

Journal of Industrial Relations – Call for papers

Women, Work and Collectivism

Symposium: 11 May 2011, University of Sydney

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Organisers and special edition editors:

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Women's labour market participation has increased markedly, but women face the enduring 'architecture of discrimination' at work: glass – or indeed 'concrete' - ceilings (where women find it difficult to progress to senior strategic roles); glass walls (occupational and industry segregation into jobs which are undervalued); and sticky floors (women predominate in low-paid precarious work which present few opportunities for progression). Issues of unequal pay, gender segregation, poor job quality and lack of 'voice', among others, have been identified as key issues in research on women at work. Of course, women's workplace circumstances are intimately entangled with their non-labour market concerns and responsibilities which, as has been pointed out by numerous scholars, falls disproportionately on the shoulders of women, whether they engage in paid employment or not (Baird and Cooper 2009; Baird et al. 2009; Pocock 2003; 2006).

In many contexts, women have moved from being 'marginal' unionists to forming more than half of the membership of unions. For example, in New Zealand, reflecting the situation in many other international contexts, women constitute 54% of union membership, outstripping their representation in the labour market (46%). In part, this reflects the retreat of unionism into the public (and significantly feminised) sector and the decline of some traditional 'heartlands' of union membership such as manufacturing. The factors driving women's union participation in Australia are similar; women now form 46% of union members and represent 45.5% share of the labour force. Although the industrial relations and economic backdrops for other countries vary, a feminisation of overall union membership and the workforce is also indicated (see Foley and Baker 2009).

However, women's overall presence as union members has seldom translated into their level of representation at all levels of the union hierarchy. In this setting, as in public life more widely, women's advancement has been painfully slow and patchy, despite the many long-standing campaigns for change by agents such as the women's structures within unions, and shifting levels of regulatory and institutional support beyond the union setting. Moreover, formal or espoused gender equality policies in unions tend to be some way ahead of actual practice and change in many unions around women's participation and representation. Whilst peak union bodies have often sought to lead the way (the requirement of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) for 50% female representation on its Executive providing a case in point - see Cooper 2000), 'hard' internal policy-setting on women's representation (e.g. quota-setting) has not been adopted wholesale by individual unions in many countries.

In respect of women and collective bargaining, extant research indicates that high levels of unionisation are strongly correlated with a lower wage differential and a lower gender pay gap (e.g. Hyman 2004). Further, women generally fare better in terms of their wages and working conditions under centralised and collective-based bargaining than they do in individualised or decentralised contexts. In part, women's workplace circumstances reflect their relative under-representation and/or level of influence in unions, with men tending to predominate in the powerful roles on key structures such as negotiating bodies (Colling and Dickens 1998). However, they also underscore many women's location in low(er) paid, smaller and non-collectivised workplaces (e.g. van Wanrooy 2009).

It is also increasingly recognised that women's circumstances within the workplace are closely intertwined with their situation in the union, domestic, public and other spheres of endeavour (e.g. Charlesworth 2010). Hand-in-hand with this inter-sectoral approach is growing academic attention to the varying character of different groups of organised and non-collectivised working women's concerns or their 'intersectional' interests (Parker and Douglas 2010).

We are calling for proposals for papers to be presented on *Women, work and collectivism*, at a symposium to be held at the University of Sydney on 11 May 2011. We particularly welcome academic work and research which draws attention to the nexus between women, collective bargaining arrangements and their wider circumstances. Papers on the following themes are encouraged:

1. **Women and collective bargaining** (bargaining agenda, women bargaining agents, bargaining processes and outcomes for women, equality bargaining, bargaining in the sectors and industries)
2. **Women and unions & women in unions** (women in/and union leadership, women and union policies, roles and structures, women's self-organising, women and union organising, women's 'voice' in unions,
3. **Women and union representation of 'intersectional interests'** (representation of women's diversity/intersectional interests, 'sub-groups' of women and/or minority groups)
4. **Women in 'unorganised' workplaces** ('voice', processes, outcomes at work in unorganised workplaces, jobs and industries)
5. **'Women's work' in the sectors and occupations** (service sector, private and public sector, gendered occupational and industrial segregation, gendered bargaining processes and outcomes)
6. **NGOs and women at work** (the role of NGOs representing and advocating for women and women's workplace experiences with, and instead of, unions)
7. **Collective regulation and women's working conditions and pay** (minimum standards, awards and industry agreements, national systems)

We encourage papers presenting cross-national studies of any of the above issues and we are keen to draw on work both from within Australia and New Zealand and beyond. Both empirical and more theoretical research is welcome, as are historical analyses of the themes outlined above.

Process

Queries about content, submission of abstract and the logistics of the symposium should be directed as soon as possible to the organisers, Rae Cooper and Jane Parker (contact details below).

Abstracts of no more than 700 words noting aims, method and significance of the proposed paper to be submitted for consideration for presentation at the symposium should be submitted to the **JIR's editorial assistant Rawya Mansour by COB 1 December 2010** (contact details below). Abstracts must clearly state which of the **'themes'** outlined above that the proposed paper addresses. The organisers anticipate being able to advise if the abstract has been accepted by 24 December 2010.

A small group of submissions will be chosen for presentation at a symposium to be held at the University of Sydney in May 2011. Presenters will be expected to submit full drafts for discussion at the colloquium by **March 5, 2011** so to allow papers to be distributed to, and read by, other participants in the symposium (we encourage using JIR style). A limited amount of **funding** toward the cost of attending the symposium is available, upon application, for selected **early career researchers and or doctoral students** who work outside of Sydney. This assistance is provided by the Union Strategy Research Group at the University of Sydney (<http://sydney.edu.au/business/research/usrg>)

Publication The organisers have agreement from the editors of the *Journal of Industrial Relations* for a special edition on *Women Work and Collectivism* and a selection of the papers presented at the symposium will appear in 54 (2) of the journal in 2012. After the colloquium and submission of papers (by 5 March 2011 to Rawya Mansour), all papers will be peer reviewed. Final drafts incorporating required revisions must be completed by COB 3 October 2011. The articles which 'make it' to this stage, will appear in the JIR in April 2012. You can find the JIR style guide and current issue at <http://jir.sagepub.com/>

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