

GENDERED RELATIONS IN THE MINES AND THE DIVISION OF LABOR UNDERGROUND

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This article focuses on how men's sexualization of work relations and the workplace contributes to job-level gender segregation among coal miners. The findings suggest that sexualization represents men's power to stigmatize women in order to sustain stereotypes about them as inferior workers. In particular, supervisors use stereotypes to justify women's assignments to jobs in support of and in service to men. Once in these jobs, men's positive evaluations of women workers become contingent upon their fulfillment of men's gendered expectations. These processes foster the gender typing of jobs and lead to the gendered division of labor underground.

Among those women who entered nontraditional blue-collar occupations almost two decades ago, many have remained in entry-level jobs (Reskin 1993). Despite federal antidiscrimination regulations and the threat of litigation, men still dominate the channels of upward mobility and retain the better-paying positions of authority. Numerous studies have examined how men's reactions to women workers have contributed to job-level gender segregation in different blue-collar occupations (Walshok 1981), among auto workers (Gruber and Bjorn 1982), and corrections officers (Jurik 1985), in manufacturing (Harlan and O'Farrell 1982), policing (Martin 1980), steel making (Deaux 1984), and forestry (Enarson 1984). Even so, there are still relatively few studies investigating women's on-the-job experiences in other masculine-identified blue-collar occupations, such as coal mining. The present investigation examines how supervisors' and coworkers' resistance to women coal miners' integration has inhibited their job advancement at a single mining establishment.

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THEORY AND PAST RESEARCH

The most recent theoretical formulations appropriate to this investigation are social closure theory and the concept of patriarchy. Social closure theory states that "a status group creates and preserves its identity and advantages by reserving certain opportunities for members of the group" using exclusionary and discriminatory practices (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993, 61). Patriarchy is the system of beliefs and corresponding behaviors by which men preserve their advantages (Cockburn 1991; Hartmann 1976; Reskin 1988). In workplaces dominated by men, their privilege is manifested primarily through the functional differentiation of workers by gender (Reskin 1988; Reskin and Roos 1987).

According to Reskin and Roos, the gendered division of labor is "grounded in stereotypes of innate sex differences in traits and abilities" and operates through "various social control mechanisms" (1987, 9). Because women pose a threat to men's masculine-based privileges, men will tend to emphasize women's presumed incapability for doing male-identified work. Their behavior toward women workers underscores the terms by which they are willing to accept them. As women become integrated into the job hierarchy, they are expected to occupy subordinate positions requiring their deference to men; thus, men are able to "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).

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 re-create 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 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.

Kanter (1977a, 1977b) was among the first to document that women's conspicuous token presence leads to men's exaggeration of the differences between them. This is accomplished via men's "sexualization of the workplace," during which 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 documented, many 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 gender differences a

salient aspect of work relations (Enarson 1984; Gruber and Bjorn 1982; Swerdlow 1989). These behaviors, according to Enarson, constitute a continuum of abuse and reflect "a cultural tradition which sexualizes, objectifies, and diminishes women" (1984, 109).

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 about their work-related inferiority. Objectification and work-related trivialization are mutually reinforcing processes (Schur 1984, 142), which is how women workers are matched with gender-typed jobs requiring few skills, if any. Under these circumstances, jobs to which women are assigned mirror their relations with men, since these jobs require women's support of 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 1977b).¹

Studies have shown that men's gender-role expectations of women workers negatively affect women's success in nontraditional employment because these expectations color the men's perception of women's potential for or actual job performance (For a review, see Roos and Reskin 1984). 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). Reskin and Padavic (1988) found that supervisors' stereotypes about women's capabilities for doing sex-atypical work prevented them from objectively evaluating the women's performance. They tend to selectively perceive only that behavior that confirms their beliefs about women's lesser suitability for doing men's jobs.² In examining women miners' day-to-day social relations with men coworkers and supervisors in several western states, Yount 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" (1986, 29).

The present study investigated how men's sexualization of work relations and the workplace have contributed to coal mining women's concentration in entry-level jobs at a large underground coal mine. 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 supervisors' 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. 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. Their continual individual efforts to prove their competence as coal miners represented their solution to a collective dilemma.

METHODOLOGY

Primary data were collected from in-depth interviews, on-site observation, and document study done at a large coal mine in southern West Virginia during the fall of 1990. After getting permission from the company's home office, local mine officials gave me tours of the compound and the mine. Interviews with women and men were solicited between shifts in the women's bath house and lamp house, respectively. Being a woman in my early thirties and dressed in a faded army jacket, flannel shirt, jeans, and boots facilitated my initial contact with the women miners. Ten of the women contacted were interviewed later in either their homes, my motel room, or other places where they felt at ease. Seven other women were willing to talk only in the bath house because they feared reprisals from the company, saying, "Sorry, but I need this job." Four women flatly refused to be interviewed. Two were unavailable because of illness and injury. Relatively speaking, men miners were considerably more difficult to interview than women. As revealed later, they believed I was only interested in "women's problems," not their experiences. This was not surprising since managerial personnel often referred to me as "the lady here to talk to our lady miners."

In sum, in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 women and the mine superintendent. On several occasions, 20-minute discussions were held with seven more women. Conversations were also held with the local union president and several other men miners. All these individuals were contacted repeatedly. Sampling among men was based on convenience. Sampling among women miners was a combination of snowball and purposive techniques. The first few women interviewed provided the names of other women who were selected because of their tenure, job rank, and other job-related experiences, such as sexual harassment or discrimination. With two exceptions, interviews were taped.

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 tenth grade, seven had high school diplomas, and two had attended college. When they were hired, three women were married with at least one child. Four were divorced with one or more children to support. The remaining three were single without children. All of the women said they needed a coal mining job to support themselves or their families. By the time of the study, one of the married women divorced and three of the divorced women had married or were cohabiting, so half of the women in the sample were coupled with children. Two of the women were divorced with one or two children to support. Two had remained single and childless. The youngest woman, a single mother, was Black. The rest of the sample was White.

Coal mining jobs are arranged according to five ranks, each containing job families. Six of the 10 women in the case study sample were classified in laboring jobs, three of whom were certified for higher grade jobs. Grade 1 jobs are laboring jobs usually involving mine maintenance. These jobs require few skills and more physical strength and endurance.³ The four other women held jobs in each one of the higher grades. These jobs are more closely involved with coal production and require operative skills or certification, or both. 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 were most women at the mine.

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 the company employed approximately 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 of its miners, including more than two-thirds of the women. 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 a dozen men as assistant foremen or "bosses." Their duties underground were strictly supervisory, so they were not members of the UMWA.

During their first few months on the job, new miners are considered trainees and are assigned to Grade 1 jobs, usually as general inside laborers ("GIs") or beltmen. At the end of this period, they receive their miner's certificate, meaning they can bid on any newly posted job in the mine. By UMWA contract, jobs are awarded by seniority defined as length of service and a miner's ability to perform the job (United Mine Workers of America 1988). Since the mid-1980s, new job postings at the case study mine 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. The following analyses identify the social processes that contributed to job-level gender segregation at the case study site.

ANALYSES AND FINDINGS

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. More often than men coworkers, foremen tended to sexually bribe women through the misuse of their authority. In response to the women's complaints about the men's behavior, the company issued a formal set of rules forbidding obscene or abusive language. According to the

women, the 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 gender-based jokes, comments, and profanity have persisted. These conditions, they said, have contributed to the endurance of the negative stereotypes that justify women's assignments to lesser-skilled jobs.

Sexualization of Work Relations

Half of the women in the sample said they had been sexually harassed by either men coworkers or foremen, who used verbal innuendo and body language to convey a sexual message (Gruber and Bjorn 1982). Two women reported that occasionally some of the men coworkers grabbed their own genitals and then pretended to have gotten "caught" urinating. Another woman reported an incident of homosexual buffoonery with a particularly potent message accentuating men's sexuality and solidarity:

They was pretending they was queers in front of me. 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 men 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 [said] all the women made beds out of rock dust 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 woman'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 [the 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 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 coworkers, she retaliated:

I walked up to him and I said, "When did I suck your goddamned dick down the jackline?" He goes, "I don't know what you're talking about." I said, "You're a goddamned 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].

In the above case, the foreman's rumors lead to 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 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. Men's sexualization of work relations underscored the women's sexuality at the expense of their work-role performances and substantiated the cultural contradiction of a woman doing a man's job.

Although the women in the sample recognized that the men's sexual harassment was usually unprovoked, some tended to place the responsibility for the men's actions almost entirely on women themselves. This was especially true among 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 herself and to all her women coworkers for avoiding "loose" behavior.⁴ Conversely, the sexual indulgences of other women were also a reflection upon each of them. As one woman explained:

[The foreman] wanted to sleep with me. I wouldn't have anything to do with him. He thought if a woman worked for him, she had to sleep with him because there was one woman working on the section [who was] sleeping with him. Everybody knew it. When it came my turn, I wouldn't sleep with him.

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.

Because of her behavior, this single and childless woman had challenged men's heterosexist beliefs. As a result, a man 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." No one ever asked her 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 woman's homosexuality. In this case, a woman could remain not only financially independent but also sexually independent of men and their control.

When the company issued its mandate against harassment, the superintendent told me it was necessary to "teach the men what harassment was." His subsequent

remarks 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 of sexual harassment, the women added that its enforcement put the onus of responsibility on them. Using the rule had a double binding or "damned if you do, damned if you don't" quality, because it was the women, not other men (such as foremen), who were solely responsible for reporting harassment. Some women indicated that they were often reluctant to do so because it created tension among crew members. It also violated a UMWA oath of solidarity, defeating the women's attempts to become socially integrated as unionized members of their crews; moreover, those women who reported infractions said that it was they, not their harassers, who ended up being transferred to other work locations.

At the time of the study, most of the women insisted that any kind of sexual harassment was largely a thing of the past. A few also said that its saliency was the result of media hype and was not indicative of their current experiences. As one woman said:

I think things have changed so much since the first woman come into the mines. She was harassed a lot [said with emphasis], but things have changed because they've accepted us.

Another woman agreed that sexual harassment was declining, but for a vastly different reason:

Oh, they've just about quit now because after all this time they see they're not going to get in my pants. At first they get mad at you and don't speak. Eventually they'll start talking to you, but they don't harass you no more for sex.

Another added, "I think it's still going on, it's just more subtle now." Her comment indicated that although the men's sexualization of work relations had changed form, it certainly had not disappeared.

Sexualization of the Workplace

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). Over time it had become clear to the women that their successful integration had done little to seriously disrupt men's sexualization of the workplace. 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.

Two types of men's behavior that contributed to workplace sexualization were sexual jokes and stories and profanity.

Gutek (1985) concluded that sex in the forms of graffiti, jokes, comments, and metaphors for work is a part of workplaces dominated by men regardless of

women's presence. 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 men 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 the 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 if they got carried away, she would "make them stop." Another woman attempted to curb the men's "sex talk":

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

Although she stated "you're not going to change people," she concluded, "all you can do is have them have respect for you."

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 maintains 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 they said they were careful to conceal or curtail their use of 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." 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."

Men's Stereotypes and the Gender 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 stereotypical differences in women's and men's respective abilities. 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 men coworkers but were also demonstrated by foremen's behavior toward the women.

During their first few years at the mine, all of the women complained that at least some men coworkers had made derisive remarks questioning the appropriateness of their presence or their work-related competence. One woman's account captures the nature of these remarks:

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.

Another woman was asked why she had taken a coal job if she could not 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."

Several of the women said that when they first started working, some of the men told them that mining jobs were too physically difficult for them. On the job, their men coworkers made the women's 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. As one man miner said with a sneer, "They wouldn't let nobody help them do nothing. They'd chew you right out. And they've stayed here and become real independent."

Even at the time of the study, however, men miners were still expressing the same views. The women felt that these men had exaggerated their claims and asserted that these ideas constituted men's mythology designed to keep them from becoming miners. They likened the men's views 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. In order to avoid fulfilling the men's prophecies about their presumed incapability, the women felt they had to constantly prove themselves.

Foremen also 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 woman commented:

We've had a couple of bosses up there that thought that women couldn't 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 from another woman:

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. 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 [coworkers] did.

Not only did foremen "have it in their minds that we are the weaker sex," another woman miner said, but the superintendent insisted that "men had a more mechanical approach" to their work, and the women had the more menial mining jobs because of "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 themselves as 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 heard that some women had been shown how to run equipment, she had not been shown.

I was put on the belt line shoveling and then on the belt head 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.

Even after management instructed senior miners to honor new miners' requests for on-the-job training, the women said that getting the training or the temporary assignment to get the experience was rare. Men 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. Those 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, it's 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, [so] 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.⁵ They contended that women were disproportionately downgraded relative to men. Like these women, another woman 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 want to advance, you got to make waves." Most of the women, she contended, were not willing to risk the men's hostility by doing so. 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 10 years I felt like I was the underdog, that I shouldn't be stepping on their toes. I haven't felt like 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 woman who had advanced said that "a lot of them women got the seniority to bid over half them guys out." Data from company documents 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 that 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 that mirrored the work they traditionally performed in their homes in service to or in support of men.⁶

Sunday I carried cinder block and rock dust 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 from another woman:

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 flunky. 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 the foremen's, gendered stereotyping about women's work capabilities have remained prevalent, making token women's negotiations with men over how they evaluate themselves and other women as miners highly problematic. The men's expectations that women should perform support activities requiring few, if any, technical skills has resulted in the gender typing of jobs at the mine. At least some of the men have acted to restrict the women's advancement by redefining the women's and men's respective places in the underground work hierarchy.

CONCLUSIONS

Sexualization of work relations and the workplace reinforces the assumption that men and women are inherently different in terms of their physical and mechanical abilities. Accepting these differences as natural implies that their consequences, such as job-level gender segregation, are beyond organizational control. 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 that negatively affect their employment outcomes through the application of organizational procedures. The strength of job-level gender segregation rests upon the endurance of men's stereotypical beliefs about women's capabilities for doing men's work. These beliefs, behaviors, and corresponding organizational consequences constitute the preservation of men's privilege. As long as these beliefs are supported by management in the form of reactive as opposed to proactive antidiscriminatory policies and their enforcement, advancement for women miners will be unnecessarily difficult.

Over the years, despite their pessimistic advancement attitudes, women have been tireless in resisting men's attempts to stereotype their abilities through their own hard work. Their resistance can be furthered in at least two ways. First, despite some personal differences, the women share a common sense of being subordinates in a "man's world." They could gain an even greater collective consciousness by forming a support group at the mine. Then, as one woman told me, "we'd be a force to be reckoned with."

Second, there is strong evidence that nonsexual, egalitarian relationships have developed between at least some of the men miners and their women coworkers. Despite the women's disillusionment with weak local leadership, their allegiance to the union and their union brothers has remained strong; hence, the bonds between women and men miners could be strengthened through union solidarity. Women miners could 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 been a powerful tool for dividing and controlling miners. The belief that an injury

to one is an injury to all needs to be reasserted because the informal exclusion of women as union members diminishes the potential effects of union solidarity. Together, miners could pressure the company to more vigorously enforce its own policies for all miners, thereby recognizing that women deserve to be accepted as competent and not merely tolerated as "here to stay."

Coal mining is only one of many male-identified blue-collar occupations into which women have made important inroads. More research needs to be done delineating their experiences with men coworkers and supervisors in these nontraditional settings. Other studies could focus on the women's relationships with each other and the collective strategies they have devised to resist how men have attempted to discredit and exclude them.

NOTES

1. When women's resistance to men's stereotypical work-role expectations is minimal or nonexistent, they fall victim to what Nieva and Gutek (1981) have labeled "sex-role spillover." This occurs when workers in men's jobs are expected to "act like men" to be perceived as good workers" (Gutek 1985, 133). For women in nontraditional jobs, being perceived as competent is problematic.

2. Women who disconfirmed these stereotypes by successful advancement were regarded as "exceptional" (Reskin and Padavic 1988).

3. Typically, the entry-level jobs of beginning miners consist of rock dusting, hanging ventilation curtain, setting timbers for roof support, shoveling coal along a belt line, moving heavy belt line structures and power cables, and laying track.

4. Not only did the women miners place the burden of sexual responsibility upon themselves, but miner's wives' opposition to women miners reinforced it and, according to women in the sample, partially accounted for the men's negative behavior toward them.

5. Realignment was done to accommodate major changes in the extraction of coal. Before realignments occurred, miners indicated in writing their job and shift preferences to management. Miners were then reassigned on the basis of their preferences and seniority in years and qualifications.

6. A few women in the sample likened their crew membership to being in a family, a social unit in which patriarchal control and women's subordinate status have already been defined (See Crull 1987, 233-4).

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