Sister’s Organising – The Future for Trade Unions?

Jane Harrington

Paper presented to the Critical Management Conference, Future of Work Stream
University of Manchester, July 11 –13, 2001

Working Paper: Comments Welcome

Bristol Business School
Frenchay Campus
Coldharbour Lane
Bristol
BS16 1QY

Tel: 0117 3443478
E-Mail: jane.harrington@uwe.ac.uk
ABSTRACT

There has been much recent discussion concerning the potential for trade union renewal and growth. This paper draws on three scenarios for union renewal, presented by Martin et al (1996): a collapse of trade union activity on all spatial levels; a continuing marked unevenness in rates of decline; or alternatively, new opportunities for unionism created by the very process of economic and social restructuring. The data in this paper considers trade union women at local level and the influence of gender. It is argued here that whilst women are potentially one of the main groups for unions to attract into membership, if unions do not recognise the diversity of women’s interests then Martin et al’s third scenario – a collapse of trade union activity on all spatial levels becomes a distinct possibility.

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the future of unionisation in the UK, drawing upon empirical work conducted in the South West focusing on women union activists at local level.

Martin et al (1996) presented three possible union landscapes for the future: a collapse of trade union activity on all spatial levels; a continuing marked unevenness in rates of decline; or alternatively, new opportunities for unionism created by the very process of economic and social restructuring. During the 1990s we have seen a continuing marked unevenness in rates of decline. However, in parallel we have also seen women’s membership holding up proportionally better than men’s. This can be argued to be partly explained by shifts in the composition of employment. Job losses in the recession of the early 1980s were concentrated on manufacturing and on full-time male manual workers who traditionally had been among the core of the trade union’s membership. Employment growth in the 1980s and early 1990s was concentrated largely on industries and workplaces where trade union organisation in the past had been relatively weak. This period saw an expansion of private service sector employment and, associated with this, a continuing increase in part-time jobs for women. Since trade union membership density decline has in fact been most pronounced among trade unions traditional ‘strongholds’ - among male, manual workers in manufacturing industries - women’s proportionate share of aggregate union membership has risen. Women are now a majority of the membership of five out of the ten largest TUC affiliated unions, and make up almost 39% of total union membership (Equal Opportunities Review, 1999).

Martin et al. (1996) argued that the most likely trade union scenario for the future is a continuing marked unevenness in decline. It is possible to also suggest that their third scenario is equally likely - new opportunities for unionism created by the very process of economic and social restructuring. Indeed, union renewal strategies, drawing upon the organising model, highlight the need to attract previously under-represented groups into trade unions, of which women are one. This paper argues that if the third strategy is to become a reality and provide trade unions with a future, albeit in a different form to the one at present, then national trade union officials need to address a range of issues in relation to their women members and potential members. These include the factors that shape and influence women’s participation, and in particular the role of gender. It is also argued here that trade unions need to understand what women’s interests are. Unions at present have tended to follow two types of strategies. Firstly, the incorporation of women’s structures into unions. This is evident in the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied workers (USDAW), where since 1986, they have pursued a policy of the creation of a separate women’s structure both at national and divisional level. The second strategy has been attempts to facilitate greater involvement of women within the existing structures. This has tended to be through a
variety of positive action measures, such as reserved seats on national committees, childcare and creche facilities for meetings. There is evidence in the Banking, Insurance and Finance Union (BIFU) of these type of policies being pursued. The contention here is that if such actions are to be successful and unions are to play a role in the workplace landscape of the future they will need to be more sensitive to understanding women's interests.

Studies of women's representation by trade unions (e.g. Drake, 1920; Rowbotham, 1975) have noted how women have been marginalised within union structures, rarely reaching high levels of trade union office. To a large extent this situation persists today. A number of writers have considered barriers to women's union participation. In particular, Wertheimer and Nelson's (1975) three stage model of socio-cultural, job related and union related barriers provides a useful framework for the analysis of women's under-representation in the trade unions' hierarchies.

Other studies have attempted to understand the reasons for women's participation in trade unions. Recently there has been an increase in research publications that focus on senior women leaders and full time officers (e.g. Cockburn, 1996; Heery and Kelly, 1988,1989, Kirton and Healy, 1999, and Healy and Kirton, 2000). These studies consider the profile of the senior woman activist and question, for example, whether their style of bargaining prioritises different issues from those of male trade unionists. This has led writers such as Ledwith and Colgan (1996) to develop a typology of trade union women's consciousness.

Studies of senior women trade unionists, however, tell us little about women's local level trade union activity. Indeed, there remains a relative paucity of research conducted on women's participation at this level. The studies that do exist have tended to consider barriers to women's union participation. This study, whilst considering the barriers to women's local trade union activity, also addresses the reasons for women's participation3. Where the focus has been on women activists at local level the tendency of some of the studies has been to assume that they are a homogenous group, with a shared consciousness and set of interests as a consequence of either their sex or gender (e.g. Charles, 1986 and Cunnison and Stageman, 1993).

This paper draws on empirical data derived from Harrington (2000). The data focused on two broad issues: the factors shaping and influencing the women's participation in unions; and secondly (the focus of this paper), the influence of gender in shaping women's union participation.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research reported is drawn from two qualitative case studies. The principal case is of women activists4 in the South and West area of the Banking, Insurance and Finance Union (BIFU). The second case is of women activists in the South Wales and Western Division of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW).

The USDAW case involved interviewing all women members of the South Wales and Western women's committee. In addition eight women activists were interviewed. The divisional officer, area organiser (she was also chair of the women's committee) and divisional training officer were also interviewed. Participant observation was the critical research method employed in order to gain further insight into women's local level activism. This included attending the divisions over a period of two years, spending a week with one of
the Bristol area organisers visiting union sites, and attending three branch meetings in the South Wales and Western Division.

Most of the women in USDAW (see appendix two) worked in semi-skilled jobs, such as supermarket cashiers and machine cleaners in food processing factories. Their profile in terms of young children was more varied than the women in BIFU (see below). Some of the women had children at school, some worked night shifts to accommodate this, while others worked part-time. At the time of interviewing the Sunday trading laws were changing. This meant for most women a change in their contracts. One woman now found herself with a zero hours contract. This case was originally intended to be used as a comparative case with BIFU. However, due to access being initially secured through the Bristol area officer, there emerged political problems for further access. The internal politics of the union, which resulted in a friction between both the Bristol area officer and the divisional officer, and the women’s national officer ultimately meant that the interviews could not be extended to all women activists in the South Wales and Western Division. One of the consequences was that access to national officers was not possible. As such, many of the findings discussed focus on BIFU. However, the USDAW data does highlight some interesting contrasts.

Access for the case study of the South West area of BIFU was secured at both area and national level to try to ensure that all women who were potentially research participants could be interviewed. The initial access had been gained through the South and West area organiser; she was interviewed on three occasions. The area organiser also provided access to the South and West area council and to two branch meetings. Forty-eight women, defined as active in BIFU were contacted and invited to interview. Twenty-seven agreed to be interviewed. The majority of the interviews were held in the women’s homes. Where this was not possible they were held in their workplaces. Relevant national officers including the Deputy General Secretary (now joint General Secretary of UNIFI), the senior research officer and a research officer, and the equality officer were also interviewed. Participation at area council allowed for the research process to be explained, and to include direct observation. Two branch meetings were attended to provide further information on local level activism. The National Officers made documentary evidence available. This included BIFU research reports on part-time workers, maternity provision and employment and industrial relations in the 1990s.

The women in BIFU (see appendix one) all held white collar clerical posts and, with two exceptions, they were all employed in full-time jobs. Only two women had small children, one a single mother, the other married with step-children. The others were either single with no children, or married with no children or with grown-up children. A number of studies (e.g. Heery and Kelly, 1988, 1989 and Ledwith and Colgan, 1996) suggest that such a profile is the norm for trade union women activists. The age profile was more diverse, ranging from early twenties to late fifties. The majority, however, were women in their forties. Only one of these women worked in the recently established call centres. The rest held positions in the branch structure of banks or in insurance centres. However, some had been affected by the move towards ‘clustering’ and now worked in a devolved branch structure. Geographically they were dispersed across the South and West, from Oxford to St Ives.

GENDER AND WOMEN’S UNION PARTICIPATION
The women interviewed were asked a range of questions about their reasons for participating in trade union activity. Whilst this is discussed in more detail elsewhere (see Harrington 2000, 2001) the data does impact on the discussions in this section. In brief, there are a number of themes that dominate the responses that the women gave; the extensive use of the
term protection, the context of the two trade unions (BIFU and USDAW), and the heterogeneity of views expressed. The interview data, also considered the role and influence of gender in women’s union participation. Aspects of this data will be considered in more detail here. However, due to limitations of space it is not possible to discuss all the area’s explored. This introductory section will, therefore, highlight the areas that are not probed more deeply below, yet inform the later discussion section.

Trade unions and feminism can be viewed as an uneasy alliance. For some writers (e.g. Campbell, 1986) unions are male institutions, inaccessible for women. Others (e.g. Charles, 1986; Segal, 1987; Cockburn, 1987 and Lawrence, 1992) argue that women can and are making a difference within the structures and hierarchies of the trade unions. A number of unions have changed their structures and pursued positive action measures to better represent women members and attract potential recruits. Some studies have emphasised the role of ‘vanguard’ women in pioneering these changes (e.g. Kirton and Healy, 1999), and in presenting a role model for other women. Implicitly or explicitly feminism is identified as an influence on these women, although the meaning of the term is often poorly defined. A number of studies suggest a specific socialist feminism consciousness (e.g. Lawrence, 1992) among senior women activists and indeed among women activists more broadly (e.g. Walton, 1991). Ledwith and Colgan’s study (1996) was an attempt to move away from this universal idea, and to explore the differing ‘levels of consciousness’ of women trade unionists. However, the feminist groups in their typology remain labelled as socialist-feminist, and feminist-socialist.

Many of the above studies have focused on national union policy and senior women activists, where according to some writers, the pace of change is very much in advance of what was happening at local level. Charles (1986) distinguished explicitly between an egalitarian ideology at national level and a familial ideology that prevails locally. Cunnison and Stageman (1993) speak of the ‘culture of masculinity’ at local level. The women in the study discussed in this paper were asked about their views on feminism. Did they regard themselves as feminists? Whilst a few women do embrace the term, most are uncomfortable with some of the perceived connotations and many remain hostile to labelling themselves as feminists. This is true for the women in both BIFU and USDAW. One woman articulated the views of many:

“….Feminism – turns off many women, because the perception is burning their bras, rather than someone improving women’s lot. We should be advocating women and women’s contribution and promote them as trade unionists – as part of society on an equal basis….the feminist movement has excluded many women….” (USDAW:12:5)

Feminism was perceived to be synonymous with separatist politics and lesbianism. It has connotations for these women of ‘men hating’, being ‘butch’ and presenting women as a superior group to all others. Even in USDAW where a women’s structure does exist the term is felt to exclude many women. It is not seen as all embracing but a narrower more extreme version of equality. Many of the women were uncomfortable with the notion of differential treatment for women and union separatist policies. Ledwith and Colgan (1996) raised this as a particular problem in their study. In terms of recruitment strategies for attracting women members it is also pertinent. If we assume that women hold explicit feminist values, then interim separatist policies are not problematic. However, if we recognise that there may be a diversity of views held by women, of which some are antagonistic to notions of feminism, then strategies for recruitment need to reach and target all these different groups of women.
The women’s views on positive action were explored. The term positive action is used here to mean any union action and policy intended to encourage and attract women union members. Examples include; the use of reserved seats on national committees, creche facilities for meetings, and union negotiated enhanced maternity benefits. Charles (1986) suggests that these ideas emanate from an egalitarian ideology existing at national level, whereas Kirton and Healy (1999) argue that they are evidence of ‘transformational’ women leaders. How they are understood at local level is less clear.

In exploring the women’s views of positive action the interest here was in whether the women were aware of the policies that existed, and the importance the women attached to these policy initiatives. Having discussed their interpretations of the role that positive action can play in enhancing women’s union activity and serving women’s interests, the women were asked more specifically about reserved seats. The reason for this specific focus was to consider how their views converged or diverged from those held at national level.

In the past BIFU used reserved seats for women. However, the policy is no longer considered to be appropriate by the union executive. Since its abolition the justification presented at national level is that there is now evidence of more women on the National Executive Committee, not just the women with a reserved seat. They also feel that these women are able to discuss all union issues and are not restricted to simply focusing on women's issues. The national executive have tried other forms of positive action to try to encourage women member’s trade union activity. For example, they have been proactive in encouraging the establishment of workplace nurseries in Midland bank. They have also tried to change inappropriate venues for meetings. USDAW, in contrast, has a developed women’s committee structure. The union has attempted to consider positive action, in particular in relation to part-time workers, creche facilities and appropriate venues for meetings. USDAW has a women’s national officer (Bernadette Hillon) who is committed to a feminist agenda. This has brought with it problems, in terms of perceptions of her and her ascribed feminism, perceived by many as separatist.

Both positive action and reserved seats are seen by many women in BIFU and USDAW as a suggestion of preferential treatment for women. Cockburn (1991) and Ledwith and Colgan (1996) argued that women in trade unions remain uncomfortable with this notion. This is evident in the attitudes of women local activists in BIFU and USDAW.

The terms used to argue against reserved seats are of interest; ‘tokenism’ and ‘window dressing’ were commonly expressed. The women felt that reserved seats can disadvantage women in a number of ways. They allow the union to present a public image of a commitment to equal opportunities, yet in their view do little to alter the disadvantages that women experience in trade unions. They can disadvantage women from standing in general elections and therefore reduce their opportunities to become elected to committees. Finally, they argued that they can also marginalise women, as once elected to a reserved seat women are expected to focus on women’s issues, not general union concerns. It was evident that the women felt that reserved seats rather than serving women’s interests, disadvantaged them:

"I don’t think reserved seats is the answer. It gives men a cop out, they don’t have to worry about why women aren’t coming through any more because there’s a seat for them. I don’t want to do that, I don’t want to have this scapegoat for them to get away with it because I do very much see it as men getting away with it...." (BIFU:14:17:11)
“Men should be as aware as women are to what kind of things are needed to what we feel and how we want to move forward. I’m not totally convinced that that will happen if we are segregated...” (BIFU:14:24:13)

The women’s concerns raise issues over recruitment strategies specifically targeted at women. Whilst women as a group are clearly important for union renewal policies, many remain uncomfortable with the notion of separatism and preferential treatment. Cockburn (1995) and Ledwith and Colgan (1996) indicate that this is apparent from the studies that they conducted. This suggests that sensitivity over the management of such a strategy is crucial, if it is to work effectively.

The data considered below discusses the role of women trade unionists, encouraging and supporting other women at local level.

Women Trade Unionists: encouraging and supporting other women?
As more women enter the union hierarchies it is possible to suggest that they in turn influence other women’s activity. Whether this is the case at local level will be explored here. Kirton and Healy’s work (1999) suggests that senior women officials can act as ‘transformational leaders’.

“...They start by empathising with the needs of the membership, then become active agents in translating this empathy onto union agendas and in turn raise gender consciousness among other women”.... (Kirton and Healy:1999:10)

This explicitly argues that women act as role models for other women.

In BIFU at the time of interviewing there was a female president, Edwina Hart. She held her post for two full terms (the maximum possible) before relinquishing it to a man. Within the South and West area there was a female and a male full-time officer. In USDAW at the time of interviewing there was a national women’s officer, Bernadette Hillon, who held an explicitly feminist position. Within the South Wales and Western division there was a female divisional officer, Pat Phillips and one female area organiser. The area organiser was also the chair of the women’s divisional committee. Whilst these women were not in the majority they did have high profiles and were known to many women in both unions. However, in both unions the great majority of national full-time officials are men.

This section explores three themes: the attitude of the women interviewed towards other women as role models; how important other women had been to their own union activism; and finally, how important they felt it was to encourage other women to become active in the trade union.

The importance of role models
Wertheimer and Nelson (1975) and Lawrence (1992) suggest that women as role models are fundamental to the encouragement of other women activists. They argue that they present an acceptable image of women participating in trade union activity, diminishing the view of a masculine culture dominating. This enables us to start to examine the importance that the women in BIFU and USDAW attach to their gender in influencing their union activity. It should be noted that Lawrence’s (1992) research uses role models to mean any women who positively encouraged the women in her study to become active. Hence she argues that departmental culture can be important; for example, where women are in management positions they provide an environment of ‘acceptability’ for women to pursue similar roles. She also cites examples of women outside the workplace and the union that have been influential, such as their mothers. So for Lawrence, role models, are women who provide positive encouragement to other women.
The term *role model* here was used equally broadly. It was discussed in relation to the women’s union activity and most women interpreted it to mean other union women that had played a part in influencing their own union activity.

The BIFU women in their responses to *role models*, their potential importance and influence, can be divided into three groups. The first group felt that there had been no *role models* for them. The second group felt that *role models* could be important but have not been an influence on their own activity. The final group acknowledged the importance both for themselves and for others in the future. The significant point that stands out, however, is how few made any reference to the women in positions of power in BIFU. Many in principle felt that *role models* were important, yet they could not identify any woman in BIFU that had acted as such for them. Given the fact that BIFU had at that time the first female president and a high profile female full-time officer in the South and West area, this does raise questions as to how important *role models* actually are for these women.

For a number of women, including those who felt *role models* in principle of use, the *token* woman in a position of seniority in BIFU did not alter the unions predominately male culture and structure.

> ...." I'm sure that if everything else is right having a role model there would certainly confirm yes I can do it too because there's somebody there, but I'm not sure that having a role model there is the thing that either makes it easy or makes you believe it’s possible if it’s culturally or if it’s not".... (5:27:17)

For other women *role models* were considered gender neutral. They argued that influence came from both men and women, anyone who encouraged them, and also any person that they felt was ‘good at their job’.

> ...." If there's someone that’s good at their job then I'll admire them for what they do regardless. The same as if they're doing a crap job then they shouldn't be in that position”.... (5:18:10)

Most women did feel that other women in positions of power could only be positive. However, many women qualified this statement. For example they could not identify an individual in such a position of power.

> ...." oh yes, it’s difficult to think of somebody who has been a role model and I know it would have helped me”.... (5:25:17)

Other women felt that by the time you reached the workplace your ideas were already formed. *Role models* here are people who shape your life at an earlier stage; they influence your career direction and the subsequent positions you take. However, the actual women in senior positions in BIFU were seen as less significant.

> ...."But I think that it’s probably not another female member of staff I think it’s happened earlier than that. You go with your parent along to the bank and say there’s a lady bank manager and the idea is in your head that it isn't only men who achieve certain positions. Once you’re working for them I think that probably that it’s not going to make much difference”.... (5:16:11)

For others, though, *role models* are important for women in the workplace. One common argument was that it provided women with inspiration and encouragement. They argued that it provided evidence to women that they could also hold such positions.
One woman developed this idea of encouragement. She felt that men rarely provided support and assistance for women to progress in either their careers or union work. As such, she felt that role models were important to give women the confidence that they were as capable as men.

"yes I do because I feel that women are oppressed - repressed, I do think that men try to control women and I do think that men try and put women down....I think if you have got role models women who are actively doing things either for the cause of women generally or in a trades union context it gives you a lot of inspiration - you think well if she can do it there is nothing to stop me doing it".... (5:21:15)

Many women in BIFU argued that women support each other in a different way to men. For one woman this was expressed as the idea that women try harder. However she felt that this in turn meant that role models were therefore of less use, as you have to be ‘good’ to be a woman and achieve a position of influence. By implication that does not apply to men. For others the significance was a reflection of women in banking in the union.

"Yes yes, but then I think because the bank is so predominately female you need to have the same representation in the union so that females do feel sort of confident going to someone and saying something’s happening".... (5:22:22)

The bank is dominated by female clerical staff and men in management positions. This is not dissimilar to the positions occupied by women in BIFU. As such, for some women at local level, their experience of working with women clearly shaped their attitudes towards both the banks and BIFU. The woman quoted above also suggested that female union representatives may be an advantage to men. She felt that some men may be uncomfortable talking to another man about a sensitive issue, such as harassment. She expressed the view that women are more sympathetic and willing to listen.

"I think a man would probably feel more comfortable discussing something like that with a sympathetic woman, than a man who'd probably think oh you wimp being sexually harassed by another woman, or what are you doing to entice her like sexual harassment from another man you know. So I suppose even a man would probably feel more comfortable going to another woman".... (5:22:22)

This starts to suggest that some women do feel that women bring a different perspective to the trade union movement. Whilst it presents a positive image of women active at local level it also presents a stereotype of women as carers and supporters.

A small group of women in BIFU clearly felt that other women had influenced their union activity and acted as a role model for them.

"I do think we all need role models. I joined the union because I was encouraged to do so by a woman I worked with and she was a good role model".... (5:17:27)

"I think *** did a lot. Seeing someone who's actually working for the union and she is positive she encouraged me to do things a lot that perhaps I wouldn't have done without someone there behind me sort of saying go on do that....I don’t think there are enough, I
Wertheimer and Nelson (1975) and Lawrence (1992) argued that role models were not necessarily other women in the union hierarchy, but simply women who supported and encouraged other women. In the first of the quotations above the role model was the woman’s fellow colleague.

The final group of women recognised that they may themselves be role models. They were conscious of the fact that there remain relatively few women activists, especially as you progress up the union hierarchy. Their concern was with how other women saw them; were they a good role model? The quotation below illustrates this view. The woman interviewee’s concern lay in how others viewed her, she wanted to be seen as a normal person, so that other women did not feel that she was superwoman. In common with other women interviewed she felt that her presence in the hierarchy could act as a role model for other women, but that some women officials had the opposite effect and served to discourage other women. This she expressed as ‘becoming like a man’.

..." Yes I think they are important in that you can see other people who have got there. But I think those of us who are in a position where we could perhaps be seen as role models, have a responsibility to show that to admit that we aren’t perfect and we do have crises in our lives and we do have guilt feelings just like everybody else because there’s a danger that you get people who for one reason or another have gone into a high position and they have become just like men, and they aren’t good role models ....we’ve got to demystify that it isn’t difficult to become active in a trade union, particularly in a union like BIFU and so it’s important that we get people who are understanding and sympathetic in key roles” .... (5:23:14)

This quotation raises some important issues. Whereas very few women felt that they had been influenced by a role model, most felt role models were in principle important. The women who did acknowledge some influence by others discussed work colleagues and women outside BIFU as well as a few individual women in BIFU. In addition, the above quotation suggests that whilst women in official positions can serve as role models, they can in turn equally portray a negative image of women in trade unions. Hence, they appear to suggest that women encouraging and supporting other women is of importance but, it is not necessarily women holding positions of power. At local level there are relatively few women that the interviewees identify as being of importance in influencing their trade union activity. This may be partly due to the area that the South and West of BIFU covers. With only two full-time officers, of which one is a woman, it is hardly surprising that many women are not aware of her presence. It is, though, more significant that they do not see the president as a role model. As suggested previously, the presence of a woman within the hierarchy does not necessarily suggest that she is considered to be a role model by other women, indeed she may have the opposite effect.

Whilst the women in USDAW remained fairly sceptical about the role of the women’s committee structure, their responses to questions about role models were very different to those of the women in BIFU. They all named individual women that had supported and encouraged them. Some went as far as to talk of their admiration for certain key women. For them role models played a significant part in their activity. We should however be cautious in making direct comparisons. Most of the women interviewed in USDAW were members of the women’s committee. As such they came into direct contact with other active women frequently. This may
tell us something about the power of the women’s committee’s to influence and support other women.

In summary, the presence of women in the hierarchy is not identified by these women as being the crucial significant feature that influences their activity. They discuss the importance of support and encouragement by other women as being more influential. This is apparent in USDAW where the women’s committee structure appeared to have played a crucial role in influencing their subsequent union activity.

Women’s influence in BIFU

In addition to the specific question about role models, the women were asked whether they had been encouraged by other women to become active in BIFU. Hypothetically role models were seen as positive. However, many women argued that becoming active was an individual, personal decision that they had made independently of any one else. This is unsurprising and does not necessarily mean that they were not influenced by other women, but that attributing their own activism to someone else was a position most women were uncomfortable with.

....“I can't think of any...um, I can’t think of anybody particularly who’s influenced me, I'm very much my own person you see I like to make up my own mind”.... (6:26:9)

This raises a multi-faceted contradiction. The idea of women as role models, and of themselves as the role model is appealing in principle. Yet, for these women it is having your ‘own mind’ that appears to be crucial. They acknowledge that it is harder for women to be active in BIFU than for men. But, the idea that they have had to struggle on their own to become active remains attractive. This may tell us more about this group of women who are active participants in their trade union than potential women activists. The problem that this presents for a separate women’s structure is discussed in the discussion to this section.

A small minority of women did feel that other women had influenced their activism. At times this was women within BIFU, and for other women it was a prominent woman trade unionist from another union. Their views are illustrated below;

....”Always liked Brenda Dean, I thought she was excellent. But my sister was quite a big influence”.... (6:5:2)

....”I really thought she’s right you know she’s really strong if you get the chance to meet her I think you’ll know what I mean she um she looks like anybody’s mother sort of thing, you know she doesn’t look as you’d imagine a trade unionist to look, but she’s a really strong sort of personality woman”.... (6:22:21)

Importantly even women who acknowledged the influence and role that others had played in their activism (both men and women), still wished to be portrayed as ‘independent thinkers’. It remains a dichotomy for women in BIFU. Role models and women influencing women are attractive hypothetically. However, when applied to their own experience it detracts from their own ideas and sense of personal ambition and control. This raises problems when considering renewal strategies and practices for future recruitment of women in BIFU. The ‘struggle to achieve’ remains all powerful. Again, this of course may tell us more about this particular group of women and their attitudes than those of potential members.

Certainly the women in USDAW were more comfortable with the notion that other women had played a part in their activism. This is illustrated by some of the following comments;
....“*** is very good, she is one of the people that inspired me, because she’s gone so far”.... (2:4)

....“*** and *** have given me the confidence to carry out my shop steward roles. One they’re very approachable. If they’re not sure, they’ll say leave it with me and I’ll come back to you. They’ll give you 100% backing as well”.... (7:4)

....“*** has got it”.... (8:3)

....“*** has had an impact because she is so accessible, she’s always available”.... (9:7)

The differences between the women in BIFU and USDAW and their responses are marked. The women in USDAW have no hesitation in suggesting influential women, whereas the women in BIFU remain more cautious. They discuss the idea of role models as positive, yet remain uncomfortable with any actual influence that appears to detract from their own personal choice in becoming active.

The context of both unions is significant. The women interviewed in USDAW were part of the women’s committee structure. Although many remain uncomfortable with such a structure and its connotations of separatism, it appears to have played a role in influencing their activism. It may simply be that it has enabled them to meet more active women and gain encouragement and support. As we know already, BIFU does not have a women’s structure. The geographical area of the South and West is vast, and as such many women do not have contact with other women activists. This means that the issue of role models remains for them an idea rather than a reality. This shapes their views on women acting as role models.

Women influencing women?
An additional area for exploration in this section was the women’s attitudes towards encouraging other women. Did they encourage women more than men? The organising model of trade unionism suggests that rank and file members can be effective in renewal strategies. For this to be operationalised women at local level need to target and encourage other women to become members. Hence their attitudes to this are important.

Many women were uncomfortable with the notion of encouraging women above men. This returns to the problem of a separate agenda for women. They argued that any new member would be welcome and they did not differentiate on the grounds of gender. For them declining membership levels were the concern, they felt that you could not choose who to recruit;

....“To be honest I don’t care whether they’re black, white, yellow, female, male disabled what ever they are really if you want to become involved then anybody’s welcome, I don’t think we can be that fussy”.... (17:26:6)

....“ I think everyone, if people come to the branch and join I usually talk to them and introduce BIFU to them, I don’t think it makes any difference male or female. I think both equally need protection although it may be in different ways to an extent, but its important to everyone”.... (17:16:8,9)

At local level the main concern remains how to attract potential new members. Strategies that encourage one gender over another remain unacceptable. This is expressed by the following quote;
...." No I want to encourage everybody. I want to encourage everybody. The more members that we have the stronger we are".... (17:13:15)

Other women acknowledged that recruiting women for them was often easier. It should also be noted that many of them worked in a female dominated environment and as such most potential new members were women.

...." I find that I get on very well with women and so I do get more success I think".... (17:23:9)

Some women argued that women were more suited to the role of joint accredited officer and therefore they were more comfortable with encouraging women to become active. They viewed their role as the ‘carer’, the person who was more approachable and understood the member’s interests. This was expressed as:

...." I'd encourage anyone who's interested. I think though women are more approachable as office reps, women understand more”.... (17:3:2)

Others felt that women were less suited, and they discussed the idea that women found it more difficult to attend meetings and to become committed.

...." It's important for women to get involved because the majority are women but it's difficult to go to meetings, if you’ve got childcare it can be very difficult, also to go on courses for BIFU at weekends. It shows if you will do it that you are very committed because it means that you will sacrifice things”.... (17:11:20)

Many of these women were keen to have any support and for them the luxury of encouraging one group over another did not exist. Of the women who did agree that they encouraged women more than men, one argued this was simply due to circumstances. There were no men in her branch. Another suggested that women were more easily ‘swayed’ as they did not think as much (!) The final woman in this group recognised the difficulty in being the only active woman in her branch. She felt that the support of another woman would be invaluable.

...." I feel sometimes you know I'm non stop talking and it would be nice to have another woman say something at a meeting sometimes so that I don’t feel it's just me”.... (17:14:20)

Clearly the practice of equal opportunities remains problematic. Many women were willing to suggest that BIFU needs far more women within its structure. They recognised that at present it is not representative of the organisations within which they work. But they remain uneasy with any suggestions of how to alter this. They do not wish to be seen to be given preference to one group over another. A separatist agenda is problematical for these women.

Discussion
This section draws upon the broad theme of women supporting other women, acting as role models and actively recruiting other women into the union movement. It considers whether women influence other women’s activity at local level. Wertheimer and Nelson (1975) and Lawrence (1992) had suggested that role models were crucial for supporting women’s trade union participation, and for creating a culture of ‘acceptability’ for women trade unionists. The women studied at local level in BIFU and USDAW illustrate that for them the issue of role models is complex.

Whilst they suggest that women supporting and encouraging other women creates a positive environment, they do not feel that women in the hierarchy of the unions necessarily contribute to
this. Some women suggest that women in positions of power, emulate men and actually discourage other women from becoming active. Cockburn’s (1995) distinction between ‘form’ and ‘content’ is useful to highlight in this context. It is not enough to have a greater presence of women in trade union hierarchies; the style and changes women can bring also needs to be addressed.

Renewal strategies that have focused on women as a special group to attract into union membership suggest that women recruiting women is an effective practice. However, the women in BIFU suggest that this needs to be treated cautiously. Many discussed the principle of role models as positive and recognised the greater problems that women have in becoming active trade unionists. Yet they were uncomfortable with any suggestion that they had not personally chosen to be active. The idea of a struggle was one that was attractive to a number of women. This may tell us more about this group of women than potential new recruits. However, it does suggest that recruitment policies need to be sensitive to the image of personal achievement and choice.

The women in USDAW indicate the power and impact of a women’s committee structure. They freely acknowledge other women’s support and encouragement as contributing to their union activism. However, separate women’s structures in trade unions are difficult to instigate. Many women remain uncomfortable with the notion that women as a group should receive differential treatment from the rest of the membership. This was highlighted in the section, women influencing women, where many women raised the concerns that they had about recruiting and encouraging women more than men. This is a paradox. Separate women’s structures do appear to encourage and support women to become and to remain activists, yet the ideology remains unacceptable to many women.

Finally, we also see from these data a discussion of women as officials. For some, women are more suited to union roles as they are more approachable and understanding than men. However, other women feel that due to domestic constraints many women find it more difficult than men to attend union meetings and appear committed. This raises the contradictions that women face in becoming active and equally their attitudes towards women union activists.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This section (and the more detailed discussion of the data found in Harrington, 2000) indicate that there are common themes for women in trade unions at local level. These are:

- The issue of separate agendas for women
- The use of the term protection
- The diversity of views
- The context (particularly industrial and job related) in which the women operate
- The difficulties in addressing equal opportunities through the union structure
- The significance of barriers to participation.

To group these themes into one ideological position (e.g. Charles, 1986) is problematic due to the diversity of views expressed. It is equally difficult to locate these women in a typology as, for example, that developed by Ledwith and Colgan (1996) from their study of ‘senior’ women union leaders. Due to the paucity of studies on women trade unionists at local level the tendency has been to treat their attitudes and behaviour as synonymous with women located higher up the union hierarchy. The present study suggests that these existing typologies are inadequate for understanding women’s union activity locally.
Ledwith and Colgan (1996) present their typology as a trajectory, drawing on Marshall’s work (1984) which focused on women managers. A trajectory infers both superiority of one position over another and secondly that the women are moving in one direction towards a final level. Ledwith and Colgan (1996:25) argued in relation to their typology that as you moved along the trajectory to ‘women in transition’, you focused on a group of women with an awakening consciousness.

In concluding the present study the women are grouped into a new typology. However, there is no suggestion that a trajectory exists or equally that one position is superior to another. The typology locates the different attitudes portrayed at local level, and does not impose a preference by the writer on these attitudes. The research has identified four groups; the individualist, the collectivist, the carer and finally the equal rights representative.

The four groups are ideal types. A term used by Weber to refer to the construction of certain elements of reality into a logically precise conception. He did not intend it to mean exemplary, or to be seen as representative of an ideal way of life (Gerth and Wright Mills, 1991:57). Critics of such typologies suggest that by singling out features that are deemed to be most typical or characteristic, means that those that are atypical or eccentric are played down (Parkin, 1982:35). Indeed, not all the women in this study exhibit all the characteristics of the group in which they could be located. They do however suggest some broad groupings.

Women’s interests may be different for each individual woman, and union policies have necessarily to be sensitive to this. For the majority of the women at local level separatist politics remain divisive and alienating. Even in USDAW, where a separatist structure is in place, many women remain uncomfortable with the ideology of separatism.

The groupings developed here focus on the women in BIFU. Where they are relevant to the women in USDAW this is highlighted in the discussion of that group. It should though be noted that the USDAW women were not representative of active members at local level and so their location in the typology is diminished in its significance. Indeed, the first group the individualist was not evident in USDAW, suggesting as has previously been discussed that the context of unions at local level informs and shapes the women’s subsequent participation. Each group is considered below, highlighting the dominant characteristics.

The individualist

In this group women in BIFU who utilise the insurance analogy as protection for themselves and their jobs are located. Some of these women remain in both BIFU and their staff association. They discuss their membership in terms of ‘getting the best deal’, and suggest that their attachment to BIFU is a limited engagement, it is simply an insurance policy that might help to safe guard their own job.

Their prior socialisation is likely to have been in a family with anti-trade union views or else one where trade unions and politics were rarely discussed. They hold conservative views, and in some cases feel that the Conservative government’s ‘curbing of trade union power’ was positive. Some women argued that they would not have become trade union members in the past.

The role that they hold in BIFU remains that of limited commitment. They open the post, they publicise union courses and events and may conduct health and safety checks. They do not have a desire to become more active and as such do not seek to move upwards through
the union hierarchy. This group argued that being an active participant caused no conflict between work and domestic commitments as their union activity took up very little time.

They do not support any notion of separatist politics, and reject ideas of feminism, positive action and role models for women. For this group there is no necessity for such policies. Women’s low levels of activism are blamed on women themselves, they acknowledge material constraints on women’s lives, but many feel that apathy is the main issue. As one woman argued “there is no problem with women becoming involved, they are just not prepared to put themselves forward”.

They have a limited understanding of national level structures and policy. Some women in this group did not know that they had a woman president. This is not surprising as their engagement with BIFU remains limited.

A minority of women in BIFU can be identified as being located in this group. However, none of the women in USDAW could be located here. This is not surprising as all the women interviewed in USDAW were members of the divisional women’s committee. By agreeing to sit on that committee they had already demonstrated an engagement with issues in USDAW that moved beyond that illustrated by the individual group. However, it may also tell us something about the importance of context. The women in USDAW regarded unionism as “the natural thing to do”. They argued that you went to work and you joined the appropriate union. As already discussed, they were predominately located in South Wales where there is a history of traditional union organisation. Their attitudes may be a reflection of this. They may also be an indication of the inherent conservatism in much of the banking, insurance and finance sector, where attitudes of individualism have been able to flourish. If this is the case the insurance analogy is testimony of BIFU’s success in organising a particular group of members.

The majority of individualists were clerical workers in bank branches. They tended to be aged 31 - 45 years and come from a family that was anti trade union. Their union activity was generally limited to holding the post of joint accredited office representative with possible additional responsibility for health and safety. The majority of women individualists had either no children or grown-up children. Their trade union activity was unlikely to impact on their job or home life, most of it was conducted during office hours. As such for most of these women their union activity involved minimal commitment and they did not aspire to greater union involvement.

A typical woman in this group is Doreen (see appendix one). Doreen works in the front office of a bank branch in the position of a clerical officer. She is in her early forties, and holds the role of joint accredited office representative in BIFU. She has two children, one is at secondary school, the other has finished formal education. She opens the mail from BIFU and puts relevant notices on the notice board. Doreen feels that her role in BIFU is limited to the circulation of information. She willingly undertakes this role, but does not feel that she would want to be involved in any additional union activity. Her attachment to unionism is ambiguous. She argues that in the past unions had too much power and influence in the workplace, but now due to the changes occurring within her sector she feels that the union is important to protect her job. The analogy of BIFU as an insurance, she suggests, means protection of her own job in the future.
The collectivist
This group can be seen to replicate a more traditional conception of the ‘shop steward’. The women’s use of the term protection relates to protection for the workforce as a whole. They are dismissive of members who join the staff associations, which they fear weaken the collective power of BIFU. They see themselves as protecting their members in a ‘difficult’ climate, with job insecurity and restructuring dominating their agenda.

It is likely that this group came from a family that was pro-trade unions, or at least discussed political issues. Many of the women in this group talk about the changes in attitudes towards trade unions over the last 20 years in negative terms. They fear that it has contributed to membership decline and made it more difficult to recruit new members, particularly the young.

As with the last group they remain uncomfortable with notions of separatism. Their view of trade unions is that they are there for all their members and therefore special treatment for one group over and above the others is unacceptable. This is not to suggest that they do not feel that discrimination and disadvantage for women exists. However, they argue that this is a problem of society and in some cases workplace practice. BIFU in their view is ‘doing a good job in a difficult climate’. They highlight policies that BIFU has put in place for women, such as changing the venues of meetings away from pubs, and providing creches. The women argue that there is little else that can be done. The focus of their activity is to protect all their members and as such their engagement with issues of gender remains limited.

They have a greater awareness of national policy than the previous group. This tends however only to be significant when they have had to represent a member. For example, many of the women in BIFU discussed the importance that the union has played in overcoming sexual harassment. Yet only women who had been trained as sexual harassment officers, or else had represented a woman who had experienced sexual harassment, were aware of their existence.

They do in principle support ideas of role models but not women role models. They use it in a more general sense to suggest that any member who supports and encourages another member either to join or become active is a positive influence on trade unionism. As such some of these women are happy to view themselves as role models, to provide a positive image of trade unionism to all members.

This group was clearly evident in BIFU, many women felt uncomfortable with separatism and any notion of preferential treatment. To them issues of gender were not the dominant problem that confronted members and as such it was treated as a less central consideration. A few women in USDAW could be located here, although again due to their representation on the women’s committee it was unusual for them not to focus on issues affecting women in USDAW. Women’s committees were seen as resolving some of the problems of representation.

Typically collectivists in BIFU were women clerical workers in bank branches where changes in the branch structures and proposals for future change had made their positions more vulnerable. They held the role in BIFU of joint accredited office representative, and many of these women had extended their activity to take on a role such as branch membership secretary or to become a member of area council. Most of these women had worked in the banking sector for many years and were over the age of 46 years. If they had children, they were now grown up. In the main
their union work was more extensive than the previous group of individualists. Most of their fathers had been union members, and their families pro trade unionism. The main issue that they focused on was protecting themselves and their fellow workers from the current changes occurring in the banks.

A typical woman in this group is Matilda (see appendix one). Matilda is in her early fifties. She has been employed by the same bank all her working life, and is now a clerical supervisor at head office. Her union roles are extensive, taking her out of the workplace for a number of days a month. They include that of branch membership secretary, area council member, and membership on a number of national committees. She has no children, and a partner who is committed to her union activity. Matilda argued that all workers needed protecting in the present environment and women should not be treated as a special case.

**The carer**

This group of women has many similarities with the group labelled the collectivist. They utilise the insurance analogy as protection in a collective sense, protecting the workforce. However, they see their role as pivotal to this, and discuss their participation in terms of helping and supporting others. They argue that as women they are more suited to the role of joint accredited office representative than men. This they express by saying that women are more understanding, they are more willing to listen. They view men and women as bringing different skills to the workplace. Implicit within their argument is that, due to their domestic arrangements as wives and mothers, women are often more able and more 'suited' to helping others. Gender and their perception of the differences existing between men and women are the significant factor for this group.

It is more difficult to suggest what their prior socialisation was likely to have been. Some women in this group talk about the antagonism that they face regarding their union role from their husbands. One woman states that her husband regards the fact that she holds a position in a union as an 'embarrassing joke'. Another talks of the jealousy that her role invokes from her husband. They remain however committed to supporting and helping others.

As with the previous groups of women, they remain uncomfortable with notions of separatism. They recognise the barriers to participation that confront other women and discuss the difficulties of combining childcare, in particular, with union activities. However, they are unsure as to how the union can tackle this issue. For them it is a problem for society, women’s role in society is reproduced in the workplace. We can argue that these women reproduce that role in the union, as they see themselves as the carers of the workforce.

These women have a mixed knowledge of union policy. For some they have become active beyond local level and engage in many of the current debates. However, many still remain outside the hierarchy and as such only demonstrate a limited knowledge of national policy and practice.

Their engagement with trade union activity is bound with their gender identity. Being a woman and supporting, encouraging and helping others is a ‘natural thing to do’ according to this group of women. This group was evident in both USDAW and BIFU. They are in many ways similar to the collectivist. However, the significant difference is the extent to which they reproduce their gendered domestic role within the union.
Carers tended to be women over 46 years of age, who had returned to the workforce after a period out of paid employment bringing up children. They tended to work for either insurance companies or in bank branches, employed in clerical posts. In general they expressed the view that the three roles of work, home and union were incompatible. As such, their union activity did not begin until their children had grown up. These ideas tended to pervade their union activity, with their focus being on the protection and support of others. Many saw themselves as the carers of the workforce and did not wish to become active beyond that of joint accredited office representative. Their husbands tended to tolerate their union work as long as it did not impact on their domestic commitments. These women were uncomfortable with notions of separatism for women.

A typical woman in this group is Violet (see appendix one). Violet is in her late forties and works in the back office of a bank branch as a clerical officer. She holds the role of joint accredited office representative in BIFU, and also undertakes regular health and safety checks of three bank branches. Violet has one child who is now grown-up. Her husband does not support her union work, and gets jealous if male colleagues ring her for advice at home. As such, she tries to conduct all her union work in office hours. She is committed to helping and supporting individuals and suggests that she is the ‘mother’ of the workplace. She is particularly concerned that many young women, due to financial constraints, have to take paid employment whilst they have young children.

The equal rights representative
For this group of women also, the insurance analogy is used in a collective sense, protecting the workforce. It is however also extended to suggest that protection may mean certain groups need specific support, in this case women. They argue that all members need protecting in the workplace, and yet they also suggest that women have particular disadvantages that need to be addressed.

Their attitude to separatism is ambivalent. Whilst they suggest that role models, positive action and equal opportunities are important, they remain uncomfortable with separate structures for women. Their key argument is that often these serve to disadvantage women, as they remove women’s issues from the general agenda. Equally they feel that some women can become targeted with only being interested in women’s issues and this negates men from responsibility to address such issues, and the women from addressing broader union concerns. Even in USDAW, where such a structure for women does exist, these attitudes are evident. Many of the women in USDAW, whilst arguing for equal opportunities, are uneasy with the agenda of separatism that they feel emanates from the women’s national officer.

Discrimination is a key issue for these women. They are the only group to suggest that the unions may have a responsibility to address gender inequality within their structures and to play a pro-active role in addressing such issues within the workplace. Many of these women argue that the image of the trade union as male dominated remains and that the policies that they have are ineffective. For example, they refer to positive action measures as ‘window dressing’.

Their socialisation prior to joining and participating, like that of the carers group is less obvious. Some of the women came from families where a tradition of trade unionism was dominant. For many women their mothers did not work and where they did they usually held
part-time jobs after their children had reached school age. We could argue that this may have influenced and shaped their later beliefs regarding gender discrimination.

Their engagement with the union is broad. Whilst they are committed to equal opportunities for women, this is not their only concern. They are also aware of the context in which they are active and are concerned about the changes in the banking, finance and insurance industry. As such they exhibit an awareness of gender related issues but also a frustration with their situation. They do not have specific strategies for change, but are able to articulate the problem well.

*Equal Rights Representatives* tended to be under 30 years of age, working in a clerical post in an insurance company or bank. They frequently expressed frustration with their jobs, which appeared to offer limited opportunities for progression. Many of these women held a variety of roles in BIFU such as branch membership secretary, member of area council and some had been elected to a national executive committee position. Many of these women came from families where their mothers did not have paid employment, and discussed their need to be financially independent, unlike their mothers. Most of these women were in favour of positive action but felt that BIFU and their employer simply paid ‘lip service’ to such measures. They tended to argue that women needed special treatment due to the particular disadvantages that they faced in the workplace. However, their commitment still remained with all union members and as such they were generally uncomfortable with the notion of separate union structures for women.

A typical woman *Equal Rights Representative* was Karen (see appendix one). Karen was in her late twenties, single with no children. She worked as a clerical officer in an insurance company, and held a range of roles in BIFU. These included joint accredited office representative and area council member. Karen talked about the need for women to be financially independent and was concerned that her present employment held limited opportunities for career progression in the future. She did not feel that women’s structures in BIFU were necessary, as she argued that women need to be incorporated more effectively into the existing structures. However, she did support positive action and was cynical of both BIFU and her employer’s current attempts, which she argued were simply ‘window dressing’. She was concerned about job insecurity for all union members in her sector, but was committed to some measures directed at women members.

These ideal type groups illustrate the diversity of attitudes and behaviour towards trade unions by women in BIFU in the South and West area. They also demonstrate the significance of context when trying to understand why women participate in local activity in trade unions.

In conclusion, family, location, job role and industrial sector all appear to be of relevance in women’s participation at local level. The four groups discussed above highlight some commonalities of women’s local level union activism. However, they also suggest that union renewal policies need to be sensitive to the differences between women, when trying to recruit women as a particular group. If we return to Martin *et al’s* (1996) union landscapes of the future, it is possible to argue that the potential for the third scenario is evident – new opportunities for unionism created by the very process of economic and social restructuring. However, the challenge to trade unions is that for this to become a reality they need to recognise that the treatment of women as a homogeneous group neglects the richness and
diversity of attitudes and interests that women bring into the trade union movement. The implication for renewal policies targeting women members is that if they are to be successful they will need to be sensitive to the diversity of attitudes that shape and influence women’s local level union activity. Otherwise, they may potentially encourage one group of women to become trade unionists at the expense of another group. The bleakest scenario is that potentially, if unions fail to attract ‘non-traditional’ union members then we will see Martin et al’s (1996) first scenario become a reality - a collapse of trade union activity on all spatial levels.

ENDNOTES

1 Union renewal strategies can be broadly classified as dividing between organising and servicing models (Blyton and Turnbull, 1998). Implicit with the servicing model debate is the focus on collective rationales for joining (Snapper, 1991 and Waddington and Whitson, 1997) verses the individualistic model (Bassett and Cave, 1993). The organising model locates women as one group of rank and file members to attract into membership and is of use to discuss within the context of women’s future role in trade union activity.

2 Cockburn (1995) suggests a useful distinction between union strategies which facilitate the representation for women ‘as individuals in a sex category’ and those which encourage the representation of women as ‘an oppressed social group’. According to Cockburn women are treated as individual in a sex category when it is their biological (female) status which distinguishes them from other members - such as the reservation of seats for women on union lay structures, the provision of creche facilities for union meetings. Women are treated as an oppressed social group when their status within society distinguishes them from other members - such as the establishment of women only committees in which women consider and promote issues of specific concern to women members.

3 Lawrence (1992) argued that whilst research on women trade unionists has tended to focus on barriers to participation, research on male trade unionists has tended to focus on reasons for participation. The problem that she has with such an emphasis is that in Lawrence’s view the removal of obstacles or barriers to participation does not in itself provide any positive reasons for participation.

4 Activist is used in this paper to mean holding a position from Joint accredited office representative upwards. They can be described as formally participating (Barling et al., 1992), as they were all office holders. Alternatively using Klandermans’ definition (1986), they could be described as being both administrative and direct participants in decision making. Some also personally participated. They were all active in the sense that they held office and all participated at local level. Some also held area and national positions. This was a definition agreed by both USDAW and BIFU. It was also a definition that the women interviewed could relate to.

5 The interviews were conducted between 1990 – 1994. Where possible the interviews were taped.

6 Both Wertheimer and Nelson (1975) and Lawrence (1992) discuss the importance of role models for women in trade unions. This they use to mean women occupying senior positions in trade unions, encouraging other women to advance in their trade union career. Lawrence (1992:93) also suggests that where women are present as office-holders they create the impression of acceptability, removing the image of an all male organisation. It is argued that they provide explicit encouragement to other women, but also the very fact that they are in these positions provides implicit encouragement.

7 Cockburn (1995) argued that the pursuit of women’s interests is about form and content. Form related to women’s increased access in decision making. Content related to policies that address the issues that bear on women. For Cockburn the difference lay in the representation of women. Women elected either through proportionality or through general elections, have a constituency of men and women. There is no obligation for them to speak for their sex. Whereas women elected from within the women’s structures are selected by the constituency of women only and will be expected to represent them.
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APPENDIX ONE
Women Interviewees* - BIFU

* The names have been changed to protect the women’s anonymity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAMES</th>
<th>UNION ROLE</th>
<th>AGE*</th>
<th>WORKPLACE LOCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doreen</td>
<td>Joint Accredited Office Representative</td>
<td>31 - 45</td>
<td>Clerical Worker - Bank (Branch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>Joint Accredited Office Representative/ Branch Secretary</td>
<td>31 - 45</td>
<td>Clerical Worker - Bank (Branch)</td>
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<td>Moreen</td>
<td>Joint Accredited Office Representative/ Publicity Officer South and West Area Council</td>
<td>31 - 45</td>
<td>Clerical Worker - Bank (Branch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Joint Accredited Office Representative</td>
<td>31 - 45</td>
<td>Clerical Worker - Bank (Branch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>Joint Accredited Office Representative/ Health and Safety Representative</td>
<td>31 - 45</td>
<td>Secretary to Bank Manager (Branch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>31 - 45</td>
<td>Section Supervisor - Insurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>Joint Accredited Office Representative/ Branch Membership Secretary</td>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>Clerical Worker - Bank (Branch)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Michelle</td>
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<td>Under 30</td>
<td>Clerical Staff - Bank (Head Office)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>Joint Accredited Office Representative/ Area Council Member</td>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>Clerical Staff - Insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judith</td>
<td>Joint Accredited Office Representative/ Area Council Member</td>
<td>31 - 45</td>
<td>Computer Analyst - Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheila</td>
<td>Branch Secretary/ Branch Membership Officer ( had held role as a Seconded Representative)</td>
<td>Over 46</td>
<td>Senior Clerical Worker - Bank (Branch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estelle</td>
<td>Joint Accredited Office Representative</td>
<td>Over 46</td>
<td>Customer Service Officer - Bank (Branch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Age Range</td>
<td>Department</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Violet</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Rachel</td>
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<td>Clerical Supervisor - Insurance</td>
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<td>Sally</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penny</td>
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<td>Over 46</td>
<td>Securities Officer - Bank (Branch)</td>
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<td>Samantha</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Joint Accredited Office Representative</td>
<td>31 - 45</td>
<td>Clerical Worker - Bank (Branch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Joint Accredited Office Representative</td>
<td>31 - 45</td>
<td>Clerical Worker Bank (Branch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>Joint Accredited Office Representative/ Branch Treasurer</td>
<td>31 - 45</td>
<td>Clerical Supervisor - Insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl</td>
<td>Joint Accredited Office Representative/ Health and Safety Representative</td>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>Clerical Worker - Bank (Branch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>Joint Accredited Office Representative</td>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>Clerical Worker - Bank (Call Centre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>Joint Accredited Office Representative/ Branch Secretary/ Delegate to National Committee</td>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>Clerical Supervisor - Insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>Joint Accredited Office Representative/ Area Council Member</td>
<td>31 - 45</td>
<td>Computer Specialist - Bank (Computer Section)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matilda</td>
<td>Branch Membership Secretary/ Area Council Member/ National Executive Council Member</td>
<td>Over 46</td>
<td>Clerical Supervisor - Bank (Head Office)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The ages have been banded into three categories; under 30, 31-45, and over 46 years.

APPENDIX TWO
Women Interviewees* - USDAW

* The names have been changed to protect the women’s anonymity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>UNION ROLE</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>WORKPLACE LOCATION</th>
<th>WOMEN COMMITTEE MEMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pamela</td>
<td>Shop Steward/ Branch Secretary</td>
<td>Over 46</td>
<td>Part Time Shop Assistant</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>Shop Steward</td>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>Retail Assistant</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judith</td>
<td>Shop Steward/ Branch Secretary/ Chair of</td>
<td>31 - 45</td>
<td>Retail Assistant</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Division of Shop Stewards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>Divisional Councillor/ Chair Local Branch/</td>
<td>Over 46</td>
<td>Part Time Shop Assistant</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political Committee Member (Local and National)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teresa</td>
<td>Shop Steward</td>
<td>31 - 35</td>
<td>Part Time Shop Assistant</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Shop Steward</td>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>Personal Assistant to</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Store Manager</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhulah</td>
<td>Shop Steward/ Vice Chair of Local Branch</td>
<td>Over 46</td>
<td>Part Time Retail Work</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ursula</td>
<td>Shop Steward</td>
<td>31 -45</td>
<td>Part Time Barmaid</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geraldine</td>
<td>Shop Steward/ Branch Chair</td>
<td>31 - 45</td>
<td>Night Shift Food Process worker</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Age Group</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnes</td>
<td>Shop Steward/Health and Safety Officer/Wages Council</td>
<td>Over 46</td>
<td>Retail - Cashier</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Shop Steward/President of Branch</td>
<td>Over 46</td>
<td>Retail - Cook</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>Shop Steward</td>
<td>Over 46</td>
<td>Retail - Cashier</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judith</td>
<td>Shop Steward/Branch Secretary/Consultative Committee Member</td>
<td>Over 46</td>
<td>Retail Assistant</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>Shop Steward</td>
<td>31 - 45</td>
<td>Part Time Retail</td>
<td>Receptionist</td>
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</tbody>
</table>