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University of the Witwatersrand

Global Labour University

Research report

"Struggling to Get the Position and Struggling to Keep it": How Women Become Trade Union Leaders

Submitted to the faculty of humanities in partial fulfilment of M.A. in Labour and Globalisation

By

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Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Labour Policy and Globalisation at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other University.

Signed_____ _____day of_____2010

Constance Chiedza Tsomondo

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to understand the journey through which women travel in order to become trade union leaders in an environment that is male dominated. Through an analysis of the exceptional women who are trade union leaders, it looked into their motivations to become trade union leaders, the steps they take, the struggles they face, and the mechanism which they employ to successfully overcome the barriers to their rise to top hierarchies of trade unions. This qualitative study identified the limiting factors to women's involvement in trade unions as leaders and simultaneously identified the positive forces that support them the opportunities that exist for trade unions to foster and strengthen the integration of women leaders.

Participants in the study were trade union officials from COSATU affiliates: nine were women with leadership positions at national level and six were gender coordinators from the trade unions (one was a man). The women leaders had experience of trade union activism for a number of years ranging from four to twenty-eight. The study employed an in depth interview method where all the interviews with participants were carried out face to face. There were two separate interview schedules; one for the women leaders and one for gender coordinators.

This study contributed to the body of existing knowledge about women in trade unions. It confirms other studies' findings that in addition to women's personal attributes there are opportunities for trade unions to promote women's leadership but they remain weak in implementing strategies for increasing the participation of women as leaders and are hampered by the persistence of male culture and bureaucracy which disadvantages women.

GLOSSARY

ANC	African National Congress
CEPPWAWU	Chemical, Energy, Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers' Union
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CWU	Communication Workers' Union
DENOSA	Democratic Nurses' Organisation of South Africa
DITSELA	Development Institute for Training, Support and Education for Labour
IGNA	International General Nurses' Union
ILO	International Labour Organisation
NALEDI	National Labour and Economic Development Institute
NEHAWU	National Education and Health Workers Union
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUMSA	National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa
SACCAWU	South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union
SACTWU	Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union
SACP	South African Communist Party
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SAMWU	South African Municipal Workers Union
SASBO	South African Society of Banking Officials
SATAWU	South African Transport and Allied Workers' Union

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Introduction

Although feminist campaigns have exploded some myths about women's weakness and inferiority, they are still not found in positions of leadership in politics, industry, commerce, and in society in general (Bradley, 1989). With a general focus on the trade union movement in South Africa, this study aims to find out the experiences of the few women who are in trade union leadership with the hope of identifying the challenges they face and the positive forces that exist for them which can be drawn upon in order to increase the numbers of women trade union leaders. These 'vanguard women" face personal and institutional obstacles as they struggle to attain and to maintain leadership positions in trade unions. Though trade unions purport to fight against discrimination and inequality in the work place they can be seen to be also propagating it as shown by the low numbers of women in the top echelons of these organizations. Female trade union leaders constitute only 19% of trade union leaders in South Africa (Tshoaedi and Hlela, 2006).

A history of women in trade unions shows that women have been active for a long time in South Africa and their membership has increased. However their participation and increased membership has not been similarly reflected in their representation at the leadership level of the trade unions even in cases where the union members are mostly women. The concept of patriarchy tries to explain the genesis and maintenance of the sexual division of labour which has kept women out of positions of leadership in society and in organizations. It emerges as a system which subordinates women to men in

families and in society. This is also mirrored in organisations, including trade unions which are supposed to be democratic, where women occupy subordinate positions to men and are very few in leadership. Heery and Kelly (1988) and Trebilcock (1991) suggest that women leaders are better than male leaders at stimulating women's activity in trade unions and at prioritising issues of particular concern to women such as sexual harassment, equal opportunity and child care on union agendas. This suggests trade unions would benefit from more women leaders in order to effectively address women's marginalisation and so attract more women into the trade unions and into the leadership positions.

Trade unions need to change their image and culture and serve women more if they are to remain viable, relevant democratic unions. If they cannot effectively include women who are more than half of the labour-force then they cannot claim to be democratic. This study details how women trade union leaders struggle to get their positions and then struggle to keep them and the positive forces that exist for them. It also therefore shows the opportunities that exist for trade unions to nurture, to encourage and to motivate more women to take up leadership roles and to become more democratic and representative of their members. Trebilcock (1991:409) found that union statements of commitment to addressing the discrimination of women are a good starting point for programmes that assist women but observes that the commitment often remains on paper only without adequate implementation. This study similarly argues that trade unions are not fully exploring the available mechanisms to increase women's participation in leadership because their commitment is weak and influenced by the

desire to maintain the existing structures and culture of trade unions and of society which benefit men at the expense of women.

Rationale of the Research

Trade unions are male–dominated organizations which display the influences of a patriarchal society (Bradley, 1989). At the same time trade unions claim to fight for equality and against all forms of discrimination. The persistent lack of women in leadership positions in these organizations poses a threat to their survival in view of the fact that women are more that 50% the workforce (ILO Global Employment Trends, 2010:50). Trade unions must appear to serve women and must be able to attract women if they are to hold the claim that they are progressive democratic organizations. Research has shown that the few women who manage to cross the barriers of trade union bureaucracy to become leaders may be using transformational leadership to cope with the challenges of leadership. This study aims to examine the exceptional women who have managed to overcome barriers and seeks to understand how women trade union leaders are overcoming challenges in a system that marginalises women. It is important to acknowledge a problem in order to make the necessary steps to address it. A study of the life stories of the women leaders who have succeeded and continue to hold positions of influence in trade unions provides a profile of which mechanisms and strategies will increase and sustain the numbers of women in leadership. It also identifies the pitfalls and the opportunities through which trade unions can strengthen the participation of women at all level of their hierarchies. In order to increase the number of women in trade unions, the organizations need to project an image which is attractive to women and to achieve

this they need to have more women in their leadership structures. In other words it is a mutually dependent relationship between women leaders and women members.

Research Questions

The study aimed to investigate the experiences of women trade union leaders in South Africa through the following research questions:

i) What motivates women to become trade union leaders?

ii) How did they become trade union leaders?

iii) What challenges do women trade union leaders face?

iv) How do they cope with challenges of trade union leadership?

This study suggests that women trade union leaders struggle to get into leadership positions because there is inadequate support for their involvement in the form of societal barriers and institutional barriers presented by trade unions themselves. Once they have attained leadership positions they struggle to maintain them as the same barriers continue to be reconstructed. The study also suggests that there are opportunities for trade unions to encourage and support women's involvement and leadership but, whilst many unions have recognised this need, they have remained weak in terms of taking ownership of the problem and implementing viable strategies to deal with it.

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.0 Introduction

Trade unions aim to fight for workers rights and to fight all forms of inequality and discrimination in the workplace. However trade unions themselves are found exercising discrimination as evidenced by the low presence of women in trade unions and trade union leadership. Rees (1992) writes that the 1980s were characterized by the growth of women's participation on the labour force with nearly half the workforce globally being made up of women but this has not been reflected equally by the number of women in trade unions and in trade union leadership. Even where trade union member are mostly women, the leaders are predominantly male (Rees ibid) According to the international Labour Organisation (ILO Global Employment Trends 2010:50) women currently make up more than 50% of the global workforce and more than 60% in Sub-Saharan Africa. This literature review will discuss the issues relating to the absence of women in top echelons of organizations and also of trade unions. Firstly, it will address the patriarchal nature of society and the systems that maintain women in a subordinate inferior position in relation to men. Secondly, it will discuss the gendered nature of organizations and the practices that bar women from leadership positions. It will also discuss the need for democracy in trade unions if they are to remain relevant and useful to both women and men. This study looks at women who have managed to cross the limiting barriers to become a part of the leadership in trade unions which is male-dominated.

1.1.0 Patriarchal Society, Capitalism, and Women's Subordination

Patriarchy is the power to rule by the male head of a family or a society. In some views, such as those of Millet (1977) patriarchy is the primary and most important social division of society and is achieved though a centre of control which is the family unit. Other radical feminist views of patriarchy regard men's control over women's bodies and sexuality through sexual violence as the fundamental way in which patriarchal control is achieved and maintained

The Marxist view of women's subordination is that it is the direct result of capitalism: man's accumulation of surplus capital which he needs for his heirs through the unpaid domestic labour of women and their reproductive role. Unequal distribution of wealth and resources are seen as the source of oppression and sexual oppression is a dimension of class oppression (Beasly 1999:60). Barrett (1988) supports this view and elaborates that the subordination of women to men in society is a by-product of the subordination of labour to capital and class oppression is the central feature in society and determines gender oppression.

Hartmann (1979:101) describes a dual system of patriarchy and capitalism as "a set of social relations between men which have a material base and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women." The system is characterized by male superiority and domination of

social relations and the family unit and male control of the government, religion and society in general. In this account patriarchal domination predates class, race, capitalism or imperialism. The oppression of women is derived from so called natural differences between male and female. Though male domination is physiologically based it is not itself inherited but is an ideological construct which is difficult to change (Hartmann 1979:104). She theorises that capitalism and patriarchy are mutually interdependent, mutually accommodating systems of oppression though patriarchy predates capitalism. Similarly, Walby (1986:51) sees gender inequality as the outcome of the interaction of patriarchy in articulation with a system of capitalist relations and explains that writers like Mitchell (1975) and Hartmann (1979) capture the autonomy of patriarchal relations whilst not ignoring the significance of capitalist relations. Hartmann (1979:104) cites job segregation by sex and the demand for a family wage as an example of patriarchy and capitalism working together to secure the oppression of women. Men sought to keep high wage jobs for themselves and fought for a family wage so that their wives could remain at home and dependent on them. This demonstrates that capitalism in fact does not eradicate patriarchy as might be expected when women work as waged labourers but that through the motivated actions of working class men, patriarchy is constantly reconstituted.

The family, seen as the locus of control of patriarchy, is where dominance by men and obedience by women are learned. The emanating power structure of patriarchy creates a gender-based division of labour where women are confined to certain types of work in the domestic sphere such as caring for children, cooking, and cleaning which are deemed

by society as inferior. Men on the other hand do the skilled work which is deemed superior whilst they are not expected to share in the domestic work (Chafetz 1991:74). Meer (1991:51) describes the African family as traditionally dominated by the patriarchal head with his rights to lobola of his daughters and the right to marry many wives. Women remain subordinates despite the fact that in many families they are the breadwinners.

In other analyses, some writers have elaborated how different forms of oppression and not just patriarchy can be present simultaneously. For example, Collins (2007) explains a theory of intersectionality that socially and culturally constructed categories of discrimination interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, contributing to systematic social inequality. Intersectionality explains that the most visible models of oppression such as those based on race, gender, class, and ethnicity do not act independently of one another but that these forms of oppression interrelate creating a system of oppression that reflects the "intersection" of various forms of discrimination. Crenshaw (1991) follows this theory and focuses on the intersections of race and gender, highlighting the need to include multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed. Cultural patterns of oppression are not only interrelated, but are bound together and influenced by the intersectional systems of society. Therefore a woman's oppression could include the convergence of gender, race, class oppression at the same time.

1.1.1 Sex-Typing of Work

At work patriarchy has produced a sexual division of labour in the workforce. There are stereotypical work-roles that put men in decision-making positions and better paid work. Hartmann (1979:111) writes that sexual division of labour puts women in tasks thought to be appropriate for women's role such as teachers, welfare workers, and in the health profession. Women are assigned work roles which are similar to the domestic chores they undertake in the home which are considered to be of less value (Crompton and Sanderson, 1990:31). Women are not considered as being equally capable to do the work that is the domain of men because their inferior status under patriarchy is reflected in all other spheres of life. In a study of men's attitudes in Durban 1984, Meer (1991) found that the majority of men believed that decision-making is a male prerogative and that men are better at it and more entitled to do so. They also believed that men were more entitled to jobs as they look after the whole family therefore in a recession, women should be the first to be fired. Bradley (1989: 23) describes the extensive sex-typing of jobs as men's or women's work all over the world and the exclusion of "all but a handful of women from posts of power and authority".

When women do participate in the labour market, family responsibilities affect the amount and type of work that women can undertake because they are still expected to perform domestic duties at home. Hakim (1991:101) writes that women are concentrated in the lowest jobs, least skilled and lowest paid work with the poorest employment benefits and prospects. Tshoaedi and Hlela (2006:98) cite Franzway (2001:3) who writes that professional women are expected to perform and be as committed as men and at the same time are normatively expected to give priority to their families. Hakim (1991:115)

writes that women are restricted by their husbands' attitudes and often have to take on part-time work so that they can also attend to domestic duties. This ultimately leads them to lower grade jobs and maintains the husbands' power as the breadwinner.

When women are in full-time employment they have to take on the double-shift of still attending to domestic work as well as the waged work (Berger 1986:216). On the other hand, the assumption that men do not have domestic duties makes them more suited for certain types of work requiring flexible working hours. Changes have taken place in this organization of society but the effects of patriarchy are that women are not viewed to be equal to men or to be equally capable of the same kind of work that men do. Walby (1997:76) notes that women are entering the wage market in greater proportions and are not just at the bottom of the hierarchy but in various positions though they are still often segregated from men. This therefore points to an erosion of some of the patriarchal practices. Milkman (1983:161) acknowledges that Hartmann (1979) explains the persistence of job segregation in a general way, but argues that this does not explain the specific location of women's and men's jobs in the labour market.

Laws have made equality the right of every person and discrimination of any kind is a crime but the organization of social relations still maintain the patterns of inequality. One reason may be the role of the state in maintaining social norms and institutions which reflect and reinforce the collective interests of men. According to Folbre (1994) women cannot compete equally with men if they continue to be saddled with greater domestic responsibilities. She suggests that the state needs to take greater responsibility for child

care and care for the elderly and the sick so that women can be free to compete equally with men. Similarly Franzway et al (1989) criticise the nature of the state itself arguing that it is constituted in a culturally masculine realm with top personnel being men and that it generally advantages men with greater access to power and disadvantages women. Bradley (1989:4) points out that despite increased social awareness and new legal measures against sex discrimination of any form, women are still disadvantaged in most areas of work and many aspects of social life. Therefore even though women are now active on the labour market they are found in certain kinds of work and are very deficient in management positions and in leadership positions. In South Africa's middle and senior management positions only 17.7% are women (Employment Equity Commission Report 2007-2008).

1.2.0 Gender and Inequality in the Workplace and Trade Unions

Helmbold and Scholfield (1989: 504) write that despite strong prejudice against the employment of women, during the great depression, the number of women in the global labour force actually increased dramatically between 1929 and 1940. Post World War II employers were increasingly seeking women workers but trade unions were in opposition to women taking men's jobs and sought a demarcation between men's work and women's work (TUC Annual Report 1945 in Walby 1986:207). Milkman (1983) writes about the concerns of male workers about the large number of women who had entered the labour market the World War II era. There was conflict over the terms on which women should be permitted to replace men, even temporarily, and what would happen

once the war was over. In a comparison of the electrical and auto industries, Milkman (ibid) argues that the factors determining the kind of arguments about women's employment and the sexual division of labour depend on a particular industrial structure and are different for each industry. She also demonstrates that once a sexual division of labour is established in an industry, the ideology and idioms of sexual division become entrenched and are very difficult to remove as managers and workers (including trade unions) adhere to them strictly. This explains the reproduction of sexual division of work even when the historical reasons for it have been successfully challenged. The 1980s were characterized by the growth of women's participation in the labour force and currently women constitute more than 50% of the global workforce (ILO Global Employment Trends 2010). Walby (1997:1) describes the rise in employment of women in the UK as a major transformation of gender relations in employment but notes that this new employment of women is not done under conditions equal to those of men. Rees (1992) similarly discusses inequality in trade unions, saying that the increase of women in the global labour force has not been matched by a corresponding increase of female membership in the trade unions, neither has it been reflected in the number of women in union leadership hierarchies nor in the prioritization of women's issues in trade union activities.

The feminist view of trade union bureaucracy is that male priorities have been awarded greater priority at the expense of women, and also that unions employ strategies that are predicated on the assumption of the existing domestic division of labour (Fosh and Heery, 1990: 13). Trade unions thus marginalize women within the workplace by

continuing to affirm women's subordination in the domestic sphere. Hartmann (1979) and Walby (1986) claim that the labour movement has been a man's movement which propagates patriarchy. Hartmann (1979) and Cockburn (1991) cite the example of trade unions and male members fighting for the exclusion of women and fighting for a family wage as evidence of unions marginalizing women. Women are disadvantaged in paid employment both in terms of rewards and the type of work performed and there is need to improve their position in order to attain democracy. Heery and Fosh (1990:12) lament the women's disadvantaged position has been reinforced by the actions of male workers and male dominated unions with the aim of confirming women's subordination in the domestic sphere. Though even feminists accept that there has been a change in policies towards women in the union movement they still maintain that trade union bureaucracy limits women by the continued male domination of unions with men controlling the key positions of power.

Acker (1990:152) puts forward a theory of gendered organizations and hierarchies. She argues that the worker is explained as an abstract person occupying a job but in reality this abstract worker is actually a man. On the other hand, a woman's body is stigmatized and used as grounds for control and exclusion because of its perceived weakness, pregnancy, breastfeeding and "mythic emotionality". Acker (1994) further explains that there are decisions and procedures that control, segregate exclude and construct hierarchies based on gender. These can be conscious decisions that exclude women or include them in segregated roles. She adds that the construction of images, symbolisms and ideologies, what Connell (1987) terms "hegemonic masculinity", that justify and

legitimate institutions can also marginalize women. An example is that the leader and the successful organization itself are often portrayed as aggressive, goal-oriented, competitive but rarely as supportive, kind and caring. Similarly Orr (1999:29) writes that trade union leaders in South Africa have a largely macho image which is associated with male characteristics. Such constructions and images discourage women from participating in organizations and also actively alienate women from these organizations.

According to Date-Bah (1995), in Africa, women constitute about 33% of trade union membership. In South Africa, data for COSATU shows that in 2008, 37% of the federation's members were female (COSATU Gender Policy 2008:6). This growth is still lower than women's proportion in the labour market which is about 50%. In South Africa the fight for women's emancipation formed a struggle within the struggle against apartheid. Hassim (2006) explains that women activists in South Africa, many who were with the trade union movement, hold that women's struggles needed to be linked with national struggles and hence the task of women activists was to organize for the broader struggle. The issues of women's equality were seen as a secondary issue to the liberation struggle. Despite expectations of the new democracy, working class women have not experienced significant shifts in gender relations. Orr (1999: 29) and Meer (1991:79) describe the workplace as still a place for men; trade unions leaders and managers are still assumed to be and usually are men. The trade unions are perceived as male organizations and hence the problem of taking up issues related to women.

Tshoaedi and Hlela (2006) argue that chauvinistic attitudes and the dominant male supremacy culture which is typical of the trade union movement play an important role in the subordination and discrimination of women in the trade unions in South Africa. They add that the solidarity of COSATU was built on the notion of black liberation which they argue is the cause of the lack of focus on gender discrimination by COSATU. It was more aligned to class and racial solidarity and less focused on gender and this tradition still continues today to the detriment of women's issues. They further conclude that women's activism in trade unions has increased but is not matched by the numbers of women in leadership positions. According to NALEDI (2006:144), COSATU has a number of strong gender policies but insufficient action is taken in terms of implementing these. When attempts are made, real changes are often prevented by the hostility of men and the unchanged patriarchal culture of the trade union movement. Creese (1995:145) notes that failure to challenge masculine assumptions embedded in traditional union approaches results in practices that may actively disadvantage female members. Similarly, NALEDI (2006:145) states that in South Africa, the failure by COSATU to effectively implement gender policy resolutions, particularly in relation to leadership, is due to the fact that the federation is made up of general secretaries and presidents of the affiliates who are mostly men and who have been current and past beneficiaries of the patriarchal system in society. They resist and prevent the empowerment of women in the trade unions.

Arguments exist that increasing the numbers of women leaders will not necessarily change the power relations within unions nor will it affect the representation of women's

issues at collective bargaining forums. Briskin (1999:544) writes that when women as individuals are elected to positions of leadership, there is no guarantee that they will represent women's interests, although undoubtedly in some context improved representation will contribute to constituency building. Phillips (1991:152) explains that representation of women in trade unions should not be misunderstood as representing the needs of all other members because people do not carry a single identity as women or any other category like race or ethnicity. She adds that representation should be seen as mirroring the different groups that society is composed of and this should be automatic if there were no vested interests and no structures sustaining the power of certain groups. The absence of any one category points to a problem of power relations and can be deemed as undemocratic.

1.2.1 Gender Distribution of COSATU Affiliates

Below is a tabulation of the gender distribution in COSATU affiliates in South Africa. COSATU is the largest trade union federation in South Africa representing more than 66% of the workforce (Pillay 2008).

Table 1.0 Women in COSATU

Title	Percentage	Source
Women in the workforce	+50	ILO Global Trends 2010
Women T.U members COSATU	37	COSATU gender policy 2008
Women T.U leaders COSATU	19	Tshoaedi and Hlela 2006

Table 1.1 Gender distribution of the five largest affiliates

Union/Affiliate	Male	Female
NUMSA	60%	39%
SADTU	40%	60%
NEHAWU	39%	61%
SACCAWU	45%	55%
NUM	90%	10%

Source: State of COSATU affiliates 2009 p15:NALEDI

The data above show that unions' gender representation is related to the sector in which the unions operate hence there are few women in the mining and metal sectors (NUM and NUMSA) whilst there are more women members in the education, health, and commercial and catering service industries represented by SADTU, NEHAWU and SACCAWU, However, even in unions that have majority women members, the leaders of trade unions are still mostly male especially in the influential positions (COSATU Gender Policy, 2008).

1.3 Women and Trade Union Leadership

The South Africa Employment Equity Commission report for 2008 indicates that only 17.7% of senior management positions are held by women (Employment Equity Commission report 2007-2008 pp44). Similarly, there is a glaring under-representation of women in trade union leadership positions especially at the higher levels where women are only 19% (ILO). Tshoaedi and Hlela (2006:97) outline that the history of

women in the labour movement in South Africa began in the 1920s and 1930s in the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union and the Women Workers' General Union and in the textile industry. Berger (1992) adds that in the 1970s when black trade unions re–emerged, women such as Maggie Magubane (organiser of the Sweet Food and Allied Workers' Union), Emma Mashinini (founder of Commercial Catering and Allied workers' Union of South Africa), Lydia Kompe (Metal and Allied Workers' Unions), and others emerged as activists**.**

In South Africa Buhlungu (2006:11) writes that the gender distribution of COSATU's trade unions showed women memberships of 33% in 1994; 30% in 1998; and 34% in 2004. Data for 2008 show female membership of 37% (COSATU Gender Policy 2008:6). COSATU is the largest trade union federation in South Africa representing more than 66% of the workforce (Pillay 2008). At its launch in 1985 COSATU undertook to fight all forms of discrimination including race and gender at the workplace, society and the federation itself. However by 2004 women's representation in leadership (19%) was still very low (Tshoaedi and Hlela 2006:101). Orr (1999:29) adds that due to the sexual division of labour and power relations in trade unions in South Africa women are found as administrators, a position which is not influential and not involved in policy-making, whereas men are the organizers and office–bearers. This is confirmed by COSATU Gender Policy 2008 which tabulates the influential positions and their occupants and the administrative positions as below:

Table 1.2 male and female occupation of influential positions

Position	Male	Female
General Secretaries	100%	0
Branch/ Regional Secretaries	89%	11%
Education officers	90%	10%
Organisers	78%	22%
Research/Legal/Media officers	75%	25%
Administrators	6%	94%

Source COSATU Gender Policy 2008

The COSATU gender policy includes guidelines for increasing women trade union leaders as follows: additional ex-officio positions on constitutional structures; portfolio positions; reserved seats for women; quota system including fixed and proportional representation; representation of sector coordinators on constitutional structures. Orr et al (1997) comment that the quota system has been hotly debated and contested and some unions argue that women should only be appointed in terms of merit and the system may lead to women being viewed as tokens. They also observed the lack of political content and understanding of the nature of gender relations and patriarchal oppression in the debates during a COSATU congress. NALEDI (2006:146) observes that in general few of the unions in COSATU have made significant advances in attaining gender equality. Other affiliates believe the system is beneficial and apply it within a broader strategy of developing women's leadership. NALEDI (2006) reports that NEHAWU is committed to a 50% quota in leadership and boasts the first woman president in

COSATU affiliates; NUMSA does not have a quota for leaders but has a 20% quota for delegations to national meetings; SACTWU and SACCAWU do not have a quota policy.

1.4 The Importance of Women as Trade Union leaders

There are several reasons why women trade union leaders are important to the trade union movement and to the feminist movement. Firstly, women workers face not only the same problems as male workers, but also have very specific problems such as sexual harassment, lack of maternity protection and lower wages (Helmbold and Schofield, 1989: 504). Trade unions need to actively step up the fight for the equality of women at work. This however, cannot be done effectively without direct active participation of the women workers at all the levels of the labour movement. Research by Heery and Kelly (1988) also supported by Trebilcock (1991:425) suggests that female representation in trade unions makes a difference to prioritizing of women's issues such as equal pay, childcare, maternity leave, sexual harassment and equal employment opportunity. Chaison and Andiappan (1989) also suggest that if women are more active trade unions will become more sensitive and these issues might be given more priority by trade unions which in turn will attract more women to the unions. Trade unions face the risk of losing their female members if they do not treat women's issues with importance. Prieto and Quinteros (2004: 153) found in their studies in Central America that women's organizations are now fighting for women's rights at work. This is an area which the trade unions feel is their territory. Therefore, Trebilcock (1991:407) writes that making unions more responsive to women's issues

as workers is an important part of union survival in many countries. Briskin (2006) also stresses that it is important for women to become trade union leaders in order to maintain women's union membership.

Cockburn (1991) suggests that unions must be seen to serve women in order for more women to join and for the current members to remain members because they must see the benefits of the union to them. This can be done by projecting a woman-friendly image through the inclusion of women in decision making positions of trade unions. This is because the women workers are finding trade unions inadequate and ineffective. Needleman (1988) cited in Melchner et al (1992:268) suggest that women's participation at all levels of union activity and decision-making has the potential to strengthen the movement toward more internal union democracy. Similarly Hyman (1971) cited in Heery and Fosh (1990:15) argues that unions are democratic institutions or can become democratic through the reform of their structures. If women are not visible in the leadership of trade unions they cannot claim to be democratic. When the composition of decision-making bodies in institutions that represent society is starkly at odds with that of the society this becomes clear evidence that certain voices are being silenced. Chaison and Andiappan (1989:160) see the lack of women in trade union leadership as an embarrassment to unions that want to claim to be progressive and democratic and this limits their ability to attract and represent women workers.

Another reason for the involvement of women in trade unions even though they have not done enough for women, as advanced by Phillips (1993), is that feminism intends

to build autonomy of women which can only be done if women become more independent and this can be achieved by women's activity themselves. Therefore women must participate and must be actively involved in making decisions for themselves. On a similar note, Briskin (2000) argues that women need to be part of trade unions because unions can provide a vehicle for struggling around fundamental issues affecting their home and work lives and union activity encourages personal empowerment, political awareness and collective solidarity.

1.5 Challenges of the Women Who Lead Trade Unions

Women encounter obstacles as they climb the ladder of organization leadership. Lundy (1998) cites Dipoye (1987) who discusses women's problems and progress in management and suggests that there are four levels that explain women's under-representation and their slow progress up organisational ladders; firstly, the individual level, which suggests that the problem stems from women's deficiencies in knowledge, skill, and personality, as well as male and female attitude barriers. Secondly, the interpersonal level, which suggests that men and women adopt social roles inconsistent with the integration of women into a traditionally male domain. third, the group level; suggesting that men exclude women from informal networks which are important for acquiring power and influence within the organization. Finally, Dipoye suggests that the culture and environment in an organization can prevent women's upward progression.

These can also be applied to women in trade union leadership and other researchers have similar findings.

Chaison and Andiappan (1989:155), in a Canadian study of the relative barriers to women's trade union leadership, found that time and convenience of union meetings, lack of knowledge, skills and experience, and discouragement and discrimination were the major areas of women's obstacles. They found that many women had two jobs; at work and at home as the primary carers of the home and children. This leaves them with no extra time to devote to union work which typically takes place after hours. The cost of child minders was found to be too high and therefore many women could not take part in union activities. Similarly, Appolis (1998) comments that the disproportionate burden of family responsibility is also a challenge to women trade union leaders who have to carry out domestic duties as well as the demands of union work in South Africa. Women already have to do the double shift of their domestic duties and their jobs before they can add on union work which is normally after hours and during weekends.

Chaison and Andiappan (1989:156) explain that women lack the knowledge, skills and experience required for trade union leaders because of the fact that they miss out on involvement at the shop floor level where experience is gained. The reason why women miss out is that they often take time away from work for child care and child bearing during which male counterparts gain requisite experience. Chaison and Andiappan also point out that women underestimate their own abilities and potential because they are generally not socialised to be assertive and politically efficacious. In

terms of discrimination and discouragement, Chaison and Andiappan (ibid) suggest that women may be discouraged by male colleagues who may actively prevent them from taking leadership positions.

Another barrier that prevents women's leadership in trade unions is the stereotyped ideas about women's "proper" roles that can lead to prejudice and discrimination (Heery and Kelly 1989, Ledwith et al 1990). In South Africa, (NALEDI 2006:109) highlights this position adding that women trade union leaders were seen as going against traditional norms. Consequently few leaders in the study were married as some of the women's relationships had broken down. In their study, NALEDI (2006:101) and Orr (1999) write that women leaders described that they experience ridicule, sexual harassment and lack of support from male union leaders. Women also experience the glass-ceiling effect where they cannot rise beyond a certain level due to role incongruity unless they find specific strategies to counteract this incongruity. Role incongruity is elaborated by Eagly (2003:80) and Kram and Hampton (2004:219) as being due to less favourable evaluation of the ability of women to lead because leadership is more stereotypically male and less favourable evaluation of their actual leadership behaviour because the behaviour is not desirable in women.

Women are faced with the problem of not being included equally as men in organizations and are less likely to be chosen as leaders or to rise to a better position (Acker 1990:143, Pateman 1980). There are systemic factors in the organizations themselves such that the norms that define competence and excellence privilege the traits that are socially and culturally ascribed to men while devaluing those ascribed to

women (Fletcher and Ely 2004:13). The leader is expected to be macho, competitive and goal-driven as opposed to being kind and caring, which are traits attributed to women. NALEDI (2006) write about South African trade unions projecting a male macho image which excludes women leadership in its outlook.

Kram and Hampton in Ely et al (2004:211) write that the challenges of women as leaders are the combined effect of the heightened visibility they experience once they become leaders and the perceived and actual vulnerability they accept when they lead. Such conditions also exist for men as they lead but are more exaggerated for women. Based on Kanter's (1977:22) work, the mere fact of having the minority status in a group as women in leadership brings about a set of experiences including heightened visibility, intense scrutiny of performance and pressure to assimilate into the majority culture. This means that a woman's behaviour becomes more visible once she becomes a leader. The challenges that come with this scrutiny can either undermine her subsequent success or allow her to climb higher in the hierarchy of the organization. . In South Africa women trade union leaders reported similar scrutiny and judgment and thus having to do a lot more work in order to be appreciated (NALEDI, 2006:101).

McDowell and Court (1994:733-745) draw on Judith Butler's work on the notion of gender identity as a regulatory fiction (Butler 1993:236). They found that in the banking sector in London, jobs made use of workers' personalities and emotions as well as their physical and intellectual capacities. Therefore the stereotypical image of the successful banker conformed to the patriarchal model of masculinity. This image was maintained through language and sexist metaphors. Women on the other hand had

to adopt a workplace performance that constructs them as “honorary men” and were only suitable as bankers when they were much older and less likely to be objects of sexual desire. McDowell and Court (ibid) also confirmed with women bankers who admitted to performing like men in order to fit in. Whether the women performed like men or like women, male colleagues reported feeling uneasy about the women bankers. The trade union movement, similarly, is the arena of men and women have the minority status thus the few women who are in the trade union movement are sometimes seen as being the atypical female who conforms to the masculine job model (Cockburn 1995). Kirton (1999:219) also highlights the difficulties of women’s social integration in male-dominated unions in that women may feel disempowered by the masculine culture of unions which appears in the tendency of officials to work long hours with meetings ending late in the night; neglect of family life as many men leave the burden of child care to their wives and spend very little time at home; sexual harassment of female colleagues shown by the inappropriate sexual advances male colleagues make and the assumption that women are interested in them; sexist language; and the scheduling and location of meetings in places such as bars which may be deemed inappropriate by some women.

1.6 Women Who Lead Trade Unions

In spite of the barriers that women face in becoming trade union leaders, there are some who have achieved this. According to Kirton and Healy (1999) these “vanguard” women play an important role in pioneering changes and in presenting a role model for

other women. Eagly (2003:88) theorises that three factors have led to women becoming leaders in organizations: women have changed their personal attributes in a masculine direction; leader roles have changed in a direction that incorporates a greater measure of feminine qualities; women leaders have found ways to lead that overcome the role-incongruity between leader roles and the female gender role. Cockburn (1995) writes that senior female officials are often atypical: no children, grown-up children, over the age of forty, supervisory, or holding professional full-time jobs (i.e. conforming to the typical male model of a trade union leader). It can be argued that these women have become more like men. Kirton and Healy (1999: 36), in a study of women trade union leaders in the UK, also found that women trade union leaders were feminists or reflected feminist values in their beliefs.

Kirton and Healy (1999:36) also suggest that women's trade union activism may be influenced by significant gendered events or significant collective events. Role models also appeared to be very influential with the women typically coming from family backgrounds with a leftist political orientation. Fullargar et al (1994) argue that early union socialization has an effect on the long term commitment and attitudes of shop stewards, suggesting that women in trade union leadership may have benefited from positive socialization. Kirton (1999) further suggests that women union leaders have a strong desire to make the union work fork for women indicating a gendered commitment.

In a study of COSATU affiliates, NALEDI (2006:136-140) found that women trade union leaders had to employ certain strategies to cope with their positions. Strategies

included some leaders leaving abusive and un-supporting partners who did not want them to be involved in trade unionism. On dealing with male colleagues who alienate them some women chose to be outright and confrontational in asserting that they were not giving in to intimidation. Realizing that they had a lot to learn about trade unionism and about leadership, some women embarked on a proactive process of self-education and development whilst maintaining a resilience to soldier on against the odds.

A tendency to discover ways to lead that overcome role incongruity is known as transformational leadership (Kirton and Healy 1999). Briskin (2006:368) suggests that organizational fundamentals (i.e. democracy) of unions create space for women and therefore for transformational women's leadership. Unlike organizations, unions have explicitly democratic structures thus democratic styles of leadership may be more readily supported in unions and may be central to union survival and renewal. Transformational leadership can be an integral part of more democratic trade unions. Briskin (2006:370) explains that studies have shown that gender is an essential variable in the ability of executives to resort effectively to a variety of strategies available. This kind of ability can be found in the transformational leadership skills of women trade union leaders who manage to overcome a host of barriers to eventually become leaders. Briskin (ibid) adds that studies have shown that women encourage participation, share power and information, enhance other people's self-worth, and get others excited about their work.

This study investigates the motivations of women who lead trade unions in South Africa and the strategies they employ to overcome the challenges of leading

organizations which seem to be prejudiced against women and which are predominantly male-led. These transformational styles of leadership are essential to union renewal because they lead to greater democracy and greater involvement of women in the trade union movement. It is important for trade unions to reflect a different image and to tap into the resources of these transformational women leaders because as Briskin (2006:374) and Kirton and Healy (1999) write, women's transformational leadership is both adaptive in coping with discrimination and pro-active as part of envisioning a more democratic and inclusive union.

This study argues that women who become trade union leaders posses some personal characteristics which enable them to become leaders but are also supported by positive forces within the unions and within the realm of influence of the unions such as positive socialisation experiences. They follow a path of progression from shop floor level activism to the top hierarchies over a number of years during which opportunities exist for trade unions to encourage, nurture and sustain their involvement or to discourage and prevent it. Those who survive experience some positive support from the union and also adopt innovative mechanisms to cope with a host of personal and institutional challenges. This study finds that opportunities and mechanisms exist for trade unions to enhance the development of women's capacity to become leaders and argues that trade unions lack the commitment to practice these mechanisms because they have failed to take ownership of women's marginalisation as a trade union issue. This is because of their own reluctance to transform or desire to maintain social systems which benefit men at the expense of women.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

2.0 Introduction

The study aimed to investigate the experiences of women trade union leaders in South Africa through the following research questions:

v) What motivates women to become trade union leaders?

vi) How did they become trade union leaders?

vii) How do they cope with challenges of trade union leadership?

viii) What enrichment do they add to their trade unions?

This chapter explains the methodology employed for the study and the rationale for it.

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a qualitative research method in the form of in-depth interviews. Neuman (1997) claims that the advantage of interviews is they allow the researcher to make interpretations which reflect the interviewees' accounts since they aim to gain insightful information and conclusions are based on the responses of the participants. The researcher gains insight rather than statistical significance. According to Weiss (1994:310), qualitative interviews can elicit the fullest possible report of how something happened. Through interviews we can learn how events and experiences have affected people's thoughts and feelings. The study aims to understand the personal experiences of women trade union leaders in depth and from their own perspectives with particular

attention to how they reached their positions. Thus the interview method was chosen as an appropriate method.

Patton (1990:10) notes that data from interviews consists of quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge. He further asserts that qualitative methods permit the researcher to study issues of interest in depth and detail. Jones (1985) also explains that the in-depth interview is a method used to understand why persons act as they do and the meaning and significance they give to their actions. The rich quality of data from the in-depth interview was necessary for the study undertaken. In addition, the interview method allowed the researcher to have personal contact with the people who were studied allowing greater insight and understanding. It was valuable to meet the participants in person as this gave a proper perspective of their views and feelings in their own words. Patton (1990:47) notes the value of personal contact that make it possible to describe and understand the externally observable behaviours and the internal states i.e. worldviews, opinions, values attitudes and symbolic constructs. This method was appropriate for this study because the study aimed to find out what motivated women trade union leaders and the challenges they faced. The questions entailed a discovery of personal strategies, opinions and views of individuals.

2.2 Research Instrument

The research instruments (Appendix A and Appendix B) were interview schedules used to carry out interviews with women trade union leaders and with gender coordinators.

The interview schedule for the trade union leaders (Appendix A) was a standardized semi-structured interview schedule of mainly open-ended questions which worked as a guide for the conversations. The semi-structured interviews allowed the women to talk about their experiences using their own words whilst allowing the researcher to follow similar lines of questioning with each participant. This avoided the problem of the researcher collecting data of different emphases from different participants. The researcher prompted and sought clarification where a particular question had not been clearly communicated. The semi-structured interviews also allowed enough flexibility for the researcher to ask new questions as a result of how the participant had responded during the interview but the researcher maintained the general framework of the themes which were pursued.

Standardized questions were carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each the same questions in the same words. They were used because it is important to minimize the variation of questions from respondent to respondent in order to minimize the possibility of bias. They also eliminate the problem of having more comprehensive data from certain interviewees and less from others. Implications for the analysis of the data collected were also that it was easier to group and code similar responses and to identify recurring themes. Patton (1990:285) hails the advantages of standardized questions because of the following reasons: the availability of the exact instrument used for inspection or evaluation by peers and decision-makers; the focusing of an interview so that time is well-managed; and the collection of the same information from all interviewees.

Standardised questions can limit the interviewee from pursuing subjects of interest. To counteract this limitation, the instrument left the end of the interview open to the interviewee to discuss any other issues they felt were important to the discussion.

Open-ended questions were chosen for the greater part of the interview schedule (Section B) relating to the broader life history of the participants, their trade union involvement, their motivating factors, how they got to their positions, the challenges they face and their strategies for overcoming these challenges. This is because the study aims to collect data on the personal views, experiences and strategies of the interviewees and intends to understand the issues as they are perceived by the interviewees. Open-ended questions enabled the researcher to capture the views of the respondents without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories (Patton, 1990:24).

The interview schedule for gender coordinators (Appendix B) consists mainly of questions pertaining to the unions' membership, female membership, female leadership and the gender policies and activities that it engages in. The interviews with gender coordinators helped to build a picture of unions' culture and the attitudes and beliefs held which may influence the activities and policies of unions. These interviews also served as a method of cross-checking information from the interviews with the women trade union leaders.

2.3 Sampling

According to Patton (1990:169) qualitative research typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples. The study involves a total of 15 interviews with participants from COSATU affiliates: 9 women trade union officials with high ranking positions of power and influence in their trade unions and 6 gender coordinators (one who was male). COSATU is the largest trade union federation in South Africa and has a comprehensive gender policy document which acknowledges and tries to address the problems of women at the workplace and in leadership of its affiliates.

The study employs purposeful sampling which is a method of selecting specific cases relevant to the study. The power of purposeful sampling lies in the selection of information-rich cases for in-depth study (Patton 1990:171). This is appropriate for the study because its focus is on the personal experiences of particular people (women trade union leaders with particular positions of power and influence) who are not a very large population and therefore had to be specifically identified. The women trade union leaders held positions of political influence and were chairpersons, deputy presidents, general secretary, deputy general secretary, and national office bearers. Women trade union leaders were identified through COSATU. Purposeful sampling was useful as it allowed the researcher to immediately have a list of possible candidates for the study. The gender coordinator provided a list of COSATU affiliates which had women in leadership positions. Gender coordinators were also identified in the same way through the COSATU gender coordinator. It was important to get independent information from

gender coordinators about union attitudes and values and about the problems of integrating more women into the leadership structures of trade unions.

Though Buhlungu (1996:30) advises that trade unions are suspicious of researchers other than their own, the researcher in this case encountered very little hostility because the COSATU gender coordinator formally introduced the researcher to the participants who accepted her as a fellow trade unionist. The only problem encountered was that the officials were very busy and sometimes it took several postponements before the interviews were finally held. The identified interviewees were emailed and telephoned to seek their participation and to set up the appointments. The final participants in this study were those who were most accessible and flexible at the time and they were from SACCAWU, CWU, DENOSA, SATAWU, CEPPWAWU, NUM, NUMSA and SAMWU.

2.4 Validity

The validity and reliability of qualitative data depend largely on the methodological skill, sensitivity and integrity of the researcher Patton (1990:11). The questions in the interview were carefully selected so that they were appropriate to answer the four research questions. Different questions were relied upon to answer a single particular research question so that they could serve as a confirmation or triangulation method. The researcher was a woman and the majority of the interviewees were also women. This gave a certain degree of comfort and ease of establishing a rapport whilst conducting the

interviews as the participants felt that she understood what they were talking about. Finch (1984) supports the notion that the identity of the researcher and the researched as women can give a degree of comfort. However, this was at the same time a problem as in some instances the participants would assume that she had had the same experiences and would say "you know what I mean…" but the researcher had to probe them to explain what exactly they meant in their own words. The researcher was also a trade unionist as were the interviewees and this was an advantage in terms of understanding the jargon that was used in the interviews.

The researcher attempted to maintain objectivity as the purpose of the study was purely to gain insight into the experiences of the women interviewed and not to prove or falsify any preconceived hypothesis, but the topic already presupposed that women trade union leaders had challenges and that gender equality was of importance. The open-ended nature of questions helped to confine the subjective bias of researcher to the question chosen and not the choice of answers given as there were no choice answers. The researcher was also a woman trade union leader as were the participants and this may have influenced the choice of questions in the interview schedule as she may have targeted themes that she was already aware of and interested in. The researcher was able to prompt and probe for more information. Because the interview was structured, there were no spontaneous questions and therefore the study is repeatable by any other researcher and likely to produce similar findings.

The qualitative method chosen presents limitations in terms of the generalisability of the findings to a wider population because of the small sample size.

2.5 Data Collection

The interviews were conducted by the researcher in person between August and October 2010. All interviews were done in English as this is the only South African language that the researcher understands and is fluent in. All interviewees were comfortable with this language. Audio recordings were done with the consent of the interviewees. Interviews were all one-on-one, in private, at a venue chosen by the interviewee which was usually their place of work. The researcher maintained a journal of notes and observations alongside the audio recordings. In 4 cases where either the interviewees did not consent to audio recording or the recorder failed, the researcher made detailed notes of the interviews. Interviews lasted approximately 1 hour 10 minutes for the women leaders and 45 minutes for the gender coordinators.

2.6 Data Analysis

The raw data collected was transcribed and then coded following recurrent themes and also in line with the four research questions. Detailed transcripts provided a way of managing the data and maintaining the detail that would have been missed by the journal notes. The researcher listened to the interviews and assimilated the information before categorizing recurrent themes. According to Jones (1985), the analysis of qualitative data

is a process of making sense and structure in the data. The researcher made meaning by categorizing the data into themes that answered particular questions. The researcher employed the use of electronic qualitative data analysis software, *Atlas.ti5*, to code the transcribed data. The codes were developed both before and during the process of analysis as some categories emerged as the data was analysed. The researcher then analysed the coded data by comparing and contrasting the responses from different participants. The data was then presented as a narrative of the findings supported by the actual direct quotations from interviews and categorized to provide answers to each of the research questions. Similarities and differences of views and opinions were reported and analysed for all the respondents. Information from interviews with gender coordinators was compared with what the women leaders said and used to support or question particular ideas. Similarities and differences with other theorists and researchers' findings were discussed.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

The participants in the study took part on a voluntary basis. They were made aware of their right to refuse to take part and to refuse to answer any question they did not wish to. According to Burton (2000), in any research participation should be voluntary and the participants must be aware of their right not to take part in the entire project or any part of it. The participants in this study were made fully aware of the purpose of this study; that it was academic and no part of it would be used for any other purpose; where any direct quotations would be made the identity of the interviewee would be protected. Interviews

were tape recorded with prior consent of each participant. Those who were unwilling were not tape recorded. Only one participant declined to be tape-recorded. All participants signed their consent to be interviewed after reading through the purpose of the study and their rights to object to particular questions and to abandon the interview if they so wished. They were assured that their identity would be protected and that the report would use pseudonyms. Audio recordings were deleted at the end of the study.

2.8 Limitations

The researcher was constrained by time as there was a deadline for the completion of all the field work. The geographical location of participants meant that the researcher had to wait for opportunities when the participants were in Johannesburg as there were financial constraints to her travelling to different provinces where the participants were based. Some of the participants also travelled a lot both locally and abroad making it difficult to set up meetings with them. The researcher had set out to hold twenty interviews but achieved fifteen. Other interviews could still have been conducted had it not been for the time limitations.

The study looks at officials from affiliates of one federation and the practices and cultures may be different for the other union federations in the country. Since the sample size was also small, the results may not be generalized to all women trade union leaders as some women may have different experiences.

Another limitation is that the study focuses on women leaders only and not on any male leaders so it does not provide a comparison with the experiences of male trade union leaders. However, the findings of this study are internally valid and insightful and can be compared with other similar studies focusing on women leaders from different federations and studies on male leaders should these be conducted in the future.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT MOTIVATES WOMEN TO BECOME TRADE UNION LEADERS?

3.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the motivations of women for trade union activism and leadership. It explores the events and situations that shaped their lives and their belief systems and the people who encouraged them to become trade unionists. The motivations were both internal to the person and the family context and external, relating to a particular environment and the people that women came across and interacted with.

3.1 Shaping of a Personality

For many of the women interviewed early life experiences had an impact on their eventual involvement with the trade union movement. Their ideas of activism and the need for justice were greatly influenced from within their homes and communities. Critical lessons that they learned at a very young age shaped their personalities and prepared them for a future life of activism and leadership.

3.1.1 The Family

There were nine women leaders in this study. Four women were over the age of fifty years, three were in their forties, and two were in the thirties. In terms of socio-economic status, four women leaders described themselves as having grown up poor, another four said they were not poor and one said she was relatively privileged but not rich. They were from families in both urban and rural areas. The women interviewed all recalled some family influences and lessons which led to their eventual involvement in the trade union movement. The influence came directly from the parents in instances where parents were involved in politics or some other form of society activism. The influence also came from the day to day lessons taught at home such as what is wrong, what is right and what it is that one should strive for. All the women leaders recalled leftist political involvement by themselves or by their family members from a very young age. One woman said having an activist mother exposed her to opposition of apartheid and to developing a sense of justice.

> *"My mother was also a member of the black sash which was a women's protest organization, so since my mom was involved in that, I have very early opposition sort of political memories. My parents were not exactly in the congress as such. Nevertheless, they were actively opposed to apartheid. So I guess that had quite an influence on me and I suppose I grew up with a strong sense of justice."- Sipho*

Kirton and Healy (1999:36) discuss similar findings of political influence on activists saying that it conforms to Watson's (1988) model of activism being influenced by

significant others and by significant events. They found that women trade unionists typically came from family backgrounds with a leftist political orientation and the influence of significant others was so strong that they became active trade unionists in the absence of a significant event, it being the 'natural thing to do'

In other cases it was the family situation of poverty that shaped personality. Poverty led to one feeling the need to fight for a better life. This appears to have led to their developing a strong sense of purpose and direction in order to attain a better standard of life.

> *"The hardship I faced was that I am the first born and our family was poor so I had to help in taking care of six younger siblings and that taught me to be very responsible."-Thobekile*

> *"Life wasn't easy because of the status of our parents so I grew up knowing what it is that I want in life as a person because I saw how my parents struggled to raise the five of us. I knew I had to work hard for me to live differently than my parents."-Thulani*

Referring to her own socialisation, one woman explained that the values she was taught in the home environment led her to become a person who wants to question things around her and not to conform blindly to social values and norms.

> *"My father was liberal and encouraged me to have my own perspectives so my home environment made me objective. My father taught me to be independent and not to conform blindly to norms, even of our Pedi Culture."-Mpho*

The way a woman grew up and the lessons learnt at home and in the community together with the injustices that she was subjected to and witnessed were strong forces in shaping the personality of who she would become and the involvement in a movement for workers rights in the future. Early life experiences of poverty and social injustice bred a spirit of determination for some women. For others, there was the influence of their own parents' activism and ideology that shaped their belief system and sense of equality and human rights.

3.1.2 Education

All the women interviewed expressed that the importance of education was emphasised to them at a young age. Even under conditions of poverty and inequality they strived to get a good formal education level up to Matric. For some this meant walking long distances to school every day. Eventually, all of them had professional qualifications. Six of the nine had university degrees, two were in the process of studying for one and three had masters' degrees. Education may have been influential in their eventual involvement in trade union leadership. One woman narrates:

"As a child I had to travel long distances to school. In secondary school I went to a boarding school until I did Matric."- Mpho

For another this meant going to boarding school at a young age;

"Early age I stayed with my parents but I went to boarding school at an early age when I was in Standard 5. There were no high schools in my area."- Nosipho

Education was a value entrenched into the lives of the women by their parents:

"My mother was a single parent and a teacher. She encouraged us to be educated. I got pregnant when I was 16 years old but I later finished Matric."-Rose

The fact that the women in this study had fairly high levels of education suggests that education is a supporting factor in women becoming trade union leaders. Trebilcock (1991) comments on the high illiteracy rates in some developing countries acting as a barrier to union activism for women as leaders are likely to be chosen from higher level job categories which are occupied by better educated people. In this case the converse held true and confirms Trebilcock (1991) as the higher education level served as enabler for women activists. Rose sums up this notion:

"I had to become a shop steward because the other workers were illiterate and I thought they would be weaker in the boardroom, and the managers were really appalling"-Rose

3.1.3 The Apartheid Society, Early Consciousness and Activism

The Apartheid system of government and racial inequality in South Africa led to the involvement of communities and families in political activities in a quest freedom and for equality. Even for the white families, the effects led some to fight against the white rule. The women interviewed in this study were in one way or the other involved in political activities and most very politically conscious at a young age. This consciousness and activism formed the basis for the trade union involvement later on.

> *"The years that I went to university were 1975, 1976, 1977 of which 1976 was the student uprising, 1977 was the banning of the seventeen organizations and the murder of Steve Biko[1]. So from sort of just being a fairly conscious young person, I became radicalized as a student and I got involved in student politics, I stood up for the student representative committee in my second year and I was the vice president of the committee."- Sipho*
>
> *"I was staying with my grandparents. I remember when I was about 9 years old, I saw my grandfather being assaulted by the white farmer and I knew that it was wrong"-Rose*

The apartheid system also meant that education was separate for blacks and whites and thus it brought together black students and they were influenced into political activism as a way of resisting the inferior education they were receiving. One woman recalled:

[1] Steve Biko was an anti-apartheid activist in the 1960s and 70s; he founded the Black Consciousness Movement; and SASBO which organized the protests leading up to the SOWETO uprising in 1976. He died in police custody.

"The medical school in Durban happened to be the only medical school for blacks. At that time blacks were Africans, Indians and Coloureds; and blacks were very active in politics. You might have heard of our hero, Steve Biko, who became a leader there. So as student nurses we were all young and that's why I got very interested in politics as a young woman and I think that had an influence on what I am doing today."- Miriam

For the white people, it was witnessing of inequality and segregation and the poverty around that influenced the development of some individuals who would eventually be part of the movement to change the system:

"Well as a youngster I was fairly middle class white and privileged...we were not that wealthy but it was enough of relative privilege and I was very conscious of that. I also guess growing up in Pietermaritzburg which was so small back then, there was one bus service that was segregated with whites at the front and blacks at the back and there were also tremendous amounts of poverty around the city, so although I was a white middle class person I was exposed to the poverty around."- Anonymous

Sometimes the involvement in society and politics was not just a matter of choice but that there seemed to be no other option as expressed by one woman:

"I am from Kathlehong in the East Rand. The community was characterised by a lot of violence. During the 80s and 90s there was violence and I was involved in politics because of the area and I had to be involved in the community."- Thulani

Another woman spoke about her experience of police brutality in the community whilst protesting apartheid segregation and injustice:

> *"I was politicised at a very young age when the ANC was still banned. But I was part of a youth organisation that organised through choirs. I experienced being beaten by the police when I was just 14 years old for political activities….At one point when the police came and beat everyone in the village, the village then became very militant. Some people were even killed. By the time I finished high school my parents were very political and they were being harassed. They became political in order to protect me…Through the ANC structure I became the office Administrator for NEHAWU in 1990… The death of Vuyani[2] at NEHAWU affected me but it also caused me anger and motivation"-Daphne female leader*

This confirms the literature that the notion of black solidarity and black liberation was the building block of COSATU. Trade unionism could not be separated from the anti-apartheid movement and the politics of the day (Tshoaedi and Hlela 2006; Baskin 1994). Additionally, women's issues were subsumed by the racial issues and the women in this study were propelled into trade unionism by racial issues rather than by gendered events (NALEDI 2006). People turned to the union movement to fight the apartheid system. In the case of the women in this study, the political environment and apartheid led to their interest in the trade union movement. Though Kirton and Healey (1999:36) theorise that significant work events (either gendered or collective) lead women to become trade union

[2]Vuyani Maxaba was an organizer for NEHAWU. He was killed by the South African Police in October 1991

activists, in this instance, there was a significant national political situation prevailing: the racial discrimination and oppression during the apartheid era in South Africa.

The women interviewed in this study were activists from an early age some beginning with involvement in student movements, others were involved in social campaigns and organisations and others from youth organisations of political parties. Their early activism may have prepared for eventual participation and leadership of trade unions. One woman began with opposing race based evictions of people from flats:

> *"So Barbara got me involved in something like a door to door campaign to oppose the evictions that were taking place and she raised for me the possibility of working on unemployed workers union and this was in 1981 and I was almost doing full time activists jobs."-Sipho female leader*

Four of the women were involved in student politics beginning with COSAS and also with university student representative councils:

> *"I was a COSAS member at school"-Rose female leader*

> *"When I was at university I became very active in politics as a student to an extent that I ended up serving in the SRC as an organizing secretary which was again something unique because the majority of nurses there were sent by employers to go and study but as for me I came individually. So they could not act in politics and with me nothing could hold me back."-Miriam female leader*

Most of the women joined a trade union soon after they got a job, while others worked for a union as the first job. Becoming an activist happened by chance for some of these women and was a result mainly of significant work experiences as discussed earlier.

3.2 Internal Factors to Motivation

The study found that in becoming trade union leaders, women had some internal motivation. These were personal ideas and feelings that the individuals had that led them to want to be visible and active in the movement.

3.2.1 Sense of Responsibility

The women leaders interviewed reported feelings of responsibility for and towards the community and fellow workers and that these strong feelings drove them to trade unionism and leadership. The responsibility they felt was that if they did not do the work then no one else would.

> *"If Mandela is talking about transformation of the whole country, I am only involved in the transformation of nursing, who am I? Mandela is way older than me somebody has to do this why not me and when I looked at him it seemed as if he was saying you can."- Miriam female leader*

A feeling for the sad lives of people under oppression led one woman to politics and unionism:

"So through more exposure to that I just got more interested in the trade unions and although I had qualified as a social worker, I was really quite cynical about social work at that stage with the country burning it seemed inappropriate to try and counsel people out of their social situations. The problems were not psychologically determined, they were politically determined, so it seemed like a waste of time to do social work."-Sipho female leader

For others it was the responsibility towards helping workers as expressed:

"It is part of my personality. I like to help people and I like to conscientise people. Nurses forget that they are workers as well as professionals and so the need to address bread and butter issues."-Mpho female leader

This confirms the work of Nicholson (1976) discussed by Flood and Turner (1996:105) that one of the internal forces of motivation to activism is when a person feels obliged to take on the job because of the pursuit of a personal grievance or a conviction of their own suitability to carry out the work. Women leaders in this study felt that they had a social and political responsibility to fight against injustice

.

3.2.2 The Need for Involvement

For some women the choice to become a trade unionist was determined by love and passion for people or for a cause. Some had passionate feelings for the work and felt a need to be active in order to satisfy their personal desires. For example one woman said it was for her fellow workers:

"I got involved with the union because of my passion for activism and for my fellow comrades. I am self- motivated and it was really a voluntary choice"-Daphne female leader

"I left nursing for the trade union because I like to be challenged and I like adrenaline. I hated the routine work of nursing but I would be happy in the trauma unit or intensive care where there is a lot happening."-Mpho female leader

Another woman similarly expressed that she simply had to fight for workers' rights because she could not tolerate being abused:

> *"I became active immediately when I joined the Post Office in 1994. There was still a lot of racism. Being new I didn't allow exploitation. I showed immediately that I know my rights and I won't tolerate abuse. So by 1996 I was already one of the identified persons to represent workers who were casuals and not members of the union"-Thulani female leader*

Flood and Turner (1996) discuss Nicholson's (1976) internal motivation factors for activism where taking up the role is seen as a natural extension of one's own political beliefs and involvement external to the workplace. This is very similar to the expressions of the women cited above. Flood and Turner (ibid) also note where careerism (wanting to advance one's chosen career) is the primary motivating factor to take on the job of shop floor representative as expressed by another woman:

"This is a global phenomenon that nurses are the most marginalised health care workers despite being professional but because of patriarchal history and nursing was for females. So there was a gap. We needed to advance nurses issues in government, in the trade unions and broadly in society and politically because you can't separate these. So I wanted to advance our status and to protect our profession through unionisation."-Nosipho female leader

3.3 External Factors to Motivation

External factors also played a role in motivating women to become trade union activists and leaders. External motivations are the social processes by which the individual becomes an activist. According to Nicholson's (1976:106) theory discussed by Flood and Turner (1996) external factors include crises, accidental events, and election or nomination by other people into a position. In this study oppression and violation in the workplace played a role in motivating women leaders as did the exposure to trade unionism and role models and the encouragement of other people.

3.3.1 Workplace Oppression and Marginalisation

Significant work experience of injustice or oppression motivated some women to join the trade union and to later become leaders. Issues could be personal to the individual but could be issues affecting a group of people. For the majority of the women, the events affected them together with other people as a group. Kirton and Healy (1999:36) suggest

that women's activism is influenced by significant gendered events as well as significant collective events. Gendered events are events involving unequal treatment between men and women and forms of sex discrimination like sexual harassment. Collective events do not have a visible gender dimension. Two women narrated that it was the collective oppression and injustice combined with racism that motivated their activism:

> *"At the store where I used to work, there was one man who was an Afrikaner, he was hard on everybody and that's what made us to be more strong and supportive to one another. Dismissals and retrenchments were just coming whenever someone did what he didn't like. I think that brought me closer to the union. They would just look at your face then dismiss you there was no protection and the trade union was the only one."-Nothando female leader*

> *"There was a tea party for ladies but not for blacks so I challenged that and eventually the party was cancelled…Also, the oppression and unfairness. Black people used to start work earlier and finish later than whites even if it was the same job, same office. That was not fine"-Rose female leader*

One woman experienced a work event which was not gendered but was very individual to her and also racially motivated. It was an unfair practice whereby she could not occupy the same type of company house like other workers of her grade because of her colour and she felt she had to fight. Thereafter she was nominated to be the workers' representative

> *"I also studied the mine rules and realised that because of my level I qualified for a big house in the town not the small one in the location like I was given. So I spoke to the housing officer and I moved into a house. I was insulted and abused*

by the whites who would put cats' blood on my walls and throw dead animals in my yard but I didn't leave. I stayed there to claim my rights. So I was the first black person to live in Ntabazimbi. When it came to the union I was an obvious choice because people had seen me in action."-Mpho female leader

None of the women in this study emphasised a particularly gendered event as a motivating factor for them. The recurring theme was evidently the issue of racism. Kirton and Healy (1999) did also observe that some women were motivated by work experience which had no gender dimensions.

3.3.2 Exposure to Trade Unionism

Exposure and contact with trade unions seems to have played a part in motivating women to become involved in unionism. For some it was the fact of knowing somebody in the movement or reading union documents. Perhaps the most influential motivator was being involved in some trade union work as this led some to leave previously chosen careers in pursuit of trade unionism.

Exposure to trade unions and subsequent work in a trade union with personal interaction helped one woman:

"In the mean time I had met some of the people who worked for some of the COSATU union and one of them was a woman by the name Lydia Kompe[3] *who at the time was the secretary of the transport and general union. So in May 1982, I applied for a job as an organizer I went to the interview and I got the job… In*

[3] Lydia Kompe was a trade unionist for the Metal and Allied Workers' Union

most of the COSATU unions, organizers would work in pairs and it was fantastic to work with someone. I worked with Mama Lydia; we would go out together in a small bakkie… The good thing about working in two's was that we had lots of informal time, we would just have time to reflect on each other, how the meetings would have gone, what we would have done and so on and that was really good."-Sipho

Similarly, Fullagar et al (1994: 518) found that there is a positive relationship between early planned socialisation in the union and attitudes and commitment to the union. Fullagar et al (1994:530) elaborate that socialization which is individual, informal, random, variable, and serial provides new union members with an organizational climate that facilitates the development of positive union attitudes, which in turn affects their loyalty to the union, sense of responsibility to the union, and willingness to participate in union activities. For other women in this study, unionism was not familiar to them to begin with but once they became involved they felt driven to continue to the top of the structures as one woman confessed:

"When I became involved I saw that we are not free as workers and we have a long way to go and we need people to fight for us. Because I was a fighter I ended up being elected in the union and I neglected the other career of being a manager in transport while I did union work."-Thulani

In this study, interviews with gender coordinators revealed that in some of the unions, the gender departments were actually new and only formed within the last twelve months.

Furthermore, some of them were poorly resourced while in other cases they were not dedicated to gender but to other portfolios as well. In SAMWU the gender department is a part of the education department whilst in DENOSA the gender coordinator is also responsible for HIV/AIDS and Maternal and Infant Mortality portfolios. The gender departments were new in CWU, DENOSA, CEPPWAWU and NUMSA. These two factors present limitations to the ability of the gender departments to effectively coordinate the proper socialisation and support to aspiring women leaders.

3.3.3 Role Models and Encouragement

All the women in this study said that they had role models who influenced them in one way or the other to become trade unionists. Role models were not necessarily women or unionists but they had an impact on the decisions that these women made. In other cases the influential people were not in the form of role models but were the people around who expressed confidence and encouragement to an individual. One woman in the nursing profession said this about her role model:

> *"The model I can say is Mama Albertina Sisulu[4] because she was a person who didn't abandon the profession. She lived a terrible life under the apartheid regime. Sisulu was in forefront of struggle even in 1976 when the children who were shot would be sent to her surgery. I thought if Mrs Sisulu can do this as a nurse treating the children we should emulate her. She inspired me in this*

[4] Albertina Sisulu is the late black South African anti-apartheid activist who was the wife activist Walter Sisulu. She was a nurse by profession

profession. She had the hardship of being a nurse and she would see people brutalised by the police in that surgery and she would not keep quiet. So we all mobilised around this role model at a later stage"-Nosipho female leader

Also in the nursing profession, another woman spoke of being motivated by the work of other women involved in nurses' organisations overseas:

"Amongst the delegation at the Kellogg Foundation there was this lady, Dr Gloria Smith, who was a nurse by profession and I was so impressed by the way she was articulating issues of being a nurse …Later on in the International General Nurses Association, when we attended congresses of the IGNA I could see other women from other countries who were general secretaries mostly in the developed countries because in Africa its still a challenge where they don't want professionals to be unionized as compared to developed countries."-Miriam

Because of the political tension of the Apartheid era it was difficult to isolate political activism from union activism and as such women in this study all had some political role models who influenced them to become active unionists. These included Nelson Mandela[5], Winnie Mandela[6], Lillian Ngoyi[7], Joe Slovo[8], Barbara Hogan[9] and other unsung heroes and people who were not named. In some cases there was actual contact with the role models but in other cases there was just admiration.

[5] Nelson Mandela is the anti-apartheid activist who became the first democratic president of South Africa. He spent 27 years in prison for political activities
[6]Winnie Mandela is an anti-apartheid activist and former wife of Nelson Mandela
[7] Lillian Ngoyi was an anti-apartheid activist and one of the leaders of the march against apartheid pass laws for women
[8]Joe Slovo was a trade unionist; anti-apartheid activist; leader of the SACP and member of the ANC
[9] Barbara Hogan is an anti-apartheid activist who organised the white political left; she serves as a minister in the current cabinet

In the trade union movement some women did not have role models but others did and the names included; Chris Dhlamini[10], Petros Moshoeshoe[11], Lydia Kompe, Connie September[12], Jay Naidoo[13] and Gallant Roberts[14]. Again, the women didn't necessarily have personal contact with these people but they regarded them very highly but in other cases the women were literally taken by the hand by their models. Many of the women did, however lament the lack of female role models in their lives and expressed that it would have been good to have these:

> *"Strangely enough they were male comrades because we haven't had a lot of female leaders in our union. I find myself being alone and lonely."- Thulani female leader*

Trebilcock (1991:413) points out that in the union movement role models can be encouraging factors to potential leaders. She states that studies in the United States have shown that women leaders need the support of other women leaders and of male leaders in a sponsorship role.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored what motivates women to become trade unionists and trade union leaders by looking at the experiences of nine women who are leaders in South

[10] Chris Dhlamini is the former COSATU Deputy President
[11] Petros Moshoeshoe
[12] Connie September was deputy president of COSATU in 1999; previously she was the national treasurer of SACTWU
[13] Jay Naidoo was the generally secretary of COSATU at its formation; he served as a minister in the post-apartheid cabinet
[14] Gallant Roberts is a trade unionist at CWU

African trade unions. It has emerged that there are a variety of factors that include: the influences of socialisation and family values, societal conditions and events, work experiences, the impact of role models, exposure to trade unions, and encouragement by other people.

It is evident therefore that there are windows of opportunity for trade unions to encourage and foster greater participation of women in trade union structures and in the leadership. Whereas the women studied here were largely affected by the apartheid system, that system is no longer in place. However just as unions were involved not only in worker issues during apartheid, even now there are a wide range of social issues that unions can engage. For example, the issue of women's marginalisation and mainstreaming should be viewed as a union issue. Trade union visibility and relevance can be increased in such a way and women are likely to be motivated to be active in a cause that is beneficial to them and addresses a real societal imbalance.

CHAPTER 4

HOW DO WOMEN BECOME TRADE UNION LEADERS?

4.0 Introduction

This chapter traces the events leading up to women becoming trade union leaders. It also discusses the forces of support and training that encouraged the women leaders along their path to leadership. A combination of personal factors and experiences and trade union socialisation and empowerment worked together in assisting the women in their careers. The women shared the sacrifices they have had to make, their regrets, the rewards of the work and their determination to continue. There are factors that supported the continued involvement in the trade union and the eventual leadership at the higher structures. Among these were the experiences of the women of encouragement and support from the trade union, education in trade unionism and hands-on training, and family support.

Cockburn (1995) writes that senior female officials are often atypical: no children, grown-up children, over the age of forty, supervisory, or holding professional full-time jobs (i.e. conforming to the typical male model of a trade union leader). In this study most of the women were over the age of forty with grown-up children, one had no children, but there were two with young children.

4.1.1 The Path to the Top

The path to the highest level structures in trade unions invariably began at the level of shop steward and followed by involvement in several less influential committees at the local level and then more influential positions at provincial level and finally to the national level. Most of the women studied occupied elected positions while three are in appointed positions. The detailed path for each woman is given in table 4.0 below. From the table it can be seen that generally the women leaders were initially shop stewards. The path to the higher leadership positions were slightly different in the cases of those positions which were not elected and seems on average to have taken a shorter amount of time. In speaking to gender coordinators, they also confirmed that women who become leaders are likely to start off as shop stewards and work their way through other structures until the top:

> *"Women who get to the top are likely to be those who start off as shop-stewards."-Nomsa gender coordinator*

Another gender coordinator also explained that women are now present and willing to be shop stewards but the numbers of women are tapering off as you go up the hierarchy towards the top, meaning that potential female leaders are lost along the way.

Table 4.0 Pathways to the Top

Name	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	yrs
Nothando	Shop steward alternate	Local executive	Local secretary	Local chair	Branch treasurer	Regional treasurer	2nd Deputy president	12
Thobekile	Shop steward	Full time shop steward	Province deputy chair					4
Nosipho	Shop steward	Province deputy chair	Province chair	1st deputy president				16
Daphne	Shop steward	Branch chair for women	Branch executive member	Province treasurer	National chair for gender	National treasurer		12
Sipho	*organiser	General secretary	General secretary	National organiser	*Policy & research officer			28
Rose	Shop steward	Education secretary	Branch secretary	Region chair for women	National chair for women			10
Mpho	Worker rep	*Province Secretary	*Deputy general secretary					8
Thulani	Worker rep	Local deputy chair	Branch gender officer	Region gender officer	province			11
Miriam	Shop steward	*Exec. director	*General secretary					12

* These are appointment positions not up for election

In comparable observations, Chaison and Andiappan (1989:151) contend that the under-representation of women in union leadership positions is generally attributed to the barriers to participation in union activities on the local level because there is a sequence of steps that women must follow to reach higher union offices; regularly attend union meetings, serve on committees, and be appointed or elected to union offices of increasing importance. They argue that the local positions provide the experience, political skills, confidence, and contacts necessary to move through the hierarchy of intermediate and national level positions. Therefore, this suggests that barriers to participation faced by women at the local level have a subsequent impact on the proportions of women running for and attaining higher positions.

4.1.2 Support and Mentoring

Trade union support in the form of encouragement and mentoring was a factor in the women interviewed becoming leaders. Eight of the nine women started off as shop stewards or worker representatives. The decision to continue with union work was made as a result of the support and encouragement they received from the workforce in general and from the other union officials, both male and female but mostly male as female officials were generally fewer than men. Support played the role of building their confidence and capabilities and in increasing their level of satisfaction and maintaining motivation. Three women described how fellow unionist gave them mentorship and support and kept them motivated:

"*Mama Lydia really was sort of my guardian star…Partly just the real pleasure and challenge of successfully organizing workers and hoping to make a difference and the encouragement also came from my friends. So I suppose there was a big community of political support."-Sipho*

"Our current Secretary General was there and he literally took me by the hand and forced me to learn."-Thulani

"In 2002 when I came in I was afraid on how I was going to handle it but I had our first deputy president, comrade Sue[♣], comrade Kethiwe[♣] and the head of education, and several heads of departments, all grabbed me and supported me."-Nothando

There were people who encouraged the women interviewed to take up unionism and these were leaders of trade unions and general members whose confidence spurred on these women:

"For me to be so much strong, the workers at the store I used to work were so much strong and supportive to me"-Nothando female leader

"The workers wanted me to do this"-Rose female leader

"*Other people saw the potential in me. The branch chairperson of my branch who was male encouraged me."-Thobekile female leader*

[♣] Not the real name

Overall, it is apparent that other people, both women and men, were instrumental in motivating these women leaders to take up unionism and to become leaders.

Interviews with gender coordinators revealed that support was really necessary and when a woman was not adequately supported she would fall and give up. One frustrated woman indicated that she would not stand for re-election because she cannot handle the stress caused by other leaders:

> *"Yes I have thought of quitting. It's because of men's egos and they take you as "a nobody" when you are also a leader. The society is very patriarchal so men don't view you as an equal. They will assign some types of duties to you like taking minutes because you are a woman and will leave you out of other duties which are important like chairing meetings…so I will be quitting at the end of my term. I am tired of the in-fights and the stress and I feel I have done enough for the union."-Anonymous*

In terms of favourable union policies towards women, most of the women were of the opinion that they had not been beneficiaries of affirmative action policies by their unions. On the other hand gender coordinators confirmed the existence of affirmative action policies by unions although to varying degrees. SAMWU follows the one third quota system and believes it is only a temporary measure; CWU has 50% quota policy in principle but not in practice; SACCAWU does not have a quota for women but has ex-officio representation of women; CEPPWAWU does not have a quota or any other

affirmative action policy; NUMSA now has a proposed 50% quota but it is not constitutionalised; DENOSA has a 50% quota policy without prejudice to the demographics (i.e. there can be more women because in some areas women are an overwhelming majority).

Only one woman felt that union policies somehow contributed to her current leadership role. Others felt they had fought for their right to lead and feared that after their terms of office they could easily be replaced by men therefore they had not benefited from affirmative action policies. This corroborates gender coordinators' opinions that union policies to promote women were on paper but not being implemented. Furthermore there was a lot of difficulty in the exercise of affirmative action policies for elected positions as the culture of men as leaders had not really changed among the electorate. Even where union members were mostly female, they still tended to vote for men as leaders. Where the policies are in place, there is weak commitment to the implementation and hence women remain marginalised. This was also confirms the findings by NALEDI (2006:146), that there needs to be better supervision in terms of the implementation of the COSATU gender strategies.

4.1.3 Union Education and Training

Most of the women leaders studied have received some trade union education and training. Some was formal training and workshops and some was hands-on experience like apprenticeship training. In whichever form the training was beneficial and helpful in

the women becoming leaders. The training received by each woman leader is summarised in table 4.1 below

Table 4.1 Summary of Women's Training in Unionism

Interviewee	Training received	Usefulness
Nosipho	None; workshops and conferences	Networking; consciousness of contemporary issues
Thobekile	Basics + labour law	Trade union structure and operation; Rights and legal frameworks
Sipho	Pan-active courses; hands-on mentoring	Political and class consciousness; trade union skills and confidence building
Daphne	Not formally; workshops and conferences	Consciousness on contemporary issues
Thulani	DITSELA courses; hands-on mentoring	Political and class consciousness; trade union skills and confidence building
Nothando	Basic trade unionism +disciplinary hearings	Trade union structure and operation; consciousness; procedures, Rights and legal frameworks
Miriam	Leadership training not from trade union	Leadership skills; Confidence building; strategy formulation; management
Mpho	Basic Labour law; labour representation	Trade union structure and operation; Rights and legal frameworks
Rose	Basic training at branch level	Trade union structure and operation; class consciousness

It was evident that in most unions trade unions were providing basic training which raises the level of political and class consciousness and awareness but the only woman who had received leadership training had not received it from a union. There were only two instances of mentoring which increases women's confidence. This pointed to an inadequate preparation of women for leadership roles.

Gender coordinators interviewed also perceived that in order for women to become leaders they needed to be "capacitated":

> *"I have to say you don't have to be educated and of course we have got leaders that are not educated but who are well capacitated…as a leader, you must have*

the capacity because in terms of delegation when we deploy people to go to management or to go to executive meetings, we deploy leaders that we know are well capacitated. We would not just take somebody whom we know will not discuss on issues of workers" –Buhle gender coordinator

"So education and exposure are absolutely critical and also understanding how our structures actually work and what their functions are is also absolutely critical."-Sarah gender coordinator

Six gender coordinators from SAMWU, CWU, SACCAWU, CEPPWAWU, NUMSA and DENOSA described the policies of their unions aimed and building the capacity of women members and leaders. NUM and SATAWU were part of the study but their gender coordinators were not interviewed. The influence of COSATU was evident as most followed its gender policy as a guideline. All the unions had gender structures and a full-time appointed national gender officer though for SAMWU and DENOSA the officer also had other portfolios other than gender. For NUMSA, CEPPWAWU, CWU and DENOSA the national gender structures were actually new, having been formed within the last year and therefore still in the process of setting up. All the unions except for CEPPWAWU had training programs for women though the focus and intensity varied for different unions for example SACCAWU had successfully carried out a three year intensive training program for women whilst NUMSA would only implement its training program in 2011. All the unions except CEPPWAWU also had a form of affirmative action policy and again these varied though the majority had 50% quota system on paper. SACCAWU did not have a quota system but had provision for ex-officio representation

of women and a commitment to gender balance. DENOSA had in addition to a quota, an employment equity policy giving first preference to suitably and adequately qualified women for all appointments to non-elected positions. SACCAWU and NUMSA had a childcare policy where facilities for childcare are provided at union meetings.

A woman leader confirmed the encouragement she gained from union courses:

> *"I was trained at branch level. NUM had very good education courses and these were helpful. They encouraged me to continue"-Rose female leader*

Other than courses, workshops and conferences were also a form of valuable support:

> *"There are workers college programs but I haven't attended. I upgrade myself through reading and through involving myself with issues to do with unionism like conferences and congresses. That's where I learn."-Nosipho female leader*

Perhaps the most valuable training that women received was the hands-on practical work experience with the help of other unionists. Gender coordinators also supported that women leaders need to be taken by the hand and mentored and supported:

> *"I am even involved in the shop stewards elections. So if I see potential in a woman, I will support you, bring you into structures and help you find your way... after some periods of training you can actually see that some people are very blooming while at the same time some have it naturally."-Thandeka gender coordinator*

"One shop steward of ours always helped us. If you wanted to learn he would teach you. That's the man that gave me a physical training like he would take me with him to hearings and I would hear and learn. The training was not formal…Ditsela was providing training but it wasn't that you could get it and you would be on your own. You needed practical training."-Thulani female leader

Training was believed to be valuable by all the women leaders interviewed although not all of them had received some training. They all did express that the most valuable training was of the apprenticeship-like form. Some women commented on the fact that they received basic union courses but no training on leadership:

"COSATU doesn't have programs to train in leadership. I participate in the gender committee but that committee needs a lot until it can influence COSATU in gender mainstreaming and leadership training for women."-Nosipho female leader

One woman did feel she was greatly capacitated by a leadership course she attended outside of the union:

"Yes there is training which specifically did not look into trade was called leadership for changes which was a two year programme that they do for Eastern Central and Southern Africa... So that course assisted me to be able to think outside the box because it was all about leadership and not trade union leadership but leadership."-Miriam female leader

Even though in some unions the gender department was actually a new unit or had been re-launched after a period of being dormant or dysfunctional, there appears to be a general desire to provide training courses for women and men on gender issues. The limiting factors to the optimal performance of the gender departments and women's education programs were deemed to be financial constraints. However one union has already done a large scale education programme:

> *"A couple of years ago we had a large scale woman empowerment program… and we do have some other programs where we include women in all the mainstream training programs. At the moment we are setting in progress a three year empowerment education program which is for everybody but a component of that is specifically for women."-SACCAWU gender coordinator*

Because of determination and commitment the women leaders continuously upgraded and empowered themselves in order to keep up with new knowledge. All of them expressed their desire to learn more and their efforts in doing so:

> *"But the other training was by ourselves by reading books and talking to others now and then"-Nothando female leader*
>
> *"You read on your own for development…I upgrade myself through reading and through involving myself with issues to do with unionism like conferences and congresses."-Nosipho female leader*

Despite the demands on their personal time and other difficulties they face, the women in this study mostly said they have not considered quitting the union work and are more

willing than ever to continue. Only one woman expressed that she would like to stop union work because she is frustrated and tired.

4.1.4 Family Support

Support for union activism and leadership has also come from spouses, partners and family and friends of the women in this study. Three women narrated that they had faced marital problems because of their trade union work which their husbands felt was eating into family time. These problems were held partly responsible for the breakdown of the marriages:

> *"We actually ended up splitting up with my husband because I used to travel around the country a lot doing negotiations and so on and he was finding it very difficult."-Anonymous*

Five women were married and they all felt that the marriage and the union work were both co-existing because of the husbands' support and understanding. It is apparent that in the case of a married woman the support of a partner is essential to her success in becoming and remaining a trade union leader

> *"I got married five years ago to a man who understands my work. I prepared him ahead of time so that he could understand the type of work that I do. So he is supportive and he even accompanies me to some of my assignments and meetings."-Anonymous*

A gender coordinator similarly suggested that women need to explain their union work to their partners:

> *"It doesn't mean that you have to divorce with your husband in order to be in the union. They just have to bring their husbands on board because the reason why some men act like that is just because we do not bring them on board, they think that women are a competition and they want to be better than men."-Anonymous*

In some cases the husband actually encouraged the woman's continued involvement. In four of the five marriages, the husbands were political activists or trade unionists as well. Despite the harmony of their relationships, two women confessed that their husbands were resentful of the amount of time they spent away from home. This resonates with arguments about the domestic division of labour (Hartmann 1979) where women are ascribed roles within the home hence the men's resentment of the amount of time women spent away from home.

Two women in this study had never married and one had never had children. One woman commented on why she never married:

> *"Men can't deal with my questioning attitude because they are taught superiority. They actually have an inferiority complex in their heads. They say I am disrespectful. So I have never been married"-Anonymous*

Similar to the findings of Kirton and Healy (1999:36) this study also found that women trade union leaders were feminists, or espoused feminist values and beliefs even when they did not declare being feminists.

Gender coordinators revealed that they find a lot of women cannot participate in leadership and activism because of the disapproval of their partners. One gender coordinator voiced her opinion:

> *"No women with a husband and children will manage. Marriage won't work unless the man is a trade unionist but even union men don't want their wives to be involved. It's okay for men to be away from home but not women in this culture."-Anonymous*

In similar studies Trebilcock (1991:411) found that married women experienced dissuasion by their husbands in addition to other challenges such as their domestic obligations. Rees (1992:106) discusses comparable findings by Roby and Uttal (1985) who found that the presence of a partner and/or children lowered women's level of participation in trade unions (though for men the effect was opposite). Rees (ibid) noted that it was not merely an issue of finding time but of persuading other members of the household to cooperate in order for the woman to be released: she has to seek permission. The women who can participate in union work are then those who are single, older or have very supportive families. NALEDI (2006:111) argue that society's traditional expectations of women and the expectations of male partners have meant that women trade unionists go against traditional norms and as a result, for the majority of women in their South African study, marriages had broken down. Those whose marriages were still intact expressed that their partners were very understanding and supportive. Feminist writers like Hartmann (1979) theorise that the family and the institution of marriage are the locus of control of patriarchy where subordination and oppression of women are

learned and internalised. In this study the women leaders were exempt from marital oppression because being single, having supportive partners, or through divorcing unsupportive partners.

4.2 Personal Attributes

Women trade union leaders in this study expressed their personal strengths and attributes and that these had a lot to do with their success as leaders. They are committed to their work and have made huge sacrifices to other aspects of their lives. However there are rewards from the work and most were not about quit.

4.2.1 Commitment and Sacrifice

Gender coordinators revealed that women who are likely to become trade union leaders need to show a great deal of passion and commitment to the union. They must be willing to sacrifice a lot of time away from their homes and cope with a lot of work. Two gender coordinators summed it all up:

> *"you can just see that someone is very active, attentive, goes to meetings, willing to sacrifice her time off from her family, if you ask her to do something she will do, she reports back, she is accountable all of those things then you can start mentoring her."-Thandeka gender coordinator*

"Show commitment by attending meetings regularly. She must be very active from the factory level to local and regional and national levels."-Nomsa gender coordinator

The sacrifice of time is one where the union does not compromise. If a woman cannot give a lot of time she would not survive:

"The union is not tolerant of time away so I have to try to be present as often as possible."-Thobekile female leader

"A woman must be willing to sacrifice time and space to become a leader."-Simphiwe gender coordinator

Kirton (1999) also found in her study that senior women unionists exhibited a great deal of commitment to the unions. She cites Klandermans (1992) who argues that commitment is one of the ways in which activism is sustained. The women's commitment stemmed from their continued belief in the relevance of unions in the battle against exploitation. Kirton (1999) adds that the costs of union commitment were very high for the women leaders. This point of sacrifice and commitment is problematised by Franzway (2000) when she discusses the union as a "greedy institution" which demands commitment, undivided loyalty, and emotional labour from its workers. She adds that the family is also a greedy institution and women unionists are confronted with the problems of both. Women leaders in this study also confirmed this notion and expressed that they had to sacrifice a lot of things especially time at home to fulfil the expectations of their work.

The biggest sacrifice made by these women seems to be time with their children:

> *"Mothering was done by my mother. I was not there. Initially for the first child I was just too young and my mother took over. Then afterwards I was busy with the work. Now I guess I am a part-time wife. I have sacrificed motherhood and developing that bonding with my children."-Daphne female leader*

> *"The union work is too much of a burden when you are senior and it takes a lot of time. I try to balance but it is a challenge. When the kids were young my husband would get a relative to watch them. It was difficult… But when you are a woman with young children the guilt of sometimes going away for long periods would haunt you."-Nosipho female leader*

Chodorow (1978:3) identifies mothering as one of the few universal and enduring elements of the sexual division of labour because it is seemingly natural. She describes that women produce daughters with mothering capacities and the desire to mother and this primarily situates women in the home while men are situated in the public sphere. Chodorow (1978:208) argues therefore, that women's mothering produces psychological self-definition appropriate to mothering in women and curtails these in men. From the narrations above, the women regret not being able to mother because they have been socialised to value it yet one could argue that their successful careers as leaders were precisely because they were not constrained by mothering.

4.2.2 Women Leaders' Strengths

Women in this study described their personal strengths as a range of attributes and attitudes including courage, confidence, willingness to learn, hard work, honesty, good communication, and accessibility to people. Many women expressed that their biggest strength was that they are hard workers and their work speaks for them:

> *"Like I said I am a very hard working person. I put all energies into what I do and I don't relax."-Thulani female leader*
>
> *"I am not sure why people chose me but it may be because of the work I do."-Rose female leader*

Six of the nine women said their strength was their confidence and ability to articulate social and political issues. Gender coordinators also identified similar characteristics as being necessary for leaders.

> *"I think obviously that if you are a professional woman with advanced communication skills, confidence of being able to address challenges, to take on the bosses and if you are a good organizer you know how to organize things, that will obviously be an advantage but it is not exclusively so."-Sarah gender coordinator*

> *"I am articulate with things that pertain to the profession, politics, trade unions and social issues. People want a person who can articulate their view and the ability to stand for your views."-Nosipho female leader*

"I have knowledge and confidence in politics; and I feel that I must speak for women."-Daphne female leader

Many of the women also described themselves as being open and honest, and felt that honesty is very important for unionists

"I put a lot of importance on honesty. I think that is the most important characteristic you need to have as a trade unionist. So when you are negotiating you do not have to give workers false promises, you have to make them understand the various options of going into different directions."-Sipho female leader

"I believe in being honest if I say I am going to do a thing then I do it , if for some reasons I cannot do it I come back to you I don't want to pretend to be what I am not and I don't do things to impress other people but I do it because I am convinced it is the right thing to do. I believe that people respect you if you are honest to them"-Miriam female leader

Table 4.2 shows in detail what the women in this study felt were their strengths and attributes.

Table 4.2 strengths and attributes

Strength/attribute	Number of women
Willingness to learn	7
Hard working/ determination	5
Confident and articulate	6
Fearless/ courageous	5
Upfront, open and honest	6
Interpersonal skills	5
Energy and enthusiasm	3
Negotiation skills	2
Listening skills	3
Age	1
Education	2
Strategy skills	2
Information sharing	2

n=9

Symbolically, a certain kind of male heterosexual sexuality plays an important part in legitimating organizational power. Connell (1987) describes a kind of male heterosexual sexuality important in legitimating organisational power which he calls hegemonic masculinity. He emphasises that it is formed around dominance over women and in opposition to other masculinities. Currently, hegemonic masculinity is typified by the

image of the strong, technically competent, authoritative leader who is sexually potent and attractive, has a family, and has his emotions under control. From the table above, some women leaders in this study described their own attributes such as energetic, confidence, determination and courage which resemble hegemonic masculinity. In a similar analysis McDowell and Court (1994) describe women as adopting work performances as "honorary men". However the women leaders in the table above also described other attributes which can be described as feminine such as listening and negotiation skills and information sharing. Acker (1990), and McDowell and Court (1994) argue that women's bodies cannot be adapted to hegemonic masculinity. Therefore, to function at the top of male hierarchies requires that women reject everything that makes them women. But this leads to them experiencing role incongruity which is the less favourable evaluation of their ability to lead and of their actual leadership because their masculine behaviour is not socially desirable in women whilst their feminine attributes are not desirable in leaders (Eagly 2003:80, Kram and Hampton 2004:219). Trade unions value the macho image of a leader which resonates with the notion of hegemonic masculinity.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the journeys that women trade union leaders have travelled. Along the way, they found union education, mentorship and support helpful. Most women also expressed being supported by their spouses/partners. Despite the union

demanding a lot of time from them and their regretting the time their children lost, the women did not regret their choices and were not willing to stop this work yet.

The path that most women took began at the shop floor level and followed a steady rise through less influential positions over several years; a time during which the women gained valuable knowledge, experience and confidence. This was acquired as a result of positive socialisation experiences in the unions and through gaining knowledge of the functioning of union bureaucracy and hands-on experience gained systematically from grassroots participation through to the upper levels of the union hierarchies.

In this study, the women mostly did not feel that affirmative action policies had assisted them in any way. This is because of the difficulty in implementing policies such as the quota system where positions are elected and also because there is often poor commitment by unions towards such policies. Some unions have resolved to include women as ex-officio members of committees (e.g. SACCAWU). Others have introduced compromises on deputy positions where if a man is elected, a woman must be the deputy. DENOSA have introduced an employment equity policy which gives priority to a female candidate of requisite qualification for their appointed positions. Quota policies were present in most unions and these just need to be implemented. NALEDI (2006:144) also write that COSATU has a lot of strong gender policies that are not being implemented.

In most cases the women studied were supported and encouraged in their work by their partners/spouses. Most of the partners were political or union activists themselves. In two

cases, where the partners had not been supportive, the relationships had ended in divorce, with union work cited as contributing to the problems. Problems of union work were that the women were unable to carry out their domestic obligations to the satisfaction of their partners. The concept of patriarchy and the domestic division of labour (Hartmann 1979, Mitchell 1975) is here seen as responsible for women being unable to pursue trade union careers. More women would be able to come forward and work as trade unionists if more partners were supportive.

Women unionists sacrificed a lot of time away from their families and many felt guilty about being away from their children in particular. Some supportive partners were also quite resentful of the time the women spent away from home. This creates two discussions. First is the idea that unions are too demanding of time and hence keep away women who have other obligations than just their work. Franzway (2003) and Heery and Kelly (1988) have similarly explored the concept of the 'greedy institution'. Second, women feel, and are socialised to be overly responsible for child care at a psychological level and are thus limited by this.

Women in this study possessed personal attributes and strengths which enabled them to take on union work. These were different for each woman but most felt they possessed courage, honesty, hard work, confidence and a willingness to learn. Some of the a personal attributes of women leaders could be described as them performing like "honorary men" (McDowell and Court 1994) and fitting in with the stereotypical image of leadership masculinity while other attributes could at the same time be problematic as

they can be described as being too feminine for the macho image of a trade union leader. The personal attributes were not the only reason why they were successful leaders but rather a compliment to other positive conditions in the union such as mentoring and encouragement by fellow unionists. This finding supports the work by Flood and Turner (1996) who found that success and satisfaction of union leaders were due to union-related attitudes, values and support.

This chapter concludes that the path for a woman to top leadership in a trade union requires commitment and personal sacrifice. It also highlights the opportunities for trade unions to nurture more women into leadership structures. Though the work is demanding women can be satisfied by it and the women studied here expressed pleasure and contentment with the psychological rewards of their work.

CHAPTER 5

THE CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES

5.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the obstacles and challenges that women trade union leaders face as they climb to their positions and their battles to maintain their positions once they are there. There are few women in leadership positions and particularly in the top structures of trade unions because of the social beliefs and the culture of male leadership of trade unions. Interviews with gender coordinators revealed that women are present at the lower ends of the structures but become fewer and fewer at the top. This chapter examines the challenges presented to women leaders by the trade union work, fellow colleagues and social beliefs and attitudes. Women leaders face the problem of role incongruity where their work does not conform to their socially assigned roles as women. This chapter also highlights the possibilities and the avenues by which trade unions can transform their macho culture in order to include more women in leadership positions. The chapter ends by reviewing the strategies that these women employ to overcome their challenges.

5.1 Why Women Leaders are Few

The women who participated in this study put forward their ideas about why women trade unionists are few in numbers. The factors can be broadly categorised as family and societal factors, union factors and personal factors. Factors are however not mutually independent as societal factors also influence personal factors and union factors.

The study found that women are limited by the expectation that they should be caregivers in their homes. Because of this they cannot afford the extra time to be involved with union work. Women also face restrictions from their husbands and partners who impose that they should not attend to union business. The reasons are a disapproval of women's involvement in unions and the need for women to be at home carrying out domestic duties. Because of the subordinate nature of women's relationships in the marriage arrangement they are often unable to defy their husbands' wishes:

> *"Women are oppressed by being women; their social status in society is low. Even if you marry a man who is not a breadwinner and you are the breadwinner you are still the subordinate. It's rooted in culture. It is about men leading women. Patriarchy!"-Nosipho female leader*

Gender coordinators (who were mostly women) interviewed commented that women usually cited their domestic responsibilities as the reason why they cannot actively participate in trade unions:

"Most of them are afraid of their partners and others feel that union jobs are for men."- Thandi gender coordinator

The society has socially ascribed roles for women, which are in the home providing care and comfort. Hartmann (1979) explains that patriarchy assigns women and men different positions in society and in the home with the woman in a subordinate position and responsible for the bulk of (unpaid) domestic duties. The family is seen as the locus of control of patriarchy and is here shown to be confining women to certain kinds of "appropriate" work in the domestic sphere. Women are not only discouraged and forbidden by their husbands, but by other female family members who maintain that this work is not socially appropriate for women. In this study, most of the women leaders expressed that their own mothers most disapproved of their activism initially.

Personal factors that hinder women's participation relate to their lack of confidence in their own abilities and the belief that leadership is not for them. This is a result of the fact that women are not culturally and socially raised to be confident in leadership. Women are not brought up to be leaders and grow up believing they are not equal or as capable as men. Chaison and Andiappan (1989) discuss that a major barrier to the participation of women in unions is their tendency to underestimate their own capabilities to lead. They add that this may cause them to rely on men make policy decisions, and fill leadership positions. Chaison and Andiappan (1989) cite Cook (1968) and Wertheimer and Nelson (1975) who found that women were frequently unwilling to run for office because of their feelings of inferiority, fear of failure, and a belief that it is more appropriate for men to be

union officers. Similarly, NALEDI (2006) document many different ways by which internalised oppression at a personal level affects women's ability to become leaders in trade unions. Because of this disadvantage women express fear of leadership positions and are averse to situations where they need to speak up alongside or above men who are the socially ascribed leaders:

> *"An observation that one has made is that women are there who are qualified. The only weakness is that they are still frightened to speak when there are huge volumes of men. We have quality women out there who can lead in government and who can run businesses."-Nothando female leader*

Women leaders interviewed in this study also pointed out that unions also play a part in the exclusion of women from leadership and in the perpetuation of patriarchal social relations. They all mentioned that because of patriarchy, men do not want to be led by women. Therefore, women candidates for elections receive fewer votes if at all they are nominated. Moreover, there was an observation that women do not receive votes from other women in the union who also prefer to be led by men. Chaison and Andiappan (1989) similarly cite the views of Simmons et al. (1975) and Koziara and Pierson (1980) who believed that negative stereotypes about females were also behind the reluctance of women to support female leader candidates. NALEDI (2006) widened the concept of internalised oppression to include the idea that because of misconceptions, women do not believe in their own capabilities and in those of other women. Even though unions are democratic organisations they have not fought hard enough against the prejudice and inequality of women. One woman expressed that why women are few is

because the issue of few women in leadership is "not a union issue". She was articulating that unions do not see this as their problem:

> *"It's not seen as a union problem that women need to be developed yet it is a very serious issue. Women need training and exposure."-Nosipho female leader*

Another perspective on the role of unions in excluding women was that given that women have the extra burden of disproportionate domestic work unions need to restructure their meetings in terms of time:

> *"Would you think if I was married and having children would I survive? The meetings go on and on they are repeating one and the same thing nothing new until 11 or 12 midnight , they are making things difficult for women to come on board."-Miriam female leader*

Though unions acknowledge the lack women in leadership structures, they seem not to have done enough to increase these numbers. Unions have adopted gender policies but their implementation remains weak. Women still lack exposure to union activities and there aren't enough programs to fast track women's involvement. This was expressed by one interviewee:

> *"We (women) haven't polluted the environment in COSATU. There are no programs to propel the resolutions. COSATU has global reputation, it talks about women but where are the programs to fast track women within structures? I want to be alive when COSATU is led by a woman. Already we know when Vavi[15] steps*

[15] Zwelinzima Vavi is the current General Secretary of COSATU

down it will be a man who will lead. The weakness is the lack of programs to propel women."-Nosipho female leader

Trade unions have not taken upon themselves to deal with the problem of women's subordination in society and in the workplace and their own institutions. The problem calls for a multifaceted approach because it is deep rooted in social belief systems. Many women in this study observed that in the unions women do not vote for other women. One gender coordinator explained that women are not even aware of their own marginalisation and do not see gender imbalances in their own lives:

"Female members don't feel that gender issues impact on them and this was seen in a survey done by our union."-Simphiwe gender coordinator

This ignorance needs to be addressed by trade unions if they want to claim to represent women because as Cockburn (1991) argues, unions must be seen to serve women if they want to hold a claim to being democratic. It is no wonder that women do not vote for other women because as a group they have not identified the injustice of their own inequality. Unions which represent women must address and highlight the ignorance of women's inequality.

5.2 Challenges Faced by Women Leaders

The women at the centre of this study were amongst the few "vanguard women" (Kirton and Healy, 1999) who have achieved leadership positions in spite of a lot of barriers.

They faced challenges in terms of the actual work of trade union leadership; the resistance of male trade unionists and the lack of support from female trade unionists: and the social beliefs that surround them.

5.2.1 Challenges of the Work

Three women felt that when they were elected to higher leadership roles they were literally thrown in the deep end with an expectation that they would fail. They did not know what to do or how to do it and they were left on their own:

> *"If you know what you are doing you are able to do it confidently. But when you do not know you are not and that happens a lot of the times because as a Deputy President you will expect the President to take you with them when you are first elected but here I was just alone so I would go to address workers on my own…that's a new environment and you are just thrown into the deep end and you have to take yourself out of it"-Anonymous*

One gender coordinator expressed that male leaders received a lot more assistance and support than women:

> *"If a woman isn't strong she will break. There is an expectation that she will fail Male shop-stewards however are supported."-Nomsa gender coordinator*

All the interviewees concurred that women leaders have to work a lot harder and achieve a lot more than men to gain the same amount of recognition. Many of the women leaders

also consequently described themselves as hardworking. The trade unions expect women's work to be near-perfect:

> *"When you are elected you find men who are already in a position and who are experienced and they expect you to perform double what they normally do. When you are a woman you have to be more perfect than the men because if you make a mistake they say that is why we don't want to elect women."-Anonymous*

> *"when women achieve a senior position its quite clear that they have to work twice as hard as their male counterparts in order to gather credibility from the people both men and women. So while I think there is a degree of unfairness in that approach it does mean that the women leaders that do emerge are extremely of good quality by nature precisely because they do work very hard."-Sarah gender coordinator*

5.2.2 Male Colleagues as Obstacles

In this study it emerged that women leaders also found that the attitudes of their male colleagues made their work difficult by being sexist and prejudiced. Trebilcock (1991) and Kirton (1999) found that sexist language and sexist behaviour at meetings is factor in discouraging women's active participation in union leadership. Seven of the women leaders highlighted that in their own opinion men do not like to be led by a woman and will overtly and covertly resist women's leadership. As a result many of the women found that male unionists did not treat them as equals and some felt they were blatantly

ignored or not taken seriously. Where they made meaningful contributions women found that their ideas would be accepted when a man also think the same. Therefore there is no acknowledged or recognition of their inputs.

"Men do not want to be led by a woman so they resist and frustrate you."-Daphne female leader

"I have felt that men don't take you as an equal and they don't really want you to speak. Fellow leaders are really problematic. You are not taken seriously and you are not given the chance to chair meetings. When you say something valuable it can be attributed to someone else or they don't acknowledge that it was you who said it."- Thobekile female leader

"As a woman you are not taken seriously, you are just a face. People can be very disrespectful and treat your ideas as though they are not valuable. Your inputs are disregarded until a man supports the same idea."-Mpho

"The structures are still very male dominated because if a woman speaks it might not be considered but if a man speaks the same thing then that's when it becomes an issue and it is very discouraging. You know I have been in the union for 22 years now and I have seen these things working out and it really puts women down."-Thandeka gender coordinator

Moreover, when women made errors they felt that they were harshly judged and criticized. One woman explained that it is not about the mistake, but rather about the person who has made it:

> *"For example, when a woman makes a mistake it's not about the mistake but about the person. Even other women are harsher to women the men."-Nosipho female leader*

> *"As a woman your mistakes are made be more visible and you are judged more harshly than men." Thobekile female leader*

Women leaders also complained about men dominating meetings and not wanting women to chair. Similarly, there were accusations that male unionists maintain their "boys' club" mentality and block out women from their informal networks. Informal networks were found

> *"The struggles as a woman came when the political issues intensified and the women leadership became much more invisible[16] and there was sort of a culture of leadership acquired much more by men, you know the guys getting together over a beer and so on."-Sipho female leader*

> *"I fit in everywhere though I don't drink but you don't get invited. They have a psychological wall against you so a progressive woman has to become part of that network. But because of social status the women are to go home and prepare*

[16] Prior to South Africa's transition into democracy, more women were general secretaries of unions than now

food for the men who are at the pub so how does a woman join networks even if she wants to. How many women can do that?"-Nosipho

There was the sentiment that men continue to use sexist language during meetings, joke inappropriately ultimately putting down women's self-esteem, and subject women to sexual objectification and harassment; observations made by both the women leaders and gender coordinators. Kirton (1999) similarly discusses that in a study of women leaders in UK, women reported that men made sexist jokes, laughed and heckled as women were trying to speak thus undermining women's self confidence.

"*You know when you talk about joking: we really have different jokes men and women. They will just joke insensitively without realizing that there is someone who has gone through it"-Miriam female leader*

"Men don't want to be ruled by women so for example women shop stewards report being judged unfairly and made fun of and trivialised. People make fun outside of the meeting to make you feel small."-Nomsa gender coordinator

"…but I must say that there is a contradiction: at one point you can get people who say that sexism is an abomination and all those forms of terrorism and sexual harassment are terrible and they go back to that hotel room and behave quite differently. So the contradiction between policy and practice needs to be tackled."- Sarah gender coordinator

"You are also treated like a sex object and when you refuse their advances you are abused in another way."-Anonymous

One woman did stand out in her opinions as she felt that she does no longer experiences prejudice or harsh judgements. She indicated that judgements were the same but that people differed in how they took it when they are criticised (implying that women may not accept criticism as easily as men do hence the feeling that they are unfairly criticised).

5.2.3 Societal Beliefs

The beliefs that people are enculturated into were discussed as being a challenge to women trade union leaders. As already discussed in section 5.2, patriarchal society holds that women do not lead and should maintain a subordinate position in relation to men and hence few women end up in leadership positions. These social beliefs as well as stereotyping were seen as a challenge to women leaders who had already broken some norms and become leaders. They reported being persistently viewed as surrogates and being assumed to be weak and vulnerable. Helmbold and Schofield (1989:503) write that trade unions continue to reinforce prevailing ideas about women's weakness and are unable to treat women as equals. They are depicted as needy, vulnerable and victimised. Women in this study described that this stereotyping came from both men and women. Examples of this are that women reported being expected to take minutes rather than to chair the meetings; certain duties were assigned to them or not assigned to them on the basis of their perceived weaknesses as women; they felt enormously guilty about not

attending to their expected roles as primary carers of children in their homes; and men using other women to bring them down. Some examples are quoted below:

"There are stereotypes and you are expected to be this and that but not this and that; there is also the fear of doing something which hasn't been done before by other women so you have to get into a double struggle where you struggle to get the position and then you struggle to keep the position."-Daphne female leader

"I had one incident whereby I found that these male comrades in the leadership were totally against my winning of the elections and its simply because of laws and values of our culture that how can a woman run a province instead of a man; why could not women be deputies instead of a provincial secretary. Comrades become negative if it comes to a woman leading , they tell you that you must do this and you must not do that and you have to prove them wrong sometimes"-Buhle female leader

"You expect other women to stand for you but they rather support a man. That's a challenge."-Thulani

"Because women like to play the subordinate role to men they will be used against good women. Women don't nominate a woman to be president, it's ridiculous."-Nosipho

"If I am in a meeting they say who is going to take the minutes? And they will say Miriam then I will say no you want me to do that because I am a woman I would rather chair than taking minutes."-Miriam

5.3 Strategies for Coping

The women in this study showed a variety of innovative ways of coping with their daily challenges as trade union leaders. They shared their own personal strategies and also made suggestions for what COSATU and their unions can do based on their personal observations of trade unions. The strategies that the women leaders employed can be categorised according to three broad areas of their challenges: the family, the union and at a personal level.

5.3.1 Coping with the family

In chapter four the importance of family support for women leaders was discussed and in section 5.2 above it emerged that women leaders are few because of their burden of domestic duties and their subordinate position in marriage relationships. As a way of coping with childcare responsibilities and domestic duties, the women leaders elicited the help of other family members. Many of women pointed out that their mothers were particularly helpful with the children. Five of these women also had supportive husbands or managed to negotiate with their husbands so that the relationships were not strained. Two women who had divorced and remarried mentioned that in their first marriages their

work had been a source of conflict so in their second marriages they made sure that the partners understood their work and they did not have any problems. Though most feel that they sacrificed time with their children, they also mentioned that they systematically tried to make time for the family during weekends and holidays.

5.3.2 Coping in the Union

Women in this study generally spoke about being vocal and assertive as a method of coping with the prejudice against them by male colleagues. Gender coordinators also confirmed that women leaders need to be firm and confident. Two women mentioned that they out-rightly fight for their recognition and refuse to be abused. For example one said she refuses to ever take minutes during meetings and requests the opportunity to chair the meetings.

Another coping strategy employed by some women leaders was that they learnt to ignore sexist remarks and in some instances they have become aggressive as a way of protecting themselves and describe this as "if you can't beat them join them."

> *"Then I realized that it's not about changing these people , if you can't fight them then join them so I used to go upfront and when somebody was looking at me.*[17] *I will be the first one to joke about it and say forget you are not going to get me, and I realized that I could not remove the fact that I am a woman."-Miriam*

[17] Referring to unwanted sexual attention/harassment

In terms of being thrown in the deep end without much support participants mentioned how they would research and consult so as to gain more knowledge and work extra hard to get affirmation from colleagues and to complete their tasks. One woman said she learnt that when she was in a difficult situation she would always find a way out and emerge from it a stronger person. Because of this, she is no longer afraid of tasks even when she is unfamiliar with the requirements.

In some cases women found that when they discussed their problems with other women and other trade unionists (even some males) they felt relieved and they often got help. One woman even suggested that women need to form their own networks and forums for discussions and sharing of experiences, strategies and stories. Unions have not been able to address the problems of women leaders. The gender coordinators are tasked mainly with setting up gender structures and monitoring and evaluating the gender programs, but these programs are not taking into account the personal needs of women leaders to network. Whilst the move towards gender structures as opposed to women's committees represents a conceptual understanding of the need for gender as including both men and women, other scholars like Briskin (1999) still advocate for women's spaces where they can network and identify with each other as the marginalised group.

5.3.3 Personal Development

In general, the women leaders refused to conform to stereotyped ideas about women though the beliefs affected how people behaved towards them. They dared to be different

and to go against the crowd. They pointed out the importance of self-empowerment and self education. These are factors that helped them to gain confidence in themselves. Though gender coordinators did not feel that education was a prerequisite for women leaders the women interviewed in this study were fairly well educated with most having a bachelors' degree and some with masters' degrees or studying for one.

Many of the women concluded that what was really useful for them was having a positive attitude and being able to pick one's self up after difficulties. The other attitude was one that one woman described as mental liberation.

5.4 The Rewards

Most of the women in this study expressed that being away from their children was what they regret most about choosing trade union work. Despite this, all of them do not regret the choice of work, believing it was the right thing to do

> *"I have sacrificed motherhood and developing that bonding with my children... I feel it was for a good cause so I do not regret."-Daphne female leader*

> *"I only have one child so to some extent I neglected my responsibility as a wife and focused more on the career...I don't regret. I wouldn't be here if not for my prioritising certain things over others and compromising certain aspects. But I do regret the part of not having another child while I still can. I have postponed and there are always new things to be done. So there are areas you regret but generally the union has helped me to be where I am."-Thulani female leader*

Asked how they are rewarded by the work, most of the women mentioned psychological rewards and the pleasure of accomplishing a task, pride in working for people and the greater consciousness and knowledge they have gained. Only one woman mentioned that the salary she earns is also a reward.

> *"I am rewarded by the thoughts of the future for women; the exposure to higher things; the political knowledge and consciousness that I receive."-Daphne female leader*

> *"Partly just the real pleasure and challenge of successfully organizing workers and hoping to make a difference and the encouragement also came from my friends."-Sipho female leader*

> *"The reward is psychological and… To know you have made a difference in your country and in your profession and society. Also the recognition of the people you work for in their feedback and when they vote for you…It's the rewards of the revolution: If I hadn't been there DENOSA wouldn't be where it is today without the contributions I and others made."-Nosipho female leader*

> *"For me there is nothing that I enjoy like seeing somebody under me growing."-Miriam female leader*

"I left nursing for the trade union because I like to be challenged and I like adrenaline."-Mpho female leader

"I am rewarded by a salary and the outcomes for the masses... I also rewarded enjoy seeing other people develop and the organisation."-Rose female leader

Trade union work was viewed as demanding and difficult but the rewards are also within the work. The women interviewed expressed satisfaction and pleasure from their work with only one feeling the need to now stop. It emerges that the psychological benefits they felt that they earned also served as motivators for the work and as reinforcers for them to continue even when the odds were against them. Only one woman out of the nine leaders expressed the desire to discontinue trade union work whilst the other eight were adamant that they would continue and would not even consider any other work because their work is fulfilling and enlightening.

5.5 Union Solutions for the Woman Issue

Women in this study put forward some suggestions and opinions of how trade unions could address the problem of low numbers in leadership positions. Most of the women leaders felt that training would help to increase the numbers of women in leadership. They alluded to different areas of training including assertiveness, self-confidence and esteem, leadership, political, and exposure to union proceedings and activities. The general feeling was that women lack capacity in a variety of ways and are thus not able to

compete with men on an equal footing. Gender coordinators confirmed that there are education programs in place on gender, sexual harassment and in general trade union ideology and that there were also some cases when programs were run for women in particular but the focus has not been on confidence building and assertiveness training. There were sentiments that affirmative action and quota systems could only work in the presence of rigorous training and empowerment for women. In terms of union policies, the quota had been adopted to varying degrees by the unions covered in this study. Mostly it existed as a policy proposal or a resolution but the implementation was poor and sometimes difficult as it seemed to conflict with the democratic election system. One union had achieved ex-officio representation for women, and another had negotiated for women to be deputies where men were the main officials.

Another way in which women's leadership could be increased was deemed to be through the education and involvement of men in the process of gender mainstreaming. There were sentiments about the existence but marginalization of gender structures and also the problem that the structures are dominated by women with only a few men involved. Gender coordinators also confirmed the existence of these structures and that in many cases they were still not well-capacitated because of financial constraints. Two women leaders and one gender coordinator mentioned the need for women's separate organizing on the basis that women need the space to share their problems and explore the solutions because the issue about gender mainstreaming is really about women's marginalization in another sense so women need space on their own. Moreover, many of the interviewees

also expressed that women need to build their own solidarity and start supporting each other so they need a forum for this.

There was also a need for the change of societal mindset expressed by women leaders and gender coordinators. They felt that women were being disadvantaged from the way they were enculturated which leaves them with a feeling of being deficient and unequal. This was emphasized by the observations that women do not have the confidence in themselves and do not have confidence in other women as leaders. Women were characterized as wanting the leadership and direction of men in most spheres of their lives. This problem was identified as coming from within the society. Similarly societal mindset was also thought to be responsible for men's prejudice and sexism which stems from them internalising patriarchy and adding to the lack of confidence women already had.

All the interviewees in this study felt that some progress had been made in terms of increasing women's leadership in trade unions. Over the years they acknowledged a change in attitude and practice in their unions but they also all noted that the strides made were small and there was still a long way to go. Gender coordinators commented on the improvement in terms of the level of seriousness given to women's issues but a resistance when it came to the issue of leadership positions. Some achievements for women were listed as sexual harassment policies, maternity leave benefits and childcare facilities at some unions and some employers. One union (SACCAWU) also highlighted their milestone on documenting a comprehensive parental rights policy.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter looked at the challenges that women trade union leaders face in the course of their work and the strategies that they employ to cope. Women are initially discouraged or barred from participating in trade union activities and work by social beliefs of what they should and should not be. They are further discouraged by the burden of domestic duties that they are expected to manage. When they do enter the trade union arena, they face challenges of doing a type of work which is not perceived to be suitable for them and which they were not brought up to be capable of. This poses a challenge to them in terms of actually performing the work and in terms of the judgement they receive whether they are wrong or right. Another problem they face is that the trade unions also reflect the beliefs of South African society and are not very accepting or accommodating of women leaders. Male colleagues display sexism and prejudice against women leaders and consciously or unconsciously resist their presence.

The continuation of patriarchal influences was found in the challenges that women leaders faced in their work environment. This study found a variety of ways in which sexism and prejudice manifest themselves in the daily interrelationships of men and women to the disadvantage of women. Again an opportunity for trade unions exists where they can recognise and acknowledge the enormity and the impact of these problems and actively discourage them. Most trade unions in this study had a form of sexual harassment policy which can be implemented and closely monitored and

supported by an education program. It emerged that women are discouraged by sexist language, jokes and unsolicited sexual attention which male colleagues use at them. The root of the problem may be partly the ignorance of the impact of their actions on the part of men and partly the fact that they face very little consequence as a result of their actions. Most of the unions in this study had also embraced the concept of gender relations as a conceptual tool but there is room for trade unions to adequately capacitate their gender departments and elevate their status in the union structures so that they can be more vibrant and effective. They need to address gender issues seriously and should involve both men and women. Other women leaders and a male gender coordinator impressed upon the fact that women need separate organising so they can have a platform for themselves to speak as the oppressed group and to share stories of success and strategies.

This chapter found that the culture and attitudes of trade unions shows a resistance towards women leaders. Also the structure and scheduling of trade union meetings is not accommodative of the fact that women are expected to carry out other duties at home so meetings drag on late into the night. Trade unions will have to change their culture and their image in the process of involving and attracting more women. There is a need to educate men that they too should be involved in duties at home as exemplified by the parental rights campaign by SACCAWU. The image of trade unions is discussed by Creese (1995) who argues that trade unions need to change masculine assumptions which are embedded in traditional union practices because they keep women away. Tshoaedi and Hlela (2006) also write about the chauvinistic attitudes of trade unions which

maintain the discrimination and subordination of women. In this study, some women highlighted the perpetuation of beliefs that leaders should be men. If trade unions want to be democratic, progressive and relevant they will have to be willing to be transformed so that their internal methods of operation and their external projections and image also become democratic. They cannot hope to include women in the same chauvinistic structures. But as some women in this study commented, when the structures are adequately diluted the culture may inevitably also change.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In an effort to address women's concerns more effectively, Heery and Kelly (1998) and Trebilcock (1991) suggest that women leaders are better than male leaders. In short this means trade unions need to have more women leaders in order to effectively address women's marginalisation and so attract more women into the trade union and into the leadership positions. This means that trade unions should make gender mainstreaming a goal and a priority rather than a secondary issue on their agendas. In speaking with gender coordinators from some unions it is evident that unions do not give priority to women's issues and to gender mainstreaming. Where the policies are in place, there is weak commitment to the implementation and hence women remain marginalised. Opportunities exist for trade unions to strengthen the participation of women in leadership positions by looking at what women's challenges are and how the successful women cope and stepping in to provide a conducive environment.

In line with the findings of this study, it is apparent that trade unions can motivate and encourage women to become leaders by: socialising them well and introducing them to trade unionism and its benefits for them; by identifying potential leaders and literally taking them by the hand; by offering encouragement and persuasion. Role models are important to motivation and the lack of women leaders translates to a lack of role models

for future women leaders. This strengthens the argument for the inclusion of reserved seats for women, the quota system and other forms of affirmative action.

There is a need for trade unions to be visible to young people as evidenced by the fact that most current women trade union leaders were exposed to unionism whilst they were still at university and at that young age they already valued what unions could do for them and for the society. Union work should be portrayed not as an incidental or accidental form of work but as a viable option for a career. An opportunity exists where trade unions can identify potential candidates and nurture them from the grassroots level and maintain a good number of women in positions beginning from the bottom. There is need to monitor and maintain this representation of women all the way to the top structures by which time they will have gained the necessary knowledge and skills.

Union education is a vital tool in maintaining the enthusiasm and commitment of women leaders. Again this presents an opportunity for trade unions to increase the numbers of women in the leadership positions. Though, in chapter three it was seen that women lamented the lack of female role models, it is possible for them to be mentored and apprenticeship-trained by male mentors. In this study women valued the hands-on training that they received from both male and female unionists. It also emerged that even when women are not yet confident to work on their own, they would gain a lot by merely witnessing union proceedings like meetings and disciplinary hearings. This means that women can be accorded non-participatory seats during proceedings in order to stimulate and maintain their interest.

Unions need to consider restructuring of meetings so that they do not take away so much personal time and those with domestic duties can still participate. Meetings are currently structured with the assumption that unionists do not have other duties to attend to. If trade union men were themselves more involved in domestic duties they would also want the meetings to be restructured. Unions need to change their own greedy cultures and re-examine the rationality of the excess demands they make from their activists because the reality is that people do have other obligations and even male unionists should attend to these obligations.

The limitations of a patriarchal society and capitalist mode of production as discussed by Hartmann (1979) and Mitchell (1975) were found to have a profound effect on women's self-confidence which leaves them unable and unwilling to undertake work which does not match their socially ascribed roles whilst men try to maintain their positions of privilege both at home and at work. This basic source of inequality underlies most of the problems that women trade union leaders in this study discussed which related to sex-role stereotyping and the limited of presence of women in leadership positions. NALEDI (2006) document the opinion of some trade unionists that trade unions do not oppress women but the society does. This resonates with the findings in this study that the problem of women leaders is not viewed as a union problem yet that is what it is. As has been shown, trade unions have been slow in acknowledging the problem of women in leadership and hesitant at implementing the gender strategies they propose. Similarly, NALEDI (2006) write extensively about the internalised oppression that affects women

as a result of patriarchal social relations resulting in women not wanting to lead or to be led by other women as was found in this study. This resonates with De Beauvoir's (1953) writing about women's position as the "other" in society and the stereotyping and mystification which allows society to be organised in a patriarchal manner. For trade unions to successfully address the problems of low numbers of women in their structures they will have to be involved in a broader social revolution to remove the injustice of patriarchal mentality. The opportunity here is trade unions to engage in mass campaigns aimed at highlighting the inequality and injustice and suggesting better and more progressive ways social operation. Trade unions cannot then afford to limit themselves to rigid worker issues because the society affects the workers. By not acting against the oppression of women in society, trade unions will actually be enabling its continuation. SACCAWU's Parental rights campaign is a good example of a programme where a union sets out to address issues outside of the workplace and there is room for a diversity of other programs

In chapters three and four it was discussed that trade unions need to encourage and support women's involvement, and similarly, in chapter five, women leaders expressed that they needed support from their unions when they became leaders as they often were left to sink or swim. Here again exists an opportunity for trade unions to retain any women who would have risen to positions of leadership because not all will be able to swim on their own and so the investment from a grassroots level can be lost in the final mile. But it appears that because of stereotypical ideas about women and leadership there is an expectation and a desire for them to sink. Women also related that they found a

method of coping by self-empowerment and self-education. This points to a void in terms of the training and education of women by trade unions and so also points to an area of opportunity. Rigorous training and education of women is necessary and effective in supporting women to take on leadership roles. In this study there were suggestions of the different types of education and training which women thought would be particularly empowering such as leadership, assertiveness and confidence, and political education. The role of hands-on exposure to trade union activities and proceedings was already discussed in chapter 4 and cannot be understated. This suggests an opportunity for trade unions to empower women through education and involvement in union activities.

Finally, the characteristics of women leaders in this study confirmed the notion held by Eagly (2003) that three factors that have led to women become leaders of organisations: women have changed their personal attributes in a masculine direction; leader roles have changed in a direction that incorporates a greater measure of feminine qualities; women leaders have found ways to lead that overcome the role-incongruity between leader roles and the female gender role. Participants in this study all acknowledged that the attitudes and practices of their organisations have changed and are more receptive of women, though the changes are small. Secondly and in line with Eagly's second point the women leaders were practising their own strategies and innovations in their organisations and had steadily risen from the bottom structures to the top structures in this way. Though women leaders did not describe themselves explicitly as atypical women, they did claim to not conform to stereotypes, being more vocal, more aggressive and authoritative than other women and hence their survival in the trade unions. Cockburn (1995) argues similarly

that women trade union leaders have become more like men. Though the women leaders in this study were faced with a lot of challenges because of their status as women performing “men’s work”, they mostly also celebrated the rewards of their work not wanting to trade it in for any other work. It was not all a bed of thorns and all but one of the women in this study found this work to be one of the most fulfilling parts of their lives at a personal psychological level as they did not emphasise the material gains. They enjoyed the sacrifice even though most would have liked to spend more time with their children. Perhaps according to De Beauvoir (1953) this is a manifestation of transcending immanence where women have moved beyond what was expected of them and have chosen to take responsibility for themselves and for society.

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Appendix A- Interview schedule for women trade union leaders

(Follow-up themes and questions in italics if interviewee does not already discuss them in main answer)

Section A

1. What is your position in the Union?

2. Do you hold any other position in the federation or in any other organization?

3. Are you single, married, divorced or widowed?

4. Do you have any children?
   If yes How many and what are their ages?

5. What is your highest level of education?

Section B

6a. May you please tell me about yourself and your early life

- *Family background*
- *Aim to build a rapport at this stage*
- *Parental influences-what were your parents like?*
- *Socialization-what were you taught as a child that you still hold dear today*
- *Did you endure any hardships and how did you overcome these?*

6b. How did you get involved in the trade union movement?

- *Aim to get data on length of service at work*
- *Progression through the ranks*
- *Significant life/work events*
- *Did you have fears, reservations, discouragement*
- *Role models*
- *Did you ever feel shyness, lack of confidence*
- *Did you receive any training that assisted you to rise through the ranks? If so what?*

7. What motivated you to become a trade union leader?
   Note any specific events, family history of involvement, work events, gendered events social injustice etc

- *Did you have role models*
- *Who/what supported and encouraged you*
- *What are your ambitions and dreams*

8. Please narrate in detail HOW you became a leader in your union

- *Elections*

- *Significant events: personal, political, work related*
- *Affirmative action/gender policy*
- *What were your strengths*
- *How did you win the confidence of your peers*
- *What union education did you have and how did it help you in climbing the ranks*
- *Was your family supportive? If not how did she overcome that?*
- *Did you ever think of quitting (if yes why?)*
- *Impact of role models*
- *Did you have to balance your career with other parts of your life? Which ones and how do you feel now about those choices?*
- *What are the rewards for you?*
- *Have you ever felt like you were out of your depth? if yes how did you overcome this*

9. What obstacles or challenges have you faced as a woman rising to a position of leadership?

Note obstacles then follow up on how she overcame each one

Prompt if any of the following are not mentioned

- *Family commitments*
- *Prejudice/sexism*
- *Tokenism*
- *Rubber stamping decisions*
- *Being left out of informal networks/ unable to join informal networks of men*
- *Being expected to do female duties*
- *Being judged more harshly than male counterparts- get examples if applicable*

10. How would you define leadership?

- *How do you describe your leadership style?*
- *Do you feel that you lead differently than others? If so how?*

11. How do you feel about the low numbers of women trade union leaders especially in policy-making positions?

Note possible causes & ask about possible solutions

12. Is there anything else you would like us discuss?

- *Make any appropriate follow-up questions based on what she wishes to discuss*

13. Conclude

Appendix B- Interview schedule for Gender coordinators

Section A- Demographics

1. Name of union

2. Federation

3. Total membership approx

4. Potential membership

5. Female membership

6. Potential female membership

7. Female leadership at local level, Regional level and National level

8. Female membership at executive/policy-making level

Section B

9. What are the gender policies of your union? Prompt if any of the listed are not mentioned:

- *Quota*
- *Training programs*
- *Women's committees*
- *Sexual harassment*

10. What are the achievements of the union in terms of issues that relate to women and equality?

11. Describe the attitudes of the union towards female members and female leaders

12. Attitudes towards women's issues

13. Are women's issues a part of the main agenda of meetings or do they form a separate agenda?

14. What are your particular responsibilities as a gender coordinator?

15. How are the gender policies of the union formulated?

16. How do women become leaders in your union?

17. Which women are more likely to rise to the top leadership?