Casey Clevenger

IWPR recently released a report on strategies that unions can use to promote women’s voices and leadership in union organizing. The report, by IWPR’s Democracy and Society Program Director, Amy Caiazza, was based on a series of qualitative, in-depth interviews with 15 union activists from diverse backgrounds across the country.

Dr. Caiazza’s work reveals that women experience a wide range of obstacles to their activism and leadership within unions, including a lack of visibility in leadership; the fear of retribution as a result of union activism; discomfort with conflict and public roles; neglect for women’s priorities as workers; the time demands of union work; discrimination within unions; and lack of awareness of what unions do. Some of these issues are common to both men and women, while others are unique to women and other disadvantaged groups, such as people of color.

I Knew I Could Do This Work offers seven strategies to enable unions to address these obstacles and outlines recommendations for the supports, networks, and other resources that unions can provide to create a sense of empowerment among women, within unions and beyond:

#1 Address Women’s True Priorities: If unions more consistently and more visibly address women’s concerns, they are more likely to inspire women’s long-term, active involvement.

#2 Create and Support Formal Mentoring Programs: While a good deal of mentoring occurs informally, many women suggest that it could be more intentionally incorporated into union organizing as an ongoing resource for women’s leadership.

(IKMW-cover)

IWPR Advises Congress on Modernizing Unemployment Insurance System

Jill Hindenach

On September 19, Dr. Vicky Lovell, IWPR’s Director of Employment and Work/Life Programs, testified at a hearing on the Unemployment Insurance (UI) Modernization Act, H.R. 2233, before the House Ways and Means Committee, Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support.

Dr. Lovell’s testimony addressed the three most important changes proposed in H.R. 2233 from the perspective of women workers—changes that would directly address women’s disproportionate representation in the low-wage workforce and women’s continuing role as our country’s primary caregivers for children. These provisions would consider workers’
I find all the new research on aging fascinating, especially the ways that women and men experience and plan for retirement differently. I have been researching women’s lives for the past 30 years, initially as a sociologist and, now, as the President of IWPR. I’ve written extensively on the experiences of older women, and seen the changing lives of women over the decades. Many of us have also experienced them firsthand. I have been watching trends and issues closely, and often have been studying women’s lives in the context of their careers, families, and lives in general. As a woman who is nearing retirement age, I can identify with many of these trends and issues.

In this issue of Forum, we have articles that address the increasing diversity of women’s experiences in retirement. The authors explore the ways that women are living more active and engaged lives in retirement, and the ways that retirement is changing for women. They discuss the challenges that women face as they plan for retirement, and the ways that women are coping with these challenges. The articles also address the issues of important to women that are emerging as women enter retirement.

I am incredibly lucky that at age 90 my mother is still full of energy, committed to her independence, and in good health. She is also extremely pragmatic, so she gave up her car and considered my convenience by moving to the Washington area, which was not her first choice (she would have preferred to stay in New Jersey, having lived the last 60 years in Ocean County where she still had many friends). She had also moved about ten years prior, downsizing considerably, and gradually disposing of unneeded items since then, by passing them on to individuals or organizations she thought would be able to use them.

Because I’ve been studying women’s lives in the retirement years, it was not hard to begin exploring all the housing options that might be available to my mother in Washington. And because my mother, while never earning a high wage, had worked consistently over her lifetime, and received a lump sum from her 401(k) type pension plan upon retirement which she reinvested, along with other savings (resulting from her careful financial habits), money was also not a problem.

All my life I had thought that, because my mother divorced my father when I was quite young, and raised us with no help from our father and with no education beyond high school, that we would certainly be responsible for supporting her financially in her old age. Yet, my mother is still directing gifts towards our children and us.

Moreover, my employer, not surprisingly, is incredibly understanding and feminist, so I had plenty of paid family care leave. Consequently, this was about as easy a move of an older parent as it possibly could have been. And it was still amazingly time consuming and emotionally draining, for my Mom as well as myself, and I now have a much greater appreciation of how hard this transition is, even in the best of circumstances.

This new understanding is helping me put some flesh on a volume on women’s retirement that Sunhwa Lee and I are editing for IWPR with funding from the AARP and the Russell Sage Foundation. It contains seven excellent chapters from scholarly researchers and conveys the increasing diversity of women’s experiences in retirement. Because women’s lives are changing, in both employment and marriage patterns, more women our age, than our mothers’, will have worked all our lives by the time we reach retirement age. More women our age, than our mothers’, will also have divorced and remarried, perhaps several times.

In terms of women’s financial security in retirement, these two trends tend to cancel each other out. Women will have more retirement resources based on their own earnings, but they will also have less based on marriage to a generally-higher earning man, leaving about as many older women in poverty in the future as we have today, and possibly more. The growing number of women reaching retirement without a long marriage will account for a larger share of women living on their own resources in retirement. Inequality among older women may increase since unmarried women (whether never married, divorced or widowed) have the highest rates of poverty.

Another source of diversity and inequality in retirement experiences comes from our growing minority population. Currently, members of these groups have fewer resources in retirement than do whites, and they also have more diverse living arrangements in retirement, living more often with their adult children. Despite this income pooling, though, older women of color have the highest poverty rates of all.

For now, I am grateful that my mother seems to be doing pretty well in her new environment, a continuing care community in Gaithersburg, Maryland. Our good fortune has renewed my commitment to use the tools at my disposal to increase the retirement security of the many older women who do not have the resources we do.
UI Testimony  
(cont’d from p.1)  

most recent earnings in assessing eligibility for UI, cover part-time workers, and allow workers who lose their jobs because of certain personal or family reasons to receive UI. Dr. Lovell noted that as women have become increasingly active in the labor force, families depend on women’s earnings, often as main or sole earners in the household. As a result, it is not just women that suffer during women’s unemployment, but entire families, including children, and the needs of women must be addressed more specifically in UI policies.

Dr. Lovell added in her testimony that the current UI system does not account for domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking, or a lack of child-care as eligible reasons for receiving UI benefits. She encouraged the Subcommittee to incorporate these circumstances as UI-eligible causes of job loss. Before Dr. Lovell testified, the Subcommittee Chairman, Congressman Jim McDermott (D-WA), introduced a letter signed by 60 women’s organizations in support of the UI Modernization Act and how it would benefit women. The letter can be seen on the National Women’s Law Center’s website at nwlc.org/pdf/UISignOn.pdf.

Dr. Lovell was joined by four other expert panelists who testified about the considerable changes the United States workforce has undergone since the UI system began over 70 years ago. In particular, there have been significant increases in the number of low-wage jobs, the number of women workers, and the duration of unemployment. The eligibility rules for receiving UI benefits do not adequately reflect these changes. If passed, the proposed bill would make $7 billion in incentive payments available to states to encourage them to expand eligibility for benefits and provide training to workers struggling with long-term unemployment.

Cynthia Fagnoni of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) shared the results of a recent GAO study that compared UI receipt by earning levels. The study showed that low-wage workers are much less likely to receive UI benefits than higher-wage workers. Fagnoni explained how the current UI system’s eligibility rules create this disparity. In particular, many states do not count workers’ most recent earnings toward the minimum earnings required for eligibility, and most states fail to recognize illness or disability of a family member as an allowable reason for being forced to leave employment.

In addition to Dr. Lovell and Ms. Fagnoni, the panelists included: Amy Chasanoc, former staff member of the Advisory Council on Unemployment Compensation; Lynette Hammond, Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Trade from the Commonwealth of Virginia; and Dr. Jeffery Kling, Senior Fellow and Deputy Director of Economic Studies at the Brookings Institute.

Dr. Lovell’s full testimony is available now at iwpr.org.

Women in Unions  
(cont’d from p.1)

#3 Provide Opportunities for Women to Strategize Together: Unions can cultivate women’s leadership by providing women-specific training programs, conferences, women’s committees, and networks at the local, regional, and national levels.

#4 Put Women in Leadership: Placing women in visible local and national leadership roles within unions promotes women’s activism and establishes respect for their authority.

#5 Highlight the Importance of Women’s Contributions: Unions can provide examples of women’s current and past union leadership and hold them up as models for what union women can accomplish.

#6 Provide Flexible Options for Involvement: To accommodate the conflicting demands of women’s lives, unions can offer creative options and opportunities for them to get involved.

#7 Provide Training on Mobilizing Women: Unions should provide training to their leaders and organizers on strategies that can effectively address the obstacles facing women.

Outlined in greater detail within the report, these strategies are designed to help women claim a voice of authority in an area that is traditionally dominated by men: union organizing. By claiming leadership, women can transform their lives, their unions, their workplaces, and their communities to reflect their needs.

With the release of I Knew I Could Do This Work, IWPR hopes to raise awareness among unions of the challenges facing women in organizing and provide tools that can help them cultivate women’s political activism and leadership. IWPR also hopes that this report will mobilize other women’s organizations to support women’s union activism by cultivating stronger local ties at the grassroots.

IWPR’s Report and accompanying Research-in-Brief, I Knew I Could Do This Work: Seven Strategies That Promote Women’s Activism and Leadership in Unions, were produced with support from the Berger Marks Foundation.
Emily Morrison

In the ten years since the 1996 welfare reform, IWPR has conducted extensive research examining the economic situations of low-income mothers. The most recent report is by Sunhwa Lee, Ph.D., entitled Keeping Moms on the Job: the Impacts of Health Insurance and Child Care on Job Retention and Mobility among Low-Income Mothers, which explores the tension between work-oriented welfare systems and low-income job markets with high turnover rates. Dr. Lee’s findings show that the availability of health insurance, child care, and quality jobs are decisive factors in sustaining employment for low-income women.

In her research, Dr. Lee considered both the personal and job characteristics of low-income working mothers and contrasted them with those of women with higher incomes. The study reveals the unique challenges low-income mothers face, and discusses their employment patterns and limited upward income mobility.

Dr. Lee discusses how access to child care and health insurance promote job stability and enable low-income mothers to remain in the workforce. Few, however, have access to employer-provided health insurance or child care subsidies. In addition, low-income women are unlikely to experience a wage increase when switching jobs.

The research concludes that policy efforts should emphasize the importance of low-income working mothers’ access to health insurance and child care benefits.

IWPR Research Informs Paid Leave Initiatives Nationwide

Jill Hindenach

Over the last several years, IWPR has served as the primary national research resource for paid leave policy development. The Institute has provided cost/benefit analyses and consulted with campaigns at the national level and in ten cities and states to educate voters and policy makers about the need for, and benefits of, more adequate paid time off policies. For example, in November 2006, voters in San Francisco, California, adopted a policy making it the first US city to ensure that all workers have paid sick days. IWPR’s research provided the only source of information about the number of workers to be covered by the policy, as well as the sole analysis of the likely impact of the policy on employers.

IWPR will soon undertake a new study on the impact of San Francisco’s paid sick days law. The study will look at how employers’ policies and practices have changed and what effects workers have experienced under the new policy. IWPR plans to conduct some of the study collaboratively with researchers at the University of California–Berkeley.

So far this year, IWPR’s research has assisted local advocates in Ohio and Maine in releasing reports on paid sick leave in their states. In Maryland, Dr. Lovell presented at a forum on paid leave, and, in the District of Columbia, she testified at a hearing on the proposed Paid Sick and Safe Days Act, presenting IWPR’s research to the DC City Council Committee on Workforce Development and Government Operations. IWPR also informed policy on a national level by consulting on the likely costs of a paid family and medical leave insurance program envisioned by Senators Chris Dodd (D-CT) and Ted Stevens (R-AK). This paved the way for introduction of the Family Leave Insurance Act of 2007 in June 2007.

IWPR has also consulted with advocates in California, Connecticut, Illinois, and New York on policy issues and answered questions from policy activists about paid sick days.

IWPR Presents Early Education Research to Kansas Governor

On September 14th, Dr. Barbara Gault and project partner, Anne Mitchell, met with Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius and Kansas pre-K experts to discuss the implications of research findings for potential expansions to Kansas’ early childhood system. Left to right: Jennifer Crew, Abby Thorman, Larry Jacob, Governor Kathleen Sebelius, Barbara Gault, Anne Mitchell, Leadell Ediger, and Mary Baskett
The Seoul Foundation of Women and Family invited Dr. Vicky Lovell, IWPR’s Director of Employment and Work/Life Programs, to present at its First International Women’s Policy Research Conference in August. The conference, entitled "Global City Strategies for Implementing Policies on Gender Equality," provided an overview of the issues women face in their attempts to achieve economic gender equality in Korea and of the role of research in better understanding Korea’s current social climate regarding women’s employment.

Dr. Lovell’s presentation, "Gender and the Labor Market: Creating Equal Employment Opportunities for Women," focused on the context for creating equal employment opportunities for women in the United States. She introduced four factors in the United States that can work to either expand or limit women’s prospects for equal employment: the country’s legal framework, especially its strong foundation of laws outlawing employment discrimination; women’s roles in creating political change; cultural ideas about gender and the role of the government in ensuring equity in outcomes; and economic stimulus for equal employment opportunities for women. Lovell says she sees these factors as defining the prospects for women’s integration into economies around the globe.

According to Dr. Lovell, Korea has very modern employment expectations of women but a strong cultural overlay about gender roles that holds women back. While the government funds women researchers and agencies focused on gender equity, Korean culture does not universally welcome women into the workforce. Several conference participants noted that, particularly in younger generations, men often want their wives to work and provide economic support to their families, but the men do not help much with household chores or caregiving and there is not enough childcare in Korea.

Dr. Lovell was also invited to give a seminar at the Korean Women’s Development Institute in Seoul on the paid sick days initiative in the United States, and she met with the renowned Korean feminist researcher Dr. Chang Pilwha of Ewha Women’s University. She hopes to follow up with future collaborations with researchers she met in Korea, including a comparative policy analysis of the United States and East Asian countries.

In October, Dr. Lovell and Dr. Barbara Gault, IWPR’s Vice President and Director of Research, met with Eom Yeon Sook, Director of Population and Family Policy Division of the City of Seoul, and Dr. Lee Bong Wha, Head of the Women and Family Bureau in Seoul, to discuss Seoul’s “Project to Create the Best City for Women.” In particular, they talked about a range of policies and services important for women’s economic security, including strategies for expanding childcare. Another researcher Dr. Lovell met while in Korea, Dr. Moon You-Kyoung, will be starting as a visiting scholar at the University of Maryland in January 2008, giving IWPR more opportunities for collaboration between the two countries.
Ms. Daisy Chin-Lor has spent a lifetime as a pioneer in a typically male-dominated marketing world, and has risen through the ranks to hold a number of high-ranking positions at major companies including Avon, Chanel, and Birks and Mayors. After graduating from Hunter College, she eventually explored marketing due to her interest in how businesses can better connect with consumers. Facing unique challenges due to her status as both a woman and a minority, she found that the exclusionary attitudes of corporate cultures had a negative effect on the bottom line and had to be re-examined. She was fortunate to find a mentor in Marcia Worthing, then Executive Vice President of Human Resources at Avon. With a combination of knowledge, passion, and courage, Ms. Chin-Lor was able to rise through the ranks of business to many rewarding and influential positions. While working for Avon, Ms. Chin-Lor oversaw the decentralization of the overseas market, and moved to Hong Kong in 1988 to lead the opening of the new market. Ms. Chin-Lor describes the experience as incredibly rewarding and exciting, and is proud of the thousands of women who were employed during the first year of operation, and the meaningful opportunities that they were offered. Besides her accomplishments in the business world she lists becoming a mother as her proudest achievement.

Women’s Employment
- *BusinessWeek Online* cited IWPR’s report “Solving the Nursing Shortage Through Higher Wages”
- *Newhouse News Service* quoted Dr. Vicky Lovell on labor hours in the United States in a story that was picked up by *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), the *Patriot News* (PA), *The Star Ledger* (NJ), *The Ann Arbor News* (MI), and the *Post Standard* (NY)

Poverty, Welfare and Income Security
- *The Financial Times* quoted Dr. Avis Jones-DeWeever and highlighted IWPR’s research on the effects Hurricane Katrina has had on women of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast

Women and Politics
- *PBS’ To the Contrary* and *The Record* (NJ) quoted Dr. Avis Jones-DeWeever on women’s involvement in politics

Gifts of Tribute
In 2007, some of our members paid tribute to important people in their lives with these special gift designations:

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Cynthia Harrison (Tanya Doriss)
Cindy Deitch (Tanya Doriss)

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Emily Morrison
IWPR General and Project Support

IWPR's research, education, and outreach activities are funded and supported primarily by foundations, organizations, and individuals. The Institute is grateful for the support of the following: Soroptimist International of the Americas and the Ms. Foundation for work on the status of women in the Gulf Coast who were affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita; The Ford Foundation for IWPR's work on sex and race discrimination in the workplace, paid family leave and job quality, interfaith activism, and older women's economic security; The Annie E. Casey Foundation for IWPR's work on job quality and poverty; the Rockefeller Foundation for studies on women and gender in the workplace; the Public Welfare Foundation, the Rockefeller Family Fund, and the Economic Policy Institute for support of our work/family research; The Russell Sage Foundation for work on older women's economic security; The W.K. Kellogg Foundation, The National Institute for Early Education Research, and The Annie E. Casey Foundation for IWPR's work on child care; The Berger-Marks Foundation for IWPR's work on women's union activism; the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, The National Science Foundation, the Women's Foundation of Minnesota and the Black Women for Black Girls Giving Circle for work on improving the status of young women and girls; the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, Ohio State University, the Summit County Department of Community & Economic Development of Ohio, the Women's Endowment Fund of Akron, the Women's Fund of Central Ohio, the Nokomis Foundation, the New York Women's Foundation, Columbia College of South Carolina, and the Indiana Commission for Women for IWPR's work on the Status of Women in the States; and the Sunrise Foundation for work to more broadly disseminate IWPR's work to the media.
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