1 Tackling gender, diversity and trade union democracy

A worldwide project?

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Introduction

This is a book about moves towards new forms of trade union democracy – initially aimed at addressing the gender democratic deficit, although as workforces and union memberships across the world become increasingly diverse, so more demands are placed on unions to deliver on new, inclusive diversity and equality agendas.

In the modern world, the developed world, or the first world, in newly industrialising countries, and in formal labour markets in developing countries, trade unions are the main, established sites of collective solidarity in the search for improved terms and conditions of work and employment protection. However, increasingly these institutions of traditional, male, working-class, blue-collar trade unionism are in crisis. In the developing world there is particular anxiety about the capabilities and the future of the trade union movement (Thomas 1995). Globalisation and restructuring have changed the landscape of work and workforces both within and across countries and continents, and trade union membership has been in free fall in many countries as established constituencies have disappeared. At the same time groups organised around ethnicity and race are reshaping societies, upsetting old assumptions and challenging established systems of power (Cornell and Hartmann 1998). Challenges from young, lesbian and gay and disabled workers are also questioning the status quo. Trade unions have been unable, unwilling, and slow to recognise and exploit the membership potential of these new workforces. Primary among these are women, who by the start of the twenty-first century make up half of the global workforce and are diverse in terms for example of class, race, ethnicity, age and sexuality. Women workers are increasingly seen as the saviour of trade unionism. Yet women are only 1 per cent of trade union governing bodies worldwide (ILO/ICFTU 1999).

Dissatisfied with this situation, and nowadays in a better position of numerical strength, demands from women and minority groups for visibility and voice have been gathering momentum. Since the 1960s and second wave feminism, it has been women who have led the challenge to traditional, male trade union government. In addition the US civil rights and the South African anti-apartheid movements, and subsequently the lesbian and gay and disability movements have ensured that other oppressed groups, principally minority ethnic and racial groups, lesbian and gay

members, and disabled members have also been demanding their places and voices in institutions of organised labour.

Academic subjects have also been transformed by feminist contributions, and in many countries academic life has in large part experienced a paradigm shift as a result (Evans 1997: 46). We agree with Anne Forrest (1993), Barbara Pocock (2000) and Judy Wajcman (2000), however, that in the field of industrial relations, although feminism has reinvigorated research and extended the traditional scope of inquiry, the white masculine tradition has meant an over concentration on the institutions and structures of industrial relations and a neglect of the social processes which gender organisational logic, culture and structure. The increasing integration of gender, race, disability, lesbian and gay politics and analysis into the discipline, plus critical contributions from wider social movements and the growth of masculinity studies is central to extending analytical perspectives, scrutinising and challenging traditional narratives and discourses, and refocusing the epistemology; Attempting to draw on these developments in order to bring together the theory and practice of industrial relations and the study of gender, race, sexuality and disability has become a project for many of us who work in the field.

Aims

In this book we aim to do three things. First we want to bring together debates and developments about women, gender and diversity in trade unions in order to develop an international perspective, or perspectives, on the reshaping of trade union democracy.

Second, using empirical studies from a range of countries and cultures we hope to identify and assess structural and cultural developments in trade unions as they respond to new labour market conditions and challenges to traditional forms of unionism from increasingly diverse agendas among the membership.

The third aim is to offer a site for the voice of gendered and diversified trade union activism. To do this we present where possible, the social processes of debate, challenge and change, the dynamics of gender and diversity in union politics through the lenses and voices of activists themselves.

Rather than attempt a strictly comparative approach, our method in this first chapter is to identify common themes and issues across the cases studies, and to explore the differences and similarities between them. Models of change are never wholly transferable across cultures and industrial relations systems, but there is plenty of room for cross-cultural adaptation and the borrowing of ideas and innovative practice.

Organisation of the book

We start with the global questions. Linda Briskin's chapter provides an account of the equity project in Canadian unions; confronting the challenge of restructuring and globalisation. She revisits key strategies used by Canadian women and assesses

their relevance to building resistance to the forces of globalisation and restructuring. Rianne Mahon also situates her analysis within the global paradigm. She discusses how the impact of global capital has weakened the corporate state in Sweden, the tensions between the male dominated 'export sector' and the female dominated services sector and what effects this is having on class and gender relations in the main blue-collar union the LO. Both these chapters also explore the union relations of gender and race. The fourth chapter which is framed by globalisation is by Patrica Todd and Mhinder Bhopal. They examine how the recent rapid economic development of Malaysia has impacted on labour relations of ethnicity, race and gender, especially since much of the expansion was reliant on female labour in the low-skill, low-wage electronics based export sector. The chapter from India follows. In writing of the complex and fragmented relations of gender, caste and religion, Rohini Hensman has adopted both a global outlook, and a discussion based on six case studies of women's relationship with trade unions in both the formal employment sector and the informal sector — where women dominate.

The next group of chapters come from Europe. Bianca Beccalli and Guglielmo Meardi trace women's relationship with their unions in Italy since 1945, and since, as they say, there is a shortage of gender analysis in Italian industrial relations, this is a welcome contribution. They draw on case study research about union gender policy in Milan with Italy's two largest unions, the CGIL and the CISL, and also look at how the unions have responded to increased immigration. In the following chapter, Sigrid Koch-Baumgarten asks whether the German trade union model has yet changed from homogeneity to heterogeneity. She surveys the recent history of women in German unions in the light of reunification and also with the increasing presence of migrant workers. Fiona Colgan and Sue Ledwith present findings from their detailed research with women in the UK print union The Graphical Paper and Media Union (GPMU), and women, black, lesbian and gay and disabled self-organised groups in the public service union UNISON. As UK unions have responded to membership decline through merger, these groups have seen opportunities to tackle the democratic deficit in UK unions through forms of semi-autonomous organising, or self-organisation. Also from the UK, Geraldine Healy and Gill Kirton consider how ideology and solidarity among professional teachers in the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and highly qualified women trade union activists in the Manufacturing, Science and Finance union MSF are both different and similar to that of women within the union hierarchy and structures.

Malehoko Tshoaedi explores gender democracy in the new South Africa. Her findings are of disappointment. Whereas women and men worked side by side when forming and developing their unions under apartheid, freedom and political power has resulted in the reassertion of male hegemony. Tshoaedi discusses the significance of gender processes and politics within the trade union movement of the new South Africa.

In the USA, where trade union membership has haemorrhaged, Dorothy Sue Cobble and Monica Bielski Michal look at how after decades of pushing for cultural and institutional change in US labour unions, the impact of women's efforts is

increasingly being felt. They argue for a positive gender partnership in the remaking of American unions and a reframing of bargaining issues towards more inclusive and collaborative projects encompassing diversity based on class, gender, race, and sexuality. The following chapter by Gerald Hunt is an account of the progress made in Canada by unions in supporting and taking forward lesbian and gay rights. He shows how it has been possible to build lesbian and gay activism by making alliances with and building on the example of women's union organising which arose through the women's movement of the 1970s. He highlights the subsequent contribution of the labour movement to campaigning to help achieve legal and constitutional gains on lesbian and gay rights.

The two final chapters are both from Australia. From complementary perspectives they each address and analyse the sexual politics and hegemonic masculinity which underpin gender relations in trade unions. Suzanne Franzway puts the sex as well as the gender back into the trade union debate as she examines some of the ways that women unionists are confronted by dilemmas of sexual politics, and how they handle the pleasures and dangers of gaining and exercising power. Claire Williams explores masculinity and sexuality through the voices of trade union men who articulate gay and green (environmental) discourses that challenge taken-for-granted masculine norms in the timber, meat and health sectors. She provides new insights into the structuring of gender and sexual politics in trade union life.

Trade union democracy, gender and diversity

Trade unions are political organisations whereby representative democracy is seen to be achieved through elections of leaders, checked by balances between the powers of elected executives and delegates and appointed officers which aim to ensure that the interests of all the members are met. In this regard, democracy implies equality. The extent to which trade unions are democratic in practice has been a source of much debate within the industrial relations tradition. This has focused on the key concerns of the relationship between representative and participative democracy, and the balance of power between members and their officials and whose power prevails (Fosh and Heery 1990). Here, Michels' 'iron law of oligarchy' is often invoked to show how leaders in political organisations acquire and retain a relative influence which is then used against the interests of the membership as the leadership seeks to protect its position of privilege. Writers have sought to identify countervailing tendencies, especially through forms of participatory democracy whereby challenges are mounted by 'outsider' groups and factions, rank and file grassroots activism, and shop stewards' movements (Lipset et al. 1956; Hyman 1975; Hemingway 1979; Fairbrother 1984). In discussing these balances of interest within unions, traditional analysis has been slow to address those of gender or race, or other membership diversities even though as Hyman (1994, 1996) has pointed out, most unions have 'typically been biased in the composition of their officials and activists towards relatively high-status, male, native-born, full-time employees' (1994: 121). 'The debate thus far has been informed by a class-based analysis and subsequent critiques from feminist and race studies. This book seeks to draw on the growing

number of studies which consider the interplay between class, gender and race. This is now supplemented by the research concerning sexuality, democracy and equal rights (Herman 1994; Rayside 1998; Rahman 2000) and lesbian and gay activism within trade unions (Colgan 1999a; Hunt 1999; Humphrey 2000). The other developing area of research concerns the links between the wider disability movement and trade unions (Campbell and Oliver 1996; Hales 1996; Humphrey 1998). 'The book is thus titled Gender, Diversity and Trade Unions. We acknowledge that the term 'diversity' has acquired 'political baggage' but in deciding to use it in this book we follow Noon and Ogbonna (2001) in reclaiming diversity purely as a 'neutral descriptor of variation within the workplace'. The contributors have interpreted 'diversity' as appropriate given the ways in which the term is understood and addressed currently by the labour organisations studied within each chapter.

Class

'The unifying ideology of trade unionism has been based on the notion of class solidarity. However although the tendency has been for class to be articulated within a Marxist analysis of antagonistic relations between two main opposing classes, labour and capital, in both theory and practice, as it suits, class becomes both fixed and flexible; what Hyman has referred to as the 'incoherence of class' (2001: 39). In traditional trade union analysis, class has been symbolised by the male working-class, blue-collar worker. In reality this has never been a homogeneous group, exemplified instead by a hierarchy of labour with craft workers (exclusively male) at the top and the unskilled (mixed sex) at the bottom. In the early period of industrialisation each was organised into different unions, focused on their own sectional interests, and this formulation has endured. As Hyman observes, 'competitive sectionalism has most commonly been the hallmark of trade union action' (2001: 31). As a result of restructuring, professional and white-collar sectors are the most recent interest group to emerge – a sector where women dominate. Recognising the salience of the proletarianisation and embourgeoisement debates, these are significant developments for trade union relations of gender and class. Healy and Kirton's chapter illustrates how among professional and highly qualified trade union women activists, an individual instrumental career orientation can coexist with a commitment to both professional and trade union values of collective solidarity. Moreover, within the superordinate goal of gender equity they complementary enhances union solidarity.

As feminist and diversity studies and analysis develop, it becomes clearer how what Hyman (2001: 38) describes as the 'paradox of collective organisation that simultaneously unites and divides workers' is no longer solely about concepts of class. Colgan and Ledwith suggest in their chapter that the question is not whether class or gender or race should be given priority, 'but whether it will be finally understood that workers come in all sizes and shapes, and there is no one class ideology or consciousness because there is no one worker. A new and vibrant working-class politics can be built but only when no one particular experience is taken as universal'.

Patriarchy, gender regimes, sexuality and hegemonic masculinity

Feminist analyses of patriarchy show how the power relations of gender structure the overall subordination of women and the dominance of men. Recently the term has tended to give way to the concept of gender regimes on the basis that, as Walby comments, patriarchy always exists in articulation with other social systems. She identifies six interrelated regimes, or structures of patriarchy in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. These are: household production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state; male violence – including sexual harassment, patriarchal relations in sexuality, including homophobia, and in cultural institutions such as education, religion, the media (1990, 1997: 6). Clearly these are not fixed, nor universal, and the forms they take will be contingent on interrelated structures of culture, politics, social relations, economics and history. These interrelations are especially well illustrated by Hensman in the chapter from India. There, the inseparability of gender politics in the spheres of domestic relations, work relations, and those with male violence is exemplified, particularly for vulnerable women in the informal sector where constitutional rights are relatively meaningless and employment rights do not exist.[1]

Feminist analysis has also blown away the cover of gender neutrality and the notion that organisations are a-sexual (Pringle 1988; Acker 1990; Mills and Tancred 1992; Alvesson and Billing 1997). The studies by Hearn *et al.* (1989) concerning the sexuality of organisations built on and further opened the door to research on a range of topics including sexuality and the labour process, sexual harassment, men's sexuality and women's sexuality. Lesbian and gay studies have added to this literature by focusing on the experiences of lesbians and gay men and the inequalities based on sexuality within organisations (Oerton 1996; Humphrey 1999). Masculinity studies have made further important contributions. Connell (1995) identifies a three-fold model of the structuring of gender, whereby he distinguishes relations of power, relations of production, and relations of cathexis (emotional attachment). These cover similar ground to Walby's six gender regimes. In Connell's model, gender power relations are about the structuring of patriarchy. Gender divisions in paid and domestic work and which structure the unequal and gendered economic consequences through concepts such as the family wage, result from gendered production relations. Relations of social attachment and sexual desire, and the central role they play in the gendering of organisational life raise political questions such as whether or not sexual practices are consensual or coercive. He stresses that in feminist analysis of sexuality these have become 'sharp questions' about the connection of heterosexuality with men's position of social dominance.

From this analysis, and using Gramsci's notion of hegemony as a cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life, Connell has developed the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity becomes a configuration of gender practice which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. It is a cultural dynamic, a 'historically mobile' relationship which may vary in time and place with cultural specificity, and the

resulting pattern of social relations is always contestable. Within its overall framework, Connell identifies specific gender relations of dominance and subordination between groups of men – heterosexism and homophobia. We would add that there is also the possibility of such relations between groups of women, and in her discussion of sexual politics in this book, Franzway comments on how little attention is paid in the literature to sexual diversity among women. Connell points out that masculinity is also constructed in relation to race. Thus white men's masculinities are constructed not only in relation to white women, but also to black men and gay men. At any given time one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted.

These analyses are having an impact on the study of trade unions (Briskin and McDermott 1993; Cobble 1993; Pocock 1997). Reconceptualisation of trade union democracy has become a gendered, sexualised and racialised project. For example, in their research with particular UK unions, while McBride (2001), Colgan and Ledwith (2000, 2002) and Humphrey (2000) have been raising the issue of sexuality in, Colgan (1999b) and Healy and Kirton (2000) have been putting gender back and Humphrey (1998) that of disability and trade unions. Healy and Kirton (2000) emphasise that women's constituency can act as a countervailing faction against male oligarchic leadership. They conclude that the resulting continual opposition does seem to constrain the dominant gendered oligarchy. They also point out, though, that reassertion of oligarchic tendencies ensure that gendered change is evolutionary rather than transformative.

'The resulting 'democratic deficit' for women and other minority groups has wider implications and is intimately related to these memberships' position in the workforce. A crude, but potent measure of this is the gender pay gap, which internationally, even for similar jobs, still averages between 20 and 30 per cent. This is in part an outcome of the absence of women from collective bargaining in the majority of unions (Colling and Dickens 2001; ETUC 1999). A recent international survey found that only a third of unions had a policy for the participation of women in collective bargaining teams. (ILO/ICFTU 1999).

Race and ethnicity

Cornell and Hartmann (1998) in discussing the differences and relationships between ethnicity and race suggest that ethnicity is based on self-consciousness, on shared beliefs in common descent, memories or legends of a shared historical past and a cultural focus on symbols which rate as the 'epitome of their peoplehood' (Schermerhorn in Cornell and Hartmann 1998: 19). Racism they describe as a more 'slippery' concept, as less benign than ethnicity, although the two cannot be neatly divided, and both are bound up in power relations and conflicts over scarce resources such as jobs or status. Race typically has its origins in assignment by others, whereas ethnicity may have similar origins, but frequently originates in assertions of group members themselves. Race is based on the pseudo science of biological distinctiveness, which they suggest owes more to history and social construction – especially European colonialism – than to any physical or biological basis.

Wets (2000: 2) discussing the attitudes of trade unions towards immigrants and immigration in Europe comments that although unions may commit themselves verbally in varying degrees to internationalist worker solidarity, in practice this tends to become subordinated to the national state and national arena, and increasingly in Europe regionalism has become an important rallying point. Like the other categories we are dealing with here, race is culturally determined, and in Western systems, whiteness, itself a racial category, is privileged over others. Race forms a powerful and persistent group boundary through forms of constructed 'arbitrary closure' (Yuval-Davis 1997: 119) and the use of assigned essentialist characteristics as expressive means of exclusion and control. Stuart Hall describes the work of racism as being 'directed to secure "us" "over here" and "them" "over there"', to fix each in its appointed place (Hall and duGay 1996). Whatever the source of minority ethnicity however, traditions of class and national identity combine to exclude and control minority groups. Ethnicity and race are seen as having a 'striking potency' as bases of collective identity and action (Cornell and Hartmann 1998: 12). It seems that when such groups launch an active claim for access and entry to closed institutions, what previously may have been a benign institutional tolerance of ethnic difference, slides into an antagonistic racist response.

In the countries represented in this book it is evident that there are a number of different categories of ethnic minorities. There are indigenous peoples in Canada, Australia and the USA for example, who have been oppressed by the incoming dominant majority, usually white. Until 1993 this was also the case in South Africa, although there the dominant white group was the minority and thus the majority was oppressed by the minority. There is little contemporary research available in Australia about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, although it is argued, reports Franzway, that union support for these workers has been, at best, equivocal. Currently what is termed 'reconciliation' with the indigenous groups by the white majority is politically disputatious, although now in some unions there are officers and groupings specifically to represent their interests. In the USA the domination by slavery of the black by the white population has a unique historical significance. Its legacy, the civil rights movement, has been the main engine for development of black consciousness and collective action and has been a significant model for social movement organisation both in America and abroad. Elsewhere minority ethnic groups are mainly the result of immigration, and there are many variations in time-waves, groups of immigrant peoples, and geography. Early phases of immigration as a result of previous colonial relations have been significant in the UK, and Australia and Canada. In Europe there has been migration from Mediterranean southern countries to the more prosperous north, while the most recent migrant waves have resulted from the break up of the USSR, the Eastern European bloc including former Yugoslavia, and the opening up of China. Economic immigration, including flight from conflicts and political expulsions in south east Asian countries have also impacted on for example Australia and Britain. Forms of indentured immi-grant labour have been an important presence in Germany and Malaysia. On the Indian continent caste, religion and multiple ethnic groupings present complex hierarchies.

The range of analyses from contributors in this book offers the opportunity to observe the forces at work in these domains and the interrelationships between them. We suggest that study of the cultural and social processes involved in the dynamics of class, gendered, sexualised and racialised hegemonies can help explain the oligarchic tendencies involved in structural practices of closure, exclusion, demarcation and segregation in trade unions.

Strategies of challenge and resistance – a conceptual framework

To help to do this we have developed a conceptual framework. This is now outlined, and then we move on to discuss it in relation to the analysis in the chapters that follow. As already indicated here, and in the chapters in the book, traditional trade unionism as characterised by patriarchal, working-class, organisation is being challenged externally by the forces of global restructuring, and internally by the groups of workers which it has marginalised.

To help understand the fluid social processes of challenge and resistance to these hegemonic and oligarchic forces we draw on approaches from industrial relations, sociology and organisational theory. In Witz's analysis of patriarchy she utilised neo-Weberian concepts of exclusion, inclusion, demarcation, closure and power to develop a model of gendered strategies of exclusionary and demarcatory closure (1992). From an industrial relations perspective, similar ground has been covered by Penninx and Roosblad and others in relation to immigrants (Roosblad 2000). This analysis can be expanded to include a broader conceptualisation of racial and ethnic groupings. Three main dilemmas are identified for trade unions in considering their position in relation to immigration and immigrant workers. First, do unions resist immigration and immigrants, or cooperate with governments and employers, and if so under what conditions? Second, once immigrants are in the country/labour market should unions assimilate them as part of the working class or exclude them from membership? Third, if trade unions consider immigrants as potential members, should they defend their general interests as workers, emphasising the collective stake in working-class interests while disregarding differences in material and cultural positions, or should they develop specific policies and structures to address their particular concerns at the risk of upsetting the indigenous workers?

From these two sources we have developed a framework which is concerned with both traditional trade unionism's strategies of closure, and challenge and response to these. The model is not fixed. Particular strategic forms in different countries will always be mediated by and be contingent on external factors such as labour market positions, employer approaches, government ideology and strategy, legal rights and industrial relations systems. Six closely related and often overlapping systems are identified: exclusion, demarcation, inclusion, usurpation, transformation and coalition.

Exclusion

Traditional trade unionism has applied oligarchic and hegemonic strategies of resistance and closure to outsiders such as women, part timers, and minority ethnic groups, in order to secure and maintain cultural and class homogeneity and access to resources and rewards. Exclusionary strategies are adopted in order to protect against the threat of dilution by undermining core pay and conditions and fear of strike breaking. These practices give rise to the dual concepts of the male breadwinner and the family wage.

There are strong parallels with exclusionary practices in relation to immigrants. Virdee (2000) discusses how in the postwar period large numbers of Caribbean and Asian workers were encouraged to move to work in Britain's new welfare state and its manufacturing sector. Through examples of black industrial disputes where white trade unionists resisted the employment of black immigrants moved into the country's manufacturing sector, or insisted on a quota system, he shows how parts of the white working class actively colluded with employers in restrictive practices of racist exclusion in key sectors of employment. Thus exclusion may also be achieved through collusion between capital and organised male labour against 'dilution' by women, unskilled, and 'outsider' racial and ethnic groups. Responses by these groups have often been to organise separately, but they have then run the risk of being denied resources by predominant union organisations.[2]

In the last quarter of a century, in the developed world, trade union practices of total exclusion have largely been swept away by a combination of technological, economic, social and political change. Nevertheless exclusion of women, ethnic groups, disabled and lesbians and gay members from union leaderships and power elites continues today. For example, a recent survey by the European TUC of its affiliates in twenty-eight countries found a serious under-representation of women in trade union decision-making, particularly in positions of responsibility and leadership, and in collective bargaining (1999). Employers and/or the state may also practise exclusion both of trade unions altogether, and of women from particular spheres. Such practices include marriage bars for working women, and legal restrictions on women working in certain occupations such as mining and seafaring, and night working. Absence and silence are also potent motifs, and the suppression and stigmatisation of lesbians and gay men through cultures and practices of hetero-sexism and homophobia have been effectively employed in exclusionary projects.

While total exclusion is no longer practised in trade unions in any of the countries represented in the chapters in the book, there is evidence of a range of exclusionary and demarcatory practices, and gender and diversity challenges to these. Exclusion of women from the formal employment sector through discriminatory employment practices in India is of central and increasing importance as this also means exclusion from legal employment rights and trade union organisation. These difficulties have driven women into autonomous organising, often outside trade unions, through women's non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and into leading the way in organising across caste and religion, work, community and family, cross-

organisational and cross-nationally. Similar exclusionary practices can be seen in Malaysia, where for example, temporary migrant labour is prohibited by the government from joining unions, and the government supports employer antagonism to trade unions in the export driven electronics sector where many women work. Once again NGOs have moved in to fill the gap left by trade unions providing advice and support to these women and migrant workers (Committee for Asian Women 1995).

There is evidence across the chapters of systemic exclusion from internal positions of trade union power in every country. Perhaps the most extreme example is from South Africa, notwithstanding the impressive commitment to equality within its constitution. Tshoaedi describes how once trade unions gained political power post-apartheid, women leaders found themselves being pushed aside and sidelined from senior and leadership posts through processes of homosocial closure.

Demarcation

Demarcation and segregation occur when total exclusion gives way to entry by marginalised groups, for example through external forces such as labour market restructuring, employer strategies, or statutory rights. Then, traditional trade unionism seeks to contain and regulate the participation of outsider or minority groups through the creation and control of boundaries. Usually these are already well established through gendered and racialised labour market segregation and hierarchical occupational segmentation, which become replicated within trade unions, again sometimes through strategies of collusion.

Thus low paid workers in low status jobs, usually women and members of ethnic and racial minority groups, may also be held in low esteem in their unions, and find themselves excluded from power elites and institutions of collective bargaining. If they do succeed in taking on union positions, they may find it difficult to participate in union circles where closure techniques are used such as excessive jargon, rigid constitutional rules and procedures, meetings in 'smoke filled rooms' in inhospitable environments and at times of day which are difficult for those with family responsibilities. For those whose employment status is precarious it may also be risky to take time off work for trade union activities. In addition, strategies of traditional hegemonic masculinity, such as sexual and racial harassment and homophobia, are prime techniques for policing demarcation lines between insiders and outsiders and keeping the latter in their place. Writers have discussed how in the UK, where it was not possible to exclude, then quota systems restricting the numbers of black workers were agreed with employers (Wrench and Virdee 1996). As a result these workers came overwhelmingly to occupy a position at the bottom of the British class structure (Virdee 2000: 210).

Demarcation practices may vary in detail in each of the country case studies, but they do show similar patterns. In South Africa, within unions women are routinely segregated into secondary positions and excluded from union power elites and collective bargaining. In Italy, Beccalli and Meardi report that among the job specifications of paid union officer work are being on call, and job mobility. While

women find they are required to uphold these requirements, their male colleagues are able to ignore them. Koch-Baumgarten discusses how German unions restricted women's political participation by corralling them in special women's structures without power or status, and excluding women from the union power elites. In Germany into the 1980s, and in the UK in the print union the GPMU, for example, male executive members remain responsible for the work of women's departments. In these forms, separate organising has been described as 'ghettos to keep women quiet, ineffective, and talking only to themselves' (Briskin 1993: 94).

Hegemonic masculinity is explicitly brought into play as part of the systems of control and demarcation through sexual politics. The moral question of women and men working together, historically important in the West, is still employed in a number of countries, for example Malaysia where patriarchal and religious forces opposed women doing paid work outside of the home, especially under foreign male authority. Cobble and Michal identify how the labour movement in the USA helped men achieve 'manhood' through traditional sexual practices built on deeply embedded gender norms at work. These arguments are extended by Williams in her discussion of how masculinities and emotion work maintain hegemonic heterosexual masculinities within Australian trade unionism in the meat, timber and health industries – through a particular form known as 'Mate'-ism'. Key among these practices is sexual harassment, which Franzway identifies as being deeply and centrally implicated in the development and maintenance of traditional patriarchal trade unionism. In almost every chapter in the book practices of sexual harassment appear as a core and contentious issue in trade union gender relations. In the USA and Italy for example, unions have shunned this issue leaving women to take up cases without the active support of their unions and being forced to turn for help to outside women's organisations. In Italy and Sweden, the unions have also been happy to leave lesbian and gay and disability issues to lesbian and gay and disabled campaigning organisations. Where unions have taken on the issue of sexual harassment, they have often been pressed to do so as a result of internal union cases which have reached to the heart of union sexual politics.

In Germany, special departments were established in some unions to deal with the particular problems and interests of migrants. This form of affirmative action reserves space and resources for education, anti-racist publicity, and negotiating non-discrimination works agreements in leading companies. Elsewhere, for example in Malaysia, demarcation remains strong among ethnic groups. Ethnic hierarchies are also important in India, where oppressed groups such as Dalits (formerly Untouchables) and Muslims are excluded from mainstream society. In the formal sector, trade union leadership is dominated by caste Hindu men.

Inclusion

Here two strategies can be identified. *Contested inclusion* whereby inclusion or assimilation within the existing systems and structures is sought, campaigned for and negotiated by excluded/minority groups. Second, the dominant union group may invite inclusion for material and/or ideological reasons such as membership growth,

union solidarity, or democratic ideals. In practice the two often operate together. For example women have long been actively campaigning and negotiating for inclusion in unions. Simultaneously, the forces of globalisation, restructuring and demographic change in labour markets have led to huge losses among male (mostly) trade union memberships, and it has become clear to trade unions that women are their main source of membership and renewal. As a result, new strategies of recruitment and organising are being developed by trade union movements across the world. Recruitment into membership is the first step. More complex, more radical and more vigorously contested is inclusion into mainstream decision-making structures, power elites and top positions of power.

In the current period, at the start of the twenty-first century, strategies of inclusion are possibly the main challenges facing union movements. It can be seen from the discussion below and in more detail in the case study chapters, that these are all currently practised in trade unions in various forms in different countries and different situations. In some, challenges from outsider groups have progressed as far as the next strategy, usurpation.

As already outlined in this chapter, increasing the membership of women, young workers, migrant workers and those from previously marginalised ethnic and racial backgrounds has become a major objective of trade union renewal in a growing number of countries. Contrary to previous conventional union wisdom, the workers keenest to join unions are those who have most to gain; the marginalised and oppressed – women and those from other diversity groups. Many of the organising breakthroughs in the USA in the 1990s have been among women, particularly women of colour and immigrant women, in the hotel and healthcare sectors. In the UK, analysis of the increase in union membership during 2000, found that it was mainly accounted for by women part-time workers (LRD 2001).

Unions in Anglophone countries where restructuring and employer antagonism have been central to membership losses, have developed increasingly sophisticated strategies of organising; recruitment and retention, and have drawn on one another's experience to do so. Australia's *Organising Works* campaign, initially modelled on developments in the USA, helped lead to the British TUC's *Organising Academy*, which in turn linked up with New Zealand unions, and was one of a number of Anglo labour movement initiatives recently studied for a new Australian project: *unions@work* (ACTU 1999). These 'new unionism' projects are primarily geared to addressing the membership crisis. In the UK this is seen for example as 'a trade unionism for the new insecure world of work' (TUC 1997). However, it is one thing to organise new members into membership. It is another to retain them, and it is yet another again to move members beyond instrumental membership and into ideological and practical collective commitment to union solidarity.

Strategies designed to move towards inclusive internal union democracy take two main trajectories:

* *autonomous or separate organisation and special structures* – forms of affirmative action
  – for previously oppressed and marginalised groups working as constituency groups; and

- *mainstreaming*[3] – inclusion and integration of representatives from such groups into mainstream structures and decision-making positions.

Both of these increasingly coexist and interrelate, with for example representatives and delegates from diverse constituencies taking up positions in the mainstream. Both strategies have been driven principally by women and other minority groups themselves. Among the responses triggered have been resistance and opposition both direct and indirect, from traditional trade unionism (both male and female) which has often interpreted such entrism as a threat to class solidarity and as usurping male privilege. Increasingly, however, unions' espoused formal positions have been to welcome and include diversity and to develop structures to support it. In doing so, institutional organised labour has begun to move towards what Cockburn (1989,1991) has described as a longer, transformative agenda of equality politics in trade unions.

Separate organising has already been referred to in the discussion of exclusion and demarcatory strategies by trade unions. It can also be used in a more positive sense and here we move to consider this more positive and proactive approach to self-organisation. The debate around separate organising was first opened up by Briskin (1993, 1999), and she has argued that its success depends on maintaining a balance between autonomy and integration. The dangers of autonomy include ghettoisation, outlined above, and those of integration resting on a deficit model which suggests that it is women who are the problem and need changing, and that they are poorly equipped to take on leadership roles because they lack skills and self-confidence (Briskin 1993: 96). What Briskin has described as a proactive politic of separate organising is now becoming the preferred choice of marginalised groups (Colgan and Ledwith, 2002).

Separate organisation can be seen as a goal, as an end in itself and as a way of building an alternative community. Such groups may organise outside of mainstream trade unions altogether. Alternatively, groups may organise semi-autonomously within trade unions. Self-organisation may also be an interim strategy in preparation for mainstreaming self-organised group interests and transforming union cultures and structures. Autonomous organising by groups of women teachers in Canada (Briskin 1993), and in New Zealand (Street 2001) have been important models of transformational feminist change.

Two main strategies of self-organisation are of significance here; *social creativity* and *social change* (Colgan and Ledwith 2000). Strategies of social creativity involve the development of individual skills, self-confidence, and possibly of political consciousness. If and when these combine collectively into a strategy of social change, they may (or may not necessarily) develop further into a strategy of social change. Strategies of social change seek to bring about actual change in material circum-stances and objective social relations between groups such that marginalised groups may improve their position and their access to resources in relation to those of existing power holders. Examples of social creativity strategies are illustrated in the Indian chapter in particular, where women reported high levels of empowerment as a result of women-only organising, even though their material gains were low.

Healy and Kirton's professional and highly qualified trade union women were committed to both types of strategies, seeing them as complementary. The same was the case for women in Italy and Sweden. Colgan and Ledwith (Chapter 8) and Hunt (Chapter 12) show the further development of self-organisation for black/ethnic minority, lesbian and gay and disabled members and their importance as locations in which to gain self-confidence and build political strength. The evidence from the UK is assessed in an appraisal of the utility of self-organising and the balance between autonomy and integration.

Much of the ground for these developments was laid in the 1970s, when the rise of second wave feminism either influenced or directly connected with an upsurge in political activism and labour movement politics. Hunt, for example records the presence of informal lesbian groups at Canadian union women's conferences and national congresses of the time. In the UK, there was a significant shift in union attitudes towards inclusivity of black workers as a reaction against the extreme right adding up racist feelings, and combating racism has become an important feature of many British trade unions' work (Virdee 2000: 218). In European countries while elements of institutional[4] racism clearly remain within trade unions, their positive recent strategies on immigrants has largely been as a response to the rise of the far right and neo-Nazism.

In India, the impetus for women to organise autonomously was their marginal-isation by male dominated unions. Hensman charts the formation and rapid spread of women's wings especially in banking and in mineworking and shows how the women's movement also bridged the formal/informal sector divide. This reflects the indivisibility of domestic and production gender relations, so women members of workers' families were included in campaigning across issues of housing, sexual harassment, alcoholism and domestic violence.

Cobble and Bielski discuss how in the early 1970s American women, especially in white-collar and professional jobs such as clerical work and flight attendants, broke away from the male-dominated unions and formed their own. This became an interim separatist strategy for changing the gendered norms of their occupation, such as pressures to 'appear forever young, slim and sexually alluring', to end exploitation and gain control over compensation for their sexual and their emotional labour. In Italy and Sweden, it was women in the metal (car workers') stations who pioneered women's separate organising, although they met strong resistance from the traditions of working-class solidarity, especially, in Italy among communists in the CGIL union.

In the USA nearly a quarter of the workforce was made up of minority ethnic groups in 1999. American women from ethnic minority groups, mainly African-American and Latina, have been rapidly joining unions, especially from the sectors tions have traditionally labelled as difficult to organise; home healthcare workers, and service workers in the hotel industry. In the UK too, there is evidence of a similar inclination among women, particularly Afro-Caribbean women, for joining unions. Agency among these groups is high, and there is considerable autonomous organising among racial and ethnic minorities both within the labour movement and across civil rights and community groups.

Ethnic and racial inclusivity is also illustrated by the progressive attitude of the Canadian Auto Workers' challenge to an 'increasingly mean-spirited and at times openly racist attitude towards immigrants and refugees' in Canada. Other inclusionary initiatives during the 1990s relate to indigenous and well-established minority ethnic groups. As in Britain this was the outcome of years of organising by anti-racist activists. The main aim of these strategies is to integrate – not assimilate, and Swedish trade unions have also recently moved in this direction. German trade unions have not only had to cope with reunification but also with recent increases in refugee immigration. Here strategies have changed from assimilation to special treatment, with departments being established to deal with the particular problems and interests of migrants, and to develop works council agreements.

In Italy, ethnic minorities have also become a trade union issue since the 1980s, but unlike unions in many other countries, Italian unions moved directly to a strategy of supporting immigrants, such as promoting various laws for undocumented immigrants and supporting their rights in the wider society including those of migrant prostitutes (ILO-ICFTU 1999: 119).

More recent still have been developments in separate organising among lesbian and gay members and members with disabilities. The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) is described by Hunt as the world leader in the field of sexual diversity initiatives – which are limited to a few developed countries. While these developments are strongest in the public sector trade unions, it is possible to chart increasing shifts towards inclusion in private sector unions. Colgan and Ledwith outline similar development in the UK, where for example, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) has moved from running a women's conference and a lesbian and gay workers' conference in the 1990s. In 2000 it established a conference for disabled members.

Australian unions meanwhile remain reticent about developing rights and policies and practices for lesbian and gay men. Franzway comments that creative strategies are required to tackle such issues in unions. The Gay and Lesbian Members (GLAM) of the Australian Services Union are a pioneering group in these areas.

The weakest area of change has been for workers with disabilities although some progress is now evident in the UK. Even in Canada, the labour movement has taken a minimalist position, focusing mainly on the legal responsibilities of unions.

Usurpation

This is where a subordinate group mobilises through strategies of social change to challenge the dominant group, and succeeds in changing the structure of positions and balance of leadership between the groups. An example of a successful strategic challenge here would be the achievement of proportional or quota representation of women and of minority ethnic or racial groups or lesbian and gay and disabled trade unionists in union structures. Since usurpation strategies are about altering the balance of power between groups, of replacing men with women, white members with black, and so on, they may be fiercely resisted, once again through

discriminatory exclusionary and demarcatory practices. Where it is effective however, usurpation may lead to strategies of change and transformation.

When unions adopt policies and practices for increasing women's representation such as proportionality, reserved seats or self-organisation, the common response from traditional unionism is antagonistic. As Tshaoedi comments, in South Africa, the closer to the centre of male power basis women's challenges go, the more vigorously they are rejected. Opponents of radical interventionist affirmative actions such as women's quotas, claim that these are tokenistic and anti-democratic since those elected are not truly representative of the membership. A related argument is made on the basis of union ideology of unity and solidarity, claiming that separate structures are divisive. In Sweden, women and men in the *Landsorganisation i Sverige* (LO) sought to prioritise a policy of class-based solidarity, mainstreaming gender equality issues while campaigning for work/life balance and 'family friendly' state and employer policies to apply to both men and women workers. Paternalistic arguments are also used. In South Africa it is men who raise the fear that women will be marginalised by their separatism, while women point out that it is precisely by organising on their own that they will be able to develop strength. In India, Germany, the UK, the USA, Canada and latterly in Sweden too, women activists all strongly supported women's structures as essential to maintaining a critical mass of women to advance a feminised trade union agenda. However, in Italy, Beccalli and Meardi report a form of malaise concerning these structures particularly among younger women. In the UK, when proportionality was introduced for women in UNISON, it reversed the existing gender power balance among members elected to positions at all levels of the union, giving rise to varying forms of opposition.

To try to avoid such problems, some unions have expanded the total number of elective seats on mainstream decision-making committees and conferences in order to *add* women, and avoid women being seen as displacing men. Colgan and Ledwith discuss how in the UK the male dominated print union, the GPMU, has done this; with some success.

As traditional work opportunities for men have declined, there has been a rise among women entering white-collar and professional occupations, and management so usurping male privilege. The exclusionary and demarcatory responses of closure have been described in detail by Anne Witz in her study of health workers (1992). There has been surprisingly little research into union practice among the increasing number of women in these professions, and their attachment to trade union principles and practices. So we are pleased to be able to include the chapter by Healy and Kirton, which explore these. Their findings show how women's occupational and professional skills such as literacy and advocacy together with their experiences of working in mainly male milieux, equip them for the masculine world of trade unions. Elsewhere we have discussed four styles of political behaviour women may adopt in homosocial organisations: wise, clever, innocent and inept (Ledwith and Colgan 1996). Among the union women in Healy and Kirton's studies, the professional and highly qualified women union activists could be seen as using wise behaviour – which entails accurate reading of organisational mores and acting with integrity. Wisdom is no guarantee of success however,

Franzway comments that women do not fail in their efforts to change sexual politics simply because their strategy is flawed. If relations of male domination shape women's subordination, then successful challenges to that domination are likely to be strenuously resisted. In addition, since recognition of sexual difference strikes at the heart of class-based heterosexual masculine hegemony, it is also to be expected that where heterosexism is strong, lesbians and gay men will experience most difficulties. Among the chapters here, it is seen that resistance in South African and Australian unions has often been strong, and in Canada and the UK progress on lesbian and gay rights has not been achieved in unions without opposition.

Transformation

Transformation involves a wider range of structural and cultural organisational change such as extensive and innovative diversity structures and a reallocation of union resources, whereby representing the interests of diversity groupings becomes central to campaigning and collective bargaining agendas. Transformative strategies may involve autonomous organising by diverse groups as a source of empowerment and as a site from which to challenge and to bring about change. Strategies of collaboration with existing power holders might also be pursued in search of formulae for transforming union structures and cultures. Or both. Again, such measures are also likely to set up resistance, triggering discriminatory exclusionary and/or demarcatory tactics. Counter-pressure may also involve seeking to work together more widely with forces outside the union(s), and to seek alliances and coalitions.

There is much evidence in the chapters in the book of increasingly assertive and dynamic groups representing women, ethnic and racial groups, lesbian and gay groups, and in a few cases, disabled members organising, and pursuing transformative strategies. It is clear that these pioneers have changed union cultures and structures and in some cases have moved into situations with transformative potential. Women and minority groups are on the whole keen to link with union mainstreams, but on their terms, and increasingly they have resisted assimilation. The form and character of these new unionisms is varied, but in all the chapters from the developed world there are accounts of special structures for women and in some cases minority groups, and these are clearly significant as sites of social creativity and social change. There are fewer accounts however of quotas/proportionality for women or minority groups on key committees and bodies in the union hierarchies. While special structures may serve as sites for transforming and empowering their constituents, it is a harder task to reach the core power structures and attempt to change and transform them. Oligarchic tendencies reassert themselves.

In Germany, the opportunities offered by the fluidity following reunification was a boost to women's membership, especially from former east Germany, where strategies for women and diverse groups moved towards more inclusionary – although nevertheless, contested – approaches. These initiatives are mainly in service sector and professional unions, and in some, women have managed to expand their power base, manage their own budgets, and even have a right of veto.

With its wide-ranging, inclusive strategies the Canadian union movement must be a model of transformational change, both within internal union democracies, and in the wider engagement with the state and more broadly across union and social movements. In the USA, workers are generally seeking involvement at work, a less combative trade unionism, and, as in the UK, a form of collective protection that gives them job security and advancement and responds to their emotional as well as their economic needs. The drive is to rethink traditional models, especially among professional workers. For example, the organising model being rolled out in the Anglophone countries is also about equipping activists to take on decentralised bargaining, which offers opportunities for new forms of community-based organising (Mantsios 1998).

Material terms and conditions at work form a crucial test of whether or not new approaches are delivering for women and those from other marginalised groups. If we look at the gender pay gap in the countries represented in this book, reported by the contributors, then the gender union project does not look strong. The smallest gap is 11 per cent, in Sweden, where trade union density remains at around 80 per cent overall and 83 per cent for women. The largest pay gap among the case studies is in Malaysia, where trade union organisation is poor and women are marginalised. Certain conditions are important for improving women's pay. In industrialised economies the corporate state, government equality frameworks, centralised systems for pay determination, social partnership, and high trade union density and collective bargaining, are all institutions which are known to make a difference (Rees 1998; Rubery *et al.* 1999). In the USA for example, where trade union density is around 14 per cent only, union women earn over a third more than non-union women.

Universal measures such as improving low pay generally will always help women and marginalised ethnic groups. In Britain the introduction of a National Minimum Wage in 1999, which impacted mainly on women and ethnic minorities, led to a narrowing of the gender pay gap to 18 per cent. It had stuck at around 20–5 per cent for over twenty years. Across the chapters, however, the authors comment that women and diversity members are not present at bargaining tables. Lack of access to inner circle power positions in unions means that they will rarely be involved in setting bargaining agendas. A creative exception is the participative bargaining agenda setting among Harvard university staff in the USA discussed by Cobble and Bielski.

Gender and diversity projects do fare better however when considering qualitative bargaining outcomes. Canadian unions have negotiated solid gains such as child care benefits for parents, and the right to paid leave following workplace harassment. Most countries represented in the book report wide-ranging policies and in some cases, collective agreements which provide for equality and non-discrimination, the right not to be sexually harassed, and increasingly, commitment to work-life balance policies and practices. Campaigning around violence against women is gathering momentum in several countries, from Canada to the UK, to India. These gains provide the basis on which to build broader-based demands, for example mainstreaming gender into union bargaining across the board. As already

mentioned, this is an important strategy among European trade unions. The real challenge however is to move such progressive policies into practice. Too often they remain at that level without the means or the will at workplace level for unions to take on and demand that policy becomes practice.

Coalition

Here the diverse constituencies within unions make links internally, across union movements, as well as alliances with external organisations such as community groups, NGOs, social movements, political groups, campaigns and so on. Strategies of coalition enable the movement beyond the narrow interests of sectional and sectional organised labour towards a framework of rights (Sen 2001), and is especially important for women and members of racial, ethnic and sexual minorities where such groups are weak. In developing countries, for example, in the informal economy especially, those who attempt to organise may face intimidation, threats and violence and sometimes even murder (Committee for Asian Women 1995; ILO/ICFTU 1999). Also often excluded from trade unionism are agricultural, domestic and migrant workers, especially in Export Processing Zones. Women particularly remain marginalised and highly vulnerable to discrimination and exploitation and thus family poverty is perpetuated (Ledwith and Colgan 2001). The Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing in 1995 was a rallying point for international women's networking. It also called for recognition of collective bargaining as a right and an important mechanism for the promotion of gender equality (ILO/ICFTU 1999).

Coalition strategies are increasingly being led by social movements and diverse groupings, within, across and outside trade unions. Unions are starting to recognise that their unity no longer rests solely on a central class ideology, but on a more pluralist form of alliances and coalition politics. In her discussion of the problems women's diversity poses for the labour movement and for the notion of 'sisterhood', Yuval-Davis (1998) argues that feminist and trade union politics should now incorporate the notion of 'women's positionings' into their agendas by developing 'transversal' coalition politics. Thus women (and men) in different constituencies may be rooted in their own membership and identity, but at the same time be prepared to shift into a position of exchange with those with different memberships and identities. Within unions, this was always to some extent possible for different occupational and sectoral constituencies; what is now required is that this be extended to the self-organised constituencies through new union democratic structures, coalitions and alliances (Colgan 1999a).

In the USA, as Cobble and Michal show, the women's movement and African-Americans have been working across civil rights and labour unions since the 1960s and current organising campaigns in the US seek to build on and extend their coalitions and alliances with community and campaigning groups (Mantsios 1998). For example, in 1997 the USA Pride at Work organisation (PAW) affiliated with the main trade union confederation, the AFL–CIO, following more than twenty years of work by gay and lesbian union members. Hunt makes the point that the

Canadian Labour Congress's success in rolling out lesbian and gay rights was due to 'networks, networks, networks' over nearly thirty years.

Among unions which have become adept at reaching out to use the courts to test for and extend the rights of their diverse membership, are those in Canada, and the UK. In Europe, the European Union's social agenda has become a significant focus of gender mobilising, and has developed a solid body of women's legal rights (Pillinger 2000). Mainstreaming has become a strong organising basis, and increasingly unions are working across countries and through federal union organisations to carry forward work on gender equality to ensure that all aspects of union work and employment include a gender dimension as a matter of course. At the turn of the new century, the paramount concern has been work–life balance, and public sector unions especially have been developing innovative practices in partnership with employers whereby union members themselves are centrally involved in planning, negotiating and organising change. Long-standing forms of collaborative work between unions in developed and developing countries on gender and women's rights are also spreading. Partnerships and twinning arrangements organised around gender issues are growing. Often focusing on education and training these are frequently initiated and resourced wholly or partly by union organisations such as the Public Services International (PSI) which then roll out training and campaigning at local level within the unions and forge alliances with NGOs and political and community groups.

Reaching out further, Briskin is especially keen to see unions build on such developments in order to realise the global potential for international labour and feminist alliances. Here she is very much in accord with women in the developing world. For example, Hensman discusses how Indian women are benefiting from alliances and coalitions with NGOs and Women Working Worldwide, based in the UK and linked with women workers' groups in several Asian and Central American countries. In Malaysia examples include Tenaganita, a multi-ethnic women workers' organisation which has taken up the cause of migrant labour and sex workers. In the absence of teeth with which to implement important international codes of conduct and ILO conventions, these forms of self-help are crucial.

Can we draw conclusions?

So how can we assess the current state of play in projects of gender and diversity trade union democracy? It is clear from the extensive and detailed evidence in the contributions here that in all these countries, to a greater or lesser degree, traditionalism continues to coexist with innovation, and even with transformation. Is the glass we raise to toast union equality endeavours half full, or is it half empty? This is a discussion we often have with trade union equality activists. Are advances being made towards a new trade union democracy? How far does the resistance encountered mean two steps forward and one back?

From the review of gender and diversity trade union democracy projects in the countries in this collection there are some patterns which emerge. In terms of internal union democracy favourable conditions seem to be:

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