People's Situations and Perspectives Eight Years After Workshop Conversion

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Abstract

Our purpose in this study is to describe the circumstances and views of 16 individuals 8 years after their participation in one agency's conversion from a sheltered workshop to an exclusively community employment service. Individual interviews were conducted to examine participants' present employment circumstances and their perspectives on the agency changes and on their current life situations. Participant reactions varied. Most individuals, although describing the conversion as initially anxiety-provoking, attributed to it many long-term benefits. Some reported disappointing and painful experiences manifested by prolonged service delays, a return to a segregated facility, or their rejection of any community employment. Findings were analyzed with regard to previous research and implications suggested for policy, systems, and practice changes.

Having been established as an effective employment alternative to segregated day programs and sheltered workshops, supported employment has enjoyed an impressive level of growth. Since 1986, when it was legally instituted as a formal state-federal vocational rehabilitation service, supported employment has grown 10-fold (Kregel &. Wehman, 1997; McGaughey, Kiernan, McNally, Gilmore, & Keith, 1994). Most recent estimates indicate that about 150,000 people are receiving supported work services (Wehman, West, & Kregel, 1999).

Supported employment programs also have reported impressive successes. Compared with sheltered work, supported work has been associated with heightened earnings, social integration, job satisfaction, positive employer reactions, and reduced federal assistance (Hernandez, Keys, &. Balcazar, 2000; Kregel & Wehman, 1997; Mank, 1994; McGaughey, Kiernan, McNally, Gilmore, & Keith, 1995; Noble & Conley, 1987; Schalock &. Kiernan, 1997; Thompson, Powers, & Houchard, 1992). In addition, supported work has been found to be more beneficial than center-based programs for people with significant and multiple disabilities (Reid, Green, &. Parsons, 1998).

Although expanding dramatically and demonstrating impressive results, supported employment has failed to generate widespread enthusiasm for complete agency changeover to integrated work (Kregel & Wehman, 1997; Mank, 1994; McGaughey, Kiernan, McNally, & Gillmore, 1993, 1994; Wehman & Kregel, 1995). Despite numerous reports of successful agency conversions (Albin, Rhodes, & Mank, 1994; Beare, Severson, Lynch, &. Schneider, 1992; Butterworth &. Fesko, 1998; Campbell, 1988; Fesko & Butterworth, 1999; Hagner & Murphy, 1989; Murphy & Rogan, 1995; Rogan, Rinne, & Charleston, 1999; Walker, 2000a), less than 10% of adult day programs across the country have reported reductions in center-based programs and a realignment of resources toward community employment (Kregel &. Wehman, 1997; McGaughey et al., 1994). Apparently, the success of supported employment has led to a dual-tracked vocational rehabilitation system that reflects expanding integrated and sheltered components as well as a strong, stable segregated service system (Gilmore, Schalock, Kiernan, & Butterworth, 1997; McGaughey et al., 1994, 1995).

Numerous reasons have been proposed for the low conversion rate, including lack of leadership,

inadequate management, governmental and funding disincentives, negative constituent attitudes, transportation problems, inconsistent regulations, and lack of staff training (Albin et al., 1994; Griffin &. Carol, 1997; Mank, 1997; McGaughey, 1995; Murphy & Rogan, 1995; Rogan & Held, 1999; Wehman & Kregel, 1995). However, despite the growing literature around agency changeover, very little information exists on the long-term effects of conversion or how those who actually experienced the process view it years later. Such information seems critical at a time when community employment has been declared a national priority (Butterworth & Gilmore, 2000), and people with disabilities continue to report clear preferences for community work (Harris, 1994). Yet, employment rates for people with disabilities remain abysmally low (Bruyere, 2000); systemic remedies to address this problem have been slow, fragmented, and inconsistent (Kiernan, Schalock, Butterworth, & Mank, 1997); and skepticism continues regarding the viability of a truly inclusive national employment policy (Black, 1992; Rosen, Bussone, Dakunchak, & Cramp, 1993).

Method

Participants and Setting

Beginning in January 1988, Salt City, Inc. underwent a complete change of administration, accompanied by an organizational commitment to convert its sheltered workshop to a community employment service, to find everyone in the facility an individual community job, and eventually to close the workshop. Meetings were held with all workshop staff and participants to describe the changes; explain what they would mean for everyone in terms of agency focus, services, training, and outcomes; and to answer any questions about the workshop, the future of the agency, and the options available to staff and workshop participants.

Prior to January 1988, the agency was called the Salt City Center and served as an umbrella agency for people described in the agency's brochure as "blind or visually impaired and multiply handicapped." People enrolled at Salt City not only worked in the agency's sheltered workshop but lived in its nearby group home or in one of various agency-selected housing situations, such as supervised room and board or adult foster care.

Immediately following the agency's stated intention to change, new staff members were hired, employees were retrained, and interested workshop participants were assisted in finding competitive jobs of their choice. By May of 1990, everyone who had worked at the facility had an opportunity to obtain community employment or was assisted in finding a sheltered setting, and the workshop was closed. On average, participants in the present study were approximately 37 years old and had been enrolled at Salt City for an average of about 7 years. All interviewees were diagnosed as being either blind or visually impaired and sometimes had multiple classifications. Four individuals had three or more diagnoses. Fourteen individuals were classified with various developmental disabilities: 9 were diagnosed with mental retardation, 5 with cerebral palsy, and 3 had seizure disorders. Three individuals were classified with psychiatric disorders, and 3 were diagnosed as deaf. In terms of our findings in this study, however, there appeared to be no relationship between disability categories and reported experiences or outcomes.

Data Collection

Interviewees were contacted by phone or letter, informed of the nature and purpose of the study, and asked to participate. Of the 21 individuals in the initial Salt City project, 16 were located and agreed to be interviewed. Of the 5 people who did not participate, 2 moved to another part of the state, 1 had no known address or phone number, 1 did not respond to researchers' correspondence, and 1 had died.

Over a 10-month period, participants were interviewed in their places of work or residences by doctoral students in rehabilitation counseling who had received advanced training in qualitative research and were not involved in the initial Salt City conversion project. Interviews were semi-structured, open-ended, and between 45- and 120-minutes long, including second interviews that were conducted to obtain additional information. All interviews were taperecorded and all audiotapes were transcribed verbatim for analysis. Each interview session began with a brief introduction of the research; a discussion of confidentiality; and a request for written consent to participate in the study, have the session taperecorded, and the results published. All interviewees were asked a standard series of open-ended questions and clarifying and follow-up questions that varied from person to person. People were requested to trace their work, living, and social situations after the workshop changed until the pre-

sent. They were also asked to describe (a) their specific reactions to Salt City's change from a sheltered workshop to an agency that only offered community jobs and had no workshop, (b) how the agency's changes had affected their lives at the time, and (c) how they viewed their current working and living situations, it these were related to Salt City's changes. As people responded to these broad questions, interviewers asked follow-up questions and encouraged people to explain and expand on their answers. Interviewers rephrased questions that people did not understand and inquired about details and emotions surrounding situations being described. In order to reduce our reliance on people's recollections, to gather supplemental interview data, and to obtain information that interviewees did not know or could not remember, we also interviewed staff members who had worked closely with them, knew them well, and had access to individual employment records. These interviews were used to verify details of people's work situations, such as when jobs began and ended, hours worked, and types of support provided.

Data Analysis

In order to verify the accuracy of the data, we conducted multiple, independent analyses of the interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Three of the authors independently coded and analyzed all transcripts using the constant-comparative method (Bogdan 6k Biklen, 1991; Glaser 6k Strauss, 1967). Researchers developed and continually identified emerging themes using analytic memos throughout data collection. The senior author then collated the research team's submissions into a written draft that was distributed to the team for additional analysis and revision. After further discussion, unanimous agreement was reached regarding the final themes, the representative quotes, and the final conclusions.

Findings

In this section findings are reported in terms of overall employment outcomes for all 16 interviewees, followed by the presentation of specific themes describing people's reactions to the work situations they experienced and to the agency changes associated with those experiences.

Overall *Vocational Outcomes*

Focusing on an 8-year period beginning in January 1988, we asked participants to describe numerous and varied employment experiences after leaving the workshop. Of the 16 individuals, 15 (93.7%) found at least one competitive job. The one person who left the project before finding a job has been included in all analyses. Eight years following the first placement, 7 individuals (43.8%) were still working in integrated employment. Three (18.7%) were unemployed and looking for another job. Four (25%) decided to return temporarily (n = 1) or permanently (3) to a segregated day program, and 2 (12.5%) elected to remain home and not work or attend any facility. Combining those who entered segregated day programs with individuals who remained unemployed for any reason, the total percentage of participants not working in the community at the time of the study was 56%.

Over the 8-year period, participants held an average of 2.5 jobs, with a range between 1 and 5 positions. Although 13 of the 15 individuals who found jobs changed them at least once, 44% had community jobs after 8 years. As reflected in Table 1, all participants earned more than minimum wage and reportedly far more than they had earned in the workshop. However, all were working less than full time.

In the following section, people's responses to the changes they experienced are presented in terms of themes and subthemes that we developed from individual interviews.

Initial *Reactions to* Leaving *the Workshop*

Enthusiasm for change. Several people said that they had long desired to work competitively and welcomed the proposed workshop changes. Roger, a young man working in a university office, said:

> Let me tell you, 1 didn't care for (the workshop) at all. It didn't fit most people, but the staff acted like it did. I didn't like [what] 1 was told to do there, but that was my only choice.

Several people explained that the workshop was no longer stimulating and became an obstacle to their development. Jeff, a man who subsequently held five different community jobs, called the workshop "not that much of a challenge." This theme was reiterated by both Kathryn and Suzanne. Kathryn, a workshop participant for 12 years, said that she "no longer needed the workshop. . . [and] wanted to do other things." Suzanne, enrolled for 16 years in the workshop, described it as "a place for something to do, but I could do better." She went on to emphasize that "I want to change, run my own thing. . . . [Some] people don't want to change, just

Table 1 Employment Information on Working Participants

Employment type/Name	Years employed	Hourly wages	Weekly hours	Type of support	No. of competitive jobs
Competitive					
Deborah	7+	8.25	20	Natural	1
Joanne	5 +	6.00	16.5	Natural	2
Joe	.5	5.25	20	Natural	3
Loretta	1 +	6.00	20	Natural	3
Marilyn	2 +	4.35	10	Agency plus natural	2
Ned	7 +	8.25	20	Natural	1
Roger	7	6.00	18-20	Natural	3
Sheltered					
Jill	3 +	NA[a]	35	Agency	3
Monica	7	NA	35	Agency	2

[a]Not available.

stay disabled. . . . Anything's better than working at the workshop."

Initial *fears about community work.* Almost everyone expressed some initial fear about leaving the workshop, but most eventually favored the change. Joanne, a woman who was blind and used a wheelchair, recalled thinking:

> How the hell am I going to do this when I can't even go the bathroom by myself?' 1 was really worried. People from the company aren't going to want to help me. . . . [Agency staff] said we could get someone who could come in certain periods of time and help you into the bathroom. . . . So I said 'OK, fine.'

Later, describing the changes, she termed them, "Amazing!. . . definitely for the better."

Loretta remembered feeling apprehensive when first approached about community work:

> Oh, dear Jesus, help me. I am terribly shy. How could 1 do anything like that. . . . 1 was a little bit scared because I saw myself doing jobs where I wouldn't last long; jobs that would be too physically demanding. . . . [Previous] staff warned me and warned me that with that attitude I wouldn't last very long in the community.

Eventually, she became a booster for the workshop's changes, describing her life as "the best," and her job as a place where "I can make money, and friends."

Continuing *dislike for workshop changes.* Some initial fears persisted. Marilyn said that she liked her job, but that she was unnerved by the agency changes: "I am frightened by change. . . . It makes me sad. . . . I don't like things to change. I miss [the agency]. I liked it there. I miss the people."

Raymond initially desired to work in the community but found the changes very stressful:

> 1 have blocked a lot of things out because of my being upset. When 1 was upset, my blood pressure went up. Like I said, 1 couldn't handle it [change]. I couldn't sleep. . . . I think [agency] was good while it lasted. Like everything, you just have to move on and try to find your own way with help.

Changes in Work Over Time

Losing and leaving jobs. Of the 15 people who found community jobs, 13 (86.6%) changed jobs at one time or another. Three individuals left positions voluntarily, whereas the others were terminated because of inadequate performance, lack of work, and/or company cutbacks. Most interviewees, despite disappointing job changes and losses, expressed firm determination to find another position. Roger described three jobs before finding the one he liked:

> I worked as a janitor. That wasn't for me. Then I was doing dishes. It wasn't what I liked. Then I worked at a supermarket, but cars in the parking lot were really an issue. . . . Then the day that I will always remember, August 21, 1989. That was the day a job was created for me at [a university office]. 1 couldn't imagine a better fit.

Kathryn recalled feeling hurt and frustrated, pointing to a lack of staff support for her efforts. Despite her disappointment, she still desired community work.

The part that hurt me the most was that I was willing to put my best foot forward and. . . I couldn't get the funding that I needed. . . . There was a lot more that [agency staff) could have done. . . . It was just a total let down. . . . I miss it [working]. . . . 1 miss doing what 1 was trained to do, and that was advocacy. . . . 1 even said that I would do receptionist work if they would train me, and get the personal help that 1 would need.

Jeff, who lost several jobs, tended to blame himself for his checkered work history but missed the increased pay that came with community employment:

1 am not going to fault them [agency staff]. . . . Sometimes I would be staying up late at night and that catches up with you. . . . I don't always listen to the things I am told. I have to learn the hard way. People warned me about sleeping at work, but I didn't listen. . . . I liked the paycheck. . . . It was nice to put in the bank.

Suzanne held and lost several community jobs and described compelling attempts to succeed and the supportive efforts of others to help her:

1 knew what to do on the job. 1 just wasn't producing the way they wanted. And I loved my boss. . . . and everybody wanted me to stay, but I was messing up the company. . . . The manager even said he'd let me work Saturdays to catch up, but it never happened, catching a bus and all. I didn't make my quotas. . . . and they let me go. We were all so sad and frustrated.

Despite such disappointing experiences, Kathryn, Jeff, and Suzanne continued to pursue community employment. Suzanne related that "life in the community is most important for me," a sentiment shared by many others. In fact, of the 86% who changed jobs, 92% found at least one other community position.

Rejecting *community work.* A total of 5 people rejected community work, 4 after leaving or losing a job, and 1 before finding an initial position. Three reentered a segregated workshop or day program, and 2 decided not to work at all. All cited various kinds of stress as major factors in their decision.

Tina found work to be stressful and decided to live with her boyfriend and do things that made her life more meaningful:

1 had an office job answering phones. That was hard because if the person on the other end was in a rotten mood, you just had to take it. . . . Then they said you're not doing well, you can't use your machinery, but we'll help you. I finally got the help. . . but 1 called [supervisor] and quit. . . . Having a job, you can't do this or that. . . . They pay. . . [you] less than a so called person without a handicap. It's not worth the stress. You have to do more with your life than answering someone else's phone.

Although Lydia cited the combined stress of family problems and work as temporary problems that caused her to leave her job, she described her life as good now and expressed no immediate interest in returning to paid employment, "[roommate] and I get along good, I'm happy in my volunteer work. Things are working out."

Monica considered community work too sporadic and unsettling and returned to sheltered work after leaving a job she did not like:

[The workshop] could be better. . . but it is steady work. . . . Things change a lot and fast. But 1 would rather work in the workshop. You know where you are going and what you are doing.

Jill, after voluntarily leaving several community jobs, and having been laid off for lack of work from her final job, opted for sheltered work. Although she expressed mixed sentiments about her decision, she cited her continuing fears about having seizures at work, receiving insufficient coworker support, and being personally safe:

I'd rather not even be there [in the workshop]. . . . 1 really wish I could do more in the community. . . . Not much money [in the workshop]. 1 had a hard time holding a community job. . . half because of my [seizures]. . . . Sometimes 1 had trouble with coworkers. . . [and] with mobility in a different place.

Raymond said that he "gave up" after waiting too long for a community job that he felt that he could do. He later enrolled in a day program for older people.

Long *waiting periods for another chance.* Some people who lost jobs often waited long periods for another opportunity. Of the 4 individuals seeking another job (including 1 who enrolled temporarily in a day program), 3 waited over 18 months for another chance. Kathryn waited more than 3 years and described the experience as so frustrating that she finally decided to enroll temporarily in an adult day program, noting,

I was promised and promised and it [a job] did not come. 1 was hanging around until I went to adult day care. . . . I know it is not the best thing for me, but it is better than nothing. 1 am not going to hang around the house.

In contrast to the people awaiting subsequent community jobs at home, those opting for segregated settings reported no delays, noting their ease of entry and stability. (See Table 2 for additional information.)

Likes *and Dislikes About Community Employment*

Personal satisfaction with work. Thirteen of those interviewed were generally positive about the work-

Table 2 Information on Those Not Working

Name	Waiting for another job	Years not working	No. of jobs held	Current day activities
Becky	Yes	.5	4	Volunteers at human service organization
Jeff	Yes	1.5	5	Attends weekly support group
Kathryn	Yes	3.8	1	Attends day treatment program
Suzanne	Yes	2	3	Volunteers at advocacy organization
Lydia	No	3+	2	Decided to remain at home
Raymond	No	8+	0	Volunteers at a day program
Tina	No	3	3	Decided to remain home

shop's changeover, saying that it allowed them to decide whether they wanted to work at all, to find preferable work, to earn more money, and to achieve more personal autonomy. Roger indicated that he relished both his freedom from the confines of the workshop and the opportunity to find the right job and do it the way he wanted:

> At [current job] . . . everybody is patient, not just with me but with each other. I'm mellow here. . . because I make the choices in how best to do my work. That never happened before, and it makes all the difference in the world.

Roger also commented that his job led to other opportunities where he could make choices that he had wanted to make for years:

> Life has become so much better. I'm much more independent in ways that I want to be. . . . It's what I always kept asking for . . . but I'm not sure people heard me. . . . I'm hanging out with the people I want to after work and on the weekends. . . . and not just because they're in the same workshop. . . . Now I'm just my own self.

Loretta had been in the workshop for almost 12 years and survived a very chaotic housing situation for several years. Over the years she has held three jobs, and though working 20 hours per week in a telemarketing job that she has held for slightly over a year and calling it "the greatest change in my life," Loretta still is anxious about her future:

> If I lost it [my job], my life would be awful. . . . One of the things I really like best is that I made friends since I have been working there. . . . [My life] has changed a lot. . . . It's the best. . . . I have a job . . . where I make money . . . friends at work. . . . I dread thinking about the future.

Joanne described personal triumphs she had not considered possible and alluded to past experiences that may explain Loretta's continuing anxiety about the future:

> My life has changed, definitely, and for the better. . . . There were two alternatives for me—the group home or a nursing home. . . . It took a lot of convincing [that I could work]. . . . The money is absolutely wonderful. 1 hold a credit card, and I am very pleased with myself. If they told me I was going to live in my own apartment and have my own personal care and I could live independently, I would have told them they were crazy. . . . When they actually took me to job sites, I went, 'Wow!' And then I actually had my first job interview. Oh, my God, these people are actually listening to me. It was totally amazing. . . . You have to understand that people have been so disillusioned for so long and they have no confidence or trust in people, and probably no confidence in themselves.

Specific work dissatisfactions. Not everyone was completely happy about their job. Some expressed a desire for more money and hours, more stimulating work, more time to socialize, and more predictability. Despite liking her job and coworkers, Joanne wished she could make more money, relating that "if it came down to more money, I would really have to consider another place [of employment]."

Ned has worked at the same printing company for over 8 years, doing assembly jobs. Although he liked his job despite criticizing the workshop for "not paying enough," Ned also related an interest in more varied work: "I'm working a good job, but I want to do new kinds of jobs."

Marilyn has packed bread at a nursing home for about 2 years and says she likes the job and the people she works with. However, she desired more work hours in order "to be out of the house more."

Monica left a job she did not like and decided to return to a sheltered workshop because she believed community work was not sufficiently secure or predictable. She argued that "The workshop is steady, everyday, and supported employment always ends, and never lasts for a long time. Then you are left with nothing."

Conclusions

Interviewees held varied perspectives on Salt City's conversion. Consistent with previous studies

conducted over shorter time periods (Albin et al., 1994; Butterworth &. Fesko, 1998; Fesko & Butterworth, 1999; Murphy & Rogan, 1995), most participants associated the agency's changeover with long-term, personal benefits. Individuals pointed to community employment opportunities they had never considered possible, increased income, expanded social relationships, and heightened control of decisions and activities. Some people, while reporting improved work and community circumstances, also expressed a desire for different, better jobs with improved income and hours. Many said that they initially feared the agency's changes, but that their fears subsided as they found competitive work. For some, anxieties persisted, and when coupled with service delays and inadequacies, were described as primary reasons for rejecting integrated work.

When the conversion began, no one was employed in a community job. Eight years later, all but one interviewee had worked competitively, some for many years in the same job, and about 44% were still competitively employed. However, an equivalent percentage had either returned to segregated settings (25%) or were enduring long waiting periods (18.7%). A few (12.3%) decided not to work anywhere. These figures were somewhat better than national percentages, where 33% of those leaving integrated employment found other community work, and 66% either returned to segregated facilities or waited at home (McGaughey et al., 1994). Nevertheless, over 56% of Salt City participants were not working competitively, and community work was what they wanted and what Salt City had said it would provide.

The results of this study should be interpreted cautiously, given the small sample and the possibility that the data-collection period was not representative of people's postconversion work experiences and outcomes. Also, although participants' accounts were supplemented by case records and staff reports, interview data were based primarily on people's recollections.

Systemic Barriers to Full Conversion

One might argue that the number of people not working in integrated jobs reflects the reality that some individuals need segregated settings. We believe, however, that these figures point out that people may end up in segregated settings, despite preferring and being capable of competitive work, because of systemic obstacles as much as the rigors of community employment itself.

Multiple, *timely job opportunities.* All but one person (who left prior to obtaining a job) were able to do community work for substantial periods, even individuals who eventually re-entered segregated programs. Some participants were terminated for poor performance in some jobs, but successfully performed others. Several left jobs through no fault of their own. Only after experiencing what they described as significant, demoralizing service obstacles did people reluctantly decide to enter sheltered settings.

Although Salt City participants widely preferred community employment, they had little or no competitive work experiences and often needed multiple job tries. Initially, the agency used its demonstration grants and special arrangements with local funding organizations to offer numerous job opportunities. This practice seemed helpful. Of those who initially found community work, slightly more than 86% changed jobs at least once, and 92% found at least one other community job. Also, of the 7 individuals who were still working competitively, 5 had three or more job tries. Several of these individuals attributed their eventual employment success to the agency's support through numerous job losses and turbulent work periods. Unfortunately, when Salt City's grants and special relations ended, funding decisions reverted to the state-federal system that favored new applicants and initial placements. These agencies rarely offered numerous and timely job opportunities, contributing to long and discouraging service delays.

Integrated, interim supports. In addition to service delays, people between jobs had no funded, integrated alternatives to support them while they waited. The lack of adequate federal and state support for people who lose or leave integrated work has been well-documented and presents a particular obstacle for converting agencies that must rely totally on their own, inadequate resources to provide this support (Kiernan et al., 1997; Rogan et al, 1999).

In contrast to those experiencing long service delays, frustrating work uncertainties, and lack of interim supports, people entering sheltered facilities reported no delays and described the ease of entry and predictability of sheltered work. Such contrasts reflect part of what Albin et al. (1994) termed "contradictory, conflicting and unfriendly" (p. 108) funding messages and regulatory policies that con-

front agencies wishing to convert and illustrate a continuing lack of comparable support for integrated employment. Undoubtedly, this has contributed to the expansion of segregated workshops nationwide and the pervasive tendency of even converting agencies to retain their workshops (Beare et al., 1992; Campbell, 1988; McGaughey et al., 1993; McGaughey et al., 1994; Wehman & Kregel 1995). Kiernan, Gilmore, and Butterworth (1997) have reported that although 75% of the nation's rehabilitation providers offer both integrated and segregated services, only 20% of those being served received noncongregate integrated employment. Given such an imbalance, how can we be sure that whatever the demand for sheltered work, it is not emanating from the workshops' need for people.

Volunteer, community placements have been proposed as viable safety nets for those who leave or lose jobs. They could prevent people from returning to segregated settings, even temporarily, offer preferred short- or long-term community activities, and facilitate total conversion. Funding for these placements remains sporadic, though Butterworth and Gilmore (2000) have found that some states have begun to offer such services. Reportedly, interim options that did not even exist 5 years ago now comprise about 16% of MR/DD funding in several states.

Using volunteer community placements has evident advantages but may also pose some dangers, such as becoming a rung on the continuum ladder, an acceptable place for long waiting periods, and/or a permanent setting for those who want community work but are considered difficult to serve. In addition, relying too heavily on nonwork placements may be begging the larger and more pressing challenge of providing timely services to those who lose work or want a better job. Unless more flexibility is instilled in the vocational service system, and greater balance is struck between new applicants and those who need additional vocational services and supports, people will continue to languish in undesirable circumstances, whether these are termed *integrated* or *segregated.* This seems to be a particularly important long-term issue for converted agencies where waiting lists still exist for those between jobs and where increasing numbers of more experienced workers are seeking better jobs, hours, pay, and benefits (Kregel 6k Wehman, 1997; Sowers et al, 2000).

Retaining the Shop

Many Salt City participants said that they were initially fearful after learning of the agency's plan to change and to close its workshop. Retaining the workshop, even temporarily, might have prevented or reduced such anxieties and may have avoided roiling other agency stakeholders. In fact, previous studies have documented the frequent tendency of rehabilitation facilities to avoid, conceal, or delay workshop closure as they embark on agency changeover (Beare et al, 1992; Campbell, 1988; McGaughey et al., 1994; Rogan et al., 1999; Wehman 6k Kregel, 1995).

Retaining the workshop may appear to have merit. However, given the well-documented historical failures of workshops to adequately prepare people for community employment (Greenleigh Associates, 1975; Whitehead, 1979), we wonder how continuing the workshop would adequately prepare people for what they said they preferred, namely, integrated work. Moreover, most participants reported their anxiety as temporary and apparently not related to eventual community employment success or satisfaction. In fact, operating dual services seems as likely to raise anxiety levels of both participants and agency staff by creating intraorganizational competition and tensions, hindering community work efforts, compromising services, and delaying planned agency changes (Albin et al., 1994; Beare et al., 1992; Murphy 6k Rogan, 1995; Rogan et al., 1999).

Although most Salt City participants discussed the agency's conversion primarily in terms of their supported employment experiences and outcomes, many indicated that the changeover held broader meaning, namely, enhanced freedom of choice and opportunity. Even individuals who had experienced very disappointing employment experiences could speak positively about the agency's conversion, particularly about the workshop's closure. Thus, although initially feared, apparently the closure of the workshop eventually symbolized for many the reality and finality of their changed circumstances. This is an interesting finding in light of the pervasive tendency of agencies to retain their workshops after adding integrated work. In this regard, we support the Rehabilitation Service Administration's recent restrictions on the use of sheltered placements as legitimate employment outcomes. Such a regulatory change is a welcome antidote to the accelerating resistance of workshop providers to changeover

(Mank, 1994, 1997; Weiner-Zivolich & Zivolich, 1995) and to the inconsistent policies and practices that support such resistance (Albin et al, 1994; Murphy & Rogan, 1995; Schalock & Kiernan, 1997).

Comprehensive System *Changes*

Despite its successful and complete conversion, Salt City still determined major aspects of participant services. Moreover, several participants complained about losing control of the services they wanted, resulting in discouraging service experiences and outcomes and, sometimes, exclusion from community work. As numerous writers have noted, informed participant decision-making and service control are not assured by either agency conversion or supported community work (Hagner &. DiLeo, 1993; Mank, 1997; Murphy, Rogan, & Fisher, 1996; Wehman & Kregel, 1995; West & Parent, 1992). This is an important point because agency conversion has often been treated in the literature as a desired end in itself.

Advocates for a national policy of inclusive employment have called for comprehensive vocational systems change in which organizational change is synonymous with participant-controlled services and where meaningful reform does not depend predominantly on voluntary agency change (Kiernan et al, 1997; Mank, 1997; Wehman & Kregel, 1995; Weiner-Zivolich & Zivolich. 1995).

Wider system change has been pursued under the banner of self-determination (Nerney & Shumway, 1996) and implemented through a series of national demonstration projects that have promoted a different service participant-provider relationship. Individuals are assisted to control their own services, use independent advisors, select their own providers, determine funding allocations, and assess cost efficiencies, satisfaction, and results (Callahan, 1997; Walker, 2000b). These initiatives and related legislation, such as the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Act of 1999, appear promising, and although not devoid of potential pitfalls (O'Brien, 2000), reflect a slow but inexorable movement toward a consistent national policy of inclusive, self-determined employment. Although full agency conversion will play an integral role within this movement, it can no longer be considered sufficient. Unless larger systemic changes ensure that agency conversion is synonymous with self-determined employment services and outcomes, participants, such as some at Salt City, likely will continue to report widely disparate outcomes, and agency conversion will serve as a smokescreen for real reform.

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