled "sex-role spillover." Sex-role spillover begins when "a high percentage of one sex in an occupation leads to the expectation that people in that occupation should behave in a manner consistent with the sex role of the numerically dominant sex. ... Thus, people in men's jobs are expected to 'act like men' to be perceived as good workers" (Gutek, 1985:133). The inherent dilemma for women in nontraditional jobs is that in order to be perceived as competent, they are expected to act like men which directly contradicts the behavioral expectations based on their gender (Gutek and Dunwoody 1987). Because men are viewed as "natural inhabitants" of organizations, there is no comparable phenomena operating for them (Gutek and Dunwoody 1987).
3. Not only do the women miners place the burden of sexual responsibility upon themselves, but miner's wives' opposition to women miners reinforces it and may also partially account for these men's behavior toward the women with whom they work. This finding is substantiated by other current research on the topic, particularly by Giesen (1995).
4. A few women in the sample likened their crew membership to being in a family, a social unit in which patriarchal power and control and women's resulting subordinate status have already been defined (See Crull 1987: 233-

234). Only one woman in the sample was married to a miner and, interestingly, she was the one quoted here. Two others were married to foremen and both declined to be interviewed citing their husband's position with the coal company.

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