

Women and Industrial Relations Theory : No Room in the Discourse

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Résumé de l'article

La concurrence internationale accrue a suscité de nouvelles approches en relations industrielles. Une enquête récente de l'auteur auprès d'environ 1 000 entreprises syndiquées au Canada révèle que les nouvelles initiatives se développent souvent en parallèle avec les pratiques plus traditionnelles. À partir des résultats de cette enquête, l'article fait ressortir les principales caractéristiques de cette évolution. Il insiste de façon particulière sur le lien entre les relations du travail et la gestion des ressources humaines. La discussion cherche aussi à préciser dans quelle mesure les changements observés dans l'entreprise représentent une transformation du régime canadien de relations industrielles.

La première partie du texte porte sur les débats théoriques relatifs aux changements en cours et distingue trois approches poursuivies par les employeurs. La première s'oppose farouchement à la syndicalisation dans un contexte de restructuration économique. La deuxième approche consiste à réaffirmer les prérogatives patronales dans les entreprises syndiquées. Une troisième approche, mise en lumière de façon particulière dans ce texte, cherche à concilier les innovations dans la gestion du travail et les mécanismes traditionnels en matière de relations patronales-syndicales. L'auteur soutient que la gestion des ressources humaines, tout comme les approches fondées sur la négociation collective, est confrontée avec les contradictions inhérentes à la relation d'emploi dans une économie capitaliste.

La deuxième partie de l'article présente les résultats de l'enquête et cherche à préciser dans quelle mesure le régime canadien fait l'objet d'une transformation, passant de la négociation et de l'application de règles à une gestion plus efficiente de la force de travail. Les données indiquent plutôt que les innovations en matière d'organisation du travail coexistent avec la négociation collective. L'auteur observe donc une forme de dualisme par lequel les nouvelles pratiques de gestion se développent de façon parallèle à la convention collective.

La conclusion porte sur les contradictions mentionnées plus haut et fait valoir l'idée que la gestion des ressources humaines ne peut résoudre les problèmes fondamentaux associés à la relation d'emploi. Notamment, elle insiste sur le fait que les employeurs ne peuvent viser à la fois la flexibilité fonctionnelle et la flexibilité numérique, ou en d'autres mots, l'implication des salariés et l'insécurité d'emploi. L'auteur avance l'hypothèse que la concurrence vive et la récession pourraient continuer à placer les syndicats sur la défensive et ainsi ouvrir la voie aux nouvelles initiatives patronales. Il critique par ailleurs l'idée selon laquelle le déclin de l'approche conflictuelle correspond nécessairement à une plus grande coopération. Cela pourrait aussi signifier qu'une partie est de plus en plus soumise aux exigences de l'autre.

Women and Industrial Relations Theory No Room in the Discourse

Anne Forrest

This paper seeks to open a debate about the definition of industrial relations as a field of study using the analytical insights gained from feminist scholarship in the social sciences. The author's focus is industrial relations as conceptualized and practised by academics in Canadian business schools where 'systems theory' remains the predominant analytical paradigm. The purpose is to show that industrial relations so constructed is profoundly gender-biased.

The need to re-examine academic orthodoxy in the light of recent feminist scholarship is particularly pressing in the case of industrial relations.¹ As presently conceptualized and practised, the discipline is quintessentially male territory. It is from men's lives, their work and their unions, that the study of industrial relations takes its shape. The workers, the organizers, the strikers: all have been men. One looks in vain for the contributions of women: their work, their organizing drives, their strikes are 'missing' from the journals and texts.

As a discipline, industrial relations is growing out of touch, not only with the changing realities of the workplace, but also with academic discourse in the social sciences. Although some attention is paid to the so-called women's issues — maternity leave, sexual harassment policies, pay equity, and so on — attention is limited. Seemingly unknown to scholars of industrial relations is the burgeoning literature on women and work and women and unions in the companion disciplines of history, sociology, and law. In these fields, feminism has reinvigorated research and broadened the traditional scope of inquiry. But

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none of this has made its way into industrial relations. The compensatory scholarship described as the first step towards a feminist rethinking has scarcely begun.² 'Malestream' industrial relations continues on as before, if not entirely oblivious to the presence of women, then certainly unaware that their presence makes much of a difference.

This paper seeks to open a debate about the definition of industrial relations as a field of study using the analytical insights gained from feminist scholarship in the social sciences. My focus is industrial relations as conceptualized and practised by academics in Canadian business schools where 'systems theory' remains the predominant analytical paradigm. My purpose is to show that industrial relations so constructed is profoundly gender-biased. As a discipline, industrial relations is deeply committed to a gendered construction of women and women's work. The basic assumption is that, whatever else women are doing, they are women first and foremost and are driven by motivations uniquely female. At work or at the union hall, women are not really workers or trade unionists but women and so are defined by the roles of wife, mother, and daughter. The theoretical base of the discipline, consequently, is incomplete and one-sided: based almost exclusively on the experiences of men.

Although my focus in this paper is limited to a critique of industrial relations from within the pluralist paradigm, a feminist rethinking of the political economy/labour studies tradition would reveal similar shortcomings and blindneses. While fundamentally at odds in many respects, these diverse approaches share a world-view that discounts the importance of gender as an analytical concept. Both presume that workers and trade unionists are quintessentially men; neither analyzes the ways in which social relations at work are rooted in gender relations.

My critique begins with an analysis of the treatment of women in the contemporary literature. In addition to a review of the texts in use in Canada, I examine recently published articles in the mainstream industrial relations journals.³ I show that, even today, women are marginal to the study of industrial relations. It is not uncommon for researchers to overlook women entirely by choosing data sets that include only men or by failing to report their results disaggregated by sex. Even when women are the object of study, however, they often remain invisible. Reviewing the literature on union growth and the studies of women in union leadership I show the extent to which researchers rely on simplistic and stereotypic conceptions about who women are to 'explain' their experiences. Only rarely are the complexities of women's lives examined in detail. Much more common is an analysis that presumes that women's relationship to their jobs and unions is attributable to their presumed family responsibilities or other personal characteristics. The ordinary kind of

industrial relations analysis which seeks to understand patterns of union growth or membership involvement by examining structural factors (size of work group, rates of pay, degree of democracy within the union, and so on) is rarely applied to women.

The reasons for women's invisibility lie at the heart of the discipline. In the third section of the paper I argue that the theoretical construction of industrial relations as the study of job regulation is profoundly exclusionary. The discipline's preoccupation with the 'problem of order' ensures the invisibility of women, not only because women have generally been less successful in mobilizing around their own needs and discontents, but more profoundly because this approach identifies the employment relationship as the ultimate source of power and conflict at work. The discipline sees no connection between gender relations and work relations and so defines important gender-related phenomena like job segregation by sex as 'outside' of the industrial relations system. Stated more generally, the pluralist conceptualization of industrial relations as a field of study locates women 'outside' of the 'system' whenever they appear to be simply women (that is, not workers or trade unionists) and 'inside' only when women appear in the guise of, presumably genderless, workers or trade unionists. Furthermore, because the discipline is primarily concerned with the ways in which unions and collective bargaining diffuse and regulate industrial conflict, long-standing practices such as job segregation by sex (or sexual harassment or the systemic undervaluing of 'women's' work) which effectively keep women 'in their place' are not conceptualized as industrial relations phenomena that need to be explained from within.

The fourth section of the paper draws attention to the deeply embedded 'male' point of view in industrial relations theory which, I argue, is especially evident in the analysis of the role and function of trade unions. That unions were organized by men to further men's needs and that theories about the role of unions embody that purpose establish an identity between what unions do and what unions are that excludes women in fundamental ways. Using the examples of seniority and 'fair' wages I show that union-initiated benefits which favour long-service workers and bargaining strategies which leave traditional wage structures intact entrench job segregation by sex and pay discrimination against women. Thus, an analysis which focuses on the extent to which unions represent 'workers' needs leaves women stranded: either their needs are consonant with those of male workers (in which case, women as women are invisible); or their needs are defined as 'women's' (read: not workers') needs and so fall 'outside' of the industrial relations system. To problematize hard-won union benefits that institutionalize discrimination against women, researchers must step 'outside' of the point of view conventionally adopted by scholars working in the pluralist tradition.

My conclusion, offered in the final section of the paper, is that industrial relations as presently constructed cannot study women. It is not the discipline's construction of women as gendered that is problematic (although the analysis has been far too simplistic and stereotypic); what is wrong with industrial relations is that, so far, scholars have not engendered men. Critical to an expanded definition of the discipline is an analysis of gender relations as an underlying force in the workplace. Only then will women's needs and concerns be defined as squarely within the boundaries of disciplinary interest. The challenge, more broadly, is to reconceptualize the meaning of industrial relations so that women *and* men, not institutions and procedures, are at the centre of scholarly attention.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS LITERATURE

A review of the contemporary literature reveals the extent to which women remain marginal to the study of industrial relations. None of the popular textbooks⁴ — Anderson, Gunderson and Ponak, Craig and Solomon, or Sethi — includes more than a handful of references to women or 'women's' issues. All of the authors note the growing participation of women in the labour force and the marked increase in union membership among women; however, they make no effort to explain these well-established trends or evaluate the implications of these changes for employers and unions. 'Women's' issues such as maternity leave and employment equity are referred to in passing but none is used to initiate a discussion about the particular needs of working women. Discrimination against women is likewise described but its significance is neither discussed nor analyzed. The ways in which, and the extent to which discriminatory practices shape the work experiences of women are left unexplored: readers learn nothing about job segregation by sex, the systematic undervaluing of 'women's' work, or the persistent harassment of women in the workplace.

The marginalization of women and women's concerns is standard treatment in the discipline. Thus, we find that the much-talked-about 'transformation' of industrial relations has little to do with women. The 'seminal' works on this topic assume that industrial relations remains the business of men. In Lipset,⁵ for example, the few token references to women do little more than document their absence from the discussion. Chaykowski and Verma,⁶ Kochan, Katz and McKersie,⁷ and Kochan and Katz,⁸ though generally much more aware of women as participants in the industrial relations system, none the less focus their attention on structures and procedures in a way that renders women invisible. All told, there are fewer than thirty references to women in

these three volumes and the treatment of 'women's' issues is similarly cursory. Employment equity is mentioned from time to time, but discussed just once in Chaykowski and Verma, and Kochan and Katz, and then in a single paragraph; a scant two paragraphs (in Chaykowski and Verma) are devoted to equal pay/pay equity which, otherwise, is referred to only in passing. Part-time work, maternity leave, and sexual harassment are mentioned very briefly; however, their importance to working women is never explored.

That women are outsiders in an industrial relations system devised by and for men is evidenced again and again in the literature. Most telling are those research studies which intentionally exclude women while purporting to study system-wide phenomena such as labour market segmentation, wage differentials, and racial discrimination. By focusing entirely on the experiences of men⁹ or by choosing a data set that includes only information on men¹⁰ researchers underscore the extent to which the discipline has been constructed around the experiences of one sex. Women are plainly irrelevant when articles supposedly about seniority or job mobility are based exclusively on what has happened to men.

The invisibility of women is ensured, as well, when researchers collect data on both sexes but fail to investigate or report their findings as they pertain to women. Even when differences by gender might reasonably be anticipated, researchers often neglect to disaggregate their results. By overlooking what is distinctive about women's experiences in studies of job mobility, bargaining preferences, union membership, and like matters¹¹ scholars implicitly assume that the experiences of the minority (women) are unimportant and/or parallel those of the majority (men).¹² In this way the experiences of men are commonly misconstrued as those of 'workers', underscoring the presumption that, in the field of industrial relations, 'workers' are men.

Often, women remain invisible even when they are consciously included by researchers. More and more, the practice is to incorporate 'women' as an independent variable, a convenient and readily discernible category with a built-in comparator. Studies of this sort, which are very much in vogue, focus on women's 'difference' in job attitudes, career paths, fringe benefits, union membership (whatever).¹³ The results of this research can be disappointing, however: more descriptive than analytical. The authors rarely state their assumptions or explain the importance of gender as an analytical concept. Little attempt is made to investigate how gender relates to the mechanisms which underpin the phenomena under investigation. Thus, despite the many studies of earnings and pay differences between women and men, we seem no closer to establishing that pay discrimination exists, how it works, or how it might be remedied.¹⁴

What we know about women in industrial relations, consequently, comes not from the study of women themselves but is largely the by-product of research aimed in other directions. Prominent within this genre are the many studies of union growth which are the *forte* of a number of scholars. This body of literature, which utilizes sophisticated statistical techniques to analyze patterns of union growth and decline, is at the leading edge of the discipline. By regressing some measure of union attachment (union membership, having voted in favour of unionization in a representation election, or expressing a willingness to do so — note that most of these studies are American) against any number of independent variables, one of which is sex, researchers confirm, again and again, what the discipline believes it 'knows': women are less inclined to join unions than men.¹⁵

Examined more carefully, however, the results of this research do not support conventional wisdom unequivocally. Much hinges on the nature of the data employed and, in particular, on the choice of the dependent variable. As Voos¹⁶ notes, those studies which analyze union *membership* data do say that women are less likely to be union members than men and so tend to affirm the presumption that women, for whatever reasons, are less inclined to join unions. On the other hand, when data from surveys of workers' *attitudes* towards unions are analyzed they reveal a strikingly different relationship: on the basis of these studies one would have to conclude that American women today are *more* inclined to join unions than are men¹⁷ — a conclusion consonant with recent experience. In all of the OECD countries union membership among women has grown remarkably over the last twenty years.¹⁸

Industrial relations thinking has yet to catch up with the evidence, however. The rapid growth of union membership among women notwithstanding, the discipline's stereotyped conceptualization of the relationship between women and unions remains undisturbed. When the literature is blunt and at its most sexist, the argument is simple: whether by nature or by socialization women are not willing to join unions. '[a]s many observers know, women are (generally) not union-oriented. They dislike the thought of strikes, pickets, violence'.¹⁹ For many scholars it is self-evidently true that the future growth of the union movement is severely limited by the large number of women now working for wages. And the presumption is so widely accepted that many studies of union growth employ gender as an explanatory variable without any discussion.²⁰ Others justify the use of gender as an independent variable reciting the usual 'saturation school' arguments: principally that unionization is less cost effective for women because they are only temporarily attached to the labour force and consider their wages as a supplement to the family income. By the bye, many of these studies assume that women are *less* likely to have a positive image of organized labour than men.²¹

In its less obviously gendered form, lower levels of union membership among women are said to result not simply from the fact that women are women but because women are commonly employed in certain kinds of 'hard to organize' jobs. So, for example, Antos *et al.*²² conclude that almost 60 per cent of the sizeable difference in the levels of union membership between the women and men in their sample is largely accounted for by the different occupational and industrial location of the women. Similar findings are reported by Fiorito and Greer²³ and Peetz²⁴ who argue that the lower rates of unionization among women in the United States and Australia, respectively, are explained in large part by factors other than gender *per se*, that is to say, differences in union membership are related to differences in labour force attachment, industrial and occupational distribution, and other factors that vary with gender. And from her review of the data, Voos²⁵ concludes that 'lower rates of organization among women do not reflect less demand for unionism because of lack of attachment to the labor force . . . but rather that the process of filling union jobs (occupational selection by women and hiring decisions by employers) creates the overall negative association'.

But this is nothing more than a variation on a theme. The explanation that women do 'women's' work and so are hard to organize relies on the same tired set of gendered assumptions,²⁶ albeit in a somewhat more sophisticated form: the 'polite version', Smith²⁷ calls it, of the 'older and deeper view that women are naturally timid and unwilling to fight and have no place in the rough arena of union struggle'. Such an explanation tells us yet again that women workers are essentially women, not workers, and so are best understood by examining their personal characteristics and family situations. This mode of reasoning is evident even in those studies which employ job segregation as an explanatory variable. Why 'women's' work should be so hard to organize, particularly when wages are low and working conditions oppressive — the very conditions that industrial relations scholars would regard as causative factors in the organizing drives of men — is never analyzed or explained. And in the absence of any consideration of job segregation by sex as an institutionalized form of discrimination against women the implication is that women choose 'women's' work, for example, part-time or temporary jobs, because it allows them to accommodate their family responsibilities, or that women are content with the low pay attached to 'women's' work because theirs is a 'second' income, or that women don't mind doing unskilled, monotonous 'women's' work because they are not permanently attached to the labour force, and so on. What could be plainer?: women are women.

Industrial relations employs what Feldberg and Glenn²⁸ have labelled the 'gender model' to explain why women workers are less likely to be union members than men. Women are constructed as the non-working complements of men for whom employment and earning are assumed to be life's central

purpose. Thus, we frequently learn of women's less 'stable' labour force participation and lower investment in 'human capital'. Also familiar to readers of the literature are women's distinctive occupational 'tastes' and 'choices' — that is, their supposed preference for looking after children and doing the housework — which are commonly attributed to their presumed family responsibilities, or other personal characteristics, without fully considering differences between individuals.²⁹

The 'gender model' is standard treatment for women in the discipline. A similar set of arguments is offered to explain why women, once organized, are less likely to be actively involved in union affairs. In this case, the fact that women are women and consequently live 'women's' lives is advanced to 'explain' why they are less active in their unions and, in particular, why they are so underrepresented among the leadership of unions, locally and nationally. The studies of women as leaders and union activists rely heavily on received wisdom of this sort. The commonly discussed obstacles to the participation and advancement of women in unions focus on their perceived 'difference': the double workday and family commitments, lack of self-confidence and self-assertiveness, and insufficient training and experience.³⁰ 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 examine how union policies and practices systematically discourage women's participation and exclude them from active participation and leadership.³¹ That many unions continue to function as men's clubs, with a variety of informal rules barring entry or full participation to women, remains unexamined. Nor have there been any studies of women's efforts to claim a place for themselves in their unions. The battles surrounding the creation of women's committees and women's attempts to put sexual harassment and pay equity on the bargaining table have yet to be documented. The few accounts of women organizing within their unions to advance their interests as women have been written, in Canada at least, not by academics, but by union activists.³²

What we have in industrial relations is a classic example of the construction of women as 'other': not men, not workers, not trade unionists. As a discipline, industrial relations is deeply committed to a gendered construction of women and women's work. The basic assumption that underlies much of the analysis is that, whatever women are doing, they are women first and foremost and are driven by motivations uniquely female. In the workplace or at the union hall, women are not really workers or trade unionists but women and so are defined by the roles of wife, mother, and daughter. That women do 'women's'

work seems entirely natural to scholars of labour-management relations. Rather than an industrial relations phenomenon that needs to be understood from within, job segregation is taken as a given and so offered as a partial explanation for women's lower rates of unionization.

Even when judged on its own terms, the assumptions about women and work embedded in the discipline make for a faulty analysis. The argument that women are women, even when presented in its more sympathetic form drawing attention to job segregation and the double workday, is not a sound industrial relations approach. The experiences of men at work are never linked to their gender. The union activity of men, for example, would never be explained by reference to 'male' characteristics. Researchers would never argue that men organize trade unions because they are the principal wage-earners or because men, by nature, are more aggressive and assertive than women. Importantly, men are never compared with women: men are assumed to be workers; in fact, industrial relations constructs men *only* as workers and never as men. Their gender is never a consideration: it is the work experience — how well the workers are paid, how hard they are pushed, the size of the work group, and so on (what Feldberg and Glenn have labelled the 'job model')³³ — that informs an industrial relations analysis of why certain groups of workers/men do or do not choose to unionize.

WOMEN AND THE 'PROBLEM OF ORDER'

The centre of attention in industrial relations has long been occupied by men because it is men who have been the most troublesome to management. Industrial relations is full of men doing manly and disruptive things: shouting, swearing, striking, picketing. Indeed, it is to these angry and rebellious men that the discipline owes its place in academia. Not until the large-scale organizing drives and sit-down strikes of the 1930s and 1940s seriously threatened managerial control in the mass-production industries did labour-management relations become a legitimate field of study in North American universities. And these workers, by and large, were men. Their unions won recognition; their unions negotiated collective agreements; their unions needed watching.

The preoccupation of industrial relations with the 'problem of order' in industry identifies the discipline as a managerial science that 'takes as its starting point problems as they are perceived by managers'.³⁴ How collective bargaining institutionalizes and regulates industrial conflict is a perennial theme of academic research and writing. The task of the scholar, according to Dunlop, is to explain 'why particular rules are established in particular industrial-relations systems and how and why they change in response to changes affecting the system'.³⁵ Theoretical constructs like 'job regulation'

and the 'web of rules' underscore the extent to which industrial relations is focused on the management of industrial conflict.

That the discipline places a normative emphasis on stability and accommodation has been noted and criticized by many scholars.³⁶ What has gone unnoticed, however, is that the construction of industrial relations as the study of job regulation through collective bargaining defines the discipline as male territory. For a variety of reasons women have been less well organized, less able to establish trade unions and collective bargaining, and so less able to challenge managerial control. It's a familiar story: 'good girls' rarely warrant attention.³⁷

The discipline's preoccupation with the growth and development of unions and collective bargaining, of necessity, values what men have done but marginalizes and trivializes what women have done. As conventionally written, the history of the labour movement is the history of unions organized by men. Jamieson, Lipton, Logan, and Robin³⁸ tell us clearly that trade unions and collective bargaining have been men's affairs.

Such a history necessarily ignores the many, many organizing drives and strikes that failed to build lasting unions. As a result, much of women's activism has slipped through the fissures in our thinking. The history of women and unions has been 'invisible except in scraps'.³⁹ The sources are fragmentary and scattered; until recently, there were no published secondary source materials on the union activity of women in Canada.⁴⁰ The irrelevance of women's struggles to the study of industrial relations has generally been taken to imply that there were none. 'Myth had it that women were difficult to organize':⁴¹ they were too timid or just not interested.

The secondary literature demonstrates, however, that Canadian women have been organizing unions for as long as unions have been organized. When cobbled together the story of women's activism is impressive. Among the earliest were unions of laundry workers, waitresses, candy makers, teachers, telephone operators, garment and textile workers, domestic workers, even unemployed women. There were, as well, some women members of 'men's' unions: tailors, retail clerks, bookbinders, boot and shoe makers, cannery workers, farm labourers, packing-plant and sugar refinery workers. And there were strikes — many strikes — on occasion organized and led by women. There were strikes of waitresses (ten in Vancouver alone during the 1930s), laundry and sugar refinery workers, garment and textile workers; and major strikes of telephone operators in Vancouver in 1902 and 1906 and Toronto in 1907.⁴²

Women *were* there: they organized unions, they went on strike, they walked the picket line, and they fought with strikebreakers. But for women, stable, functioning unions have been the exception rather than the rule. For a variety of reasons, women have been less able than men to institutionalize their anger

and resistance into permanent structures. Comparatively few women established unions; fewer still won recognition and the right to bargain collectively. And so, much of women's trade union activity remains invisible. Indeed, from an institutional point of view the history of women and unions is a legacy of failure.

Women have been invisible, as well, because much of their organizing activity has been directed towards the support of their men's (husbands', brothers', fathers') struggles and consequently of incidental interest to scholars of industrial relations. As is common in the social sciences, the study of industrial relations is premised upon a clear divide between work and home. Paid work that is done in the public sphere is part of the industrial relations system while unpaid, domestic labour is not. The organizing of unions, consequently, is of disciplinary interest while the organizing of wives' committees, union-label campaigns, and picket-line vigils is not. Thus, although women's efforts on behalf of men have been vital to the success of many strikes — think of Ford and Stelco in 1945-46 and Inco in 1978-79⁴³ — the organizing of soup kitchens, clothing exchanges and the like warrant nothing more than a footnote in conventional accounts.⁴⁴

Women spend much of their lives 'outside' of the boundaries of the industrial relations system where their invisibility is ensured. But even when women are 'inside' the 'system' — when they are employed or are members of trade unions — their inclusion is far from certain. Much of what happens to women at work is of little moment from the point of view of industrial relations. The discipline has no interest in the doings of women, or men for that matter; the only 'actors' in the 'system', to use Dunlop's terminology, are workers, managers, and trade unionists. So fixated are we on the employment relationship as the source of power and conflict at work that all other dimensions of power, most notably gender and race, are disregarded or dismissed as external to the 'system'. Thus, we find, in industrial relations, men acting as managers and men acting as workers and trade unionists, but we never seem to see that men also act as men, as members of the privileged gender who seek to perpetuate their dominant position at work, at home, and at the union hall.

For this reason, phenomena like job segregation by sex and the systematic undervaluing of 'women's' work are presently defined as 'outside' the discipline because their genesis lies in gender rather than work relations. Such universal markers of women's work experience apparently require no explanation or analysis. Because industrial relations is primarily concerned with the ways in which, and the extent to which unions and collective bargaining diffuse and regulate industrial conflict, long-standing practices which effectively keep women 'in their place' are of little interest to scholars. This contrasts sharply with the extensive attention paid to union-imposed protections which

enhance workers' income and job security. Restrictive practices, seniority rights, just cause provisions and the like attract research interest precisely because they interfere directly with managerial prerogative and have the potential to detract from what managers define as peak efficiency and productivity. By contrast, pervasive practices like job segregation pose no threat to managerial control; on the contrary, they are deeply rooted sources of stability at work. The discriminatory treatment of women is so much a part of our taken-for-granted world that the means by which the privileges of men, managers *and* workers, are created and sustained in the workplace are doubly invisible from the point of view of academics within the discipline.

There have been moments in time — as, for example, during the two world wars when it seemed that discriminatory pay practices and job assignments might give way to more equitable treatment — when job segregation by sex and the systematic undervaluing of 'women's' work could have been drawn into the discipline. But the threat posed was short-lived. Employers' resistance to change coupled with the opposition of male-dominated unions ensured that women's unequal status in the workplace would be maintained.⁴⁵ Academics, consequently, were not challenged to rethink their conceptual categories. Neither job segregation nor pay discrimination has attracted the attention of researchers who, presumably, see nothing remarkable in either phenomenon. Thus, we find that textbooks continue to classify such matters as part of the 'environment', not part of the industrial relations system.⁴⁶

Though seemingly inevitable, job segregation by sex and pay discrimination are not simply the by-products of capitalist development; both are integral to a social system that privileges men and 'men's' work. From an industrial relations perspective job segregation can and must be theorized as a mechanism of job regulation, a creation of employers that is further institutionalized by trade union practices. There is nothing natural or immutable about the sexual division of labour. 'Women's' work is characterized by low pay and rapid labour turn-over not because women refuse to invest in training or because women are not committed to their jobs, but because this form of work organization is profitable for employers and advantageous to male workers.⁴⁷

An analysis of job segregation illuminates why so few of these women have been able to act on their desire for union representation. Employers that rely on women's labour fight unionization as hard as they do in order to preserve their access to a cheap and flexible work force. Eaton's and the chartered banks are cases in point. Without doubt their determination to undercut the momentum of organizing drives was motivated by the fear that collective bargaining would raise substandard 'women's' wages and constrain management's right to organize and schedule work as it sees fit. Without doubt, as well, Eaton's and the banks are greatly aided in their resistance to unionization

by labour laws that institutionalize the bargaining advantage of employers in the service sector.⁴⁸

Placing job segregation squarely within the industrial relations system adds powerfully to our capacity for understanding the relationship between women and unions. Without denying that much of what women do is influenced by the reality of their 'women's' lives, an analysis which takes into account the everyday realities of job segregation draws attention to job-related factors such as the low pay, close supervision, and job insecurity endured by many working women and so underscores why so many are favourably disposed towards trade unions.

THE 'MALE' POINT OF VIEW

Men acting as men are unknown in industrial relations and yet it is their point of view that suffuses the discipline's understanding of labour-management relations. Emerging as it did in the 1930s and 1940s, the academic study of industrial relations has long evidenced a great sympathy for the plight of working men humiliated and emasculated by the abuse of managerial power on the job. Stories of the indignities suffered by men in desperate need of employment to support their families — plying the foreman with liquor or painting his porch to secure a job — abound. Indeed, it is impossible to read labour history without imbibing the subtext which celebrates the organizing of trade unions as the means by which working-class men have achieved their due. And it is this point of view which underpins the discipline's understanding of the role and function of trade unions.

A profound identity between the interests of (white) working-class men and the meaning of trade unionism has emerged, so that, now, it is seemingly impossible to disentangle the ways in which trade unions act to protect the narrow economic interests of a particular group of men and the conceptualization of trade unionism as a social force. Union men and scholars together agree that what unions have achieved — seniority rights, the 'family wage', and 'fair' treatment for the select few — is precisely what unions are for. Few academics acknowledge, and fewer still analyze the extent to which these gains have been won by denying an equivalent measure of economic security to women and others who have been systematically excluded.

In the literature unions are conceptualized as open and inclusive organizations which can and do act as a collective 'voice' for (all) workers' concerns. Theoretically, union policies and practice are understood to reflect the needs and aspirations of the genderless 'median voter' whose long-term attachment to the workplace legitimately gives him (sic) a particularly loud voice in shaping union affairs.⁴⁹ Freeman and Medoff,⁵⁰ whose work in this area is widely

cited, never doubt that unions effectively represent women or other minorities; indeed, they underline the egalitarianism of union-initiated policies and practices. Freeman,⁵¹ in particular, argues forcefully that 'single rate' policies (which require employers to set a wage for the job) are the most important mechanism by which unions have reduced pay discrimination and so narrowed the dispersion of wages both within and among establishments in the same industry.

This is not to say that scholars recognize no potential for conflicting interests among union members. Conflicts of interest based on sectional differences within the work force — the most commonly cited of which are conflicts related to length of job tenure (junior/senior) and degree of skill (skilled/unskilled) — are regarded as inevitable but resolvable. Conflicts of this sort flow naturally from workers' differing perceptions of their self-interest as defined in relation to their jobs. Though embedded in the very structure of the work force, the strong presumption is that such conflicts can be balanced out and a consensus reached through compromise and trade-off, in part, because these identities are not uniquely defined. At any moment in time, workers have allegiances to any number of interest groups with overlapping and conflicting concerns. Moreover, definitions of self-interest are constantly in flux as individuals progress up the job ladder, acquire greater seniority, change departments, and so on. For these reasons, the ability of any one interest group to dictate 'union' policy over the long run is necessarily limited. In the rough and tumble of union politics even well-entrenched interest groups are likely to fall victim to the vagaries of workers' shifting needs and priorities.

The theory suggests that conflicts of interest between women and men are analogous to conflicts between junior and senior or skilled and unskilled workers. Discrimination against women, consequently, is apt to be characterized as inadvertent rather than intentional, a function perhaps of their few numbers or their failure to mobilize effectively. The adverse impact of seniority clauses on women, for example, is described as an 'unintended side-effect' in a discussion of union practices which includes only one other reference to women.⁵² And job evaluation schemes which undervalue 'women's' work are similarly reported to be under revision by unions 'in response to the growing drive for pay equity between men and women'.⁵³ Certainly, unions are advised to be seen to be fair; for example, to choose negotiating committees that are representative of the membership as a whole and to structure negotiations 'so that each faction gets something'.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, when this advice is not followed, the lapse may go unnoticed. In 'Negotiations at Canadian Switch', the fact that the work force was 90 per cent female but that the bargaining committee included only one woman, and that she alone refused to sign the memorandum of agreement, drew no comment from the case-writers.⁵⁵

This approach, which sees gender conflict as sectional rather than systemic, fails to make sense of the long-standing efforts of union men to exclude or segregate women. Many are the examples of craft unions that denied women access to training and jobs by refusing to accept them as members. In this way cigar makers, bookbinders, moulders and barbers tried to prevent women from entering their trades;⁵⁶ when women were hired anyway strikes were called to force employers to dismiss them.⁵⁷ Commonly, skilled workers interfered with the organizing efforts of women and other groups of less skilled workers by refusing to respect their picket lines.⁵⁸ In these circumstances, it is a thoroughly male perspective that would damn women who, like Susan B. Anthony, challenged the institutionalized power of the craft unions by encouraging women to take the place of striking male printers because, she reasoned, it was the only way that women could expect to learn the trade and so overcome the employers' excuse that there were no skilled women to hire.⁵⁹

Nor were the experiences of women in industrial unions remarkably different. Again and again, women were organized only reluctantly, and often without full membership rights or benefits.⁶⁰ Job segregation was the norm: with the unions' agreement — sometimes at their insistence — 'women's' jobs were clearly demarcated from 'men's'. Such distinctions, rooted in stereotypic notions of femininity, magnified women's supposed 'difference' and justified their inferior treatment, most notably, their lower rates of pay.⁶¹ Labelled as 'light' and thought to require dexterity (rather than skill) and attention to detail (rather than physical strength), 'women's' jobs lacked the recognized benchmarks of skill and effort that valorized 'men's' jobs.

Even skilled work performed by women was routinely slotted into the lowest pay categories and no amount of complaining by women members could induce union leaders to reconsider this arrangement. Union bargaining practices ensured that 'women's' jobs, skilled and unskilled, were never compared with comparable 'men's' jobs. Furthermore, union commitment to the concept of the 'family wage' (paid only to men) commonly ensured that unskilled men earned more than skilled women.⁶² Even the demand that women and men be paid the same wage when doing the same job was raised only defensively. Though progressive on its face, 'equal pay for equal work' was initially adopted by unions chiefly as a way of discouraging the employment of women on jobs traditionally performed by men, most importantly, during the two world wars.⁶³ For these reasons, the higher rates of pay earned by organized women can be seen, not as evidence that unions served women's needs directly, but as the by-product of a system of protections devised to ensure the 'fair' treatment of men.⁶⁴

The multiple ways by which women have been excluded and marginalized by male-dominated unions are part of the legacy of unionism that is

'missing' from the literature. None of the textbooks subjects unions or collective bargaining to a critical reappraisal. Constructs like 'dual' unionism, 'men's' and 'women's' jobs, separate seniority lists, and the like are not a significant part of the story of unionism that is passed on from one generation of scholars to the next. There has been no attempt to analyze how commonplace collective bargaining practices such as pattern bargaining, 'orbits of coercive comparison', and seniority rights have disadvantaged women. What persists is a thoroughly 'male' point of view; a point of view that sees mechanisms like job segregation by sex and pay discrimination as the natural outcomes of social forces and not the means by which men — managers and trade unionists acting together — entrench male privilege.

Conceptualizing women as a sectional interest group like any other is an inadequate basis for understanding gender politics at work. Unlike sectional interests such as those based on job tenure or degree of skill, the place of women in the work force is paralleled and reinforced by their inferior place in the broader society. There can be no underlying assumption that women, like other 'pressure groups' within the union, can mobilize and be heard. The strength of their voice in decision-making may be influenced by their numbers, their activism, and the quality of their leadership, but these are not the only considerations. Even when women are in the majority, there is no guarantee that their needs and priorities will take precedence.

Women's experiences belie the easy assumption that their concerns will be attended to. Women frequently report being shouted down at meetings, having their concerns derided as trivial or dismissed as not proper matters for collective bargaining. And when they try to organize as women, their efforts often arouse stiff opposition, especially when union funds are involved. Women's demands for training schools for women members or affirmative action initiatives to put more women into positions of leadership are often viewed as threats by union men. Charges of 'special treatment' and exclusivity or division from within — 'Are you a feminist or a unionist?' — are commonly levelled at women activists.⁶⁵ Thus, a model which presumes that, whatever else might be true, women workers identify with the goals of their unions and believe that their economic self-interest is advanced by their unions' bargaining strategies does not accurately reflect the more complex reality of gender politics in the workplace and at the union hall. Sometimes, in fact, women can make more progress on issues of critical importance to them, but opposed by their union brothers, by aligning themselves with management.⁶⁶

The norms and priorities of men are what union leaders understand best. And there can be no simple assumption that male leaders represent, or even understand the concerns of women members. The officials, themselves, may be confident of their ability; however, women leaders and members are much

more doubtful.⁶⁷ Male leaders cannot be counted on to pursue women's bargaining demands vigorously. Time after time, women have seen their issues put to the bottom of the bargaining agenda, then dropped in exchange for concessions which benefit men.⁶⁸ In particular, male leaders cannot be counted on to support demands for pay equity, sexual harassment policies, or employment equity which alter the balance of power between women and men. Leaders may fear that initiatives of this sort will undercut union solidarity and corrupt the principle of 'equal treatment' by giving 'special privileges' to women.⁶⁹

The presumption that workers are simply workers and that unions can and do act in the interests of the 'whole' is a 'male' point of view. The genderless worker/trade unionist is a myth that serves to perpetuate male control. This construction leaves women stranded: either their needs are consonant with those of male workers (in which case, women as women are invisible); or their needs are defined as 'women's' (read: not workers') needs and so fall 'outside' of the industrial relation system. From the point of view of women, trade unions are homosocial organizations:⁷⁰ organizations created by men to meet men's needs, one of which is to preserve and enhance male privilege.

To make working women fully visible presents a potent challenge to industrial relations theory and practice. To seriously address women's needs and priorities goes against the established order of things. It is not only 'bad', but 'good' trade union practice about which women complain. Women complain about seniority clauses that protect men but leave women exposed to lay-offs; they complain about the low value that unions attach to 'women's' work; they complain about their unions' opposition to increasing the number of part-time jobs; in fact, women complain about many of the things that unions have fought for that enhance their members'/men's job and income security. That seniority benefits and full-time jobs at good wages define what unions are all about seems self-evident and uncontested to a whole generation of union leaders and academics. So deep are these traditions that simply raising one's voice in criticism is to risk being labelled anti-union.⁷¹

Seniority rights provide a vivid illustration of these conflicting points of view. The benefits which flow to long-service workers — longer vacations, bigger pensions, better protection from lay-offs, and more opportunities for advancement — have a legitimacy that is seemingly indisputable, even though these benefits are highly sex-linked. Academics seem not to notice that truncated and sex-segregated job ladders, fragmented seniority districts, and restricted bumping rights commonly freeze women into worklife-long disadvantage.⁷² Nor do they question how and why women receive less on-the-job training, win fewer promotions, and take less money from pension plans. Academic inquiry is much more likely to focus on the extent to which the rights

and benefits claimed by long-service workers interfere with management's ability to run the firm as efficiently as possible.

There is *nothing inadvertent* about the choice of long service as the defining characteristic for claims of privilege in industry. It may be an objective standard that cuts down employer discretion and the potential for abuse of authority just as the textbooks say, but it also divides men from women, neatly and absolutely. Long service as the basic measure of job security and advancement fits men's work patterns, but not women's. As a rule it is more difficult for women to accrue the length of service required for protection from lay-offs or to qualify for pensions. In the absence of recognized maternity leave and adequate child care, women are 'unreliable' workers whose family obligations interfere with continuity of employment. Employers routinely assign women to jobs with the least measure of job security and the most limited prospects for advancement.⁷³ Length of service, consequently, is a clean, seemingly genderless way of excluding women from high-wage industries altogether or keeping them on the lowest paid, least interesting, 'women's' jobs.⁷⁴

Academics are similarly incurious about the ways in which lower wages for women are produced and reproduced by traditional bargaining practices. The effect of unions on wages is almost always analyzed in conjunction with the wages of men. When women are considered at all,⁷⁵ we are most likely to learn that organized women (in concert with organized men) earn more than their non-union counterparts, and that pay differentials between women and men performing the same work are smaller in unionized workplaces.⁷⁶ That pay differentials continue to persist in unionized workplaces — most remarkably, even when women and men are employed on the same jobs — draws little comment, even though this finding contradicts our presumptions about union policies and practice.

Industrial relations theory focuses on the ways in which union bargaining strategies are guided by the goals of fairness and equity. Principles such as 'equal pay for equal work', 'pay the job and not the worker', and 'fair comparisons' are central to trade union practice precisely because the strict application of these rules reduces pay discrimination. The use of 'orbits of coercive comparison', 'key bargains', and pattern bargaining likewise constrains management's ability to set wages arbitrarily and so induces greater equity and fairness in pay structures. The imposition of rational and impersonal standards, consequently, has significantly narrowed wage disparities among blue-collar workers, both within establishments and across highly organized industries.⁷⁷

Union bargaining practices have unquestionably curtailed certain forms of pay discrimination; in the process, however, other forms have effectively been entrenched. Though seemingly egalitarian and unbiased, union notions of fair pay which leave traditional wage structures undisturbed consistently

downgrade the value of 'women's' work. The pay policies and bargaining strategies preferred by unions perpetuate and further solidify payment schemes that take both traditional 'men's' work and the presumption of the 'family wage' for industrial work as the norm. In collective bargaining parlance 'fair comparisons' mean comparisons of like with like. To be paid 'fairly', that is, 'like a man', means having one's wage assessed against the wages paid for other 'men's' work. And this is no small matter: as Kessler-Harris observes, "'a woman's wage'" has long been a term of opprobrium among men'.⁷⁸

In the process of comparing like with like, 'women's' work has been systematically undervalued by employers and trade unions alike. Once again, it is what men do that constitutes the benchmark of value. Skill is a notoriously gendered construct,⁷⁹ but so are effort, responsibility, and working conditions. Always, the effort entailed in manual work is measured by the physical demands of 'men's' jobs while 'women's' work, no matter how exhausting, is defined as 'light';⁸⁰ nor is there any appreciation for the mental effort entailed in much of 'women's' work in service occupations. Responsibility, likewise, is a gendered concept which on the job is measured by the potential damage to capital equipment. Potential harm to children or sick people, by contrast, is not factored into pay schemes.⁸¹ And the *sine qua non* of poor working conditions, the grease and noise so characteristic of heavy industrial work, have an economic value that the dirt and noise of 'women's' work — sweat, urine, and tears — does not.⁸²

Wage differentials between 'men's' and 'women's' work capture something of profound importance about gender in our society. Male workers cannot legitimately be compared with women workers without violating their sense of dignity and justice.⁸³ Such comparisons contradict what every man 'knows': that 'men's' jobs are too much for most women. Equal pay for work of equal value draws into question the legitimacy of gender privilege and so threatens men's sense of self and masculinity. For these reasons, women's claim for pay equity is a pointed challenge to men and there can be no easy assumption that unions will unhesitatingly undo the very mechanisms that have long ensured higher pay for male 'breadwinners'. Equal pay for work of equal value 'blow[s] apart the historic compromise between capital and labour that has cost women a fortune'.⁸⁴

CONCLUSION: A FEMINIST RETHINKING OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

That we do not, arguably cannot, study women through the lens of industrial relations as presently constructed is patent. It is not simply that the discussion of women in the literature is 'bad' industrial relations ('bad', that is, because it treats women as stereotypically defined by their gender while

ignoring all of the structural factors that make up an industrial relations analysis of workers and unions); it is critically important to ground the acceptability of such approaches in the discipline's refusal to conceptualize gender as a power hierarchy. What is 'missing' from industrial relations as presently defined and practised is an analysis of gender relations as power relations.

There is no quick fix. The adaptations and simple reversals that have been tried are not sufficient. We remain caught in a 'male' point of view. To overcome these analytical shortcomings, we must learn to 'double double unthink'.⁸⁵ It is not the discipline's construction of women as gendered that is problematic (although the analysis has been far too simplistic and stereotypic); what is wrong with industrial relations is that, so far, scholars have not engendered men. To 'unthink' we must come to recognize the value of what women do, to understand the needs of working women, and the priorities which they set for themselves. At the same time, we must begin to address the reality that men have used their superior power to order the workplace in accordance with their needs and priorities.

Critical to an expanded definition of industrial relations as a field of study is an analysis of job segregation by sex from within. Institutionalized job segregation is fundamental to patriarchy because it ensures that women's place in the labour market is subordinate to men's and so reinforces the unequal division of labour within the household. Job segregation by sex 'constructs women's "primary" commitment as devotion to home and family whether or not they also work for pay'.⁸⁶ Defined as wives and mothers first, women are expected to take family life as their central responsibility around which all other commitments must be organized. There is no escape: women's subordinate position in the labour market reinforces their subordination within the family which, in turn, reinforces their subordination in the labour market⁸⁷ — which explain why, rather than disappearing as more and more women enter the labour force, job segregation remains stubbornly entrenched.

Until job segregation by sex is made visible as an underlying mechanism of job regulation, women's needs and concerns will be defined as 'outside' the boundaries of industrial relations. For the moment, issues like pay equity and sexual harassment fall within the parameters of the discipline, but only insofar as women are able to keep these matters on the bargaining agenda. In other, more fundamental respects, pay equity and sexual harassment are not theorized as industrial relations phenomena. Neither is conceptualized as an 'output' of the industrial relations system. Only when the discipline removes its gender blinkers and accepts that job segregation by sex is a mechanism of job regulation that reveals a great deal about how the industrial relations system works will scholars be able to see unequal pay and sexual harassment for what they

are: integral parts of an industrial relations system that is designed to keep women 'in their place'.

Once an understanding of gender relations as power relations is drawn into the analytical framework, the persistent harassment of working women can be understood as an industrial relations phenomenon. For women, sexual harassment is not an aberration but a constant threat, a means by which men police the dividing line between men's and women's worlds.⁸⁸ Derided, insulted, occasionally assaulted, women at work (and elsewhere) are commonly sexualized and treated as 'fair game'. Whether initiated by supervisors or co-workers, sexual harassment is an attempt by men to dominate and control women by using the source of their socially defined inferiority, that is, their sexuality.

Analyzed in this way, sexual harassment is clearly a mechanism of job regulation which parallels and reinforces job segregation by sex. By this means, women employed in traditional 'women's' work are constantly reminded of their subservient position. In these occupations particularly women can never forget that their function at work is to service men's needs.⁸⁹ Women who attempt to break into the work of men, by contrast, may be forcibly ejected. The experiences of many women employed on 'men's' jobs in the manufacturing, construction, mining, and forestry industries are testament to the multiple, varied, and persistent resistance that is often evoked by women challenging men's privileged position in the labour force.⁹⁰ Nor has the male preserve of the union hall been much friendlier. The business of unions has generally been taken to be 'men's' work and women are not especially wanted. The widespread practices of belittling women, shouting them down at meetings, dismissing their concerns as trivial, and responding to their presence with sexual harassment are so common that they are rarely examined in detail and never from an industrial relations perspective.⁹¹

That we do not study women is clear. But what may be less obvious is that in industrial relations we do not study men either. The day-to-day experiences of workers, women and men alike, are extraneous to the discipline as conceptualized and practised. In this we are following Dunlop's example. His classic work tells readers a great deal about collective bargaining — the text is replete with detailed descriptions of job classifications, seniority rights, portal-portal pay, and so on — but nothing about the workers themselves, or their trade unions. The narrow construction of the industrial relations system as a 'web of rules' led Dunlop to separate the institutions and processes of collective bargaining from the working lives of the miners and construction workers who were the object of his study. The men themselves never appear: we learn nothing about their work, their families, or their communities. How and why they decided to organize unions remain a mystery.

This approach is characteristic: industrial relations as social relations at work are rarely considered or analyzed. Academics know, but conveniently forget, that the underside of managerial authority is workers' obedience. We seem to have lost sight of the fact that most work is semi-routine, 'slivered and stereotyped', like the workers themselves, as Mills long ago observed.⁹² There is a 'strange irony', Hyman noted in the ability of scholars 'to construct elaborate models of procedures of "job regulation" without the least awareness of the sphere of production which constitutes the material foundation of the bargaining arrangements that they seek to explain'.⁹³ Workers as 'actors' in the industrial relations system, as people who think and do, have only a shadowy presence in the literature.

Considering the 'missing feminist revolution' in sociology, Stacey and Thorne argue that 'feminist thinking has made the most headway in fields (anthropology, literature, and history) with strong traditions of interpretative understanding. In contrast, fields more deeply anchored in positivist epistemologies — sociology, psychology, political science (excepting political theory), and economics — have posed more obstacles to feminist transformation.'⁹⁴ Certainly, the positivist tradition runs deep in industrial relations. No one doubts the practical, prescriptive nature of the discipline.⁹⁵ In Hyman's words, industrial relations 'forms an area of study with no coherent theoretical or disciplinary rationale, but deriving from a directly *practical* concern with a range of "problems" confronting employers, governments and their academic advisers in the pursuit of labour stability' (emphasis in the original).⁹⁶ Highly charged political issues of distribution and control — issues which cut to the heart of the conflict of interest between labour and management — are commonly reduced to technical or procedural problems to which straightforward solutions can be applied. The industrial relations scholar-practitioner generally sees himself as 'neutral' and 'objective', a practical man (as *he* usually is) with little use for theory.

The feminist revolution in industrial relations must combine both strategies. (Yet again, the 'double burden' of women.) To take a feminist standpoint in industrial relations, that is, to hold a morally and politically committed position on the side of the less powerful, requires us to challenge both sexism and elitism in industry. We must be constantly aware, Mills warned, of our tendency as academics to collaborate with management in the manipulation of workers:

In the drama of the human relations studies, the manager and the scholar have carried on the dialogue — a discussion between elites, about the worker, who is the prime human object of...research. The worker occasionally enters the scene only insofar as the managers and the scholars decide that they ought to open a channel of communication to him [or her, we must now add].⁹⁷

Then or now, a fundamental ill of 'malestream' social science has been objectification. In industry, the 'logic of efficiency' — what HRM calls 'organizational effectiveness' — demands that managers treat people as so many units of 'human capital'.

What Smith urges for women — that women be the subjects, not the objects of academic study — scholars must extend to all working people.⁹⁸ We must allow — indeed, we must change the way in which we do our research so that it becomes possible for — women and men both to be at the centre of their own lives, to speak and act for themselves. To 'unthink' traditional approaches to industrial relations, academics must learn to 'look up from below'.⁹⁹

Such a project will press against the boundaries of the discipline as presently defined. Adopting a point of view that is self-consciously inclusive will raise new issues of theory and practice and deepen our understanding of social relations at work. In so doing, the principal challenge is to reconceptualize the meaning of industrial relations so that women and men, not institutions and procedures, will be at the centre of scholarly attention.

NOTES

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² TETREAULT, M.K.T. 1985. "Feminist Phase Theory." *Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 56, No. 4, 363-384.

³ This includes: *British Journal of Industrial Relations*; *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*; *Industrial Relations*; *Journal of Industrial Relations*; *Journal of Labor Research*; and *Relations industrielles/Industrial Relations*. Unfortunately, my review is limited to those articles published in English.

⁴ ANDERSON, J.C., et al., eds. 1989. *Union-Management Relations in Canada*. 2d ed. Don Mills: Addison-Wesley Publishers; CRAIG, A.W.J., and N.A. SOLOMON. 1993. *The System of Industrial Relations in Canada*. 4th ed. Scarborough: Prentice Hall Canada; SETHI, A.S., ed. 1989. *Collective Bargaining in Canada*. Scarborough: Nelson Canada.

⁵ LIPSET, S.M., ed. 1986. *Unions in Transition*. San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies.

⁶ CHAYKOWSKI, R.P., and A. VERMA, eds. 1992. *Industrial Relations in Canadian Industry*. Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada.

⁷ KOCHAN, T.A., et al. 1986. *The Transformation of American Industrial Relations*. New York: Basic Books.

⁸ KOCHAN, T.A., and H.C. KATZ. 1986. *Collective Bargaining and Industrial Relations*. 2d ed. Homewood: Irwin.

⁹ See, for example, BLACKBURN, M.L. 1990. "What Can Explain the Increase in Earnings Inequality Among Males?" *Industrial Relations*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 441-456.

¹⁰ Examples include: ABRAHAM, K.G., and H.S. FARBER. 1988. "Returns to Seniority in Union and Nonunion Jobs: A New Look at the Evidence." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 3-19; FARRIS, D. 1989. "Compensating Wage Differentials in the Union and Nonunion Sectors." *Industrial Relations*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 356-372; GILL, A.M. 1989. "The Role of Discrimination in Determining Occupational Structure." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 42, No. 4, 610-623; WIAL, H. 1991. "Getting a Good Job: Mobility in a Segmented Labour Market." *Industrial Relations*, Vol. 30, No. 3, 396-416.

¹¹ Examples include: BAZAN, S. 1990. "On the Employment Effects of Introducing a National Minimum Wage in the United Kingdom." *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 215-226; CREEDY, J., and K. WHITFIELD. 1988. "Job Mobility and Earnings: An Internal Labour Market Analysis." *Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 100-117; DOLAN, S., et al. 1992. "Personality, Social Support and Workers' Stress." *Relations industrielles/Industrial Relations*, Vol. 47, No. 1, 125-138; DWORKIN, J., et al. 1988. "Workers' Preferences in Concession Bargaining." *Industrial Relations*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 7-20; LE BRASSEUR, R. 1990. "Retirement and Skill Issues in Northern Ontario Industries." *Relations industrielles/Industrial Relations*, Vol. 45, No. 2, 268-282; MILLER, P., and C. MULVEY. 1991. "Trade Unions and the Distribution of Paid Overtime." *Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 33, No. 2, 220-233; ROBINSON, J.C. 1988. "Hazardous Occupations Within the Job Hierarchy." *Industrial Relations*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 241-250; SPILSBURY, M., et al. 1987. "A Note on the Trade Union Membership Patterns of Young Adults." *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 267-274.

¹² See, for example, MACPHERSON, D.A., and J.B. STEWART. 1987. "Unionism and the Dispersion of Wages Among Blue-Collar Women." *Journal of Labor Research*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 395-405. The authors critique Richard Freeman's work on these grounds. Freeman's initial comparison of wage dispersion in the union and non-union sectors did not include women at all and, although women were included in a subsequent study, the results were not disaggregated by sex.

¹³ Examples include: ALTONZI, J.G., and J.R. SPELTZER. 1991. "Worker Characteristics, Job Characteristics, and the Receipt of On-the-Job Training." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 45, No. 1, 58-79; BEAUMONT, P.B., and R.I.D. HARRIS. 1988. "High Technology Industries and Non-Union Establishments in Britain." *Relations industrielles/Industrial Relations*, Vol. 43, No. 4, 829-846; BORBA, P.S., and D. APPEL. 1987. "The Propensity of Permanently Disabled Workers to Hire Lawyers." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 418-429; CANNINGS, K., and C. MONTMARQUETTE. 1991. "Managerial Momentum: A Simultaneous Model of the Career Progress of Male and Female Managers." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 44, No. 2, 212-228; DRAGO, R., and M. WOODEN. 1990. "Determinants of Strikes in Australia." *Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 32-52; GREEN, F., et al. 1985. "Fringe Benefit Distribution in Britain." *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 261-280; GUEST, D.E., and H. DI CIERI. 1991. "Company or Trade Union: Which Wins Workers' Allegiance? A Study of Commitment in the UK Electronics Industry." *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 75-96; MARTIN, J.E., et al. 1986. "Patterns of Union Stewards' Commitment." *Journal of Labor Research*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 323-336; SCOTT, C., and E. SHADRON. 1989. "The Effect of Gender on Arbitration Decisions." *Journal of Labor Research*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 429-436; SMITH, T.L. 1992. "The Impact of University Faculty Unionization on the Male-Female Wage Differential." *Journal of Collective Negotiations in the Public Sector*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 101-110; STROMBECK, T. 1988. "Job Mobility in Australia: Theories, Evidence and Implications." *Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 258-276; SWIMMER, G. 1990. "Gender Based Differences in Promotion of Clerical Workers." *Relations industrielles/Industrial Relations*, Vol. 45, No. 2, 300-309.

¹⁴ See, for example, BLAU, F.D., and A.H. BELLER. 1988. "Trends in Earnings Differentials by Gender, 1971-1981." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 41, No. 4,

513-529; BOSTON, T.D. 1990. "Segmented Labor Markets: New Evidence from a Study of Four Race-Gender Groups." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 99-115; CARLSON, L.A., and C. SWARTZ. 1988. "The Earnings of Women and Ethnic Minorities, 1959-1979." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 530-546; GERHART, B. 1990. "Gender Differences in Current and Starting Salaries: The Role of Performance, College Major, and Job Title." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 43, No. 4, 418-433; GERHART, B., and N.E. CHEIKH. 1991. "Earnings and Percentage Female: A Longitudinal Study." *Industrial Relations*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 62-78; HABERFIELD, Y., and Y. SHENHAV. 1990. "Are Women and Blacks Closing the Gap? Salary Discrimination in American Science in the 1970s and 1980s." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 68-82; HERSCH, J. 1991. "Male-Female Differences in Hourly Wages: The Role of Human Capital, Working Conditions, and Housework." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 44, No. 4, 746-759; HODSON, R., and P. ENGLAND. 1986. "Industrial Structure and Sex Differences in Earnings." *Industrial Relations*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 16-32; MONTGOMERY, E., and W. WASCHER. 1987. "Race and Gender Wage Inequality in Services and Manufacturing." *Industrial Relations*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 284-280.

¹⁵ The studies relied upon are referenced in endnotes 17-26 below.

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¹⁷ FARBER, H.S., and D.H. SAKS. 1980. "Why Workers Want Unions: The Role of Relative Wages and Job Characteristics." *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 88, 349-364; FIORITO, J., and C.R. GREER. 1986. "Gender Differences in Union Membership, Preferences, and Beliefs." *Journal of Labor Research*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 145-164; KOCHAN, T.A. 1979. "How American Workers View Labor Unions." *Monthly Labor Review*, April, 23-31; LEIGH, D., and S.M. HILLS. 1987. "Male-Female Differences in the Potential for Union Growth Outside Traditionally Unionized Industries." *Journal of Labor Research*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 131-142; MOORE, T.S. 1986. "Are Women Workers 'Hard to Organize'?" *Work and Occupations*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 97-111; RODAN, P. 1990. "Women and Unionism: The Case of the Victorian Colleges Staff Association." *Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 386-402; SILVERBLATT, R., and R.J. AMANN. 1991. "Race, Ethnicity, Union Attitudes, and Voting Predilections." *Industrial Relations*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 271-285; VOOS, P., *op. cit.*

¹⁸ ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD). 1991. *Supplementary Outlook, 1991*.

¹⁹ IMBERMAN, W. "The Hocus Pocus in Union Avoidance." *Journal of Labor Research*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 275-283.

²⁰ ANTOS, J.R., *et al.* 1990. "Sex Differences in Union Membership." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 33, No. 2, 162-169; ELSHEIKH, F., and G.S. BAIN. "Unionisation in Britain: An Inter-Establishment Analysis Based on Survey Data." *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 169-178; FARBER, H.S., and D.H. SAKS, *op. cit.*; KOCHAN, T.A., *op. cit.*; SCOVILLE, J.G. 1971. "Influences on Unionization in the US in 1966." *Industrial Relations*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 354-361.

²¹ FIORITO, J., and C.R. GREER. 1982. "Determinants of US Unionism: Past Research and Future Needs." *Industrial Relations*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 1-32; HIRSCH, B.T. 1980. "The Determinants of Unionization: An Analysis of Interearea Differences." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 33, No. 2, 147-161; LEIGH, D., and S.M. HILLS, *op. cit.*; MOORE, T.S., *op. cit.*; MOORE, W.J., and R.J. NEWMAN. 1975. "On the Prospects for American Trade Union Growth: A Cross-Section Analysis." *Review of Economics and Statistics*, Vol. 57, No. 4, 435-445; MOORE, W.J., and R.J. NEWMAN. 1988. "A Cross-Section Analysis of the Postwar Decline in American Trade Union Membership." *Journal of Labor Research*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 111-125.

- 22 ANTOS, J.R., *et al*, *op. cit.*, 164.
- 23 FIORITO, J., and C.R. GREER. "Gender Differences in Union Membership, Preferences and Beliefs", *op. cit.*, 161-162.
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- 25 VOOS, P., *op. cit.*, 450.
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- 27 SMITH, D.E. 1981. "Women and Trade Unions: The US and British Experience." *Resources for Feminist Research*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 53-60, 53.
- 28 FELDBERG, R.L., and E.N. GLENN. 1979. "Male and Female: Job versus Gender Models in the Sociology of Work." *Social Problems*, Vol. 26, No. 5, 524-538.
- 29 See, for example, GERHART, B., *op. cit.*; HERSCH, J., *op. cit.*
- 30 CHAISON, G.N., and P. ANDIAPPAN. 1989. "An Analysis of the Barriers to Women Becoming Local Union Officers." *Journal of Labor Research*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 149-162; CHAISON, G.N., and P. ANDIAPPAN. 1987. "Profiles of Local Union Officers: Females v. Males." *Industrial Relations*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 281-283; CHAISON, G.N., and P. ANDIAPPAN. 1982. "Characteristics of Female Union Officers in Canada." *Relations industrielles/Industrial Relations*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 765-779; COOK, A. 1968. "Women and American Trade Unions." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, No. 375, 124-132; IZRAELI, D.N. 1982, "Avenues into Leadership for Women: The Case of Union Officers in Israel." *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, Vol. 3, 515-529; KOZARIA, K.S., and D.A. PIERSON. 1980. "Barriers to Women Becoming Union Leaders." *IRRA 33rd Proceedings*. Madison: Industrial Relations Research Association, 49-54; MELCHER, D., *et al*. 1992. "Women's Participation in Local Union Leadership: The Massachusetts Experience." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 45, No. 2, 267-280; TURTLE, A.M., *et al*. 1984. "Women's Participation in the New South Wales Teachers Federation." *Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 451-471; WERTHEIMER, B.M., and A.H. NELSON. 1975. *Trade Union Women*. New York: Praeger Publishers.
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- 35 DUNLOP, J.T. 1958. *Industrial Relations Systems*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press.
- 36 DIMMOCK, S.J., and A.R. SETHI. 1986. "The Role of Ideology and Power in Systems Theory: Some Fundamental Shortcomings." *Relations industrielles/Industrial Relations*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 738-757; GILES, A., and G. MURRAY. 1988. "Towards an Historical Understanding of Industrial Relations Theory in Canada." *Relations industrielles/Industrial Relations*, Vol. 43, No. 4, 780-810; HYMAN, R. 1989. *The Political Economy of Industrial Relations*. London:

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55 SETHI, A.R., *op. cit.*, 214-232.

56 CREESE, G., *op. cit.*

57 FRAGER, R., *op. cit.* 51.

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64 FREEMAN, R.B., and J.L. MEDOFF. 1984. *What Do Unions Do ?* New York: Basic Books, 87 estimate that 'roughly half of the lower dispersion among union workers is due to the fact that such important measured wage-determining characteristics as schooling, age, occupation, and industry, among others, have less pronounced effects on union than on nonunion workers'.

65 DARCY, J. 1985. "The Barriers Within — How Unions Have to Change." *Strong Women, Strong Unions*. Participatory Research Group, eds. Toronto: Group and the Canada Employment and Immigration Union, 31-44; DAVID, F., *op. cit.*; FIELD, D., *op. cit.*

66 Such alliances become more likely as employers are required by law to implement employment equity policies, with or without the agreement of unions. See, for example, COCKBURN, C. 1991. *In the Way of Women: Men's Resistance to Sex Equality in Organizations*. Ithaca: ILR Press, 108-112.

⁶⁷ Male union officials surveyed by MELCHER, D., *et al.*, *op. cit.*, 277 were more than twice as likely as women leaders to believe that unions led by men could adequately represent the interests of women members. Women interviewed by COCKBURN, C., *op. cit.*, 117 also felt that their male leaders knew little and often cared little about 'women's' issues.

⁶⁸ See FORREST, A. "Male Power at Work: Evidence from Six Studies of Job Segregation by Sex in Factory Work", *op. cit.*, and the studies cited therein.

⁶⁹ COCKBURN, C., *op. cit.*

⁷⁰ LIPMAN-BLUMEN, J. 1976. "Towards a Homosocial Theory of Sex Roles: An Explanation of the Sex Segregation of Social Institutions." *Women and the Workplace: The Implications of Occupational Segregation*. M. Blaxall and B. Reagan, eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 15-31. At 16-17 the author conceptualizes trade unions as homosocial organizations:

'The basic premise of this homosocial view of sex roles suggests that men are attracted to, stimulated by, and interested in other men. It is a process that is noticeable in early childhood and is channeled and encouraged by the entire range of social institutions within which males live. The stratification system, which ranks individuals and groups in terms of their value to society, systematically places males in more valued roles than females. Until very recently, the stratification system located men in such a way that they had virtually total and exclusive access to the entire range of resources available within the society.'

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⁷² KELLEY, M.R. 1982. "Discrimination in Seniority Systems: A Case Study." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 40-55.

⁷³ See ARMSTRONG, P. 1982. "If It's Only Women It Doesn't Matter So Much." *Work, Women and the Labour Market*. J. West, ed. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 27-43 for evidence that employers insist upon hiring 'reliable' men for jobs on capital-intensive machinery. 'Unreliable' women were preferred for the lowest paid, labour-intensive jobs.

⁷⁴ In heavy industry, especially, the application of seniority rules has proven to be highly prejudicial to women. Experience has shown that the toe-hold that women won in the steel industry during the 1970s was quickly lost in the economic downturn of the early 1980s. The contractual obligation to lay off first those hired last has all but eliminated women. More than ever, the industry is a highly paid enclave for older, white men. See LUXTON, M., and J. CORMAN. 1991. "Getting to Work: The Challenge of the Women Back Into Stelco Campaign." *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol. 28, 149-185.

⁷⁵ There is far more information about unionism and women's wages available than is actually reported. On the important issue of wage dispersion within establishments and industries, for example, researchers routinely employ gender as an independent variable but rarely report the results as they pertain to women in any detail. See FREEMAN, R.B. "Union Wage Practices and Wage Dispersion Within Establishments", *op. cit.*; HIRSCH, B.T. 1982. "The Interindustry Structure of Unionism, Earnings, and Earnings Dispersion." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 22-39.

⁷⁶ FREEMAN, R.B., and J.L. MEDOFF, *op. cit.*, 50, 87; GUNDERSON, M. 1975. "Male-Female Wage Differentials and the Impact of Equal Pay Legislation." *Review of Economics and Statistics*, Vol. 57, No. 4, 462-469; WHITE, J., *Women and Unions*, *op. cit.*, 56-57.

⁷⁷ FREEMAN, R.B., and J.L. MEDOFF, *op. cit.*

⁷⁸ KESSLER-HARRIS, A. 1990. *A Woman's Wage: Historical Meanings and Social Consequences*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 125.

79 GASKELL, J. 1991. "What Counts as Skill ? Reflections on Pay Equity." *Just Wages: A Feminist Assessment of Pay Equity*. J. Fudge and P. McDermott, eds. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 141-159.

80 TIERNEY, D., et al. 1990. "She Ate Not the Bread of Idleness: Exhaustion Is Related to Domestic and Salaried Working Conditions Among 539 Quebec Hospital Workers." *Women and Health*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 21-42.

81 See COCKBURN, C., *op. cit.*, 107.

82 ARMSTRONG, P. 1990. "Lessons from Pay Equity." *Studies in Political Economy*, Vol. 32, 29-54; MESSING, K. 1991. *Occupational Safety and Health Concerns of Canadian Women*. Ottawa: Women's Bureau, Labour Canada.

83 KESSLER-HARRIS, A., *op. cit.*, 122.

84 CAMPBELL, B. 1989. "Bargaining Women." *New Statesman*, December 1, 20.

85 DALY, M. 1978. *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 60. (The phrase is attributed to Andrea Dworkin.) Daly argues that simple reversals cannot help women think differently because they continue to rely on male-defined values. She argues by way of example:

"Thus, it is a pitfall simply to reverse "penis envy" into "womb envy", for such theories trick women into fixating upon womb, female genitalia, and breasts as our ultimately most valuable endowments. Not only disparagement, but also glorification of women's procreative organs are expressions of male fixation and fetishism."

86 MILKMAN, R., "Redefining 'Women's Work': The Sexual Division of Labour in the Auto Industry During World War II", *op. cit.*, 340.

87 HARTMANN, H. 1976. "Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex." *Signs*, Vol. 1, No. 3, Part 2, 137-169, 153.

88 FARLEY, L. 1980. *Sexual Shakedown*. New York: Warner Books.

89 CAROTHERS, S., and P. CRULL. 1984. "Contrasting Sexual Harassment in Female- and Male-Dominated Occupations." *My Troubles Are Going to Have Trouble With Me*. K.B. Sacks and D. Remy, eds. New York: Rutgers University, 219-228.

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91 But see LEDWITH, S., et al., *op. cit.*; HEERY, E., and J. KELLY, *op. cit.*

92 MILLS, C.W. 1949. "The Contribution of Sociology to Studies of Industrial Relations." *Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting of the Industrial Relations Research Association 1948*. Madison: IRRRA, 199-222, 218.

93 HYMAN, R. "Review Symposium", *op. cit.*, 109-110.

94 STACEY J., and B. THORNE. 1985. "The Missing Feminist Revolution in Sociology." *Social Problems*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 301-316, 307.

95 ANDERSON, J.C., et al. 1989. "Frameworks for the Study of Industrial Relations." *Union-Management Relations in Canada*. 2d ed. J.C. Anderson et al., eds. Don Mills: Addison-Wesley Publishers, 1-22, 3-4.

96 HYMAN, R. *The Political Economy of Industrial Relations*, *op. cit.*, 120.

97 MILLS, C.W., *op. cit.*, 207.

98 SMITH, D.E., 1987. *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 105.

99 MIES, M. 1983. "Towards a Methodology for Feminist Research." *Theories of Women's Studies*. G. Bowles and R.D. Klein, eds. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 117-139.

Les femmes et la théorie des relations industrielles

Cet article cherche à ouvrir un débat sur la définition des relations industrielles comme champ d'étude en utilisant l'approche analytique inspirée par le professorat féminin dans le domaine des sciences sociales. Mon intérêt touche les relations industrielles telles que conçues et pratiquées par les universitaires dans les écoles canadiennes d'administration où la théorie des systèmes demeure le paradigme analytique prédominant. Mon but est de démontrer qu'ainsi conçues, les relations industrielles sont profondément sexistes. En tant que discipline, les relations industrielles discriminent entre le travail des hommes et celui des femmes.

L'hypothèse de base est la suivante : quoique les femmes fassent, elles sont avant tout femmes et ne sont inspirées que par des motivations féminines. Au travail ou dans leur syndicat, les femmes ne sont pas d'abord travailleuses ou syndicalistes, mais plutôt femmes, alors épouses, mères et filles. Conséquemment, le fondement théorique de la discipline est incomplet et ne considère qu'un côté de la médaille : les relations industrielles sont basées presque exclusivement sur les expériences de travail des hommes.

Je débute ma critique par une analyse du traitement des femmes dans la littérature contemporaine. En plus d'avoir examiné les textes utilisés dans les écoles canadiennes de relations industrielles, j'ai récemment scruté les articles publiés dans les revues savantes de relations industrielles traditionnelles. La conclusion en est que, même aujourd'hui, les femmes constituent un sujet d'étude marginal en relations industrielles. Il n'est pas rare que les chercheurs choisissent leurs données en ignorant les femmes pour inclure seulement des hommes ou qu'ils présentent leurs résultats en omettant de les distinguer par sexe. Même lorsque les femmes sont sujets d'étude, elles demeurent invisibles.

Un examen de la littérature sur la croissance syndicale et sur la présence des femmes dans le leadership syndical révèle jusqu'à quel point les chercheurs se rabattent sur des conceptions simplistes et stéréotypées de la capacité des femmes à expliquer leurs propres expériences. Très rarement, la complexité de la vie des femmes est-elle même examinée en détail. L'approche d'analyse générale présume que la relation entre les femmes, leur travail et leur syndicat dépend de leurs responsabilités familiales ou d'autres caractéristiques personnelles. L'analyse typique des relations industrielles, qui cherche à comprendre les tendances de croissance syndicale ou d'engagement des membres en examinant des facteurs structurels, est rarement appliquée aux femmes.

Les raisons de cette invisibilité des femmes se retrouvent au coeur même de la discipline. Mon argument est à l'effet que la construction théorique des relations industrielles comme champ d'étude de la régulation du travail est profondément basée sur l'exclusion des femmes. La préoccupation des relations industrielles avec le « problème de l'ordre » assure l'invisibilité des femmes non seulement parce que les femmes ont moins réussi à se mobiliser autour de leurs besoins et de leurs revendications, mais, plus sérieusement, parce que cette approche identifie la relation d'emploi comme étant la source ultime de pouvoir et de conflit au travail. Les relations industrielles ne voient aucune relation entre les rapports entre sexes et les relations d'emploi et ainsi

d'importants phénomènes reliés à la question des sexes, comme la discrimination sexuelle, sont considérés en dehors du système de relations industrielles. De façon plus générale, la conception pluraliste des relations industrielles comme champ d'étude place les femmes en dehors du système lorsqu'elles n'apparaissent que comme femmes et à l'intérieur du système lorsqu'elles se manifestent dans le déguisement asexué de travailleur ou de syndicaliste. De plus, vu que l'attention première de la discipline se concentre sur les moyens par lesquels les syndicats et la négociation collective s'occupent du conflit industriel, de vieilles pratiques, telles que la discrimination en emploi, avec toutes ses facettes (qui ont eu pour effet de garder les femmes à leur place) ne sont pas perçues comme des phénomènes de relations industrielles qui nécessitent d'être expliqués de l'intérieur du système.

J'attire également l'attention sur ce point de vue très masculin dans la théorie des relations industrielles et qui est évident dans l'analyse du rôle et des fonctions des syndicats : ils furent formés par des hommes, pour les besoins des hommes. La théorie des relations industrielles a adopté cette approche qui exclut les femmes de façon fondamentale. En utilisant les exemples de l'ancienneté et des salaires « justes », je tente de démontrer que l'approche syndicale en faveur des travailleurs les plus anciens et les stratégies de négociation qui cherchent à conserver les structures de salaires traditionnelles visent à oublier la discrimination en emploi et la discrimination salariale contre les femmes. Donc, l'analyse de la façon dont les syndicats défendent les besoins des travailleurs laisse les femmes sur le carreau : ou leurs besoins sont synonymes de ceux des hommes, alors les femmes sont invisibles, ou leurs besoins sont définis comme des besoins de « femmes » (lire non travailleuses) et alors tombent en dehors du système de relations industrielles. Pour établir la problématique des grands gains syndicaux qui ont institutionnalisés la discrimination contre les femmes, les chercheurs doivent sortir de l'approche conventionnelle de leurs confrères campés dans la tradition pluraliste.

Ma conclusion est à l'effet que, telles que conçues aujourd'hui, les relations industrielles sont incapables d'étudier les femmes. Ce n'est pas la perception des femmes comme femmes qui pose problème dans le domaine, mais plutôt que les chercheurs n'ont pas encore identifié les hommes en tant qu'hommes. Il devient alors fondamental pour une nouvelle définition de la discipline que l'on s'attarde à l'analyse de la relation entre sexes comme force sous-jacente sur les lieux de travail. Ce ne sera qu'alors que les besoins et les préoccupations des femmes seront correctement définis à l'intérieur des frontières de la discipline. Le défi réside, plus largement, dans la reconceptualisation de la signification des relations industrielles qui permettra aux femmes et aux hommes, et non aux institutions et aux procédures, d'être au centre de l'attention des chercheurs.