**5th Equality, Diversity and Inclusion International Conference, 2012, Toulouse, France**

**23-25 July, 2012, Toulouse Business School**

**Conference theme: country and comparative perspectives on equality, diversity and inclusion**

**Stream Title: Leadership theory: disrupting the ‘discourse’**

**Women Leaders in Science: a case study of a UK public sector organisation**

This paper analyses the careers and networks of female senior scientists who are employed in leadership positions, in a male-dominated, UK public sector organisation engaged in global scientific research. The paper contributes to two bodies of research on women in science and the gendering of the knowledge-based economy that have not previously been considered together through case study research. This is surprising, given the rising interest in knowledge workers and scientists' position as 'archetypal knowledge workers' (Bell 1974). The paper reveals that while the female scientists who are the focus of this paper may be 'bucking the trend' by enjoying quite rapid career progression and a long length of service, they remain tokens amongst their male peers. They are also 'stuck' below the 'glass ceiling' with very few options to progress or leave and continue to face gender-related career challenges.  This could be partly attributed to a lack of socialisation into the networks that help future progression and a reluctance to network strategically. The paper challenges knowledge work as a gender-free concept by demonstrating that when a gender lens is applied, women fare less well than their male counterparts in a knowledge-based economy.

*Dr Susan Durbin, Reader in Employment Studies, Centre for Employment Studies Research, Faculty of Business and Law, University of the West of England, Frenchay Campus, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol, BS16 1QY*

*Email: sue.durbin@uwe.ac.uk*