Instructor’s Manual: Chapter 14

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Learning Objectives for Chapter 14: The Changing Workplace

After reading this chapter, you should be able to  
1. Describe how the organization of work reflects advances in the economy, production methods, and society.  
2. Define the concept of the “changing workplace.”  
3. Explain five work-related issues of current concern.  
4. Explain the difference between social insurance programs and social welfare policies.  
5. Describe the role of social workers in workplace issues.  
6. Apply the dynamic advocacy model to the changing workplace.

Lecture Notes for Chapter 14: The Changing Workplace

People’s employment status defines their position in society and their standard of living or the level of wealth, material goods, housing, services and education available to them. Being gainfully employed also brings self-esteem, respect from others, friendships, socialization, and a daily routine. For most people, the family and the workplace are the two major domains of everyday interaction. Because social work uses a systems/ecological approach to issues of human needs, social workers are positioned to advocate for better working conditions in the context of family life. Introducing policies, programs and procedures that enhance the workplace will improve family life while simultaneously increasing productivity and profitability for the work organization.

History of Work

In less developed societies, work is linked to survival. Work also has a societal function, serving to organize people in small groups. Our society places a great deal of value on the **work ethic:** the moral belief of the necessity and benefit of work. The work ethic is often associated with the character of an individual and the perceptions others have of a person. It is expected all people who are capable should work and if they do not, they are viewed as “unworthy” or “nondeserving” of government support.

* Traditional Societies
  + Division of labor - The organization of work by task and responsibility, traditionally divided by gender and age.
* Agricultural Era: 1630–1760
  + The main occupations in the American colonies were based in subsistence agriculture in rural contexts. As the nation expanded, agricultural occupations associated with lumber, food, cotton, and dairies grew to meet the demands of a developing nation and a growing population.
  + The social welfare system in place during this time reflected the centrality of the family in maintaining social and economical stability. When a family experienced difficulty, the typical Colonial response was one of the following:
    - farming out members of the family to labor for others in return for food and shelter
    - indenturingworkers from the family to another farm or business for a specified period of time
    - apprenticingselected family members to expert craftsmen to learn a trade like shoemaking or blacksmithing
* Industrial Revolution: 1760–1840
  + Water and steam power, iron making and machine tools elevated the living standards of ordinary people while the United States gained worldwide presence as an industrialized nation. Family life changed as people left their homes and searched for work.
  + Included the introduction of wage laborers who sold their work hours to a factory, mining operation or business owner in order to earn a salary. They were often required to follow strict rules and live in deplorable conditions.
  + Integral to the rise of wage labor was Francis Cabot Lowell’s power loom that synchronized weaving with spinning and changed a labor-intensive method of textile production to an automated weaving system. Young girls could do the work of the mechanized mill system. They were called Lowell Mill Girls and lived in dormitories or boarding houses supervised by matrons.
  + In response to working conditions and the inequality of incomes ,workers united in action and demanded reforms.
    - Equal and universal free education
    - Public lands for settlements
    - No more abuse of child labor and apprentices
    - Restrictions on competitive prison labor
    - Better working conditions for women
    - Establishment of a ten-hour day without any deceases in wages
    - Governmental control of currency
    - The right to organize
    - Jobs for the unemployed in public works programs
* Urbanization: 1860–1950
  + One of the defining features of the Industrial Revolution was the development of cities, vast urban areas with roads, public transportation, railroads, and waterways. Prior to industrial growth approximately 80% of people lived in rural areas.
  + Hiring unskilled workers on a daily basis, laying off workers during slow periods of production, and seasonal work contributed to unsteady employment and transiency among the working class.
  + Welfare capitalism - business owners introduced policies and programs that became associated with the welfare movement. There were two basic goals: support for a diverse workforce that would maintain the established the values and goals of management; and discourage workers from union membership.
  + Human relationship school of management - emerged with the decline of the welfare movement. It emerged from a set of studies conducted at the Western Electric Hawthorne Works in Chicago. Researchers were interested in the impact of physical factors like light or temperature on production rates but found that the attention they paid to the workers during the studies was in itself motivating.
* Information Age: 1960–Present
  + Employee Assistance Programs – developed in response to the stresses of work associated with disrupted employment, competition, and changing markets.
  + Address issues that negatively impact job performance, work attendance and collegial relationships, as well as personal problems, such as domestic violence, parenting, and mental illness.
  + Social workers provide the majority of EAP services. Trained in an ecological perspective, EAP social workers view the person-in-the-environment,which includes relevant individuals, groups and communities. The goal is to assess environmental stressors that may be contributing to a problem and intervening to bring balance into the work and life of the employee.

Current Social Trends Related to Work

* Increase in non-work responsibilities – more women in work force.
* More people work at home - One third of Americans are freelancers (17 million people), contractors and consultants, and most of them work at home instead of in a traditional office setting. By about 2020 there will be more of these non-payroll workers than full-time employees.
* Workforce ages – Baby Boomers retiring, Millennials moving up. Challenge will be ensuring continuity as people with deep knowledge of the company’s business leave and new ones come in.
* Gender pay gap starts to close – The gap is smaller for younger workers than it is for workers overall.
* Career growth delayed - Due to the weak economy, many recent college grads took internships to gain work experience when they couldn’t find jobs, delaying work force entry. Median income level used to be achieved by age 26, now it is age 30.
* Global markets become more integrated - Global commerce will experience significant growth in the next decades, as developing nations and emerging markets benefit from a new generation of businesses and consumers. Issues of diversity will be important.
* Job searches are continuous - Fifty years ago, Americans tended to find a good job and stay with that employer for most of their working life. Today people have, on average, about eleven jobs between the ages of 18 and 34.

Work-Related Issues

* Unemployment
  + Frictional unemployment: part of the normal labor cycle and considered unavoidable. Frictional unemployment is triggered when people leave their place of employment or are fired from their job.
  + Structural unemployment: caused largely by conditions in the economy that mismatch available jobs and potential workers.
  + Cyclical unemployment:when businesses downsize and lay off workers because of a decrease in demand for goods and services.
* Underemployment - People who are employed but are frustrated in their ability to do a job commensurate with their skills and availability.
* Minimum Wage - The lowest hourly rate wage that employers may legally pay their workers. Even when working 40 hours per week, workers paid the minimum wage are earning only $15,080, which is below the poverty line of $15,130.
* Gender Inequality - Women are primarily in low paying positions: hair stylists, house cleaners, cooks, child-care workers, nurses, and teachers. Women with full-time employment are paid about three-fourths the salary of full-time working men. Women represent less than 20% of federal and state elective offices.
* Occupational Health Hazards - Illnesses, diseases, and disorders, whether physical or emotional, that are a result of work, and affect a person’s earning ability. To ensure the health and safety in the workplace, legislation and inspection standards for workplaces have been enacted.

Social Welfare and the Changing Workplace

* Social Insurance Programs - Employers and workers share the risks associated with employment by paying premiums through deductions from their earnings.
  + Unemployment Insurance - provides benefits to eligible workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own.
  + Workers’ Compensation - provides most employees who are injured on the job the right to medical care for any injury, and in many cases, monetary payments to compensate for resulting temporary or permanent disabilities.
  + Social Security – provides retirement benefits for workers who contribute to the federal social insurance program. Approximately 94% of all workers participate in the program. Deductions for the program are taken directly from a worker’s paycheck.
* Social Welfare Policies – Policies based on the idea that women, members of minority groups, and people with challenging conditions have civil rights that guarantee their opportunities in employment without prejudice and discrimination.
  + Affirmative Action - [equal opportunity employment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equal_opportunity_employment) measures that federal contractors and subcontractors are legally required to adopt. These measures are intended to prevent discrimination against employees or applicants for employment on the basis of "color, religion, sex, or national origin".
  + Americans with Disabilities Act - supports people with disabilities in employment, transportation, public accommodation, communications, and governmental activities. It covers employers with 15 or more employees, including state and local governments.
    - Reasonable accommodation - adjustments or modifications provided by an employer to enable people with disabilities to enjoy equal employment opportunities.
      * Making existing facilities used by employees readily accessible to and usable by persons with impairments.
      * Restructuring jobs, modifying work schedules, and reassigning people with impairments to vacant positions.
      * Acquiring or modifying equipment or devices, adjusting or modifying examinations, training materials, or policies, and providing qualified readers or interpreters.

Diversity and the Changing Workplace

Environment of work - The environment of work supports the social advancement of some workers while others are marginalized. Traditionally, people with minority status—especially on the basis of race, ethnicity, or religious affiliation—have been deficient in class, status, and power. Thus they have held labor positions that require harder, dirtier, more dangerous work and offer less privilege and prestige. In turn, the lowly character of the work they do lowers their social status. Because of their status, such people are excluded from specializations in labor that would enhance their financial status and overall standard of living. It is a vicious circle.

* Age - Older people are subject to many stereotypes. Older workers are thought to be less healthy, clumsier, more prone to absenteeism, more accident prone, and slower in task performance. Research has shown these myths to be untrue. In fact, older workers tend to be highly productive, dependable, and cooperative. To provide older adults with a productive, meaningful role in society, it is suggested that they be encouraged to work as long as they are productive and have an interest in working to maintain their standard of living.
* Class - Alienation refers to the cognitive separation of people from each other and from the control of their work. It can lead to the exploitation of workers, resulting in inequality in the distribution of work and its rewards. Exploitation in a work context is seen when individuals gain little from their work but those who supervise them gain much.
* Gender - The position of women (and some men) in the workplace would be enhanced if access to affordable, convenient child care or elder care services were provided either on-site or through a consortium with other employers.
* Sexual Orientation - There are 21 states with laws protecting LGBT workers from discrimination. The majority of the largest employers (5000 + employees) now provide benefits to same sex partners and spouses of employees.
* Intersections of Diversity - Women of color are disproportionately employed in low income jobs in retail, services, child care and janitorial services.

Advocacy and the Changing Workplace

* Social and Economic Justice - The working conditions of women, older people, people of color, working class people, and LGBT people contradicts the notion of a just workplace, in which workers have resources and benefits through equal distribution. Social workers can help by advocating for systematic change in order to shift this sort of inequity from a personal problem to societal one. Such advocacy can take the form of referring people to programs and benefits, developing social welfare policy, union organizing, and writing editorials and other documents for public education.
* Supportive Environment - The work environment can set the stage for discriminatory actions and prejudicial attitudes. Often the line between employment protections from discrimination and protections from harassment is not clearly defined. Anti-discrimination policies typically emphasize the responsibility of the employer and anti-harassment policies emphasize the responsibility of employees.
* Human Needs and Rights - According to the Dynamic Advocacy Model human rights can be divided into three categories: 1) civil and political rights; 2) social and economic rights; and 3) collective rights. In the world of work it is civil rights that ensure fair treatment, as guaranteed by the nation’s constitution.
* Political Access - Social workers can educate people about their rights as employees and about the resources that should be available to them if they are not employed. Employee rights cover everything from salary levels to appropriate physical work environments and benefits including child care, sick days and mental health services.

Your Career in the World of Work

* Social workers are involved in the majority of workplaces through: direct practice to individuals, families and groups; service systems including housing, health and education; policy development at the local, state and federal level; advocacy in unions, associations, or membership affiliations; offices of human services; insurance offices; schools; correctional and mental facilities, and service agencies across all levels of government.
* The combination of benefits, environment, location, and salary make for a healthy and rewarding workplace.
* A social work career in the world of work involves embracing people's individuality and needs as a matter of basic human dignity and civil rights.

Key Concepts for Chapter 14: The Changing Workplace

affirmative action

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)

gender gap

gender inequality

minimum wage

occupational health hazards

Social Security

standard of living

underemployment

work ethic

Case Study for Chapter 14: The Changing Workplace

Cole is a client in an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) located in a large pharmaceutical corporation. He decided to seek help for a variety of issues ranging from a recent divorce and to anxiety and panic attacks.

Cole, who is a “techie,” asked his social work counselor to facilitate a live web-based therapeutic group where he and other clients would be represented by computer graphics (avatars). With a focus on health and wellness in the workplace, the clients stated that ideally their advocacy effort would result in individual and organizational change that fosters a balanced lifestyle.

Cole is intrigued by the idea of a web-based intervention, but the social worker has some concerns related to:

conducting counseling without ever meeting people in person.

ethical questions about privacy and confidentiality.

establishing a professional relationship through computer graphics.

effective management of the network.

how live web-based services fit in the organizational culture of a large pharmaceutical corporation.

the pathway for advocacy efforts to result in change within the corporation.

1) Do you think it would be advisable for a social worker to proceed with a web-based therapeutic group like the one sought by Cole? Why or why not?

2) In an area like computer technology where social workers may not have much expertise, how can they proceed? Confidentiality of personal information can be very tricky online. What potential consequences could occur if there were a data breach of some kind?

3) Is a social worker able to adequately assess people without physically seeing or hearing them? Explain your thoughts.

Discussion Questions for Chapter 14: The Changing Workplace

Discussion Question #1

Have you ever had a coworker whom you really liked who then became the boss and seemed to change completely? Theoretically, they got promoted because of who they were, but then who they were seemed to change. What do you think that tells us about our ideas of what it means to be a boss and the culture of work in America?

Discussion Question #2

Did you know someone who lost a job as a result of the economic downturn during the Great Recession? How long did it take them to find a new job? What was that process like for them? Did they have to settle for something less enjoyable or lower-paying than what they were doing previously?

Discussion Question #3

In America, a big part of how we define ourselves is on the basis of work. After all, one of the first questions adults typically ask someone they just met is, “So, what do you do?” Have you ever felt judged for what you do? How do you think people who have recently been laid off or are long unemployed feel about social interactions where they might be asked questions about their work? How might this impact their physical and mental health?

Discussion Question #4

Do you see work as a means to an end—meaning you just have to make money to survive, and it doesn’t matter if you truly like your job—or as something you must enjoy if it’s going to be worth your time? What would you do with your career if all jobs made roughly the same salary? Do you think all social workers need to be passionate about the work they do in order to be good at their jobs?

Chapter Exercises for Chapter 14: The Changing Workplace

1. Make a “dream list” of the economic and social status and other benefits you hope to gain from your professional career. Do you think your goals are realistic? Why or why not?

2. Schedule an interview with a professional who’s currently employed in a position that you might be interested in pursuing. Before conducting the interview, please be sure to construct a list of questions that will guide your discussion. What does the list tell you about your values

and also about your career expectations?

3. The unemployment level is high worldwide and causes civil unrest in some countries. Read an article that describes an international work-related incident. How does the situation impact workers and their families? Is there a role for the United States in the issue? If not, why? If so, what is it?

4. Visit a large retail store and note the people working: what they do, what they wear, how they interact, and the general work environment. Based on your observations, describe how and why the components of the dynamic advocacy model apply to the workers in the store. What advocacy skills would you use to enhance this workplace?

5. Social work education builds on a liberal arts foundation. Use the Internet to examine how the following individuals contributed to social work’s perceptions of the workplace. Please list the experiment, theory, or concept each individual offered to the understanding of the workplace.

a. Adam Smith

b. Karl Marx

c. Emile Durkheim

d. Elton Mayo

e. Frederick Winslow Taylor

6. Take a walk across your campus or community and list the modifications that have been made to assist people with special needs. Consider mobility, vision, and hearing impairments in particular. Are there more than you realized? What others are needed?

Class Activities for Chapter 14: The Changing Workplace

**Class activity #1**

Hand the following out to each member of the class to complete individually.

You are a social worker at a company that has been experiencing some downturns in productivity, low morale, and a general feeling that the company does not support a healthy work-life balance for its employees. A number of proposals have come through for what the company could do to improve morale and employee retention. Each one seems to have about equal support from the employees. These are those proposals. Rank them from 1-8 to denote which you think would be best to implement first.

\_\_\_\_\_ Free on-site day care for parents with preschool children, or children out of school for

the summer

\_\_\_\_\_ A wellness initiative that gives employees the chance to take breaks during the day to

exercise in an on-site gym facility or go for a run/walk

\_\_\_\_\_ Fewer expectations of working from home at night and weekends

\_\_\_\_\_ More of a voice in major decisions being made about the company’s direction/policies

\_\_\_\_\_ On-site counseling available for employees going through divorce, other family

problems, or drug/alcohol abuse issues, confidentially

\_\_\_\_\_ Financial planning services made available for retirement and other personal financial

goals

\_\_\_\_\_ More leisure activities for coworkers to spend healthy time with each other, hopefully

growing closer as a team and enjoying work more

\_\_\_\_\_ More flexible scheduling, with later morning starts available for parents or those who

live further away if they are willing to work at night or on weekends

After the students complete the list individually, put them into small groups to try to come up with a consensus. Have them discuss what gets in the way of these sorts of changes in work environments. Would they be interested in working as corporate social workers? On one hand, they could certainly have a positive impact on people’s lives. On the other, the company is keeping them around in hopes of increasing its profits, perhaps more so than it necessarily cares about workers’ well-being. Would this be an acceptable sort of environment for them to work in?

**Class activity #2**

Social work is a demanding job in itself. Like many fields, different social work environments produce very different sorts of work experiences. Other than a specific area of practice, it’s good for your students to have an idea of what *kind* of agency or organization they want to work for—what would the environment be like?

Have each student write down a list of five traits they think would be most important in finding a satisfying social work agency in which to work. If students do not wish to be social workers, they can still identify traits they would like to see in their future workplace. Aggregate the traits students identify on the board. Which are the most frequent answers? Why are these the most important factors? Which elements are absolute deal breakers?

Discuss with your students the best and worst jobs they’ve ever had. What made those jobs so great or so dreary/aggravating? What does having a job one doesn’t enjoy do to one’s physical and mental health? What would it be like to feel trapped in a job one didn’t enjoy, for instance, because there were no other immediate prospects and one needed the money to make ends meet?

**Class activity #3**

Have students discuss the merits of affirmative action policies. Break them into groups to answer these questions.

1) Have minorities and women been disadvantaged systematically in work opportunities in the past? Are they still? If not, explain why.

2) If so, that gave men and whites an unfair advantage and opportunities for advancement that others did not enjoy equally. Is affirmative action a fair way to attempt to equalize that playing field? Why or why not?

3) Whites and men who have experienced unearned advantages in the system the way it stands today have at times claimed they are being victimized by “reverse discrimination” through affirmative action, as they are being punished for something over which they had no control. How would you respond to that assertion?

4) Is there a way to equalize the playing field other than through affirmative action?

5) If we abolished affirmative action, and didn’t replace it with any other program or policy, what do you think would happen? Are there factors still present today that would still give men, whites, and other privileged groups an unfair advantage?

Video and Multimedia for Chapter 14: The Changing Workplace

#### Video Clips

* [The End of Unemployment Benefit Extensions in Illinois](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/19/illinois-unemployment_n_5352536.html)   
  The data doesn’t support the perception that Unemployment Insurance discourages people from working.
* [The Looming Social Security Crisis](http://chicago.cbslocal.com/video?autoStart=true&topVideoCatNo=default&clipId=10626599)   
  Will Social Security be there for the Millennial generation?
* [A Day in the Life: Profiles of Underemployment](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yApkp_EiU9k)   
  What is the current state of underemployment in the United States? Are there jobs for college graduates?

#### Audio Clips

* [The Impact of Minimum Wage Hikes](http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=343430393&m=343900905)   
  A single mall split between two cities (Santa Clara and San Jose, CA) with two different minimum wage laws poses unique problems for business owners and workers on both sides of the mall.
* [62, 65, 67, 70?](http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=175937361&m=175997290)   
  Deciding when to start claiming Social Security benefits isn’t as simple as turning a certain age.

Web Resources for Chapter 14: The Changing Workplace

* [The Impact of National Minimum Wage Increases](https://www.cbo.gov/publication/44995)   
  The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office breaks down the likely impact of a hike in the minimum wage on a national level.
* [Dealing with Workplace Challenges for LGBTQ Employees](http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/lgbt-employee-resources)   
  The Human Rights Campaign’s resource page for LGBTQ workers.
* [On the SSA Tax Cap](http://www.ssa.gov/oact/cola/cbb.html)   
  A look at  the history of the Social Security tax cap, which hit $118,500 in 2015.

SAGE Journal Articles for Chapter 14: The Changing Workplace

[**SAGE Journal User Guide**](http://www.uk.sagepub.com/sageEdge/orvis3e/files/SJ-userguide.pdf)

Article 1.

[Dreier, P. (2014). The battle over the minimum wage, city by city.*New Labor Forum, 23*(3), 85-88.](http://nlf.sagepub.com/cgi/content/full/23/3/85?ijkey=vRGsdNl8BYAWM&keytype=ref&siteid=spnlf) doi:10.1177/1095796014542615

This article describes the living wage movement and the recent efforts to demand increase in the minimum wage in cities and states across the U.S.

#### Questions:

1. What factors are responsible for increased attention to the inadequacy of the minimum wage?
2. What is the “living wage movement,” and what are its central accomplishments?
3. How have economists responded to arguments that raising the minimum wage will force employers out of business?

Article 2.

[Williams, C. L. (2013). The glass escalator, revisited: Gender inequality in neoliberal times, SWS feminist lecturer.*Gender & Society, 27*(5), 609-629.](http://gas.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/27/5/609?ijkey=YMmvAiWHYxR1g&keytype=ref&siteid=spgas) doi:10.1177/0891243213490232

Building on her earlier work exploring gender inequality in employment, the author revises the original concept of the “glass escalator” through adopting intersectionality and exploring the effects of neoliberalism on the organization of work.

#### Questions:

1. Explain the concept of a “glass escalator” with respect to gender and employment.
2. What are the central critiques of this concept?
3. How does intersectionality respond to these critiques?  What examples from the text illustrate the benefits of an intersectional analysis of gender and work?
4. How does the reorganization of work and the new economy affect new expressions of gender inequality?