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ABSTRACT

Two studies were conducted to determine how nontraditional men and women of at least college education differed from same sex comparison groups more traditionally employed. Inferences were drawn from the studies about possible intervention strategies to encourage adolescents to enter nontraditional fields. It was found that for both nontraditional men and women, the deviant career choice appeared to be but one manifestation of their low adherence to conventional stereotypic sex roles. In contrast to their same sex comparison groups, the nontraditional men and women described themselves as less sex-typed both "on the job" and in social situations. The nontraditional persons also had less stereotyped marital and family roles. The nontraditional women were more career oriented while the nontraditional men were less so. Background factors that foster broader sex roles were more frequent in the two nontraditional groups. Nontraditional women were often classified as tough-minded, and they had had support from male parents and teachers. Intervention to encourage adolescent girls to choose nontraditional careers should focus on making them more tough-skinned and fostering support by male peers and role models. Nontraditional men were more often of lower socioeconomic status or members of minority groups. It was felt that stressing the prestige and upward mobility of professional work, even in that usually chosen by women, to underprivileged groups would encourage them to choose nontraditional fields more often. It would also be helpful to expose male students to sensitivity and the values of the affective domain. (KC)

Increasing Occupational Role Innovation: Intervention Implications of Two Survey Studies

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It's hard enough growing up without growing up as a deviant! Whether one is a woman engineer or a male nurse, the situation is hardly benign. The common response to such individuals was expressed to a woman medical student in the 1920 s, "You are not a man, you are not a woman. You are an unsexed thing studying medicine out of morbid curiosity" (Lopate, 1968, p. 26). Though rarely so blatantly stated today, it is still no easy developmental task to reconcile one's identity as a woman or man in a gender-conscious society with one's identity as a worker in a nontraditional field.

Adolescense is a critical period for both career decisions and sex role development. In this paper, I will discuss what my research on occupationally deviant men and women suggests may be important issues to be addressed when planning interventions at the adolescent level. I will describe my research only briefly, and I refer you to my published work for more detailed descriptions of relevant literature and of the research methodology and results (Lemkau, 1979; Lemkau, in press).

In 1976, I surveyed 135 professional women in eastern New England. Women with master's degrees as their highest earned degree employed in fields with over 75% males were compared with equally educated women employed in fields with over 75% females. All women completed a biographical questionnaire, the Cattell 16PF personality inventory, and the Bem Sex Role Inventory under several instructional sets.

In 1978, I replicated this study with men in the greater Atlanta area (Lemkau, in preparation). I surveyed 117 men employed in either female- or male-dominated fields. Again, education was controlled, but this time at the bachelor's degree level. To my knowledge, these studies are the first which attempt to separate factors related to nontraditional

career choice from those related to educational attainment alone, by comparing nontraditional men and women to same sex counterparts, of equal education but more traditionally employed.

I will emphasize broad themes which recur across biographical, personality, and sex role measures, first sharing how nontraditional men and women differed from same sex comparison groups more traditionally employed and then presenting issues of special concern for women and men respectively, as suggested by my data. Obviously, given the nature of my samples, my comments are most relevant to occupational deviance among at least college-educated men and women.

The first point I wish to make is that for both nontraditional men and women, the deviant career choice appeared to be but one manifestation of their low adherence to conventional stereotypic sex roles. In contrast to their same sex comparison groups, the nontraditional men and women described themselves as less sex-typed both "on the job" and "in a mixed sex social situation" and they describe the "ideal" of their sex as less sex-typed. The nontraditional women were more career oriented while the nontraditional men were less so, again putting them at greater odds with the stereotypic expectations for their sex than their more traditionally employed, same-sex counterparts. They also had less stereotyped marital and family roles: for example, the married nontraditional women had fewer children than their traditional peers--even with age controls; and the nontraditional men were less frequently married, and with some indication of more variable sexual orientation. The division of household labor was less sex-typed and more egalitarian among the married nontraditional women and men than among their same-sex counterparts in traditional employment. Background factors which foster broader sex

roles were more frequent in the two nontraditional groups--for example, they reported higher maternal employment and more frequently mentioned the support of members of the opposite sex during their youth. Typical were the words of one nontraditional woman who wrote, " The major influence on my career was my father. He always encouraged me, saying I could do anything I set my mind to. I seldom, if ever, heard words like 'girls can't do that'."

The career aspirations of young adults are shaped by what they learn to value and what they come to expect that they personally can achieve (Laws, 1976). Consistent with this social-learning framework, narrow sex roles where gender is salient for defining what is appropriate, limit both the value one places on what one defines as cross-sex behaviors and the interest and self-confidence with which one confronts such possibilities. Conversely, when gender is not salient due to broad sex roles, then the values and expectations of young people will lean them in the direction of more diversified occupational roles. Any interventions which foster broad rather than narrow sex roles should thus contribute to desegregating the work force.

But the deviant man is not the same as the deviant woman. The woman who enters an occupational role which is not traditional for her sex at least holds a high status job, although her role is likely to put her at a social disadvantage, since men are typically socialized to marry a woman of lower status. This is the crux of a dilema faced by adolescent girls as they juggle their career interests with their budding social and sexual interests. In the context of this issue, it is not surprizing that my nontraditional women report strong support and encouragement from the men

in their lives--first their fathers and later male teachers, boyfriends, and husbands, support which demonstrates that one's occupational choice need not preclude satisfying intimate relationships with men.

While her field may be a high status one, within the field the nontraditional woman is likely to be in a low status position. Not surprisingly, the nontraditional women in my study were most different in personality from their traditional female counterparts on the dimension of tough-mindedness on the Cattell 16PF. Tough-minded women are typically described as no nonsense, cynical and realistic, thus well adapted to withstand the pressures of their isolation and limited upward mobility. In brief, in terms of interventions to help women enter the male-dominated professions as they exist today, it may be helpful to foster personality styles which give them the "thick skin" they need to work in nonsupportive circumstances on the job, while addressing their needs for male support and intimacy off the job.

The man who chooses to enter a nontraditional occupation for men is in another kettle of fish altogether, for he has chosen a field with low status, although within the field, he is likely to hold a high status position, for example as a nursing supervisor or library administrator. The fact that the nontraditional men were more frequently of lower socio-economic status and/or members of minority groups suggests a possible intervention strategy. Professional status may sufficiently offset the stigma of doing "women's work" for persons striving to overcome racial and economic barriers, and recruitment efforts addressed to the upward mobility needs of traditionally underprivileged groups may bear fruit in terms of occupational desegregation.

In regard to personality style, the nontraditional men were more emotionally sensitive (or tender-minded in the Cattell 16PF language) than their traditional counterparts. This emotional sensitivity should facilitate their job performance in female-dominated fields which tend to have a large human relations component. Looking at the backgrounds of these men, what is striking is the greater frequency of loss of a family member or disruption of the parental home via separation or divorce, along with more frequent reporting of emotionally challenging events in childhood and adolescence. Three examples will suffice:

"My father and I took a three-day trip together and when we returned, I felt I had found a gentle and wonderful friend. He died with a massive heart attack the very next day. I felt this loss...influenced me to devote time to other boys who are at the age they need a father." (Written by a 5th grade teacher)

"I started thinking of physical therapy in the early part of my college years. As a freshman, one of my friends was crippled in a gymnastics accident."

"I originally began college studying business. However, I went to Vietnam in 1970. The thing that impressed me most was the lives of the children. The ultimate turning point sticks in my mind like it was only yesterday. A young Vietnamese boy about 8 or 9 yelled to me and asked me if I wanted to buy drugs or his sister's or mother's services in prostitution. My thought was that America had brought the demand for these things

when they came and I wanted to make sure I helped to change that in my part of the world. So I chose teaching."

Such experiences as these may crack through the "macho" socialization typically part of the male experience in our culture, helping men learn to value their own emotional capabilities and expect to function in emotionally charged situations. In brief, in considering interventions for young men, the issue of status may be addressed somewhat by appealing to traditionally disenfranchised groups, while the personality styles which go with female-dominated fields may be fostered by structuring experiences to enhance emotional sensitivity and the valuing of the affective domain.

I would like to close by acknowledging two important limitations of my approach. First, since my data are cross-sectional, it may be that the occupations themselves shape role incumbents and neither the tough-mindedness of women nor the emotional sensitivity of men is necessary for successfully establishing oneself in a nontraditional job role. Second, my comments address interventions in the context of a status quo in the structure of the labor market. In fact, the research was conceived at a point when I was still relatively naive about structural constraints on working women. While I acknowledge this limitation, I also share my conviction that even with the doors of opportunity wide open, occupational segregation will end only when sufficient numbers of women and men make very individual decisions to walk through those doors.

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