WE DO NOT WANT TO LEARN HOW TO PLAY GOLF:

WOMEN LEADERS OF THE CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES (CUPE)

by

ALISON DAVIDSON

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
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Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
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Abstract

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Alison Davidson

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This study explored the realities of women union activists in order to illuminate their place within the current evolving culture of the labour movement in Canada. Women have been entering the work force and becoming members of unions at increasingly high rates. This increased representation of women union members has challenged the culture of the labour movement and has forced a renegotiation of who is considered "appropriate" in positions of leadership. The participants in this study were sixteen women members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) who were elected into leadership positions at the local, provincial, and national levels.

Literature on women's activism has focused on the barriers facing them and their resultant under-representation in elected leadership positions. However, a comprehensive theory which describes the experiences of women union activists and their personal choices in becoming active has not yet been developed. Using an inductive analysis within a qualitative paradigm, this study explored the multi-faceted experiences of women's lives and how these experiences impact on their desire to become active within CUPE.

To explain these experiences, the "Self-Fulfilment Theory" (SFT) has been developed. The SFT focuses on women's desire to self-actualize and to reach the goal of self-fulfilment as primary reasons for becoming active in the labour movement. Activism is a means for women to develop a sense of personal power and control and ultimately to achieve fulfilment in their lives. Activism is more than a job or a commitment; it is tied to their desired self-perception; namely, as strong competent contributors to society.

This study suggests that to explain women's activism within the labour movement, it is important not to focus solely on the barriers limiting women's involvement. An understanding of women's personal desires and feelings about themselves are crucial components for an explanation of women's activism. It is suggested that further work be undertaken to explore the elements introduced within the framework of the SFT. The relationship among self-esteem, self-efficacy and women's activism is a further suggested area of study.

Author's Note

The title of this dissertation originated from a woman leader who had been president of her local for eight years, in one of the largest private sector unions in Canada, and a member of their National Executive Board. At a women's activism workshop, she spoke of her frustration during their executive board meetings, where she would come in the morning of the second day and many of the decisions for that day would have already been made without discussion. She was present during the previous day's discussion and could not understand what had happened. She then learned that all the men on the board (she was one of only two women) had gone to play golf after adjournment on the previous day. On the golf course they had reached agreement on the issues listed on the agenda for the second day. She seriously considered taking up golf but then decided that a better approach would be to challenge this practice of "golf course decision making" at the board-room table.

It is the ability and perseverance of women who challenge the status quo and the strength of their commitment to equity that has motivated this research.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank those who have helped me complete this work. My supervisor Jack Quarter was relentless in his support and encouragement throughout the whole process. The women I interviewed were wonderful to share with me both their time and their stories. I hope that I have done justice to their words. I would also like to acknowledge my examination committee - Budd Hall, Lana Stermac, Mary Alice Guttman, Nina Bascia, and Janice Ristock - for their thoughtful suggestions of ways to strengthen this research.

The members and activists at my home local - CUPE 3907 (formerly the Canadian Union of Educational Workers Local 7) taught me, and are continuing to teach me, the importance of the trade union movement. CUPE, as an employer, graciously provided me with the flexibility I needed to complete. My friends both within and outside of the academy have always been there to listen to my gripes and frustrations as well as to share in my joy. My family's pride in my work has helped me to celebrate the end of a long journey. The arrival of my special friend and partner near the completion of my work has opened up the possibilities for my life after OISE.

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Chapter I

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Study

Within the Canadian Labour Movement (CLM), women and other marginalized groups have worked within the union structure to make significant gains on equity issues. Unions and labour bodies have been at the forefront of fighting for workers in many areas of equity, including accessible and affordable day care, employment equity, pay equity, flexible work schedules, parental leave, opposition to homophobia, anti-racism, and measures to reduce violence against women. Marginalized groups have found a sympathetic and concerned ally in the policies and practices of the labour movement and have been successful in lobbying governments, policy makers, and employers for progressive gains on issues affecting disenfranchised and oppressed members of our communities.

The purpose of this research is to focus on women's place within the current, evolving culture of the labour movement in order to understand this culture's impact on women and, in turn, to understand the effects of an increased representation of women unionized workers on this culture. I will examine the realities of women who hold leadership positions within a national union in Canada and propose that this exploration will provide insight into their activism within the culture of the labour movement. My theoretical framework will be constituted from a feminist perspective and will endeavour to explore women's involvement in a traditionally male domain and the choices women have made within this domain. As women advance to leadership positions, the existence of barriers provides an insufficient explanation for their continued activism. I will therefore attempt to give a more encompassing explanation of women's activism through an exploration into their

personal choices. This exploration will result in the construction of a theory which incorporates personal choice and related psychological dimensions.

The progress of women labour leaders, and hence their increased acceptance within this erstwhile male bastion, suggests that the norms and values of the labour culture are shifting. My research is an attempt to focus on this proposed shift in the labour movement culture through the lens shaped by women leaders' stories. Women leaders provide an unique vantage point from which to study the culture of the CLM in that they, in the process of running for office, have chosen to challenge the union culture's view that authority equals masculinity and femininity implies subservience. The focus of my research is therefore to examine the choices women make in becoming active, the experiences they have as activists and the resultant impact of their choices on the labour movement culture.

The increased representation of women as both union members and elected leaders suggests progress toward the acceptance of women as equal and contributing members of unions. A key indicator of a union's commitment to women's concerns is the representativeness of women in the decision-making process of that union (Kumar, 1993). If Kumar is correct, a study on leadership within the CLM will be an important indicator of how the union culture is accommodating to the needs of a changing composition of its membership. Becoming active within their union is, for many women, engaging in non-traditional work. Although women have been given a formal opportunity to enter non-traditional work, something is preventing them from realizing that opportunity (Schultz, 1992).

Although every place within the labour movement is *open* to women, an element in this study is to uncover the more implicit (unspoken) boundaries that limit the *accessibility* of women to these places. I propose that these boundaries are largely defined by the culture of

the labour movement and that challenging these boundaries offers a redefinition to and revitalization of that culture. The focus of this research will expand beyond an examination of barriers and will include an analysis of women's personal reasons for becoming active. An understanding of these reasons will complement existing theories relating to women's activism.

Within the culture of the labour movement as well as in the larger socio-political context, women (especially white middle-class women) have discovered that previously-closed doors are now open, or at least, opened wider to notions of sharing power (Darcy, 1993). I propose to contribute to the exploration of why, now that the doors are open and women constitute 41.3 per cent of the unionized work force in Canada (Statistics Canada, 1994), they are still under-represented in leadership positions.

To theorize on the challenges facing women in the CLM culture, I will borrow from the analysis provided by Cunnison and Stageman (1993) in their research on the culture of the British labour movement. Their analysis, which will be further explored in Chapter III, suggests that women union members enter into a circle of irrelevance, defined as a self-perpetuating cycle in which women find themselves alienated from their union because the issues of concern for them are not addressed and their voices are not heard. My research targets how women are redefining their role within the culture of the CLM by insisting upon their right to become elected leaders within the culture.

The research to date on women's activism suggests that women's time commitment to family is a predominant inhibitor to their activism. Activism is a third layer of responsibility for women, above their paid work outside the home and their household work, as the majority of women in dual-earner households still undertake an unequal share of work done in the home (Marshall, 1993). Women who have paid employment outside of the home

and who have children are less likely to have the time and support to commit to union work. In addition, many women work multiple part-time, partial year jobs in an attempt to earn a full-time, full-year wage (Canadian Labour Congress, 1997).

Women's own sense of self-efficacy as leaders, and their questioning of their competency in these non-traditional roles, is another less-explored, yet plausible reason for the decreased involvement by women. Women and men make choices in their lives based on their socialization, self-concept, level of self-efficacy, perceived competency, expectations of success and failure, and subjective value ascribed to a given task (Eccles, 1994). The choices they make and the psychological underpinnings of these choices are sites of inquiry into why they do or do not become activists and leaders within the labour movement. These various factors interact within a labour movement culture in which the structures continue to be hierarchical and male dominated and which has traditionally been concerned with issues relevant to the lives of white working-class men. How do women activists negotiate their place within this culture, given both the external pressures listed above and the potential internal questioning of their competency and efficacy in leadership roles?

The research to date in Canada on women in the labour movement has not paid adequate attention to barriers constructed within the union culture. Discrimination is usually listed as one of the obstacles put in place of women's advancement. However, the systemic nature of that discrimination is rarely studied (Forrest, 1993). It is unclear how union policies and practices work to discourage women's participation and exclude them from leadership. The literature is equally silent on women's struggles to change this reality within the labour culture. In addition, there is no thorough description offered in the literature on women leaders' choices and experiences of their perceived "levels of fit" with the culture of the CLM or the reasons they have for engaging in union work. These internal beliefs result

in particular choices women make as to whether they are active within the CLM.

1.2 Context of the Study

The context for my research will be CUPE. In 1994, CUPE was the largest union in Canada with 455,818 members representing 10.0 per cent of all unionized workers in Canada (Directory, 1996). Unfortunately, this Directory does not provide a gender breakdown of unionized workers in Canada. However, data from CUPE's national database indicate that in 1993 women constituted 53.9 per cent of all CUPE members. The most recent data available state that the overall female membership in the unionized work force in Canada stands at 41.3 per cent (Statistics Canada, 1994); therefore CUPE is above the current national average.

The wave of unionism in Canada beginning in the 1960s organized predominantly public sector workers, many of whom were women. This resulted in a radical change in the number of women members in the CLM. When CUPE was formed in Winnipeg in 1963 with the merger of the National Union of Public Service Employees and the National Union of Public Employees, it was already the second largest union in the Canadian Labour Congress and the largest Canadian union affiliated within the Congress. At that time women represented 32 per cent of CUPE's membership. Since 1975, CUPE has been the largest union in Canada and the one which represents the largest number of women. CUPE's top two leadership positions are currently both held by women.

CUPE was chosen as the site for this research because of its representativeness across diverse employment groups, the high percentage of women members, and its stated commitment to equity goals for all marginalized groups, including women. CUPE offers a place to examine "success stories" of women leaders. Women hold leadership positions

within CUPE at or near the proportion of women in the membership. From this it seems that the culture of CUPE has been more conducive to women's activism. I propose that the process experienced by these "success stories" will offer insight into the evolving culture of the labour movement. I also propose that understanding how women have achieved positions within CUPE's culture will provide useful information toward explaining why other women within the CLM have found the process difficult. In addition, their reasons for initiating activism and their experiences while in leadership positions will offer insight into the dynamics of women's activism. CUPE's high number of women members offers an unique opportunity to view the lives of women within a labour culture.

In this research, I do not suggest that the culture within CUPE is similar to all other unions, or indicative of the culture of the CLM as a whole. However, I do propose that the contexts are similar enough to warrant the transfer of results from my research within CUPE to explanations regarding women within the CLM. I am also not attempting to generalize the results from my research to other women's realities as there are always multiple perspectives and no one perspective can tell the whole story or no group of perspectives form the whole of the phenomenon. I will propose, however, that the data obtained from my research may be transferred to other contexts in the form of a working hypothesis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) that will aid in an understanding of women's activism. As CUPE represents currently the largest unionized work force in Canada, and concomitantly the largest number of unionized women, an exploration of the realities of women leaders within CUPE toward an understanding of CUPE's culture will be useful for proposing a framework to understand women's activism within the larger CLM.

I have chosen to interview women currently in elected leadership positions because an integral part of this research is the focus on the evolutionary nature of the labour movement.

I am interested in the personal choices women make both to initiate activism and to maintain it in leadership positions. Women leaders can provide both the experience of failed attempts (perhaps from previous attempts) as well as the successful strategies they have used to become elected officers. Women who have only experienced failed attempts at election would provide insight into barriers inherent in the labour culture. However, their stories would be limited to this and would not expand to include how they personally feel in elected positions and how their presence as women leaders is possibly redefining the acceptable place for women within the labour culture.

The suggested feminizing of the labour movement (Cunnison & Stageman, 1993) occurring as a result of the increased number of women union members places us at an exciting evolutionary time within labour history. Changing gender relations resulting from the increase in women entering into non-traditional arenas is likely to result in redefinitions of masculinity and femininity (Kimmel. 1987). The trade union culture in Canada is in the process of change and enrichment through the gradual incorporation of feminine values and practices, largely as a result of the change in composition of the membership.

The traditional union culture has been interested in issues impacting upon white working-class men within the industrial and manufacturing sectors. In addition, the culture supports and typifies traditional masculine behaviour and values; physical toughness, competition, aggression, independence, and anti-femininity (Cockburn, 1991; Cunnison & Stageman, 1993). This culture presents barriers to participation for women, and hence their representation in the labour movement. The current shift occurring both in the work force and within unions is toward an inclusiveness of marginalized groups, including women. This shift will force unions, who desire to maintain their goals of equity, justice, solidarity, and fairness, to address how to achieve these goals for a changing membership. The focus of

this shift will be in two directions, both progressive and regressive - forward to the emergent and changing needs of the membership and backward to the fundamental principles upon which the movement is based.

Although significant gains have been made in organizing women into unions, and they have benefited greatly from this, women are still under-represented in leadership positions at many levels within the CLM. The work to date on barriers to women's involvement has clarified various overt, direct practices that have worked traditionally to bar women from activism (i.e., meeting schedules that do not take into account working women's schedules and lack of appropriate child care for union-sponsored events). In addition, unions have realized that the inherent sexism within their unions is a reflection of a larger patriarchal society and have begun to address this through policy statements and educational tools aimed at eliminating barriers and sexist practises in the workplace and within the unions. Some feminist trade unionists posit, however, that the support women receive from male-dominated unions is half-hearted and sporadic and that women workers are facing the same disparaging sexism from their fellow male unionists which is permeating Canadian society as a whole (Frager, 1983). The labour culture is one that does not formally exclude women, but rather makes few allowances for the existence of different values, beliefs, and ways of knowing.

Many unions (e.g., the Canadian Auto Workers, the United Steelworkers of America District 6, and CUPE) have developed education courses targeting the barriers that women face in becoming active in their union, in an attempt to increase the number of women leaders within their membership. In addition, unions and labour bodies (i.e., the Ontario Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress), have recognized the need for women to organize on their own within the labour movement and have worked to establish separate women's committees. Affirmative action seats on executive boards have also been

fought for and won by groups within unions and labour bodies, which once again confirms the need for women to carve out a space for themselves within the labour culture. In developing educationals, forming women's committees, and fighting for affirmative action seats for women, unions have recognized that there are particular barriers that affect women's lives within the labour movement and that special consideration is needed to allow women to feel as though they are equal and participating members.

Members who occupy leadership positions in unions are overwhelmingly male, white, and able-bodied even though currently 41.3 per cent of organized workers are women (Statistics Canada, 1994). The highest political structures within the Canadian Labour Movement hierarchy such as the Canadian Labour Congress, which represents 60.8 per cent of unionized workers in Canada (Directory, 1995), have the poorest representation of women in leadership positions (White, 1993a). In fact, at the Canadian Labour Congress, three of the four top positions are held by men as are 28 of their 32 vice-president positions[1] (Directory, 1995).

1.3 Summary

In relating Cunnison and Stageman's (1993) theory to the Canadian context, I will examine whether women consider themselves irrelevant to a culture which is imbued with male identity. This feeling of irrelevance, combined with structural barriers to activism, such as family responsibilities, results in fewer women seeking leadership roles. Further, I propose that white working-class men, who are in leadership positions within the CLM and who have been long-standing members of unions, are threatened by women's infiltration into

[1]These vice-president positions are held by the presidents of the 20 largest Canadian unions and the presidents of the 12 Provincial/Territorial Federations of Labour in Canada.

this culture. The consequence of this threatened state results in barriers to activism through de-legitimation of their roles as trade union activists, further contributing to an under-representation of women in leadership positions. The barriers faced take many forms and include low levels of self-confidence and self-efficacy in positions of leadership. These feelings impact on whether women choose to become active and, if already active, whether they desire to maintain our activism. Clarifying barriers however forms only part of the analysis. Understanding the choices women make to become active will provide a clearer, broader framework in which to understand activism.

My research will provide a missing piece to the analysis of women's involvement in the Canadian Labour Movement. One way this will be done is through an analysis of barriers and how the union culture works to limit activism. As Forrest (1993) explains in reference to scholarship in the industrial-relations literature,

> Considerably less attention has been paid to the difficulties placed in the path of women seeking positions of power in male-dominated organizations. Although discrimination is almost always listed as one of the obstacles that women must overcome, the systemic nature of that discrimination is rarely studied. Few researchers have bothered to examine how union policies and practices systematically discourage women's participation and exclude them from leadership (p. 330).

Forrest (1993) continues in her analysis to explain how historically the trade union culture has been used as a tool of patriarchy by both unions and employers which has effectively kept women away from well-paying jobs as well as out of the union hall.

The second contribution to the existing field of study is through an exploration of the personal choices women make and the psychological contributors to their choices to become activists. Women who are active have chosen this path even though they may expect barriers. The reasons for these choices are important components to the understanding of the dynamics of women's activism.

1.4 Outline of the Study

Chapter II will provide a contextual analysis to my research by focusing briefly on the history of women's place within the paid work force in Canada, as well as women's place within the CLM, and specifically within CUPE. Chapter III explores the challenges to women's activism, including a discussion on the culture of the labour movement. I propose to examine how these challenges impact on women's perceived and real level of acceptance as leaders within the CLM. Chapter IV briefly summarizes relevant theories in the areas of women's activism and leadership.

Chapter V outlines the method that I used in my examination of women's activism. I discuss the method for selecting the participants and for examining the interview and questionnaire data. I also provide a brief description of the sixteen respondents. Chapter VI provides a breakdown of the data into two primary and four secondary themes. I chose to include many quotes so not to lose the richness of the data. The final chapter, Chapter VII, explores the "Self-Fulfilment Theory" developed from these data. This theory attempts to explain women's involvement in CUPE by hypothesizing that women choose activism work in order to alleviate feelings of discontentment. Through activism, women work toward a positive sense of self. I conclude Chapter VII with the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

1.5 Significance of the Study

As a committed trade unionists, I believe in and promote the benefits, strengths, and power of belonging to and being active in a strong union. We are at a time when we need to find a way to work collectively and share the potential power and strength of a strong,

unified labour movement. I also agree with Cobble's (1993) analysis that

> If the work force of the future is to be organized, the work lives and work needs of this new majority [women and racial minorities] must be seen not as deviant or as a "special interest" group but as the norm, as expressive of the dominant reality (p. 13).

The labour movement, the women's movement, and other progressive voices have the capacity to work together in a symbiotic relationship for the economic and social liberation of all workers. As a feminist trade unionists, I live the inherent contradiction between the principles of solidarity, fairness, justice, and equality expressed within the labour movement culture and my own questioning of my acceptability and "fit" within that culture.

At this critical historical juncture where the neo-conservative economic agenda is taking hold in Canada and where free trade, restructuring, deregulation, disentanglement, downloading, and privatization are eroding our social services, the labour movement is faced with the difficult tasks of representing all its members, preserving jobs as well as maintaining a membership base. The culture of the labour movement will influence how unions take up this fight. The options include collective action on behalf of all members or, individual in-fighting between traditionally-dominant group members who are used to being in control within their unions and the more recent "infiltrators" to the labour movement. The choice of options depends to a great extent on whether the culture considers all members to be equal claimants to the rights associated with union membership. The magnitude of the challenge unions face will also determine who will choose to become active. Those who may not feel strong and competent as leaders may avoid taking on these struggles.

Chapter II

2. WOMEN IN THE CANADIAN LABOUR MOVEMENT

In this chapter I will explore women's involvement in the paid work force in Canada, their role as unionized workers and as leaders in the labour movement in Canada, and finally, their representation within CUPE. Women's participation in the labour movement is predicated on their representativeness in the paid work force. The number of women in the paid work force and in unions has greatly increased since the 1960s. Using a historical analysis, this chapter describes the socio-political realities of these workers. This analysis is meant to provide a context for an understanding of the representation of women workers and women leaders within labour today. The topic of women in the work force is extremely broad. For the purpose of this research I will focus on particular points germane to the discussion of women's activism in the labour movement. These include the prevalence of women in part-time work, the number of working mothers who have recently come into the work force, the differential income levels between men and women, and the sex-segregation and sex-typing of particular jobs. Following this overview, a description of CUPE as well as a description of women's roles as members and leaders within CUPE are provided.

Much of the reported work on women in the CLM clearly does not identify who is being discussed under the general term "women". I do not want to continue this generalization and make problematic assumptions. Where possible I will identify the non-dominant group members' realities within the literature review and the research project itself. For example, it was estimated that in 1991, there were 1.9 million adults in Canada who were visible minorities, representing 9 per cent of the population who were 15 years of age and over. Three-quarters of this group were first generation immigrants (Kelly, 1995).

Workers of colour are generally more highly educated than other adults in Canada (Kelly, 1995). In fact, women of colour are more likely than any other women in Canada to have a University degree (Kelly, 1995). However, workers of colour are still less likely to be employed in professional or managerial occupations and more likely to be in lower-paying clerical, service, and manual labour jobs. Racial discrimination has resulted in a stratified work force where workers of colour are largely relegated to low-paid, low status jobs, shift-work, and higher than average levels of unemployment (Cunnison & Stageman, 1993). These jobs are also where much of the union organizing is taking place. It is imperative therefore that issues of concern for non-dominant group members form part of the discussion on the culture of the CLM.

The representation of women from non-dominant groups in the non-unionized work force was 17 per cent in 1993. For the unionized work force, the representation dropped to 14 per cent (Canadian Labour Congress, 1997). Therefore, in comparison to the current participation rate of women in the work force (45.4 per cent), the rate for women from non-dominant groups is remarkably low. Workers of colour are dissatisfied with the slow pace of change on issues of race. Not all women workers of colour have shared in the recent gains made by predominantly white women in the labour movement and, in fact, white-dominated women's committees have done little to advance the interests of women workers of colour (Cunnison & Stageman, 1993). Consequently, in a discussion of gains women have made in the labour movement, some women workers of colour have asked not to be included until they also share in the benefits (Leah, 1989).

Cunnison and Stageman (1993) state that women's ways of knowing are different than men's and are also careful to point out that diverse experience gives rise to diverse identities. However, they suggest that

> beneath the diversity is a core set of gender-specific values which support a core culture of femininity...which are found "among" women, but which are not to be thought of as attributes of all women (emphasis in the original, p. 17).

I hope to base my research on a discussion of the common factors that construct women as a meaningful social category within the labour movement but also describe the diverse experiences of women.

2.1 History of Women in the Paid Work Force in Canada[2]

In Canada, the factory system of production began in large urban centres like Toronto and Montreal in the 1870s and 1880s. This system, of course, brought with it an increased number of workers in the urban areas; the urban population at the turn of the century increased manyfold. Women outnumbered men in urban centres like Montreal across all age groups. In the late 1800s, women were active members of the work force, representing 34.5 per cent. But the census statistics under-represented women and indicated that they were less than 15 per cent of the work force (White; 1993a). The discrepancy is explained by the fact that most of the women working were under 25 years old, and usually their work life was temporary, intermittent, and concentrated between the ages of 15 and 20 years. Therefore, although there was a significant number of women working at the time, their transitory nature precluded their registration by the census as gainfully employed. Women were concentrated in such industries as clothing, tobacco, cotton, light manufacturing, confectionaries, and communications. Factories were enticing whole families to come and work for them and offering jobs to the wives and the children to supplement the income of

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[2]Much of the following material comes from Women & Work: Inequality in the Canadian Labour Market by Phillips and Phillips (1993). Where other references are used, including labour force statistics, appropriate citations are provided.

the husband - the result being that an entire family was "bought" for one (the husband's) "living wage". Women were paid less than men (57 per cent of male wages in 1910) and were expected to work longer hours.

The large increase in the number of women, both married and single, within the factory communities provided employers with a cheap pool of labour. Moreover, the role of women as secondary income earners was clearly defined at this time. Employers stated that women were supported either by their family of origin or their family of marriage, and therefore did not need a "living wage". Because the supply of workers within the factory communities was far in excess of the demand, employers did not always have to pay an equitable wage to either the man or the woman.

Women professionals began working as teachers in the primary public school system. In 1897 they were paid one-third of the wage of their male counterparts. Fewer requirements were placed on women to attain their qualifications as teachers, that is, they were asked to take fewer exams than men. These less stringent requirements for women were then used to justify the lower wages paid to them. Beginning in 1895, married women and women over 30 were barred from teaching, as their primary responsibility was deemed to be to their homes and families.

The reformers of the time, including white middle-class women, attempted to limit working-class women's involvement in the paid work force. They voiced their concerns about the possible lapse in women's morality and their desire to fulfil their roles of reproduction. It was suggested that factory work would impact negatively on the ideal of "womanliness". Women who worked outside the home were in direct contradiction to the prevailing image of womanhood, which consisted of religious piety, moral purity and, most importantly, a complete commitment to domesticity (White, 1993a). When women workers

were discussed publicly, it was in reference to the effects of work on their maternal role and not on their economic role and their position in reference to male workers (White, 1993a).

Nevertheless, throughout the turn of the 19th century, as the first wave of feminism was gaining prominence in English Canada, women were gaining economic, legal, and political rights. The ideology of most feminists included an acceptance of the maternal role for women but also sought to extend that role beyond the confines of the family. As it was considered a woman's duty to protect and nurture her children and homes, feminists believed that this could only be accomplished through their participation in public life (White, 1993a).

During the First World War, women's employment greatly increased, although their wages still lagged well behind those for men. Once the men returned from war, women's "obligation" to participate in the work force was lifted and they were asked to go home. A notable exception to this pattern was the burgeoning clerical industry where between 1914 and 1918 the percentage of women workers increased from 15 to 30 per cent. By 1921 women comprised 40 per cent of the work force in this sector. Women clerical workers earned on average 37 to 45 per cent more than the average wage of all employed women (White, 1993a). Between the two world wars, the number of women working in the clerical industry continued to increase while the number working in factories decreased greatly. The Second World War brought women back to the paid work force in droves with their participation rate increasing 69 per cent between 1939 and 1944. As previous, however, when the men returned from the war, the women workers were replaced.

During the post-war period, urbanization grew and the number of productive farms diminished. Women were therefore "freed up" to pursue paid work opportunities at a higher rate than previously. Between 1961 and 1986, the number of male-breadwinner families decreased from 65 per cent to 12 per cent and the number where both parents were working

increased from 14 per cent to 52 per cent.

2.2 Representation of Women in Today's Paid Work Force in Canada

Recent change has included a shift from the goods-producing sector to the service-producing sector. Between 1990 and 1996, there was a 5 per cent decline in the number of workers in the former sector and an increase of 6 per cent in the latter (Statistics Canada, August 1996). There was also a large increase in the number of part-time workers and the number of women workers (Statistics Canada, 1995a). The work force continues to grow in Canada; between 1977 and 1996 there was a 41.8 per cent increase in the number of workers (Directory, 1996).

By the 1991 Canadian census, 6.4 million women were in the labour force, up almost 18 per cent from the 1986 census. In contrast, the number of working men increased by only 8 per cent (Hughes, 1995). The participation rate of women (which is defined as those who currently are employed or who are looking for work as a percentage of the total number of women over the age of 25), was at 57.4 per cent in May, 1997 (Statistics Canada, June, 1997). This means that over half of all women are currently working or trying to find work in Canada. Overall, women represent 45 per cent of all paid workers in 1994, an increase from 37 per cent in 1976 (Statistics Canada, 1995a).

There is a converging trend between employment levels of women and men in Canada. The percentage of employed men has decreased from roughly 74 per cent in 1975 to 65 per cent in 1993, whereas in the same period women have increased employment levels from 41 percent to 52 percent (Best, 1995). Women accounted for almost 70 per cent of the growth of full-year, full-time jobs during 1995. Between 1980 and 1989, the number of full-time, full-year women workers increased by 50.2 per cent (four times the increase of women

in the population (Statistics Canada, January 1997).

2.2.1 Type of Occupation

Although women are still concentrated in many of the occupations in which they traditionally have worked, there is some change. Whereas 18.3 per cent of physicians and surgeons were women in 1982, in 1994 this figure rose to 32.1 per cent. In 1994, 43 per cent of those employed in management and administrative occupations were women, an increase from 29 per cent in 1982 (Statistics Canada, 1995a). Table 1 shows a breakdown of the number of women workers in various occupations between 1982 and 1993. By 1991 the representation of women in the clerical sector had increased to 80 per cent of the total workers in that area. However, the overall proportion of women workers who were concentrated in that sector decreased over the past decade (from 34 per cent in 1982 to 28 per cent in 1993). Therefore, although women still predominate in this sector, they are also moving into other types of work. Table 2 shows the shift in representation between 1976 and 1994 within the service and goods-producing industries for both men and women workers.

Hughes (1995) compared the Canadian census data for the years 1971, 1986 and 1991 in terms of the types of jobs women occupied. She found that the percentage of women in highly traditional jobs has decreased from 86 per cent in 1971 to 78 per cent in 1991 with the largest change between 1971 and 1986.

Table 1: Percentage of Women Workers in Various Occupations, 1982-1993

Occupation	Women 1982 (%)	Women 1993 (%)
Nursing/therapy/other health	85	86
Clerical	79	80
Teaching	59	66
Service	55	57
Social Science/religion	43	56
Sales	40	45
Artistic/literary/recreational	39	44
Managerial/administrative	29	42
Doctors/dentists	18	26
Primary	19	22

Source: Statistics Canada, Catalogue Number: 75-507E

Table 2: Distribution of Employment by Industry, 1976 and 1994

	Service		Goods-producing	
	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
1976	55.0	80.6	45.0	19.4
1994	62.8	86.1	37.2	13.9

Source: Statistics Canada (1995b). Women in Canada: A Statistical Report, 3rd edition. Catalogue Number: 89-503E.

2.2.2 Part-Time Work

In 1996, the number of part-time jobs reached 2.9 million, up 120 per cent from 1975 (Canadian Labour Congress, 1997). In the clerical sector from 1990 to 1995, full-time employment was reduced by 13 per cent while part-time employment increased by 22 per cent. Women represent 86 per cent of the total clerical part-time work force. For the same period in the service sector, the number of women employed increased 6.8 per cent yet the

proportion of full-time women's employment dropped from 60 per cent to 58 per cent (Canadian Labour Congress, 1997). Women accounted for all the increase in part-time jobs and lost 77 per cent of the full-time jobs held by visible minority workers (Human Resources Development Canada, 1995, cited in Canadian Labour Congress, 1997).

Part-time work accounted for 17 per cent of total employment by 1994 compared to only 11 per cent in 1976 (see Table 3). In 1994, 34 per cent of all female part-time workers indicated that they wanted full-time employment but were unable to achieve it. This figure has increased since 1989 when only 22 per cent indicated they preferred full-time work (Statistics Canada, 1995a). Currently, 23 per cent of employed women 25 years and older are working part-time (Statistics Canada, June 1997). Throughout the past two decades, women have consistently accounted for approximately 70 per cent of all part-time workers (Statistics Canada, 1995a).

Table 3: Part-time Work in Canada, 1976 and 1994

	% of total employment	% of employment of women
1976	11	20
1994	17	26

Source: Best, P. (Spring, 1995). Women, men & work. Canadian Social Trends. (pp. 30-33). Statistics Canada, Catalogue Number: 11-008E.

Women were much more likely to be employed part-time because of personal or family responsibilities. However, the number of women reporting this as a reason for choosing part-time work has decreased in the past two decades. In 1994, 12 per cent of part-time working women indicated they worked part-time because of personal and family

responsibilities compared to only 0.9 per cent of part-time working men. When men worked part-time it was often because they were going to school (43.9 per cent of men reported this as compared to 21.4 per cent of women) (Statistics Canada, 1995a). The needs of the employer are met when they hire part-time women. Many people working part-time are in lower paying, non-unionized, service-oriented sectors that do not offer access to benefits such as pension plans and supplementary health-care coverage (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1994).

Involuntary part-time employment (those who would prefer to work full-time) as a proportion of total part-time employment increased from 11 per cent in 1975 to 36 per cent in 1993. In 1996, 67 per cent of involuntary part-time workers were women (Canadian Labour Congress, 1997). With the accompanying diminished income in part-time work, women became multiple job holders. Between 1977 to 1993 the number of women with multiple jobs grew 372 per cent, compared to 93 per cent for men (Canadian Labour Congress, 1997).

2.2.3 Working Mothers

The demographics of the changing work force also include an increase in the participation of women who have young children (Best, 1995). By 1994, 56 per cent of women with children less than age 3 were employed, up from 39 per cent in 1981 (Statistics Canada, 1995a). Table 4 provides a summary of recent changes in working mothers' participation rates and their proportion of the overall female work force. It is clear that the number of women working outside the home who have children still at home has increased over the past 10 years. Mothers made up 49 per cent of the total women in the labour force in 1991, and this increase occurred despite a slight decline in the overall proportion of women with children at home (43 percent in 1991 compared to 45 per cent in 1981) as well

as the unavailability of adequate child-care facilities. In 1994 the employment rate of women with children less than age 16 living at home rose to 63 per cent, which is higher than the 52 per cent reported for all adult women (Statistics Canada, 1995a). Because of this increase in the number of working mothers in the paid work force, the participation rate has narrowed between mothers with children in the home and other women (see Table 5).

Table 4: Participation Rate* of Working Mothers in Canada, 1981 and 1991

	Working Mothers With Children at home (%)	Proportion of Total Women in Work Force (%)	Working Mothers With Partners (%)	Working Mothers Without Partners (%)
1981	52	45	52	54
1991	68	49	70	60

*Defined as those currently employed or seeking work.

Source: Logan, R. & Belliveau, J. (Spring, 1995). Working mothers. Canadian Social Trends. (pp. 24-28). Statistics Canada, Catalogue Number: 11-008E.

Table 5: Participation Rate* of Working Mothers With Children in the Home Compared to Other Women by Age, 1991

	Mothers (%)	Other Women (%)
25-34 years	70	91
35-44 years	78	85
45 and older	72	71

* Defined as those currently employed or seeking work.

Source: Logan, R. & Belliveau, J. (Spring, 1995). Working mothers. Canadian Social Trends. (pp. 24-28). Statistics Canada, Catalogue Number: 11-008E.

2.2.4 Earnings

There has also been an increase in the average earnings of women working full-time as a percentage of those of men. In 1995, women who worked full-time, full-year averaged an income which was 73.1 per cent of their male counterparts. This is an increase from 69.8 per cent in 1994 (Statistics Canada, January 1997). It is of note, however, that this comparison takes into consideration only women who work full-time and full-year and not the many women who either work part-time throughout the year at usually lower rates of pay or who may take a leave for family reasons during part of the year. When all waged workers are considered, in 1995 women earn 65.1 per cent of men's wages. Full-time, full-year single working women earn 94.1 per cent of men's wages, whereas those who are married only earn 68.9 per cent (Statistics Canada, January 1997).

Women are also moving into higher income levels. They constituted 17 per cent of those with earnings above $51,000, up from only 11.5 per cent in 1984. This increase occurred for women between the ages of 40 and 54. For those in other age groups, their position within the earnings distribution remained unchanged, and for some it grew worse (Scott & Lochhead, 1997).

Wages of women of colour and aboriginal women who were working at full-time, full-year jobs were lower than that of other women, men of colour, and other men. In addition, many women of colour are in "underground jobs" where there are no recorded wages (National Action Committee on the Status of Women, 1993). The official unemployment rate for all women in 1995 was 9.2 per cent. For visible minority women, the most recent available statistics show that in 1991 the rate was 13.4 per cent, Aboriginal women 17.7 per cent and for women with disabilities it was 16.6 per cent (Canadian Labour Congress, 1997).

Women constitute more than half of the total population with low incomes; in 1993, 20 per cent of the total female population had low-incomes compared with 16 per cent of the male population. In addition, women of colour were more likely than any other group of women to have low incomes (Statistics Canada, 1995a). Single-parent households led by women under 65 years old have the highest poverty rate in Canada (57.2 per cent in 1995). This rate increases to 80.4 per cent for women with three or more children (National Council on Welfare, 1997). In a survey of fifteen countries worldwide, Canada ranked second to Japan on the incidence of low-paid employment for women; 34.3 per cent of Canadian women were working for low wages, compared to 16.1 per cent for men (cited in Canadian Labour Congress, 1997).

In summary, the changes in the labour force include more women, more working mothers, more part-time workers (many involuntary), and more workers in the service-producing industry (with the latter two both involving a majority of women). Many women still work in low-paid, part-time jobs in the service sector where unionization rates are lower. However, the overall increase in the number of women in the work force has resulted in an increase in the number of women unionized workers.

2.3 History of Women in the Canadian Labour Movement

2.3.1 Women Union Members

Women have been involved as members in unions since the 1860s when the Cigar Makers International Union became the first union to admit women into its membership (Balser, 1987). In Canada, unionized women were members of the Knights of Labour during the latter part of the 19th century. The Knights sent their first woman delegate to the Trades and Labour Congress (the central body for Canadian unions) in 1886. The type of women's work often precluded collective action and unionization, as the majority of women

worked either in total isolation or in workplaces with few other workers (White, 1993a). There were attempts to organize domestic workers in the late 1800s. However, these women were vulnerable to retaliation by their employer and also had a high turnover rate, which frustrated these attempts. The second largest employer of women was the clothing and textile industry, where women were employed either in small "sweat" shops with an average of four workers per workplace or in their home where they worked alone. This system prevented both wage comparison and unionization, because the workers were dispersed and fragmented (White, 1993a).

The turnover rate for women workers was high in all sectors since women were consistently leaving the work force once they were married. In addition, as many of the women were considered unskilled, their bargaining power with their employer was limited. There was also a surplus of workers waiting as a "reserve army" (Phillips & Phillips, 1993), which afforded the employer the opportunity for exploitation of both male and female workers. The continual wave of immigration added to this surplus of possible workers and resulted in tension between recent immigrants and current workers.

The limited potential to organize women was because of their transience, their decentralized organization, and their relatively unskilled work. In addition, many employed women were recent immigrants to Canada and faced cultural and linguistic barriers. These factors combined with the ethic of the day, which suggested that a woman's appropriate place was the home and the family, resulted in few attempts at organizing. Unions which consisted of mostly male factory workers did not want their wages undercut by the addition of lower paid female members. The limited organizing of women workers during the late 1800s and early 1900s was not due, however, solely to the lack of enthusiasm by male union officials or the difficulties inherent in organizing women because of the type of their

employment. Employers had much power and were very hostile to unions. Workers who held precarious jobs, especially in the unskilled sectors (women and recent immigrants), were not about to risk losing their positions in order to organize unions.

The next major historical shift for women union members was during the 1960s and 1970s. Throughout this time, women were organized into unions more extensively than any other working group (National Action Committee on the Status of Women, 1993; White, 1993a). Between 1983 and 1992, they accounted for 79 per cent of the total growth in union membership in Canada (Statistics Canada, 1995a). In 1992, the female membership of unions grew to account for 41.3 per cent of all unionized workers in Canada and was expected to account for over 42 per cent in 1993 (Statistics Canada, 1994[3]). Although women are still in unions less often than men, the gap has substantially narrowed in the last two decades (White, 1993b). In 1992, 31 per cent of all female workers (compared with 38 per cent of men) were unionized (Statistics Canada, 1995a). The service-producing sector constituted 37.2 per cent of employed union members in 1992. Table 6 provides a breakdown of the unionized workers and the unionized women workers in the service industry in Canada in 1992.

Table 6: Unionized Workers in the Service Industry, 1992

Percentage of all unionized workers	37.2	
Percentage of all unionized women workers	60.0	
Educational and health service		55.3
Public administration		17.5
Other social services		19.7
Total		92.5

Source: Statistics Canada (1994). Annual Report of the Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act Part II: Labour Unions 1992 (CALURA). Catalogue Number: 71-202.

[3]There was no breakdown by race provided.

Sixty per cent of all female union members are employed in service industries, with the largest concentration in the education and health service (followed by public administration). Education, health, and social services account for almost all unionized women workers within the service-producing sector.

Women are joining unions eight times faster than men (National Action Committee on the Status of Women, 1993). From 1962 to 1989, their numbers grew by 510 per cent, substantially higher than for men (White, 1993a). In 1987, 4 out of every 5 new union members were women (United Steelworkers of America, 1992).

Tables 7 and 8 show the percentages of equity seeking groups (visible minorities, aboriginals and people with disabilities) in the work force and the unionization rates (defined as the percentage of workers unionized as a proportion of all non-agricultural paid workers, [Directory, 1995]) for these groups. Equity-seeking groups make up 14 per cent of the unionized work force and 17 per cent of the non-unionized work force. The unionization rate for these groups is generally lower than for all workers. Table 9 shows the wages of equity-seeking groups in both the unionized and non-unionized work force. In all cases, unionized workers earn more; for women, the gap between unionized and non-unionized wage rates is especially pronounced.

Table 7: Equity-Seeking Groups as Share of Unionized and Non-Unionized Work Force by Gender, 1993

	Unionized		Non-unionized	
	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Visible Minority	6	7	9	8
Aboriginal	2	2	3	3
Disability	6	5	5	6

Source: Canadian Labour Congress. (1997). Women and Work: A Report. Ottawa.

Table 8: Unionization Rates For Equity-Seeking Groups by Gender, 1993

	Unionization Rate*		
	All	Men	Women
All Workers	31.3	33.8	28.6
Visible Minority Workers	25.8	24.8	26.7
Aboriginal Workers	25.7	26.1	25.2
Workers with Disabilities	31.3	37.1	24.8

* Defined as the percentage of workers unionized as a proportion of all non-agricultural paid workers.

Source: Canadian Labour Congress. (1997). Women and Work: A Report. Ottawa.

Table 9: Unionized and Non-unionized Hourly Wages for Members of Equity Seeking Groups by Gender, 1993

	All ($)			Men ($)		Women ($)	
	All	Union	Non union	Union	Non union	Union	Non union
All	14.41	18.03	12.75	18.98	14.23	16.81	11.25
Visible Minority	12.66	15.04	11.84	15.77	12.81	14.31	10.78
Disability	13.57	17.67	11.70	18.93	12.78	15.54	10.66
Aboriginal	12.49	17.28	10.82	18.23	12.01	16.26	9.60

Source: Canadian Labour Congress. (1997). Women and Work: A Report. Ottawa.

Unionization in Canada must be seen in light of the influence from the United States. In the early 1800s, 85 per cent of all union members in Canada belonged to international unions (White, 1993a), in contrast with only 29.4 per cent today (Directory, 1996). How unions organized originally in Canada was therefore more directly influenced by the policies

[illegible] practices of the international unions headquartered in the United States, compared to [illegible]

The actual number of women and their rate of unionization in the five top industries where women predominate is shown in Table 10. The unionization rate for part-time workers is less than that for full-time workers (see Table 11). Given that women represent 70 per cent of part-time workers, they are most likely affected by this lower unionization rate (Canadian Labour Congress, 1997).

Table 10: Top Five Industries with Largest Representation of Unionized Women in Canada, 1992

	Number of Women (000s)	Unionization Rate* (%)
Health and Social Services	477	50.3
Educational Services	400	71.5
Public Administration	279	80.0
Transportation/Communications/ Other Utilities	117	52.1
Communications	70	61.9

* Defined as the percentage of women workers unionized in the industry.

Source: Statistics Canada (1994). Annual Report of the Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act Part II: Labour Unions 1992 (CALURA). Catalogue Number: 71-202.

Table 11: Unionization Rates* of Full-Time and Part-Time Workers by Gender

	All	Men	Women
All Workers	31.3	33.8	28.6
Full-Time	34.7	36.8	31.6
Part-Time	22.7	20.1	23.9

* Defined as the percentage of workers unionized as a proportion of all non-agricultural paid workers.

Source: Canadian Labour Congress. (1997). Women and Work: A Report. Ottawa.

Unions are currently faced with a growth in the labour force - a growth which is at a higher rate than the unionization rate (Directory, 1996). The resultant stagnation of union membership over the past thirty years has largely been due to a decline in manufacturing jobs where there has been historically high unionization rates. The shift in employment to the service-producing sector where unionization rates have also increased has counterbalanced what would have been a decline in the overall unionization rate with the loss of the unionized manufacturing jobs (Galarneau, 1996). Currently the unionization rate in Canada is at 33.9 per cent and has remained relatively constant over the past three decades (Directory, 1996).

2.3.2 Women Union Leaders

The first woman to serve as a top official within a Canadian union was Grace Hartman, who became the National Secretary/Treasurer of CUPE in 1966. She later became CUPE President in 1975, and remained there until 1983. Although women's representation within unions has increased greatly, they remain under-represented in union executive committee positions (White, 1993a). It is important that women define a place for themselves within the labour culture because:

> [w]hat has become painfully obvious to women union members is the lack of attention paid to issues of importance to them. In order for unions and employers to take note, it would appear that women trade unions must take a more active role in pursing their own interests (Boehm, 1991, p. 6).

In 1989, 25 per cent of executive positions within local unions were held by women, which was below the 39.1 per cent of all women union members at that time (White, 1993a). In addition, in a cross-section of Canadian unions, none had women on executive committees or as convention delegates in proportions equal to the percentage of women members (White, 1993a).

When the top leadership of the ten largest unions in Canada is reviewed, women are grossly under-represented. A breakdown by sex of official in these key executive positions is provided in Table 12. CUPE is the only union which has women represented in either of its top two positions of President or Secretary/Treasurer. In CUPE, both of these positions are currently held by women.

Table 12: Number of Women Elected Officials in Top Leadership Positions in the Ten Largest Unions in Canada, 1994

	Total Members (#)	Women* (%)	Top Positions** (women/total)	(%)
Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)	409 810	54.7	11/20	55.0
National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE)	307 592	na	1/11	9.1
United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW)	175 000	45.5	0/8	0.0
National Automobile, Aerospace, Agricultural Implement Workers Union (CAW)	170 000	20.0	0/3	0.0
Public Services Alliance Canada (PSAC)	167 828	47.3	3/5	60.0
United Steelworkers of America International Union (USWA)	161 232	14.6	0/6	0.0
Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers (CEP)	149 000	17.1	0/4	0.0
International Brotherhood of Teamsters	95 000	13.2	1/4	25.0

Table 12 con't

Confédération des syndicat nationaux (CSN)	na	67.8	1/6	16.7
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)	80 000	72.0	0/10	0.0
TOTAL			17/77	22.1

* Source: Statistics Canada (1994). Annual Report of the Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act Part II: Labour Unions 1992 (CALURA). Catalogue Number: 71-202. **Positions include President, Secretary, Treasurer, Canadian Director (if applicable), and Vice Presidents or equivalent. Source: Directory of Labour Organizations in Canada. (1995). Ottawa: Department of Labour, Labour Data Branch.

Kumar (1993) outlines the progress made by the CLM on achieving equity for women through the collective bargaining process. However, he points out that in some places change has been slow and frustrating and suggests that

> a key reason why collective bargaining has been slow to respond to women's issues is the apparent lack of urgency on the part of many unions to integrate women fully into union decision-making structures, programs, and activities (p. 224).

He points to structural barriers both internal and external to the union which limit women's participation.

The most recent overview of women's current representation rates in the leadership of unions and labour organizations in Canada is summarized by White (1993a). She collected data through interviews with the Canadian Labour Congress, the Confederation des syndicat nationaux, the ten provincial federations of labour and thirteen selected unions. Her research indicates where women are currently leaders of major unions in Canada at the local, regional, and national levels. Her data, collected in 1989 and detailed in her chapter "Moving Up: Women into Union Leadership", provide an excellent resource for

understanding the position of women in leadership. She concludes with the following key points[4]:

(a) women hold 28 per cent of the executive seats within labour centrals while representing 39 per cent of the overall union membership (41 per cent of these seats are designated as affirmative action seats for women),
(b) only one union in her study of 13 major unions had a woman President - the United Nurses of Alberta,
(c) few labour centrals and unions had a representative number of women delegates at their most recent convention, and in 1992 the Canadian Labour Congress had 25 per cent women delegates (while its membership included 37 per cent women),
(d) only 4 of 13 unions, have a close correspondence between the number of women Presidents and the number of women members, and
(e) women are under-represented on negotiating committees (p. 119).

2.4 Women of CUPE

CUPE stands at the forefront of progressive change toward the inclusion of women into leadership positions. Information obtained from CUPE's national database describing women's representation in leadership is shown in Table 13. These data indicate that when women are elected at the local level they are less likely to hold the position of president. In fact, earlier data showed that the highest proportion of women elected-officers in CUPE was found in the position of recording secretary (71 per cent of local unions' recording secretaries were women in 1988) (White, 1993a). In comparison to many other unions, CUPE has made significant gains on the representativeness of women into leadership positions (given that it is the only national union in Canada with the top two positions both held by women).

[4] These data are from 1989 and there has been some changes in representation. Most notably, CUPE's two top leadership positions are currently both held by women.

Table 13: Representation of Women in Leadership Positions in CUPE, 1993

Position	#	Total	(%)
President at Local	1066	2210	48.2
Table Officer at Local*	4819	8261	58.3
National Executive Board**	11	20	55.0

* Refers to women holding any of the following positions: President, Vice President, Recording Secretary, or Treasurer.
** Comprised of President, Secretary/Treasurer, General Vice Presidents, and Regional Vice Presidents

Source: CUPE National Database, 1995

The 1971 CUPE convention had the stated purpose of focusing attention on issues affecting women in the union. The policies passed at this convention clearly showed that not enough had been done to protect women workers. There was a call for increased representation of women in elected positions, and this push was reiterated in subsequent conventions. Other policies important for women put forward in 1971 included organizing part-time workers, ensuring day-care provisions, and encouraging all levels of CUPE to establish women's committees. CUPE has published and promoted a plethora of statements, policies, and resolutions to increase women's participation within the union and to decrease the discrimination felt by women in the workplace and within their union (Equal Opportunities Policy Statements, CUPE, January 1995).

The CUPE National Women's Task Force was set up in 1979 to develop a strategy to ensure that women's issues receive priority, nationally and throughout the regions. Within the same year the national office reiterated its encouragement to all provincial and regional offices to establish women committees. CUPE's "Ten Point Action Plan", which came out at that time, included a call for increased special programs to meet the needs of women

members. In 1985 CUPE passed convention resolutions to fight violence against women (i.e., sexual harassment, pornography, and battering of women). In 1985, CUPE was the first union to hire a National Equal Opportunities Officer, and in 1987 CUPE became the first union in North America to establish a National Equal Opportunities department which was given the task of promoting economic and social justice for women.

2.5 Summary

The labour force has changed to include more women, more working mothers, more part-time workers (70 per cent of whom are women), and more workers in the service-producing industries. All these shifts represent new challenges for unions in an environment of cut-backs, downsizing, lay-offs, contracting-out, privatization, and high unemployment rates. Recently announced cuts in the public sector, both provincially and federally, may result in backsliding on some of the gains made by women through unionization. The trend toward elimination of full-time positions, for example, may lead more women to look for jobs in the private sector where unionization has been much slower. As the service sector has been targeted in recent years as a key place for organizing, and as 60 per cent of unionized women currently work in this sector, unions such as CUPE have greatly increased their representation of women (for CUPE, from 32 per cent in 1963 to 54.7 per cent in 1994).

Chapter III

3. CHALLENGES TO WOMEN'S ACTIVISM

This chapter focuses both on the culture of the labour movement and on an examination of women's family and working lives so to understand the challenges women face as activists. The terms "activists" and "leaders" will be used interchangeably throughout my research. Both refer to women who have become involved in their union. I refer to those in elected positions as "elected leaders". As a starting point in a description of labour culture, I will explain in more detail Cunnison and Stageman's (1993) analysis on the "circle of irrelevance" in which union women find themselves caught without voice or ability to affect change in their unions. Following this explanation, I will provide a broader description of the labour movement and how aspects of the culture may limit women's full participation. Finally, women's work inside and outside of the home will be discussed in relation to its impact on activism.

3.1 The *Circle of Irrelevance*

In a description of the labour culture in Britain, Cunnison and Stageman (1993) state that

> [i]t is a culture which does not formally exclude women but which makes very few concessions to the existence of any different set of values and patterns of behaviour. It is a culture where few women feel at ease and where most find difficulty in expressing their views (p. 114).

Their research is an attempt to document how the voices of women trade unionists in Britain have been suppressed by the dominant male culture. They believe that until unions address issues of significance to the majority of women workers, they will not feel their unions are

relevant and they will choose not to become involved. They draw attention to this culture as one which is in a state of flux and where there is an ongoing "feminizing" of the movement as a result of increases in women activists challenging the status quo.

Cunnison and Stageman (1993) suggest that the a male culture involves an urge to dominate and exert power over women and over men. Masculinity is equated with paid work for the purpose of status and independence and also places a positive value on mental and physical toughness, competition, aggression, and sometimes violence. There are feelings of anti-femininity (or an adverse reaction to stereotypical female behaviour which is considered "sissy") as well as a hatred of free expression of emotion. The male worker is seen as the provider for his family and the breadwinner who is entitled to a family wage. Within this traditional view a woman's place is one of secondary income earner, who is not a serious worker and whose identity is still equated with unpaid family service.

Cunnison and Stageman (1993) attempt to avoid presenting a caricature of the masculine culture of the British labour movement, but do believe that there is an essential truth behind this portrayal where, within the union, women find values and behaviour that do not fit with their experience. The result of this "lack of fit" is that women do not believe they are equally contributing members of their unions and they experience themselves as irrelevant to the union.

This indifference is a result of union structures which do not take into account issues impacting on women, collective bargaining negotiations which downplay the needs of women workers, equity policies which were voted on and passed but were not implemented, and under-representation of women in the decision-making bodies of unions. Cockburn (1991) suggests that the preponderance of male leaders within the British labour movement would not be so damaging for women if the men paid attention to women's issues and adequately

represented women's interests which, she argues, they do not. Cunnison and Stageman (1993) focus much of their discussion of the lack of concern placed on women's issues during the bargaining process as well as the lack of support given to women workers during collective action.

The circle of irrelevance is described as a self-fulfilling prophecy where women become alienated from their union because it does not act on their behalf. The women do not become active participants and consequently the culture of the union remains the same. There are five links contained in this circle:

> The first is male-formulated definitions of women located in the trade union culture of masculinity. The second is obstacles for women stemming from their practical role in systems of reproduction, reinforced by men's cultural definitions and by women's own complicit acceptance of their low rates of pay. The third is male-dominated structures of representation supported by gendered patterns of occupational segregation. The fourth is male-dominated structures of authority which rest both on common cultural equations of men with authority and on occupational segregation. The fifth is a male-dominated agenda which excludes many work-related issues of potential interest to women and marginalizes those which are included (Cunnison & Stageman, 1993, pp. 45-46).

This cyclical pattern offers an explanation for the mechanisms in place that work to limit women's involvement within the labour culture. Cunnison and Stageman (1993) study how this pattern works to keep women's issues away from the collective bargaining process. After documenting a series of cases where women's voices have been muted during bargaining, they argue for change in this process so as to include women's interests when setting priorities for bargaining, to increase the number of women in the decision-making bodies and on the negotiating team, and to challenge the informal agenda set by the culture of white, working-class masculinity. They suggest that the experience of the working-class culture of femininity will work to strengthen the collective bargaining process for all members.

Women union members who decide to run for elected office come to their position in the union with complex realities. Women are still the predominant care-givers in the home and, although evolving, the home is still considered women's "appropriate" domain. Women, on average, are still underpaid when compared to men. Consequently, they hold less status in both the home and the workplace, and these two factors contribute to their perceived level of acceptability as leaders. How the structural realities of women's lives intertwine with their psychological sense of self-worth in entering a traditionally male dominated arena of leadership has not been extensively explored in the literature to date.

Given that the union culture is a reflection of the larger patriarchal society in which we live, it is not surprising that women often feel silenced and ignored and their progress is limited. Women face equality challenges within the union as within the larger society. These challenges derive from stereotypes purporting that women are too emotional or too weak to be effective leaders. Masculinity is constructed in part by differentiating it from femininity (Kimmel, 1987). Consequently, women's involvement in the labour movement is limited by their position in contradistinction to masculinity. The strong trade-unionist leader is often categorized as male and connotes strength and endurance.

My research will explore the concept of irrelevancy and will see whether women leaders experience the cyclical self-fulfilling prophesy referred to by Cunnison and Stageman (1993). I will examine whether women have felt irrelevant to the labour culture and, if so, what has produced this irrelevant feeling and how has it impacted upon their activism. Understanding this dynamic of irrelevance will contribute important insight into why (or why not) women decide to take on leadership roles within CUPE. I will argue, however, that this theory needs to be expanded upon to include other practical factors (i.e., women's home life and the structure of their paid work) which are important challenges to women's activism.

In addition, Cunnison and Stageman's (1993) theory does not explore women's own level of self-efficacy as activists within the labour movement or the personal reasons for their activism. I propose that why women become active is indeed related to how "others" define their appropriate place within the movement and the possible resistance posed by these others. However, an important piece to the puzzle missing from this analysis is the impact of their beliefs as women concerning their roles as elected leaders. Also missing is an understanding of the reasons behind their choices to become active.

3.2 A Description of Labour Culture

For the purpose of this research, culture is defined as the social and normative cohesion within an organization which expresses the values and beliefs held by members of the organization. Further, the culture of an organization provides a sense of identity for the members and acts as an effective device to guide and shape behaviour (Johnson, 1992). In this section, I will describe the labour culture both historically and present day. Some of the following information is extrapolated from British and American researchers and may not be identical to the culture of the CLM. However, there seems to be substantial overlap with the work done in Canada.

The visible barriers within the labour movement that had previously been erected to prevent women's entry into male, elite realms have been eliminated. At the turn of the century in Canada, given the surplus of labour available, the Trades and Labour Congress advocated that women be excluded from work in the factories so that male jobs could be secured (Phillips & Phillips, 1993). Today, it is no longer legal to openly forbid women from organizing, to deny that women should receive the same pay and benefits as men, to maintain separate, gendered seniority scales, or to bar women from particular jobs.

Women's role in the history of the labour movement and in militant action taken by union members has often been minimized or entirely ignored (Guard, 1994; Milkman, 1985). The resistance that prospective women activists face within the CLM can be attributed to patriarchy and a negative attitude to women's militancy (Briskin, 1983). Women's activism within the CLM, whether as individual activists or within women's committees, disrupts the traditional notion of women as non-militant and passive.

Historically, women were depicted in both Victorian and Christian ideology as inferior to men, fragile, emotional, and in need of protection (White, 1993a). Kessler-Harris (1986) provides a historical analysis of women's place within the wage-earning work force. She hypothesizes that virtue, defined as "conceptions of self that capture women's sense of being as it emerges from her 'naturally' prescribed roles" (p. 4), remains central to the societal decision-making processes. One example that Kessler-Harris (1986) provides from the late 19th century was the discussion surrounding the jobs women should be barred from because they were hurtful to women's roles and responsibilities in the home. Her analysis assumes that although definitions of female virtue have changed over the years there is still an overall consistency in the importance of women's familial connection.

Women are expected to represent only private concerns centering around the family (Pasquier, 1986), which leaves men in power to direct the social institutions. Women are also expected to be morally pure, pious, and above all else, devoted to their home and family. Women's activism within the CLM challenges the stereotypical idea of "woman". This disruption is a result of women transcending the traditional roles of wife and mother and becoming active in labour, which has not been considered a respectable place for women.

Historically, organizing women within the work force was in direct contradiction to the perceived appropriate place for women. Employers capitalized on the prevailing

ideology, which included that women were the weaker sex, that their role in the work force was temporary, and that they should be provided for by their husbands. Employers offered work to women at lower wages which served to undercut male wages and caused divisiveness between men and women within the labour movement (Frager, 1983).

When women were gaining entrance to unions, they were afforded a special place within the union structure where they were "protected" by the male leaders. Women paid lower initiation fees and dues and consequently received lower strike pay as well as sickness and death benefits (Kessler-Harris, 1985). Historically, a persistent mistrust of women within the union structure was evident because they were not considered strong enough to fight the oppression of capitalism.

Faue (1989) conceptualizes the gendering of the labour movement in the United States and the gendered definitions of solidarity. She points to the sometimes violent history of the labour movement in the United States and suggests that an ideology of solidarity that is built through violent struggle impacts on women's identification with that ideology. She states that "the metaphors of struggle, even political struggle, are the metaphors of war and battle; and war is not female" (Faue, 1989, p. 147). The retelling of stories of militant action within the literature distributed by unions forced women onto the periphery as their roles in these actions were not part of the retelling. The representation of solidarity within the labour movement shapes women's participation. According to Faue (1989),

> In emphasizing the commonality of experience for workers even as it represented them in increasingly unitary and male terms, the labour movement made insufficient peace with gender division and inequality among workers, and its failure undermined the basis of inclusive working class solidarity (p. 154).

The culture of the labour movement and the emphasis on solidarity as a unifying discourse works to subsume difference among workers and results in challenges to the acceptability of

anyone who does not become part of the "mainstream" definition of solidarity.

The dominant cultural imagery of labour and of union power remains male and blue collar with a male prerogative to positions of power (Milkman, 1985). There is an inherent limitation to women's activism when the cultural discourse surrounding the CLM defines it as antithetical to femininity (Guard, 1994). Cockburn (1991) suggests that the "conventional set of processes governing trade union life is, as a product of labour movement history, a masculine way of doing things" (p. 133). Intrusion into this world by women is met with non-acceptance and questioning. The union movement is not merely alien to women but actively hostile to femininity, which is equated with passivity and compliance with managerial power and therefore construed as a threat to the masculine strength inherent in the labour movement (Faue, 1991; Kessler-Harris, 1986).

The collective bargaining process is one arena where the male culture of the labour movement is particularly evident. Control over the collective bargaining agenda and the negotiating process leads to tangible advantages for men: better money and control over their jobs (Cunnison & Stageman, 1993). The negotiation process itself is described as more conducive to male ways of working (tough, aggressive, and confrontational) (White, 1993a).

Frager (1983) discusses that the notion of the "manly union member" and the terms "fraternity" and "brotherhood" define women as outsiders. She further states that,

> [f]or a significant number of male trade unionists their sense of dignity - and indeed their conception of unionism - was bound up with their gender identity (p. 56).

It is interesting to point out that currently in Canada, there are 27 labour organizations which use male-defined words like brotherhood, craftsmen, and/or workmen in their official name. Although no gender break-down is provided, overall these organizations represent approximately 400,000 workers (Directory, 1995). I would argue that a woman may not

identify with, or feel relevant to her union, which identifies its members as a "brotherhood".

A premise underlying my research is that white, working-class men, who are in positions of power in the CLM, have, by virtue of their leadership roles and their dominant group status in society, the inherent ability to either accept or reject women's activism. According to Forrest (1993), the

> profound identity between the interests of (white) working-class men and the meaning of trade unionism, [makes it] seemingly impossible to disentangle the ways in which trade unions act to protect the narrow economic interests of a particular group of men (p. 331).

The belief that men are the appropriate members of the union culture, and that a primary purpose of the labour movement is to further the rights of these workers, stems from the enmeshed identity held between white working-class men and that culture. Infiltrators into this culture are either asked to become part of the established structure or to remain silent.

When women enter a male-dominated workplace, the men have the privilege to decide what kind of woman their co-worker is and how much trust she should be accorded. The ability to negotiate the definition of the culture may be a major determinant of one's acceptability within that group (Izraeli, 1983). As the male norms are clearly defined by the dominant group, the attitudes expressed by the woman impact greatly on the degree of legitimacy given to her (Fine, 1987). If women are not afforded legitimacy and trust, and therefore unable to participate in the negotiations to redefine the culture, then the existing culture will be slow to change.

The CLM is a reflection of a patriarchal culture which works toward the maintenance of male privilege. Armstrong and Armstrong (1994), in their discussion of job segregation, state that

> [i]deas that serve to reproduce inequality are also encouraged and promoted by those whose interests lie in preserving existing social relations (p. 179).

To maintain power, the dominant group attempts to legitimize the practise that establishes the social inequity. The dominant cultural discourse establishes the social norms for a group and dictates what is considered acceptable to that group. The culture of the CLM works to continue the entitlement that men feel to their leadership positions. There are also perks such as notoriety, financial incentives for elected leaders, possibility of moving into a better paid staff position, time off with pay from their less attractive work, and travel to conferences (Cockburn, 1991).

Part of the fear of women's infiltration relates to the research finding that stereotypically feminine work taken over by males gains in status, while traditionally defined "men's work" invaded by females loses status (Mackie, 1991). In Williams's (1989) research on male nurses and female marines, she discovered that when men enter into traditionally-female occupations, they make great efforts to distinguish their roles from those performed by the women. Alternatively, the presence of women in traditionally-male occupations (the marines) threatened the achievement of men. It was particularly problematic for the men when these women were highly competent.

Fudge (1993), in her research on Canadian labour law and its impact on women, points out that the feminization of the labour movement threatens the norm of the male worker with a dependent family. In collective bargaining, unions have argued that this normative male worker requires a fair living wage and appropriate benefits because of his role as the primary contributor to the income of his family. Women's status as the secondary wage earner has been firmly entrenched within our society and within the labour culture. Wages for men have been organized according to their skill, their cost of living, and the fact that they were the head of the family and primary breadwinner (Warskett, 1993). Each one of these reasons has worked to exclude gender parity for women in access to

particular jobs.

Warskett (1993) states in her work, aptly titled "Can a Disappearing Pie be Shared Equally?", that fairness is based on a hierarchy and does not necessary mean equality, but rather equal opportunity:

> These [liberal-democratic] societies accept that it is "fair" for some to have higher living standards than others. The more "meritorious", employed in work of higher status, are thought to have earned and thus deserve this higher standard. Again, in this sense, women "lose out" because their work generally is socially constructed to be of lower status and lower value (p. 252).

She describes the struggle between the "core" and the "periphery" workers where the core workers are usually white, working-class. and male and those on the periphery include anyone outside these definitions. With the restructuring of work and the increased use of non-standard employment (part-time, temporary, part-year), there are increases in gendered and racial conflicts within the unions.

If men feel that they have a right to maintain their leadership position (either because they have historically been part of the core group or because they believe that the union culture is a reflection of men's identity), their fear of losing this entitlement will greatly outweigh their desire for the inclusion of non-dominant group members, including women. Cockburn (1991) suggests that because men dominate the decision-making bodies in the British labour movement, they are unlikely to change the rules as they may "die by their own hand". The resistance to change results from expected loss of their status, their perceived sense of self, and their power. As well, men are more likely than women to target an expected loss of "own power over self" as the reason for their resistance to change (Menlo, 1984). It is not a fear of change *per se* but rather a fear of losing control that is entrenched in the resistance dominant group members hold to women's infiltration.

As with all bureaucracies, unions within the CLM function to maintain themselves in their current structure. To understand resistance to change, Ferguson (1984) offers a view of bureaucracy as

> a type of social system, one in which certain social acts are established and maintained, certain social objects are valued, certain languages are spoken, certain types of behavior are required, and certain motivations are encouraged (p. 9).

Challenges to the status quo in the CLM are met with resistance. Women organizing on their own within the labour movement and promoting their concerns as separate from their "brothers" question the tenet of solidarity within the movement. Further, when women demand a place within the CLM, they are challenging what has been historically accepted as a male culture where men are the only powerful members.

The perceived threat to union solidarity is an effective way both to oppose women organizing on their own and to challenge issues women bring to the bargaining table and to the convention floor. The strength of the ideology of solidarity prohibits women and other marginalized groups from challenging their unions. It is harder to argue that there is discrimination within the union when union officials are able to point to their anti-discrimination policy to show that they are concerned about equity issues.

In the related field of women in development, Straudt (1982) discusses the strength of bureaucratic resistance to women's political organizing. She points out that this resistance to women's programs may be greater than the usual resistance to new mandates. The reasons for this, she suggests, has to do with the lack of successful bureaucratic politics and leveraging within the organization. She feels that if women's programs were in control of significant resources, other parts of the bureaucracy would be more likely to respond to policy matters that pertain to sex equality. There are limited gains, in her view, in the area of sex equity compared to the pronouncements within policy. She suggests a stance of

"symbolic politics", or the use of policy to placate constituencies without any real commitment to the policy. She states that: "[u]nless equity policy is put into practice, it will have been but a fleeting, symbolic gesture and not part of government standard operating procedure and therefore impact on people" (p. 278).

In relation to this, Balkan (1985) focuses on the hypocrisy of unions within Canada who argue for and bargain affirmative action with the employer in the workplace but do not ensure that there is equity within their own organization. She aptly points out that when the Canadian Labour Congress was being congratulated for designating six additional vice-presidential seats for women, no one was questioning why there was a need for this action.

The absence of women from various social-cultural arenas (e.g., politics, military, and athletics) is part of a much larger pattern of a male homosocial world which results in lower status placed on women as well as their status and legitimation being granted through their relationship with men. Homosociality is defined as

> the seeking, enjoyment, and/or preference for the company of the same sex [with the premise that] men are attracted to, stimulated by, and interested in other men. It is a process that is noticeable in early childhood and is channelled and encouraged by the entire range of social institutions within which males live (Lipman-Bluman, 1976, p. 16).

This culture is created and protected by men who in turn limit women's access to significant resources and positions of power. This ability of men to protect their privileged position results in the maintenance of sex role segregation in many aspects of social life, including women's activism in the CLM.

Edelson (1987) discusses the political hurdles encountered in arranging all-women meetings. She states:

> Restricting the course to women provoked a great deal of resistance because by so doing a distinction was drawn between the experience of male and female union members. For some, such a move threatened union solidarity (p. 6).

Kessler-Harris (1985) also discusses how

> allegiance to women and their modes of organization could be of itself subversive because it risked creating dual loyalties. And in reducing the strength of a militant organization, it could undermine the trade union itself (p. 120).

Women's militancy forces the male leadership to take women into account and questions the positions of equality and solidarity held publicly in union policies. Solidarity and the ideology of a collective struggle are important tenets of the CLM. However, these pronouncements have the equally strong potential to be effective instruments to stifle change. Women find themselves in a gulf between rhetoric and their daily realities. Under the umbrella of solidarity we are all assumed to be equal and able to contribute equally within the labour movement, an assumption which does not apply to many non-dominant group members.

Women's committees are found within local and national labour unions and central labour bodies (i.e., the Canadian Labour Congress), and these committees are active participants in furthering the rights of women members. Moreover national and regional governing boards of unions, as well as governing boards of central labour organizations, have affirmative action seats designated for women. There is a problem, however, with the notion that only more active women are needed in the CLM to solve the "woman question". The possibility remains that the simple inclusion of women may not be matched by a renegotiation of gendered character of the male union culture. Notwithstanding the positive attributes associated with same-sex networking for women in the union structure to achieve mutual support and strength, in order to be accepted and to have power to affect change, women's networks are still reliant upon dominant group members.

There are instances, however, where gendered roles are changing. Men are doing much more work in the home and child care than previously and are paying more attention to

both their physical and their emotional health (Kimmel, 1987). These changes are partially a result of pressure placed on men from progressive groups. There are two competing forces, however, in how this progress is taken up by the men:

> For some men these critiques have prompted a terrified retreat to traditional constructions; to others it has inspired a serious re-evaluation of traditional worldviews, and offers of support for the social, political, and economic struggles of women (Kimmel, 1987, p. 10).

The tension created from these competing reactions by the men provides a framework for a discussion of men's reactions to women's involvement in the labour movement. There seems to be both the desire to include non-dominant group members under the aegis of equality and justice as well as to maintain the traditional dominance of the male culture of the labour movement.

3.3 Impact of the Labour Culture on Women's Activism

The CLM promotes a culture of workaholism which excludes women with family responsibilities (Edelson, 1994). The full-time union officer job in Britain has traditionally been described as "masculine heroics" including expectations that they are available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and can manage rowdy members and employers (Cockburn, 1991). Cockburn (1991) suggests that women

> find it more difficult than men to put themselves forward for election, to think that they could do the job as well for the members as an experienced full-time male [usually the incumbent], who, first, has few domestic duties to eat up his free time and, second, is accorded more respect by employers. Women have less facility with the jargon and procedures that male trade unionists have developed over the decades (p. 116).

In addition to all the other factors discussed, the actual gender make-up of the union membership may have an effect on the perceived acceptability of a woman leader by both the

woman leader and the members. Izraeli (1983) researched leaders of union committees in Israel in two different conditions: when the make-up of the membership constituted either a minority of women or when there was gender parity of women (less than 20 per cent and between 41-60 per cent female membership respectively). When women were in the minority in the membership and were elected into leadership positions, they were more likely to view themselves and even more likely to be viewed by male members as representing "women's issues" only and largely uninfluential in other aspects of the union. When there were more women in a group, the members were more likely to view women as skilled leaders. Analyses across all groups showed that men held more pro-male attitudes than women in terms of leadership skill. Further, when women were in the minority, their token representation resulted in more stereotypical female behaviour as leaders. The author proposed that this was because women relied on traditional feminine scripts to put themselves and their male partners at ease. Women leaders were viewed as responsible solely for women's issues more than men leaders for solely men's issues. Although not discussed by Izraeli (1983), the distinction between "men's issues" and "union issues" as a whole may be an arbitrary one, as issues affecting dominant group members are often believed normative and therefore do not require any particular distinction. The author concludes that regardless of the number of women in the group, women will always feel under pressure to prove themselves within a traditionally male domain.

One way for change to occur is for men to forego some of their power and control to further the advancement of women and women's issues (Cockburn, 1991). She suggests that "if women's interests are better represented by trade unions today it has not been because of any natural trend but because of a concerted struggle by women themselves to defeat male self-interest" (p. 111). She theorizes that women do not put themselves forward for election

because they are both too busy with domestic duties and are not afforded the same respect as men from other union members and from their employers. There is an overriding belief held by both men and women that men are more "natural leaders", and a sense of entitlement ensues that the position of labour official is best held by a man.

Within the British labour movement, Cockburn (1991) discovers that many of the leaders are male and have held their positions for a long period of time. She suggests that a way that men have been able to hold onto their union agenda is to maintain their positions on the decision-making structures of the union. It is difficult for women to feel that they can better represent the membership when a long-standing official has become part of the "geography" of the union. Women do not have the confidence of the membership (and perhaps the self-confidence needed) to run against long-standing male elected officials. The fear is that the membership would be disadvantaged by a decrease in the quality of the officer (which is presumed to happen if a younger, more naive woman was elected). The incumbent usually chooses a successor or endorses a candidate when their own re-election is not possible. An interesting point Cockburn (1991) puts forward is that it is not just the "old-guard" who is challenging women's place, but there is also backlash behaviour by newer male members who are attempting to hang on to what they can in the face of changing male dominance in the workplace and in the larger society.

There is an inherent sense of self-worth, manliness, and self-efficacy for men resulting from being active in trade union work. The underlying resistance expressed by men to women's activism, I will argue, is a result of a perceived threat to control, status, and self-esteem. Whereas men are welcomed into non-traditional spheres, women are shunned (Williams, 1989). As well, men are far more concerned about the viability of their masculinity while women seem relatively unconcerned about maintaining their femininity in

situations where either gender is engaging in non-traditional work. As Williams (1989) states,

> [f]or most men raised in this society, "femininity" connotes an inferior state of being relative to masculinity, and the achievement of masculinity is predicated upon superseding whatever is associated with femininity (p. 133).

Job segregation or, in this case, maintenance of men in positions of leadership within the labour movement, therefore, allows men to maintain their masculinity in contradistinction to femininity. As in the area of non-traditional work, I propose that a male-dominated culture, such as that within the labour movement, has traditionally been used by men not only to ensure their economic advantage over women, but also to establish and affirm their essential difference from and personal sense of superiority over women.

The description of the culture of the labour movement offers insight into the mechanisms by which women are limited in their activism. If women's "natural" tendency is toward familial connection and if the CLM does not recognize this important consideration in fostering activism, they will be less likely to feel that the movement is a place that includes them. Women's goals, ambitions, competencies, and societal expectations are important factors in the understanding how they interpret the challenges facing them as activists and whether they ultimately decide to become active. In the next section, I will describe other challenges facing women who desire to become active. These include both their unpaid work inside the home as well as their involvement in the paid work force.

3.4 Women's Work in the Home

In the 1990 General Social Survey (GSS) conducted by Statistics Canada, it was found that only 10 per cent of dual-earning couples working full-time shared housework equally.

Over half the women partners[5] in these family had sole responsibility for daily housework (defined as meal preparation, meal clean-up, cleaning, and laundry) (Marshall, 1993). In addition, the more children in the home, the more likely it is that women take on the household tasks. The percentage of full-time employed women partners in dual-earner families who had total responsibility of housework increased from 44 per cent with one child in the home to 83 per cent with four or more children. Overall, employed women with a male partner devoted two hours more per day to housework than employed men (Statistics Canada, 1995a). When men do help out they take on the more flexible work such as repairing appliances and caring for the children - work that does not actually take time away from the tasks women still have to do (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1994).

Education Level. Women with higher education were less likely to assume full responsibility for housework. Male partners with higher education were more likely to assume some responsibility for housework. As women's income levels increased, they were also less likely to do housework. As men's income levels increased, however, their women partners where more likely to do housework. As men were more likely to have the better-paying jobs, women were left the responsibility for work in the home. Women resorted to taking jobs which allowed them to be available for this housework. This pattern suggests that the relative social and economic power between male and female married partners determines who does household chores or, stated differently, having greater economic power "buys" time out of housework.

Working Mothers. Between 1981 and 1991 the work force participation rate of

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[5]These statistics refer to legal marriages in dual-earner families. When common-law arrangements are taken in account, women are slightly less likely to be responsible for all housework (46 per cent compared to 52 per cent for married women). These statistics refer to opposite-sex couples only.

mothers with children at home increased from 52 per cent to 68 per cent (Logan & Belliveau, 1995). As the majority of these women were still primarily responsible for work in the home, balancing job and family obligations becomes onerous. In 1995, women working full-time lost seven days on average per year to attend to personal or family responsibilities, compared to one day for men. Full-time women workers with preschool children missed an average of 33.5 days per year (Akyeampong, 1996). Given their responsibilities in the home, it is not surprising that women find it difficult to pursue union activity given their responsibilities in the home. As married women constitute one of the largest groups who have recently come into the labour force, it is necessary to pay particular attention to these data.

Satisfaction Level. Women who have sole responsibility for housework are less satisfied than their male partners with the amount of time they have available to pursue other interests. Not surprisingly, when the male partner is responsible for all of the housework, he is as dissatisfied with the little time he has to spend on outside activities (Marshall, 1993). In a related finding, Armstrong and Armstrong (1994) discovered that middle-aged women who worked outside of the home, many of whom were married, were happier, felt less isolated, smoked less, drank less alcohol, and exercised more than married women who did not work outside the home. The point is that many women are happier when they also work outside of the home, but this satisfaction is frustrated by the limited time they have to spend on outside activities (union work being one possibility). The amount of women's work in the home is a relevant factor to their ability to become activists within their union and a key contributor to their (un)availability for leadership positions. Not all women choose housework because they prefer it over union activity.

Triple Burden. Women's time and energy are limited by the practical realities of

their lives which force many of them to do most of the housework. Local union presidents average 11 hours of union work per week on top of a normal work week of 35 hours (White, 1993a). When these hours are added to the usual 29 to 34 hours per week spent on domestic tasks, the triple burden placed on women amounts to between 75 and 80 hours of work per week. When over half of dual-earning families still rely on women for most responsibilities in the home, it is clear that there are significant limitations placed on time available for their activism.

Lower Status of Work in the Home. Another factor associated with housework is its low status. Work in the home is not considered real work because it is not in exchange for wages and it is not sold on the market (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1994). As housework is not rewarded in monetary terms and is largely invisible, it does not receive the same societal value as wage-earning work. Prestige is awarded to people whose jobs are highly skilled, highly paid, specialized, and competitive. Housework is considered unglamorous, dull, fragmented, isolating, boring, and presumed to require unskilled labour to accomplish. It is not, therefore, just the amount of time spent on work in the home which is a deterrent for activism. This work is also not given societal credit which is a contributor to feelings of self-worth. Women working in the home are not given this credit and subsequently may not feel as positive about themselves. As union activism requires a level of self-confidence; some women may not have had the experiences to gain this confidence.

Single Women. Until there is more equal sharing of work in the home, I would argue that women will be disproportionately under-represented in union activity due to the lack of available free time and the low status placed on house work. It is not surprising that women who do become active are less likely to be married than working women in general, whereas this is not the case for men (White, 1993a). In fact, women who become active and

hold an elected position in a union are younger, higher paid, and live without a male partner or children compared to their non-active sisters (Canadian National Trade Union, 1985). Being single, however, does not necessarily mean that a woman is more likely to become active; single sole-support mothers are far more likely to be poor than any other type of family (National Action Committee on the Status of Women, 1993). In 1995, single-parent households led by women under 65 years old had the highest poverty rate in Canada (57.2 per cent) (National Council on Welfare, 1997). In 1993, 60 per cent of all families headed by lone-parent mothers as compared to 31 per cent of families headed by lone-parent fathers had incomes which fell below the low income cut-offs (Statistics Canada, 1995a). The realities of these women, although different from those women in dual-earner families, pose impediments for their activism.

3.5 Women's Work Outside of the Home

The access that women have to work outside of the home is mitigated by their particular social circumstance. In economically-secure households, women are more prepared for the labour market and also have more access to that market. Differences among women based on race, class, culture, linguistic ability, and immigration status impact on their access to the labour force (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1994). In 1991, the unemployment rate for visible minority women was 13.4 per cent, for Aboriginal women, 17.7 per cent and for women with disabilities 16.6 per cent (Canadian Labour Congress, 1997). Some argue that the earning capacity of white women compared to non-white women is only marginally better, and that the difficulties faced by women are due more to their gender than any other factor (National Action Committee on the Status of Women, 1993).

As discussed in Chapter II, women are more likely found in lower-tier occupations

where pay, benefits, and opportunities for advancement are low (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1994). These sectors where women predominate are more likely to have non-standard employment patterns (i.e., part-time and partial-year work), which results in lower pay, less job security, and fewer, if any, benefits. Women constitute less than 10 per cent of the employees in the majority of top industries in Canada and 75 per cent of the workers in the lowest paying manufacturing industry in Canada (clothing). Women are therefore concentrated in particular industries where they are paid less, have less job security, and they receive fewer benefits when compared to men. The rise in low-paying, part-time, service work, where women are concentrated, is showing its effects as occupational poverty rates are highest for those in this sector (National Action Committee on the Status of Women, 1993).

3.6 Women's Work and Labour Activism

To understand their lack of involvement in union activity, women's realities as workers while in the work force form part of the analysis. The characteristics of their workplace are critical indicators as to whether women participate and sustain their activism. An example of the potential impact of work life on union activity is provided by Cobble (1990), in her examination of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) union in the United States. She describes the atmosphere of the workplace for these women waitresses and discusses how this atmosphere has resulted in very active, outspoken, and committed women trade unionists. The author states that the waitresses create for themselves a work culture and community that promotes and sustains their collective action. They work separately from the men and spend much of their work and social time together.

In addition to the strong support gained by the separate structures resulting from their job segregation, waitresses are forced to negotiate daily with male clients and male co-

workers - a negotiation which prepares them for potential hostility and confrontation experienced by union activists. The legitimate status of waitresses within a craft-based organization such as HERE also provides women with the sense that they are appropriate members of the work force and of the union. Cobble (1990) believes that unions are constantly changing and states that:

> the barriers to women's leadership - male hostility, the labor movement's masculine culture, the socialization of women for supportive roles, the often temporary attachment of women to the workplace, and the patriarchal institution of the family - could be mitigated in certain circumstances and ultimately overcome (pp. 540-541).

She believes that to understand the limitations placed on women and to formulate strategies to work toward inclusion - a woman's family life, work life, and the structure of the organization in which she works are important contributors to this understanding.

Working conditions impact on women's ability to become active participants in the labour movement. Daily responsibilities such as housework and child care leave them little time to creatively think about personal goals and needs (Steinberg, 1986). Many of the women who are working part-time, part-year, who hold multiple jobs and who have little job security, are not able to spend time and energy on unpaid, volunteer union work, as they are concentrating on finding work to make up a full-time schedule as well as maintaining their current work positions. When women's overwork in the home is combined with their realities in the paid work force, the impediments to women's activism become evident.

3.7 Summary

The interplay between women's home life and their work life is summarized succinctly by Armstrong and Armstrong (1994):

A woman's work as wife and mother is frequently considered a sufficient explanation

> and justification for the segregated labour force and women's low wages...[as] men constitute the primary labour force because they must support their families...[and] the primary attachment of women to the home, where they perform the domestic labour, prevents them from participating continuously and fully in the labour force. [As a result] women have high rates of turnover and absenteeism; they are not committed to their work in the industrial unit, and thus do not want responsible jobs outside the home; they are geographically immobile; they lack the appropriate education and skill levels; and they are less productive than men. Given such a list of limitations, it is hardly surprising that women are restricted to particular jobs in the labour force (p. 182).

Women report lack of time due to family commitments and job constraints as reasons for their lack of involvement in their unions (White, 1993a). Men and women are in the work force with different realities, and men are privileged by the systemic structures that keep women from contributing equally to the work force and to their unions. It is unclear how much weight should be placed on these barriers to explain the experiences of women activists, however, I will explore the interplay among these practical barriers and the culture of the labour movement as it works to limit women's activism.

3.8 Conclusion

As identified in Chapter I, a focus of this research is to explore the ways in which women's participation as activists is a reflection of the labour culture working to limit women's activism. I propose that whereas women are now definitely *in* the CLM, they are still not equally *a part of* that movement. Women within the unions are seen as members of a special-interest pressure group (Cockburn, 1991) and not as full-fledged equal participants.

In this research I posit that the challenges faced by women activists include, but are not limited to, a myriad of interconnected factors such as time-consuming family responsibilities, discrimination and harassment, stereotyped views of women's appropriate place, de-legitimation of their roles within the CLM and unfair expectations (a double

standard) placed on their candidacy and performance as leaders. This study will attempt to uncover the structural and systemic foundations of women's place within CUPE and their choices and options within this organization as activists.

The next chapter complements this discussion on the challenges women face. As many women are active trade unionists holding leadership positions, the challenges described in this section are not sufficient explanations for an understanding of women's activism. Women's levels of self-efficacy and self-esteem contribute to how they feel about engaging in this work. Also, the concept of legitimacy within leadership theory offers insight into women's decisions to become active.

Chapter IV

4. PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTORS TO WOMEN'S ACTIVISM

In the previous chapter various challenges to women's activism were explored. It is clear, however, that many women are in leadership positions and are active at all levels of the CLM. The psychological contributors to women's decisions to be activists have not been explored in the research on women's activism. I will argue that it is not simply the structural barriers experienced by women which define whether they become active. It is also their personal feelings about themselves and their comfort level as labour activists which impact on whether they decide to become active. The present chapter begins with a discussion on self-efficacy and self-esteem issues for women. After which, I expand upon the concept of activism as a non-traditional job for women and relate this to their decisions to become activists. Finally, a brief summary of leadership theory, including a description of the concept of legitimacy is provided as a contributing factor to decisions to become active.

4.1 Self-efficacy and Self-esteem

Self-efficacy expectations refer to one's perceived ability to perform successfully a given task or behaviour (Betz & Hackett, 1981). Women have higher levels of self-efficacy when engaging in traditional (as opposed to non-traditional) jobs, whereas men show similar self-efficacy ratings for traditional and non-traditional jobs (Betz & Hackett, 1981). Women's levels of self-efficacy are related to their career choices (Eccles, 1994). Developmental research has indicated that girls have more negative self-image than boys, and working-class girls have a lower sense of self-worth than those from the middle-class (O'Leary, 1974). For women in non-traditional work, those who scored high on masculinity

traits had higher scored levels of self-esteem. Self-acceptance, however, for these women was lower than for any other group (men and women in traditional and non-traditional jobs) (Long, 1991).

Self-esteem is defined as the process by which people examine their performance according to personal standards and values, which are internalized by means of interactions with society and significant others (Burns, 1979). One theory proposes that to the extent that a woman's self-esteem incorporates traditionally feminine stereotypic notions, she will be hesitant to engage in behaviour requiring characteristics societally constructed as male (Korman, 1970, cited in O'Leary, 1974). This theory assumes that if a woman engages in non-sex role appropriate behaviour (for instance, non-traditional work), her level of self-esteem will be low if she is invested in traditional definitions of femininity and women's appropriate role. O'Leary (1974) outlines internal factors such as low self-esteem, role conflict, fear of success including apprehension about occupational advancement as inhibitors of non-traditional work.

Even for those women who do achieve success in their lives, they are more likely to attribute it to external factors such as luck and less likely to believe it is because of their own competency. This results in many high achieving women feeling fake or phoney in spite of their achievements; the resulting experience is one termed the "imposter phenomenon" or "imposter syndrome" (Steinberg, 1986). As success is attributed to external variables, there is a high degree of stress and anxiety due to their fear of being discovered as imposters (Long, 1991). These psychological effects are experienced by women, regardless of the type of work they engaged in or the level of success they achieve. It is therefore important to keep in mind the externalizing that women do when explaining their successes and the internalizing that they do when explaining their failures. These could be important indicators

in their perceptions of acceptability within the union culture.

For many women, becoming leaders is entering into a non-traditional sphere of public life which has previously been reserved for men. The combination of women's own levels of self-efficacy, combined with the already low status attributed to women in society, may impede the desire to become active. Why they choose activism and how they feel about themselves as activists are important and less explored questions to aid in an understanding of their (in)ability to function within a traditional union culture.

The division between male and female work is still prevalent in many sectors. For instance, the male-female ratios in traditional male-dominated professions still remains high (Mackie, 1991). The social control inherent in professional life proscribes access to rewards and learning of informal norms through a sponsorship system referred to as "old boys' network". In research on this network and its impact on women in a non-traditional discipline (biology), Rose (1989) notes that junior women (particularly married junior women), are more poorly connected to the influential "old boy network" than the junior men. She described the long-term detrimental impact this has for women in their academic careers. Access to opportunities and promotion are part of belonging to this network which has traditionally not been open to women (Mackie, 1991).

Women have responded to this exclusion by forming their own networks and social groupings, but these traditionally have not carried the same power and prestige as those of the men. Women who enter leadership positions may therefore find themselves in a "doubly marginalized" position where they are removed from women outside the leadership structures as well as set apart from the men who hold similar positions as themselves. There is no equivalent "old boys network" on which these women leaders can rely (Apfelbaum, 1993).

Ethnographic research on women entering non-traditional male-dominated groups

details how women must be willing to engage in coarse joking, teasing, and accept the male-based informal structure of the occupation. To be accepted within a male-dominated group, women must choose to become "one of the boys"; moreover, this act must be accepted by the men (Fine, 1987). Although being "one of the boys" is acceptable for some women, it places much strain on others. When women enter these non-traditional places, men are not openly hostile toward them; but rather difficulties arise because men believe (often accurately) that the women do not share similar informal understandings. Fine (1987) proposes that it is not gender *per* se that is the problem, but rather the cultural traditions surrounding gender. Women, upon entering these male-dominated areas, disrupt patterns of male interaction. Men feel that it is not "fun" to have women around and the informal "clubby" atmosphere is broken by women's intrusion (Fine, 1987). Men also do not feel that a woman would make as good a co-worker as another man, not just because she "could not take a joke" but also because she could not work as part of the team as well as a man. Fine (1987) assumes that many of the barriers to women's acceptance are related to sexuality, where

> Each sex, like different cultures, has its own standards for comfortable interaction...For males, these expectations involve a rough and rowdy exterior, in which tenderness and the softer emotions are excised. Machismo, while not always present, need not be justified among males. The presence of female equals threatens to alter these standards, changing a relatively unambiguous setting into one fraught with moral ambiguity (p. 146).

Similarly, the social-ease argument (Johnson, 1992) suggests that members in same-sex groups are more likely to be certain about appropriate behaviour and norms of interaction than in opposite-sex groups, and more tension is created from the uncertainty produced from mixed-sex arrangements.

In her study of men and women in non-traditional work, Williams (1989) discovered

that when there are fewer women in a particular role, their visibility is more pronounced and this potentially puts greater pressure on their role performance. She also proposed that the performance of men and women is evaluated differently when they engage in non-traditional work, and the qualities highly praised in one sex are often denigrated in another. There are different sets of expectations for men and women and these unfairly prejudice women's chance of promotion and occupational advancement (Williams, 1989). An interesting finding from her research was that men and women in non-traditional work engage in a reassertion of their "true" gender identity, which sometimes results in hyper-femininity and hyper-masculinity in these workers.

Eccles's (1994) research has attempted to understand how, even though there have been efforts to increase the proportion of women in advanced educational training and high-status professional fields, women and men are still concentrated in different occupations and educational programs and women are ultimately under-represented in many of the high-status fields. Eccles (1994) outlines a model to understand the choices that women make, referred to as the expectancy-value model of achievement-related choices. The model links

> educational, vocational, and other achievement-related choices most directly to two sets of beliefs: the individual's expectations for success and the importance or value the individual attaches to the various options perceived by the individual as available. The model also specifies the relation of these beliefs to cultural norms, experiences, aptitudes, and to those personal beliefs and attitudes that are commonly assumed to be associated with achievement-related activities (Eccles, 1994, p. 587).

The research on this model has shifted the focus of women's career goals away from asking "why are women different from men?" to "why do women and men make the choices they do?" (Eccles, 1994). Briefly, the results from this work indicate that women are less likely to enter non-traditional fields because they have less confidence in their abilities and because they place less subjective value on these fields than on other occupational niches. Eccles's

theory appears to be generalizable to women labour activists. The value they place on activist work and their perceived success as activists will be examined as potentially important contributors to their decision to take on leadership roles.

Women may have an internal barrier toward activism because many have been unaccustomed to wielding power publicly. In entering places where men have been the most active and influential members, there may be an uneasiness experienced by women. A woman academic describes her process of becoming involved in the academic club:

> Rather than identifying with our mothers, whose powerlessness and muteness in the larger world we saw close up, we have accepted membership in a very odd club. The rules go something like this: If we don't call attention to our femaleness, if we play by the boys' rules, if we don't plead the cases of our mothers, or sisters, if we don't fuss when men harass us or tell sexist jokes, or pass us by for promotion, if we're content with what we're given, keep our own struggles quiet, don't talk about how hard it is not to speak in our own language of our concerns, and never say the "F" word out loud ("post-Feminism" is O.K.) then we may be rewarded in which case we are expected to be promptly and graciously grateful (Bolker, 1994, p. 54).

Bolker further describes how becoming a member of the club has an expensive entrance fee for women in that it results in the disempowerment. Her analysis is transferable to the CLM. Women's entry into leadership positions has been met with questioning and, on occasion, with hostility and violence. Some of the statements that women make within the CLM and the implied challenges to the male leadership are not particularly popular. Women risk rupturing the connectedness they feel as members of their union. They are forced to play the game or risk being barred from it all together. Consequently, women who support male leadership face fewer accusations of disloyalty (Kessler-Harris, 1985).

In terms of elected leadership, if women are unable to fight "man to man" for these positions, it therefore proves that they are not strong enough to lead. "The battle for mastery is a human trait...it is up to women to fight their way to the front", states Kessler-Harris (1985, p. 130). The dilemma for women is that once they voice their opposition and their

anger, someone may hear and sever the connection. There is the fear that those who question the hegemony of the male culture of the CLM will be cast aside (Edelson, 1994).

The present model of a union leader is one who is an authority figure, eloquent speaker, expert negotiator, gunslinger, jack-of-all-trades, assertive (aggressive), and fearless (CUPE's "The Facts", May/June 1985). This image may be difficult for women to aspire to as their ways of relating and their sex role expectations do not traditionally include these descriptors. In addition, women's legitimacy as leaders is often questioned by male followers who do not automatically accept the authority of a female leader, especially when these women leaders adopt autocratic, more "masculine" leadership styles (Johnson, 1992). Not to say that there should be automatic acceptance of authority, but rather the existence of a double standard in recognizing leadership needs to be challenged.

In summary, the expectancies women have concerning their appropriateness in leadership positions are important contributors to their level of activism. These expectancies result from their levels of self-esteem, as well as their perceived fit with the leadership role, given the societal definitions ascribed onto the construction of "woman". I hope to contribute to the existing research on women's activism by understanding their feelings of "appropriateness" in these roles. The next section describes leadership theory and, in particular, the concept of legitimacy as an issue affecting women's decisions to become active.

4.2 Leadership Theory

Although there are different definitions for what is commonly referred to as "leadership", for the following discussion leadership is defined as "a process of *influence* between a leader and followers to attain group, organizational, or societal goals" (Hollander,

1985, p. 486, emphasis in original). Researchers in the area view high influence as a major defining characteristic of the leader. As well, leaders who are elected have the capacity for greater influence and are also subject to higher levels of expectations by the group than those who are appointed (Hollander, Fallon, & Edwards, 1977). The particulars of what constitutes this influence, how this influence is achieved, and hence the underlying dynamics of the concept of leadership will be discussed in an attempt to understand how the construct of leadership may impact on women's activism.

The *Interaction Theory of Leadership* presupposes that leadership is not solely a result of a particular leadership personality trait or a constellation of personality traits, but rather a "function of personality and of the social situation and of these two in interaction" (Gibb, 1969, p. 268). There is a transaction between leaders and followers that provides the potential for changes in influence, for counterinfluence, and for who takes on the leader's role (Hollander *et al.*, 1977). A key tenet within this theory is that leaders are afforded legitimacy not solely from their individual traits, but also from their interaction within the group. Within the context of the CLM, it is not simply the perception of a strong leader that is crucial for acceptance but how that perceived power translates into effective action.

Legitimacy must be accorded to people for them to be considered appropriate leaders for the group (Gibb, 1969; Hollander, 1985). It is the leaders' and followers' sense of legitimacy which serves as the base on which the leader may exert influence (Hollander & Julian, 1970). The actions of leaders affect whether they are conferred legitimacy and their sense of their own legitimacy has a direct impact on their willingness and ability to assert influence (Hollander & Julian, 1970). The conditions under which the leader receives authority are as important as the source of that authority because of this requirement for legitimacy (Hollander, 1985).

This theory of leadership presupposes that to be afforded legitimacy as a leader within the group, the individual first must be a member of the group and someone who behaves in accordance with group norms:

> The expectations of followers, the nature of the task, and the institutionalization of the group are all factors in the situation within which the leader behaves and to which he [sic] adapts (Gibb, 1969, p. 272).

According to this theory, leadership exists in a group whenever its norms and structure allow the special abilities and resources of someone to be used in the interests of many. These social norms or values which are shared by members of the group define the proper allocation of power and provide legitimacy for leadership positions (Read, 1974). In addition, the presence or absence of this legitimacy impacts on the success of the leader's efforts, evaluations of the leader as well as their tenure in office (Read, 1974). The relationship between the leader and the followers is always evaluational and the leader's behaviour is subject to group determination. Within labour activism, expectations of leaders are incredibly high and are further heightened at times when members' job security is threatened. Successors to leadership positions must first meet the obligations of the norms and institutional rules of the group in order to be accepted as legitimate leaders for that group (Gibb, 1969).

One explanation for gender differences is in the "status approach theory" where these differences are related to the ability to exercise power and influence within an organization:

> Status and power approaches provide a better account of the situational variability of men's and women's assertive behavior than traditional personality explanations...they shift the explanatory focus from individual characteristics to the dynamics of interpersonal power and prestige and its relationship to gender stratification in society (Ridgeway & Diekema, 1992, p. 159).

According to this theory, the different leadership behaviour characteristics between men and women are not a result of gender *per se*, but rather a result of the power and status attributed

to the dominant-group members in that organization. Therefore, because men (in particular white, able-bodied men) hold greater power and prestige in society, the interaction between leaders and followers in the organization affords greater status and power to male rather than female leaders. Effective leadership is therefore not a result of particular personality traits but rather the status an individual leader holds within an organization.

I propose that women members are not afforded the same legitimacy within the CLM as male members and are therefore limited in their ability to become elected leaders. Women face both the pressures of low performance expectations and also the sense that they are not legitimate candidates for high influence and prestige in the groups (Ridgeway & Diekema, 1992). In addition, research on performance ratings suggests that there is a different standard (a double standard) which is dependent upon the sex of the performer, where women either have to perform better than men or have to exhibit additional qualities above those required of men, before both sexes exert comparable levels of influence (Foschi, 1992). These different expectations placed on women impact on their comfort level as activists.

In order for women to become leaders in the group, they need to receive approval and legitimacy from the group. Norms regulate the relations between persons occupying social positions (Michener & Burt, 1975). The norms that have flourished within the culture of the labour movement, and within CUPE as part of that movement, have historically been unwelcoming towards and perhaps irrelevant to women. Women's activism challenges these traditional standards and norms by questioning the status quo of who is deemed capable of holding leadership positions. Legitimacy is necessary not only for the members to accept the leader's influence, but also so that the leaders feel that they have the capacity to exert influence. Women who do not feel that they are legitimately occupying space as labour

activists may not feel capable or competent. They may question their own effectiveness as leaders and decide not to engage in activist work. Also, women who are subjected to higher expectations than their male counterparts may not feel they can live up to those expectations.

4.3 Summary

I propose that when women achieve leadership positions, their existence in these positions offers a radical departure from the perceived societal norms of women's "appropriate" role. Research has uncovered that exposure to women as leaders breaks down stereotypical images of women and decreases people's desire for male leaders (Brown, 1979; Ferber, Huber, & Spitze, 1979). As long as men dominate positions of leadership within the CLM, it will be harder to have women's voices heard and acknowledged within that structure. In Cunnison and Stageman's (1993) terms, this results is a self-fulfilling prophesy where women may not become activists because their voices are not heard, which results in women's issues not becoming part of the labour movement's agenda. Cockburn (1991) poetically states that currently women feel that

> "equality" is a frail plant grafted on to sturdy old stock. Were they [the women] to stop cultivating the men they would immediately revert to kind. And men indeed admitted that much does depend on women's pressure (p. 124).

It will remain difficult to convince women to become leaders within a structure which encourages male leaders and male leadership styles for men but does not acknowledge women leaders and women leadership styles.

Women's beliefs and expectations of their effectiveness contribute to their decisions to become union leaders. These personal, psychological contributors will aid in an examination of why women choose activist work given the structural barriers in place. As leadership implies acceptance, support, and legitimation by a majority of the members, documenting the

experiences of women "success stories" offers an unique viewpoint for research. The possibility that women activists within the labour movement may not feel that they are "acceptable" leaders will be explored as a possible contributor to an explanation of activism. My research, which focuses on women who have achieved positions of elected leaders, views them not as passive victims of societal forces but as strong agents who make choices toward social change. Why they choose activism and how they feel about themselves as activists will be critical to the theory that is developed from this research.

Chapter V

5. METHODOLOGY

This chapter begins with an overview of the research design. After which I provide a detailed description of the procedure used to choose the participants and to collect the data. A description of the participants is also included in this chapter. I conclude with an explanation of the method used to analyze the data and a discussion on possible researcher bias.

5.1 Research Design

I used an inductive analysis (Janesick, 1993), within a qualitative paradigm to develop a theoretical framework to describe women's activism in the CLM. An inductive analysis refers to the process whereby categories, themes, and patterns emerge out of the data (Janesick, 1993). The goal of my research was not to support any particular hypothesis but to generate data to describe the phenomenon and then to develop a theoretical understanding of these data. This qualitative approach was chosen because it was more sensitive and adaptable to the many influences and value patterns encountered through interviewing women activists (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) this implies that

> many elements are implicated in any given action, and each element interacts with all of the others in ways that change them all while simultaneously resulting in something that we, as outsiders, label outcomes or effects (p. 151).

That data emerging from the questionnaires and the interviews present an explanation for how the various elements shape together to form the realities of women's lives as activists. I was interested in understanding the multiplicity of experiences and the meaning the women made from these experiences.

The following are characteristics of qualitative design (excerpted from Janesick, 1993) used in this research:

1. Holistic - searching for an understanding of the whole,
2. Relational - studying relationships within a system or culture,
3. Personal - researching face-to-face and immediate,
4. Not Predictive - understanding and not necessarily making predictions about the phenomenon,
5. Model Generation - developing a model of the phenomenon, and
6. Researcher Bias - identification of the role of the researcher and researcher bias

The research design consisted of both a short questionnaire and a face-to-face semi-structured interview. By utilizing both a questionnaire and an interview, I hoped to increase the likelihood of obtaining credible and useful data. The questionnaire served two purposes: first, it was an expedient method of obtaining factual information, ie., demographics, home life, and personal/family history; and, second, having the responses to the questionnaire before the interview made it possible to familiarize myself with each participant before we met. Utilizing multiple methods of data gathering increased the likelihood of obtaining credible and useful data. In other words, I hoped that by using both a questionnaire and an interview I would "cast the net as widely as possible in the search for understanding critical issues in women's lives" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 201).

Eisner (1990) refers to a prefigured focus where there is an observational target but where new information can develop to influence the resultant research. In the semi-structured interview process I asked questions about particular topics yet allowed the flow of discussion to determine the information received. I was interested in understanding the multiplicity of the participants' experiences and the meaning they derive from them. I wanted to both examine previous theoretical understandings as they relate to women's activism as well as develop a complementary framework so to understand their experiences.

The interviews were therefore explorational and conversational in nature.

5.2 Procedure for Choosing Participants

I interviewed 16 elected women leaders from different levels within the CUPE organization (local, provincial, and national). At the national level, I contacted the two top officials within CUPE as well as the nine women representatives on CUPE's National Executive Board (NEB). These women are elected from all regions across Canada. From this group of eleven, six (55 per cent) agreed to participate. Two more agreed to participate, but we were unable to set up convenient times for the interviews. The remaining three chose not to respond to my initial request for participation. It was difficult setting up meetings with these women as many lived outside of Ontario and only came to Ontario four times per year. Their schedules during those occasions were extremely full. I wanted, however, to ensure the participation of non-Ontario respondents because of the possibility for differential experiences across Canada.

For reasons related to costs, I decided to interview women from the local and provincial levels from within Ontario only. CUPE Ontario represents approximately 45 per cent of the entire CUPE membership; therefore, limiting interviewing to those in Ontario still provided a range of women leaders. I used three methods to narrow my search of the thousands of elected women leaders in CUPE Ontario:

1. I contacted women who were elected to the CUPE Ontario Executive Board,
2. I contacted women who were represented on the CUPE Ontario Women's Committee, and
3. I approached women whom I had seen at CUPE conferences when I attended as a delegate from my local.

The rationale for the third method was to ensure local representation among women who were not on any other body within CUPE. A further reason was to ensure that the total

sample included a representation of women from male-dominated locals. I contacted twelve women from Ontario. Two chose not to respond to my request for participation. The remaining ten were interviewed.

I began by telephoning all contact names I had for the National and the Ontario Executive Boards and the Ontario Women's Committee. CUPE publishes a directory with many of these names and numbers. During this initial telephone call I explained the purpose of the research in as much detail as was requested and asked them if they would agree to have a package mailed to them. If they said yes, I sent them the introductory letter and consent form (Appendix A) and the questionnaire (Appendix B). For the women from the local level whom I met at conferences, I would explain the study to them face to face and, if they were interested, I asked for their address and telephone number. The result of the participant search was a total of 16 participants broken down as follows:

6 CUPE National Executive Board (NEB) members,
4 CUPE Ontario Executive Board members (one is also a member of the NEB),
1 CUPE Ontario Women's Committee member, and
6 CUPE local activists.

The sample had almost equal representation at the three levels of CUPE I was exploring (national, provincial, and local).

5.3 Description of the Participants

All 16 women held at least one elected position within CUPE at the time of the interview. At the beginning of the interview I asked the participants to provide me with a pseudonym for the research to help ensure confidentiality. This is the name I used throughout the research. Fourteen women did not identify as a member of any designated group; one woman identified as a visible minority, and one woman identified as lesbian.

The women ranged in age from 30 to 50 years with mean age of 40 years.

Thirteen of the participants lived and worked in Ontario, and one each in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia. Thirteen of the women worked in female-dominated workplaces and hence their CUPE local was made up of mostly women. The remaining three (Cody, Maureen, and Sonjia) had, what could be considered, non-traditional jobs for women; their respective bargaining units were male dominated.

Family Status. Nine of the women (Jennifer, Cody, Anne, Christina, Chrissy, Sarah, Sonjia, Eileen, and Esmerelda) were living with a partner. Of these nine, six had children. Of the remaining seven women who did not have partners, three (Ethel, Hiliary, and Lina) were sole-supporting parents. In total, nine women had responsibilities for children.

I asked the women what percentage of housework responsibilities they had. On average, the women currently living with a partner were responsible for slightly over 50 per cent of the work in the home. Within that average, there was much variability. Sarah and Anne reported that they only did 5 and 10 percent respectively. Both are full-time union officers and spend very little time at home. There were two other full-time officers (Sonjia and Eileen) who reported 80 and 90 percent respectively as their level of responsibility in the home.

Work Life. The types of jobs the women held show the diversity of the CUPE membership. Some women were front-line workers in the service sector: child-care worker, welfare worker, public health nurse, registered practical nurse, counsellor at a group home, flight attendant, and social service worker. Some had administrative or technical jobs: job registry advisor, computer programmer, bookkeeper, library technician and medical transcriptionist. Two women held jobs as maintenance electricians and one was a municipal planner.

History of Labour Activism. The participants ranged in years of activism from 2 years to 23 years, with the average of 11 years. Almost half became active within CUPE immediately upon becoming a member. On average, the length of time between becoming a CUPE member and engaging in activism was 2 years.

Seven of the women were full-time officers. The remainder had full-time careers and their union activism was in addition to their full-time work. For those who are full-time officers, they averaged 49 hours per week of union activity. Those who do their union work on a volunteer basis on top of their full-time job spend approximately 21 hours per week working within CUPE.

5.4 Procedure for Collecting Data

Those who agreed to participate completed the consent form and questionnaire and mailed them back to me in a self-addressed stamped envelope that I provided. Upon receipt of their completed questionnaire and consent form, I contacted them again by telephone to set up an interview time and arranged to fax or mail them the interview schedule (Appendix C). I then completed the interview. The interviews lasted between forty-five minutes and two hours. All but one of the interviews was done face-to-face. This latter case occurred because a member of the National Executive Board from outside of Ontario, after agreeing to participate, left the board. She was very interested in completing the research and offered to write out all her answers to the interview schedule she had received. Once she completed the written interview and mailed it to me, I followed up with a few points of clarification. All interviews were done between December 1995 and March 1996. Five interviews were conducted in Ottawa, one completed by mail and the remainder (10) were done in Toronto.

5.5 Data Analysis

The background data from the questionnaires were summarized and reported in the previous section of the methodology. This present section refers to data obtained during the interviews. Of the 16 interviews, I personally transcribed two and hired three different people to transcribe the remainder. The result was approximately 30 single-spaced pages per interview, for a total of approximately 500 pages of text.

> I agree with Lincoln and Guba (1985) that the purpose of analyzing data is to
>
> make sense of the data in ways that will, first, facilitate the continuing unfolding of the inquiry and second, lead to a maximal understanding ... of the phenomenon being studied in its context (pp. 224-225).

It was my goal to generate a theory to understand women's activism through identifying the meaning of the data provided by women activists. Janesick (1993) states that

> the process of reduction of data into a manageable model constitutes an end goal of qualitative research design (p. 214)

Tesch (1990) refers to this approach, which has the goal of making meaning out of qualitative experiences, as "interpretational".

Once all interviews were transcribed, I began the process of identifying major topics. To do this I read all interviews many times until I felt comfortable identifying the topics consistently reported. Five broad topics were colour coded: personal issues related to activism, external pressures to and encouragements for activism, views and impressions of unions (including CUPE), impact of women's involvement on unions, and a final catch-all "other" category. Although not colour coded, I also noted in the margins of the transcriptions comments on the "evolution" of women's involvement in the CLM and the impact of the "societal context" on activism. These two additional items did not fit into any of the broad topics but appeared frequently enough to warrant consideration.

Themes referring to a group of words generated and linked to my research question began to emerge within the 5 broad topics described above. At this point it was useful for me to envision the broader topics as "metathemes" described as the major aspects or descriptors of the phenomenon (Tesch, 1987). Within these 5 metathemes, approximately 30 themes were identified. With these themes acting as headings, I began the process of pulling out quotations from the data and placing them in lists under these headings. Quotations with similar ideas were listed together. As the number of themes was unmanageable; they were collapsed to form 6 categories. These final 6 categories form the basis of the theory developed in Chapter VII. As an example of this process, under the metatheme "external pressures to and encouragement for activism", the theme "barriers to activism" was identified. "Sexism" was one of the elements mentioned within the quotations that was listed under this theme.

The data analysis consisted therefore of a breaking down and then a building up of ideas taken from the responses in the interviews. The metathemes were dissected to their smallest form - elements that were then re-connected to form the resultant theory described in Chapter VII.

5.6 Inter-Rater Reliability

Given that I have my personal opinions because of my own experiences as a labour activist within CUPE, I wanted to perform a reliability check to ensure that the themes which emerged from the interviews reflected the meaning of the respondents' words and not only my own ideas. An independent rater, unfamiliar with the research question, read over a chosen interview. I gave the rater a description of the two primary categories emerging from the date ("barriers to activism" and "reasons for activism"). We independently read through

the transcribed interview and marked in the margin where we saw either or both of these two categories. We then compared our markings and calculated how often we matched. We achieved 78 per cent agreement on matching instances where the participant referred to barriers to activism. We achieved 74 per cent agreement on matching instances where the participant referred to reasons for activism.

5.7 Researcher Bias

As discussed by Janesick (1993), qualitative researchers accept the fact that research is ideologically driven and that the researcher approaches the study with his/her own biases. Marshall (1990) states that research is actually a process whereby researchers uncover their own as well as others' truths and that "good" research must include self-revelation.

At the time of conducting these interviews I was a member activist within CUPE and had been active in the labour movement for four years. My approach in the interviews and in this study has been influenced by my beliefs as a committed trade unionist and a feminist. A different approach may have yielded dissimilar results.

Given the amount of data generated by the interviews, I was forced to limit which ideas I would name as either elements, themes, or metathemes. I was as inclusive as possible - only discarding data which seemed completely irrelevant to the research question. Themes that appeared frequently throughout the interviews and which had direct relevance to the research question were included. The possibility exists, of course, that important ideas relevant to the research question were left out of the final summary of data. However, the detailed and lengthy method I used to ensure maximum representation of ideas within the final 6 categories hopefully lessened this potential for bias. Many quotations from all participants were included under each of these 6 categories and were used in the final

analysis.

There is also the possibility that my beliefs concerning the culture of the labour movement, and my perception that this culture is not always welcoming to women, influenced the content of my interview schedule; therefore the responses might have been skewed toward my beliefs. The interview schedule repetitively included questions surrounding barriers and impediments to activism. Even though these questions were obvious attempts to target the difficulties women face as elected leaders, the theory emerging from these data is not focused on these barriers. Instead, the broad range of ideas elicited from the interviews and developed in the resultant theory reflects more than a description of the impediments to activism.

Chapter VI

6. WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF ACTIVISM WITHIN CUPE

> I was told there were three things wrong with me: I was a woman, I spoke my mind, and I was usually right. *Sarah*

6.1 Overview of Findings

The findings from the interviews are divided into six broad categories: Barriers to Women's Activism; Reasons for Women's Activism; Perspectives on Leadership; Societal Influences on Activism; Family Influences on Activism; and Current Labour Trends within CUPE. The first two categories (Barriers and Reasons) are primary categories as they are integral to an understanding of women's activism. The remaining four, although not directly explaining women's activism, shed light on the interpretations reached in an exploration of the two primary categories.

The category on Barriers to Women's Activism is divided into three themes: external pressures, the impact of the culture of the labour movement, and internal pressures. These barriers may limit activism, but do not stop the women I interviewed from engaging in activist work. The second primary category Reasons for Women's Activism, indicates that women experience a strong sense of fulfilment in activism work. They report that this work provides them with opportunities they may not find elsewhere, and they feel a sense of connection through doing this work. The four remaining categories: Perspectives on Leadership, Societal Influences on Activism, Family Influences on Activism, and Current Labour Trends within CUPE do not neatly fit into either of the two above categories describing barriers to or reasons for activism. However, these categories provide insight into the respondents' interpretations of the barriers and a context in which to understand their

reasons for activism.

The findings from the interviews are presented to attribute ideas and thoughts directly to the respondents.. Consequently, I have also included many direct quotations as the words contain a richness I did not want to lose through my translation.

6.2 Barriers to Women's Activism

6.2.1 External Pressures

i. Lack of Available Time

Time constraints are one of the most frequently cited reasons for not becoming active in CUPE:

> It's also still very much the woman who has the primary home and child responsibility. Not always possible to go to a meeting in the evening or weekend if you've got a stack of laundry to do and two kids crying. *Sonjia*

> I think the biggest obstacle is time cause I think most women, even if we think we have come a long way, still hold the major responsibilities for the running of the household as well as their work outside of the house and then to try to find the time to fit anything else in - I think that is still the biggest obstacle. *Christina*

The above quotations permeate the interviews. In response to the question why women may not want to become activists, the predominant response was because of lack of time. Every respondent, at some point in the interview, mentioned time constraints as a factor either in terms of their own activism or that of other women. Sarah believes that the strain of union work is more pronounced for women because there are so many competing responsibilities:

> you work all day and you want to spend time with the family, you've got chores to do at home, I mean it's, you know, you're doing everything. The job, the union, and you know, and home. *Sarah*

Jennifer worries that since she missed so much time while her daughter was young it has resulted in her daughter growing up too fast and not having a fulfilling childhood. Sonjia's

family resented her time away from home which resulted in an ultimatum from her husband that she either decrease her activism or leave. The women in Eileen's local are flight attendants and as a result of their job, they are already away from home a lot. Activism in CUPE increases their time away and makes it harder for them to take on union positions. Ethel believes a lot of women get active either when their children are older or when they are single without any children.

Women felt that once they became active, and there was someone supporting them, they were encouraged to continue and take on more responsibilities. For some women, such as Chrissy, this meant that she went from departmental steward to president of her local within two years. Sometimes the lack of time made the work even more difficult. For Jennifer, because she was already away so much doing work at the provincial level of CUPE, she ended up doing all the work at her local because she had no available time to train others so to delegate responsibilities. Sonjia stated that "the inability to delegate was at times my undoing". Betty found it very stressful that there was never enough time to do what she would like to be able to do in the union. Sonjia, Jennifer, and Maureen all stated that they more you do, the more people expect you to do.

Lack of available time and expectations from others result in women acting as martyrs to their union work. Jennifer, who was on the verge of an emotional collapse was forced to take time off work for stress-related reasons. She, however, continued her union work and eventually had a total breakdown. Sarah described this type of burnout as feeling "empty":

> Sometimes I think I do too much...I got empty...I'm normally a very energetic person and I love what I do, so I find if I'm having to constantly push myself even after a break then I know the signals there. *Sarah*

As Sonjia describes, "it is a thankless job that can consume your life if you let it." For some, the result is that they not only deal with the pressure of time and the burden of

others' expectations, but also the guilt that comes along with not being able to do all things for all people. Jennifer experiences a lot of guilt for not being home with her daughter, not doing a good job at work, and not being able to attend all union functions at both the local and provincial level. Likewise, for Meg, asking co-workers to cover for her when she is away on union work resulted in similar feelings of guilt.

ii. Activism and Work Life

> Probably the biggest impediment is, first of all, having to do their jobs at the workplace and not having [male] supervisors or managers who would support the flexibility they'd need in their schedules. *Chrissy*

Lack of time and the responsibilities that union work entails also impact on women's work life. Seven of the women are full-time union officers. The remainder work at full-time jobs and conduct all their union work at nights and/or on weekends. The majority of this latter group also have children. These women do not have a lot of control over their work life and require flexibility in order to be union activists.

The CUPE membership, as a whole, is predominantly made up of low-wage service sector employees. Some of the women I interviewed work as social services providers, clerical support staff, child care workers, and in lower paying jobs within the health care sector. Others have technical, administrative, or professional jobs. Chrissy believes that management treats women activists differently, which in turn makes it harder for women to engage in that work. Not only are they less powerful in the workplace but they are also not afforded the same respect as their male colleagues in their dealings with management. Edna states that,

> there are ... a lot of managers who have trouble dealing with a woman in a position of what they consider to be power...it [acceptance of powerful women] is much slower changing within the management ranks [than within the union].

She further states that management judges you by what you look like and by the fact that you are a woman and not by what you say or do. At her workplace, she feels that her manager is "humouring" her and talking to her because of her union position and because he has been told to do so by more senior management.

Betty commented that when she had previously criticized her employer that a male co-worker earned more than herself, she was told that she should be happy because, in her position, she makes more than the women clerical staff. She understood this as a threat that she is only one step away from a lower-paying job and a lower-status position; therefore, she should be content with her current "place" in the workplace hierarchy. This level of powerlessness makes it difficult to engage in union work as employer flexibility is often necessary for women to become involved in activism work.

Lina, who is a social service worker, describes how she immediately became active upon taking up a new position and as a result experienced harassment and a negative work evaluation by her direct supervisor. Hiliary, who describes herself as a racial minority person, points out that many racial minority workers are at the bottom of the workplace hierarchy and managers have the power to hand-pick whomever they wish for more secure and higher-waged positions. This powerlessness deters workers from engaging in activism.

Jennifer, Cody, and Sonjia all discuss that while they are away on union-related business their work is placed onto their co-workers. As a result, they experience resentment from their co-workers, especially from those not supportive of the union. For Christina, one of the biggest stressors is that some of the members at her local think union work is full of perks and that when she is away at conferences and conventions she is just trying to avoid work.

Eileen discusses how the confrontational nature of activism deters women because the requisite skills are inconsistent with those of their jobs. As a flight attendant, Eileen describes how expectations of the job include that she is gracious and non-confrontational. She hypothesizes that women who chose this line of work may not be disposed to activism because it often entails a more outspoken and "in your face" approach.

Sonjia believes that she has lost some skills at the workplace because of her absence and that she will have to decide whether to discontinue her activism or seek out another job, perhaps one working in the labour movement. Betty described how being involved in a union affected her opportunities for other jobs. She feels that her current activism and politics prohibit her from applying to more mainstream positions. Interestingly, she also points out that it is hard to imagine what an ex-officer from one of the higher political bodies of CUPE would do if voted out of that position. Both Betty and Sonjia feel that the insecurities associated with union activism and the passion for union work lead many activists to consider relinquishing their jobs and becoming full-time union staff.

For those women (Cody, Maureen, and Sonjia) who currently work in non-traditional jobs in male-dominated workplaces, activism in relation to work life was experienced differently:

> [male co-workers] don't want a woman to be an electrician on their crew, [or] their steward...it's everything, it's not just being active in the union ... most of them don't even want you there. *Cody*

Her male co-workers did not want her there either as a worker or as someone who is representing them within the union and with the employer. The reaction she had to this was devastating:

> I consider myself a strong person [but] by the time I left there, I felt that I was weakened by the battle of fighting...and when you start thinking that you shouldn't be there then you know that they've gotten to you. So I quit... *Cody*

Both Cody and Maureen talked about how, comparatively speaking, activism within CUPE is an easier path than breaking into non-traditional work.

iii. Activism and Personal Life

> I tend not to have much of a personal life. I find that when the demands in one area start to reach a head, the other areas definitely suffer ... I consistently disappoint people in terms of the amount of time I'm willing to commit to a relationship. *Ethel*

> I had a relationship for a short while, actually with a couple of different men who tried to put me down for being so involved [in the union]...that was only because they wanted my time, not because they were all that concerned about whether I was going to burn out or not. *Lina*

Because she has no free time, Meg wonders how, as a single woman, she is going to meet anyone. For Maureen, she thinks it is easier for men to find women partners who can live with their activism than it is for women to find male supportive partners. Lina has been told that she is too aggressive and that men would not want to date someone like that. Jennifer is never invited out any more by friends; she believes they have given up on her coming because she is never at home. Her friends have become frustrated and are not as supportive as they once were. Christina and her family have had to work to achieve a balance between her activism and her family life so the relationship is fulfilling for all. Chrissy believed that if her involvement causes huge conflict at home, she would have difficulty remaining active. She believes her husband tolerates her activism, but no more. Hiliary states that her husband was the biggest problem; he started drifting away and they are now separated. Edna, who is single with no children, points out that she still has an extended family with whom she wants to spend time and that her situation is not always taken into account. People expect her to be more available because she is single.

Ethel believes that women may not become active within a union because their personal life provides self-fulfilment and enjoyment and they do not want anything to interfere with that. They equate activism to their work life and would prefer to spend time with their family than with anything related to work.

Women described the need for balance in their lives to deal with the time restrictions and the pressures placed on them:

> I think there's a lot of people like that in the union movement who won't admit that they've reached their limit or who won't ever say, "That's it, I've had enough, I have to step back now". Because they think of themselves as failures when that happens. *Edna*

When I asked Anne about the stress she experiences because of her many responsibilities, her response was:

> You see, there's more than me to survive; if I don't survive the local doesn't survive, because my team doesn't survive, and if the team doesn't survive than the leadership within the local can be misguided. *Anne*

When asked what advice she would give her daughter if she wanted to become active, Christina responded:

> ...to make sure her life was balanced. That it wasn't wholly consumed by the union, you know that if she had a family, she made sure she had time for family or socialized outside of the union because I do think that becoming involved in the union can take over your whole life and I don't think that is healthy. I think we need to have that balance there.

iv. Summary of External Pressures

The lack of time and the potential for negative consequences in their work life and their personal life make it difficult for women to engage in union work. The "snowball effect" shows that for some, once they become active, their responsibilities grow to sometimes unmanageable proportions. They are encouraged by others to take on more and more work. This encouragement, however, is not felt by all women and in all places within

CUPE. The next section describes the unwelcoming and difficult atmosphere that may confront women activists. The culture of the labour movement has traditionally been dominated by men and male ways of working. Women activists are challenging these traditions.

6.2.2 Culture of the Labour Movement

i. "Old Boys' Network"

> it's all this politicking too, in fact, the old boys - it just seems like a real old boys...it's very hard to break into, how are you doing to, unless, you are able to beat them or be like them or be accepted into that group. And I still don't know if, even if you're accepted, that they're going to support you in a leadership role. I think that it's very evident that there's still an old boys' network out there. *Meg*

> I think sometimes, it is hard for women to break into an all-male enclave and figure out what the hidden messages are and the hidden communications. *Chrissy*

During the interviews, frustration was expressed that all but one of the provincial presidents were men and many female-dominated locals had long-term male presidents. When asked from where she was most likely to experience challenges to her activism, Sonjia replied: "the old boys' network." In reflecting on her experiences Edna agreed that, "the old boys' club is still alive and well in the unions and in union activism".

Esmerelda describes the union environment as a clique:

> I think it's a clique, actually. I think people are sort of chosen to be the leaders. To be a leader of a local, it helps that I am friends with xxx and xxx. But you have to be around a long time before you're thought of as a leader. *Esmerelda*

Many of the participants were the first woman to hold the position they currently do. Sarah's involvement in a previously all-male body challenged the way that body was operating:

> I knew I was cleaning up. I thought if I did nothing else I would clean it up so that you'd be able to speak your mind amongst your own. So it was a big struggle...that's the first time I actually felt discriminated against as a woman. *Sarah*

The importance of women breaking into positions previously held by men is encouraging for other women. Maureen notes that Judy Darcy's success is "one less nut she has to crack herself."

The women from female-dominated locals did not experience the same degree of organized resistance as women from male-dominated locals. Jennifer believes that women are intimidated by male leaders and this prohibits their involvement in union activism outside the local because the leadership there is more likely male. Meg's home local is approximately 90 per cent women. When she attends CUPE conferences or conventions, she describes the environment as not that encouraging for women. In attempting to name this "unwelcoming" feeling two themes emerged: Women feel excluded from the decision-making process and positions of leadership; and women feel that different expectations are placed on them which makes it more difficult to engage in activism work. These two themes and the "old boys' network" are the primary descriptors of the culture of the labour movement emerging from the data.

ii. Women's Experiences of Exclusion

> I sometimes feel like I'm being told what somebody wants me to know. Like somebody has told me part of the situation, but there's a room where there's other people talking where they say: "We'll just tell her that. We'll take care of the real business here". *Edna*

Women report exclusion from positions of leadership within the union; even when they are in these positions, their opinions are not always sought. As a co-chair of a committee, Sarah learned that the male co-chair unilaterally called a meeting without consulting her. Chrissy

feels that she was excluded from the decision-making process during one meeting because she did not go to the bar the night before where the issues were discussed and decided upon. Maureen spoke of an instance where the male president went directly to the male departmental steward without first approaching the female chief steward. Normally, the chief steward would be contacted first.

Ethel, who is active on various provincial committees in her role as executive board member, states that the decision-making process is not always transparent and the incumbent leadership tries to keep information away from her and the rest of the membership. She likened her role to a "cheerleader" who is not part of the process but is to remain on the sidelines as a supporter. Meg feels that men want women to work behind the scenes so to leave the grandstanding to them. Sonjia says that her male president keeps her in the dark so to limit her power. According to Jennifer, elected officers are able to hold onto their positions and ensure they are not contested by not informing others about the issues. Christina spoke of the power of those in leadership positions to define a role for others:

> CUPE is very political and if the main players decide that you are not playing ball and they don't want you there, then they have the ability to do that. *Christina*

Given the influence of union leaders, women who would consider an activist role need their support.

The president's position, referred to by Maureen as "the last frontier" for women, is accompanied by a certain degree of privilege:

> When you can come in and say, I'm president of a local and I'm representing 200 people, they [employers] do listen more. *Meg*

Christina has found that the members think you have to be in a higher position before they really listen to you and before what you say carries weight. Chrissy enjoys her president

position because she likes putting her views forward, testing them, and seeing if they work. There is an assumption by the membership, according to Edna, that leaders know it all. If someone wants to be in a position to push their issue, to receive respect, and to be seen as knowledgable, then it makes sense that they desire to hold onto that position.

The reasons why someone would like to hold on to their position of leadership is explained by Christina:

> It is being part of the process, you know, knowing what is going on and being part of the process to make some of the changes... I don't like someone else making all the decisions. I like to be part of that process. *Christina*

This speaks to a desire to have some power over defining your work and your life. Many CUPE members in low-wage service jobs do not have a lot of power to define their work or to speak to management as equals. For many, being part of a local leadership is the only way of achieving recognition and power within the workplace.

In attempting to understand exclusion, Anne describes the fear that people in leadership positions have when they are confronted with women activists:

> There's an inherent strength in women that we've never acknowledged. Men, don't have that, and they're fearful of it. That's why they [men] need us to act more like them. *Anne*

Anne says that leaders will not help other people who are capable because they are afraid they will run against them at the next convention; it does not make sense to increase the power and ability of "your opponent".

Eileen believes that men are threatened by women's issues, such as pushing for gender parity on convention delegations, because it means that they are less likely to attend conventions. When Ethel ran against a man for a position he had held for a long time, people told her they agreed with her platform but they were unwilling to push him out of "his job". The assumption was that he had some ownership over this position.

A further explanation for the exclusion is offered by Cody. She attended meetings where she was the only woman there and felt that:

> there was an uncomfortableness at the meeting ... they [the men] can't say what they want, they can't joke like they want, they can't swear like they want. They're aware that you're there. So you get the feeling, not that you don't think you should be there, but you know that they feel they don't want you there. *Cody*

Meg describes it as very hard to break into this enclave. Even if you are accepted by male members, it is a question whether you will get support when you run for a leadership position. Maureen felt the support when she held a position at the local; when she went for another position she needed to recruit the support of non-dominant groups members in her local (women and racial minority members).

Women offered solutions to the lack of support they feel. Cody believes that those in leadership have to forego those positions that others have opportunities, such as the chance to go to convention. Hiliary believes that it is up to the leadership to force discussions within the union on issues such as designated group status for racial minorities. According to Ethel, white men in leadership positions need to be convinced that they represent everyone. Maureen feels that people in positions of leadership have the added responsibility to provide the opportunity for women to participate through addressing some of the discrimination within the union. Exclusion is one way the respondents feel "unwelcome"; the third and final theme describes a culture which places different and more strenuous expectations on women.

iii. Expectations Placed on Women

When asked whether there were different expectations placed on them in leadership positions, a large majority of the participants said yes. These different expectations emerge

in three ways: (a) there is a double standard where more is expected of women in leadership positions because they have to prove they belong there; (b) women are not allowed to exhibit any faults or to fail because, if they do, their failure means all women can not succeed; and (c) there is a "tough chick expectation" placed on women where any sign of vulnerability or weakness is used to prove they cannot be effective leaders.

(a) Double Standard

> I think women have to prove themselves more than men. I think they are expected to do more and be better. I think because we still need to justify being there. I don't think we've gotten beyond that and I think that our members expect us to justify us being there..it puts a lot more pressure [on us]. *Christina*

> As a woman, you come in, you have to work to earn the respect. Men come in, and they are given the benefit of the doubt where they are okay until they prove otherwise. For women, it works the other way. *Cody*

> ...people always seem to expect more, or you have to prove yourself more, I guess it is just history, I don't know. It's a frustrating thing...that men have always been the leaders. *Eileen*

Lina feels that although men within CUPE are very encouraging, women have to be better in order to reach the same level in the organization. Sonjia states that if a man is elected and is doing a good job he will continually be re-elected; he has to make a big mistake before being contested. Whereas, for a woman, she will always be contested regardless of the job she has done. For Anne, the double standard means that women are expected to act both like a man and do the job, whereas for men, they are only expected to do the job.

Jennifer feels that women in leadership roles face ongoing scepticism:

> men are looked at in society in a more powerful way...They still look at the main role for women to be the care provider. *Jennifer*

The assumption that men are more "appropriate" in leadership positions forces women to work harder. For some, it is not only that women have to be twice as good but they also have to be close to perfection.

(b) Pressure For "No Fault" Leadership

> people are harder on women...If a man screws up, "Oh well." It's not all men's fault, it's just his fault, right? But if a woman screws up, there's still a tendency to - "Oh well, she blew it so therefore all women can't do it." [and] If you screw up one little thing, you're no good in anything either. *Betty*

There was a perception that women cannot show any faults and that they are pressured to be perfect all the time. Sarah describes how women are under more scrutiny and this results in pressure on them to be perfect. The consequence of this pressure, according to Jennifer, is that women will be fearful of taking the first step to becoming active because "if you lose, you've lost for women". She feels that women members have pinned their hopes on you as a woman leader, and view you as a role model, and if you let them down, they will not be encouraged to become active themselves. The push toward perfection in women forces women to be tough and to avoid showing any vulnerabilities.

(c) Tough Chick Expectation

> I think there's still the expectation that if you're a woman leader of a trade union then you're one tough cookie, there's that whole tough cookie, tough chick expectation, that they don't want to see somebody who's vulnerable. *Ethel*

She explains that women are more likely perceived as weak, and consequently are conscious not to show any vulnerability whatsoever. According to Jennifer, women will be criticised for not being as tough as men. She further states, however, that men are also criticised if they do not show the "appropriate" level of emotion when it is expected.

6.2.3 Internal Pressures

In addition to the barriers described above, many of the women question whether they have the necessary abilities to do the work of elected leaders. Two themes emerge from the

interviews: women experience a fear of failure resulting from a lack of self-confidence and/or a perceived lack of necessary skills; and to counter this fear, women need the support and encouragement from others in order to decide to become active. This external validation was described as a necessary condition for their activism.

i. Fear of Failure

> I was afraid to open my mouth and you know, it's better to keep your mouth shut and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and prove it. *Edna*

> I think [doubt comes] from within, it's like Oh God, I screwed that up! I can't do this, you know, I should have done this, or I should have done that but it mostly comes from within, it's never somebody who's come and said, "What are you doing?" *Meg*

As a result of the barriers described in the previous section and in particular the increased expectations placed on women, it is not surprising that many respondents express a fear of failure. In response to the question on why women may not want to become active, Maureen suggested that it is:

> the fear of attack. The reality of sexism. That you're going to be undermined, that you're going to be doubted, that even if you do get somewhere, you're going to be a token, you're going to be the representation of your gender. If you fail that proves...it's too gargantuan an attack. *Maureen*

Many of the women reported a deep fear of making a mistake resulting in someone getting hurt. Eileen spoke about a fear of doing something wrong resulting in the whole thing "crumbling down". She says that women take criticism more personally than men; if she fails, she will interpret this as a lack of self-worth. Jennifer believes that taking the first step toward activism is fearful because,

> If you lose, you've lost for women. Like, that you're not good enough. You didn't say your speech right, or your material didn't come across well enough, or maybe

> you're letting down all of these people who have put so much hope into what they believed in and you're always afraid that you're going to put them back a step. So every time you take the risk of running for that, you could maybe do that. *Jennifer*

Women were asked to talk about their confidence and comfort level in the role of a union activist. I also asked them about personal barriers they experience, whether they are comfortable in their role as activists, and whether they perceive that they are accepted by others. Whereas some (Lina, Anne) believed that women have the most credibility as activists because they, more than men, have experienced the downs of labour, the more prevalent position was that described by Sarah where women question their role as activists:

> I find it hard. I find it hard being a leader. I don't find it hard doing what I do, but I find it hard viewing myself in that role. *Sarah*

Women described a lack of self-confidence which contributed to their fear of failure. This lack of self-confidence was in response to their perception that they did not possess the necessary knowledge and skills to do activism work:

> Men begin with more confidence and we are used to perceiving men's voices as authoritative. *Maureen*

Betty describes women as more careful than men when taking on leadership responsibilities:

> they [women] make sure their bases are covered, they have to. And men don't seem to worry about that kind of stuff, they just take a fling at it. *Betty*

This need for "groundwork" was apparent in the response Christina gave to the question on what advice would she give her daughter if she wanted to become active. She would advise her to get as much education as she could before getting involved in CUPE and know what CUPE is all about. Chrissy feels that she never has enough background to feel comfortable in her position. She became the president quickly, and currently experiences a lot of stress when she is asked to make decisions and give advice in areas where she doesn't feel solid.

She feels that there is always something more to be learned before making a decision. One of the skills discussed as necessary for activism is public speaking. I asked the respondents about their experiences speaking in public. Their perceived effectiveness in public speaking is related to whether they feel comfortable in a leadership position. Meg believes that women will more likely defer to men to speak in public because they are perceived as stronger in that area:

> [when] people get up at the microphone at conventions, people think, wow, they're really good speakers [and] I want him to represent me - I think a lot of people think that women, are not going to be as strong [and] we need somebody really strong to speak out in that kind of position. I don't think people always see women as doing that. *Meg*

> It is very noticeable, and it's almost embarrassing, like women are slower to get to the microphone. We have to think about what we want to say, it takes us a few minutes to actually get up there... if you look around, it's men that are at all the mikes, even though there's hardly any men there. *Meg*

Betty stated that the fear of public speaking will deter women from becoming active:

> I know people that won't run for office because of that [requirement for public speaking], because they're afraid to...you've got to go to the microphone, and you've got to speak because you've got to let people know that you're able to do that. I know one woman [who] won't do it. I'm sure that's why she won't do it because she's so afraid. *Betty*

Lina reflects that she will never reach her potential in leadership because of discomfort in public speaking. Anne and many other women get up to speak only if they feel knowledgable about the topic. Eileen worries that she will run out of words because of insufficient knowledge. Also, given the discussion about higher expectations, Eileen remarks that women are afraid to get up and speak because of feeling they have to do better to avoid criticism.

Sarah questions whether she has anything important to offer and does not think she

sees the world with any greater insight than anyone else. She also wonders why she, as a woman, is frightened to get up to speak when other members get up and repeat, in her words, "gobbledegook". Esmerelda believes that for her to get up to the mike, she would have to feel prepared and confident of providing new and unique information.

Ethel explains that the fear of public speaking is about "risking your ego" by putting your views forward and showing whether you have the skills to do that. Similarly, Sarah talks about how exhausting it is for her to speak in public; because for her to feel comfortable, she has to feel grounded and sincere about the issues:

> I sometimes get embarrassed because of the intensity I feel...when I get up and I talk about issues that I care about, I think my sincerity comes out. But it's at a great cost. I find it exhausting, speaking, because it's so much of me in it. *Sarah*

As a result of this pressure on women, Christina believes that women make better leaders as they are more likely to think about what they do and the consequences of their actions. Eileen believes that because women are open to accepting that they must gain experience and knowledge in order to succeed as leaders, they will develop strong leadership skills.

The women in this study felt accepted as leaders within CUPE. For Cody, it was a gradual process:

> So you get the feeling, not that you don't think you should be there, but you know that they feel they don't want you there. And then again you've got to earn your stripes. It's not right, but I think there's still a long way to go before women will actually feel comfortable just, equal, right off the bat. *Cody*

Maureen talks about how her co-workers accept her because of the credibility that she has in their eyes. They spoke of encouragement by others which helped to maintain their activism in light of the barriers experienced in leadership roles. As will be discussed in the next chapter, feelings of acceptance are necessary contributors to women's decisions to be active.

ii. Need for External Validation

Given the lack of self-confidence, the questioning of necessary skills, and the unwelcoming culture described above, it is not surprising that women report a desire to seek out encouragement and support from others:

> Any step I've every taken, it's always been with a lot of coaxing ... When I think about throwing in the towel its usually because [of] lack of confidence, that I just don't feel ... I feel others can do the job much better than I can. *Sarah*

It was the people around Sarah who saw her potential and convinced her to run for office and even after fourteen years of activism in CUPE she still says, they "saw something in me that I still don't see". Ethel describes how if she did not have people she respected encouraging her to be active and to promote herself, she never would have become active. She did not feel she had the "ego" and the confidence of other people but is developing that confidence. She is frightened of public speaking and feels more reassured if she can talk within a group first to get the issues solidified in her mind before she goes to a microphone. Part of the confidence Ethel needs comes from the membership developing a comfort level for women in leadership positions.

The other side of this reliance on external validation is that when criticism is received it carries a lot of weight. When Chrissy was criticized by members of her local, she felt "shattered" and it shook her confidence. Eileen explains this by saying that:

> women take criticism more personally than men do. Men take it in stride, if a man is criticised for his speaking style or whatever, they say, well that's the way it is, where women will do everything to try and change it, and say, oh my god, it's me, it's personal. *Eileen*

6.2.4 Summary of Barriers to Women's Activism

External pressures including lack of available time and the detrimental impact on personal and work life impact on activism work. Women's experiences of exclusion and the

added expectations placed on them also affect whether they take up activism work. Finally, women's fear of failure and their self-questioning of whether they possess the requisite knowledge and skills impacts on whether they feel comfortable as activists.

These barriers might lead one to assume that very few women become active in labour. This, however, is not the case in all levels of CUPE. In 1993, women represented 48.2 per cent of all presidents at the local union level and 11 of the 14 positions on the National Executive Board, CUPE's highest governing body. However, of the 10 provincial division positions of president, only one is held by a woman. This is an important point because the division presidents are the most vocal leaders in the province and the person whom the membership is most likely to know. Overall, more and more women are taking on leadership roles at various levels of CUPE. CUPE has a membership which is approximately 60 per cent women. In many locals, the percentage of women is much higher. It is therefore not surprising that there are women active at all levels of CUPE. What is surprising, however, is that they are active in spite of the multiple barriers described earlier. In the next section, the reasons for women's activism will be explored. The strength of women's desire to be active counteracts the barriers just described.

6.3 Reasons for Women's Activism

The second primary category emerging from the interviews is the Reasons for Women's Activism. I asked the women questions about why they decided to become active so to understand how and why they worked to overcome the barriers described above. The reasons provided are organized into three themes: sense of obligation mingled with a desire to affect change; activism as a way toward self-fulfilment; and a feeling of love and connection while engaging in activist work.

6.3.1 Sense of Obligation and a Desire to Effect Change

Women become active because they feel that it is time to give back to the organization and because they believe they can make a positive impact both within the union and at their workplace:

> ...that sense of obligation to CUPE, ... not only do you take from an organization, but you have to put back into it...if you can contribute in a way that's wanted at the time, then I feel a certain obligation to do that. *Sarah*

> The reason I [got] involved in the union was the injustices I saw that racial minorities were facing in my workplace, both from the employer and from the union. *Hiliary*

Chrissy feels that it is time to do her "bit" and it is time to give back to CUPE because she has benefitted from the work of other activists.

The desire to effect change also comes from acknowledging the discrimination of women and viewing activism within CUPE as a way to challenge this discrimination. Lina has watched women co-workers experience difficulties at work and feels that she wants to be part of an organization to fight back. Eileen states that her activism stems from her strong feminist viewpoint. Cody talks about the link between women's issues and the union movement. The desire to help women is also why Meg decided to become active:

> I feel like I'm fighting, I'm doing something to fight the cutbacks, to you know, to help other women. *Meg*

Anne discusses how women who have recognized unfairness that exists in the workplace and in society see the union as a means of improving their personal situation and women more generally. Christina experiences the difficulty juggling home, work, and kids. She believes that changes in the workplace need to be made and that the union is an avenue to make those changes.

For some women, attaining leadership positions is a way for them to support and

encourage other women activists. Jennifer remains involved in order to help other women develop the confidence that they can be activists too. Maureen previously ran for a position, not because she thought she could win but because she needed to make a point about sexism at her local:

> I knew that I was making a political point, you know, and raising the stakes and whatever, raising the possibility in those men's minds that, what would that be like, to be led by a woman. *Maureen*

Cody and Anne both spoke about their dissatisfaction with the incumbents at their local and that their activism was meant as a challenge to them.

For some, it was an event which encouraged their activism. Maureen began her activism as a health and safety representative after witnessing a co-worker being burnt while on the job. Hiliary first became involved during the 1981 hospital strike. For Eileen, the obligation for activism extended beyond the union and included a responsibility to work on social justice issues.

The desire to effect change was not only focused externally but also inward as a way for women to gain self-fulfilment.

6.3.2 Self-Fulfilment

> Being a woman and being active means that you face a lot of unnecessary barriers, and most of them are attitudes. I think that if you are given the opportunity and you take advantage of the opportunity, you might have to go the extra mile just to be heard. But if you do, like I said, I think you're going to meet with the success that you might not have expected, which is a kind of pleasant surprise. *Cody*

Meg enjoys the excitement of being "out there" screaming and showing her anger. For Lina, she feels that she has been "crapped" on enough and now she is doing something that she wants to do. She referred to herself as a "kool-aid mom", who loved her family but was bored to tears and needed something different. For Sonjia, involvement in CUPE gave her

the opportunity to "get even" and to do something significant that she hopes will be felt for years. Esmerelda views activism as a way for her to achieve self-confidence and maturity. She wants to be able to look back at her life and feel that she accomplished something. Meg found activism rewarding because she is achieving something - not just going to work. For some women, the challenge of activism is part of the attraction. Cody enjoys the politics of the struggle and the chance to engage in something that she believes in.

Union work provides opportunities for women that may not have been found elsewhere:

> I didn't go to college or university, and my whole education has been from the union. The union has taught me to speak, they've taught me to write, they've taught me, you know, how to deal with difficult situations or conflict. And that's been my house of education, it's been the labour movement and CUPE. *Jennifer*

Lina believes that the labour movement has shaped her outlook and philosophy on life. Edna feels that being involved has helped her get over some of her shyness.

I did not ask any particular question about connection, love, or solidarity. However, I did ask the respondents why they think women become activists and whether they and other women are accepted in that role. A theme that emerges from these questions describes women activists' feelings of love and connection.

6.3.3 Love and Connection

> I love this union work so much, that I'd love it to be a full-time job. *Lina*

> When I got involved in the labour movement I remember thinking I finally found my niche. This is somewhere where I do really well and I thought how come I understand this so well?...I seem smart here. People seem to like me, and they really were accepting of me and supportive and caring... *Jennifer*

There is a strong thread throughout many of the interviews which involves women's love of being active and being part of CUPE and the labour movement. Ethel is active because she

views the union as a big part of her life. She comes from a labour-positive family and the union is something with which she has always experienced a connection. For Cody, being involved in labour was something to believe in and as such is different from a "9 to 5" job. Labour activism is something that you "live". Maureen describes activism as like "having a beer with 1,000 of your closest friends" - the climate of her meetings are "loving". During the recent strike at her local, she saw the importance of a meaningful connection between the members and the leadership and spoke about the love she felt at their successful ratification meeting. She enjoys the four hours a month in meetings with members and is happy to work with them. Without this type of connection she does not see that important work can be accomplished. Sarah's leadership position allows her to do something that she loves to do - being active in CUPE. Edna enjoys the acceptance she feels within the labour movement and the positive impact it has made on her:

> Union people are so very, very different than any other group of people in the world ... I find them to be very, very accepting people, nobody tries to change you, they accept you for what you are. And it has given me the ability to grow in ways that, I mean, if 25 years ago somebody had said to me that I was going to be sitting being interviewed by someone about my union activities, I would have said "Yeah, sure. Go away". You know, I was a very shy person when I left home. *Edna*

Cody also spoke of the love she feels in her role as a union activist:

> I love it a lot. I love the work that I do... you meet with a satisfaction that I think is, can't really be compared to a lot of other things... solidarity at first is unique. When you feel that solidarity, whether it's a rally or a march or in your own union office, I think that that's unique in itself. And then when you work together for a common cause, and you meet success, that's unique. *Cody*

Love seemed to be an important connector when women talked about their reasons for being active within CUPE. Meg immediately loved the interaction with other women and the work involved in activism. There was a sense of acceptance, family, camaraderie, and support -

part of why she became active. Edna echoes this sentiment: "it's one of the nicest feelings in the world to have a complete stranger call you sister".

The remaining four categories: Perspectives on Leadership; Societal Influences on Activism; Family Influences on Activism; and Current Labour Trends within CUPE provide insight into women's interpretations of the barriers and a context in which to understand women's reasons for activism.

6.4 Perspectives on Leadership

> I don't trip over my ego too much. But I'm there, I'm elected to represent my members, and I take that commitment seriously. *Sarah*

At various points during the interview, women talked about their views on leadership. One theme that emerged was the sense that leaders were ordinary people who did not have any special qualities or characteristics that separated them from the membership. I asked women whether they saw themselves a powerful leaders. Many responded negatively and preferred to see power and leadership as defined not by who you are but rather what you do. Sarah, in particular, states:

> I'm no different than you or anyone else sitting out there or at any meeting ... I've just been fortunate to be in the right places at the right time...I find it hard being a leader. I don't find it hard doing what I do, but I find it hard viewing myself in that role.

Some women felt that they were not authentic as leaders. Lina states:

> I often feel that when I have done well and asserted myself, it's like I've put on an act. Now I can go back to my meek little self. I'm not a confident person, even though I would not let people know that. I stew about it when I'm alone.

Eileen pretends to know what she is doing:

> ...it's almost like you pretend that you can do it when you get there, and then all of a sudden you realize that you're doing it.

However, carrying out her responsibilities gives her confidence. Lina and Edna both described themselves as simply conduits of information and not the person with ultimate authority and power. Likewise, Christina spoke about how the members are the decision makers and she, as a leader, is only following their direction.

A leadership quality that continually emerged was that of "listening". Many women discussed the importance of the local leadership being available to listen to the members' frustration, anger, and fear especially during troubling political times. Members are feeling helpless as a result of the downsizing in many workplaces and as Christina notes:

> the easiest people to confront are your local executives. If you are going to be mad at someone, it might as well be them because they can't fire you [and] you don't have to go home and live with them.

Christina feels that this is part of the role of the leadership - to listen to this venting. The downside to this, according to Jennifer, is that because women lead from the heart and are more compassionate, others think they look weaker and therefore not strong enough to lead:

> A lot of decisions that we make are caring ones. And I think that comes out and may make us look like not as strong as a leader, because we worry about people and care how they are. And I think men lead from their brain, they know what the task is and they do whatever they've got to do to get it done. *Jennifer*

During actual leadership campaigns, women (such as Cody) have experienced frustration that they are challenged simply because they are women:

> there were guys that ran against me just for the sake of running against me. Because, you know, I'm a woman and things like that, and you get that everywhere. I'm used to it...he just didn't want me to be the steward, not that he didn't think it was a good thing, he probably didn't have an opinion.

Maureen knows that her own involvement has made it more credible to have women in leadership positions. Sarah believes where there are strong women activists at the local level, more relevant information about CUPE is taken back from conferences and conventions with an attempt to get women involved. Women activists allow for a discussion

of women's issues at the local level (Betty). In male-dominated workplaces, women's committees were frowned upon because:

> it was special interest, women's issues, and...the feeling was that you weren't considering the best interest of the union. You were only considering the interest of women's issues. So there's a lot of controversy and abrasive attitudes because of that. *Cody*

To understand their perspectives of leadership, I asked the women how they felt about having the two highest positions within CUPE held by women, and whether this impacted on women's activism:

> I think that they [Judy Darcy and Geraldine McGuire] have really given women the opening to come in and not to be afraid to stand up to the men who are leaders in the labour movement....I think they've really opened the door for more female activists and we want to get to the young women and get them involved and I think we're doing that ... We've got to have people behind us, because we can't stay forever. *Jennifer*

> It certainly makes me feel that there are doors, not that they are open, but that they haven't been slammed shut. *Chrissy*

Betty believes that Judy Darcy and Geraldine McGuire make it seem more possible for women to become activists and that it is okay not to act like a tough male leader. Women are able to model how women leaders deal with confrontation. Edna believes that Judy Darcy and Geraldine McGuire have been successful in demystifying and removing the sense of elitism inherent in the top leadership positions. Two women from Chrissy's local came back from a convention feeling that there was a place for them within CUPE as women because of Judy Darcy and Geraldine McGuire's roles. Lina believes that they are an example that women can do the same jobs as men. Eileen feels that because Judy Darcy and Geraldine McGuire are effective with all their responsibilities, it allows her to believe that she can do what she needs to do as well.

Meg believes that CUPE has the reputation as a progressive union because people looking from the outside see that two women are in the top two leadership positions. She feels proud of CUPE because they are in those positions. Many women reiterated this sentiment.

Not everyone felt that Judy Darcy and Geraldine McGuire had an impact on women. Anne and Cody, for instance, did not see that their positions are that important because, at the rank and file level many women do not know them. These respondents both state that the fact that two women hold top leadership positions would encourage their continued activism, but would not impact on their initial activism. Hiliary believes that Judy Darcy and Geraldine McGuire do not affect women at all. She concedes, however, that they may affect white women but not racial minority women because "they [racial minority women] don't see themselves there." When discussing her own activism, she believes that the racial minority women who saw her challenge the white male executive of her local and win a place on the local executive made it possible for other racial minority workers to become active in the union. She herself had been initially encouraged by a racial minority activists to become involved in the union.

Although women acknowledge the importance of viewing women in positions of power and maintaining a connection for support, there is also the perspective that women do not always actively support one another. Meg is sometimes not supported by women members at her local because they feel uncomfortable when Meg screams and yells at rallies. Jennifer believes that men and women both see men as better leaders, more articulate and stronger, and are therefore more likely to support them. Anne describes how women of her age group are more likely to support men and that women from female-dominated, low-wage workplaces do not see women having the power to lead. Cody acknowledges a competition

among women which she believes stems from women being forced to fight to be heard.

The next two sections - Societal Influences on Activism and Family Influences on Activism - describe how women's views on labour activism are shaped by influences from society and from their families of origin. Stereotypes of the "appropriate" role for women affect their comfort level as activists. Many respondents were influenced by growing up in labour-positive families, often with fathers who were members of unions.

6.5 Societal Influences on Activism

> I think a lot of men get involved because it's a personal boost to their ego, it makes them stronger...and it lives up to the way they're raised. Men are the ones who don't cry, men are the ones who are tough and defend, but women are the ones who console and do the crying. *Jennifer*

> It's been acceptable for men to get up and speak and to scream and to yell and to be angry...for women, you know, that's only been something that's been acceptable (I would say) within the last ten years to fifteen years.... A lot of women that say you know well you shouldn't be up there screaming and being angry.... I don't think that a woman would say that to a man that you shouldn't be up there spouting off. *Meg*

To be elected and to get support of the membership, women acknowledge that they have to be able to prove that they can do the job. Respondents comment that because women are considered too emotional, they are not considered strong enough to be leaders. Maureen states:

> Another of the general stereotypes about women is that we're too emotional and that men are rational and that you would be driven in your leadership role by your emotion instead of by your reason. And in my view it's the opposite. Women are far more rational.

When Edna has been upset, she has been told to calm down so as not to get too excited. She believes that there is a perception that,

> A man who raises his voice is forceful and a woman who raises her voice is emotional. And there's something wrong still with being emotional...[belief that women] can't separate their emotions from the job.

Women speak of the problem they have with tears in public because they think it shows they are weak. Chrissy tries to avoid crying as she believes it is a sign of weakness and shows that she is out of control. Sonjia goes one step further and says that certain individuals who know that she is likely to cry if she becomes upset will irritate her in order to use it against her to show that she is weak. Jennifer believes that limiting emotional expression is not only expected of women but also of men. Male elected leaders are supposed to show that they are hurt by something but only at the "appropriate" level, or they too would be thought of as weak.

6.6 Family Influences on Activism

Some women have described that their union activism has been shaped by supportive and active parents and family members:

> I don't think I made a decision to become active. I think that it's just how I was brought up. I come from a family, I believe, of activists. *Sarah*

> My aunt was in a union in Jamaica.... She used to drive me to all these meetings, and I'd go out on the strike line with her; didn't understand what it was all about...when I came to work that morning in 1981, I knew that crossing a picket was something you never do. *Hiliary talking about the hospital strike in 1981*

Others have felt that their upbringing has hindered their personal level of acceptability as leaders:

> My father made me quit school because I wouldn't have any need for an education, I was going to have babies and cook dinners. So how would I feel about myself in a leadership role when I've been told that all my life? *Lina*

> I grew up [with] really traditional male/female role models for my parents...he [father] was really set in his mind that women shouldn't be bosses, shouldn't be in politics, shouldn't be, you know, doing these kind of things. *Chrissy*

In the interviews, women spoke of the culture of CUPE and the labour movement and its impact on their activism. Another theme that emerged is the evolving nature of CUPE and the impact this evolution has on women's activism. Along with societal and family influences, this sense of evolution provides a context for understanding women's activism.

6.7 Current Labour Trends within CUPE

Many respondents believe that traditional perspectives on women are in a state of transition and feel that the culture of the labour movement, and CUPE in particular, is evolving, largely in reaction to women's increased participation:

> It's just beginning, women, especially in labour, taking leadership roles, and probably by the time I'm a grandmother, it's just going to be taken for granted [that] the person best suited gets the job, regardless of gender. *Lina*

> In our federation of labour...it's really changed in the last ten years, just because of the fact that there's been, that there's more women there...it's the politics of the women as well, not just the way they deal with things...less decisions made in the bar instead of at the table you know. Women have brought those things and they won't put up with some of the stuff the way it used to be. *Betty*

> I think we have more 90s' men [in CUPE], at least they act like that. But I'm sure they'd love to be able to make sexual comments or things like they used to in the old days, but we won't allow it. Too many women are standing up for their rights and demanding respect. *Jennifer*

As more women enter non-traditional work and become activists within the workplace, Maureen feels that women union leaders cannot be ignored any more. The culture of CUPE is described as becoming more accepting of women, and women's issues are taking prominence in union discussions. Whereas the only position available for women was

secretary of the local (Edna), it is now considered acceptable to have two women holding the positions of National President and National Secretary/Treasurer.

There was also mention that the views toward women are not all heading in a positive direction. In reaction to the policies of current governments, women fear that equity gains are being rolled back. Cody states:

> The thing that scares me about CUPE and any other union is the new government. We are going back 30, 40, 50 years and this is going to encourage all the white able-bodied males that aren't open to understanding the need of anybody that's different in any way [to protect their own interests]. It's going to be a lot worse for women and designated group people because that's the direction that we're heading. So I'm pretty scared.

Many women discuss the backlash which is going on inside CUPE against non-dominant group members as a direct result of the cuts being made to the public sector. Cody describes that everybody's sensitivity is heightened because of layoffs, privatization, and other forms of restructuring. According to Betty, people are frightened and saying

> If I'm not going to get a raise, why should those women get raises?...Why are women getting a raise for pay equity? *Betty*

Chrissy is sceptical that any progress has been made:

> I know a lot of people feel we have come a long way, but when I watch my 19 year old [daughter], some of the things she deals with, sometimes I feel we haven't come any distance at all. When I watch TV, I feel like we are moving backwards instead of ahead...the lack of progress that I see in younger women, how they are treated by young men, by the media - I find it really discouraging.

The escalating political climate is making it difficult to be activists. Meg talks about how frightened she was when 40 riot police arrived at a rally at which she was speaking. Jennifer is concerned at the length of time she is away from home now because of all the political action against the Ontario government.

6.8 Summary of Findings

The findings from the interviews describe a situation where women are presented with many barriers to their activism within CUPE and the labour movement. These barriers are confronted by women's desire to become active and work within CUPE. Women experience much encouragement to begin and continue their activism. This encouragement offsets their experiences of exclusion and discrimination.

The findings show that activism cannot be understood simply by describing the barriers these women experience or their reasons for engaging in union work. Union activism is the result of a multi-faceted group of experiences which includes barriers to and reasons for activism, but is not limited by these two categories. Women interpret the labour culture and their role within it and make choices about where and when they will be involved. In the next chapter, I will present a theory which attempts to capture the various facets of women's activism and helps to explain their involvement in union work.

Chapter VII

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 Overview

This study has illuminated the experiences of women activists. The purpose of this research was to identify the key elements in women's activism and to propose a theoretical framework to explain this phenomenon. The focus of previous theories discussed in Chapter III was to identify the barriers faced by women as well as their reactions to these barriers. Another theory introduced in Chapter III described how women's perceptions of unions can influence their level of activism (*circle of irrelevance* theory). Chapter IV introduced psychological contributors, previously unexplored in the area of women's activism. Eccles's (1994) explanation of why women make their particular life choices (*expectancy value model of achievement related choices*) was also briefly discussed in Chapter IV to shape the present research on the reasons for women's activism. In this chapter, I will discuss the findings from the present research and will present a theory based on my findings which complements the existing body of knowledge.

The theoretical framework I will be proposing, entitled the "Self-Fulfilment Theory" (SFT), describes the interplay of the themes identified in the interviews. Specifically, this theory suggests that self-fulfilment is a necessary condition for women's activism. I will argue that activism is a means toward self-fulfilment and that, as a goal, self-fulfilment is a crucial component in women's decisions to become active. None of the previous theories, taken individually, adequately explains the myriad of factors influencing women's activism. In addition, the psychological influences surrounding women's activism has been a less explored area of research.

Throughout the following examination of the key elements of the SFT, I will be

linking the findings and ideas back to the relevant theories introduced in previous chapters. After which, consideration will be given to how the SFT can be applied outside of CUPE. As proposed in the introductory chapter, the results of this study and the theoretical framework may be transferred to other contexts in the form of a working hypothesis in order to understand women's activism within the CLM. Following the explanation of the SFT, I will examine the limitations of this study. I will conclude with some suggestions for future research.

7.2 Self-Fulfilment Theory

I will begin by briefly outlining the key elements in the SFT and by providing a visual representation of this theory. After which, each of the elements will be explained separately and in relation to one another. I will conclude with a discussion of the dynamic nature of this theory and the tension inherent within it.

7.2.1 Overview of Theory

When I asked the respondents why they and other women wanted to be involved in labour, frequent responses were a desire to be in control of their lives and a need to do something which makes a difference in society. I will argue that this desire stems from a feeling of discontentment in their lives. Activism in the labour movement provides them with an opportunity to alleviate this feeling. Through their work within labour, women come to feel connected, accepted, and loved. Their involvement and the accompanying acceptance provides women with power, strength, and a degree of control over their lives. Activism and leadership become a means of achieving a positive sense of self for women. It is more than a job or a commitment, it is tied up with how women want to see themselves, namely,

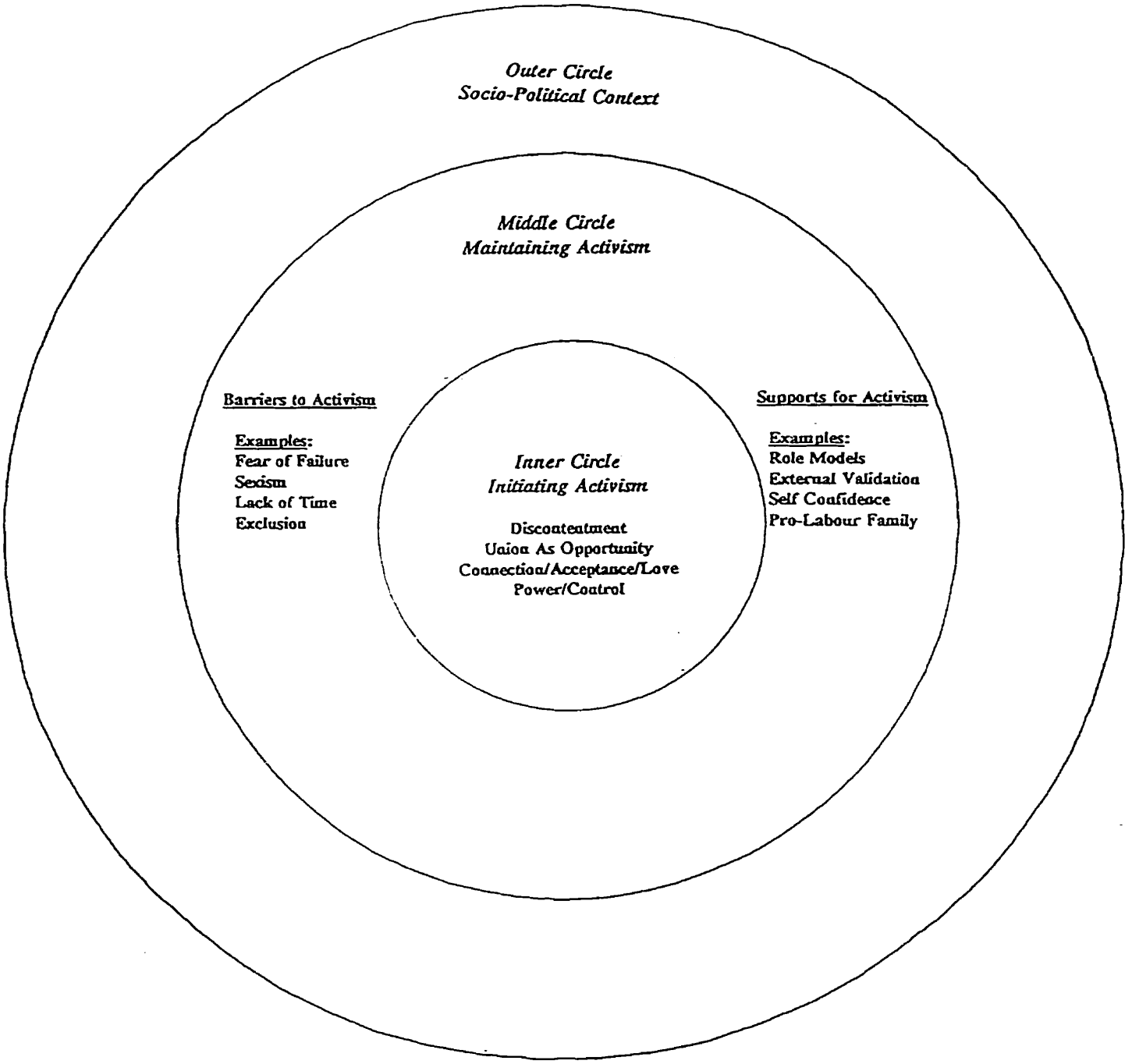
as strong, competent contributors to society.

Throughout this chapter I will distinguish between the four elements that directly influence whether activism is initiated (discontentment, union as opportunity, connection/acceptance/love and power/control) and the two elements that influence whether activism is maintained (barriers to activism and supports for activism). I will argue that the interplay of the first four elements influences women's decisions to initiate activism and the latter two competing elements directly affect whether they remain active.

The final element of this theoretical framework is the socio-political context outside of the union in which women's activism is situated. Throughout many of the interviews, women spoke of the difficulties CUPE is facing as a result of government attacks on the public sector. The impact of this element on activism is twofold: on the one hand, external pressures act as a barrier to activism and those in leadership positions are expected to show incredible strength. On the other hand, an ironic result of the cutbacks has been to increase the relevance of unions in people's lives and thereby positively influencing activism.

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the SFT. The three-circle model I chose is meant to represent the relationship of the elements outlined above. The four elements in the inner circle influencing the initiation of activism are in turn influenced by the two elements contained in the middle circle. This interplay is situated within the outer circle, or the socio-political context. The circles are therefore not meant to separate the elements into distinct influences, but to represent the interconnections among them. For the sake of clarity, only selected themes are depicted in Figure 1. In reality, this framework proposes that each of the various themes discussed in Chapter VI would fit onto one of the circles.

Figure 1: Self-Fulfilment Theory



7.2.2 Initiating Activism

The inner circle in Figure 1 depicts the four elements impacting on whether women initiate union activism. If women feel a sense of discontentment in their lives and if their union is viewed as an opportunity to affect meaningful change for themselves and others, it is more likely that they will choose to become active. If, upon becoming active, they experience a sense of connection, acceptance, and love within their work and if these feelings help them to realize an inner strength and power, they will work within labour to achieve self-fulfilment. Each of these elements will now be described separately.

i. Discontentment

I propose that a feeling of discontentment is the result of being unfulfilled. Something is lacking, and this feeling is accompanied by restlessness and a degree of personal dissatisfaction. In proposing that women become active because of discontentment, I am not suggesting that women are unhappy and depressed and seek activism as an escape from this. What I am suggesting is that they are seeking to be effective and to feel positive about themselves. The SFT does not assume that all women labour activists are malcontents. On the contrary, it promotes the idea that they are strong agents of change. None of the respondents stated that they felt their lives were meaningless before they began their involvement in CUPE. However, many spoke of a restlessness, as desire to affect change, and a desire to do something positive for themselves and others. Discontentment is the psychological construct I am using to describe the root of these desires and the catalyst for activist work.

Within the SFT, I am proposing that women's choice to engage in activism work is initiated by a desire to feel positive about themselves and their lives. The reasons the

respondents gave for becoming active focused on their need to do something that would make a difference. Eccles's (1994) theory suggests that women make choices based on the perceived success of their various options as well as the value (positive or negative) that they place on these options. In comparison to Eccles's theory, I am proposing a more personal reason for initiating activism - the desire to affect positive social change which in turn results in positive feelings of self-worth and self-fulfilment.

The desire to experience a positive sense of self is reflected in statements about personal characteristics which respondents wished they could change. Esmerelda, Jennifer, Chrissy, and Sonjia all hate their tendency toward tears when in difficult, stressful situations. They feel that emotions are a sign of weakness and they would prefer not to be seen as weak. Since leaders are supposed to be emotionally controlled, becoming active may be a way that they can change their unwanted personal characteristics. As discussed in Chapter III, the cultural discourse surrounding unions is described as antithetical to femininity. The culture is perceived as strong and dominated by powerful men. Likewise, from the results of my research, it became evident that women believe that the traditional view of male leaders as stronger and more capable is still prevalent in the labour culture. I propose that women who decide to become active in this culture view as desirable the perceived power and strength of leadership positions. As strength and control are desired, activism is viewed as a means to achieve these characteristics.

Discontentment can also result when women feel that their beliefs about themselves are not consistent with their actions. Lina and Eileen both feel they lack the characteristics to be an effective leader and both suggest that they are acting through a facade. Steinberg (1986) refers to this as the "imposter syndrome" where women feel fake or phoney in their positions. They believe they have achieved their positions through luck instead of through

their own competence. For some, I propose that their reasons for becoming active are based on a desire to close the gap between what they are actually doing and what they believe they are capable of doing. This "reality gap" results when women doubt that they are capable of being strong, powerful leaders, even though they are currently working in these positions. There is discomfort and stress resulting from this gap. I believe there is also a high degree of stress because they are worried about being "found out". They are worried that sooner or later others will also realize that they do not have the competency to be leaders. This stress manifests itself in the respondents' perceived need to always have the necessary knowledge and skill to proceed in union work.

Lack of perceived knowledge and skill, especially in the area of public speaking, is mentioned repeatedly as a reason why they may limit their activism. I propose that the belief that you have to "know it all" reflects a rooted sense of the "imposter syndrome" for some women. If women believe their achievements are based more on luck than on competence, they will work to increase their level of competence by seeking out the necessary skills. In relation to the SFT, women experience discontentment both directly (from the "reality gap" between what they are doing as leaders and what they believe they are capable of doing) and indirectly from the stress resulting from this gap.

Discontentment can also result from their work life. The respondents' jobs reflect those of CUPE workers in general - low-wage service-sector workers. Although some respondents enjoy their jobs, others find them boring, frustrating and lacking in decision-making power. Even those who enjoy their work report frustration with the organizational politics. Within her workplace, Chrissy identifies that women are treated with less respect because of their position as support staff at a University. Sarah, who refers to herself as "just a book store clerk", is unsure what she has to offer activism work. Esmerelda openly

states that she does not like her job and wants to be active in CUPE to gain "self-confidence and maturity". Jennifer finds her job boring and Lina wishes she could be a union activist full-time because it is more interesting than her paid work. Edna feels that women are not respected by management at her workplace. She refers to how women are judged, not by what they do but by their physical appearance and by the fact that they are women. For some, it is not a dislike for their jobs but rather an attraction for the work within the union, which makes their day jobs pale in comparison.

Women also are constrained or limited in what they can do given their responsibilities in the home. Lina refers to herself as previously being a "kool aid mom" and admits to being bored to tears during that time. This boredom was the catalyst for her to seek activism.

I propose that women who do not receive respect in the workplace internalize these negative images and strive to feel more positive about themselves. This negative view is a contributor to the discontentment I am referring to in this theory. Leadership connotes strength, power, and an ability to effect change. The respondents have different images of what constitutes an effective leader, but referred to these characteristics as positive. Therefore, it appears that women desire leadership positions as a way to achieve the positive characteristics associated with the people in these positions.

To use an example, Christina feels that the greatest stressor for her is that members of her local believe she is only engaging in activist work to further her personal self-interest. This accusation of self-interest is not what I am referring to here in proposing why women become active. Instead, it is a desire to self-actualize, to gain a positive sense of self through activist work. As such, it makes sense that Christina would find these criticisms hurtful because they target the very reason why she is engaging in activist work. Her reason

for activism is to feel positive about herself. As a result of her activism, however, she is given feedback that furthers the negative images she is trying to eradicate. This might explain why respondents internalize criticism so deeply. Their activism stems from a personal desire to self-actualize. Criticism directed at their activism therefore takes on a personal meaning; it adds to their personal dissatisfaction and frustrates their movement toward self-fulfilment.

It is possible that women who decide against union activism feel a greater sense of satisfaction with or contentment in their personal lives and their personal relationships than from union activism. Ethel believes that, for these women, becoming involved in the union may not be desirable because it is too closely aligned with their work life and they are more invested in their personal life. Another possibility for why women do not become active could include that attaining self-fulfilment may not be a foreseeable goal. It may not be something they have thought about or wish to currently consider and therefore they are content and would not become activists. Working toward self-fulfilment is a privilege some may not be able to afford as it requires valuable time and energy. Apathy toward union activism therefore does not have a simple explanation. It may be the result of either focusing energies elsewhere or it may be the result of not identifying self-fulfilment as a personal goal. In addition, even if someone identifies self-fulfilment as a goal, she may not think it is attainable through union activism and therefore will not pursue it.

In summary, discontentment is a necessary catalyst for activism work. It results in a desire to move toward self-actualization, seen as achievable through engaging in activist work. Women may not feel fulfilled in their lives, either because they perceive that they lack important positive personal characteristics or because their work or personal lives are dissatisfying in some way. SFT proposes that women strive to alleviate this discontentment

by focusing their energy on union work which in turn provides them with an opportunity to affect change in their lives and to bolster their self-image.

ii. Union as Opportunity

Women who feel discontent and who are searching for meaning in their lives look upon activism within CUPE as a place to "make a difference". Union activism provides them with an opportunity to work toward self-fulfilment both on an individual and a collective level. As discussed in Chapter VI, under the category "Reasons for Women's Activism", women become active because they see the union as a place to fight for workers' rights generally and women's rights specifically. I propose in the SFT that activism provides an opportunity for women to work toward a positive self-image, not just by what the union can do for them individually but also by their work in connection with the struggles faced by other workers. Women experience a positive self-regard as a result of their ability to help others.

Eccles's (1994) model fits nicely into this section of the SFT. Women who have identified a need to work toward self-fulfilment decided to engage in activism work because they expected to be successful and because they placed a high value on the work. Women who desire to effect change in their lives have different options. Some decide that union work is where they will successfully alleviate their feelings of discontentment. Others may choose to concentrate on family, jobs, community and other social justice causes. Those that become active in CUPE place a high value on union work. This high value may be a reflection of a pro-union family history, an earlier positive experience with unions, and/or an appreciation for the positive impact of unions on the lives of workers. The value placed on union work may also be because unions are viewed as an opportunity to achieve a positive

sense of self. Whereas self-fulfilment is the goal of activism, women identify the union as a context to realize this goal.

For some, CUPE provides opportunities on an individual level not otherwise attainable. Jennifer discusses how all her education has been through labour and she reports that she never felt smart until she started working as a labour activist. She also remarks that activism has effectively put challenge into her life and has made her work life more interesting. Likewise, Cody describes that she loves the challenge of fighting for social justice within her union. Betty believes she is "bettering herself" through enroling in CUPE's education programs and that the union has taught her a lot. Edna admits that she was extremely shy and has grown through her union work. For her, involvement in the union also provides her with respect from others which she feels she normally would not receive. For instance, she believes that the only reason why her supervisor currently talks to her is because she is the local president. This respect contributes to her positive sense of self and consequently encourages her activism.

I also propose that a positive sense of self is strengthened through union work when that work entails helping others. Eileen believes that she has a responsibility outside the union, in the larger community which includes fighting for social justice. Sonjia describes how activism allows her to "get even" and make a positive impact on people's lives. For Esmerelda, she wants to feel that at the end of her life she has done something to better the world. Hiliary sees union activism as providing an opportunity to fight on behalf of racial minority workers in the workplace. Cody feels that activism is the most rewarding thing in her life because it makes her feel that she is making a difference in the lives of others.

For some women, union activism validates their positive personal characteristics. When asked what characteristics make an effective leader, women leaders describe

themselves as more compassionate and more willing to listen to complaints and frustrations of members than their male counterparts. According to Christina, as women are socialized to take on a caregiving role, they are more likely to be compassionate leaders. In addition, as Edna points out, for many CUPE women their work lives entail looking after others and it is therefore something with which they are familiar. CUPE members are public sector workers providing necessary services. I propose that women choose activism work for similar reasons as they have chosen their occupations. Caring for and working on behalf of others are common themes in both their work lives and their union work.

Some respondents choose activism because they have an obligation to "give back to CUPE". I propose that this strengthens women's self-image because, in fulfilling this obligation, they are both making a positive contribution and doing what they "ought to do". Women's societally-proscribed roles as caretakers impact on women's desires to "look after" others. This is exemplified by Jennifer, Lina and Maureen who hoped that their involvement would further activism of other women. Union activism therefore provides them with an opportunity for personal self-fulfilment through actively supporting others.

The goal of self-fulfilment works within the context of union activism in two complementary ways: first, on an individual level, women gain confidence and satisfaction through learning new skills and knowledge while participating in union activities. Learning may occur from either education courses offered by the union or informally through interactions with other activists. Second, women's ability to work on behalf of others allows them to feel positive about themselves. Many respondents listed compassion as an effective leadership quality; women's activism on behalf of others allows them to feel positive about themselves because they are exhibiting this quality. When Lina decided that she needed to help stop the discrimination against women at her workplace through activism within the

union. She not only helped others but also felt better about herself.

In summary, activism is chosen because it is seen as an opportunity for successful action and because high positive value is attached to the work. Those that choose not to engage in union work do so either because they have low expectations for success or they place low value on activism work. The expectations for success and the values placed on union work are affected by the barriers and the supports women face as activists, and will be described further in the section on "Maintaining Activism".

iii Connection/Acceptance/Love

In the SFT, acceptance within the union is a crucial component in women's progress toward self-fulfilment. Acceptance provides an opportunity for women to grow and self-actualize within an environment where they feel connected and loved. Women discover through their activism that they have found a "niche". They meet others who share a common goal and purpose. They develop friendships with others who are equally passionate and committed. Lina refers to union members as the nicest people she has ever met. Edna talks about union members as accepting and states that they have encouraged her to grow personally. She also spoke about how nice it was for her that a complete stranger would call her "sister".

I propose that finding a connection with others and experiencing a strong emotional bond through love and acceptance are necessary contributors to women's activism. For most, their first activist experience is at the local union level. For these women, receiving support and acceptance at this stage is crucial for their continued involvement. Meg and Maureen both spoke about the love and camaraderie at their local union. When Meg decided to get involved, she immediately felt connected and accepted by the group of women at her

local. Maureen refers to some of her membership meetings as "love-ins" where the atmosphere is like "having a beer with 1000 of your closest friends". She believes that this connection is important for effective leadership.

All the respondents in my research were asked directly whether they feel accepted by the members and whether they feel comfortable in their leadership roles. As stated, many not only feel accepted, but also experience an emotional bond and connection. Leadership theory, as described in Chapter IV, did not directly refer to women's activism in labour. It does, however, assist through its discussion of legitimacy. Gibb (1969) and Hollander (1985) discuss how there is a requirement for legitimacy in order for people to be considered appropriate leaders. It is the sense of legitimacy which serves as a base on which the leader may exert influence (Hollander & Julian, 1970).

The SFT supports the concept of legitimacy as an important component to understanding the dynamic of leadership theory. Legitimacy is one of the necessary supports for maintaining activism. I propose, however, that acceptance not only supports activism but is also one of the necessary experiences for women to achieve their goal of self-fulfilment. Within the SFT it is the woman's own sense of acceptance in the union which furthers the goal of self-fulfilment. This acceptance resonates back to her feelings about herself as a leader, and works toward a more positive sense of self and ultimately toward the goal of self-fulfilment. Acceptance therefore is an element located in the inner circle of the SFT because it directly influences the initiation of activism toward self-fulfilment. Legitimacy can be viewed as a component of this acceptance. For women to feel accepted in their roles, they need to believe that others also feel that they legitimately hold those positions.

Throughout the interviews, the respondents report that they rely on others' opinions to feel comfortable in their leadership positions. They refer to the importance of supporters for

their activism. Also, when asked whether they are encouraged to take on leadership roles, many state that without others' encouragement they would not be active today. External encouragement and acceptance therefore propels women in their activism. For others to encourage these women, it implies that they are accepted. A high value is placed on others' opinions. Consequently, acceptance is an important contributor toward a positive sense of self for women. Election into leadership positions is a tangible manifestation of this acceptance.

In summary, the concept of acceptance speaks to how women feel about themselves in leadership roles which includes whether others believe they legitimately hold these positions. If women did not sense that they were afforded legitimacy, they would not feel accepted in their role as leaders.

iv Power/Control

I propose that when women engage in work that results in feeling positive about themselves, they experience a sense of power and control over their lives. The desire for power and control is a necessary contributor to their goal of self-fulfilment and hence their activism. I propose that self-fulfilment includes an ability for women to be in control of their lives and to have power to achieve this desired goal. The respondents include strength and power as positive leadership qualities. Becoming elected is an important step in achieving the goal of self-fulfilment. As leadership embodies traits that are generally perceived as positive, women activists strive to become elected so to obtain these traits. These traits are the qualities activists desire when seeking leadership positions.

The concept of power was not extensively explored in the earlier chapters, however, it has arisen as an important element within the SFT. In the interviews, I asked the women

to define power. Extrapolating from their responses, the definition of power I will use is that which provides the ability for activists to affect change either individually or collectively.

Respondents refer to a sense of powerlessness in their working lives. Their position in the organizational hierarchy as low-wage, low-status workers contributes to this sense of powerlessness. Hiliary notes that racial minority women are lowest on the organizational hierarchy and are, as a result, the most powerless group. Their job security is dependent upon many people above them. Hiliary believes that racial minority members are not heard because they have no power and people listen only to those who have power. She views power as the ability to challenge hierarchy. According to her perspective, unless racial minority members are considered a threat, they will not be heard.

I propose that in the past women activists may not have had many opportunities to be in control of their lives and to experience self-fulfilment. I also propose that union work provides them with an opportunity to wield power effectively. Esmerelda and Edna specifically refer to a desire to know what is going on and to be in control of the decision-making process.

I asked respondents to provide me with examples of what makes an effective leader. Many reported that leaders are strong and powerful. Desiring these characteristics is a necessary precursor toward self-fulfilment and therefore women's activism. There are different interpretations for the word "power". For Cody, power means that you have voice, respect, credibility, and support. Betty interprets power as the ability to have her voice heard and to give opportunity for others' voices also to be heard. For Esmerelda, it is the ability to influence what happens and how things happen. Sonjia links knowledge and information with power. She feels that the incumbent at her local limits her access to

necessary information because he does not want her to gain too much power and threaten his position as president.

As power means in this context the ability to effect change, both within themselves and for others, achieving power becomes a necessary precursor to self-fulfilment. The choice to engage in activism work is exerting their personal power. Positive results from this choice, such as acceptance and election to leadership positions, allow women to feel they have control over their lives.

In summary, the inner circle of the SFT proposes that discontentment is an unwanted experience for women and that they look for avenues to alleviate this feeling. Some choose work within CUPE as a means toward self-fulfilment. If women experience acceptance and connection within the union, they will continue to be active as it makes them feel positive about themselves. Finally, this acceptance and resultant positive sense of self gives them a sense of power and control over their lives. Not only are they able to effect positive change as a result of their union work, this activity influences how they feel about themselves.

7.2.3 Maintaining Activism

I propose that whether women decide to be union activists is largely contingent on the elements in the inner circle in Figure 1. The elements contained in the inner circle are all necessary conditions for women's activism as they move women toward the goal of self-fulfilment. In fact, the four elements just described act together as a catalyst for women's activism. The existence of these elements and their interconnection add to the likelihood that a woman will become an activists. These elements however, do not appear in a vacuum; they are related to other elements that influence whether women maintain their activism (see Figure 1, the middle circle).

I am making a distinction between the elements that work directly toward the goal of self-fulfilment (four elements in the inner circle discussed in previous section) and hence contribute to initiating activism and those (two elements in the middle circle - barriers and supports) that contribute to maintaining activism. The four elements discussed in the previous section detail the causes of women's activism whereas the barriers and the supports impact on whether activism continues. Barriers may place limits on women's abilities as activists but the fundamental reasons or contributing factors for women's activism are not tied to the barriers they may experience. Likewise, the support and encouragement women experience help to maintain and strengthen their ability to remain active, but are not sufficient reasons why they initially choose activism work.

Extrapolating from Eccles's (1994) model, the value placed on union work will impact on whether women choose that work as a means toward self-fulfilment. Elements contained in this middle circle directly influence whether the value is positive or negative. Because the women I interviewed were currently active, their work is more likely to be experienced as positive. In the interviews, the respondents discussed their pro-union family history and the positive impact unions have made for equity-seeking groups. These positive views influence the maintenance of union activism.

There is a dynamic tension between barriers to activism and supports for activism. By dynamic I mean these elements are always shifting in relationship to one another; depending on the particular situation. If the supports outweigh the barriers at any particular moment, then women will remain active. However, if the barriers are stronger than the supports, women will decide that activism is not currently where they will seek self-fulfilment; that is, there are too many obstacles in their way and the goal is either unattainable or too difficult to achieve. This may mean that they either limit their activism

to particular situations or they may choose to forego labour activism entirely. They may rethink their assumption that the labour movement is a place for them to be effective and decide to place their energies elsewhere.

Sexism is a barrier faced by many respondents - and particularly in forums outside the local. Women from female-dominated locals express difficulty in dealing with this "unwelcoming" environment (ie., at conferences and/or conventions). At these forums, they experience barriers that are stronger and supports that are weaker than at the local level. Some may choose, therefore, to limit their activism to places where there are fewer barriers. Women activists from male-dominated locals may be at an advantage in dealing with sexism because they have greater experience in dealing with it and have developed supports at the local.

The impact of the barriers and the supports fluctuates over time. If the "success stories" I interviewed find themselves in a situation where the barriers are outweighing the supports, their activism will be muted until they experience the necessary supports as a counterweight. The supports they experience at their current level of activism (ie., local, provincial or national) must be outweighing the barriers or I would not have found them in leadership positions. They made choices about their degree of activism based on the interplay between the barriers and the supports. These choices are reflected in their current level of activism and whether they desire to extend their activism to other areas of CUPE and to the labour movement as a whole.

None of the four elements in the inner circle is immune from the impact of either barriers or supports. As an example, a positive family history of labour activism supports and encourages the perspective that unions provide an effective opportunity to affect change; therefore, within the "inner circle", women move from being discontent with their lives to

embracing union activism as a way to achieve social justice and ultimately a sense of personal satisfaction. Another example is that women's fear of failure discourages them from running for elected office and becoming activists.

Another potential barrier (discussed by Esmerelda) is that the culture of CUPE dictates that you have to be around for a period of time before running for office. If this is true, then according to the SFT the barrier limiting newer people will lessen when the supports for these groups strengthen through increase involvement and acceptance of these newer members. As stated in Chapter VI, the culture of CUPE is shifting to allow more non-dominant group members into positions of power. The influx of women members and women in leadership positions is working to increase the acceptability of women in these roles. This increased acceptability works as a necessary support to encourage women's activism. This acceptability is not experienced equally by all women and, as Chrissy states, is continually under attack by negative messages of women in the media. Likewise, Cody believes that the government attacks on equity initiatives negatively affects the positive evolution of acceptance of women currently happening within CUPE. Women and non-dominant group members will act as role models for other activists and will be the supports necessary to maintain their activism.

7.2.4 Socio-Political Context Influencing Activism

The outer circle in Figure 1 refers to the socio-political context where women's activism is situated. This circle influences women's activism either at the point where women are deciding to become active (inner circle) or when barriers and supports are impacting on the continuation of their activism (middle circle).

These interviews were conducted between December 1995 and March 1996. At that

time the Federal and many Provincial Governments had begun cuts to public services which has forced a strong push toward privatization of that work. Privatization challenges the legitimacy of public sector work. The push toward privatization is predicated on the belief that the private sector can do the work better, more efficiently and more expediently, than the current public sector. The socio-political context affects activism in two opposing ways. On the one hand, it promotes the belief that militant, strong labour leaders are needed both to cope with the cuts and to deal with the frustration and anxiety expressed by members. On the other hand, the pressure placed on unions have forced them to strengthen internal solidarity and to develop links with supportive social justice partners. Unions have become more relevant in the lives of members because many see their union as their only source of support.

According to Ethel, the apprehension within CUPE's membership is increasing their desire for strong leaders. I propose that this is impeding women's ability to become activists because the requirements for the "job" seem daunting to those who, may not as yet, have developed the confidence level to proceed. Christina, Jennifer and Meg all mention that the biggest stress for them right now is the governments' attacks. In particular, Meg refers to the apprehension she felt when she spoke at a rally where "30 or 40 riot police showed up". As discussed earlier, leadership requires strength and power. I propose that because of the current climate, these requirements for strength and power are heightened.

The socio-political context has not only affected CUPE members at the workplace but also how members interact with one another. Cody, Meg, and Hiliary comment on how the government attacks on equity issues (ie., employment equity) are mirrored by CUPE members' reactions within the union. There is an increased reluctance by dominant group members to accept initiatives that support non-dominant groups within the union. An

example referred to by many was CUPE's refusal to debate a convention resolution in 1995 for designated group seats on CUPE's National Executive Board. This battle within the union impacts on women's desires to take up the challenge of union work.

Notwithstanding this backlash, women also report a gradual change taking place within CUPE which is resulting in more women being accepted into leadership positions. Leadership theory (eg., Hollander & Julian, 1970) purports that leadership exists in a group whenever its norms and structures allow the abilities of someone to be used in the interests of many. This theory helps to explain the change currently taking place within the CLM which has resulted in increased activism by women and other non-dominant group members. I suggest that the norms and structures are changing to recognize particular abilities within CUPE's membership. The recognition of these diverse abilities affords members the necessary legitimacy to work on behalf of the union. For leaders to be successful they must meet the obligations and the norms for that group. As these norms change in response to a changing membership, successful candidates for leadership positions will include more people from non-dominant groups.

The ironic result of a harsh climate for public sector workers is the solidarity which is being built within the union, among unions, and between the labour movement and social justice groups. Unions are increasing their relevancy in people's lives as they are being viewed as members' only source of support.

7.2.5 Self-Fulfilment Theory and the *Circle of Irrelevance*

In Chapter III, I outlined the *circle of irrelevance* theory as described by Cunnison and Stageman (1993). Briefly, this theory states that women become alienated from their union because it does not act on their behalf and this alienation results in them not becoming

active union participants. Without women's involvement, these authors argue that the culture of the union remains the same. The cyclical pattern inherent in this theory is offered as an explanation for why women's involvement within the labour culture is limited.

One of the goals of the present study was to explore whether the *circle of irrelevance* theory could explain women's activism within the CLM. I attempted to uncover if the reason why women choose to be inactive was because their union was not seen as relevant to them. Within the SFT, the issue of relevancy is a central theme intersecting all three circles. Within the inner circle, in order for activism to be seen as providing women the opportunity toward self-fulfilment, they must believe both that they can be successful and feel that union activism has a high value attached to it. Relevancy is part of that value conferred on activism. Within the middle circle, the maintenance and strengthening of activism are dependent upon whether the supports outweigh the barriers. If unions have achieved a sense of relevancy, whether from experiences in their family of origin or through earlier work assignments, unions will be deemed relevant and this encouragement will support activism. Finally, within the current socio-political context, I argue that unions are gaining a more relevant status because of the current climate of cut-backs. For many workers, their union is the only power they have to fight for their job security. This is especially true for women in low-wage workplaces.

No respondent reported that they knew about CUPE as a union when they got active. Clearly, CUPE's reputation was not relevant to their initial decisions to become active. Consequently, the theory that women do not become active because their union is irrelevant may only be partially true. CUPE was not irrelevant to them before they became active: it was simply non-existent. I propose that the concept of relevancy is an important factor for an understanding of women's activism. However, the *circle of irrelevance* theory is missing

an important component. It is not just that the union must be relevant to the women - the women must also desire self-fulfilment and a move toward a positive sense of self to engage in activist work. Relevancy helps to explain why women choose union work and why they maintain their activism, but not why they initially choose to be active.

Relevancy, however, does impact on whether women choose labour as a site for their activism. As stated above, women's activism within CUPE is a result of the union providing an opportunity to affect change. If unions are viewed as effective vehicles, then women will opt to become active. If the importance and strength of unions are marred within the socio-political context, women will not view activism within labour as an opportunity to affect change and will therefore choose to work elsewhere to achieve self-fulfilment.

7.2.6 Self-Fulfilment Theory - A Summary

In the introductory chapter I stated that the purpose of this study was to provide a missing piece to the analysis of women's involvement in the Canadian Labour Movement (CLM) and to bring the complexities of women's activism within the CLM into focus. The SFT proposes that activism is a means by which women strive toward self-fulfilment. Activism within CUPE occurs if women see the union as an effective vehicle for change both within and outside of themselves. If women become active within CUPE, experience a sense of connection and gain power and control, they are likely to continue their level of activism. Legitimacy is an important contributor to feeling accepted. Legitimacy is that which is conferred onto women and acceptance is how the woman feels as a result. In order for women to remain active, the supports they experience must outweigh the barriers. In addition, unions within the socio-political context must be seen as relevant to their goal of self-fulfilment in order for women to be active with the CLM rather than choosing another

social justice group for their activism. As stated, relevancy is the common thread intersecting all three circles in the SFT.

7.3 Implications for Women's Activism within the Canadian Labour Movement

The SFT presupposes a personal, psychologically-rooted explanation of activism. It is based on women's feelings about themselves and the assumption that these feelings contain an inherent desire toward positive self-regard. Many respondents pointed out that there are differences between the private sector and the public sector unions in terms of barriers to women's activism. The general feeling was that the barriers women face are stronger in private sector workplaces largely because they are male dominated. I propose that the SFT can explain women's activism in organizations other than CUPE. The premise of the theory is not based on any particular type of worker or workplace. Instead, it is an attempt to explore the personal, psychological component of women's activism to explain the causes for initiating activist work. The barriers and supports women experience may differ depending on their work or their workplace, but the reasons for their activism remain constant. Likewise, the socio-political context may shift over time and place but remains a contributory factor for activism and not the central explanatory reason for activism. I propose that women within CUPE are not any more or less likely than other women to desire self-fulfilment. Whether women achieve this goal through union activism will depend on the barriers, the supports, the context and consequently whether women choose activism work as a place to focus their energy.

The SFT may be useful for understanding choices women make toward activism work in general, not solely within unions. The respondents I spoke with had chosen unions as a place where they had an opportunity toward self-fulfilment. Other women may choose a

different path if they experience discontentment and if they wish to change this feeling. Their decision would be influenced by the barriers and the supports they experience in these other contexts.

7.4 Implications for Labour Education

CUPE is currently faced with a decreasing membership as a result of restructuring, privatization, downsizing and increasing use of part-time and contract workers. Union education programs meant to encourage activism and provide effective leadership training are crucial to the continued existence of CUPE. Women constitute an increasing percentage of CUPE's membership base and are the likely candidates for education designed to increase the number of activists.

Union education courses are currently designed to encourage activism by training the necessary skills for effective leadership, providing strategies to counter the possible barriers experienced while in leadership positions, and describing the important role unions play both historically and present day. Although useful, these courses do not consider that activism is also a personal choice.

Courses need to explore the personal desires of labour activists and how these activists can experience a positive sense of self through working within their union. The SFT presupposes that women desire self-fulfilment. Some may choose to work within their union to achieve this goal; others may seek it elsewhere. Part of an effective mobilizing strategy to encourage new activists therefore would include a discussion of personal choices and goals as well as offering the union environment as a place to realize these goals.

Educational courses could be designed to include a focus on the personal reasons why people become involved in their union and the feelings experienced by labour activists.

Women who desire to effect change in their life and who are searching for self-fulfilment are looking for a place to realize this desire. If unions are presented as relevant in their lives and accessible to them, they will consider becoming involved.

7.5 Limitations of the Study

CUPE is the largest union in Canada representing 455,818 members. Over 50 per cent of these members are women. My sample of 16 respondents therefore reflects a minute proportion of the total number of women in CUPE. In addition, I interviewed predominantly Ontario CUPE members. Another possible limitation is the lack of diverse representation within my group of respondents. I only interviewed one member who identified as visible minority and one who stated she was lesbian. Interviewing other women may have revealed additional or different factors influencing their activism.

The study is also influenced by the biases and perspectives which I brought to the research. As a feminist trade unionist, I believe in and promote the strengths of a union like CUPE. As a member activists within CUPE at the time of this research, I personally experienced the culture of CUPE. I also experienced the internal questioning of my acceptability in the role as a leader and wondered why I desired to be active given the sometimes unwelcoming culture.

7.6 Suggestions for Future Research

Women are entering leadership positions within the CLM at increasingly high rates. This is occurring in spite of the barriers still in existence. This research offers a framework to understand the reasons why women are active within the CLM. Future research could explore whether the assumptions inherent in the SFT are valid indicators for the increased

representation of women. In particular, the concept of discontentment and the influence of women's levels of self-esteem are two areas for further study.

I did not set out to directly explore either women's levels of discontentment or their desire for self-fulfilment. These themes, however, emerged as key pieces to an understanding of women's activism. Future research in this area could explore more deeply the underpinnings of discontentment and how powerful this component is as a catalyst for activism. The implications of discontentment and how it relates to women's life choices could be further examined. In addition, understanding how and whether women's involvement contributes to a more democratically-organized union is a place for further discussion.

Focusing on the barriers to women's activism offers an insufficient explanation for the phenomenon of women's activism. In spite of the barriers and the challenges faced by women, there are still many who hold elected leadership positions. There are also many more who, although not currently elected, are effective activists within labour.

Women's levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy are important areas to explore in a further study on women's activism. Women's self-perception emerged as a central theme in the study. How this relates to their choices to become active could be a topic for further research.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has included a discussion of the elements contained within the SFT, the implications of this framework for women's activism, limitations of this study and suggestions for future research. The women I interviewed reported a high level of enthusiasm for engaging in union work. They experienced this work as both personally and

politically meaningful. Union activism contributes to a positive sense of self for women.

It is evident from the stories provided by these respondents that focusing solely on the barriers to activism does not adequately explain the dynamics of women's activism. Barriers are included within the SFT but are limited to the role of influential factors. The psychological reasons for women's activism presented in the SFT are offered as important contributors to whether women engage in activist work. The framework developed in this research attempts to broaden the explanation of women's activism.

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APPENDIX A: Introductory Letter and Consent Form

October 1, 1995

Dear Sister_____,

My name is Alison Davidson and I am writing to you to request some of your time for a research project that I am conducting. I am currently completing the requirements for my Ph.D in Toronto and am interested in talking with women who currently hold elected leadership positions within CUPE. I am conducting interviews with women who are elected officers at the local, provincial, and national levels of CUPE to aid in an understanding of the culture of CUPE and its impact on women's experiences in positions of leadership. I am also currently an elected officer at my local (CUPE 3907) in Toronto and I would be interested in hearing other women's experiences as leaders. The purpose of my research is to build on the strengths of CUPE by exploring the experiences of CUPE women. The research project consists of a short questionnaire and an interview. If you agree to this project, the questionnaire will be mailed to you immediately. It should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The questionnaire focuses on background information of yourself including your family history. The second phase of the project is an interview. This should take approximately 90 minutes and the questions will be mailed to you in advance of the interview. The interview contains questions about your union involvement. Specifically, there are questions about the encouragements and/or problems you have encountered as an active member of your union. There are also questions focusing directly on how you feel about being an activist within CUPE. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time. Your decision to withdraw will be held confidential. No one but myself will know the identity of any of the women I interview. I will compile the responses you provide in such a way that your anonymity is ensured.

If you agree to participate, please fill in the information requested on the back of this page and mail it back to me in the envelope provided as soon as possible. If you are unsure and need more information about the project, my phone number is provided on the back of this form. Once I have received your consent form, I will send you the brief questionnaire and contact you by phone to set up an interview. I ask that the questionnaire be completed and sent back as soon as possible in the envelope provided. I would like to have the opportunity to read your responses to the questionnaire before we meet for an interview.

CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in the research project outlined on the reverse side of this page and understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time I choose.

_____

Signature _____

Name (please print): _____

Address: _____

_____

Phone number: _____

I will be coming to Toronto on (omit if you already live here)

DATE: _____

I will be attending the convention in Montreal in October 1995 (check if yes) _____

I will be available for an interview at this convention (check if yes) _____

If you have any questions or concerns, please call me at (416) 654-1799 (home) or (416) 926-4728 (union). You can expect the questionnaire in the mail soon after you send back this form. I will then phone you to set up an interview time.

Thank you in advance for your time and I look forward to meeting with you soon.

In Sisterhood and Solidarity,

Alison Davidson

APPENDIX B: Questionnaire on Background Information

Although it is best for my research if you answer all questions, you have the right to refuse to answer any part of this questionnaire. If you leave a blank, please indicate your refusal by stating "refused" in the space provided. Feel free to include other information on additional sheets if necessary.

PART I: Demographics

These questions provide me with an idea of who you are. I am interested to explore whether our backgrounds and our living situations are important considerations in whether we decide to become activists within our union.

1.1 Date of birth _____ (month/day/year)

1.2 Place of birth _____

1.3 Community in which you spent most of your growing up years _____

1.4 Marital/partner status _____

1.5 Are you currently living with a partner _____ Yes _____ No

1.5 Occupation of spouse/partner _____

1.6 Children (number of children and their ages) # _____ ages

1.7 Education (highest you attained) _____

1.8 Would you identify yourself as a members of any designated group (i.e. woman of colour, aboriginal woman, lesbian, woman with a disability)?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, which one _____

PART II: Home life

2.1 How much time per week, on average, do you spend looking after your home (cooking, cleaning etc.)? _____ hours

2.2 How much time per week, on average, do you spend looking after your child (children) or any other dependents (i.e., elderly parents, family members with disabilities)?

_____ not applicable _____ hours

2.3 If you live with a partner (same-sex/opposite-sex), what percentage of the housework would you say you did?

_____ not applicable _____ % (0-100)

2.4 If you live with a partner (same-sex/opposite-sex), what percentage of the child care or dependent care would you say you did?

_____ not applicable _____ % (0-100)

2.5 How many of your children still live at home with you?

_____ not applicable # _____

2.6 Are any of your children currently in day care?

_____ not applicable _____ Yes _____ No

PART III: Personal/family history

I am interested in your experiences in the family where you grew up and how that history might relate to your current union involvement. The questions are written for the traditional two parent family. However, I recognize that we all did not grow up in such a family. Feel free to alter the questions to suit your history.

3.1 Education of your parents

Highest attained by your mother (step mother, adoptive mother, or co-parent)

_____

Highest attained by your father (step father, adoptive father, or co-parent)

_____

3.2 Parent's occupations

Mother's occupation _____ part-time/full-time (circle one)

Father's occupation _____ part-time/full-time (circle one)

3.3 Where were your parents born

Mother _____

Father _____

3.4 Were your parents active in the labour movement or other socialist movements?

_____ Yes _____ No

3.5 How were unions described, if at all, by your parents?

3.6 When you were young, do you remember how unions were described within society?

3.7 Who were your role models growing up (from the media, politics, characters in books etc.)? Why?

3.8 What did you want to be when you were a young girl?

APPENDIX C: Interview Schedule

PART IV: History in the labour movement

a) Workplace

4.1 What type of work do you do? Please indicate if it is part-time or full-time and how many hours per week you work.

4.2 If you work part-time, is it because you have chosen this or because of lack of full-time opportunity?

4.3 How long have you been doing this work?

4.4 Do you enjoy your work?

b) Union

4.5 Local number

4.6 Who do you represent - type of workers and number of workers?

4.7 What is the approximate gender breakdown of your local?

4.8 Current elected position

4.9 Was it a man or a woman who held this position before you?

4.10 Was your current position a contested election or were you appointed?

4.11 Are you a full-time paid officer or do you work on a volunteer basis?

4.12 How long have your held this position?

4.13 What positions did you previous hold at your local?

4.14 How long have you been active in CUPE? How long have you been a CUPE member?

4.15 What committees do you serve on, and for how long?

4.16 Does your local have an active women's committee?

4.17 Are you active on your local women's committee?

4.18 Have you been involved in the bargaining process at your local (on committee or as primary spokesperson)?

4.19 How much time per week, on average, do you devote to union-related business?

4.20 Do you work evenings and weekends on union related-business?

4.21 If you have responsibilities in the home, (i.e. child care, dependent care, housework) how do you organize and juggle your various time commitments?

PART V: Experiences as a union activist

5.1 Try to remember back to before you became active in CUPE, what were your feelings about CUPE?

a) Did you think CUPE was working on behalf of its women members?
b) Did you think that issues affecting women workers were being addressed by CUPE leaders?
c) Did you feel silenced as a woman within CUPE?

5.2 Why did you decided to become active in CUPE?

a) What made you think that activism within CUPE was a place where you would like to spend your energy?
b) Do you feel that CUPE is now meeting your needs as a woman worker?
c) Now that you are a local union president, do you feel that your voice is heard and has an impact?
d) What is important to you about CUPE?

5.3 What do you like most about being a local president?

5.4 What do you like least about being a local president?

5.5 What aspects of union life do you find the most stressful?

a) How do you cope with this stress?
b) Have you ever had to take time off for stress-related reasons?

5.6 Is CUPE the first union in which you have belonged?

5.7 Have you ever been involved as a leader in another organization within or outside of the labour movement?

5.8 Who are your role models in the labour movement and within CUPE?

a) What are the qualities that you appreciate in this (these) role model(s)?

5.9 Has anyone encouraged you to become active in your union and acted as a mentor for you?

5.10 CUPE's current national president and national secretary/treasurer are both women.

a) Has this had any impact on your activism?
b) How do you think this may affect women in CUPE?

5.11 I am interested in how you got to the position that you're in, particularly what in your early life experiences got you here. How did you get here?

5.12 How has your activism been received by friends, family, co-workers, management?

5.13 Have you encountered any problems/barriers from your activism by friends, family, co-workers, management?

5.14 From where do you receive support in your position of local president?

5.15 From where do you encounter challenges in your position of local president?

5.16 Many people believe that it takes courage to become a leader. Do you see yourself as a courageous woman?

5.17 In your role as president you are probably called on to speak in public. Do you feel comfortable speaking in public, i.e., at meetings, conventions, conferences?

5.18 Often times as leaders we make decisions that do not always please everyone. How do you deal with this?

5.19 How would you describe the interactions you have in your role as president during membership meetings or executive meetings (mutually respectful, confrontational, easy-going, aggressive etc.)?

a) If you have experienced confrontation or aggression, how do you handle it and do you think you handle it effectively?

5.20 Have you experienced any setbacks in your role as president?

a) What were they?
b) How did you deal with them?

5.21 You have chosen to be an elected official within CUPE, which most people see as a powerful leadership position.

a) What does power mean to you?
b) What does leadership mean to you?

PART VI: Involvement in CUPE

6.1 I am interested in your personal level of comfort as president within CUPE.

a) Do you feel that you are accepted by your members?
b) What differences, if any, do you think there are between male and female leaders in terms of whether they are accepted by their members?
c) Are there different expectations placed on women leaders?
d) How are you similar to or different from male leaders?
e) Is this similarity or difference a help or a hindrance?
f) Have you ever felt that you did not belong in a leadership position?

6.2 Union activism often brings with it the opportunity to spend social time with other union members.

a) Do you go out socially with other union members?
b) Where would you socialize and with whom?
c) Do you engage in union-related business while socializing?

6.3 Have you ever felt left out or excluded from union business when you thought you should have been involved?

a) If yes, what were the circumstances?
b) Why do you think this occurred?

6.4 There is typically a whole range of actions, experiences, and feelings which have been harder for women to deal with than men, for instance, such things as conflict, anger, confrontation, and competition. What kinds of experiences have you had with these feelings in your position as president?

6.5 What changes, if any, have you seen taking place within CUPE and the labour movement in relation to women's involvement?

6.6 Men have traditionally dominated leadership positions within CUPE.

a) Is this true of your local?
b) Has this affected your feelings of acceptability within CUPE?

6.7 What would you say to someone who told you they think men make better leaders within CUPE because they have better skills which are more suited for the labour movement?

a) What skills do you think make an effective leader?
b) Have you questioned whether you are an effective leader?
c) If you feel you are not as effective as you could be, what is limiting your effectiveness?

6.8 Some people have described the culture of the labour movement as male dominated and not always accepting of women's involvement as leaders. What do you think about this both within CUPE and the labour movement?

6.9 CUPE national has published many documents on women's issues and various resolutions and policies have been passed at CUPE conventions.

a) Are you aware of these documents?
b) Have you had a chance to read and implement any of these policies at your local?
c) What affect do you feel these documents have had on CUPE's culture and specifically on women's involvement?

6.10 Why do you think women may not want to become active in their union?

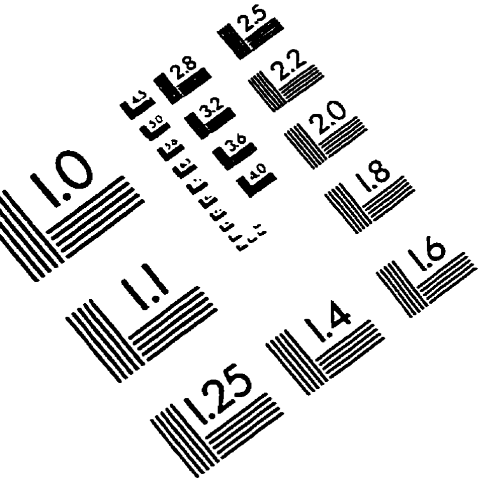
6.11 If you had a daughter who was considering running for position of president within CUPE, what advise would you give her?

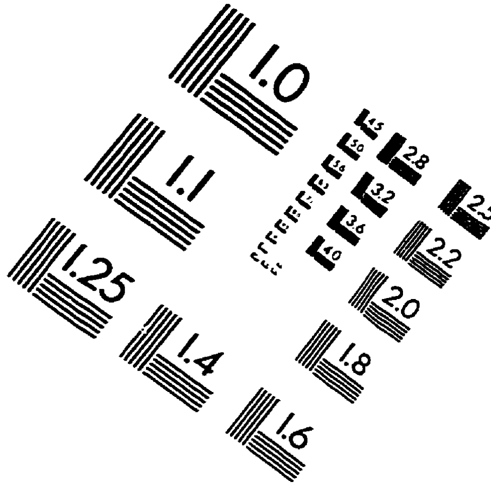
6.12 What are your future aspirations within CUPE?

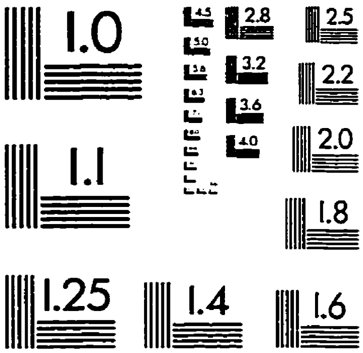
6.13 Is there anything you haven't spoken about which you think would contribute to my understanding of:

a) Either how you got to where you are or
b) Your experience as a union leader within CUPE?

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)







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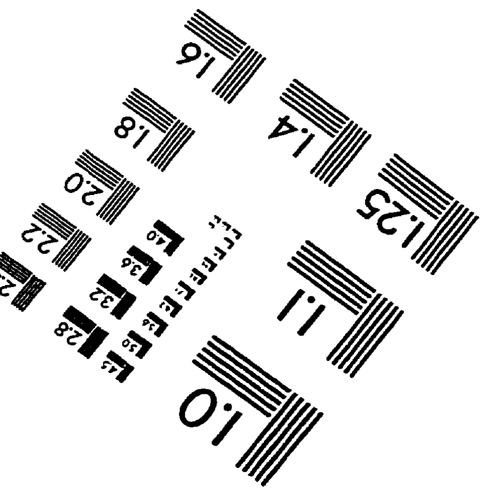

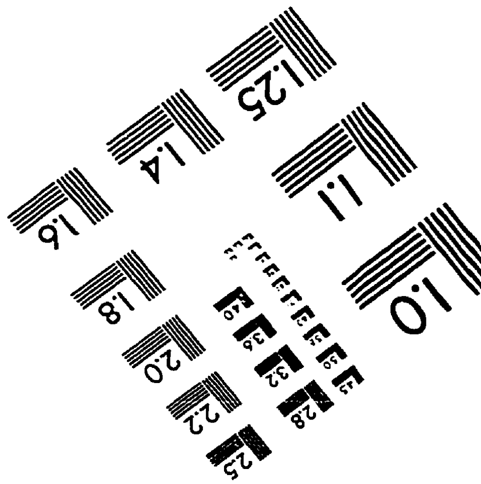

APPLIED IMAGE . Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989