

Unions: A Guide for Female Academics

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Overview

History of Unions

History of the UCU

Comparison of unions at BMW and RHUL

What does the UCU do for members?

How can UCU membership benefit female academics specifically?

Case studies

Pros and cons of the unionization model

What is a union?

A trade union is 'a continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives' (Webbs, 1926).

Trade unions act as:

labour market institutions

part of a social movement to improve workers' status

interest groups

Labour representation law in the UK

ACAS

Representation organisations: TUC versus CBI

Union recognition: right of union to represent workers

You can have more than one in a workplace

Unions are national and industry-wide (as opposed to: Enterprise unions)

Collective bargaining

European Works Council Directive (1994)

A brief adequate history of unions

19th century: the era of CSR and no welfare!

“Friendly societies”, funeral clubs and co-operatives

Unions evolve out of these associations

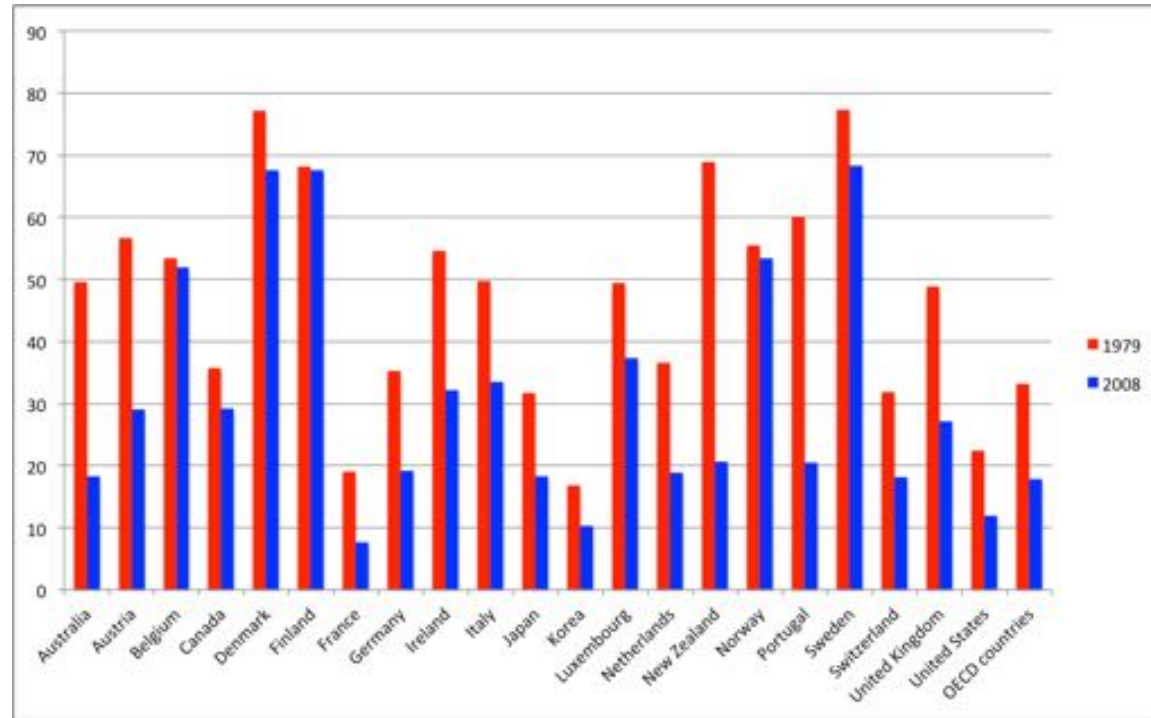
Rise in C20 and especially post-WWII (welfare state era)

1970s: power imbalance in favour of the unions?

1980s: crisis of union-busting

1990s on: power imbalance has swung the other way

Systemic decline? (courtesy of Michael Gold)



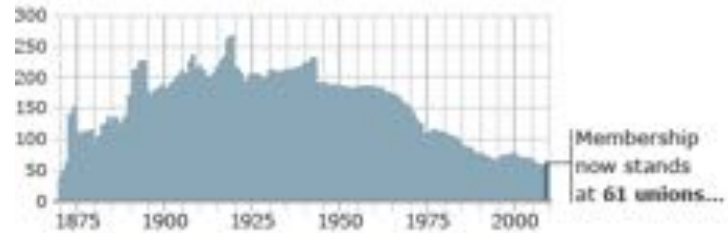
Changes in union membership - UK



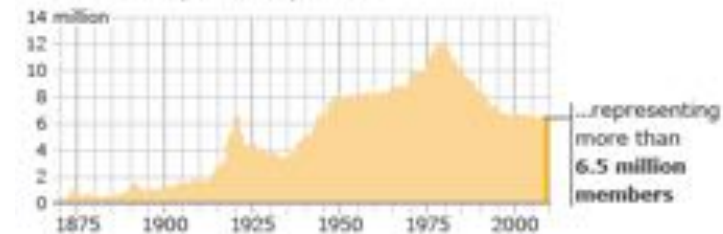
Changing face of UK unions

140 years of union membership

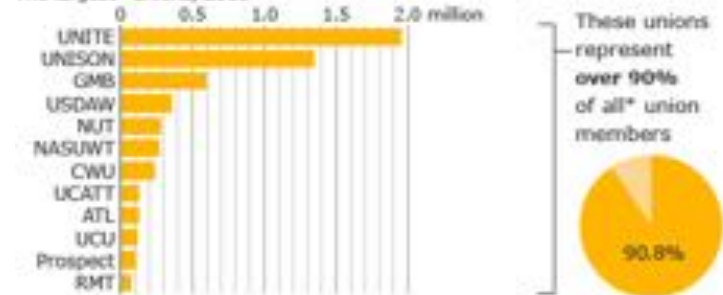
Number of unions in the TUC



Union members represented by the TUC



The largest* unions, 2009



These unions represent over 90% of all* union members



*out of those whose membership figures are given

Source: TUC

History of the UCU

Formed from two unions, AUT and NATFHE, in 2005

First post-secondary union in UK: Association of Teachers in Technical Institutes (ATTI), founded 1904

Association of University Lecturers founded 1917, becoming AUT in 1919 (when they agreed to include professors)

1955– AUT recognised as negotiating body

1966– ATTI first teacher's union to join the TUC

1976– NATFHE formed (to include FE college lecturers, and later prison teachers)



Comparison of BMW and RHUL

BMW

TGW

Near-universal membership

Class differences

Presence of EWC

Main issues: line speed rates, overtime,
the Portuguese Incident

Presence of informal resistance

RHUL

UCU (formerly AUT)

About 1/3 membership (some
departments more than others)

Fewer class differences (sometimes
leading to other conflicts)

No works councils

Main issues: Pay, casualisation, pensions,
equality

Presence of informal resistance



What does the UCU do?

Bargaining and negotiating over salary, pension, working conditions (NB: for all staff, not just members)

Joint Negotiating Committees

Casework services

Member representation (in disciplinary meetings, investigations, grievance tribunals)

Legal cases

Industrial action

Representing lecturers' interests at national level

Organising awareness campaigns



Burnt out?

More than four out of five UCU members say they suffer stress at work

UCU ANTI-STRESS AND BULLYING WEEK
19-23 NOVEMBER 2012

UCU
University and College Union

www.ucu.org.uk

The poster features five white candles of increasing height from left to right. The first candle is unlit, while the other four are lit, with smoke rising from them. The text 'Burnt out?' is positioned above the candles, with 'Burnt' in white and 'out?' in pink. Below the candles, a pink banner contains the text 'More than four out of five UCU members say they suffer stress at work'. At the bottom, a dark blue banner contains the text 'UCU ANTI-STRESS AND BULLYING WEEK 19-23 NOVEMBER 2012'. The UCU logo and website address are at the very bottom.

What do caseworkers do?

Source of advice

Confidentiality

Representation in both informal and formal meetings with HoD, HR, senior management

Access to UCU resources

Can, to a limited extent, track patterns (the RHUL “protected characteristics” survey)

Difference between caseworkers and union representatives

How can unions benefit female academics?

Representation (formal and informal)

Information

Advice and counselling

Support and social networking

Response to the #metoo movement: UCU hotline

Alternative paths to promotion (see also Andre Clarke 2017)

Royal Holloway: Discrimination tribunal

Schafer v Royal Holloway (2011)

Test case on professorial salaries and promotions

Settled out of court but led to positive action on RHUL's part

FOI request

Related cases:

Frank v. Royal Holloway (2012)

Bradley v Royal Holloway (2014)

“In evidence submitted to Reading Employment Tribunal, the union disclosed that the average national pay gap was 7.5 per cent in 2007 to 2008. At Royal Holloway, it was 10.6 per cent.

The panel heard that there was no pay structure in place for professors, who, once appointed, were invited to apply for each pay increase by completing a self-assessment form.”

(Daily Telegraph, 4 June 2011)

Royal Holloway: The Redundancy Case

Announcement of 30% planned redundancies on grounds of need for austerity, including closure of Classics Department

RHUL-UCU: Investigation and information campaign

College in profit by over £4m

Classics campaign: Awareness and national exposure

Working with threatened academics

Negotiating smaller number of “natural attrition” redundancies (e.g. early retirement payments)

The Current USS dispute

What's it about?

What's the history?

Why does it matter?

What will it involve?



Problems with the unionization model

Does it work for white collar/skilled labour?

Lecturers are not “workers” but “talent”

Can also be employers/managers– conflict of interest

How can we take industrial action in a way that only affects our employers?

The general issue: unions skewing towards white, male and older

Counterpoint: Isn't this just a general issue of patriarchy?

Although unions are internationalising they are still late to the party

Advantages relative to other options

Alternatives: enterprise unions, JCCs, works councils, labour/management partnerships

Unions have the advantage of being national, objective, and having legal recognition

Partnership organisations tend to benefit employers in practice

Works councils have reduced rights in law, and usually work in partnership with unions

(again, thanks to MG for the stats)

How effective are the non-union bodies compared to unions?

Employee perceptions of effectiveness:

1. Winning fair pay increases and bonuses:

TU: 43%, Non-TU: 19%

2. Protecting workers against unfair treatment:

TU: 66%, Non-TU: 45%

3. Promoting equal opportunities for women and ethnic minorities:

TU: 65%, Non-TU: 36%

Some useful resources for members

www.ucu.org.uk

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/working/rights-trade-unions>

<http://www.acas.org.uk/>

<http://cdbu.org.uk/> (Council for the Defense of British Universities)

UCU sexual harassment support helpline: **0800 138 8724**

Conclusions and Ways Forward

Ask Me Anything, as they say on Reddit!