Union activism: an exploration of the differential consequences of employee and freelancer experiences

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to explore how employee and freelancer lay active members of the UK union BECTU (Broadcast, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union), who are not employees of the union, view the effects of their activism on their professional and personal lives. In doing so it discusses whether participants' views are affected by their definition of the term 'activist', and by the nature of their relationship with the union. Central to this study is the question of whether participants' responses might differ depending on their employee or freelancer employment status.

In order to contextualise the study background desk based research into the existing literature is undertaken. It explores the key themes of trade union activism and employee and freelancer employment status, and the relevance of a range of theoretical perspectives is discussed. Overviews of the relevant aspects of the UK broadcast industries, and of BECTU's history and structure, are provided in order to further inform the research.

A combined methods approach is adopted, providing qualitative and quantitative data in order to deliver comprehensive answers to the main research questions. The primarily qualitative research involves semi-structured interviews conducted with high profile union activists. A questionnaire completed by delegates attending BECTU's Annual Conference in 2014 provides quantitative data to complement and enrich the findings of the qualitative data.

This thesis contributes to the existing literature about trade union activism by uncovering how its participants define the term 'activism' and assessing the effects of activism on individual members rather than on unions as entities. It illustrates the importance of seeking to understand and utilise participants' definitions of value laden terms, rather than depending on researchers' initial interpretations. It finds that although there are some differences between the effects of trade union activism on employees and on freelancers, how individuals' view their relationship with the union influences the importance that they place on those effects.

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Abbreviations

ABS	Association of Broadcasting Staffs
ACT	Association of Cine-Technicians
ACTT	Association of Cinematograph Television and Allied Technicians
A&E	Arts and Entertainment Division of BECTU
BBC	British Broadcasting Company
BECTU	Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union
BETA	Broadcasting and Entertainment Trades Alliance
Cyfle	(Opportunity) Welsh Television Training Company
ENG	Electronic News Gathering (ENG)
ETU	Electrical Trades Union
FAA	Film Artistes' Association
FT2	Film and Television Freelance Training
FTW	Transcription software
GFTU	General Federation of Trade Unions
HR	Human Resources
IB	Independent Broadcasting Division of BECTU
IPSE	Association of Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed
IBA	Independent Broadcasting Authority
ITA	Independent Television Authority
ITC	Independent Television Commission
ITV	Independent Television
LPD	London Production Division of BECTU
MU	Musicians' Union
NATTKE	National Association of Theatrical Television and Kine Employees

NEC	National Executive Committee
NUJ	National Union of Journalists
NVivo	Qualitative data analysis software
ONS	The Office for National Statistics
PACT	Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television
PCG	Professional Contractors Group
PLI	Public Liability Insurance
PSC	Portable Single Camera
RPD	Regional Production Division of BECTU
S4C	Sianel Pedwar Cymru – the Fourth Channel in Wales
SPSS	Software package for statistical analysis
SSC	Sector Skills Council
STV	Scottish Television
TPB	Theory of planned behaviour
TSW	Television South West
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UCATT	Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians
ULR	Union Learning Representative
WTW	Willingness to work
YMF	BECTU Young Members' Forum

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Chapter 1

Contextualisation

The aim of this research is to conduct a comparative study of the experiences of two different categories of activist lay members of BECTU, the UK Broadcast, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union. In the first category are those members who work under a contract for services and are thus not directly employed by the end user – in this research referred to as ‘freelancers’. In the second category are those members who are directly employed members of staff within broadcasting organisations, working under a contract of employment – in this research referred to as ‘employees’.

My purpose is to consider whether freelancer activist members of BECTU view their activism and its effects on their lives differently than activist members who are employees within broadcast organisations. My initial definition of the term ‘activist’ was ‘an individual who was actively involved in union activities at a local as well as a national level and who was willing to commit some of their time and energies to the union’, but who was not employed by the union, often referred to as lay activists. Chapter 3 outlines how, in order to inform and address the aims of this research, the following research questions were formulated:

1. How is trade union activism understood by lay members of the broadcast union BECTU, and does their understanding of the term ‘activist’ vary depending upon their employee or freelancer status?
2. In what ways might activist lay members of the broadcast union BECTU view the effects of their trade union activism on their professional and personal lives, and might their views differ depending on the employee or freelancer status of the activist?

i. In what ways might lay activists' relationship with the union affect how they view the impact of their activism on their professional and personal lives?

Previous research which involved freelancer workers concentrated mainly on the meanings of, and the motivations for, activism (Fiorito *et al*., 2014; Fiorito *et al*., 2011; Gall and Fiorito, 2012a; Gall and Fiorito, 2012b). The importance and influence of networks and networking within the UK broadcast and film industries, and the implications of informal networks in terms of trade union membership and renewal strategies were explored by Saundry *et al*., 2006; Antcliff *et al*., 2007; Saundry *et al*., 2007; Saundry *et al*., 2012. Trade union representation of workers outside traditional workplaces, and how BECTU (the union which represent workers in the UK broadcast and film industries) represents its freelancer membership was addressed by Heery and Abbott, 2000; Heery and Adler 2004; Heery *et al*., 2004; Heery, 2005; Heery, 2009; Holgate and McKay, 2009.

What have been less explored are the ways in which changes in employment practices in the UK broadcasting industries during the late 20th and early 21st centuries have affected individual workers – many of whom have been forced into freelancing as the 'expectations of a job for life were erased' (Paterson, 2012, p.93). My research therefore aims to address a gap in the existing literature by exploring how lay activists in the UK broadcast union BECTU view the effects of their trade union activism on their professional and personal lives, and whether their views are affected by their employee or freelancer status.

It should be noted that although BECTU represents workers, other than performers and journalists, in the UK film, broadcast, theatre, and live entertainment industries, this study concentrates primarily on the workforce in the broadcast industries, because it is predominantly within those industries that both freelancer and employee workers co-exist (Saundry, 2001; Saundry *et al.*, 2007).

Kelly (1998) and Simms *et al.* (2013) defined activists in terms of their contribution to group identity and their advocacy of collective organisation. For the purposes of this research the activists within BECTU I initially identified for interview were selected because they were actively involved in union activities at a local as well as at a national level. Specifically they were in elected positions on various committees, or delegates at the union's annual conference: effectively, according to my initial definition, those who were prepared to commit some of their time and energies to the union. This definition was utilised because the study focussed on activists' own views about the effects of their activism rather than investigating the mechanics of members' activism and its consequences, or mobilisation theory in terms of its effects on the trade union movement as a whole (Tilly, 1978, Scott, 1992, Kelly, 1998).

The importance of contextualising research was explored by Geertz (1973), Greenfield (2002), Becker (2007), Creswell (2009), Matthews and Ross (2010), Punch (2014), James and Slater (2014) and Bryman (2016). They emphasised that the researcher must take into account, and ensure that the reader is aware of, how contextual influences affect research subjects' actions and motivations. Bryman (2017) stated that:

> 'Many qualitative studies provide a detailed account of what goes on in the setting being investigated and often seem to be full of apparently trivial details. However, these details are frequently important for the qualitative researcher, because of their significance for their subjects and also because the details provide an account of the context within which people's behaviour takes place… they typically emphasise the importance of the contextual understanding of social behaviour. This means that behaviour, values, or whatever is being examined must be understood in context' (pp.394-395).

Thus, in order to facilitate readers' understanding of this research (Matthews and Ross, 2010), it is important to examine developments

in the broadcast industries, in the context of the political, cultural and technological changes faced by those industries during the late 20th and early 21st centuries, and how those changes have affected the employment status of the workforce in those industries. This chapter therefore begins by presenting a brief history of the UK television and radio broadcast industries in order to contextualise how the changes in the broadcast institutions affected those who worked for them.

Further, because my study explores the views of trade union members in BECTU it is equally important to outline some of BECTU's history, its administrative and organisational structures, and its position in respect of the workforce in the industries it represents. This chapter therefore moves on to illustrate how the employment status of BECTU's membership (either employee or freelancer) has varied as a result of changing work patterns. It also explores how the views of its employee and freelancer members in relation to the effects of their activism on their professional and personal lives may have been shaped by their association with the union itself. Finally, the chapter also highlights the ways in which the relationship between state and broadcasting contributed to or supported a particular form of industrial relations which in turn has had a specific effect on activism and activists.

1.1 Broadcast industries: political and cultural climate

There was a body of opinion that Margaret Thatcher's Conservative governments between 1979 and 1990 were responsible for the restructuring of UK broadcasting (Williams, 2010; Goodwin, 1998; Hood and Tabary-Peterssen, 1997; Davidson, 1992). In reality, as is demonstrated below, in exploring the history of broadcasting it became clear that the sector had been subjected to restructuring and change which affected workers and their unions from the very earliest days of radio broadcasting from its establishment in 1922 (Crisell, 2002; Barnett and Curry, 1994; Scannnell and Cardiff, 1991). How to use or control the media, and television in particular had been issues

of interest to succeeding governments (Crissell, 2002), and the object of a succession of governmental inquiries and Acts of Parliament. The resulting changes in legislation, media ownership and governance, the desire to exercise political control over the media, and its capacity to generate large financial resources also impacted on working practices, on the status of the workforce, and on the unions that represented them (Paterson, 2012).

In autumn 1922 a group of wireless manufacturers set up the British Broadcasting Company Limited, in order to 'transmit programmes of speech and music and thus encourage the sales of sets' (Hood and Tabary-Peterssen, 1997, p.29). The first programme was broadcast on 14 November 1922 (Barnett and Curry, 1994). Teer-Tomaselli (2015) notes that in the 1920s there was international debate about whether broadcasting should be funded by the state or by commercial interests. To address this issue, two government inquiries into British broadcasting were instigated between 1922 and 1927; their findings informed the future funding of the company. The Sykes Committee Report (August, 1923) considered advertising, 'but rejected it on economic rather than cultural grounds' (Barnett and Curry, 1994, p.6). It was feared that larger firms would be able to pay for airtime, while smaller companies would be priced out of this unprecedented commercial opportunity (*ibid.*). Sykes also argued that the State should continue its control over broadcasting because of its potential ability to shape public opinion and to influence the life of the nation. Others agreed that such a powerful medium should not become an unrestricted commercial entity (Teer-Tomaselli, 2015).

The BBC's reporting of the General Strike in 1926 highlighted the difficulties encountered by the publicly funded broadcaster in representing 'no particular interest, but the interests of all' (Scannell and Cardiff, 1991, p.108). Both during and after the General Strike there was much discussion about the BBC's coverage; it was acknowledged that it differed from events witnessed by the public, and its ability to present unbiased opinion was questioned. Even

internally the BBC acknowledged that its news coverage of the Strike had undermined its credibility with the public, and that its objectivity had been compromised (Scannell and Cardiff, 1991).

However, the Crawford Committee Report (1926) praised the BBC and its employees for the high standard of its output, and recommended a 'Public Commission operating in the Public Interest' (Barnett and Curry, 1994, p.6). John Reith, the first General Manager of the BBC, supported the move to a public corporation, and was adamant that 'his new charge would not become a propaganda tool for politicians' (*ibid.*), but should be a medium which engendered an appreciation of high culture and civilisation in people of all classes, 'a medium that should actively *shape* society, fulfilling its purpose to educate, entertain and inform' (Reith, 1934, quoted in Teer-Tomaselli, 2015, p.81) [emphasis in original]. Thus, on January 1, 1927 the private company became a public corporation, funded by a licence fee paid by all radio owners.

In 1936, the Moyne Committee Report on broadcasting recommended that the BBC should undertake to provide a television service in addition to its radio output (Hood and Tabary-Peterssen, 1997). In 1939, when the war against Germany was declared, television broadcasts ceased so that German bombers could not use the television transmitter at Alexander Palace as a radio beacon (Hood and Tabary-Peterssen, 1997). Radio programming continued throughout the war, albeit after much internal soul-searching within the BBC about the control exerted by the government over the corporation's output, and the 'behind-the-scenes planning based on the inevitability of war, and the front-of-house policy that continued to evade that certainty' (Scannell and Cardiff, 1991, p.88). It was resolved that although the BBC would not have its own editorial policy, nonetheless it should try to balance the official view with informed opinion, even if that opinion was critical of the government (Scannell and Cardiff, 1991).

From 1946, when television transmissions recommenced, until 1955, the BBC maintained its monopoly of the airwaves, all output came from Broadcasting House in London, and there remained a perceived entrenched ‘tradition of co-operation and collusion between the governors of the BBC and the government of the day’ (Hood and Tabary-Peterssen, 1997). The Beveridge Committee, set up in 1949 to ‘consider the constitution, control and future development of sound and television broadcasting in the UK’ (O’Sullivan 2003, p.32), published its report in 1951. Beveridge criticized the BBC’s ’Londonization, going on to secretiveness and self-satisfaction, and ending up with a dangerous sense of mission became a sense of divine right’ (quoted in Curran and Seaton, 2010, p.153). Despite this, the Beveridge Committee Report finally recommended the continuation of the BBC’s monopoly, emphatically rejecting any form of advertising to raise revenue. When the Labour Government was defeated in 1951, the incoming Conservative Government, keen to challenge the BBC’s monopoly of the airwaves, rushed through a White Paper advocating ‘some element of competition’ (O’Sullivan 2003, p.32). The ensuing campaign for a new form of commercial television, funded by advertising, eventually led to *The Television Act of 1954*, and the launch of Independent Commercial Television (Crisell, 2002).

Commercial television was launched in 1955 in the form of a plethora of Regional Independent Television franchised companies (ITV) based throughout the UK and covering regional as well as national events (Williams, 2010). It should be noted that *The Television Act of 1954* also required ITV to ‘be public service broadcasters in ethos and practice’ (Rudin, 2011, p.19). Consequently, although ITV successfully challenged the BBC’s monopoly, initially it only replaced it with a similarly acquiescent duopoly. However, because of the relatively secure income streams from advertising and the licence fee, this duopoly created an audience which was used to, and expected ‘a large proportion of domestically produced material, with

high production values, across the full range of programme genres' (Goodwin, 1998, p.16). To this end, both the BBC and ITV companies recruited and trained their employees to 'make the highest quality radio and television programmes' (Barnett and Curry, 1994, p.7), thereby making an investment 'for the nation's skills base' (p.9).

After a difficult start, the ITV companies quickly became extremely profitable, leading Roy Thomson, the Chairman of Scottish Television (STV), to state 'in an ill-advised aside that ownership of a commercial TV franchise was like a licence to print your own money' (O'Sullivan, 2003, p.33), which focused government attention onto their finances. The ITV network was regulated by the Independent Television Authority (ITA). As with the BBC Board of Governors, the ITA's members were government appointees. As well as running the television transmitters, the ITA was responsible for awarding the regional franchises, and monitoring the output in terms of 'impartiality' and 'taste and decency' (Williams, 2010, p.151).

The Pilkington Committee was appointed in 1960 to investigate 'the excessive profits of the ITV companies and the 'decline' in cultural standards' (*ibid.*). Published in 1962, its report praised the BBC and rewarded it with the allocation of its new channel, BBC2. ITV was criticised for trivialising its output, and for focussing on the lowest standards of behaviour. The ITA was also condemned for not exerting sufficient control over the network. As a result, *The Television Act 1964* brought in by the Conservative government, tightened official control over ITV; imposed a profit levy; and increased the ITA's powers in awarding franchises, and in the scheduling of programmes (Williams, 2010). The Act emphasised the public service aspect of commercial broadcasting, and its 'cosy duopoly' (Hood and Tabary-Peterssen, 1997, p.29*)* with the BBC continued throughout the 1960s and early 1970s (Crisell, 2002).

The Annan Committee *Report on The Future of Broadcasting* (1977) made a list of recommendations intended to 'liberate broadcasting

from the straitjacket of duopoly' (Crisell, 2002, p.203). In reality they proposed a host of new regulatory bodies to oversee the BBC, the ITV network, and the new fourth channel, which should be a 'network catering for interests and minorities presently ill served by television' (*ibid.*). The incoming Conservative government in 1979 set aside most of the committee's recommendations, opting to simply place the fourth channel's regulation in the hands of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA, as the ITA was renamed in 1972). *The Broadcasting Act 1981* paved the way to the launch, on 2 November 1982, of Channel 4 with a mandate to provide 'high quality programmes for minorities' (Crisell, 2002, p.207) and to offer its viewers a different viewpoint to those expressed by the duopoly of BBC and ITV.

In 1985 the Conservative government commissioned the Peacock Inquiry to explore alternative funding for the BBC, the government's preferred option being the introduction of advertising (Willams, 2010). At a seminar in Downing Street in 1987, Margaret Thatcher had addressed the broadcasters thus: '"You gentlemen are the last bastion of restrictive practices"' (Davidson, 1992, p.10). It was in this climate, coupled with the Thatcher government's well established aversion to trade unionism (*ibid.*), that the Peacock committee conducted its deliberations. Surprisingly, despite the Peacock committee being hand-picked by the government as known Conservative supporters – Peacock had identified himself as 'a committed free marketeer' (Williams, 2010, p.170) - the Peacock Report did not support the introduction of advertising into the BBC. However, the report did re-define broadcasting as the broadcasting *industry* – no longer a public service, but 'a commercial activity rather than one which had social and cultural significance' (*ibid.*) open to internal as well as external competition, and with 'consumers' rather than viewers' (Hood and Tabary-Peterssen, 1997, p.28).

The Peacock report resulted in the 1988 White Paper *Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality* – the order of the title itself

reflecting a perhaps subsequently oversimplified Thatcherite philosophy that competition and 'the market would ensure quality' (Davidson, 1992, p.14). The White paper made specific proposals, including:

- the IBA be replaced by a less hands-on regulator – the Independent Television Commission (ITC);
- the next ITV franchises to be auctioned and to go to the highest bidder; Channel 4 to sell its own advertising;
- and, significantly in terms of the workforce, both BBC and ITV to commission at least 25% of its programming from independent producers (Goodwin, 1998).

The resulting changes in the regulation of the broadcasting industries, and the move to internal as well as external markets for programme production, ultimately led to the growth of the Publisher Broadcaster Model. These are broadcasting companies which do not produce their own programming, but buy it in from outside producers.

Significantly, *The Broadcasting Act 1990* also allowed the ITC, in exceptional circumstances, to award the franchise to a lower bid (Goodwin, 1998). Subsequently, the 'exceptional circumstances' were defined in a sub-clause as a lower bidder being able to provide higher quality programming than that proposed by the highest bidder (*ibid.).* With these and other amendments the proposals in the 1988 White Paper were introduced in *The Broadcasting Act 1990* which legislated for the new auctioning process for the ITV franchises which would further promote the free market within broadcasting (Goodwin, 1998).

The 1991 ITV franchise auction saw the existing franchise holders bidding to retain their status as producer-broadcasters (both making and transmitting their own programmes) whereas the challengers were publisher-broadcasters, in the same category as Channel 4, buying in their programming from independent producers (Goodwin, 1998). One noted example of the vagaries of the franchise auction, where the ITC decisions were final and could not be questioned, was

that of Television South West (TSW) based in Plymouth. TSW was a successful and profitable ITV company with an established presence in the region, and a full time, professional staff of some 300 workers (Davidson, 1992). In 1991 TSW bid £16.1 million for the regional franchise, based on its past experience of managing the organisation and producing quality programming, only to lose out to a bid of £7.8 million from Westcountry television, a publisher-broadcaster organisation. Thus around 300 qualified professional employees lost their jobs. Some were employed by Westcountry, some retired, or moved to other employment areas, but some were undoubtedly forced into the freelancer labour market (Davidson, 1992).

This pattern was replicated throughout the other ITV companies, and 'work in programme production in the United Kingdom in the late 1980s became increasingly synonymous with short-term [freelancer] contracts' (Paterson, 2012, p.92). Additionally the closed shop, whereby 'union membership was a pre-condition of employment' (Heery, 2004, p.23), was abolished under *The Employment Act 1990.* These two factors would have far reaching implications for broadcast workers and their unions, as is illustrated later in this chapter.

In 1992 John Birt, previously director general of London Weekend Television, was appointed Director-General of the BBC, introducing an internal market within the BBC, and the concept of Producer Choice, whereby producers were free to employ outside programme makers if it could be shown that they could produce programmes at a lower price than the BBC's own resources. For the BBC employees who had previously created the programmes the internal market resulted in 3,500 job losses between 1991 and 1993 (Williams, 2010) and a consequent further expansion of the freelancer workforce.

Partly as a result of lobbying by the ITV companies, and the large newspaper groups, with Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation at the forefront, *The Communications Act 2003*, brought in by the Labour government, 'removed most of the remaining limitations on cross-

media ownership’ (Williams, 2010, pp.237-238). These changes paved the way for ITV plc – a network with much less regional input, and largely based on the Publisher Broadcaster Model. Consequently, and combined with the BBC’s growing dependence on independent production as a consequence of Producer Choice, full time staff employment opportunities in broadcasting became a rarity, replaced by short term freelancer contracts and unpaid internships (Guile and Lahiff, 2012). The 2003 Act also resulted in an increase in Rupert Murdoch’s interest and influence across the media industries (Williams, 2010). The context outlined above in relation to state regulation of the sector helps to explain why the numbers of directly employed have fallen, and why freelancer working has become more commonplace.

1.2 Changes in the workforce

As has been illustrated above, ‘freelancer employment had always been important in the film and television industries in the United Kingdom’ (Paterson 2012, p.92) as both the commercial and public broadcasters utilised the services of appropriately skilled freelancer workers to supplement their programme making abilities. Because of the regulatory changes brought in by *The Broadcasting Act 1990*, and the resulting mass redundancies from the ITV companies (Davidson, 1992) the percentage of freelancers in broadcasting had risen from 39 per cent in 1989 to 60 per cent in 1996 (Nolan and Slater, 2003). Many of the new franchise production companies operated mainly as publisher-broadcasters, employing very few production employees, and relying heavily on the independent production sector and the freelancer workforce.

This trend continued and was expanded in 1992 with the continuing growth of Channel 4, and the launch of many subsequent satellite and cable companies, which operate solely as publisher-broadcasters, with no in-house production facilities and technical staff, instead buying in programmes from independent production

companies dependent on a freelancer workforce (Crisell, 2002). It should be noted that, although other industries were similarly affected by regulatory shifts, ‘it would be misleading to suggest that the disintegration and compression of internal job structures have been all-embracing trends’ (Nolan and Slater, 2003 p.69). At that time the most notable increase in freelancer working was within the broadcast industries.

The shift in employment status within the broadcast workforce from employee to freelancer is reflected in the continuing increase in freelancer membership within BECTU. Table 1 illustrates that in 1991 BECTU’s membership within its broadcast and film divisions consisted of 34% freelancers and 66% employees, but that by 2014 those figures had reversed, with 67% freelancers and 33% employees.

Table 1: BECTU membership breakdown 1991-2014

	1991	1997	2000	2010	2014
A. Broadcast Film Freelancer	11696 (34% of Broadcast/ Film)	12124 (53% of Broadcast/ Film)	9009 (46%of Broadcast/ Film)	11288 (57% of Broadcast/ Film)	12428 (67%of Broadcast/ Film)
B. Broadcast/ Film Employees	22856 (66% of Broadcast/ Film)	10786 (47% of Broadcast/ Film)	10597 (54%of Broadcast/ Film)	8362 (43% of Broadcast/ Film)	6213 (33%of Broadcast/ Film)
C. Broadcast/ Film Total	34552 (76% of total)	22910 (78% of total)	19606 (76% of total)	19650 (77% of total)	18641 (75% of total)
D. A&E Total (Theatres, etc.)	10654 (24% of total)	6328 (22% of total)	6193 (24% of total)	5725 (23% of total)	6160 (25% of total)
TOTAL of C and D	45206	29238	25799	25375	24801

Source: BECTU Annual Conference Agenda: Membership Reports 1991, 1997, 2000, 2010, 2014

Paterson (2012) found that many of those who were previously employees of broadcast organisations became freelancer workers as production companies ‘became increasingly reliant on the attachment of specific freelancer workers with good reputations’ (p.93). However,

the reality that freelancers' good reputations could be affected by opinions about their contribution to, and the success of, the last production on which they worked was also uncovered by Paterson (2012) who stated that 'the instantiation and later dissemination of the intangible reputation account is tied to performance on the project and the critical reception for the programme' (p.93). The shift from employee to a more precarious freelancer status also affected how BECTU members viewed the subsequent changes in their relationship with, and the effects of their membership of the union, which are further explored later in this study.

1.3 Technological developments and their impact on the workforce

Concurrently, and escalating in pace from the late 1980s, broadcasting technology has changed at a fast and furious pace (Crisell, 2002), and with those changes came changes in the labour market. These resulted in additional challenges for the newly amalgamated broadcasting union, BECTU whose origins and history are outlined later in this chapter. Up until the mid-1980s, television programming was still, for the most part, shot and edited on film, a costly and time-consuming process which restricted the currency of the footage broadcast. Overseas news materials could take days to arrive in the UK for transmission (Hood and Tabary-Peterssen, 1997). The introduction during the early 1990s of Electronic News Gathering (ENG) and Portable Single Camera (PSC), recording onto a tape format which could be delivered by instantaneous transmission 'down the line' from a properly equipped satellite studio to the main transmission centre, revolutionised news gathering (Hood and Tabary-Peterssen, 1997). Subsequent digital technological developments, adopted during the 2000s, introduced further immediacy by enabling individuals to 'shoot-edit' on the road, and to digitally transfer the edited package from a vehicle equipped with its own satellite dish to the transmission centre.

Ultimately these developments paved the way towards the current situation where members of the public may record events via a digital telephone, send them to the broadcaster, and see them transmitted almost immediately. Hyman's (2001) assertion that craft workers 'whose status was undermined by technological innovation… by the emergence of cheap standardized production for mass markets… or by the challenge of new entrepreneurs with little or no respect for traditional practices' (2001, p.74) reflects the experiences of those in the broadcasting industries. They have seen a rapid and ever-changing escalation in technology which increasingly replaces professionally produced media content with widely available amateur footage which is immediately broadcast either via the web or mainstream television (Paterson, 2012).

The continuous changes in legislation and in technology outlined above inevitably had a considerable impact on the workforce in the broadcast industries. Until the mid-1990s, both the BBC and the ITV companies' workers were provided with ongoing training opportunities which enabled them to keep pace with the rapid technological changes, but which also provided them with the craft skills to create polished and professional programmes. Varlaam's (1989) report for the *Institute of Manpower Studies* 'identified the increasing problems associated with the growing freelancer labour market, particularly for the future training of a skilled workforce' (Paterson 2012, p.92) and following the emergence of more publisher-broadcasters, with only a very small number of core employees, freelancers have been forced to access and pay for their own training opportunities in order to remain competitive (Guile, 2012).

Paterson (2012) further explores the effects of the digital revolution on working practices, specifically the decreasing numbers of full-time employees in broadcasting, and the subsequent increasing numbers of freelancer workers. In order to further contextualise this research (Bryman, 2016) a brief history of BECTU is outlined below, in order to illustrate how the union itself, its membership profile and its activists'

roles have developed in order to meet the changing requirements of the broadcast industries. It describes the different cultures of, and the realities faced by its founding unions, which affected members' views in terms of their own activism and its effects on their professional and personal lives.

1.4 BECTU's history

BECTU is a specialist, organising union which represents the interests of both employees and freelancers across a range of craft and creative professions in film, broadcasting, theatre, cinema, leisure and live events. BECTU was formed on 2nd January 1991 by the amalgamation of the Association of Cinematograph Television and allied Technicians (ACTT) and the Broadcasting and Entertainment Trades Alliance (BETA). The ACTT had been founded in 1933. BETA was itself a product of the amalgamation in 1984 of the Association of Broadcasting Staffs (ABS, founded 1940) and the National Association of Theatrical Television and Kine Employees (NATTKE, origins dating to 1890). On 7th July 1995 the Film Artistes' Association (FAA, founded 1927) transferred its engagements to BECTU (BECTU Rule Book 2014).

The Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT) (previously The Association of Cine-Technicians - ACT) and the Broadcasting and Entertainment Trades Alliance (BETA) were the founding unions of BECTU. BETA's members worked in the BBC and in theatres, and were for the most part full time staff employees. The Association of Cine-Technicians (ACT) had been set up in 1933 in response to the rapid development of the British film industry. Historically and currently film production is split into three distinct periods: pre-production which involves researchers, writers, producers and other administrative production workers; production which involves specialist film technicians in crafts including directing, camera, sound, lighting, special effects, grips, electricians; and post production which involves producers, directors and editors.

In the early years of UK film production, film technicians worked long hours during production, typically 10 hours a day, and often much longer. In between productions, they were unemployed. They were, effectively, freelancer workers, not by choice, but because of the way the film industry has operated involving distinct periods of high level activity interspersed with periods of inactivity. In the laboratories, where the filmed footage was processed and developed, employees also worked long hours for poor pay, but were in full time employment. Out of the irregular nature of freelancer employment arose the idea of a union to represent film technicians, and ‘in a world of massive commercial and political power blocs, of unemployment, fear, exploitation and, often, a paralysing apathy’ (Lockett, 1983, p. 160) ACT was born.

Initially the union operated as an employment bureau for its members, negotiating fair pay and conditions with individual producers – a time consuming and laborious task. However, following a threat of strike action by the laboratory workers in 1937, serious discussions began with the Film Employers’ Federation which represented most of the film studios and producers. This was the first instance of employee union members supporting their freelancer colleagues, and this reciprocal arrangement continued and developed throughout ACT’s, ACTT’s and BECTU’s history (Avis, 1983). Although the Film Employers’ Federation was soon superseded by four separate Employers’ Associations - the British Film Producers Association, the Association of Short Film Producers, the Association of Film Laboratory Employers, and the Newsreel - the precedent for negotiating with ACT on behalf of its members had been established and continued with these new bodies. George Elvin, ACT’s first General Secretary was the son of H.H, Elvin the then Chairman of the TUC, and Anthony Asquith, the renowned film director, was ACT’s first President and son of Herbert Henry Asquith, long time liberal MP and Prime Minister 1908 to 1916. They were both ‘able to avail themselves of their respective family political traditions and

experience' (Avis, 1983, p.17) to ensure that *The Cinematograph Act 1938* contained a fair wages clause, which effectively ensured that to qualify as a British film under the terms of the Act, employers had to honour ACT's pay, terms and conditions. As a result, in 1939 ACT negotiated its first industry-wide collective agreement on behalf of its by then 1,289 members (Avis, 1983, pp. 9-17).

At the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 the government announced that *The Cinematograph Act 1938* was to be suspended and that all British film production should cease. However, ACT and its sister unions the National Association of Theatrical and Kine Employees (NATKE) and the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) in collaboration with the employers successfully lobbied the government, persuading them that a working film industry would be vital for the war effort, as a means of keeping the public informed through documentary and feature film productions. As a result an agreement was reached between the government and the union that ACT membership 'was essential for recognition as a film technician by the armed services' (Lockett, 1983, p.160) and the union and its membership found themselves operating in a period of heightened film production. Moreover, because film technicians' work was categorised as a reserved occupation, ACT's membership grew exponentially (Avis, 1983).

In the 1940s, there was a brief post-war period of almost full employment stemming from the demand for escapist film entertainment by both British and overseas servicemen and women, factory workers and the general public. ACT used its high profile and influential war record to negotiate a series of collective agreements with the employers' associations, bringing improvements in both pay and working conditions, (*ibid.*). However, by 1949 cinema audiences had declined and half of ACT's membership again found itself unemployed. In response ACT Films Limited, 'the first film production company in the world to be owned and operated by a trade union' (Avis, 1983, p.27) was set up in 1950 providing its members with

work, and proving to other producers that quality films could be produced with moderate budgets, while still providing technicians with union approved pay and conditions (*ibid.*). However the general slump in film production continued and in 1951 ACT and its sister unions took part in a demonstration in London which brought both government and public attention to the difficulties faced by the film industry and its workers (Avis, 1983). The union also turned its attention to the emerging calls for an end to the BBC's monopoly on broadcasting and the introduction of commercial television funded by advertising revenue rather than the public purse (Crisell, 2002).

Although initially some union members were opposed to commercial television, believing that the BBC public service model was most appropriate for the medium (Lewenhak, 1983), ACT provided valuable input into *The Television Act of 1954*, which resulted in the launch of Independent Commercial Television which would be funded by advertising (Crisell, 2002). With many of its previously freelancer members joining the employees of the new ITV companies, and forming union branches within those institutions (see a breakdown of the union's structure in the following section of this chapter, and in Appendix A), ACT soon decided to recruit and organise technicians working in commercial television, and in 1956 with the addition of a second 'T' for television, ACT became ACTT (Lewenhak, 1983). In 1957 the first collective agreement covering pay and other terms and conditions was signed between the Programme Contractors' Association representing the employers, and ACTT on behalf of the 7,000 plus members within its television division – by then the largest division in the union's total membership of 8,000. ACTT and the commercial television employers appreciated that such agreements could also help to sustain and develop both workers and producers in the film industry (Avis, 1983).

Prior to the implementation of *The Employment Act 1990*, ACTT operated a closed shop within commercial television, meaning that non-union members could not be 'employed in jobs the scope of

which is covered by agreements between the unions involved and the employers' (Avis, 1983, p.101) and 'union membership was a pre-condition of employment' (Heery, 2004, p.23) as noted above. The closed shop also applied to freelancer technicians, who could only be employed in commercial television if they were ACTT members. In contrast to the BBC and its predominantly public service remit, the entrepreneurial owners of the commercial television companies, who saw broadcasting as a profit making enterprise, were supportive of the closed shop because they felt that it provided an 'orderliness of recruitment and stability of employment' (Avis, 1983, p.103). This was in part based on the war-time recognition ACT had gained as the official vetting body for technicians, as previously noted. As a result, ACTT and its members wielded considerable power, and conducted several successful industrial actions throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

While ACTT represented the craft and technical grades within the commercial television companies, the National Association of Theatrical Television and Kine Employees (NATTKE) represented other workers, including catering, security, secretarial and support staff. NATTKE and ACTT worked together on several campaigns, the most notable being the lock-out in 1979 which 'blocked out the entire network for eleven weeks' (Crisell, 2002, p.195), during which time the unions negotiated for a better pay increase than the 16 per cent offered by the employers, arguing that ITV company profits had increased by 189 percent, while workers' pay had increased by only 46 percent. While negotiating with the employers the unions simultaneously conducted a successful media campaign, explaining its motivations for industrial action to both its members and the general public, reflecting the view of Alan Sapper, ACTT General Secretary in 1983, that 'film and television are extremely important to democratic expression' (Hayes, 1983, p.155). ACTT and NATTKE members eventually returned to work with an agreement covering pay, holidays and new technology, which would amount to a 44-45 per cent wage increase by July 1980 (*Film and Television Technician*

1979). Throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, ACTT also continued to fight for recognition for collective bargaining purposes within the BBC, where they had always had members in the technical grades, although union membership was not compulsory and recruitment was consequently a priority for the union.

ACTT welcomed the launch of Channel 4 in 1982 as a publisher-broadcaster, not producing its own output, but buying in productions, the union seeing it as an opportunity for both independent producers and freelancer workers, along with their employee colleagues to 'present their work to a new audience' (Avis, 1983, p.106). However, the proposed changes in how ITV franchises were allocated during the 1980s (Goodwin, 1998) were denounced as early as 1982 by ACTT, whose then Vice-President, Dennis Sippings, took a proposition to that year's Trades Union Congress at Brighton calling for the IBA (the then regulatory body for the Broadcasting industries) to be more accountable to the public, and for the unions and their members' voices to be heard. The unanimously passed proposition called for prospective employers 'to give full protection to the working conditions and pension arrangements of any union members concerned' (TUC, 1982, p.628). Nevertheless, as has already been demonstrated in this chapter, the new franchise arrangements dictated by *The Broadcasting Act 1990* did impact negatively on workers' contractual conditions, and 'introduced different employment processes' (Peterson, 2012, p.92) and an increase in freelancer working (*ibid.*) not as described by Heery (2009) as a '*freely chosen* form of employment' (p.4) [emphasis added] but as a direct result of the redundancies from the ITV companies.

Within the BBC the Association of Broadcasting Staffs (ABS) was founded in 1940, and until 1956 was essentially a staff association dealing with management on an informal basis within the BBC. ABS was recognised by the IBA in 1956 and registered as a trade union in 1957 (Marsh and Ryan, 1980). ABS represented all workers within the public broadcaster, including catering, security, secretarial and

support staff, and therefore had a wider constituency from which to attract its membership, unlike ACTT whose members were primarily in the craft or technical grades[1]. The merger of ABS and NATTKE in 1984 created the Broadcasting and Entertainment Trades Alliance (BETA), which represented workers in both commercial and public broadcasting. Unlike ACTT in commercial broadcasting, ABS and subsequently BETA did not operate under a closed shop agreement within the BBC, and therefore had to develop effective recruitment strategies in order to attract and retain their membership. Both ABS and BETA conducted several high profile and successful industrial actions, particularly on behalf of their lower paid workers. A four year campaign within the BBC instigated under ABS and continued by BETA eventually led to recognition of the contribution of production secretaries, and to significant pay increases (*BETA News* 1987). In 1989 BETA and the National Union of Journalists, supported by ACTT, conducted 'the first national strike at the BBC for 11 years' (*BETA News,* 1989a, p.4) eventually resulting in a pay increase of 8.8%, 'the first above inflation settlement since 1984' (*BETA News,* 1989b, p.2). However, such strike action was relatively rare in the BBC, unlike ACTT's history of numerous strikes in the ITV companies throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Crisell, 2002). Such industrial action was relatively easy to organise in the ITV companies because, as has been noted previously, all of the technicians working in the commercial broadcasters were union members as a result of the closed shop. At the BBC union membership was not compulsory and it was therefore more difficult to mobilize the workforce as a whole.

As well as conducting industrial campaigns, throughout the 1980s, BETA and ACTT also worked closely together to campaign against the Thatcher government's proposed changes in broadcasting. Professor Peacock's enquiry into the broadcasting industries had asserted that broadcasting should be primarily a commercial enterprise aimed at 'consumers' rather than viewers (Hood and Tabary-Peterssen, 1997).

[1]Key informant interview, high level Trade Union official (1), 13 October 2015

In response, the union joined forces with the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom to challenge the Peacock committee's assumptions, supporting the Campaign's spokesperson Janet Whyatt in her assertion that:

> 'the Peacock committee represents a very narrow, establishment viewpoint. No-one on the committee is speaking for the thousands of people who work in TV and radio… We are a non-political campaign, committed to opening up the media by forging links between broadcasting workers, viewers, listeners and community groups' (*BETA News*, 1986, p.14).

An article in BETA News (1990) reported that BETA had again joined forces with ACTT in the Public Service Broadcasting Campaign. They successfully lobbied MPs to include the following in the upcoming *Broadcasting Act 1990* which outlined the new ITV franchise arrangements: specific requirements for quality broadcasting, including the continued use of regionally based ITV companies and their highly trained employees. The problems associated with 'the growing freelance labour market, particularly for the future training of a skilled workforce' (Paterson, 2012, p.92) were outlined in Varlaam's 1989 report, commissioned by Skillset (the Creative Industries' Sector Skills Council – SSC, subsequently renamed Creative Skillset).

The formation of BECTU in 1991 brought together the strengths of two organizing and servicing unions who had worked together throughout the 1980s, and who thereafter represented the majority of workers throughout the broadcasting industries. Organising unions traditionally develop members' 'self-reliance and collective identity' (Simms *et al.*, 2013, p.7) and organize around work-place issues. Servicing unions provide 'an efficient and effective service to justify the cost of union membership' (*ibid*.) whilst preserving their organising capabilities within the constraints of the law. ACTT was a combination of an organising trade union and a servicing union from its inception, organising its members to fight for their rights in an increasingly demanding market. However, as has been illustrated in

this chapter ACTT also provided services for its members, stemming from its early history as an employment bureau for its freelancer membership (Avis, 1983). As is noted above, ACTT also had the greater experience of dealing with freelancer workers and their industrial relations issues, albeit within a closed shop where they could only be employees in commercial television if they were ACTT members (Avis, 1983).

BETA had more experience of recruiting and retaining members as an organizing union across a variety of employment areas and within a predominantly employee workforce. After the closed shop was abolished under *The Employment Act 1990,* the amalgamated union, BECTU, was therefore capable of working as both an organizing and a servicing union, and representing both its employee and freelancer membership effectively. BECTU currently provides its members with a range of add-on benefits, one of which is notably the provision of subsidised Public Liability Insurance (PLI) for its freelancer members (BECTU, 2015). As illustrated above, while the servicing aspects of BECTU's remit are more relevant to freelancers, and the organizing aspects are more relevant to employees, by providing a combination of both models the union offers its members a more complete service.

1.5 BECTU's organisation and structure

In this study, in order to 'provide an account of the context within which people's behaviour takes place' (Bryman, 2016, p.394) and to demonstrate the levels and extent of active members' commitment and how they may affect participants' views, it is important to provide an outline of BECTU's operational and committee structure (see also Appendix A). When members join BECTU they are allocated to a specific branch (a group of individuals sharing a particular workplace, employment category, and/or geographical location). Branches within BECTU have different characteristics: Arts and Entertainment (A&E) branches are normally identified with a particular workplace (such as

the Royal Opera House). Within the BBC the branches may be programme specific (‘Eastenders’ branch), or sectoral (BBC Technology) or geographical, (Bush House). Independent Broadcasting (IB) branches are identified geographically (for example, ITV Anglia). London Production Division (LPD) branches are sector, or craft specific (Writers, Producers and Directors). Regional Production Division (RPD) branches are identified geographically (North Wales Freelance Branch) (BECTU Rule Book, 2014).

Each branch forms part of a division (BECTU Rule Book, 2014). Branches may send representatives to the relevant Divisional Committee meetings, which are held a minimum of four times per year, including one Annual Divisional Conference. Divisions elect representatives biennially to the National Executive Committee (NEC) (one NEC member per 2,000 divisional members). There are currently five divisions in the union: Arts and Entertainment (A&E) – representing members working in Theatre, Cinema and Leisure (including Live Events.); BBC – representing members working throughout the BBC in both television and Radio; Independent Broadcasting (IB) – representing members working in ITV companies throughout the UK; London Production Division (LPD) – representing freelancer members based in London and the South East, and working in broadcast organisations, in corporate production, in feature film production and in commercials; Regional Production Division (RPD) - representing freelancer members based in the UK Nations and Regions, and working in broadcast organisations, in corporate production, in feature film production and in commercials (BECTU Rule Book, 2014).

BECTU’s governing body is its Annual General Conference, normally held annually in May (BECTU Rule Book, 2014). Between Annual Conferences the NEC is the principal decision making committee of the union, and is responsible for its general management and

administration, producing an annual report of its activities (BECTU Rule Book, 2014).

This committee structure is administered by paid BECTU officials, who attend Divisional Committees, and the NEC. Paid officials do not vote at meetings, but may provide information and carry out administrative duties on behalf of the committees (BECTU Rule Book, 2014). Within the BBC and the larger theatre companies, a small number of full time union lay officials are elected to provide services and representation for members, while being paid by the employers.

The structural changes in the broadcasting industries outlined in the previous section of this chapter also impacted on BECTU's membership figures (Table 1, p.13). In 1987 a Monopolies and Mergers commission report found that union membership for ACTT was 28,680 and for BETA was 30,195 – a total of 58,875 (Great Britain, House of Commons, 1989). However, following the end of the closed shop and the revised franchise agreements brought in under *The 1990 Broadcasting Act,* at amalgamation as is illustrated in Table 1 BECTU's total membership was 45,206. It appears that 13,669 workers ceased to belong to a union either as a result of redundancy and moving to a different form of employment, or because they had only belonged to a union when it was compulsory (under ACTT's closed shop arrangements).

Table 1 illustrated the shift from employee to freelancer BECTU membership in the years between 1991 and 2014 as a result of the increasing changes in the broadcast industries outlined previously in this chapter. In 1991 a BECTU internal memo (BECTU Conference Report 1991) illustrated the membership of the newly amalgamated union. It should be noted that, in 1991, of those working in broadcasting, 66% of the membership were employees, 34% were freelancers. By 2014, of those working in broadcasting, 33% of the membership were employees and 67% were freelancers – almost the total opposite of the figures at amalgamation in 1991.

Goodwin (1998) found that the ITV franchise auctions and the increased use of independent production companies undoubtedly played a significant role in a weakening of trade unionism in the broadcast industries. He also noted that the decline of union influence was a result of 'general Tory anti-union policy' (p.166). By 1997, following the increasing casualization of the workforce, the end of the closed shop, and a rationalisation of the total figure for BECTU membership, numbers fell significantly. Of those working in broadcasting, 47% of the membership were employees and 53% were freelancers, reflecting the rise in the percentage of freelancers in broadcasting from 39 per cent in 1989 to 60 per cent in 1996 (Nolan and Slater 2003). Since its amalgamation the profile of the union has changed in line with the increased casualization of the workforce, particularly in the broadcast sector (Guile, 2012; Paterson, 2012; Hood and Tabary-Peterssen, 1997; Davidson, 1992). This had resulted from the emergence of the Publisher Broadcaster Model and Producer Choice within the BBC as outlined earlier in this paper, and the increasing use of a freelancer workforce.

As previously discussed, the figures in Table 1, p.13) amply illustrate the shift from employee to freelancer membership of BECTU between 1991 and 2014, which mirrored the situation in the workforce. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) stated that the figures for self-employment within the sector defined by ONS as 'Motion picture, video and television; sound and music recording' were 31,000 in September 2014, representing 44% of the total workforce; although, as with Creative Skillset figures, their analysis covered a different constituency to that represented by BECTU. The figures may also reflect the inherent difficulties encountered by organisations attempting to access statistics about freelancer employment, which is dependent on the availability and allocation of contracts.

It is worth noting that BECTU, in the face of increasing anti-union legislation, and in a political climate which demonized trade unions and undermined employment legislation (Beynon, 2014), had,

between 2000 and 2014, suffered only a net loss of 998 members, 3.9% of the 2000 figure. BECTU achieved this by providing ongoing industrial and legislative support as well as offering value added services to all members, including access to cheaper legal services and insurance cover, subsidised theatre tickets, gym membership, etc. As Siebert and Wilson (2013) found it was much more difficult as a freelancer worker to declare oneself as a union member, than it was for employee members, because of their relatively secure employment status. To attract freelancer workers, a constituency notoriously difficult to organise (Heery *et al.,* 2004), BECTU offered additional services including Public Liability Insurance at a subsidised rate equivalent to approximately 10% of commercial rates (BECTU, 2015).

Throughout their history ACTT and latterly BECTU have relied heavily on the work and loyalty of their activist lay members, such as branch secretaries and chairpersons, shop stewards, and NEC members, whose commitment to the unions and their objectives have been the foundations on which the unions have operated. In an interview in 1983, Alan Sapper, ACTT's General Secretary stated that there was a misconception that he was a powerful figure in broadcasting and film, but 'what they don't realise is how little power I have. My members have all the power' (Hayes, 1983, p.156). Acknowledging the importance of ACTT members' contributions to the union, Roy Lockett, Deputy General Secretary of ACTT and subsequently of BECTU, reflected on ACTT's past, and anticipated the changes coming for the broadcasting industries and their workers in the coming decades. Lockett (1983) compared the 'assiduously fostered view that unions, their officials and members are grey, homogenous and disciplined groups dully treading a common and unremarkable path' (p.160) with his own experience of ACTT's activists as an 'explosive interaction of personality, background, occupation and personal beliefs' (*ibid.*).

In attempting to analyse the meaning of the term ‘activist’ this research accepts that such interaction has a bearing on members’ view both of the meaning of the term, and also of their own activism. In their exploration of union representation of freelancer workers in the UK, Heery *et al.* (2004) used BECTU as their initial case study, because of the union’s long experience of representing its freelancer members, at that time constituting 40% of its membership. Hyman (2001) argued that trade unions must adapt to different circumstances and interests within their own constituencies, but found that ‘in compartmentalizing workers, unions traditionally have compartmentalized solidarity’ (p. 170). Although BECTU members are compartmentalised in terms of employee and freelancer divisions, and although there has been a marked shift towards more freelancer than employee membership (see Table 1, p.13), this did not affect the union’s ability to work collectively, with freelancer members supporting employee members during industrial action, and employee members supporting negotiations for freelancer members’ terms and conditions (Avis, 1983).

1.6 Summary

This chapter outlines the changes which have occurred within the broadcast industries and their workforce, and within BECTU and its membership, in order to illustrate that these changes may also affect how members view their activism and its effects on their professional and personal lives. It has fulfilled the requirement for background contextualising information (Geertz, 1973; Greenfield, 2002; Becker, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Matthews and Ross, 2010; Punch, 2014; James and Slater, 2014; and Bryman, 2016) to assist readers’ understanding about the broadcast industries and the unions which represent and have represented the workers in those industries. The changes in the regulation of output, finances and contractual arrangements which have resulted in the increasing and ongoing shift from permanent to freelancer employment and the consequent effect on BECTU’s membership figures have been explored. The union’s

structure has been outlined, and how it has responded to the changes in its membership profile and their differing requirements, and adapted its services accordingly have been discussed. This has been done in order to contextualise how the roles and views of BECTU's activists have been shaped and developed by their experiences both within the union and as workers in the broadcast industries. It illustrates that 'whatever is being examined must be understood in context' (Bryman, 2016: 395) and that 'this descriptive detail is what provides the mapping of context in terms of which behaviour is understood' (*ibid.*). Subsequent chapters address the following areas: a review of the existing literature; research and analysis methodologies; analysis of the data collected, exploring and comparing both interviewees' and questionnaire respondents' views about the meaning of activism, and how and whether their professional and personal lives are affected as a result of their activism; and any conclusions drawn.

Chapter 2

Literature review – activism and its effects

The aim of this research is to explore how activist members of the trade union BECTU view the effects of their activism on their professional and personal lives. It also aims to examine whether those views are affected by the employee or freelancer status of the activists involved in the study. The existing literature is reviewed to uncover relevant theories based on a search of key terms: trade union activist or activism; and freelancer. This chapter explores the limited existing body of literature which addresses trade union activism, worker status, and their relationship, in order to afford a context for the examination of the thesis research aims, and to assess whether there are gaps in that literature. It outlines the various theoretical approaches embedded in the existing literature, which include: social capital theory; mobilization theory; social identity theory; social movement theory; and the theory of planned behaviour. Certain aspects of these theories are explored in order to assess their relevance to my research. This chapter also reviews the meaning of the key terms, including activist and freelancer, as they are defined in the existing literature, on which I based my initial definitions for this research.

2.1 Social capital theory

Theories of social capital have proliferated since Bourdieu first posited his concept in the 1980s. This section begins with a short introduction to Bourdieu's concept of social capital, and explores how the validity and relevance of Bourdieu's theory of social capital have been challenged by subsequent researchers. It also assesses the existing literature in terms of the relevance of social capital to freelancers, and trade union activists, particularly those working in the UK broadcast industries.

Capitals, as defined by Bourdieu (1985), were the perceived advantages accrued during an individual's lifetime from his or her

access to a proliferation of connections, relationships and networks, which might be familial, social, professional or institutional in origin. Each individual's habitus, meaning the internalisation of his or her upbringing, education, familial and class background provided the basis for the accumulation of social capital (relations with significant social others) and other forms of capital: including cultural (knowledge and education), symbolic (prestige and social honour) and economic (money and assets) (Bourdieu, 1985). Bourdieu (1977) argued that 'the habitus could be considered as a subjective but not individual system of internalised structures, schemes of perception, conception and action common to all members of the same group or class and constituting the precondition for all objectification and apperception' (p.86). Although he conceded that there might be differences in the way that individuals respond to their habitus, he argued that habitus 'brings about a unique integration, dominated by the earliest experiences, of the experiences statistically common to members of the same class' (p.87).

The accumulation of capitals was also influenced by the spheres in which the accumulation occurred, which Bourdieu referred to as 'fields' and the value of each capital was affected by the field, for example certain capitals might be more valuable in one field than in another. Additionally, within a field one form of capital could be converted into another (Bourdieu, 1991), for example academic qualifications might lead to lucrative jobs. Bourdieu (1996) argued that fields were a structured system of social positions and power relations, which allowed or denied goods or resources (capitals). In summary, Bourdieu (1994) formulated the theory of social practice as '(habitus)(capital)+field=practice' (p.95). My study explores whether those in both employee and freelancer fields accumulated social capital from their activism, and whether its value and how it might be used may differ.

More recently, Bourdieu's theories have been challenged by a number of researchers, for example in his critical introduction to Bourdieu's

theories, Lane (2000) argued that there is a ‘certain pessimism, determinism and stasis [in] Bourdieu’s work’ (p.196). Gauntlett (2011) found that Bourdieu’s concept of social capital was exclusionary, and mainly benefitted those who were already in possession of a range of capitals: the middle and upper classes. He posited that Bourdieu did not consider that others had the ability to overcome their perceived lack of social capital and take charge of their own destinies, and concluded that Bourdieu’s theories were therefore ‘rather limited and deterministic’ (p.132).

Coleman (1988) argued that social capital was acquired by its altruistic sharing within a variety of networks, and that it could have a positive effect on individuals’ prospects and quality of life. However, he theorised that individuals might choose not to utilise it ‘because the benefits of actions that bring social capital into being are largely experienced by persons other than the actor, [therefore] it is often not in his interest to bring it into being’ (p.S118). My study offers a different perspective by exploring whether the altruistic sharing within networks, and the resultant accumulation of social capital, is apparent between union activists. It also assesses whether this is affected by employee or freelancer status (habitus), the different routes to freelancer status, and the consequent possible accumulation of social capital.

Fine (2010) found that the concept of social capital had been undermined by its use to justify a variety of different standpoints: ‘… social capital has appealed across the spectrum of conventional politics, from Bush to Blair, so anaesthetised and yet flexible is it in its political and uncritical content.’ (p.4). He argued that social capital was no longer a useful concept. By bringing back in all the elements which had been left out of social capital theories, such as gender, ethnicity and class, the concept was stretched beyond reasonable analysis. It was ultimately rendered untenable - it lost ‘its appeal as a universal category’ (p.84) and was therefore limited as an overarching concept. For Fine, therefore, social capital had been diluted because of the variety of ways in which it had been interpreted and used to support

conflicting viewpoints. However, as Maton (2012) noted, Bourdieu's work 'like the very thing it aims to capture, should not be considered as fixed or external but rather an evolving idea' (p.63). Thus, my study explores whether all forms of capital are experienced, interpreted and utilised differently by each individual, according to her or his circumstances at any given time (habitus and field) which may bring us back to Bourdieu, and away from other subsequent theorists.

2.2 Networking and social capital

Networking has been identified in the existing literature as a significant aspect of trade union membership, and has been explored by a number of researchers. It has been accepted that networking is particularly important for freelancers seeking work from 'a large number of firms arranged in dense geographical clusters (in urban locales) providing content for a small number of broadcasters' (Lee, 2011, p.551). Lee (2011) argued that in the increasingly casualized broadcasting sector, networking - 'making and maintaining contacts with people in the industry emerges as a crucial determinant of success' (p.551).

Networks could be created both formally via workplace or union contacts, or informally through family friends and acquaintances, or via social movements, increasingly utilising social media to communicate (Saundry *et al.*, 2007, p.178). The importance of networks for an increasingly fragmented workforce has been explored in the existing literature, and it has been argued that, particularly for younger workers, hungry to get into the broadcast and film industries, internet-based networks provided a 'location where workers can meet, discuss, inform and exchange ideas' (p.178). Saundry *et al.* (2007) also discussed the extent to which networks were used to express discontent, and questioned whether networks could 'articulate and represent worker's interests and… develop into substantive mechanisms that threaten the position of existing trade unions' (p.183). They concluded that such an outcome was doubtful because participation was based primarily on

‘individual career oriented goals’ (p.184) rather than having any wider social aspirations. Additionally, they questioned whether unions could benefit from further involvement and interaction with such informal networks, while simultaneously benefiting the networks themselves.

Saundry *et al.* (2007) cited one website which was developed by a group of freelance activists specifically to provide freelance workers with a forum to discuss work-related problems (p184). Participants in this forum most appreciated being able to express their problems anonymously, as they feared that being identified as a complainant could affect their work prospects. A number of Saundry *et al.’s* (2007) respondents expressed the opinion that ‘any visible connection with the union would damage their employment prospects’ (p.185).

However, Saundry *et al.* (2007) also documented the 2005 TV Wrap campaign as an example of a union (BECTU) underpinning and providing added value to networking activities. The campaign gathered together accounts by freelancers of poor employment practices, particularly non-compliance with the Working Time Regulations, and was supported by 28,000 freelance workers, including some high profile professionals (p.186). The campaign attracted a great deal of publicity, ultimately forcing the Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television (PACT) into negotiations with BECTU regarding freelance terms and conditions. Crucially, although BECTU had played no formal part within the campaign, it was acknowledged that while the network had been very effective in raising the issues, ‘they lacked the organisation necessary to deliver hard industrial relations outcomes’ (p.186). Thus, the network eventually turned to the union to address their collective grievances and to provide tangible outcomes for their campaign.

Holgate and McKay (2009) undertook a ‘two-year study of the audio-visual industries in London’ (p.151). They accumulated their data from 226 questionnaires returned by audio-visual students, 540 questionnaires completed by workers employed in 133 different

companies, three focus groups with 20 participants, 18 of whom were freelancers, a telephone survey of 100 employers, and twenty in-depth semi-structured interviews with employers. All of their participants were London based. They found that entry into and progress within the broadcast industries was greatly facilitated by the acquisition and maintenance of range of contacts via friends or family. They recognised that the accumulation of these networks which result in the acquisition of social capital might involve a great deal of time and energy, but that they were 'not only necessary for entry into initial employment, they were seen as crucial throughout the individual's career' (p.160). Due to the increasingly casualized nature of the workforce, and its dependence on word of mouth recommendations for the acquisition of work contracts, social capital was key to advancement in the industry. The freelancer participants in Holgate and McKay's (2009) study acknowledged that employers were increasingly reluctant 'to hire individuals whom they did not know and trust' (*ibid.*) reinforcing their findings that effective networks were vital for career progression.

Lee (2011) examined the advantages and disadvantages of networking as perceived by freelancers in the UK independent television industry, based on in-depth interviews with 20 freelancers, who worked predominantly in London (p.550). He found that, due to the uncertain nature of freelancer work 'making and maintaining contacts with people in the industry emerges as a crucial determinant of success' (p.551). In addition his data revealed that networking opportunities were very much dependent on individuals' cultural and social background (habitus), and might result in further inequality by excluding individuals based on their class, race and social status. Lee (2011) found that freelancers required high levels of cultural capital in order to access the networks within the television industries which in turn resulted in the acquisition of social capital. This reflected Bourdieu's (1984) contention that strong networks of contacts were considered vital in order to gain entry into industries and to succeed.

Lee (2011) concluded that in the ‘television labour market, those who do not make it are invisible to the successful. The excluded disappear’ (p.560). This reflected Skeggs’s (1997) argument that while Bourdieu shows how the privileged can build upon and acquire more social capital, ‘he cannot account for the nuanced practices of those who do not operate from a dominant position’ (p.30). The main findings of Lee’s (2011) study were that ‘network culture is both structural, determining the field of relations within the industry, and discursive, producing ambivalent subjective responses’ (p.552). A number of his respondents illustrated this subjectivity by denying the importance of networks, stating that the only requirements for advancements in the industry were merit and talent. He concluded that the inability of emerging powerful players to acknowledge any social injustice resulting from the casualized nature of the television industry might result in the continuation of the status quo. Lee (2011) did not note whether any of his interviewees were trade union members, and whether this might have also affected their accumulation of the social capital necessary for career advancement.

Lee’s work built on Granovetter’s (1973) theory that cultural capital acquired from family and close friends (strong ties) provided less advantages than social capital acquired from acquaintances and contacts (weak ties). Putnam (2000) argued that ‘bonding’ social capital resulted from strong ties with people ‘like me’, while ‘bridging’ social capital came from weak ties with people who are ‘unlike me’. He concluded that ‘bridging’ social capital was more advantageous for career advancement than ‘bonding’ social capital which merely reinforced the status quo. Lee (2011) concluded that individuals were more likely to progress in their field by actively maintaining and creating opportunities to acquire the ‘weak ties’ which resulted in the acquisition of ‘bridging’ social capital.

Drawing their data from interviews with 37 UK based television production workers Antcliff *et al.* (2007) explored how freelancers utilised networks ‘as a source of competitive advantage and, at the

same time, support and co-operation' (p.371) to advance collective interests as well as individual career opportunities. They also gathered data from seven key informants who included trade union officials, but did not indicate whether any of their interviewees were union members, and whether this might have impacted on their views. Antcliff *et al.* (2007) argued that the value of networks was broadly conceptualized as the acquisition of social capital (Bourdieu, 1984), and explored Coleman's (1988) and Portes's (1998) identification of three different 'forms of social capital: obligations, expectations and trustworthiness; information channels; and norms and effective sanctions' (Antcliff *et al.,* 2007, p.375).

Building on Coleman (1988) and Granovetter (1973), Antcliff *et al.* (2007) also explored the strengths and weakness of open and closed networks. Freelancers favoured inclusive open networks, where not all members knew one another, and which encouraged the flow of information and individualism, but which might also have promoted competitiveness. Exclusive closed networks, where members knew each other, promoted a sense of belonging and trust, but might also result in 'exclusion, obligations and sanctions' (p.377). As Saundry *et al.* (2007) also noted, freelancers increasingly used the relative anonymity of internet based social media forums to create their networks, and to share information about rates of pay, working hours, bad employers and poor employment practices. Effectively, these were issues that they could not raise with their employers, or even with work colleagues, without the risk of 'being labelled as a trouble-maker and consequently erased from the address books of potential employers' (Antcliff *et al*., 2007, p.382). Their research indicated that membership of closed networks, such as individual craft based organisations (including, among others, production, camera, sound or editing) tended to be restricted to those who had a proven reputation and track record in the industry.

Additionally, the hierarchical structures of such networks could also restrict individual competition and place their members under an

obligation to abide by the rules and mores of the network. Antcliff *et al.* (2007) argued that 'the same networks that can enhance employment prospects also have the ability to destroy them' (p.388), thus reinforcing Portes's (1998) findings regarding 'negative social capital' (p.15) and that the accumulation of social capital was not necessarily advantageous. Antcliff *et al.* (2007) concluded that individuals utilised networks in different ways, and to different ends, depending upon their particular requirements. They found that the acquisition of social capital resulting from involvement in networks could have both a beneficial and a detrimental effect on individual workers.

Randle *et al.* (2015) conducted a Bourdieusian analysis of the social composition of employment within the UK broadcast and film industries, and its implications for new entrants into those industries. They assessed the effects of the possession and the accumulation of social capital, and its impact upon access into employment, and career progression. They acknowledged an acceptance by the participants in their study that the broadcast and film industries' workforce were still predominantly white, male and middle class, echoing Holgate and McKay's (2009) findings. Randle *et al.* (2015) argued that the increasing prevalence of unpaid internships as an entrance route into the broadcast industries represented a barrier to those without the established social networks and the economic capital to work without pay, thus perpetuating the habitus within those industries (p.14).

Randle *et al.*'s (2015) study did not consider the contributions of FT2 and Cyfle, both industry and union-led organisations set up to 'help the film and television industry increase the diversity of its workforce' (UK Film Council, 2015). Between 1985 and 2010 (when it lost its funding) FT2 provided a structured training programme coupled with industry placements on a variety of productions for 'under-represented groups such as women in technical areas, men working in make-up, people from minority ethnic backgrounds and people with disabilities' (*ibid.*). Cyfle was established in 1986, with a similar remit, but additionally to provide Welsh language speakers with the skills to enter the

broadcasting and film industries. Cyfle continued to offer professional technical training and placements for under-represented new entrants until it also lost its funding in 2015. Crucial to both organizations' success were the opportunities they provided for their trainees to network with a range of employers and experienced professional craft workers in a variety of workplaces which enabled them to gain a foothold in the industries and to subsequently grow their careers (*ibid.*). The acquisition of social capital resulting from such opportunities was also identified as a key element in Randle *et al.*'s (2015) findings in relation to progression within the industries.

Grugulis and Stoyanova (2011), in their detailed analysis of the workings of a small contemporary television production company, explored how and whether networking opportunities and the resulting acquisition of social capital could be accessed by novices working within a largely fragmented freelancer workforce. Their data was accumulated during 'three months of participant observation, conducted between 2005 and 2006 as part of a wider study, in a small, regional independent production company' (p.343). The numbers of employees varied during this period, 'but during the field-work there were eight members of staff, six of whom were novices' (p.344) employed ostensibly to learn and watch from the established professionals. In practice however, Grugulis and Stoyanova (2011) found that novices had little contact with the more experienced workers because 'they were based in the company's office while freelancers were on location… the extent to which they and the novices were part of the same 'community' is questionable' (*ibid.)*. Grugulis and Stoyanova's (2011) study revealed that access to a professional social group were traditionally interwoven elements in the creative industries. However, the increased casualization of the television workforce meant that these advantages were no longer available to the novice. They concluded that although more experienced workers might still have access to extended networks, 'the communities novices have access to are incomplete' (p.349). As Lee (2011) found, those without the

cultural capital necessary to get into the creative industries, were also unable to access the networks which would supply them with the social capital required for advancement.

As has been demonstrated, effective networking and the consequent probable accrual of social capital have always been essential for workers in the creative industries. Current research has shown that this is particularly true for freelancers, who need a wide network of contacts to be aware of upcoming productions, and to access consequent work opportunities. Relatively little has been researched about the acquisition of social capital as a result of trade union activism. In their study into the relationship between union commitment and union renewal, Gall and Fiorito (2012a) addressed activists' unconscious acquisition of social capital in terms of skills gained and networks accessed as a result of their activism. However, they cautioned that this acquisition could not be generalized as 'not all activists have these in the same quantity and quality and not all who possess them are activists' (p.199). Gall and Fiorito (2012b) argued that the capacities of existing activists, in terms of their 'organisational, strategic, intellectual and cultural' (p.724) abilities could be categorised as social capital and were essential elements in their ability to engender activism in others and to mobilize collective activities.

My research assesses whether there are differences between how freelancers and employees view the effects on their professional and personal lives, and their possible accumulation of social capital from the networks they may acquire as a result of their trade union activism. The specific implications of employee or freelancer status on social capital accrual, and whether the term is appropriate in terms of activism within BECTU, are also explored further in my research. The following section analyses the existing literature which relates to trade union activism and mobilization.

2.3 Mobilization

This section addresses a range of literature which explored individuals' motivations for their activism, or for becoming mobilized into undertaking collective action, and how they relate to existing mobilization theories. Tilly (1978) argued that collective action relied on five components: 'interest, organization, mobilization, opportunity, and collective action itself' (p.7). He found that in order to address common issues, or interests, groups of individuals must be organized into effective structures. Opportunity occurred when relationships between groups of individuals and the world around them changed, leading to collective action in order to redress the balance. However, Tilly (1978) debated the Marxist tradition that 'individuals and institutions act on behalf of particular social classes' (p.13). He argued that representatives of certain social classes were not necessarily the principal actors in mobilization, and that participants in collective actions might act against their self-interest if they were sufficiently motivated. *Defensive* mobilization occurred when a group of individuals pooled their resources in response to a threat from outside the group, and was not necessarily reliant on leaders to instigate the action. *Offensive* mobilization occurred when leaders of groups pooled their resources in order to realize their interests. Traditionally trade unions, which Bell (1954) defined as 'organizations of the underprivileged in society' (p.130) undertook *preparatory* mobilization, in which groups pooled their resources in anticipation of opportunities or threats. It could be argued, however, that trade unions undertake all of these forms of mobilization in order to effectively represent their members' interests whatever their employment status, as I discuss later in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Klandermans (1984) found that in deciding whether to undertake collective action individuals calculated the 'personal costs and benefits under three headings: goal, social and reward motives' (cited in Kelly, 1998, p.34). Goal motives included their beliefs about how many people were likely to participate, that high turnout was required for

success, and that any collective action would make a difference. Social motives were the reactions of their families and colleagues, and the value placed on those reactions by the participants in the proposed collective action. The possible personal consequences of participation, which might include both positive and negative effects on their career prospects, and the value they placed on those consequences, were the reward motives. The reward motives and the possible negative effects are of particular significance in my study into how individuals view the effects of activism on their professional and personal lives. Specifically, I discuss whether participants' perceptions about the potential rewards or negative consequences may differ depending on their employee or freelancer status. Additionally I explore how current or previous employment status affects participants' relationship with the union and their views about the effects of their activism.

Building on Kelly and Kelly's (1994) study of the relationship between social identity and collective action, Kelly (1998) in his analysis of mobilization theory posits that group identification and collectivist orientation are the main factors associated with participation in a range of trade union activities. He argued that 'under the right conditions, social identity theory [...] would suggest that anyone can think and act collectively. For example, the social identity of 'trade union activist' could be rendered salient ("switched on") by a television news item about a strike, by an argument with a supervisor or by the sight of a picket line' (p.31). Further, Kelly (1998) explored activists' motivations for their activism and found that if employees felt that they had been unjustly treated by an employer, they could be mobilized into collective action.

Kelly (1998) addressed McAdam's (1988) social movement theory that a small group of individuals who shared a perception of injustice, and who had made an assessment of the possible reward motives, addressed their grievances in a micro-mobilization context: 'processes of collective attribution are combined with rudimentary forms or organization to produce mobilization for collective action' (McAdam,

1998, pp.134-135). Gall and Fiorito (2012a) built upon McAdam and Kelly's work by assessing the relationship between union commitment and union activism, and their combined effects on mobilization and union renewal (p.193). Gall and Fiorito (2012a) argued that 'mobilization not only depends on beliefs and attitudes, but can change beliefs and attitudes as well' (p.206). They advocated that future studies should 'focus on components like individual union attitudes almost in their own right' (p.208) in order to further the development of the union renewal and mobilization agenda. By assessing the impact of activism on both employee and freelancer participants, my study aims to contribute to that discussion.

Fiorito *et al.* (2014) based their analysis on data gathered during a web based poll conducted by the faculty union of members working in a North American university. The motivations for activism, levels of activism, and views about the consequences of activism, including collective action, were explored. However, they acknowledged the limitations of research based on an 'occupationally and industrially narrow' (p.17) segment of the union movement. The different factors which might have motivated activism were explored, reflecting Kelly's (1998) findings that 'it is not enough for employees to feel aggrieved: they must also feel entitled to their demands and feel that there is some chance that their situation can be changed by "collective agency"' (p.29). Trade unions historically provided a prime example of how that collective agency could be utilised. It should be noted that Gall and Fiorito (2012 and 2014) utilised data gathered from specific sections of polls generated by a university faculty, and by the faculty union. However, they did not indicate the wider purposes of those polls, and whether they might have influenced the participants' responses.

2.4 The effects of mobilization on unions

The following section discusses the literature which addressed how, as well as affecting individual activists, mobilization into collective action

activism could also influence trade unions and their development. Gall and Fiorito (2012a) assessed union commitment in relation to union renewal studies, and discussed the failure of certain union organising strategies – in their terms the use of union resources including union employees and lay representatives to organize non-union personnel and to encourage further activism amongst existing members. They found that the results of organization were disappointing, that there continued to be a very small pool of activists, and that there was a lack of commitment to the union amongst the general membership. They argued that the growth of union renewal research which did not also address union commitment rendered the findings questionable, and that both aspects should be addressed concurrently. Gall and Fiorito (2012a) also found that another weakness in union commitment studies was that they tended to 'treat unions as undifferentiated entities' (p.193) with similar requirements in terms of commitment from their activists. In a subsequent study Fiorito *et al.* (2014) recognized that the 'unpaid volunteer efforts of lay members' (p.1) were essential for union renewal. Gall and Fiorito (2012b) also acknowledged that both commitment and participation were dependent upon the internal and external politics and strategies of individual unions, and that it was therefore difficult to generalize when considering attitudes within one particular union (p.718). They concluded that activist commitment and participation were key elements in the ability of unions to successfully achieve their goals by mobilizing their membership, and to sustain both membership and growth.

Moore (2011) identified new activist roles in unions: Union Learning Representatives (ULRs), who assisted their members to increase their employability by identifying skills gaps and guiding them to appropriate workplace learning opportunities; and Equality Representatives (ERs) who sought to redress workplace inequalities in terms of gender, race or ethnicity. She argued that these less confrontational or 'non-threatening' (p.104) roles in terms of collective bargaining responsibilities, which were supported by the then Labour government,

provided a new pathway into trade union activism. She found that individuals' involvement in these roles might have originally been inspired by social identity: 'ethnic and gender identifications as well as those of class and occupation' (Healy *et al*., 2004, p.463). However, initial involvement at this level led to increased consciousness of the power of collective impulses converted into action. Through their work as ULRs and ERs individuals discovered that trade unions could 'translate grievance into a collective challenge to the fundamental inequality of the workplace relationship' (Moore, 2011, p.170). They were one of the few 'channels through which collective impulses can be expressed' (*ibid.*) and which could also lead to improvements in the wider society. Moore (2011) concluded that individuals' values could be changed by their activism and that they could be mobilized into action because of their altered perceptions.

Simms *et al.* (2013) argued that latter day trade unions have had to adapt their relationship with their membership in order to promote their collective identity. They found that organizing unions developed their members' collective identity and activism by enabling them to organize around work-place issues. Servicing unions provided services to their members to justify their membership fees, while organising within the constraints of the law (Simms *et al.,* 2013). In their exploration of the effects of the TUC Organizing Academy on trade union renewal, they found that differentiating between organizing and servicing unions did not always reflect real working practices (p.77). Their study concentrated on the development of activists working as employees within specific workplaces. They did not address whether the organizing or the servicing model might be more applicable to freelancer activists. Snape *et al.* (2000) suggested that within organizing unions activists' had a covenantal relationship with their union based on 'shared values and ideological identification' (p.224) and argued that organizing trade unions asked much more of their members than those unions who commit to the servicing model. They also posited that less cohesion and permanence within the workforce

could lead to unions moving towards the servicing model in order to preserve membership loyalty and numbers. However, they did not explore whether, or how, those unions might mobilize that less permanent, or freelancer, workforce; neither did they explore the possible implications and costs of trade union activism for those who were not employees within workplaces, and the levels of commitment required of them. My study challenges their contention that servicing unions require less of their membership than organizing unions by exploring both employees' and freelancers' views about the effects of their activism on their professional and personal lives. It also discusses their relationship with the union, and whether this affects their views on the impacts of their activism. It should be noted that Simms *et al.* (2013) warn against a simplistic differentiation between organizing and servicing unions, arguing that a combination of both approaches is likely to be more effective (p.88).

The existing literature has demonstrated that members' requirements could affect how their unions operated, and explored whether they adopted the organizing or the servicing model, or a combination of both, in order to provide the most effective representation for their membership. Relatively little has been explored about how trade union organized and mobilized a freelancer workforce. My research notes how one particular union, BECTU, has adapted its provision in order to fulfil the needs of its employee and freelancer membership, and how the employment status of its membership and its activists have contributed to the decisions made. It also uncovers activists' views about the nature of their relationship with the union, and about the effects of their activism on their professional and personal lives.

2.5 Activists' relationship with the union and its effect on mobilization

The complex nature of activists' relationship with their unions, and the consequent implications for mobilization within the trade union movement, focusing primarily on the levels and nature of activists' commitment, is explored in the following section. Snape *et al.* (2000)

compared affective commitment - a willingness to work on behalf of the union, and a commitment to long term membership - with attitudinal or instrumental commitment - a commitment based on an expectation of a quantifiable return for their membership fees. They compared informal activity, such as reading union papers and discussing union matters with colleagues, with more formal activity, such as attending union meetings and standing for union office, and argued that the latter required 'a great deal of sustained effort and individual initiative, and are likely to be the reserve of a select group of union activists' (p. 215). Snape *et al.* (2000) argued that the role of activists' contribution was an integral part of the organizing model of trade unionism, and concluded that in servicing trade unions members became 'little more than passive consumers of union services' (p. 223). However, this simplistic argument should be challenged in view of subsequent researchers' findings in terms of how servicing unions had mobilized their membership by organizing a group of individuals with a common interest into effective collective action (Saundry, 2012).

Snape and Redman (2004) argued that activists' relationship with their union tended to be based more on covenant, or a commitment to the union, rather than on exchange, or an expectation of a quantifiable return for their activity. Whilst acknowledging that it was not possible to draw generalizable conclusions from the study of one union (the UK National Union of Teachers) - a limitation also acknowledged in my study - they found that such a relationship 'is consistent with the behavioral [*sic*] assumptions of the organizing Model' (p. 869), and advocated further research in different unions. They posited that the role of union leadership might also have an effect on members' activity, and on union renewal.

Fiorito *et al.*'s (2014) conclusions reflected the findings of Snape *et al.* (2000) and Snape and Redman (2004) that activism was more a reflection of a covenantal relationship with the union than of an instrumental one, that 'activism is more about doing good according to an internal ideological scheme than about doing well in self-interest

terms' (Fiorito *et al.,* 2014, p.19). Gumbrell-McCormick (2013) argued that although ideology might be rooted in external sources such as religion or political affiliation, they were 'internalized within the union or union movement' (p.242) and underscored activists' relationship with the union. However, these studies were focused on the relationship with the union of employee activists within specific workplaces, and did not explore the motivations of freelancer activists. Because Fiorito *et al.'s* 2014 research was based on data gathered within a university faculty, it might be that some of their respondents were employed on short term contracts. They would therefore have effectively been freelancers: working under a contract for services and not directly employed by the end user. However, Fiorito *et al.'s* 2014 participants' employment status was not explored, and it was assumed that they were all directly employed by the university. Consequently, in their research Fiorito *et al.* (2014) were unable to assess whether there were any differences in the nature of employees' relationship with the union compared with that of any freelancer colleagues.

In their study into how UK trade unions represented and organized freelancers, Heery *et al.* (2004) conducted a qualitative analysis of BECTU's practice of combining the organizing and servicing models and testing it against additional 'satellite' cases in other unions. Their data was gathered using a 'top down' approach, by conducting '15 interviews with employers' representatives, national and regional union officers and senior lay activists based in London and Wales' (p.22), and by examining relevant union documentation. They found that a fundamental feature of freelancer participation was 'officer-dependence' (p.25), wherein they turned to paid union officials for problem-solving, rather than depending on workplace union representatives who were also their colleagues and employees of the broadcasters. It emerged that internal ideology and external influences could shape the nature of activists' relationships with their unions. Additionally, the relationship was also affected by individuals' employment status and whether they expected to gain tangible returns,

or if personal satisfaction was a sufficient reward for their activism. My research builds upon Heery *et al.*'s (2004) findings in order to compare how employee and freelancer activists view the effects of their activism on their professional and personal lives, and whether this is affected by, or has an effect on their relationship with the union. I take a 'bottom up' approach by gathering data from activists themselves, and inductively interpreting that data.

Fiorito *et al.* (2014) applied Ajzen's (2005) theory of planned behaviour (TPB), which explored individuals' views about how their actions could control a situation: 'the belief that personal activism will make a difference' (Fiorito *et al.*, 2014, p.2). They concluded that activists' views about their own levels of control, of whether their actions could affect outcomes, were of primary importance in their decisions to undertake collective action (p.20). Participants in Yu's (2013) study also reported that their reactions to perceived injustices were pivotal in their motivations for activism (p.64). However, and in contrast, Hyman (2001) found that activists often became active more by circumstance than intent, because they were known and trusted by their colleagues 'or because there was nobody else willing to take on the task' (p. 86), and thus became activists almost by accident rather than as a result of planned behaviour.

Yu (2013) explored the attitudes of trade union activists in a specific section of a North American union, during a campaign to organize janitors and to encourage collective action. Based on interviews with 27 active union members Yu explored participants' motivations for long term activism, and its effect on their professional and personal lives. Yu's research built on McAdam's (1989) study of the short-term and long-term consequences of activism and involvement in social movements for those who participated in the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer project. That project involved hundreds of mainly white college students who gathered in Mississippi to help register black voters, and to join the civil rights movement in the Southern States of North America.

Although not concerned with trade union activism, McAdam's (1989) findings underpinned Yu's (2013) study in his conclusion that activism could make 'one's work personally fulfilling as well as socially meaningful' (p.60). Yu also found that lay activists' informal careers within unions provided a more reliable conduit between the membership and the organisation than the bureaucratic and hierarchical procedures of more formal, salaried union careers. Lay activists (who were not union employees) were legitimized by the respect they commanded amongst their colleagues, and were therefore able to affect unions' organizational democracy (p.72). Their successes in terms of influencing union decision making raised their own status and that of lay representation, and potentially made it easier for them to inspire and nurture other activists. She posited that such activity within workplaces could be conceptualised as 'informal activist careers' (p.58) and that they should be defined as 'careers of achievement rather than careers of advancement' (p.59), that is careers based not on monetary reward or recognition, but on the achievement of specific ideological goals. I argue that Yu's categorisation of the work carried out on behalf of their unions as activist careers reflects the prevailing attitudes towards activism and its effects as being workplace based. My research explored whether, in some workplaces activism might have resulted in advancement, and whether this was also the case for freelancer activists.

McKay and Moore (2009), in their exploration of the barriers to trade union activism in the workplace detailed the increasingly restrictive trade union legislation implemented by successive governments since the Conservative election victory in 1979. *The Employment Protection Act 1975*, which legislated for paid time off for union representatives working in workplaces where trade unions were recognised, remained largely untouched until 1989 when restrictions on the types of union activity which qualify for paid time off were introduced. Only issues which could be directly related to collective bargaining and collective agreements qualified for paid time off (p.99). *The Trade Union and*

Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 further specified the trade union activities in workplaces where unions were recognised which qualify representatives for paid time off as those related to: 'terms and conditions, recruitment, suspension, dismissal, work allocation, discipline, union membership, time off facilities and procedures' (p.101). However, the Act did not specify how much paid time off should be allowed, nor how many trade union representatives should be offered such time off.

Additionally, McKay and Moore (2009) found that employers in workplaces where trade unions were recognised also provided union representatives with resources to facilitate their trade union work (p.101). Participants in McKay and Moore's (2009) focus groups noted that organizational changes within workplaces impacted on representatives' ability to perform their trade union duties. In the public sector such changes included the introduction of 'performance management and targets' (p.104), and in the private sector the changes included the prevalence of takeovers and mergers. They found that the increased outsourcing of work affected both public and private sector unions (p.104). McKay and Moore (2009) did not specifically explore how organizational changes within workplaces could lead to the increased casualization of the workforce, and the possible use of freelancer practitioners. My study into activists within BECTU explores whether different forms of individual commitment are required from employee and freelancer activists. Gall and Fiorito (2012a) also identified the need for a different kind of activism in order to challenge the obstacles faced by unions in the twenty first century – they argued for 'higher degrees of both self-initiation and self-direction' (p.194*).* My research explores whether these characteristics could be applied to both employee and freelancer activists.

2.6 The effects of mobilization and activism on individuals

This section explores the limited literature which addressed how activism affected the professional and personal lives of employee and

freelancer union members. It should be noted, however, that the majority of these studies addressed the effects on these two employment statuses separately. For example, as previously noted, McKay and Moore's (2009) research into how economic and political change in the UK affected trade union representation, concentrated only on workplace based activists. Participants in that study stated almost unanimously that their union activities had had a negative effect on their career prospects (p.107). However, despite the increased casualization of the UK workforce noted by Heery *et al.* (2004), McKay and Moore's (2009) study made no reference to the views of freelancer activists. Siebert and Wilson (2013) found that freelancers who complained about unpaid work might then become unemployable, citing a statement from a union official '"I can show you cases where there's people who have never worked in the [TV company] again after raising a complaint"' (p.7). Freelancers' fear of retribution for their trade union activities are explored further in my study.

Fiorito *et al.* (2011) suggested that 'exchange (union instrumentality) and covenant (union attitude)' (p.500) were important, but they did not clarify the relative importance of each. Although they analysed the influences and contextual effects on activists, the effects of activism on individuals were not explored. Fiorito *et al.* (2014) suggested that academic discussions on the effects of activism had tended to measure those effects against more high level union activity, and they argued for a more nuanced analysis to engender a broader perspective (p.20). They found that lower level activity, such as attending union meetings, provided opportunities to observe and experience the effects of others' higher level activities, and could stimulate further involvement in the union. They concluded that such developmental participation was a pivotal element in the organizational model of unionism (p.21).

Yu (2013) reported that activists considered their work for the union to be of higher value than other aspects of their lives, and that because their union work enabled them to fulfil more personal and ideological

aspirations, they sought out more roles, often at higher levels within the union (p.65). Yu (2013) differentiated the informal careers of activists from paid union officials' careers based on the fact that the latter were paid by the union, and that they were therefore potentially less ideologically motivated. Her respondents felt that they had more authority and legitimacy amongst their work colleagues because they were not dependent on the union for their salary and career progression. This attitude was typified by one of her participants who stated that 'Dignity, respect and justice don't have prices' (p.69). However, it should be noted that these activists were in relatively secure, paid employment, albeit not being paid by the union, so that their views about their activism were still based on their positions as employees.

McKay and Moore (2009) found that representatives in their study were 'relatively old, on average aged 46' (p.13) and that the longer they had been active, the more roles they tended to undertake within the workplace on behalf of the union, and the more time they spent on those activities (p.105). The resulting impact on the time spent by representatives' on their union activities and on their work-life balance was acknowledged by their participants, although they accepted it as a part of their commitment to the union (p.107). However, the need for this level of commitment was also perceived as a barrier to recruiting new representatives (p.107). Many of the respondents in Moore's (2011) study 'reported that their union activism meant that they had little time and energy to for other voluntary activity' (p.158). Another influence on the levels of activist commitment identified by Gall and Fiorito (2012a) was how other responsibilities, including childcare and other family responsibilities, could affect the levels of activity which were possible at certain stages in life.

Of particular relevance to my research were Heery and Abbott's (2000) and Heery *et al.*'s (2004) explorations of trade union policies in respect of atypical workers, specifically freelancers. They argued that in order to maintain and grow their membership trade unions must find different

ways of organizing to encompass the working practices and the requirements of freelancers ‘beyond the workplace’ (p.20). Using BECTU as their lead case study, because of its long history of representing freelancer as well as employee members, and the high proportion of its members who were freelancers in 2004 (40%) (p.21), Heery *et al.* (2004) compared several aspects of union representation of employee and freelancers. The aspects explored included: ‘recruitment, participation, representation, servicing, collective bargaining and political action’ (*ibid.*). It emerged that traditional union democracy and member participation was mobilized around concerns within the workplace. Freelancer participation and mobilization was subject to more constraints within working situations, but was encouraged ‘by concentrating activists at central points within the system of union government’ (p.24). Representation of employee members was traditionally carried out by a system of shop or branch stewards, and workplace based branches. They found that, ideally, freelancer stewards or representatives were elected to hold office for the duration of some productions, but this had often proven difficult because of a shortage of activists who were prepared to be identified within the temporary workplace. Such freelancer representatives also tended to pass most issues on to full time union officials, rather than becoming involved in negotiations with producers or employers.

Heery *et al.* (2004) found that the servicing model for both employee and freelancer members involved providing protection and representation in the workplace. For freelancers, however, the range of services was expanded to include recovery of unpaid fees from employers; legal services; the provision of specialist insurances, including Public Liability Insurance (PLI), a significant and otherwise costly requirement for freelancers; representation across a range of workplaces and employers; and freelancer directories across the UK nations and regions (pp.25-26). They also noted that unions representing freelancers recognised that their training and development needs could not be met ‘at enterprise level’ (within

workplaces). Unions which represented freelancers had developed a range of training and developmental services specifically for freelancers, including union-related as well as vocational training opportunities, and the provision of advice and guidance in terms of career progression. They found that, in BECTU the advice and guidance was provided by trained freelancer members, who were themselves subject to continued up-skilling by the union, thereby also improving their own skill-base and employment prospects, or 'human capital' (p.27).

BECTU had also successfully negotiated multi-employer agreements, specifying minimum rates for freelancers across a range of craft and production skills. Heery *et al.* (2004) concluded that union representation of freelancers continued to evolve and that it could provide a valuable contribution to union vitality and renewal strategies. They posited that the structures and services provided by BECTU could usefully be replicated by other unions facing an increasing tendency towards casualization within the workforce. As previously noted, their study took a 'top down' approach in exploring how BECTU had responded to its increasingly freelance membership. It did not assess the views of individual activists, neither did it directly compare the experiences of freelancers with those of employees. My research builds upon their work in order to provide a more inductive view of the effects of activism on both freelancers and employees.

It was apparent in the existing literature that several factors including employment status and age could impact on the effects of trade union activism and how they were articulated. However, much of the existing literature concentrated on the effects of activism for those in full time employment. In the main, it also tended to take a 'top down' approach, and to concentrate on how activism affected trade unions and their ability to mobilize their membership. My study builds upon the existing literature to explore the views of both employee and freelancer workers in the UK broadcast industries about how their activism has affected their professional and personal lives. I take a 'bottom up' approach in

order to explore these issues from individual activists' own perspectives, rather than assessing their perceptions in term of the wider trade union movement. I also explore whether their views may vary depending upon their employee or freelancer status. It is therefore anticipated that the views expressed by participants in my study may contribute to a richer discussion about the effects of trade union activism. The existing literature which explored the effects of trade union activism espoused two key theoretical approaches: social capital theory and mobilization theory. However, they also encompassed some aspects of other theories including social identity theory, social movement theory, and the theory of planned behaviour. My research explores whether any or all of these theories might be applicable to the effects of trade union activism on individuals' professional and personal lives, and whether that effect differs depending on activists' employee or freelance employment status.

2.7 The meanings of key terms and their determinants

In exploring the existing literature, it became apparent that in order to address my research aims, it was also necessary to explore the meanings of two of the key terms: 'activist' or 'activism', and 'freelancer' to uncover how they were defined in the existing literature and whether they might prove to be problematic. Hodder and Edwards (2015) found that 'problems of definition are not new in industrial relations' (p.844). They cited attempts by academics in the 1950s to engage with the difficulties involved in endowing 'with exact meanings words which are ordinarily used with little or no attempt at accuracy of definition' (Bell, 1954, p.128). McBride *et al.* (2015) also posed the question 'are we, as researchers, sufficiently problematizing relationships within categories of difference?' (p.338). This section analyses how 'activist' or 'activism' has been defined in a selection of the relevant existing literature on trade union activism, in order to formulate my own definitions of 'activist'.

It was apparent that most of the existing literature used definitions predetermined by the researcher, using a 'top-down' approach. Fiorito *et al.* (2011) undertook a quantitative study, involving the relevant data from one section of a 2009 faculty survey distributed to 1,600 faculty members within one workplace (a US university) which elicited a 34% response rate. Of these only the 151 responses from union members within the faculty were considered in by Fiorito *et al.* (2011). They examined the effects of activism on unions, and explored whether individuals with positive attitudes towards the union were more likely to be activists; and whether activism was more likely within workplaces with a positive attitude towards activism. In order to assess descriptors of activism they utilised data from the 2009 faculty poll in which 'Activism' was assessed in a "global" or overall sense. The descriptors were initially prepared by the union's membership committee chair but revised slightly based on the chair's discussions with the union president and other leaders' (Fiorito *et al.,* 2011, p.490). Their relative weighting was determined by 'four senior authors' independent assessments of the importance of several specific union activism roles' (p.493). Thus they had used a 'top down' approach to deductively formulate the descriptors of the activities involved in activism and their relative importance. Perhaps unsurprisingly therefore, given that they were specified and rated by leaders in the union, the resulting seven definitions offered as options within the survey described comparatively high profile activities, which included:

> 'Active on Executive Council (chapter governing body)
>
> [Union] Senate (serves on Executive Council and represents chapter at state meeting)
>
> Fate-of-the-state rally planning (march and rally to protest higher education budget cuts)' (p.492).

The lowest level activity offered as an option in this poll was: 'Volunteer distribution network (distributed fliers, membership forms, or contracts)' (p.492). Despite this, it was this option which was most often cited by

respondents as a descriptor or activism. Fiorito *et al.* (2011) undertook quantitative analysis of the data which produced correlations among the summary ratings. They concluded that 'the global ratings of individual member activism referenced earlier were likely to systematically reflect differing degrees of activism in differentially important activities' (p.493). However, because the definitions in the faculty poll had been sourced from the viewpoints of a small number of senior union activists and proffered as options in questionnaires or surveys, their responses were filtered through these predetermined options. Fiorito *et al.* (2011) also acknowledged that, while research on questionnaire responses indicated that they were generally truthful, where the context of the research was perceived as being supported by, or integral to the union this 'could have converged with imprecise questions, subjective interpretations, and social desirability effects to produce a misleadingly positive response' (p.486). Thus taking a 'top down' approach, and proffering options based on the opinions of leaders, rather than those of activists themselves, may have provided misleading data. Additionally, the fact that the data was gathered as part of a wider, faculty based poll, may have influenced participants' responses.

Fiorito *et al.* (2014) assessed the influence of co-workers' attitudes on the development of activism, and analysed the relevant responses to the 2011 faculty web-based poll undertaken on behalf of the union. The questionnaire provided 15 predetermined definitions of activism, formulated based on participation in activities carried out during the previous 12 months (as a measure or descriptive of activism). The options ranged from active participation such as 'held an elected or appointed position in the [union executive board]' (p.10) to more passive involvement such as 'visited [union] website' (*ibid.*).

Fiorito *et al.* (2014) questioned why there was a disparity between academic findings of low levels of activism and the high levels of activism reported in the 2005-2009 World Values Survey. They

concluded that the disparity was because of the variety of meanings ascribed to trade union activism, and the ways in which these meanings were perceived and internalised by respondents (p.4). Fiorito *et al.* (2014) noted that those who reported 'specific participation in demanding activities' (p.11) tended to describe themselves as highly active. However, they found that those respondents who reported participation in more undemanding activities were 'as likely to report themselves as being inactive as being highly active' (*ibid.)*. They concluded that these differences in the way respondents involved in different levels of activism described themselves 'underscores the subjective and possibly misleading nature of summary self-assessments' (*ibid.)*. Their findings indicated that a number of respondents involved in lower level activities (15.5%) tended to inflate their reported activism, while a small percentage (6%) of those who were involved in higher level activities self-assessed their involvement as at the lower level of activism. As previously reported, Fiorito *et al.'*s (2014) definitions were based on the levels of activity reported to the union in the previous 12 months, which might therefore be classed as a 'top down' approach. Although these were interpreted by the researchers as determinants of activism, those who undertook the activities were not consulted about whether they themselves would concur that their activities could be interpreted as activism.

Moore (2011) found that the data gathered during her research clearly identified activism in terms of relationships within the workplace, but situated also within a wider political and ideological framework. She argued that while these activities remained relevant in the 21st century, they should also be re-evaluated in terms of changing working patterns and ideological shifts in perceptions as well as the new trade union roles of ULRs and ERs referred to earlier in this chapter. She noted that contemporary activists made less reference to such concepts as 'socialism and workers' control' (p. 150) and noted the importance of the use of different language in defining activism. Moore (2011) found that, despite their commitment to defending their colleagues against

injustices in the workplace, a number of her respondents denied or downplayed their activism, seeing it as rather an extension of their social identity. Moore's research was based on interviews undertaken with 30 employee activists within a variety of workplaces, and representing five different trade unions. However, because Moore's participants were all employees, she could not address the views of the increasing number of freelancer workers, some of whom would also be involved in these emerging trade union activities, about how those activities might have affected their professional and personal lives.

In Kelly and Heery's (1994) exploration of trade union officials' organization and their relationship with shop stewards, they made no references to 'activists' – unpaid lay representatives were more often referred to as 'militants' (p.201), a term which they linked with the propensity for conflict and strike action and which was thus much more loaded with negative connotations. Kelly (1998) found that mobilization relied heavily on the leadership of existing activists, or 'leaders' (p.147). The concept of the activist as a leader was further addressed by Gall and Fiorito (2012a and 2012b) in their exploration of the levels of commitment required of activists within the workplace in the UK and USA. They defined activism as a willingness to work (WTW) for the union without financial reward (Gall and Fiorito 2012a), as opposed to passive activities such as reading union correspondence or attending meetings. However, while they might argue that trade union activists within recognised workplaces undertake their activities without financial reward, in the UK they are provided with time off from their workplaces for at least some of their union duties under the terms of *The Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992*. It might therefore be more accurate to state that employees who are activists undertake some of their activities without additional financial reward.

Gall and Fiorito (2012b) assessed how member commitment affected leadership within the workplace as a form of activism, and union organizing strategies, while recognizing the current decline in union

member activity and willingness to work for the union. They found that lay union activism required union participation as well as commitment, and explored Gordon *et al.*'s (1980) conceptualisation of the four components required for union commitment: union loyalty; belief in union aspirations; a sense of responsibility; and willingness to work for the union. However Gall and Fiorito (2012b) found that the analysis of participation was less clearly definable, and argued that union commitment did not necessarily lead to participation, but that both could develop concurrently, or that participation could equally lead to commitment. Fosh (1981) argued that activism could be defined in terms of informal participation ranging from an understanding of union rules, to engaging in conversation with colleagues about the union, to more traditionally recognised activities such as undertaking representative roles.

As demonstrated above, the difficulties inherent in searching for a definition of the term 'activist' are amply illustrated in the existing literature. They are epitomised in the research conducted by Fiorito *et al.* (2014), in which activist motivations and the effects of activism on unions became the focus of the research, rather than a definitive understanding of the term 'activist', which might ultimately be proven to be undefinable, and certainly un-generalizable.

In order to approach the definition of the term 'activist' utilising a 'bottom up' approach, both the interviewees and the questionnaire respondents in my study were asked whether they considered themselves activists, and how they would define the term. The questionnaire respondents were asked to define activism based on the definitions provided by the interviewees.

2.8 The meaning of freelancer status

A growing body of literature has examined various aspects of freelancer working, its implications and consequences for the individual, and the ways in which trade unions were attempting to organize these workers. Heery *et al.*'s research between 2000 and

2009 was of particular relevance to my study because it addressed trade union representation of workers outside traditional workplaces, and analysed how BECTU represented its freelancer membership.

Kitching and Smallbone (2012) acknowledged that it was difficult to access accurate statistics about freelancer employment, mainly because of the difficulty in defining the term ‘freelancer’ and its implications: ‘the UK has no official definition of freelancer status, nor any data source specifically recording freelancer numbers (p.82). Kitching and Smallbone (2012) defined freelancer workers as ‘those genuinely in business on their own account, working alone or with co-owning partners or co-directors, responsible for generating their own work and income, but who do not employ others’ (p.76). However, this precise definition could not be applied to BECTU members, because most freelancers in the broadcast and film industries, although effectively and for tax purposes self-employed, are nevertheless dependent on a range of different employers to generate their work, and to select them as providers. Kitching and Smallbone (2012) argued that freelancers made a valuable contribution to the economy by providing flexibility in employment and a range of specialised skills and experiences (p.86). However, they did not question whether freelancer status was a choice made by the individual, or if they had become freelancers following redundancy, or other work-based changes (Gumbrell-McCormick, 2011).

Johal and Anastasi (2015) noted the growth of organisations other than unions which provided representation to freelancers, notably the Association of Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed (IPSE) founded in 2014 (previously the Professional Contractors Group (PCG) formed in 1999). By conducting research and providing advice on taxation and other self-employment related issues, developing networks of independent workers, and providing them with a variety of services they argued that IPSE had become ‘the leading specialist association for independent professionals, freelancers and the self-employed in the UK’ (p.1). Consequently, the organisation had the

potential to challenge unions' ability to represent such atypical workers. However, Johal and Anastasi (2015) acknowledged that, unlike unions, IPSE did not and could not address issues relating to collective bargaining, for which individuals still turned to the union, as is noted by Saundry *et al.* (2007) in relation to the TV Wrap campaign and BECTU's involvement in its later stages, which is explored elsewhere in this chapter.

Heery *et al.* (2004) found that freelancer working occurred predominantly in the craft and professional occupations, and focused their research specifically on broadcasting, which utilised a range of freelancer practitioners. Heery (2009) referred to freelancing as 'an acceptable and *freely chosen* form of employment' (p.4) [emphasis added]. However, he did not test this definition in order to uncover whether some freelancers had previously been employees of broadcast or production companies, and after redundancy, or other changes in working practices, had no option but to become freelancers if they wished to carry on in their chosen craft trade (Gumbrell-McCormick, 2011).

Building upon his existing studies Heery (2005) argued for further research into 'previously neglected institutions of interest representation' (p.1), a view echoed by Kitching and Smallbone (2012) in their analysis of freelancer status, and of the size of the freelancer workforce in the UK (p.75). Heery (2009) reiterated the need for unions to provide additional services in order to represent freelancer members, and argued that 'methods other than collective bargaining' (p.1) were required to effectively fulfil their needs. He supplemented his previous research by assessing how the civil service union Prospect was attempting to organize field archaeologists, who worked predominantly as freelancers (p.2). Is should be noted that at the time of my study (2014-2016) BECTU and Prospect were in amalgamation

talks, with one of BECTU's main attractions for Prospect being their experience of and ability to organize freelancers[2].

Gumbrell-McCormick (2011) found that unions in Europe attended more to the requirements of part-time workers rather than to other forms of atypical work, including freelancers, and argued that there was a particular need to address those needs in the prevailing political and economic climate. Heery (2009) argued that historical tendencies within some unions to exclude freelancers might reflect the 'indifference, contempt or hostility that are shown by permanent employees to workers in peripheral roles' (p.3). Gumbrell McCormick and Hyman (2013) also noted the perceived conflict of interest between workers in full time employment and atypical (including freelancer) workers, and the perception that 'devoting more time and resources to atypical workers was seen as reducing attention to 'traditional' members' (p.57). However, Heery (2009) found that within BECTU freelancer members were recognised as equal in status as employee members. He noted that there was an engagement with their requirements involving specialised structures for participation, and negotiation of tailored agreements and policies to meet the diverse needs of the total membership. He concluded that this model of representation and organization was becoming more accepted and more widely utilised within the trade union movement in the UK.

Although McKay and Moore (2009) acknowledged the increasing prevalence of atypical forms of work, including freelancing, they concentrated their research on barriers to activism for employee members working within recognised workplaces. They did not explore the situation for freelancer union representatives and activists, for whom the concept of paid time off for trade union activities does not exist in any form. All freelancer activists' union participation was unpaid, and if a commitment was made to attend a meeting, and a day's work was refused in order to honour that commitment, it could be

[2]Key informant interview, high level Trade Union official (2), 7 August 2015

said that their activities actually cost them money in real terms (Heery and Adler, 2004).

The literature discussed above demonstrates that the needs of atypical workers have not been fully appreciated, explored or met by trade unions in the UK and in Europe. Indeed, in some cases casual, freelancers or agency workers may be confronted by suspicion and resentment by union members (Gumbrell-McCormick, 2011). Some studies have acknowledged that the issues facing freelancers in the broadcasting industry have been addressed by BECTU (Heery, 2009). However, it has become apparent that a more nuanced definition of the freelancer status is required in order to fully appreciate how different employment backgrounds affect individuals' views about the effects of their trade union activism. Taking a combined (mixed) methods approach my research explores these issues from the perspectives of activists within BECTU.

2.9 Summary

Relatively little has been written about: activists' views about the effect of their activism on their lives and their work prospects, and whether those effects are affected by activists' employee or freelancer status. As was demonstrated in this chapter, the existing literature which addressed issues around activists, and employees' and freelancers trade union representation, did not all relate to one overarching theoretical approach. Fosh (1981), Kelly and Heery (1994), Kelly (1998), Hyman (2001), Moore (2011) and Simms *et al.* (2013), amongst others, explored union organization and how members' activism affected union mobilization, renewal and survival.

Holgate and McKay (2009) analysed the effectiveness of equal opportunities policies on freelancer working practices in the broadcast industries. The resultant implications in terms of trade union representation of freelancer (sometimes termed 'atypical') workers were addressed by McKay and Moore (2009), Heery (2005), Heery *et al.* (2004), and Heery and Abbott (2000). Kelly and Kelly (1994), Kelly

(1998), Gall and Fiorito (2012a), Yu (2013) and Fiorito *et al.* (2014) explored members' motivations for becoming activists, and individuals' willingness to work (WTW) on behalf of the union. They also addressed Ajzen's (2005) theory of planned behaviour (TPB) - the belief that activism can make a difference and enable those involved to have a level of control over their destiny. Snape *et al.* (2000) and Snape and Redman (2004) explored the nature and scope of unions activists' commitment. However, these studies took a 'top down' approach, in some cases sourcing data from high level paid union officials. Others explored how activists' action impacted on the unions. Freelancer representation was discussed in terms of how unions organized freelancer workers. None of the literature cited above explored activists' views about the effects of their trade union activism on their professional and personal lives.

Neither Jarley (2005) nor Banks and Metzgar (2005) addressed members' own views about the value of any social capital accrued by union activities. Grugulis and Soyanova (2011) and Siebert and Wilson (2013) explored the opportunities for new entrants to access networking opportunities, and concluded that association with the union might prove a liability. Their work informed the theory that becoming known as someone who questioned employers' authority (which could be construed as an alternative interpretation of activism) could have a negative effect on work prospects. Antcliff *et al.* (2007) and Saundry *et al.* (2012) did not explore whether networks and any social capital accrued as a result might be perceived as constructive or as disruptive by employers, and consequently whether they might affect activists' work prospects. However, their research and Lee (2011) provides a contextual background for my research. In exploring activists' views about their activism, my study considers aspects of social capital theory, mobilization theory, and to a lesser extent social identity theory, and the theory of planned behaviour, in order to assess which would be most applicable to my research area.

Much of the existing literature took either a qualitative or a quantitative approach, from a 'top-down' perspective, concentrating on the effects of activism on unions and their development or renewal, or exploring individuals' motivations for activism, from the standpoint of the unions, or of paid union officials. Previous research which addressed freelancers' involvement in trade unions also concentrated on how unions were adapting in order to effectively represent freelance workers, but did not explore freelancers' experiences as activists, and how their activism might have affected their professional and personal lives. In order to explore these issues my study adopts a combined (mixed) methods approach from the 'bottom-up' perspectives of individual freelancer and employee union activists, rather than from the standpoint of the union as an entity. I acknowledge Snape and Redman's (2004) and Gall and Fiorito's (2012b) reservations about drawing generalizable conclusions from the study of one particular union. Bearing that reservation in mind, in order to address some of the gaps in the existing literature, the following overarching research question was formulated for my study:

> In what ways might lay activist members of the broadcast union BECTU view the effects of their trade union activism on their professional and personal lives, and might their views differ depending on the employee or freelancer status of the activist?

Additionally, at the beginning of the data collection process, drawing on the existing literature I formulated the following definitions of the key terms involved in my research:

- Activist - a person who was actively involved in union activities at a local as well as a national level and who was willing to commit some of their time and energies to the union.
- Freelancer – a union member who worked in the industries covered by BECTU under a contract for services and was thus not directly employed by the end user.

- Employee - a union member who worked in the industries covered by BECTU and was a directly employed member of staff within an organisation, working under a contract of employment.

However, it was apparent to me that in order to inform and address the overarching research question it was necessary to further explore two of these key terms: ‘activist’ and ‘freelancer’. To facilitate this process, participants’ views, as well as their current or past employment status were considered, utilising an inductive approach to the interpretation of the resulting data. The following chapter outlines the methodological options deemed most relevant to generate the data required and to analyse it in order to answer the research questions which will address my overarching research aims.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The road travelled – how, why and when?

This chapter discusses the methodological approach adopted in this study, the selected research methods, and why they were considered the most appropriate for my research. It provides an outline of how the data was collected and analysed, and how and why the participants were selected. It also explores the ethical and other considerations involved in this project, and outlines the timetable adopted.

Creswell (2008) acknowledges that research problems can originate from multiple sources, including researchers' own experience in their personal or professional lives, as well as debates within existing literature. The origins of this study stem from exploration of the limited existing literature which addresses trade union activism and employment status. It also arises from my own experiences as both a freelancer and as an employee of a number of broadcasting organisations, which are outlined in more detail later in section *3.13* of this chapter. The research aims to fill gaps in the existing literature by exploring whether trade union activism and its effects are viewed and experienced differently by workers in the UK film and broadcast industries, depending on their employment status (whether they are employees or freelancers). It also analyses employee and freelancer activists' views about the effect of their activism; exploring why they have those views; identifying common themes; and exploring why there might be differences in their views. The study builds particularly on the work of Fosh (1981), Hyman (2001), Gall and Fiorito (2012a and 2012b), Moore (2011), Yu (2013) and Fiorito *et al.* (2014) in defining the meaning of activism and its effects on those individuals actively involved with BECTU.

This research adopts the ontological philosophy that there is no one generalizable social reality, but 'only multiple, context-specific ones'

(Ritchie *et al.*, 2014, p.4). Further, it espouses idealism, acknowledging that no external reality can exist independently of individuals' beliefs or understanding, but 'that realty is fundamentally mind-dependant: it is only knowable through the human mind and through socially constructed meanings, and no reality exists independently of these' (*ibid.*). Epistemologically, this study takes a predominantly inductive approach, by enabling the views of its participants 'to drive the later development of categories, propositions, and eventually "meaning" based on the actions in the field and not preconceptions' (Yin, 2011: 124). It allows the 'data to lead to the emergence of concepts' (Yin, 2011: 94), rather than taking a deductive approach which lets the concepts 'lead to the definition of the data that need to be collected' (*ibid.*). However, it also concedes that theorists including Blaikie (2007) and Ritchie *et al*. (2014) advocate caution about the oversimplification of the concepts of induction and deduction. Ritchie *et al*. (2014) argue that:

> 'when so-called inductive researchers generate and interpret their data, they cannot approach this with a blank mind. Even if they are not testing a hypothesis, the kind of data they have generated, the questions they have asked and the analytical categories they have employed will have been influenced by assumptions deductively derived from previous work in their field' (p.6).

Thus, this research, while taking a predominantly inductive, interpretive approach, acknowledges the inherent assumptions based deductively on previous studies and theories. It also analyses quantitative data.

The methodology outlined below was selected to gather a range of data in order to address the issues raised in the overarching research question. Because this research explored participants' views about the effects of their activism, primarily qualitative research methods were utilised to elicit relevant data 'to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of participants' (Creswell, 2008: p.16).

However, quantitative data was also accumulated from the responses to a structured questionnaire, which provided descriptive statistics and a context for the qualitative data. It also allowed me to test for the existence of statistically significant relationships between variables.

Matthews and Ross (2010) discovered that the origins of qualitative research can be traced as far back as Kant (1781), who argues against a purely positivist or scientific approach to research, but that individuals' perceptions are related to their interpretations of what their senses tell them. Ritchie *et al*. (2014) note that Max Weber (1864-1920):

> 'proposed two types of understanding – direct observational understanding, and explanatory or motivational understanding. In the natural sciences, the purpose is to produce law-like propositions whereas in the social sciences, the aim is to understand subjectively meaningful experiences' (Ritchie *et al*., 2014, pp.12-13).

More recently, the tradition of 'interpretivism' has been developed and refined by a number of methodological theorists, including Clough and Nutbrown (2002), Greenfield (2002), Creswell (2008), Yin (2011), Maxwell (2013), Punch (2014), Ritchie *et al*. (2014) and Bryman (2016). For example, Bryman (2016) defines 'interpretivism' as 'an *epistemological* [emphasis in original] position that requires the social scientist to grasp the *subjective* [emphasis added] meaning of social action' (p. 692). It has provided qualitative researchers with one alternative to the scientific method of positivism, which 'advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality and beyond' (p.694).

In order to develop an 'understanding of research participants' views and actions in the context of their lives overall' (Ritchie *et al*., 2014, p.13), my research takes an interpretivist approach to the acquisition and the interpretation of the data gathered. However, I also

acknowledge that:

> ‘where interpretations move beyond the explicit descriptions and accounts provided by individual participants – drawing on researchers’ interpretations or on wider theories – great importance is placed on ensuring that it is clear how more abstract interpretations relate to the data provided by study participants’ (p.22).

This study considers and embraces participants’ views and experiences, and inductively interprets them in the context of their current and past professional and personal situations. The first issue to be addressed was the formulation and refinement of the research questions, which is outlined in the following section of this chapter.

3.1 Research questions

In this study the initial overarching research question was formulated following an extensive review of the existing literature on trade union activism and its effects. Following the first seven interviews conducted at the beginning of the data collection process, the research questions were refined and modified. This clarification and revision of the research questions during the research process conforms with Punch (2006), who notes that it is acceptable, at the proposal stage for candidates’ knowledge ‘to be at a logical rather than a *technical* [emphasis in original] level…’ (p.55) and that proposal preparation may provide an opportunity to develop ‘this logical level of understanding’ *(ibid.)*. Equally, it is accepted that research topics can be constantly changed and refined (Punch, 2006; Silverman, 2011; Yin, 2011) during the process of data collection.

In formulating the overarching research question, I defined an activist as a person who was actively involved in union activities at a local as well as a national level and who was willing to commit some of their time and energies to the union, based on the definitions formulated by Fosh (1981), Kelly (1998), Moore (2011), Gall and Fiorito (2012b), and Fiorito *et al*. (2014). However, the overarching research question was

challenged by the responses elicited from the first seven interviews when it emerged that members' views about the meanings of the word 'activist', and its relevance in their professional and personal lives, should be explored in more detail. Additionally, it became apparent that the nature of participants' relationship with the union affected their views about its effects on their professional and personal lives. The following research questions were therefore formulated in order to address these emergent issues:

1. How is trade union activism understood by lay members of the broadcast union BECTU, and does their understanding of the term 'activist' vary depending upon their employee or freelancer status?
2. In what ways might activist lay members of the broadcast union BECTU view the effects of their trade union activism on their professional and personal lives, and might their views differ depending on the employee or freelancer status of the activist?
   i. In what ways might lay activists' relationship with the union affect how they view the impact of their activism on their professional and personal lives?

3.2 Selecting the most appropriate methods for this study

In order to solicit the view of activists, it was decided to conduct qualitative, semi-structured interviews to 'let participants vocalise their own priorities as part of their own way of describing the world as they see it' (Yin, 2011, p. 136). Additionally, in order to enrich the data gathered, a quantitative questionnaire was developed, based on the interviewees responses, and circulated to a wider constituency within BECTU. Many authors support such an approach which utilises both qualitative and quantitative methods, including Patton (2002), Seale *et al*. (2007), Gilbert, (2008), Barbour (2008), Silverman (2010, 2011) and Ritchie *et al*. (2014) and counsel against epistemological determinism.

Silverman (2011) cautions against the adoption of any one particular tradition:

> ‘At best, they are pedagogic devices for students to obtain a first grip on a difficult field – they help us learn the jargon. At worst, they are excuses for not thinking, which assemble groups of sociologists into ‘armed camps’, unwilling to learn from one another’ (pp. 24-5).

Ritchie *et al*. (2014) emphasise that researchers should not be forced into a theoretical or methodological straitjacket’ (p.19). Building on the work of Seale *et al*. (2007) and Silverman (2011), they advocate ‘a flexible approach to research design that takes account of the aims and context of a study… they argue for **pragmatism** [emphasis in original] – choosing the approach that best fits the specific research question’ (Ritchie *et al*., 2014, p.20). Thus qualitative and quantitative methods are seen as complementary, rather than competing and contradictory, approaches (*ibid.*). Flick (2009) argues that data gathered in qualitative interviews can be ‘”tested” and “explained” by their confirmation and frequency in the questionnaire data’ (p.25) and Mason (2006) quoted in Ritchie *et al*. (2014) notes that combining methods adds ‘either breadth (from quantitative research) or depth (from qualitative data) to their analysis’ (p.40). Building on Mason (2006) and Brownlie (2011), Ritchie *et al*. (2014) argue that:

> ‘A more effective way of combining qualitative and quantitative methods is to see them as equal but separate, suited to answering different questions about the same or related topics… Each of these two research approaches are seen as providing a distinctive kind of evidence and, used together, they can offer a powerful resource to inform and illuminate policy or practice (p.40).

Prior to selection of the appropriate research methods, careful consideration was also given to Bryman (2012), Yin (2011) and Creswell (2008) who advocate combining methods in order to enrich the findings. Creswell (2008) states that combining methods ensures

‘that the overall strength of a study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research’ (p.4), and similarly Bryman (2012) argues that ‘a more complete answer to… research questions can be achieved by including both quantitative and qualitative methods’ (p.637).

The use of semi structured interviews for the qualitative data was selected in order to allow participants to expand upon their experiences and views by using open questions, rather than using the closed ended questions recommended for use in structured interviews (Yin, 2011). Yin argues that a study which uses only structured interviews ‘is most likely to be a survey or poll, not a qualitative study’ (p.133).

Because of my involvement with BECTU, I was able to access members who were willing to ‘talk about the research topic in ways that will help [me] to answer [my] research questions’ (Matthews and Ross, 2010, p.149). Purposive sampling methods were adopted because it was anticipated that the background and experience of the participants targeted would be relevant to the research topic and because their responses enabled the researcher to ‘explore the research questions or develop a theory’ (p.225). In order to complete this research within the available timeframe, and with the limited resources available, it was initially anticipated that the interviews would be conducted with a maximum of 20 BECTU members who would provide a sufficient range and variation of opinions, analysed in combination with, and further informed by the data accumulated from the questionnaire respondents and the desk research. The data gathered would enable me to interrogate the final data set in the context of the research questions. This was also comparable with numbers of interviewees involved in other research projects undertaken in similar areas (Jarley, 2005; Lee, 2011; Siebert and Wilson, 2013). However, in practice, and in order to ensure a balance of employee or freelancer participants, age, and gender, in this study a total of 27 interviews were conducted, comprising 15 freelancers, and 12 employed members.

It should be noted that Andy and Bryan were interviewed in the latter stages of the data collection process because they had initially been an employee lay union activist (Andy) and a freelancer lay union activist (Bryan) before becoming paid employees of BECTU. It was therefore considered that their views on the effects of their lay activism on their professional and personal lives prior to becoming full time union officials would enrich the findings of this research.

As previously noted, it was decided at the outset of this study that whilst the primary method of data collection was qualitative it would include a small scale quantitative study in order to complement, explore and expand the findings of the qualitative data. In order to accumulate primarily qualitative and some quantitative data, ‘and to get a holistic picture of what is happening’ (Matthews and Ross, 2010, p.144) this research combined both methods. The qualitative research methods (semi-structured interviews) provided the data required to explore the research questions, which was further enriched by the quantitative data accumulated by analysing the questionnaire responses. It is acknowledged that gathering data by questionnaires which offer lists of prescribed options ‘can have a major effect on answers’ (Gillham, 2000, p.8) and provide less nuanced responses compared with direct interviews which allow respondents to expand on their opinions. Gillham (2000) also advocates that questionnaire results should be examined in the context of individual unions, their membership profiles, their geographical locations, and the prevailing internal and external political climates. He warns that caution should be exercised in extrapolating any generalized conclusions.

Nevertheless, the wider breadth of quantitative data collected from the questionnaire responses in my study provided valuable additional information in relation to the research questions, complementing the qualitative data and enriching the analysis process. Additionally, the findings of the qualitative and the quantitative methods were integrated so that they were presented ‘in terms of substantive issues

rather than in terms of different methods' (Bryman 2012, p.700) and to enrich the research conclusions. The data acquired from both methods were also approached and analysed bearing in mind that the value of combining 'methods lies in extending understanding through the use of multiple perspectives or different types of 'readings'' (Ritchie *et al*., 2014, p.41) – that is revealing that the social world is multi-faceted. Ritchie *et al.* (2014) also argue that 'the 'security' that using multiple methods provides is by giving a fuller picture of phenomena, not necessarily a more certain one' (*ibid.*). Brownlie (2011) cautions against the labelling of the combination of qualitative and quantitative findings as 'a way of "nailing" the reality… In fact, it illustrates the opposite… the impossibility of closing down all possible readings, imagined or otherwise, of that experience' (p.472). These admonitions were borne in mind, and amply illustrated, in the scope and complexity of the data gathered during my study.

The research methodology checklist in Matthews and Ross (2010, pp.148-150) was utilised to decide how both primary and secondary data would be accumulated. The checklist cross references the types of data to be gathered (including primary or secondary; spoken or written; individual or group) with a range of methods (including various types of interviews, questionnaires, observation, focus groups). My selection was also cognisant of the admonition that research candidates should choose their 'methods on the basis of the resources, particularly of time and money, [the researcher's] skills and the access [she] may have to data sources' (p.148). As an internal researcher and a high profile, active member of the union, I was able to request and be awarded access to a wide range of data sources, including:

- potential interviewees;
- questionnaire respondents;
- any relevant BECTU History project transcripts. The interviews carried out for this project explore members' recollections of their lives in the industries covered by the union.

Although this co-operation from BECTU provided access to a wide range of data, it might also be perceived to have influenced the research process, by predisposing me, as the researcher, (even subliminally) towards a more positive view of the union and its membership. This possibility was borne in mind throughout the research process in order to avoid any conflicts of interest, and the appearance of any possible bias, and the limitations and advantages of the insider researcher are explored further in section *3.13* of this chapter.

The data acquired from the demographic questions asked of all participants (interviewees as well as questionnaire respondents) was also analysed quantitatively in order to provide information about particular categories of respondents. This approach also ensured that the validity of the data gathered could ultimately be verified by comparison with the cumulative data set. Gillham (2005) states that 'Good research questions almost point to appropriate methods' (p.5). As previously stated, the overarching research question in this study was formulated in order to explore participants' views about their activism and its effects on their professional and personal lives, and led to the following combined qualitative and quantitative research methods as recommended by Yin (2011) and Gillham (2000). In order to elicit those views face-to-face semi structured interviews allowed the participants to 'vocalize their own priorities' (Yin, 2011, p.136) but also enabled me, as the researcher to use non-directive language to provide prompts where necessary (*ibid.).* These semi structured interviews, based on a carefully constructed interview schedule, provided the initial primary data required in order to begin to answer the research questions. I transcribed all of the interviews using specialist FTW software. The resulting data was interrogated utilising NVivo computer software for qualitative data analysis, which enabled more thorough thematic and content searches. More detail of how this software was utilised is discussed later in this chapter.

In order to access more factual primary data for quantitative analysis and to enrich the data gathered during the interview process, a questionnaire was developed based on the emergent themes identified during the initial interview process (Gillham, 2000; Matthews and Ross, 2010). The questionnaire was distributed to all the 127 delegates who attended BECTU's Annual Conference on 17 May 2014. A total of 93 completed questionnaires (73%) were returned anonymously into a box at the back of the conference venue. The questionnaire comprised mainly of closed factual questions in a tick box format, which were formulated in order to gather more generalised and quantitative data than that which was obtained in the interviews, and to provide a background context for the qualitative research. SPSS software was utilised to analyse the questionnaire data.

Secondary data was accumulated by desk research, which included collecting and examining relevant literature via online as well as traditional library resources in order to: explore the thematic significance of any findings in associated areas of research, and inform the development of the literature review; explore research methodology; contextualise the research questions and the responses provided; and decide upon appropriate data analysis processes. Other relevant texts were examined at the TUC Library and the British Library, and union documents specific to and provided by BECTU were also accessed. In order to assess its relevance to this study, a review was also undertaken of secondary interview data collected by BECTU's History project, an internal union project which interviews long standing members to gather information about their experiences in the broadcast and film industries.

As is noted in Chapter 1, this study concentrates on the experiences of BECTU members working in the UK broadcast industries, although it also contains responses from the sub-group of interviewees working in theatre and the arts, who provide more variation in terms of those in employed positions. It is also acknowledged that other

unions, including UCATT (the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians) also represent freelancer workers, as do some of BECTU's sister unions, including Equity, the National Union of Journalists and the Musicians' Union, and that generalized conclusions should not be formulated from the study of one particular union (Gall and Fiorito, 2012b).

Previous studies involving BECTU and its members (Antcliff *et al.*, 2007; Saundry *et al.*, 2012) have compared data gathered from the union with findings from Creative Skillset research papers. However, BECTU's members work in the film, television, radio, theatre, and entertainment industries (including film artistes or extras). In contrast Creative Skillset's footprint covers workers TV, film, radio, interactive media, animation, computer games, facilities, photo-imaging, publishing, advertising and fashion and textiles – it does not cover the film industry. Although Creative Skillset undertakes sector specific research, such as the Creative Skillset Employment Census of the Creative Media Industries (2012), it was decided that no robust comparison is possible as there is still a discrepancy between Creative Skillset's definition of the creative media industries and BECTU's constituency. As defined in a key informant interview on 13 April 2015 with a high level Creative Skillset executive, the Census is 'conducted biennially to determine the numbers of *economically active* [emphasis added] freelancers working on a particular day, usually in June of that year'. Creative Skillset's reports also emphasise that 'the Census does not capture freelancers not working on Census Day and therefore understates the representation of freelancers in the workforce' (Skillset 2010, p.32). As these factors lead to wide gaps and fluctuation between the numbers employed in the industries covered by Creative Skillset, and the relatively stable and accountable figures of employee and freelancer BECTU membership, they are likely to affect the validity of any findings. This research therefore did not utilise data from Creative Skillset for direct comparisons with BECTU data.

Consideration was originally given to the facilitation of a focus group involving previous interviewees based on the analysis of their interview responses and building upon the primary data acquired from the interviews, and the themes identified (Liamputtong, 2011). However, because of the quantity and quality of the interview data, and the limited time and resources available, this additional option was not utilised.

A case study method was considered, but as is stated by both Yin (2009) and Gillham (2000), case study research relies heavily on a 'chain of evidence' (Yin 2009, p.3), and is not as suitable for the exploration of individual views. Neither did this research involve observational methods, where the researcher takes a passive role, and observes participants' behaviour on a specific set of occasions (Yin, 2011). Observation would not have contributed towards an exploration of members' views about the effects of their activism, and therefore would not provide answers to the research questions.

In line with Silverman (2011) and Yin (2011) the data collection and data analysis were not approached chronologically, but by initially undertaking 'a detailed analysis of a very limited amount of data (**intensive analysis**)' (Silverman, 2011, p.62) in order to uncover the prevailing themes and attitudes which were explored further as the research progressed. These themes were ultimately tested 'by looking at relevant features of [the] whole data set (**extensive analysis**)' (*ibid.)* [emphasis in original]. The advantages and disadvantages of these methods are explored in this chapter.

3.3 Specifics of the qualitative research

A series of 27 face-to-face and in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore activists' views about the meaning of the term activism, and the effects of their activism on their professional and personal lives. The interview questions were designed in order to explore the following thematic categories: participants' working lives; their membership of and relationship with the union; their views about

activism; how their employment status might affect their views about the union; and whether they felt that union membership was generally advantageous or detrimental.

The interview schedule (Appendix B) consisted of 14 exploratory questions, as well as prompts for use when required, and six demographic questions regarding: gender, age range, level of education, disability, ethnicity and parents' occupations. These focused questions were carefully formulated, and arranged in sequence, in order to elicit the qualitative data which might provide answers to the research questions outlined above. Participants' responses were analysed and positioned where possible within existing theoretical frameworks. Yin (2011) states that the first interview question is critical, and should be framed as a 'grand tour question [which] establishes a broad topic or scene but does not bias the conversation by presenting a specific item of interest' (p.137). Consequently, the first interview question was about participants' first job in the media or theatre industries, their current job, and how they had progressed to that stage. In reply, most interviewees gave a comprehensive history of their careers and in so doing relaxed into the interview process, while providing me with valuable insights, and prompts for later in the interview process. These insights are explored in Chapters 4 and 5 of this study.

3.4 Piloting the interviews

To ensure that the interview schedule was clear and focused, prior to the beginning of the research and data collection processes, two members of the union who would not be involved in the research interviews or the questionnaire, were asked, and agreed to take part in pilot interviews. Conducting the first pilot interview provided valuable insights into my strengths and weaknesses in terms of how the questions were posed, as well as those of the interview questions. After reflecting on this experience, the interview schedule

was subsequently amended and refined in accordance with these findings.

The second pilot interview was recorded on video (with the interviewee's prior consent) in order to further refine the interview schedule and to hone my interviewing skills (Gillham, 2005, p.31). Again, with the interviewee's consent, this recording was reviewed to assess interview techniques, body language, and verbal prompts. From previous experience as a counsellor, I was aware of the need to listen carefully, as well as to hear responses (Rubin and Rubin, 2012), and to reflect back in order to expand on interviewees' responses, rather than to engage in a dialogue with them (Yin, 2011; Gillham, 2005). The video recorded interview emphasised the importance of body language, maintaining eye contact, and active listening, in order to encourage respondents to continue speaking until they felt they had said all that they had to say, rather than interrupting them in mid flow to explore an expressed opinion. Such explorations or probes (Gillham, 2005, p.32) are better conducted once the respondent has ceased to speak, and should be noted by the researcher and referred back. This pilot interview also reminded me of the importance of a thorough knowledge of the interview schedule (Appendix B) and its sequence, so that the respondent would not be distracted, or hurried, by the researcher constantly looking away to refer to the schedule (Gillham, 2005).

It was difficult to persuade local activists in Wales, where I am based, to take part in the pilot video recorded interview, despite guarantees about confidentiality, anonymity, and the limited use of the material (i.e. that the video recorded material was not for transmission). This may have been peculiar to the industries covered by BECTU, where members were more aware of the possibilities of media misrepresentation; or to Wales where the media industries were relatively contained. However, it also provided valuable insights into the reticence felt by certain activists about being associated publicly

with the union, and how that might affect their professional and personal lives.

3.5 Reflecting on and developing the interview schedule

This research, and previous literature including Fiorito *et al.* (2014), Gallagher and Strauss (1991) and McShane (1986), defined activists as those who were actively involved in union activities at a local as well as a national level and who were willing to commit some of their time and energies to the union. However, the first seven interviews conducted for this research indicated that how participants perceived themselves and their activism was a much more complex issue. Following the first two interviews it became apparent that the terms 'activist' and 'activism' were key to the responses received, and to how interviewees viewed the effects of their activism. Although interviewee 1 (Arthur) had undertaken many roles in and committed time to the union he did not consider himself to be an activist. In contrast, interviewee 2 (Bill), while similarly involved in the union, definitely considered himself to be an activist. Although their union activities were mentioned in passing by the participants during interviews 1 and 2, the importance of knowing about respondents' specific union activities was apparent, and therefore a further question was added to the interview schedule for subsequent interviews: 'What roles have you undertaken in the union?' The first two interviewees, Arthur and Bill, were also contacted subsequently to ascertain their union roles, and to ensure that the data collected was consistent for all respondents.

It was noted after interview 1 that, in being careful not to influence the interviewee, I had not used many prompts to encourage the participant to expand upon his comments. Additional considered prompts were therefore added to the interview schedule for subsequent interviewees, in order to 'encourage greater reflection on the part of the respondent' (Gillham, 2005, p.73). Prompts were only used when it was judged that 'the depth of information and insight is

going to be greater than asking one main question' *(ibid.)* and were therefore used sparingly and in order to encourage, not lead the respondent (Yin, 2011, p.137). As is noted previously, following initial analysis of the data gathered I reflected again on the research questions (Punch, 2006; Silverman, 2011; Yin, 2011) and amended them in order to more clearly address the issues relevant to the initial research aims.

During the first seven interviews it also became apparent that all of the interviewees made relevant or important points after the recording had stopped, often expanding on themes already addressed in the recorded interview. This may have been because they felt less pressure once the formal part of the interview was completed, or because they had more time for reflection during informal conversation with the researcher. Having made written notes of these comments after the first two interviews, subsequent participants were invited to repeat their thoughts on tape, and they were willing to do so, including Interviewee Heather, who commented that she felt more relaxed once the recording had stopped, and therefore expressed some more reflective thoughts, which she was then happy to repeat for recording on tape.

The interview schedule was carefully designed in order to enable participants to explain in their own words 'why people experience or understand a social phenomenon in a particular way' (Mathews & Ross, 2010, p.223) in order to '"learn from people" rather than study them' (Yin, 2011, p.136). The 14 questions in the schedule were framed in order to elicit first hand evidence of activists' views about activism, and of the effect of union activity on their professional and personal lives. It was apparent after the first seven responses that the 14 questions asked during the semi-structured interviews would produce a large amount of primary or 'raw' data, expressed in the participants' own words. Because I, as the interviewer (and therefore a research instrument) was in direct face-to-face contact with the interviewees it was possible to explore their experiences and feelings

in some depth. A flexible approach was taken, so that interviewees were able to respond in their own way. However, the use of the interview schedule ensured that all research topic areas were covered by all participants. Interviewees were of course free to diverge from the interview questions, and indeed the separate paths that they explored were sometimes of particular interest, and offered insights which may provide the basis for further research. However suitable prompts were also used, as appropriate, to ensure that the pertinent areas were all covered. These prompts are included in the interview schedule (Appendix B).

Prior to the interviews, participants had been asked if they were prepared to be interviewed in order to explore their experiences as active BECTU members. They were provided with Participant Information Sheets (Appendix C) to ensure that they had prior knowledge of the research topic and of the issues which were likely to be raised and so that they felt confident and relaxed about responding to the interview questions (although the questions were not provided in advance). Of necessity, because the respondents were based throughout the UK, the interviews were held in a variety of locations. Each location was chosen on the basis of it being private, comfortable and welcoming. Drinking water, and where possible hot drinks were made available, and suitable facilities were easily accessible. Participants were again reassured that their responses would be both anonymous and confidential, and that the research was for academic purposes only. Following Interview 4, when the respondent became emotional when discussing his family history, tissues were also made available for subsequent interviewees. Should participants have become distressed, the recording of the interview would have been stopped immediately, and participants offered the options of continuing at a later time, or of abandoning the interview altogether. This eventuality is addressed further in the ethics section of this chapter.

In eight cases it was necessary, with participants' permission, to conduct the interviews remotely, utilising Skype, and this did not prove to be problematic in relation to their willingness to be interviewed. In fact in some cases being interviewed remotely from the interviewer, but in their own home environment may have felt more informal and relaxed for participants, as articulated by Interviewee Carol, during a conversation following the recorded interview 'I haven't used Skype before, but it's made this process really easy'. It should also be noted that the interviewees for this research project were all media industry professionals, who were used to the process of recording both sound and images, and this may have mitigated any possible impact on their responses, and the resultant findings. Further considerations regarding the use of Skype are addressed later in this chapter.

As outlined above, interviews were conducted with 27 BECTU members, 15 freelancers and 12 employees. For the purposes of this research, 'employees' were defined as those who were directly employed within an organisation, working under a contract of employment; 'freelancers' were defined as individuals working under a contract for services and thus not directly employed by the end user. As previously noted, activists within BECTU were identified as those who were actively involved in union activities at a local as well as a national level: effectively, those who were prepared to commit some of their time and energies to the union (Fiorito *et al.,* 2014; Gallagher and Strauss, 1991; McShane, 1986). In practice, those selected for interview included individuals who were in elected positions on various committees, including BECTU's National Executive Committee (NEC), divisional committees and/or specialist committees. BECTU's committee structure is described in Chapter 1 and illustrated in Appendix A.

It was intended that participants should be representative of the union's membership in terms of gender, age, level of education, disability and race. It was initially thought that these categories would

be covered by interviewing NEC members, who came from a variety of backgrounds, and represented their divisions on a range of specialist committees, including Training, Disability, Equality, Black Members, Health and Safety (Appendix A). It was anticipated that because of their wide experience as activists, these respondents would be able to assess how that activism had affected their lives and their work, and would 'enable the researcher to study the research topic in depth' (Matthews and Ross, 2010, p.225).

However, early in the interview process, it became apparent that a large proportion of the interviewees identified in the initial purposive sampling (Yin, 2011, p.88) were in the older age range (only two of the first 12 interviewees were under 50 years of age) echoing McKay and Moore's (2009) findings in terms of the more active participants in their study, who undertook a number of union roles, also being 'relatively old, on average aged 46' (p.13). McKay and Moore (2009) also found that over time, those who were already active tended to take on more roles, and to commit more of their time to the union. Their findings were reflected in this research in terms of the BECTU NEC interviewees' average age of 55. In order to redress the balance, further purposive sampling was undertaken, and an additional seven interviews were conducted, to include younger BECTU members (identified through BECTU's Young Members' Forum). All of the participants in this research were selected because I aimed to uncover a range of opinions. Although participants' circumstances and views were different, the *explanations (theories)* I have uncovered might apply to other unions. It may be possible to generalize the theories rather than claiming that the *evidence* uncovered is representative across the trade union movement '*empirical generalization'* (Gillham, 2005, p.43) [emphasis in original].

Throughout the data collection process, and sometimes in subsequent conversations with me, many of the interviewees indicated that they had enjoyed the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of activism, and on their views about the effects of their own

activism. A number of respondents stated that it was not something they had consciously considered in the past, but that they had found it to be a valuable process.

3.6 Transcription

The transcription process, although particularly labour intensive, proved invaluable (Bryman, 2012) because it enabled me to question some of the techniques involved, for example during transcription of the first four interviews every verbal tic, for example, 'um'. 'er', 'you know', was recorded, so that the process was taking a considerable amount of time. However, as this research did not involve discourse analysis, it was decided that it would be acceptable to substitute ellipsis '…' for verbal tics, and this helped to streamline the transcription process (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). The transcription process also provided more time to reflect upon the interviewees' responses (Silverman, 2013) and to begin the process of identifying emerging themes. Each transcription also included records of: the interviewee's background and current work status; reflections on the interview process and the responses received; an outline of the emerging themes initially identified; and the duration of the interview. Gillham states that focused interviews should last a maximum of 45 minutes (2005, p.73). Twenty-five of the interviews conducted in this research varied in length from 20 minutes to 59 minutes, with a further two interviews lasting 1 hour 14 minutes, and 1 hour 30 minutes. The first two interviews were shorter than those which came later, after suitable prompts had been added to the interview schedule, and as I gained confidence in using prompts without leading the participants' responses.

Silverman (2011) emphasises the importance of context in the use of direct quotes from transcription, stating that researchers should not use a direct quote from interviewees 'without prefacing it with the interviewer's question, comment or response token (e.g. 'mm, mm') that preceded it, followed up with some attention to how the former shaped the latter…' (p.63). The data gathered during the initial stages

of the interview and transcription process which informed the development of the questionnaire distributed at BECTU's Annual Conference in May 2014, proved the veracity of the prevailing views (Punch, 2006; Creswell, 2008; Silverman, 2011; Yin, 2011; Maxwell, 2013) which have become accepted in qualitative research, that '…each component of the design may need to be reconsidered or modified in response to new developments or to changes in some other component' (Maxwell, 2013, p.2). In this research the emergent themes led to the need for a much more focused study of the meaning of activism, and of its effects, and how they were perceived by the participants. After each interview, and after each transcription, the researcher's own reflections on both processes were noted, and provided useful information for inclusion in the final thesis document (Moon, 2004).

3.7 Quantitative research

In order to gather the quantitative data, a structured questionnaire was designed (Appendix D) drawing for its content upon the data gathered during the first seven semi-structured interviews. Following initial qualitative content analysis of this primary data utilising 'the categories used by the participant[s] ('*in vivo'* coding)' (Silverman, 2011, p.69) the emerging themes were identified. Based on these a series of headings were utilised in the questionnaire, including: reasons for union membership; definition of the term activist; and the effects of trade union activities, both positive and negative. Based on the emergent themes from the interviews, a series of questions were developed, and the questionnaire was designed to elicit more generalised, quantitative data. The term 'activities' rather than 'activism' was utilised in questions 18 and 19 of the questionnaire which addressed both positive and negative effects of trade union involvement, in order to elicit the views of all respondents, whether or not they self-identified as activists. The questionnaire also gathered respondents' demographic information in terms of gender, age, level of education, disability, and race.

3.8 Pre-piloting and piloting the questionnaire

Gillham (2000) emphasises the importance of piloting questionnaires, and argues that until this process has been undertaken 'you do not know how well your questionnaire works' (p.42). The pilot stage uncovers: whether respondents find the questionnaire confusing or troublesome, so that they do not respond; and whether questions are unclear and could be misunderstood *(ibid.)*. In this research, the *questions* were first pre piloted (Gillham 2000) with two non-specialist respondents (i.e. people who were neither involved in the industries covered by BECTU, nor with the union itself), one male, one female, in order to ensure that the wording and sequence of the questions were clear and consistent. Some inconsistencies were identified, including: overlaps in the age ranges specified; the need for an additional option 'Neither' in answer to the question 'Are/were either or both of your parents Trade unionists?' which originally offered only 'Mother', 'Father' or 'Both', implying a preconception that there would be some familial influence; and the need for careful use of words such as 'important' which was replaced by 'relevant' when asking respondents to rate their responses to the definition of an activist. Following the pre-pilot stage, the questions were amended and organised into a questionnaire (Appendix D) comprising of sections under a series of thematic categories, including: about you; activism within the union; organising in the union; activities outside the union. The questions grouped under these headings were formulated to elicit data from the wider sample of respondents who would be asked to complete the questionnaire at BECTU's Annual Conference in May 2014.

The questionnaire was piloted by sampling three respondents (two male, one female), again in order to identify any further inconsistencies or unclear questions, and also to ask for their suggestions regarding any 'improvements, deletions or additions' (Gillham, 2000, p.36). As Gillham recommends piloting the questionnaire with a group which is similar to the one to be studied

(p.42), the latter three respondents were BECTU Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) who identify training needs within the workforce and negotiate with employers, unions and/or training providers in order to fulfil those needs. They may also offer their members advice and guidance about career development and other training opportunities. Although identified with the union, ULRs may not necessarily be, or perceive themselves to be, activists. It was also confirmed that the ULRs approached would not be attending BECTU's Annual Conference in 2014, where the questionnaire would be distributed.

Because activists' own views were to be explored, it was particularly important and difficult to produce clear, focused, unbiased questions (Gillham, 2000, p.26) which did not lead the respondent to a 'desired response' i.e., the researcher's preferred option (Yin, 2011, p.137). In order to ensure that their responses could not be influenced because of prior association with the researcher, two of these respondents were totally unknown to me, and were accessed only by email. They were recommended as suitable respondents by BECTU's Training department. The responses received were for the most part positive, but suggested amendments included:

- the need for an opportunity for respondents to add any negative comments or opinions about the union, which was added to the final open question – 'If you have any other comments about the union and your membership, *whether positive or negative,* please note them here' [addition in italics]. Matthews and Ross (2010) also recommend providing this opportunity for respondents to express negative as well as positive opinions (p.211).

- changing question 20 from 'Do you use social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) to communicate with other union members and/or co-workers?' to 'Do you communicate with other union members and/or co-workers via social media (e.g. Facebook,

Twitter)' as the respondent stated that he had not read the second clause in the original version, and had merely responded to the question 'Do you use social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)?'

As a result of this feedback, the questionnaire was amended to reflect the comments received. In line with the questions asked of the interviewees, question 13 of the questionnaire explored respondents' definition of the term 'activist'. Rather than outlining my definition of an activist, thereby taking a 'top down' approach, the options provided in question 13 were based on the responses of the first seven interviewees in order to take a 'bottom' up approach.

Finally, as Gillham (2000) also recommends 'consistency in the style of response. Don't mix up *tick* responses with *underlining* or *circling* responses' (p.28) [emphasis in original] some final amendments in style were made in order to facilitate the ease of participants' responses. The resulting questionnaire was constructed to be self-explanatory, with a coherent title and introduction, a clear statement of purpose about the use of the data gathered, and an assurance about the preservation of participants' anonymity. Participants were offered a variety of different question and answer formats, including:

- Tick boxes – e.g. 'yes' or 'no' answers, in some cases with routing, e.g., if 'no' go to another question; in some cases with follow up questions, e.g. if 'yes' please specify
- Multiple choice questions – 'tick all that apply'
- Ranked responses – rank in order of preference
- Specified, factual questions, e.g., 'what courses, if any, have you attended'

Source: adapted from Gillham, 2000, pp.28-34

In order to give respondents more ownership of their responses, rather than merely responding to prescribed answers (Matthews and

Ross, 2010, pp.210-211), three open questions were included in the questionnaire, including question 12: ‘What do you consider the most significant factor which has affected trade unions in your lifetime?’ which was included in response to the fact that each of the first seven interviewees, in spite of the age range (from under 30 to 65+) referred in some way to the ‘Thatcher effect’ on their lives. This response from younger interviewees was particularly unexpected because they would not have been a part of the workforce during the Thatcher period. Question 12 was therefore included in order to explore whether some questionnaire respondents might also focus on this issue, without the researcher leading or influencing their opinions. Although it was determined that this aspect of the responses would not be addressed in this study for reasons of length and time, it may prove interesting to pursue in further written outputs. The responses to the open questions also informed the final data set and its qualitative analysis. In order to preserve questionnaire respondents’ anonymity, no information was elicited regarding the specific industry sectors or geographical locations in which they worked.

The questionnaires were distributed to all of the 127 delegates at BECTU’s annual conference in May 2014. The researcher’s name and the purpose of the research were both clearly detailed at the beginning of the questionnaires, and during the course of the conference both the researcher and the General Secretary issued reminders to the delegates, resulting in 93 questionnaires completed and returned on the same day, as requested. This high response rate of 73% confirmed Gillham’s (2000) assertion that although ‘impersonal’ questionnaires typically attract an approximate response rate of 30 percent, questionnaires circulated by a researcher who is known to the participants, and to a ‘captive’ (p. 9) sample engender a much higher percentage response which enables quantitative as well as qualitative analysis of the final combined data set. The questionnaires formed a part of the combination of research methods recommended by Yin (2011) and Gillham (2000) who posited that

questionnaires are ‘of most value when used in tandem with other methods’ (pp.1-2) so that the validity of the data gathered can be verified by comparison with the cumulative data set. Additionally, as has been noted above, the combination of the data accumulated by combining methods contributes to a richer study and provides a more complete data set (Ritchie *et al*., 2014; Bryman, 2012; Brownlie, 2011; Creswell, 2008).

3.9 Data analysis

Drawing on the relevant literature and the data collected from the interviews and the questionnaire, analysis Chapter 4 addresses research question 1, and Chapter 5 addresses questions 2 and 2(i). These two chapters also compare and contrast the experiences of freelancers and employees, and explore the significance of any changes in their employment status, and how or whether that affects their responses.

Analysis was carried out throughout the research period, in order to inform the research process. During its analysis the data was continually questioned, comparisons were made, both positive and negative instances identified, and rival explanations developed (Yin, 2011, p.177). Silverman (2011) and Yin (2011) both emphasise that analysing qualitative data is a nonlinear activity, i.e. the processes overlap and complement each other. The following interconnected processes were utilised in this research:

- *Compiling* and organising the field notes
- Editing the compiled data into smaller sections – *disassembling*
- Identifying substantive themes or codes and using them to reorganize the disassembled sections into different groupings and sequences – *reassembling*

- Using the reassembled material to create the key analytic section of the dissertation – *interpreting*

- Extrapolating conclusions from the study – *concluding.*

Source: adapted from Yin, 2011, pp.178-179

These processes were facilitated by the use of NVivo qualitative data analysis computer software in order to analyse the data thematically and to facilitate the comparison between employee and freelancer experiences (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). The data was categorised and interrogated using the software to identify emerging themes and patterns, and to assess commonalities and variances in the opinions provided. Thirty four hours of interview data were recorded, transcribed and the transcripts were coded into nodes in NVivo. Additional NVivo folders were created to separate the freelancer data from the employee data so that they could be compared using the 'Queries' and 'Reports' tools in NVivo. Query results were saved into separate nodes. The software was utilised to collate all answers to specific questions into one document, so that recurring themes and issues could be identified. Additional coding queries, including text searches and word frequency queries, were also carried out, in order to explore recurring themes, and the results were filed in query memos in NVivo, and copied into Word format. For example, one query memo included all the instances when 'networking' was mentioned, and the text surrounding that instance, specifying both the anonymised name of the respondent and the question number which elicited the response. It was then possible to explore the ages of the respondents who used this specific term, and to assess any similarities or differences. The interviewees' demographic data was also collated.

The interview and transcription processes proved extremely valuable, as they provided important insights into the content of the data, and reflections were noted in the research diary at each stage of the process which subsequently informed aspects of the analysis. Following repeated readings of the transcripts and of the NVivo reports

and memos, the data was analysed and compared to illustrate the commonalities and differences in the views expressed, and how they related to existing theories.

The quantitative data accumulated from the returned questionnaires was analysed using SPSS software in order to produce statistical information which underscored, conflicted with, and/or enriched the qualitative data accumulated during the interview process. Depending on the format of the answers to the individual questions (yes/no; multiple choice; or open) they were coded Ordinal, Scale, or Nominal (Bryman and Cramer, 2011). Once the data file was set up, the questionnaire responses were inputted manually, and the data was subsequently analysed utilising the software. Split file queries were generated to produce descriptive statistics separately for employee and freelancer survey respondents. Correlation analysis for categorical (nominal) data was conducted. The Chi-Square test of independence was used to determine whether there was a significant relationship between two nominal (categorical) variables: the respondents who considered themselves to be activists and their roles in the union and, between respondents who considered themselves to be activists and their employment status. The frequency of each category for one nominal variable was compared across the categories of the second nominal variable and displayed in a contingency table. The null hypotheses for this test were:

- there is no relationship between respondents' perceptions of themselves as activists and their union roles
- there is no relationship between respondents' perceptions of themselves as activists and their employment status.

The alternative hypotheses are:

- there is a statistically significant relationship between respondents' perceptions of themselves as activists and their union roles

- there is a statically significant relationship between respondents' perceptions of themselves as activists and their employment status.

The critical value for the chi-square statistic is determined by .05 (p=5%) level of significance and the degrees of freedom (df). The degrees of freedom for the chi-square are calculated using the formula: *df* = (r-1)(c-1) where r is the number of rows and c is the number of columns in the contingency table. If the observed chi-square test statistic is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis can be rejected (Field, 2005). Chi-square (X^2) is not a strong statistic in that it does not convey information about the strength of a relationship between the two variables being examined. By strength it is meant that a large X^2 value and a corresponding high significance level (e.g. $p<0.001$) cannot be taken to mean a closer relationship between two variables than when chi-square is considerably smaller but moderately significant ($p<0.05$). Given the binary nature of the variables, the phi correlation coefficient is applied. Its interpretation is similar to the Pearson Correlation Coefficient (Pearson's r). The range is from -1 to 1, where: 0 is no relationship; 1 is a perfect positive relationship and -1 is a perfect negative relationship.

The Pearson's r *(Pearson's product-moment correlation)* coefficient was applied to examine the existence of a significant relationship been the length of time a respondent has been freelancing and their self-assessed activism. The former variable is continuous, measured in years of experience, while the latter is dichotomous, 1: the respondent views himself/herself as an activist and 0: otherwise. The length of time freelancing variable is approximately normally distributed. As discussed earlier, the closer *r* is to +1 the stronger is the *positive* association between the variables i.e. the closer the points in a data set are to a *positively* (upward) sloped line. The closer *r* is to -1 the stronger is the *negative* association between the variables i.e. the closer the observations are to a *negatively* sloped line (Coshall, 2013). The null hypothesis for this test was:

- there is no statistically significant relationship between the length of time a respondent has been freelancing and his/her views of himself/herself as an activist

The alternative hypothesis was:

- there is a statically significant (positive or negative) relationship between the two variables.

Frequency tables were generated to profile the survey respondents based on their ’gender, race, disability, age, and employee or freelancer status. Contingency tables were produced without conducting correlation analysis (chi-squire test) where there was more than one cell with expected count less than 5. In such cases, chi-square test would be invalid.

3.10 Desk based research

The research also involved on-going desk-based research into existing literature, including previous research undertaken into freelancer union representation (Heery *et al.*, 2004); into aspects of the effects of trade unionism, including Jarley (2005), Johnson and Jarley (2005), Antcliff *et al.* (2007), Lee (2011), Grugulis and Stoyanova (2011), Saundry *et al.* (2012), and Siebert and Wilson (2013); and analysis of Bourdieu’s theories of social capital (Bourdieu, 1985; Coleman, 1988; Lane, 2000; Fine 2010; and Gauntlett, 2011). The research was adapted in response to the emergent themes identified, and constantly updated following email alerts received from relevant academic journals. Additionally, a great deal of research was conducted at the TUC library, enabling the researcher to access specialist sources, including back copies of BECTU’s, and of its founder unions’ journals. Mendeley software was utilised to facilitate the organisation and referencing of relevant research materials. All articles sourced electronically were inputted into the software, and relevant sections were highlighted and added to the ‘Notes’ facility. It was also possible in Mendeley to

undertake searches of all the literature, and to check on bibliographical references.

Although I originally assumed that the materials collected by BECTU's History Project might provide relevant data, having acquired permission from the project Secretary to read their transcripts, it quickly became apparent that they were primarily a documentation of members' experiences within their craft grades, and the history of film, television, radio, and theatre production. Because they did not address their respondents' experiences of their trade unionism, but rather of their careers within the industries covered by BECTU, it was decided that further examination of these documents was not relevant to this research.

3.11 Field Diary

Throughout the research process methodological and preliminary analytical field notes were recorded in a research diary on a regular basis, 'to enhance reflection in practice' (Moon 1999, p.96). They were noted as and when emerging themes or theories were identified, or when particularly insightful comments were made by participants, or by other interested parties, who may not have been involved in the primary research, but who were interested in the subject matter. Such contributors are identified in this research as key informants, and the circumstances in which their input was sought are outlined, including the need for clarification of certain points, or to check on a statement quoted. As suggested by Moon (1999) the field diary notes also included: data collection activities; decisions made, and why they were made; changes made, and why they were made; the researcher's observations and impressions; relevant literature identified; the analytic process; comments from supervisors during supervision meetings. The diary, together with the researchers' reflections at the end of each interview and transcript, proved to be useful tools as a reminder about avenues to explore, and also as a resource in which to record random

thoughts about the process of data collection as well as the content of the data collected.

A separate database was created to preserve contact details of all participants. The database was cross referenced with participants' identifying pseudo-names within the final thesis, and will not be made available to any other parties. As the recordings, the transcripts and the database remained accessible throughout the writing-up of the dissertation, and as it is anticipated that they will be used for some time afterwards for further research, they are stored securely in a locked cabinet and electronic versions are password protected (Rubin and Rubin, 2012, p.192). Others who are involved in the research process were and will be asked to confirm in writing that they respect the confidentiality of the data.

3.12 Ethics

Prior to the beginning of this research, approval was sought and obtained from London Metropolitan University's Ethics Committee. The following section explores the ethical issues relevant to this study and how they were addressed. As the research was part funded by a bursary managed by BECTU, it was essential that this did not influence the analysis of the data. The research areas were discussed with BECTU's General Secretary prior to the beginning of the research process, and it was clearly understood that the research findings were the researcher's own, and that the research would not be hindered if some of its conclusions could be perceived as negatives by interested parties (Iphofen, 2011; Matthews and Ross, 2010). Some initial concerns were acknowledged should it have been found that union activism affected activists' work prospects, and how that might impact upon members, e.g., blacklisting. However, should such data have emerged the research might also have uncovered some potential solutions. In the event, this proved to be a difficult question for freelancers to answer because of the unaccountable nature of

freelancer contracting processes. This issue is explored further in Chapter 5.

The semi-structured interviews involved exploring individuals' views and experiences of activism, and their feelings about their involvement with the union and how this might impact on their lives and their work. To ensure that they were aware in advance of the research topic, and of the issues which were likely to be raised, interviewees were provided with Participant Information Sheets (Appendix C), (although the interview questions were not provided in advance). Interviewees were also asked to sign two copies of a Consent Form (Appendix E), one to be retained by them, the other for the researcher's secure records. The form included:

- a guarantee of the confidentiality of the data
- anonymity if direct quotes were used in the resulting research papers
- permission for their contributions to be audio recorded
- an opportunity to ask for a summary of the research findings.

Both forms included the researcher's contact details and those of the thesis supervisors (with their permission). Before the interviews all participants were reassured that the recording could be stopped if they felt uncomfortable at any time, and this offer was taken up by some of the participants who felt that they needed some extra time for reflection, or to gather their thoughts. These gaps in the recordings were noted in the transcripts. Questionnaire respondents' consent was implicit if they choose to complete the anonymous questionnaire.

At the beginning of the research process BECTU's Administrative officer was approached about circulating the questionnaire to 2014 Annual conference delegates, and her agreement was obtained. The Administrative officer also obtained agreement from BECTU's Standing Orders' Committee (SOC) to circulate the questionnaire, and to

request that delegates complete and return it anonymously on the same day to the box which was available at Conference. Written consent from BECTU's General Secretary was obtained before the beginning of the data collection process: 'BECTU is fully supportive of the research and of the data collection methods of E Ann Jones's research project'. Written permission for the use of a non-copyrighted chart outlining BECTU's internal Operational structure was also sought and obtained from the union's General Secretary. The chart and the letter of permission are included in Appendix A of this thesis.

The confidentiality and secure storage of recorded materials was perhaps a particular issue for respondents working in the media industries, who were acutely aware of the ways in which the recorded spoken word could be leaked, and/or edited and distorted. In order to address such concerns anonymised, recorded interviews and transcripts have been stored securely on my own computer with an external hard disc back-up copy kept only in my possession. None of the raw data has been shared with other parties, other than with supervising tutors, after the transcripts had been anonymised. Participants were informed of these precautions in the Participants' Information Sheet (Appendix C), and to further alleviate any concerns, in the Interviewee Consent Form (Appendix E) the interviewees were offered a summary of the final thesis, which was taken up by 23 of the 27. Questionnaire respondents were not asked for any form of identification, and interviewees' names were changed to ensure anonymity in the final thesis.

3.13 The insider researcher

Throughout the research process I was constantly aware that in researching my own union, with which I was actively involved, there was a danger that I might become too involved, and lose objectivity. As Bourdieu *et al.* (1999) state, throughout the research process the researcher must keep in mind the 'forgetfulness of self' (p.614), so that she does not impose her own knowledge and perceptions on the

participants. Yin (2011) warns that, throughout the analysis process, the researcher must continually acknowledge 'the unwanted biases imposed by your own values when you are analysing your data' (p177), and Marshall (1988) argues that research strategies that are too subjective 'are forever fated to generate images of a society that are as much an artefact of the research instrument' (p.119). In this case the researcher was the research instrument, and 'Qualitative data are mediated through this human instrument' (Punch, 2006, p.52). The experience of the data collection process confirmed the importance of this impartiality, particularly in comparing my views about the effects of my trade union activism, upon which the research project was partially based, with those of the interviewees. The field notes reflect any bias which was detected during the research and analysis process, and explained how any such bias was overcome. This included revising and refining the research questions in order to reflect the emerging themes identified from the data gathered, so that they are informed by the participants' observations, rather than being based on my own experiences.

Smith (2009) and Costley *et al.* (2010) argue that it is important for the insider researcher to both acknowledge and declare: their position within the research process; the possible influence that may have had on the responses gathered; that their responses to the data would, inevitably, be coloured by their own experiences; how their role as a research instrument might both enrich and inhibit their interpretations; and the ways in which they sought to overcome any bias in their interpretation and analysis (pp.139-141). However, in this study it was acknowledged that to an extent subjectivity was unavoidable because my background and 'particular interests in what and how the project [was] researched and developed [would] influence what [was] studied and emphasised' (p.33). Costley *et al.* (2010) argued that although this was the case for all research, it had particular relevance for the insider researcher. I acknowledged the significance to this study of my background as an insider researcher both within the industries which

BECTU represents, and within BECTU itself, and how that background might affect my response to the data gathered.

In order to situate the researcher within the study Smith (2009) this section provides a brief outline of my background. Prior to entering the broadcasting industries, I worked as a technician for a national theatre company, during which time I was a member of Equity (the UK trade union for professional performers and creative practitioners). In 1981 I was offered work in the emerging independent television production sector, working for a small independent company producing programming for the fledgling fourth channel in Wales, S4C. These independent production companies emerged following the creation of both Channel 4 and S4C, which were announced in *The Broadcasting Act 1981*. I worked in post-production as a freelancer film/videotape editor for twenty five years for many of the major commercial broadcasters, for a major public broadcaster, and for a number of relatively small independent production companies producing programming for the broadcasters. For a period of approximately eighteen months in the mid-1980s I worked as an employee for one of the major commercial broadcasters. During the early 1990s I also worked for two years as an employee of ACTT (one of BECTU's founding unions) as a field officer based in the South West of England. From when I started working in the broadcasting industries, and throughout the timeframe of this study, I have been an active and high profile member of BECTU (and previously ACTT), representing the membership in various branches, on the NEC, and at the time of writing as President of BECTU. I have also led several controversial but ultimately successful campaigns within both unions about the importance of both vocational and trade union related training for members.

It was initially apparent that my background might provide a unique insight into the broadcast and film industries, and into BECTU itself, and this was acknowledged during the research proposal stage, and in the ethical considerations. However, during the data collection process

the possible wider impact of that background became more apparent, and was explored further. Prior to the beginning of the data collection process, I had made fellow members of BECTU's NEC, and other high profile activists, aware of the general area of the research, and had informed them that I might approach them individually to request that they be involved in the interview process. Approval for the research had also been sought from and granted by BECTU. There was therefore an awareness of the research area and of the interview process among BECTU activists and officials.

At the beginning of the analysis process, in a conversation with a senior BECTU official (who was not involved in the research), and without betraying the confidentiality of the participants, I reflected on my surprise that a number of respondents did not consider themselves to be activists. The official observed that it was possible that some interviewees may have downplayed their own activism because they compared their own experiences with those of the researcher. Although I had previously considered whether my own position within the union might affect any responses (Costley *et al.*, 2010, p.34), this particular effect had not been anticipated. Additionally as the interviewees who were NEC members were aware that other of their colleagues on that committee were also being interviewed for this research, they may have compared themselves to those colleagues, which could also have affected their responses.

However, my profile both within BECTU, within the industries it represents, and within the wider organisational structure of those industries was also advantageous in some respects. It provided unparalleled and untrammelled access to highly placed individuals, including the General Secretary and other members of BECTU's secretariat, and to the wider membership. I anticipated that my shared background with the participants might provide a more empathetic response to the data gathered, and potentially uncover a richer seam of data than would have been elicited by an outsider researcher (Costley *et al.*, 2010, p.32).

The reflective researcher, 'engaged in the interpretation of data as it is being produced' (Mathews and Ross, 2010, p.187) is an active participant in both the collection and the interpretation of the data. In the interviews for this research this involved formulating possible probes and prompts which were included in the interview schedule. However, I remained constantly aware of my own prejudices and preconceptions, as Gillham (2005) advocates. He states that the researcher must always be self-questioning:

- 'What do I expect to find?
- What would I prefer to find?
- What would I hope not to find?' (p.9)

These questions were borne in mind throughout the data collection and analysis processes, and Bryman's (2012) admonition that researchers should 'leave open the possibility of coming up with unexpected findings' (p.642) was implemented. When my original impressions about the effects of activism, and indeed about the meaning of activism itself, were challenged by the data gathered, rather than clinging to my original ideas, I explored that data in order to enrich the study.

My position as a high profile union activist was also taken into account throughout the process, as well as the perception that it may have affected the responses of the interviewees and, to an extent, the questionnaire respondents. I acknowledged that my involvement in the data collection settings (the interviews and at Conference) and my 'knowledge of and relationships to the power in those settings' (Moon 1999, p.140) might affect the responses. The differences in terms of age, ethnicity or gender between the researcher and the participants might also have implied relative perceived power differentials. It was therefore vital that respondents were clearly informed about my role in this context as an academic researcher, not as a colleague. This was clearly specified in the Information Sheets provided to participants,

reiterated at the beginning of each interview, and emphasised on the first page of the questionnaire.

3.14 Other considerations

Had it not be possible to gather data from a sufficient sample of BECTU activists, which would have affected the veracity of the research, the reasons why members felt that they were unable or unwilling to participate would have been explored, and this in itself could have provided useful insights. In the event, only one member of the NEC refused to be interviewed, because the researcher was not prepared to provide him with the interview questions in advance, which would have been an unacceptable digression from the process used for the other interviewees.

Should there have been insufficient response to the questionnaires distributed at conference in 2014 alternative methods of surveying activists had been discussed with BECTU's Administrative officer. The possibility of identifying activists from BECTU's databases, and asking for their responses using the internet facility Survey Monkey were explored, to avoid incurring additional costs by printing further copies, and sending them out and requesting their return by land mail. In the event, due to the high return rate of the questionnaires circulated at conference (73%), this was not necessary.

Although participants were based throughout the UK, most of the interviews were conducted in London, generally on dates when other union activities were taking place, but away from the union offices, for example in a quiet space in a public room in an hotel, or other suitable venue. Interview venues were selected which were accessible, comfortable and secure for both the interviewees and the researcher. Where interviews were organised outside of normal working hours or at locations with which the researcher was unfamiliar, a trusted person, such as a supervising tutor was provided with details of the interview arrangements. Where distance or bad weather precluded face-to-face meetings, interviews were conducted via Skype, utilising the video as

well as the audio facilities in order to stay as close as possible to the format of the face-to-face interviews. Should participants have been willing to be interviewed on Skype, but would have preferred not to allow the interviewer to view their home environment, an alternative Skype location would have been sourced within easy access of the interviewee's home base. Alternatively, the Skype interview could have been conducted using only the audio facility. Eight of the 27 interviews were conducted via Skype, and this had did not appear to have any discernible effect on the participants' responses. Video was lost during one the interview with Roger, and it was noted by both interviewer and interviewee that this affected the flow of the interview. The process of interview transcription also highlighted the nuances that would have been lost in voice recording only, without face-to-face contact (either physical or via Skype) between the researcher and the researched. When approached about the interview, one participant had initially expressed scepticism about the need for a face-to-face interview via Skype, as she felt it could be conducted just as effectively over the telephone. However, at the end of the interview she commented that:

> '…it was a good idea to… [Skype]… it made a difference to the session being able to look at somebody… because this is quite intimate, it's almost like sitting in the same room as somebody … it's actually very effective and quite impactful in a way that I didn't [anticipate]… I thought what's she on about, we can just do it on the phone… but actually being able to relate like this has made a significant difference…' (Cheryl, employee, November 2014).

Although it was unlikely that the project would expose participants to distress, should that have occurred, the interview and its recording would have been stopped immediately. The participant would have been given the option of continuing at a later date, or of abandoning their involvement. In the latter case, the recording of their interview would have been deleted in their presence. All contributors were told in advance of their participation that they could stop the recording at any time. Only one interviewee exhibited some signs of distress when he

referred to how his father would have been proud of his involvement with the trade union movement: ‘I think my father would be proud…that’s good to feel… I never thought about that before, but it’s true…’ (Dean, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a public broadcaster). However, as this was his final statement, he ended the sentence with the one word ‘cut’ as is traditionally used in film and broadcasting to indicate the end of usable sections of any filming or recording sessions, and he left soon afterwards. At a subsequent meeting with the researcher this participant spoke of how much he had enjoyed the experience of being interviewed, stating that he had appreciated the opportunity to reflect on his own family history of trade union activity and involvement, and how unexpectedly moved he had been by that reflection.

By referring to the interview schedule it was possible to ensure that all research topic areas were covered by all participants. The one interviewee who was a first language Welsh speaker was offered the opportunity to be interviewed in Welsh, but declined. However, should this have been necessary, double translation would have been arranged for both the questions and for the interviewees’ responses.

During the data collection process it became apparent that some aspects of respondents’ views might have been of particular interest to BECTU, but could not be, and were not, disclosed by the researcher because of the strict confidentiality of the interview process. Particular examples were some younger members’ views about the benefits of membership, such as trips to overseas conferences, and their assertion that they would discourage other members from undertaking union representatives’ training courses because ‘there was nothing in it for them’ (Heather, freelancer, April 2014). This was another instance where I had to separate myself from my role as a union activist (for whom the answers obtained, and the themes identified might have been perceived to have had negative implications for the union), and my role as an academic researcher exploring the concepts of the effects of union activism.

3.15 Timeframe

Throughout the data collection phase of this research, continuous assessments of the field work was carried out in order to monitor whether the research project was achievable within the specified timeframe. As previously noted, this research did not follow a chronological timeframe and the timetable slipped after the end of August 2015 due to unforeseen circumstances. However, the project was completed by September 2018. Throughout the process other relevant articles, books and scholarly works were continually researched and studied. Regular tutorials were attended either face-to-face if practical, or via Skype.

The qualitative and quantitative research methods used in this study, in conjunction with an analysis of the existing literature, complement and expand the study of activism and its effects. In order to inform the analysis of the responses to Research Question 1, Chapter 4 sets out the findings about how respondents define themselves, and how they define the word ‘activist’ and its connotations. The responses to Research Question 2, regarding the positive and negative effects of participants’ activism on their professional and personal lives, are explored in Chapter 5. Supplementary Research Question 2(i), which explores whether the nature of participants’ relationship with the union affects their views, is also addressed in Chapter 5. The final chapter outlines the conclusions reached following the data analysis process, and suggests areas which may require further research.

Chapter 4
Analysis - the meanings of activism

The following chapters report the findings of both the qualitative and the quantitative research undertaken in my study, including the demographic data gathered from both interviewees and questionnaire respondents, and other relevant background data. Following thematic and narrative analysis of the qualitative data using NVivo software, and interrogation of the quantitative data adopting correlation analysis (the chi-square statistic for categorical data) in SPSS, a number of key themes emerged. These illustrated participants' responses to the research questions:

1. How is trade union activism understood by lay members of the broadcast union BECTU, and does their understanding of the term 'activist' vary depending upon their employee or freelancer status?
2. In what ways might activist lay members of the broadcast union BECTU view the effects of their trade union activism on their professional and personal lives, and might their views differ depending on the employee or freelancer status of the activist?
    i. In what ways might lay activists' relationship with the union affect how they view the impact of their activism on their professional and personal lives?

The aspects of the participants' backgrounds which were uncovered during the analysis process were extracted from the data, in line with Yin's (2011) assertion that setting out the 'pertinent characteristics' of those involved in a study can enrich the reader's experience by enabling them 'to gain a much stronger sense of the study and its data' (p.245). In order to 'situate the data in context and to confront directly the issue of the researchers' relationship to their research subjects' (Smith, 2009, p.62), it is important to acknowledge, and to explore the possible effects of various aspects of the backgrounds of the

participants, as outlined in Chapter 2 (Bourdieu, 1999; Costley *et al*., 2010).

The qualitative data gathered during the interview process is complemented by the quantitative data from the questionnaire responses to provide answers to the research questions. In order to better understand participants' views about the effects of activism on their professional and personal lives, this chapter interrogates the data and reports on the demographic information acquired from the participants. It also addresses Research Question 1 by discussing how participants in this study define activism, and whether their views are affected by their employment status.

4.1 Demographics

It is acknowledged that the numbers of interviewees (N=27) and of questionnaire respondents (N=93) are not representative but indicative of their respective populations. It should be noted that as not all 93 questionnaire respondents answered all the questions the total numbers varied, and their relative percentages are reported in each table throughout this chapter and in Chapter 5. The following Table 2 reports on the demographic profile of the interviewees, and Table 3 on those of the questionnaire respondents.

Table 2 Interviewees' demographic statistics

	Employee Numbers	Percent	**Freelancer** Numbers	Percent
Gender				
Female	5	41.7%	8	53.3%
Male	7	58.3%	7	46.7%
Total	12	100.0%	15	100.0%
Age				
Under 50	7	58.3%	4	26.7%
Over 50	5	41.7%	11	73.3%
Total	12	100.0%	15	100.0%
Qualification				
Below degree level	3	25.0%	4	26.7%
Degree or above	9	75.0%	11	73.3%
Total	12	100.0%	15	100.0%
Disability				
Yes	5	41.7%	3	20.0%
No	7	58.3%	12	80.0%
Total	12	100.0%	15	100.0%
Ethnicity				
White	12	100.0%	14	93.3%
BAME*	0	0.0%	1	6.7%
Total	12	100.0%	15	100.0%

*BAME = Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic

Table 3 Questionnaire respondents' demographic statistics

The 93 questionnaire respondents were delegates to BECTU's Annual Conference in 2014.

The total numbers vary, and their relative percentages are reported in each instance.

	Employee Numbers	Percent	**Freelancer** Numbers	Percent
Gender				
Female	34	65.4%	19	59.4%
Male	18	34.6%	13	40.6%
Total	52	100.0%	32	100.0%
Age				
Under 50	34	63.0%	13	40.6%
Over 50	20	37.0%	19	59.4%
Total	54	100.0%	32	100.0%
Qualification				
Below degree level	15	28.3%	16	48.5%
Degree or above	38	71.7%	17	51.5%
Total	53	100.0%	33	100.0%
Disability				
Yes	5	9.3%	9	27.3%
No	49	90.7%	24	72.7%
Total	54	100.0%	33	100.0%
Ethnicity				
White	36	69.2%	18	62.1%
BAME*	16	30.8%	11	37.9%
Total	52	100.0%	29	100.0%

*BAME = Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic

My research questions were formulated in order to compare the views of BECTU activists who were employee members in large organisations, including major public or commercial broadcasters, with the views of freelancer activists. Employees were more likely to be in a relatively secure position, because they were the acknowledged liaison between employees and management. Freelancer activists may have been in a more precarious position, because potential employers could simply decide not to employ those who they perceive as active and potentially problematic union members. These research questions initially arose from my own experience of being a union activist both as an employee member in direct employment, and as a freelancer.

Exploration of the existing literature further demonstrated that comparisons of the views of employee and freelancer trade union activists about the effects of their activism had not previously been undertaken. The relevance of the research questions was further reinforced by the responses of the participants in this study, summarised by Tricia who described how:

> 'when you're freelance you can't put your head above the parapet else you'll never be employed again… it's harder to be an activist in the union if you're freelance, it was far easier in permanent employment' (Tricia, freelancer, October 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

The key focus of my study was whether the employment status (employee or freelancer) of the interviewees, and of the questionnaire respondents, affected how they viewed the effects of their activism on their professional and personal lives. Their responses were explored throughout the analysis of the data. Other than employment status, only two other demographic characteristics emerged which appeared to affect the responses of both interviewee and questionnaire respondents: age (see tables 2 and 3, pp.115-116), and for freelancers, previous employment status. These characteristics are discussed later in this chapter, and in Chapter 5.

The research questions explore whether employee or freelancer employment status might affect participants' views about how their trade union activism affected their professional and personal lives. As was noted in Chapter 2, I had initially interpreted three key terms in my research questions based on definitions utilised in the existing literature:

- Freelancer – a union member who worked in the industries covered by BECTU under a contract for services and was thus not directly employed by the end user.

- Employee - a union member who worked in the industries covered by BECTU and was a directly employed member of

staff within an organisation, working under a contract of employment.

- Activist - a person who was actively involved in union activities at a local as well as a national level and who was willing to commit some of their time and energies to the union.

According to my initial definition of an ‘activist’, all of the interviewees in my research could be considered activists, because they were selected for interview due to their high profile activities on behalf of the union. Despite this, during the data collection process, a number of the interviewees stated that they did not consider themselves to be activists. In contrast, during analysis of the quantitative data, it emerged that a high proportion of questionnaire respondents, even those whose only activity on behalf of the union was attendance at the national conference, did self-identify as activists. It appeared that there was a contradiction between interviewees’ and questionnaire respondents’ understanding of and identification with the term ‘activist’. It also emerged that their understanding of the term might be different from my initial definition. It became apparent therefore that it was necessary to inductively define the meaning of the term ‘activist’ in the context of this research. My study challenges the tendency to accept predefined concepts based on previous studies, or on definitions provided by individuals other than those who are participating in the research process.

It emerged that in the existing literature the meaning and interpretations of the terms ‘activist’ and ‘activism’ were defined from the academic or objective viewpoint of the researcher, rather than from the subjective viewpoints of activists themselves. Where participants were consulted they tended to be either full time trade union officials or very high level lay activists. During my research it became apparent that the participants in my study interpreted the term ‘activist’ and, in a number of cases, their self-identification with the term, differently to my, and to previous studies’ definitions. The responses of my research

participants also challenged my initial categorisation of their activist status. It was therefore decided to take an inductive, interpretive approach in order to explore their definitions of the term 'activist' in more detail.

4.2 'Activist is the way other people perceive you' (Lionel, employee, August 2014)

Prior to the first interview, I had assumed that all the interviewees would view themselves as activists, because they had been sampled based on the range of their union activities, and therefore according to my initial definition they were activists. As outlined in Chapter 3, the interview respondents were selected based on their high profile and visible activities on behalf of the union. Despite this, a number of interviewees did not self-identify as activists. Employee and freelancer interviewees' union roles, and their response to whether they considered themselves activists, are illustrated in the following Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4 Employee interviewees' union roles and activist response

EMPLOYEE INTERVIEWEE	UNION ACTIVITIES	CONSIDER THEMSELVES ACTIVISTS
Arthur	3 National roles, 2 Branch roles	No
Bill	3 National roles, 3 Branch roles	Yes
Jason	1 National role, 2 Branch roles	Yes
Kate	2 National roles, 1 Branch role	Yes
Lionel	3 National roles, 3 Branch roles	No
Nadine*	4 National roles, 2 Branch roles	Yes
Phil	2 National roles, 2 Branch roles	Yes
William	3 National roles, 2 Branch roles	Yes
Andy	2 National roles, 2 Branch roles (when a lay BECTU activist)	Yes
Alison	2 National roles, 3 Branch roles	Yes
Brenda*	1 National role, 1 Branch role	No
Cheryl	1 National role, 2 Branch roles	Yes

**Brenda and Nadine were full time Lay Union Officials, that is BECTU workplace representatives, working full time for the union, but paid by their employers, rather than by the union.*

No employee interviewees had changed employment status from freelancer to employee.

Table 5 Freelancer interviewees' union roles and activist response

FREELANCER INTERVIEWEE	UNION ACTIVITIES	CONSIDER THEMSELVES ACTIVISTS
Carol	1 National role, 1 Branch roles	Yes
Dean	2 National roles, 1 Branch role	Yes
Edwina	3 National roles, 1 Branch role	Yes
Fred	2 National roles, 1 Branch role	Yes
Glenda	1 National role, 2 Branch roles	No
Heather	4 National roles, 1 Branch role	No
Milly	1 National role, 2 Branch roles	Yes
Paul	4 National roles, 1 Branch roles	No
Roger	3 National roles, 1 Branch role	Yes
Shirley	2 National roles, 1 Branch role	Yes
Tricia	3 National roles, 1 Branch role	Yes
Una	3 National roles, 1 Branch role	Yes
Vernon	2 National roles, 2 Branch roles	Yes
Walter	2 National roles, 1 Branch role	No
Bryan	2 National roles, 2 Branch roles (when a lay BECTU activist)	Yes

'Branch Roles' include Secretary, Chair, and Health and Safety representatives for their local branch committees.

'National Roles' include membership of BECTU's National Executive Committee, Divisional Committees, and national Equality, Black Members', Disability, Communications, Health and Safety, and Training Committees (see Chapter 1 and Appendix A for an outline of BECTU's Operational and committee structure).

Despite their undoubted high levels of trade union activities, three employee interviewees and four freelancers did not view themselves as activists. However, some respondents recognised the inconsistency of not self-identifying as activists when they were asked to list their trade union roles, including Brenda who, having described all her trade union activities, went on to state: '…it's quite a lot for somebody who doesn't think they're an activist I guess (laughs)' and Lionel similarly commented '…even though by my own definition I obviously am … which is bizarre, there's a contradiction there I realise'. These responses further highlighted the need for a more inductive investigation into the meaning of activism, particularly in a trade union context, and from the viewpoints of the participants in my study. The following section therefore analyses participants' views about the definition of the term 'activist', and explores whether their employment status, and how they had experienced their trade union activities, affected those views.

As Tables 4 and 5 above illustrate, all of those interviewees who did not self-identify as activists were involved in trade union activities at both branch and national levels. Bryan may have in some ways pre-empted some of the findings of this study in his description of his experience with activists:

> ‘what amazes me is that… when you ask people… sometimes the word itself is a barrier… you know, activist … if you actually sit down with somebody… and talk to them about what they’re doing in the union and they talk to you about what matters to them … and then you just quietly say… you do realise you’re an activist… they’re astonished that that’s what they are… the truth is, a lot of people do it without ever putting that label on themselves’ (Bryan, ex-freelancer, November 2014).

Several interviewees who did consider themselves activists referred to there being different levels of activism, ranging from being ‘somebody who admits they’re in the union’ (Edwina, freelancer, April 2014), to being involved at branch level, ‘representing members in the workplace, or as Equality or Health and Safety Representatives’ (Fred, freelancer, February 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster), to being involved ‘nationally on the NEC or divisional committees’ (Nadine, employee, September 2014). Jason encapsulated these views and expanded on them:

> ‘A union activist is … you can have different levels of activity, I mean you can be someone on the level of going to marches and protests and… putting loads of personal time into going and doing that kind of stuff, but I think in terms of activist it’s probably just being an active rep in your workplace … there’s also the level of being involved in your union… at a higher level like being involved in the NEC or divisional committee stuff… I’d say I’m probably active on the level of my local workplace ‘cos I’m a rep and a steward… now I’m joining the NEC… an activist has three different levels…I’m active on two different levels but probably not on that higher level’ (Jason, employee, July 2014).

Jason considered his involvement as a representative in the workplace, and being on BECTU committees, as being lower level activities than going on marches and protests, perhaps because he perceived these as more highly visible and public activities. Jason may have been willing to self-identify as an activist because he felt that he was not *publicly* recognisable as an activist, but only within his own workplace and within the union itself.

However, as Fred noted, freelancer activists were more publicly visible because their activism followed them from workplace to workplace, with a range of employers and organizations:

> '…however, I do think that other people find that difficult sometimes as a freelancer of putting their head above the parapet… and saying I am the union rep – unions still have… a negative connotation' (Fred, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

Carol also described the difficulties involved for freelancers in undertaking trade union activities, and the uncertainties involved in freelancer working:

> 'Writers, Producers and Directors [freelance] branch… had a reputation, and actually... they're a good example, the vast majority… of the membership of that branch is freelance… they're going from job to job, they're going from employer to employer… so you don't organise in the workplace, what you do is, you organise at a slightly different level… which is about sharing information, and it is about getting together to do stuff, to reach out to other people' (Carol, freelancer, February 2014, ex-employee of a public broadcaster).

In order to further illustrate the concept of the effects of different levels of activity on respondents' self-definition as activists, Tables 6 and 7 below illustrate interviewee and questionnaire respondents' views regarding whether they considered themselves to be activists, and the extent of their union activities at branch and national level.

Table 6 Interviewees' status, activist response and role (numbers)

		Employee	**Freelance**	**Total**
Activist Yes	National role	9	11	20
	Branch role	9	11	20
	No role	0	0	0
Activist No	National role	3	4	7
	Branch role	3	4	7
	No role	0	0	0

Table 7 Questionnaire respondents' status, activist response and role

		Employee Numbers	Percent	**Freelancer** Numbers	Percent	**Total** Numbers
Activist Yes	**National role**	0	0.0%	3	11.5%	3
	Branch role	32	68.1%	16	61.5%	48
	No role	15	31.9%	7	27.0%	22
Total		**47**	**100.0%**	**26**	**100.0%**	**73**
Activist No	**National role**	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
	Branch role	3	42.9%	0	0.0%	3
	No role	4	57.1%	6	100.0%	10
Total		**7**	**100.0%**	**6**	**100.0%**	**13**

Following final analysis of the qualitative data Table 6 illustrates that although all the interviewees undertook both national and branch roles, three employee respondents and four freelancers did not self-identify as activists. The questionnaire data (Table 7) reflects the views of the interviewees about how involvement at different levels of activism may affect individuals' self-definition.

As Table 7 illustrates, of employee questionnaire respondents who considered themselves activists 68.1% (n=32) had branch roles and 31.9% (n=15) undertook no roles other than their participation at conference. Of freelancer questionnaire respondents who considered themselves activists, three (11.5%) had national roles, 16 (61.5%) had branch roles and seven (27%) had no roles other than their participation at conference. Of those who undertook no union roles, 15 (31.9%) of employee questionnaire respondents and seven (27%) of freelancers self-identified as activists. These higher percentages than those reported in the interviewee data might be because questionnaire respondents' definitions and experience of activism involved lower levels of activity. They may therefore have been more likely to consider themselves activists because they were measuring themselves against arguably lower standards. In contrast, three employee interviewees (25%) and four (26.7%) freelancers who did not self-identify as activists, all of whom undertook union activities at a national (higher) level, may have evaluated themselves against different, complex definitions of the term 'activist'.

Correlation analysis was conducted utilising the questionnaire data. Table 8 presents the chi-square correlation results of respondents' perceptions of themselves as activists and whether they have any union role. Both variables are categorical (dummies), coded with 1 (activist; performs a union role) and 0 (not an activist; no union role). The results accept the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between respondents' perceptions of themselves as activists and their undertaking of a union role (X^2=10.848, df=1, p=.001). The phi coefficient (phi = 0.345, p=0.001 <0.05) shows a moderately strong, positive, significant relationship between respondents' views of themselves as activists and their undertaking of a union role. Those who view themselves as activists are more likely to engage in union roles. It is noted that correlation coefficients give no indication of the direction of causality (Field, 2005: 127).

Table 8 Correlation of perceptions of activism and union role

Union role undertaken		No	Yes	Total
Consider yourself activist	**No**	10	3	13
	Yes	23	55	78
Total		33	58	91

	Value	Df	Significance (2-tailed)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.848[a **]	1	.001
Number of Valid Cases	91		

a. 1 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5.

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.345	.001
N of Valid Cases		91	

There is no significant relationship between respondents' perceptions of themselves as activists and their employment status (X^2=0.524, df=1, p=0.469 > 5%). The null hypothesis is accepted. Both variables exhibit similar distribution indicating that staff and freelancers have similar views of themselves as activists (Table 9).

Table 9 Correlation of perceptions of activism and employment status

		Employment status		
		Freelancer	**Employee**	Total
Consider yourself activist	**No**	6	7	13
	Yes	26	47	73
Total		32	54	86

	Value	Df	Significance (2-tailed)
Pearson Chi-Square	.524[a]	1	.469
N of Valid Cases	86		

a. 1 cells (25.0%) has expected count less than 5.

Pearson's r (Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient) was applied to examine the bivariate relationship between the length of time a

respondent has worked as a freelancer (a continuous, normally distributed variable) and respondents' undertaking of a union role (a dichotomous, categorical variable). A two-tailed test was used as the direction of the relationship could not be predicted. There is a statistically significant, at 10% significance level, positive, moderately strong relationship between the two variables (r=0.266, p=10%). The longer one has been freelancing the more likely he/she is to consider himself/herself an activist (Table 10).

Table 10 Correlation results (Pearson's r)

		Consider yourself activist	Length freelancer
Consider yourself activist	Pearson Correlation	1	.266
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.101
	N	92	39
Length freelancer	Pearson Correlation	.266	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.101	
	N	39	40

In order to further contextualise some of these possible influences on interviewees' responses, the following Table 11 records details of the employee interviewees' workplaces, and Table 12 records details of freelancer interviewees' employment background prior to becoming freelancers.

Table 11 Employee interviewees: employment at time of interview

INTERVIEWEE	EMPLOYMENT AT TIME OF INTERVIEW
Arthur	Commercial broadcaster
Bill	Theatre
Jason	Theatre
Kate	Theatre
Lionel	Commercial broadcaster
Nadine*	Public broadcaster
Phil	Theatre
William	Theatre
Andy	Full time Official, employed by BECTU, ex Activist BECTU member employed by a Public broadcaster
Alison	Public broadcaster
Brenda*	Public broadcaster
Cheryl	Public broadcaster

**Brenda and Nadine were full time Lay Union Officials, that is BECTU workplace representatives, working full time for the union, but employees of and paid by the public broadcaster, not by the union.*

It emerged that none of the employee interviewees had previously worked as freelancers.

Although this study primarily explored the views of BECTU members working in the broadcast industries, some responses from the sub-group of interviewees working in theatre and the arts provide more variation in terms of those in employed positions.

Table 12 Freelancer interviewees: previous employment background

	PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT PRIOR TO BECOMING FREELANCERS
Carol	Public broadcaster
Dean	Public broadcaster
Edwina	Always freelancer
Fred	Commercial broadcaster
Glenda	Always freelancer
Heather	Always freelancer
Milly	Commercial broadcaster
Paul	Always freelancer
Roger	Always freelancer
Shirley	Always freelancer
Tricia	Commercial broadcaster
Una	Commercial broadcaster
Vernon	Always freelancer
Walter	Always freelancer
Bryan	Full time Official, employed by BECTU, ex Activist Freelance BECTU member

As Table 12 illustrates, six freelancer interviewees in this study had previously been employed by either a commercial or a public broadcast organisation. It should be noted that precise information about freelancer questionnaire respondents' previous employment was not available. Because, as is discussed later in this chapter, the possible significance of this information only emerged during detailed analysis of the qualitative data, the questionnaire respondents were only asked to respond 'yes' or 'no' to the following question:

> Has your staff/freelance status changed during your working life in the industries covered by BECTU?

Consequently, it was not possible to ascertain whether the freelancer questionnaire respondents had previously been working as employees for commercial or for public broadcasters. However, it was possible to illustrate how many of the questionnaire respondents had changed their employment status – see Table 13 below.

Table 13 Questionnaire respondents' changes in employment status

Changed status	**Employee** Numbers	Percent	**Freelancer** Numbers	Percent	**Total** Numbers
Yes	14	26.4%	19	57.6%	33
No	39	73.6%	14	42.4%	53
Total	53	100.0%	33	100.0%	86

It is apparent (Table 13) that the share of freelancer questionnaire respondents who had changed their employment status (n=19, 57.6%) is notably higher than those for employees (n=14, 26.4%). Similarly, while 40% of the freelancer interviewees had changed employment status, none of the employee interviewees had done so. It became increasingly apparent during the qualitative analysis process that certain aspects of the employee interviewees' current employment, and of the freelancer interviewees' previous employment histories, might also have affected their views about the effects of their activism on their professional and personal lives. Una described how she and a colleague were viewed when they became freelancers, after leaving a major commercial broadcaster where they had both been very high profile union activists:

> 'we were active in the union… I did lead a lot of strikes in [a major commercial broadcaster]... some of them were national ones and some were local… but... they ended up respecting me and I ended up respecting them... freelance was a different matter… one day we walked into a facility company and all… all these people disappeared out of the room… and they said, that was the moonlighters, 'cos the union's walked in, so… I was seen as a union person…if you appeared on a shoot or anything they thought you were there… checking the [union membership] cards

and seeing if you were up to date… I wasn't… but it was that sort of image you get' (Una, freelancer, October 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

It appeared that freelancers who had been previously employees and trade union activists, were viewed with a degree of suspicion not only by potential employers, but also by their colleagues. During further interrogation of the data, it emerged that freelancers' employment histories may have affected their views about activism and its effects. The following section therefore explores the meanings of the term 'freelancer' in order to explore how it might affect participants' responses in the context of this study.

4.3 Freelancer by choice or forced into freelancing?

As is reported in Chapter 1 the increasing casualization of the broadcast industries resulted in a sea-change within the balance of BECTU's membership from being predominantly employees to being more freelancer based. This is illustrated in Table 1, p.13, in Chapter 1, which provides comparative breakdowns of BECTU membership between 1991 and 2014. Additionally BECTU had older members who had always been freelancer by choice and younger members who were freelancers not by choice but simply because employee positions within broadcasting were no longer available (Guile, 2012, p.7).

In the relatively limited existing literature into freelancer involvement in trade unions, 'freelancer' had been defined as a 'freely chosen' (Heery, 2009: p.4) employment category. This description does not reflect the reality of the freelancer status, at least in relation to my study. Many workers have been forced into freelancing because of the regulatory changes in broadcasting instigated during the 1990s which resulted in mass redundancies from broadcasting organisations (Holgate and McKay, 2009). The ex-employee workers who wished to remain in the broadcast industries had no choice but to become freelancers in this increasingly casualized sector (Guile, 2012; Paterson, 2012; Hood and Tabary-Peterssen, 1997; Davidson, 1992).

Analysis of the qualitative data provided valuable insights into the differences between how employee and freelancer activists undertake activities on behalf of the union. Employee activists effectively work as lay union officials, on behalf of BECTU, supporting and representing their workplace colleagues in negotiations with management, leading disputes, and organising and recruiting members, thereby undertaking what Yu (2013) describes as 'informal activist careers' (p.58) within a collective environment. Freelancer activists' roles tend to involve less direct negotiations on behalf of their colleagues – if they have issues of their own, or are approached by others with problems, they contact a paid union official directly for their help and advice. Unlike employees they do not deal with management themselves because of the precariousness of their employment situation, as Tricia described:

> 'you're more circumscribed as a freelance in many ways….than you are as a member of staff… and you're more dependent on people's good will… and you're more open in some ways to discrimination either because of your politics, or the union... because nobody has to show they're discriminating against you, they just don't have to pick you... as a staff member you've got union protection behind you, so they're not going to pick off a union member... they just don't have to select you' (Tricia, freelancer, October 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

The information provided by the interviewees about their previous employment also uncovered the need to take into account freelancers' employment histories in order to more clearly understand their views. Freelancers previously employed by commercial broadcasters had a wealth of experience in terms of representation, negotiation and industrial action as Tricia recalled:

> 'when I was working at [a major commercial broadcaster] I was the Deputy Steward of the Live Shop, so I represented them on a lot of the negotiations with management' (Tricia, freelancer, October 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

However, they had had no need to recruit when ‘it was a closed shop... everybody was a member’ (Fred, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster). As well as representing their colleagues, those previously employed by public broadcasters brought with them more organizing abilities (in terms of recruiting and encouraging other members’ activism):

> ‘although there was no closed shop (at the public broadcaster) there were good, good strong union reps there... and I learnt from these people... you know, you would watch how they operated, how they helped people, how they supported people, and the, kind of, the debate that went on within meetings… about organization… (Dean, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a public broadcaster).

These ex-employee freelancers brought with them the skills they had gained as employee activists, and also the different experiences they had of how the trade union operated within commercial and public broadcasters.

Those participants who had always been freelancers would only have had indirect experience of trade union representation and organization within workplaces. They would not have directly represented their colleagues, or been involved in negotiations with individual employers – as previously noted, they would pass these issues on to full time officials employed by the union. Freelancer interviewees who had previously been employees articulated the differences between their experiences as employee and freelancer activists:

> ‘the vast majority… of the membership of [a specific] branch is freelance… they’re going from job to job, they’re going from employer to employer… so you don’t organise in the workplace, what you do is, you organise at a slightly different level…, which is about sharing information, and it is about getting together to do stuff, to reach out to other people’ (Carol, freelancer, February 2014, ex-employee of a public broadcaster).

It became apparent that, in the context of this study, the differences in freelancers' previous employment histories affected their views about their own activism, and how they defined the term 'activist'.

The meanings and interpretations of the terms 'activist' and 'activism' in the existing literature have tended to be defined from the academic viewpoint of the researcher, rather than from the subjective viewpoints of activists themselves. Instead of accepting previous definitions (including my own), or offering those definitions to questionnaire respondents as options to choose from, this study took a 'bottom up' approach by analysing and utilising participants' subjective positive and negative views about the meaning of the term 'activist'. As an insider researcher it is important to acknowledge and to illustrate that 'other interpretations – including those of your respondents or readers – may be very different to your own' (Smith, 2009, p.65). Throughout this study it was apparent that employee and freelancer participants' views about the meaning of the term 'activist' differed from my initial definition, and that whether they ascribed positive or negative connotations to the term affected how they viewed the effects of their trade union activism on their professional and personal lives. The following sections therefore explore the connotations and definitions of the term 'activist' suggested by participants in this study.

4.4 'Activist' connotations

The more nuanced and in some cases idealised characteristics of the meaning of the term 'activist', and some of the external circumstances and professional or personal experiences (habitus) which may affect participants' views are explored in this chapter. Given that they were selected for interview because of the high levels and visibility of their trade union activities, it is perhaps unsurprising that all of the employee and freelancer interviewees, whether they considered themselves to be activists or not, ascribed some positive connotations to the term 'activist', including 'caring', 'involved' and 'supporting'. Their views were exemplified by Tricia:

> '... it's a positive term, it means that they want to get involved and that they want to… you know have a say in how their lives are run, and they want to have a say in making lives better for other people' (Tricia, freelancer, October 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

It is noted that freelancers who felt that the term 'activist' had negative connotations tended to ascribe those views to others. Three of the four freelancer interviewees who did not consider themselves activists attributed the following negative characteristics to the word 'activist': '[it] does have that connotation of troublemaker' (Glenda, freelancer, April 2014), 'when you say trade unions to people they think 'oh everyone's going to strike' (Heather, freelancer, April 2014), 'you only have to mention the union… in some circles and… everybody shudders' (Paul, freelancer, September 2014). The fourth (Walter) merely felt that activist 'doesn't sound like me, to be honest' (Walter, freelancer, October 2014).

Freelancer Fred, who did self-identify as an activist recalled:

> 'I remember one time a manager saying to me he didn't like the word activist because it conjured up all… ideas of people sort of waving placards and all the rest of it…' (Fred, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

Fred's view may have been influenced by the high levels of union activity he had witnessed and undertaken during his time as an employee activist, and his relatively close relationship with management because of his activities as a union representative:

> 'I did feel that... everybody's view was listened to, it was very democratic, and I honestly think that it made for really good industrial relations, because… the steward could actually talk with the voice of everybody, and the management knew that' (Fred, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

Tricia was also previously employed by a major commercial broadcaster, but her response illustrates her experience of other freelancers' views:

> 'I know a lot of people to whom union activist is a very frightening term, they're scared of being labelled as a union activist in case it stops them getting work in the future, so they will do anything to avoid being labelled an activist…' (Tricia, freelancer, October 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

Despite their acknowledgement that other people might have negative views about activists, both Fred and Tricia readily self-identified as activists.

None of the employee interviewees, including the three who did not consider themselves activists (Brenda, Arthur and Lionel) ascribed negative connotations to the term 'activist'. However, Brenda felt that the term activist 'means absolutely nothing to me' (Brenda, employee, November 2014), perhaps reflecting the historically lower levels of industrial activity within that organisation compared with the commercial broadcasters (Crisell, 2002) as previously discussed in Chapter 1. Freelancer Una (who prior to her employment at a major commercial broadcaster had also been an employee of a major public broadcaster) explained that although she was a union member while at the public broadcaster:

> '… it wasn't a union in my idea 'cos it was the ABS and that was more… a staff association as opposed to a union, and I never saw them, I was very annoyed actually 'cos I joined a union and it never came near, just came once a while to collect your subs…' (Una, freelancer, October 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

Questionnaire respondents were asked whether they ascribed positive or negative connotations to the term 'activist'. Table 14 below illustrates their responses.

Table 14 Questionnaire respondents' positive or negative connotations of the term 'activist'

	Employee Numbers	Percent	**Freelancer** Numbers	Percent	**Total** Numbers	Percent
Positive	32	60.4%	12	37.5%	44	51.8%
Negative	6	11.3%	11	34.4%	17	20.0%
Neither	12	22.6%	6	18.8%	18	21.2%
Both	3	5.7%	2	6.2%	5	5.9%
None	0	0.0%	1	3.1%	1	1.1%
Total	53	100.0%	32	100.0%	85	100.0%

Higher numbers of employee questionnaire respondents (n=32, 60.4%) viewed 'activist' as a positive term, compared with freelancers (n=12, 37.5%). This disparity may reflect employees' experience of being more accepted as union representatives by management within their workplaces, compared with freelancers who were in a more precarious position as activists in the freelancer market, as was articulated by a number of interviewees.

4.5 Participants' definitions of the term 'activist'

This section compares the views about the definition of the term 'activist' of employee and freelancer interviewees in this study who self-identified as activists, and of those who did not. None of the employee interviewees, not even the three who did not self-identify as activists (Arthur, Lionel and Brenda) ascribed negative definitions to the term. Neither Arthur nor Lionel, who were both employees of commercial broadcasters, considered themselves activists, despite the high and visible levels of their union involvement (see Table 6, p.123) in their workplaces and within BECTU's structures at both branch and national levels. However, it should be noted that when asked for an example of someone who he would consider to be an activist Lionel cited Arthur. This supports Lionel's assertion that:

> '… [activist] is the way other people perceive you, I suppose, it's not necessarily a term anyone would give to themselves' (Lionel, employee, August 2014).

Lionel's view epitomises the attitudes expressed by those participants in this study who did not consider themselves activists.

(i) Respondents who self-identified as activists

When asked to define activism, interviewees in my study, whether they considered themselves activists or not, tended to describe relatively high level activities. Those employee interviewees who self-identified as activists used the following descriptions:

> 'standing outside buildings giving out flyers principally, doing the picket line, not just when you feel like it but first thing… going to meetings, talking to members, being involved, doing the bigger picture, getting the bigger picture' (Nadine, employee, September 2014).

> 'it's about organising… and getting other people involved in stuff… and turning up and taking part, I think that's all part of it… it's not all about, you know, having a massive fight with your employer necessarily or whatever it might be… but equally even things like being on TUC marches and demos' (William, employee, October 2014).

> 'Someone who participates in union activities and… the politics and what have you. Someone who's very aware and is actually... doing stuff' (Kate, employee, July 2014).

The highly visible activities described by these employee interviewees indicate their willingness to be identified as trade union activists in the workplace, and in some cases, in more public arenas.

Freelancers who had previously been employees of broadcasters, and who self-identified as activists described similar high level involvement:

> 'somebody who's engaged by issues… in the industry both in the individual's workplace and in your friends' workplace and in your colleagues' workplace... being an advocate and being a witness… [it] sounds quite evangelical doesn't it?' (Carol, freelancer, February 2014, ex-employee of a public broadcaster).

For Dean an activist was:

> ‘somebody who’s engaged with… the people that you work with... the union is an important part of their lives… if you’re a trade union activist, the trade union comes first, that’s number one in terms of your priorities, you know … your own personal situation is… secondary’ (Dean, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a public broadcaster).

Fred described how for him activism meant that he could have a voice in how his career would develop:

> ‘I wanted to make sure that I influenced what my working life was going to be like and the only way I could do that was through …the trade union movement’ (Fred, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

Milly spoke of:

> ‘Someone who is active on behalf of the membership... [who] promote union and trades union values… to inform and educate people I guess, and to listen and to then answer their questions’ (Milly, freelancer, August 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

The phrases used by these interviewees describe more abstract concepts. They do not imply the same levels of highly visible activities as the responses of those who continued to be in full time employment. Thus although they brought with them the social capital which they had accrued as employees, they did not choose to utilise it as overtly once they became freelancers.

(ii) Respondents who did not self-identify as activists

Interviewees who did not self-identify as activists used the following phrases, which imply similar relatively high levels of involvement:

> ‘somebody who is, kind of proactive in the workplace on behalf of the union whether it’s recruiting or whether it’s representing individual members… everybody that’s on the committee is an activist, even if they don’t actually want to stick their head above the parapet any more than that… I sit on the NEC, but I wouldn’t

say I'm as active as many others in the union' (Arthur, employee, January 2014).

'somebody who takes an interest… probably beyond their own workplace really… I think you can be… active… locally but I think… being a union activist is something where you are actually engaged with the union… as an entity rather than just… you know, going to your local manager and complaining about something' (Lionel, employee, August 2014).

These definitions echo Gall and Fiorito's (2012) definition of activism as a willingness to work (WTW) for the union in order to promote the union's values and to encourage others to join.

It is noted that the four freelancer interviewees who did not consider themselves activists had always been freelancers, and therefore had no experience of undertaking direct trade union activities within a workplace. Their descriptions of activism were therefore more nuanced, and often couched as if they were discussing a third person:

'the term 'activist' I would associate more with someone who's kind of actively campaigning... within the union, for… rights... it's just being there really isn't it, and being that person that people can come and have a chat to, and most of the time you're steering them in the right direction to someone else' (Glenda, freelancer, April 2014).

'someone who's actively interested in a union… in actively doing something … trying to sort a better working environment… in making their health and safety in their workplace better…' (Heather, freelancer, April 2014).

'Someone who just works on behalf of the union, I know what a union activist would mean in a lot of people's eyes, but certainly in my eyes it's someone who just does work on behalf of the working populace, and on behalf of the union' (Paul, freelancer, September 2014).

> ‘it’s about organising… and getting other people involved in stuff… and turning up and taking part... things like being on TUC marches and demos’ (Walter, freelancer, October 2014).

It also appeared that they were describing characteristics that they felt were perceived by others, rather than these being their own views. As has been noted, none of the four freelancer interviewees who did not consider themselves activists had previously been employees of a broadcaster. They therefore had no experience of secured employment in workplaces where union activists might be valued by management as the liaison between themselves and the workforce. As previously discussed, the responses of those freelancers who did not self-identify as activists may also reflect their wariness about being publicly identified with activism and the union.

In contrast, those freelancers who had previously been employees described their relatively high profile activities during their time as employees, as Una recalled:

> ‘...I was very active, I mean I have to be honest with you I did lead a lot of strikes in [a major commercial broadcaster] (laughs), five actually as a steward… not that I wanted to do that many, but it happened like that, some of them were national ones and some were local…’ (Una, freelancer, October 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

They were also aware that their activism had provided them with social capital in terms of their relationships with the broadcast institutions, as Fred noted:

> ‘I did have...the respect of my members, I also think I had the respect of the management as well’ (Fred, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

This may also explain why those who had not previously been employed by a broadcasting organisation ascribed some negative characteristics to the term ‘activist’ such as ‘troublemaker’ (Glenda, freelancer, April 2014) – they may have had little experience of positive reactions to their activism.

The unanticipated number of those participants in my study who undertook high level activities on behalf of the union, but who did not consider themselves activists reflects Moore's (2011) findings. She also noted an absence of self-identification as activists by the participants in her research, despite their 'substantial commitment' (p.19) to the union. It may be that their high expectations of activism led some interviewees in my study not to self-identify as activists, whilst others did recognise and apply the term to themselves.

The higher numbers of employee questionnaire respondents who viewed 'activist' as a positive term may reflect their experience of being more accepted as union representatives by management within their workplaces, compared with freelancers' more precarious positions as activists in the freelancer market. This point was illustrated by freelancer interviewee Dean:

> 'The basic problem we have at the moment… is trying to keep people committed to… remaining as active as they possibly can, it's very difficult and I appreciate that because I'm in the same situation myself… when you're trying to hold down a job and you don't know where your next job's coming from, and that's the reality of the freelance world' (Dean, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a public broadcaster).

The lower percentages of questionnaire respondents who did not consider themselves to be activists, compared to the interviewees (see Tables 6 and 7, p.123) may also be attributable to the questionnaire respondents' definitions of the term 'activist', which they selected from the relatively limited range of options presented to them. These options were formulated based on the responses of the first seven interviewees, unconsciously replicating Fiorito *et al.*'s (2011) technique of eliciting possible definitions based mainly on levels of activity. The more detailed definitions which emerged during the analysis of the complete interview data-set are discussed throughout this chapter. Table 15 below illustrates the definitions of activist selected from those options by employee and freelancer questionnaire respondents. None

of these respondents selected 'conference delegate', divisional committee member', 'divisional committee officer', and 'takes strike action' as their defining terms of activism.

Table 15 Questionnaire respondents' definition of activist

	Employee		**Freelancer**		**Total**	
	Numbers	Percent	Numbers	Percent	Numbers	Percent
Member of a union	11	23.4%	4	17.4%	15	21.4%
Branch committee member	4	8.5%	2	8.7%	6	8.6%
Branch officer	1	2.1%	1	4.3%	2	2.9%
Divisional committee Member	0	0.0%	0	0%	0	0.0%
Divisional committee officer	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
National Executive Committee member	1	2.1%	0	0.0%	1	1.4%
Speaks openly about being in the union	16	34.0%	9	39.1%	25	35.7%
Goes on demonstration	1	2.1%	0	0.0%	1	1.4%
Takes strike action	0		0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Speaks up for themselves or others	12	25.5%	7	30.4%	19	27.1%
Other	1	2.1%	0	0.0%	1	1.4%
Total	47	67.1%	23	32.9%	70	100.0%

Although questionnaire respondents were asked to select up to 3 options and rate them 1-3, respondents actually selected only one option, or more than three, or all options, perhaps revealing an anomaly in the questionnaire, or a consequence of the fact that participants had limited time in which to return them on the day of the conference. Consequently only the first choice of those who ranked their choices and the one option selected by a number of participants are reported here.

The highest percentage of responses for the definition of an activist, from both employee (34%, n=16) and freelancer questionnaire respondents (39.1%, n=9) was 'Someone who speaks openly about being in the union', while in third place was being 'a member of a union' cited by 23.4% (n=11) of employees and 17.4% (n=4) of

freelancers. Both of these choices reflect Moore's (2011) findings that conference delegates tend to be less proactively involved in their union's activities, than those who were defined in her study as representatives 'taking a proactive role and having a commitment to trade union principles' (p.43). The second most frequently selected definition by questionnaire respondents was 'Someone who speaks up for themselves or others' – employees 25.5% (n=12), freelancers 30.4% (n=7). This perhaps implied a more active role than options one and three, because it might have involved actually addressing issues, or being a union representative. However, it is still a relatively low profile activity, compared to undertaking more visible and public roles on branch and national committees. Overwhelmingly the questionnaire respondents' definitions implied more passive union involvement than did the interviewees' active definitions, which are explored elsewhere in this chapter.

Prior to analysis of the quantitative data, I had no knowledge of the levels of activism which the questionnaire respondents undertook, other than attendance at BECTU's Annual Conference. Although this limitation was accepted, it was anticipated that their responses would further enrich, and perhaps confirm the interview data. As has been previously noted, all of the interviewees undertook both national and branch roles.

In contrast, only 3.5% (n=3) of the questionnaire respondents undertook national roles, 59.3% (n=51) undertook branch roles, and 37.2% (n=32) had no roles in the union, other than attendance at conference (percentages based on total number of respondents (n=86) in Table 7, p.123). Based on the overall share of interviewees who did not consider themselves activists (n=7) despite their high profile roles in the union, I had therefore anticipated that the majority of questionnaire respondents would not consider themselves to be activists, because of their relatively low level activities. On interrogation of the quantitative data it became apparent that those questionnaire respondents (conference delegates) who were active, undertook those

activities at a different (arguably lower) level than that of the interviewees. However, the majority of the questionnaire respondents who undertook roles in the union, and of those who did not undertake any roles in the union did self-identify as activists. Combined with their relatively low level definitions of the term activist, it could therefore be deduced that questionnaire respondents in my study were more likely than the interviewees to self-identify as activists, because the term was less loaded for them. As Moore (2011) noted in her research, conference delegates tend to be 'more passive' (p.43) whereas activists are more proactive. In my study, interviewees' higher level definitions of activist, and therefore higher expectations of their own activism, could have led to less self-identification as activists. The interviewees may have measured themselves against higher levels of activism than the questionnaire respondents.

It may therefore be that questionnaire respondents did not necessarily equate the term 'activist' with overt and highly visible union activities, proving that a more nuanced definition was required. Other factors might also have affected questionnaire respondents - as has been noted they were distributed and collected anonymously at BECTU's Annual Conference in 2014, and no identifying characteristics were requested or obtained, as is the case in secret ballots. Gillham (2000) acknowledged that respondents in such anonymous surveys or ballots might respond differently to their public statements, when they may have wanted to be perceived as part of a greater whole (p.7). Additionally, as was acknowledged in Fiorito *et al.*'s (2011) study, the context of the research within a trade union environment, and the view that the research was supported by the union, may have affected responses towards a more positive slant, that is they may have been more likely to self-identify as activists when they were part of a group of like-minded individuals at a trade union conference. Conversely, the interviewees' responses might have resulted from comparing themselves and their activities to those of both myself as the researcher and the other interviewees. A high proportion of the latter

were colleagues on BECTU's NEC, and their involvement in my study had been discussed at a meeting when permission for the research was obtained.

4.6 Activism in different contexts

For a number of participants in my study, while the term 'activist' may not have been viewed as problematic, the context in which it was used could affect the way respondents interpreted the phrase. A number of employee interviewees stated that they would refer to themselves as activists in other realms of their lives, but not necessarily in respect to their trade union activism. Cheryl, who self-identified as an activist, defined her activism in positive terms:

> 'I'm an activist, yes, in general, in my life… I tend to…campaign on things, and take action on things and get things done…' (Cheryl, employee, November 2014).

However, she went on to state that the term could have negative connotations for others:

> 'I wouldn't go out of my way to describe myself as a [trade union] activist, because that can have very negative connotations…if you go around describing yourself as an activist, people think of protester, they think of anarchist, they think of… instability' (Cheryl, employee, November 2014).

These interviewees reflected a view that it was the association with an institution (the trade union movement) which had been undermined and demonized in the media (Beynon, 2014) which caused the negative associations with the term 'activist', as Glenda noted:

> ''union activist' does have that connotation of troublemaker… and it shouldn't do, should it? … people my age have been kind of media bashed…Thatcher bashed maybe, into thinking that every time workers stand up and demand something they're being unreasonable' (Glenda, freelancer, April 2014).

Echoing Glenda's words, it is noted that in this study slightly over half of the interviewees, six employees and nine freelancers, and a third of

them irrespective of their ages, acknowledged that their views were affected in some way by the legacy of Margaret Thatcher. A quarter of questionnaire respondents also referred to 'Thatcher' in response to question 12: '*What do you consider the most significant factor which has affected trade unions in your lifetime?'* Although this is not explored further in this study, it may provide interesting data for future research.

Of the freelancer interviewees who felt that 'activist' was a negative term, two ascribed that view to others' opinions rather than their own:

> 'I remember one time a manager saying to me he didn't like the word activist because it conjured up all… ideas of people sort of waving placards and all the rest of it…' (Fred, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

The views of freelancer Fred may have been influenced by the high levels of union activity he had witnessed and undertaken during his time as an employee activist at a commercial broadcaster, and his relatively close relationship with management during that time because of his activities as a union representative.

Although Tricia was also previously employed by a major commercial broadcaster, her response illustrates her experience of other freelancers' views:

> 'I know a lot of people to whom union activist is a very frightening term, they're scared of being labelled as a union activist in case it stops them getting work in the future, so they will do anything to avoid being labelled an activist…' (Tricia, freelancer, October 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

Despite their acknowledgement that other people might have negative views about activists, both Fred and Tricia readily self-identified as activists. Two of the freelancer interviewees who did not consider themselves activists also felt that it was not necessarily the term 'activist', which was reviled, but rather the context in which it was used:

> ‘it’s off-putting depending on the word you put in front of it, I mean you can be… a Red Cross activist, but that… sheds a whole different light on things doesn’t it?’ (Paul, freelancer, July 2014).

> ‘I can’t help but thinking that, but in other parts of my life I would call myself an activist, I just don’t put the word ‘union’ in front of it… because… ‘union activist’ does have that connotation of troublemaker’ (Glenda, freelancer, April 2014).

It became apparent that in the context of this study current public perceptions of trade unionism negatively affected the views of those who are involved in the movement. Their responses to the term ‘activism’ were filtered through their own experiences in terms of current or previous employment and the social capital thus accrued. However, their views about effects of those capitals were affected by the prevailing political climate of distrust towards trade unions (Nolan, 2014). For some respondents, the trade union context in which their activism takes place was perceived as a negative influence on their perception of the term ‘activist’.

4.7 How participants’ age affected their responses

On analysis of interviewees’ age ranges overall, 40.7% (n=11) were under 50 years old, and 59.3% (n=16) were over 50. This reflected national statistical information about trade union membership, which finds that:

> ‘The proportion of trade union members aged below 50 has fallen since 1995, whilst the proportion aged above 50 has increased’ (Great Britain, Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2015).

In my study, it may also be because the interviewees had been specifically targeted in terms of their high level activities within the union, including membership of BECTU’s NEC, roles as shop stewards, and chairs of branches or divisions. As McKay and Moore (2009) also noted, older long term activists tend to undertake a wider range of trade union activities.

However, when comparing employee and freelancer interviewee age ranges the proportions differ: 41.7% (n=5) of employees were over 50, compared with 73.3% (n=11) of freelancers (see Table 2, p.115). The comparatively lower number of younger freelancer BECTU members who could be identified as activists by the researcher and targeted for interviews may be because there were fewer activists in this age group within BECTU and therefore a smaller number from which to make a selection. Heather, who was under 50 years old and who did not consider herself an activist opined:

> 'unfortunately… trade union activists have got a bad rap, I think when you say trade unions to people they think 'oh everyone's going to strike'… there are a lot of members that I talk to that will not… disclose that they're actually a union member unless they have to because they're worried about the negative stereotype of being in a union' (Heather, freelancer, April 2014).

Older activists were also aware that their younger colleagues had different perspectives in relation to activism, as Brenda noted:

> 'younger people that I have encountered at work, they don't use that expression at all' (Brenda, employee, November 2014).

Heather felt that 'active trade union member' was a more acceptable term:

> '… 'active' means that you are actively doing stuff and I think that seems to be better received than 'trade union activist' and I think 'activist' is... it's that misrepresentation of the words that seem a bit too harsh for… mainstream media these days' (Heather, freelancer, April 2014).

As previously outlined in Chapter 3, the demonization of activists and trade unions in the media which several respondents noted was also discussed by Moore (2011), and explored in more detail by Nolan (2014) and Beynon (2014).

As media professionals themselves, the respondents in my study were aware that the media was capable of manipulating public opinion, and

misrepresenting certain aspects of trade unionism by using it as a pejorative term, as freelancer interviewee Carol described:

> '… you realise just how negative people's views are of trades unions in general… and how extraordinarily effective the right wing press has been in demonizing them… either people don't know what a trade union's for, or they think it was something which was… an attempt to overthrow civilisation as we know it…' (Carol, freelancer, February 2014, ex-employee of a public broadcaster).

Despite this awareness of the capabilities of the media, it was apparent that media descriptions may have affected participants' views about the meaning of activism within a trade union context.

Table 16 below details questionnaire respondents' age ranges and the extent of their self-identification as activists.

Table 16 Questionnaire respondents' status, activist response and age

		Employee Numbers	Percent	**Freelancer** Numbers	Percent
Activist Yes	**Under age 50**	28	59.6%	10	38.5%
	Over age 50	19	40.4%	16	61.5%
Total		**47**	**100.0%**	**26**	**100.0%**
Activist No	**Under age 50**	6	85.8%	3	50.0%
	Over age 50	1	14.2%	3	50.0%
Total		**7**	**100.0%**	**6**	**100.0%**
TOTAL		**54**	**62.8%**	**32**	**37.2%**

Of employee questionnaire respondents who considered themselves activists 28 (59.6%) were under 50 and 19 (40.4%) were over 50.

Of freelancer questionnaire respondents who considered themselves activists 10 (38.5%) were under 50 and 16 (61.5%) were over 50.

Of employee questionnaire respondents who did not consider themselves activists six (85.8%) were under 50 and only one (14.2%) was over 50.

Of freelancer questionnaire respondents who did not consider themselves activists, three were under 50 and three were over 50.

Table 16 above shows that as expected those employees who did not consider themselves activists were more likely to be under 50. However, those employees who did consider themselves activists were also more likely to be under 50, compared to freelancers who did consider themselves activists who were more likely to be over 50. The differences may again be because of the relative security enjoyed by employees who undertake union roles, irrespective of their age, compared with freelancers' more precarious employment situation, as has been discussed elsewhere in my research.

McKay and Moore (2009) found that the longer trade union activists had been active, the more roles they undertook. Similarly, several older (over 50 years old) respondents in this study referred to it being easier to be involved in the union in their later years, when their activism was less likely to affect their career prospects, or when they had fewer family commitments. Fred explained that:

> 'I'm at… the working end of my life, I'm not trying to curry favour with people… I'm able to… represent people effectively without worrying about the consequences to me' (Fred, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

Echoing this observation, in conversation with a delegate at a conference in 2014, I noted her observation that:

> 'I was always a member of the union, but it's never really impacted on me. It's only now that I'm older and I don't care if I work or not that I'm considering being active' (X, freelancer delegate at BECTU Women's conference, 2014).

Both of these statements imply that the respondents were aware that trade union activism may affect work prospects, and that they were therefore more willing to undertake union activities at later stages of their lives when they were less concerned about the consequences.

4.8 Summary

This chapter has outlined the positive and negative connotations and definitions ascribed to the term ‘activist’ by the respondents in my study, and has explored the possible influences on their responses. It has demonstrated how current employment status and previous work histories as well as the context in which terms are used both in practise and in the research process may affect participants’ responses. Although no definitive description of the term ‘activist’ has been produced, my study illustrates the possible dangers inherent in the use of value laden phrases, and reflects McBride *et al*.’s (2015) assertion that we, as researchers are not ‘sufficiently problematizing relationships within categories of difference’ (p.338). In my study, it is acknowledged that even though the participants were activists according to *my* definition of the term, they were responding according to *their* definitions of ‘activist’, which in some cases had very negative connotations. As well as being filtered through their perceptions of the term ‘activist’, participants’ responses were affected by their past and current employment status. The context in which researchers are working may also affect their perceptions – if they are research students, or if they have always been employees, they may not consider freelancers’ perspectives, because they might have no experience of that employment status and its insecurities. Heather articulated the reality that a freelancer was always ‘only considered to be as good as his (or her) last job’ (Heather, freelancer, April 2014) and that this affected whether they were employed in the future. However, Grugulis and Soyanova (2011) and Siebert and Wilson (2013) found that there were other factors which might affect freelancers’ employment prospects - they might not be offered work if they were known to be associated with a trade union. Similarly, Antcliff *et al*. (2007) found that perceptions of freelancers as trade union activists might make employers view them as potential trouble makers, who would therefore not be offered work contracts.

The following chapter builds upon these findings in order to explore whether the respondents in this study believed that their activism had affected their professional and personal lives positively or negatively, or had not affected them at all; and whether these views were influenced by their employee or freelancer status. It also explores how participants' relationship with their trade union may affect their views.

Chapter 5
Analysis – the effects of activism and participants' relationship with the union

This chapter discusses the findings of my research in the context of the existing literature, and the relevant theoretical perspectives uncovered therein, in order to address research questions 2 and 2(i):

2. In what ways might activist lay members of the broadcast union BECTU view the effects of their trade union activism on their professional and personal lives, and might their views differ depending on the employee or freelancer status of the activist?
    i. In what ways might lay activists' relationship with the union affect how they view the impact of their activism on their professional and personal lives?

For the purposes of this research, Tables 2 (p.115), 11 (p.126) and 12 (p.127) outlined those aspects of the interviewees' backgrounds which were ascertained during the interview process and which may have been relevant to the analysis of the data gathered. Tables 3 (p.116) and 13 (p.128) provided this information in respect of questionnaire respondents. This chapter explores participants' views about the effects of their activism on their professional and personal lives. It explores whether the characteristics identified in Chapter 4 affect those views, and assesses participants' relationship with the union and how that may affect their responses. The qualitative data gathered during the interview process is complemented by the quantitative data from the questionnaire responses in order to answer the research questions.

This chapter contextualises the findings of my research within the theoretical approaches espoused in the existing literature which has addressed the effects of trade union activism on trade unions, and some aspects of freelancers' employment and their representation within the trade union movement. Rather than exploring these issues

from the wider perspective of the trade union movement ('top down'), my research adopted a 'bottom up' approach in order to uncover the views of individuals who were active in the union about how their activism affected their professional and personal lives. However, when describing the effects of their activism, a number of the interviewees also referred to how their activism had affected others and the union itself, and these responses are also considered in this chapter. Because my research involved both employee and freelancer activists within BECTU, it was therefore possible to assess whether there were any differences in their views depending on their employment status.

As is noted in Chapter 4, as well as comparing employee and freelancer views my research also explores the possibility, which became apparent during the analysis process, that freelancer interviewees' responses to how their activism affected them were coloured by the different experiences of those who had never worked as employees of broadcasting organisations, compared with those who had previously worked for either a major public broadcaster and/or a major commercial broadcaster. My study built on McKay and Moore's (2009) research into the effects on unions of organizational changes within workplaces, including the increased outsourcing of work by both commercial and public broadcasters, and the resultant expansion of the freelancer workforce. They found that such changes affected union representatives' ability to undertake their union activities within the workplace. As well as comparing the views of employee and freelancer participants, my research explores whether, and how, the changes in employment status from employee to freelancer affects their views about, and their relationship with the union. Additionally, in exploring the perceived effects of activism on individual activists, I discuss how and whether theories of social and cultural capital, and mobilization may be applicable to the findings of this study.

This chapter analyses and discusses interviewees' and questionnaire respondents' views about what they had gained and lost as a result of their union activities. Additionally, it explores the nature of their

relationship with the union and how that affects the impact of their activism on their professional and personal lives.

5.1 The effects of trade union activism

As has been noted, it was established during this research that all the interviewee participants in this study were activists according to my initial definition of the term:

> 'a person who was actively involved in union activities at a local as well as a national level and who was willing to commit some of their time and energies to the union'.

However, as is discussed in Chapter 4 it became apparent to me during the data collection process that a percentage of the interviewee respondents' views differed from mine. Furthermore, during the analysis of the data, it emerged that the majority of those participants who did not self-identify as activists expressed their views in terms of the effects of their trade union *activities*, rather than of their trade union *activism*. Consequently, in order to reflect the views of all participants, whether or not they self-identified as activists, their responses about what they had gained and lost are hereafter referred to in this chapter as how they viewed the effects of their trade union *activities*. This illustrates the potential problems involved in researchers' use of value laden terms, as previously discussed. As is noted in Chapter 3, in order to address this issue, questionnaire respondents were asked what they felt they had gained and lost as a result of their trade union *activities*, rather than of their *activism.*

5.2 Positive effects of trade union activities

Table 17 below outlines the interviewees' views about what had been gained as a result of their trade union activities, and Table 18 illustrates the questionnaire respondents' views.

Table 17 Interviewees' views about what they had gained as a result of their trade union activities

The numbers in the following table are drawn from interrogative data identified during analysis using Nvivo software.

	Employee Numbers	Percent	**Freelancer** Numbers	Percent	**Total** Numbers	Percent
Work contacts	1	8.3%	1	6.7%	2	7.4%
Networking	0	0.0%	3	20.0%	3	11.1%
Work opportunities	6	50.0%	1	6.7%	7	25.9%
Professional experience/ skills & knowledge	5	41.7%	6	40.0%	11	40.7%
Confidence	7	58.3%	6	40.0%	13	48.1%
Friendships	4	33.3%	7	46.7%	11	40.7%
Nothing	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

Table 18 Questionnaire respondents' views about what they had gained as a result of their trade union activities

	Employee Numbers	Percent	**Freelancer** Numbers	Percent	**Total** Numbers	Percent
Work contacts	7	15.6%	5	18.5%	12	16.7%
Networking	17	37.8%	6	22.2%	23	32.0%
Work opportunities	1	2.2%	4	14.8%	5	7.0%
Professional experience	17	37.8%	7	25.9%	24	33.3%
Confidence	15	33.3%	8	29.6%	23	32.0%
Friendships	13	28.9%	11	40.7%	24	33.3%
Nothing	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Other	5	11.1%	5	18.5%	10	13.9%
TOTAL	75		46		121	

Note: the total number of responses (n=121) exceeds the number of those who responded to this question (n=72) because questionnaire respondents selected more than one option as was requested in the questionnaire. Twenty-one respondents did not answer this question. Percentages are calculated based on the total number of employees and freelancers who responded to this question, n=45 and n=27 respectively.

As Tables 17 and 18 demonstrate, the majority of interviewee respondents felt that they had gained the following as a result of their trade union activities: Confidence 48.1% (n=13), Friendships 40.7% (n=11), and Professional experience 40.7% (n=11). Similarly, most questionnaire respondents said that they had gained: Friendships 33.3% (n=24), Professional experience 33.3% (n=24), Confidence 32% (n=23), and Networking 32% (n=23). In order to explore research

question 2, the following sections compare these findings in respect of employee and freelancer respondents' views.

(i) Confidence

Most interviewees, seven employees and six freelancers, cited the acquisition of 'confidence' as an intrinsic effect of their trade union activities. For employee members, that confidence was about their ability to speak to management with authority because of all the training they had received, in such areas as negotiation, Health and Safety regulations and Employment Law. Arthur, who worked at a commercial broadcaster described how:

> 'with the training you get the confidence to talk to chief executives, senior managers in the company… you get respect because you know what you're talking about…' (Arthur, employee, January 2014).

Employee interviewees who worked for a public broadcaster also spoke of how their skills had given them the confidence to speak to management, and how that enabled them to become 'a conduit for communication with staff' (Cheryl, employee, November 2014) and a 'good advocate for the union' (Alison, employee, November 2014). Employee participants also spoke of how their confidence stemmed from the concrete skills they had amassed through the structured training provided by the union which enabled them to effectively represent their members in the workplace:

> 'I've gained in… confidence… also, relationship with management… I go in and talk to them about stuff… and also I've learned skills… negotiation skills… I mean I've had a hell of a lot of training from BECTU, and experience' (Cheryl, employee, November 2014).

Those freelancer interviewees who had previously worked for a broadcaster also spoke of how the skills they had gained had given them confidence to deal with authority figures. Fred's response illustrated this as he described his trade union activity when he was an employee at a commercial broadcaster:

> ‘I think the trade union has enabled me to… I’ve always gone into negotiations on behalf of my members on an equal footing with any manager, chief executive, director, I’ve never felt inferior, so it’s certainly given me confidence’ (Fred, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

Carol was aware that her experience as an activist when she worked at a public broadcaster had given her the confidence to stand up for her rights as a freelancer:

> ‘one of the things that… union membership teaches you is actually that you, the individual has to be aware of what their rights are and actually knowing what’s reasonable, what’s unreasonable... I think it gives you huge confidence actually… speaking up for yourself, standing and talking to meetings, goodness, I’ve done an awful lot of that … as a union activist’ (Carol, freelancer, February 2014, ex-employee of a public broadcaster).

Additionally the confidence they had gained enabled them to pass on the cultural capital they amassed in terms of skills and knowledge to other, often younger workers.

Carol spoke of her involvement in the TV Wrap campaign which began as an on-line campaign to gather information from freelancers about poor employment practices within the broadcast industries. Because respondents in the TV Wrap campaign were able to recount their experiences anonymously, a great deal of information was collected (Saundry *et al.,* 2007, and Saundry, 2012). The campaign eventually attracted the support of 28,000 workers (Saundry *et al.*, 2007), and although it was completely independent of BECTU many of the union’s activists became involved:

> ‘the TV Wrap campaign as the point at which I became seriously active in… workers’ rights... in a sort of slightly wider sense… not least because a lot of the people that we were advocating for were not members of the union…and one of the things we have to do is to reach out to a fairly self-interested... young group of

> people in their mid-twenties who are going to have fun and want to party and want to work in a glamorous job but they don't want anything to do with trades unions (laughs) until it begins to become clear to them that… that things aren't quite as rosy as they thought' (Carol, freelancer, February 2014, ex-employee of a public broadcaster).

This campaign illustrates how group identification of common difficulties can lead to widespread involvement reflecting Kelly's (1998) theory of social identity that given the right conditions anyone can act collectively. The TV Wrap campaign also served as the catalyst for Carol's social identity as an activist. Additionally, by utilizing the social and cultural capital she had accumulated as an activist Carol was able to educate and inform younger colleagues in the broadcast industries about the advantages of trade union membership, leading to increased awareness and mobilization of a fragmented workforce.

The importance of such involvement by existing union activists in networks which were otherwise totally independent of BECTU were identified by Saundry *et al.* (2007) as being essential for their success, because the experience of activists 'proved crucial in the development of effective networks' (p.187). The '*defensive* mobilization' identified by *Tilly (1978)* (*cited in Saundry et al., 2007, p.187*) of this group of freelancers was translated into '*offensive* mobilization' (*ibid.*) by the eventual involvement of BECTU. It could be argued that Bell's (1954) contention that trade unions undertook *preparatory* mobilization, in anticipation of opportunities or threats, is more applicable to employees than to freelancers, whose problems are more likely to be addressed retrospectively.

The latter stages of the campaign, when BECTU became involved in negotiations on their behalf with employers, also provided opportunities for those involved to meet up at meetings and demonstrations, often with high profile industry professionals (Saundry *et al.,* 2007). These networking opportunities provided the social capital which had been easily accessible by previous generations, but from which younger

freelancer workers were often excluded (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2011).

In contrast, although those freelancers who had never worked as employees of a broadcaster also spoke of gaining confidence because of their union activities, they described that confidence less in terms of their relationship with employers, and more in relation to their colleagues and to their personal lives. Paul, a freelancer who did not consider himself an activist, nevertheless felt that his union activities had given him respect, not from management, but from 'the guys you represent… it's given me… a belief in the value of my opinion' (Paul, freelancer, September 2014). Vernon, a freelancer who did consider himself an activist, described how his union activities had improved his confidence in all areas of his life:

> 'I think my union activity, and my union involvement has helped my personal life because I was very shy before getting involved in the union, very shy… that's what the union does for me, it's confidence building, it's boosting... it's had a big effect on me… I think, if I hadn't have been involved in the union, I don't think I'd have carried on doing camera work at all, I think I would have… just faded into the background…' (Vernon, freelancer, October 2014).

Vernon illustrates Lee's 2011 exploration of the effects of members' cultural and social background (habitus) on their acquisition of social capital as a result of their trade union activities, and his conclusion that in the television labour market 'the excluded disappear' (p.560). Vernon's experience also reflected aspects of Bourdieu's theory that those with a relatively high profile and privileged position within an organisation (in this research, the union) were able to gain the confidence to acquire work and industry contacts which resulted in the accumulation of social capital. However, as Skeggs (1997) argued this could not be perceived as a result which would apply to all activists, because Bourdieu 'cannot account for the nuanced practices of those who do not operate from a dominant position' (p.30). Without the

benefits gained as a result of their union activities, individuals such as Vernon may have faded into the background, and possibly left the broadcast industries altogether.

As these interviewees' responses illustrate, those who were working, or had worked, as employee members within a broadcasting organisation equated the confidence they had gained with the skills they had acquired from the trade union which enabled them to deal with management as equals, and gain their respect. For freelancers who had never worked as employees at a broadcaster, the confidence they felt they had gained was more to do with their relationships with their colleagues, and with their own personal development in their professional and personal lives. This illustrates the complex nature of the accumulation of capitals and how the context of that accumulation can affect individuals' interpretation of its effects.

The acquisition of confidence was also highly rated by almost a third of questionnaire respondents, although it was ranked joint second in the order of preference (see Table 18, p.155). Of these respondents, a third of employees, 33% (n=15) cited this intrinsic effect, as did 29.6% (n=8) of freelancers. Although these percentages are lower than the interviewees' results, they support the findings that more employees than freelancers identified this effect. As discussed above, this may be because the confidence acquired by employees resulted more from the tangible skills they had acquired which enabled them to represent their colleagues, and to deal with management. For freelancers, the acquisition of confidence was more about personal confidence, and they were perhaps therefore less likely to identify it as a direct result of their trade union activities.

(ii) Friendships and networking

The accumulation of friendships and the opportunities for networking, and the consequent accumulation of social capital were identified as positive outcomes of union activities by both interviewees and questionnaire respondents in my study (see Tables 17 and 18, p.155).

The accumulation of friends, which could equally be interpreted as the formation of informal networks, was cited by a number of both employee and freelancer respondents of all ages. This section therefore explores the accumulation of friends and contacts based on common interests or aspirations as a result of union involvement, and the subsequent formation of networks (Saundry, 2012; Gahan and Pekarek, 2013).

The acquisition of friendships as a result of their trade union activities was highly rated by 11 interviewees (Table 17, p.155). It was ranked joint second in the order of preference. Of these, four employee interviewees cited this effect, as did seven freelancers. Bill described how:

> 'everybody that works for [his employer], and I do mean everybody over the last 23 years, know who I am … so many people from across [the country] that I actually knew on a first name basis, partly or mostly because of the fact of my trade union activities' (Bill, employee, January 2014).

Similarly, Kate stated that

> 'I love the people I've met… it's nice to get the results that we get… on a daily basis and helping people… through some quite tough struggles sometimes… you meet great people' (Kate, employee, July 2014).

Phil and William, both employees in theatre and members of BECTU's YMF, felt that because of their trade union activities they had made good friends who 'I would want to stay friends with even if I was no longer a member' (William, employee, October 2014). Phil also described how:

> 'being an activist I've made a lot of friends… and not just friends for the time that I'm in the trade union but friends I'll probably keep for the rest of my sometimes it's just freak meetings with people lead to like years of friendship… and it all does filter back to being a trade unionist or being a bit active.' (Phil, employee, September 2014).

All of these employee interviewees considered themselves to be activists. However the sectors in which they worked also influenced their views. Of the twelve employee interviewees who described how their union activities had resulted in the creation of lasting friendships four worked in the theatre industry, and all of these four considered themselves to be activists. In contrast, no employee interviewees who worked in the broadcast industries cited 'friendships' or 'networks' as effects of their activities. This disparity may be accounted for because the employee interviewees who worked in theatres were based in major national theatre companies. Such companies, as well as employing a relatively large number of core employees in their centrally located theatres, also regularly welcomed in touring theatre companies and their productions. As well as the employee of the host company and the touring company working together collaboratively to stage professional productions, they also openly shared and discussed union issues. Additionally, casual workers in theatres (freelancers) became members of the theatre branch for the duration of their contract, and were therefore openly recognizably union members who could accumulate contacts and friends at union meetings, as Bill described:

> 'if you're a freelancer working as a Stage hand ... you'll work in different theatres for different employers, but you're in the same branch... the Glasgow Theatres' Branch, so it's full time people and freelancers' (Bill, employee, January 2014).

Although broadcast organizations employed freelancers who came into their organizations to work, they attended freelancer branches which met outside the workplace, rather than becoming temporary members of employee branches. Consequently freelancers working in broadcasting would not necessarily have opportunities to discuss their union membership in the workplace because of a fear that their employment prospects might be adversely affected (Saundry *et al.*, 2007). This inability to be open about their union membership could

also impact on their ability to make friendships with employee trade unionists which might enhance their social capital. Heather noted that:

> ‘we’ve got one member in our branch at the moment that’s working for a big label TV show… and he’s getting treated like shit, but he specifically is not telling them that he’s part of BECTU because he doesn’t want to be not asked back’ (Heather, freelancer, April 2014).

These findings echo Siebert and Wilson (2013) who identified a tendency, described by a trade union official in their study, that freelancer workers in broadcasting who made formal complaints about employers found that they never worked in the industry again (p.7). As a result freelancers were less likely to discuss their employment issues, or whether they were union members, with their employee colleagues in case they were identified as potential troublemakers. Employees at broadcasters might therefore have made friends with freelancers, without necessarily knowing whether those freelancers were union members. They would not perceive that those friendships had been formed as a result of their union activities, but rather as a consequence of their shared professional experiences.

Of the freelancer interviewees, seven (46.7%) referred to the friendships they had formed as a result of their trade union activities. They spoke of the high value they placed upon those friendships, and of meeting people who whom they might otherwise never have come into contact, including Una, who related how

> ‘some of the individuals were very interesting people…I used to be very friendly with a woman called X… who was in [another] section of the union, and she was much older than I was… but she was in the war… she was in the Secret Service… but she would never, ever, ever tell you anything about what went on… but you just knew… something had happened to her in her life which made her such a wise person, you know, so I met people like that’ (Una, freelancer, October 2014)

Carol described how her union activities enabled her to create friendships and helped to alleviate the fragmented nature of freelancer working:

> '…the nature of freelance [*sic*] life is that you are isolated very often you… the contacts you make and the friends you make…that I think is really important' (Carol, freelancer, February 2014, ex-employee of a public broadcaster).

As with the employee interviewees, all of these three freelancer interviewees considered themselves to be activists. All of the freelancer interviewees who referred to the friendships they had formed, spoke of the high value they placed upon those friendships. Several spoke of meeting people who whom they might otherwise never have come into contact. Shirley epitomised their views about what they had gained in terms of:

> 'support and solidarity, I've gained friendship… and the opportunity of meeting a much wider cross section of people than I might otherwise come into contact with, all working in the same industry, which is empowering and strengthening' (Shirley, freelancer, October 2014).

Tricia felt that the contacts and friends she had gained had also enabled her to 'pass on some of the things that I'd learnt to other people' (Tricia, freelancer, October 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster). This acquisition of cultural capital in terms of skills and knowledge as a result of union activities, and the ability to share it with others within networks, thereby creating social capital, are explored throughout this chapter.

Reflecting the interviewees' responses, Table 17, p.152 shows that the percentage of employee questionnaire respondents who felt that they had gained friendships as a result of their union activities, 28.9% (n=13) was lower than that of the freelancer respondents, 40.7% (n=11). These findings for both interviewees and questionnaire respondents may be accounted for in part because employees might expect to have make friendships within a workplace, and might

therefore not ascribe them to their trade union activities. For freelancers, because of the fragmented nature of their working lives, it was more likely that they would recognise that they had acquired some of their friends as a result of their union activities.

The specific phrase ‘networking’ was used by none of the employee interviewees, and by only three (20%) of freelancer interviewees to describe what they had gained as a result of their trade union activities (Table 17, p.155). However, among the questionnaire respondents ‘networking’ was cited by 32% (n=23) of respondents, and was ranked equal second in terms of what they had gained as a result of their union activities. The term was selected by 37.8% (n=17) of the employees and by 22.2% (n=6) of the freelancers (Table 18, p.155). It may therefore be useful to explore why this discrepancy might have arisen.

Only three freelancer interviewees, Glenda, Heather and Roger, all of whom were aged under 50 used the term ‘networking’ to describe a positive effect of their trade union activities. None of them had previously worked as employees of any broadcast company. Glenda stated that she had joined the union specifically in order to create a network of contacts:

> ‘the initial reason, you know, that I gave for joining was to network and I’ve definitely done that, and I think that probably is the most valuable thing from the union, to be honest, that I’ve got… we’ve all made some fantastic friends… through meeting and the union and work contacts’ (Glenda, freelancer, April 2014).

Additionally, as has been previously noted, a number of those involved in this research (including Glenda and Heather, both aged under 50) did not consider themselves to be activists, despite their high levels of union activity. They might therefore not necessarily equate their acquisition of networks of friendships with their trade union activities. However, for others, who like Glenda had joined the union specifically in order to acquire networks, their trade union activities were actually a

by-product of joining the union in order to acquire those networks. This is illustrated by Glenda's response when asked about her roles in the union, despite not self-identifying as an activist:

> 'yes, I'm a member of the union, yes, I go to meetings, yes, I've been the secretary… we worked out it was 10 years when I stopped (laughs) it don't feel like that long… and I've been a committee member for longer than that' (Glenda, freelancer, April 2014).

This lack of a conscious equation between trade union activities and their effects illustrates the difficulty involved in the analysis of participation, and reflects Gall and Fiorito's (2012b) conclusion that union commitment would not necessarily lead to participation, but that both could develop concurrently, or that participation could equally lead to commitment.

Freelancer Glenda also described how she and others used social media to acquire contacts and to discuss common issues with colleagues in the same craft grades. As was described by Saundry *et al.* (2007) and Saundry *et al.* (2012) these informal networks might provide a forum for raising issues, but they could not necessarily deliver any concrete solutions, for which they turned to the union (Saundry *et al.,* 2007). Glenda discussed how she used issues raised on social media forums to promote union membership to her colleagues:

> 'people are starting to organise on [social media], and it's a lot easier for grades to get together and talk about things, issues that are affecting them… and then you realise, by other people commenting on them, that's actually an issue, and you think, well…maybe that is an issue that should be brought up somewhere… .there's gangs of people getting together and going oh, we need to do something about this, and then you point out, well, look there's a union, there are already a gang of people getting together to do something about this, why don't you join in and give them your views and make that stronger rather than

> trying to reinvent the wheel somewhere else by starting a [social media] campaign' (Glenda, freelancer, April 2014).

The access to more experienced and active trade union members which resulted from such campaigns enabled younger workers to accumulate social capital which was otherwise difficult for them to access (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2011).

It might be that the use of the specific phrase 'networking' by younger interviewees could simply be a reflection of the use of different terminology amongst different generations (Vromen *et al.*, 2015). Freelancer Paul (aged over 50) described the useful contacts he had made because of his trade union activities, although he did not refer to it as networking:

> 'when you get involved in the union you start talking to Programme managers, Production managers… people like that, Directors, Producers… the craft side of things…' (Paul, freelancer, September 2014).

This reflects Antcliff *et al.*'s (2007) findings that networks are perceived and utilised differently by individuals depending on their particular circumstances or backgrounds (habitus).

As is noted above, the share of questionnaire respondents who identified 'networking' as a positive outcome of their trade union activities was 32% (n=23): 17 (37.8%) of employee questionnaire respondents and six (22.2%) of freelancer questionnaire respondents (Table 18, p.155). These shares were noticeably higher than those of the interviewees (Table 17 p.155). This may be because questionnaire respondents were more likely to select the concept of networking as a positive outcome for what they had gained as a result of their trade union activities because the questionnaire was completed at a conference which provided them with networking opportunities. Additionally, the questionnaire offered 'networking opportunities' as an option because of the emphasis placed on this effect by of two of the first seven interviewees (freelancers Glenda and Heather). Other interviewees may not have referenced networking because it was a

term with which they were not familiar, or that they felt less comfortable using. However, the ways in which they discussed the value they placed on, and the benefits they had accumulated from the friendships and relationships they had formed as a result of their trade union activities, suggested that they were in fact describing the acquisition of networks, although they would not necessarily have verbalised it in this way.

Additionally, employee interviewees might not necessarily have equated networking opportunities as being an effect of their trade union activities, perhaps viewing networking as an inevitable result of their relatively stable work situation (compared to freelancers). Because those employees who were actively involved in BECTU would also meet other like-minded members at Divisional meetings and conferences (see Appendix A for an illustration of BECTU's divisional structure) they might not equate this with the term 'networking'. Dean, who previously worked for a public broadcaster, described the different support and opportunities available to employees and freelancers:

> 'then I became a freelancer and … you move from the… echelons of [the major public broadcaster] … where you've got everything at your fingertips… you've got all the support mechanisms there, and… I had to learn an awful lot very, very quickly … how to get jobs… and how to make contacts' (Dean, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a public broadcaster).

For freelancers, who otherwise worked in comparative isolation as part of a fragmented workforce (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2011), the opportunities for networking at divisional meetings or conferences may have been perceived as one of the reasons why they attended such events, rather than a positive side-effect of other aspects of their trade union activities.

As is noted above, for younger respondents in this study networking was an identifiable result of their union activities, and for at least one freelancer interviewee (Glenda), was the main motivation for joining

the union. For older participants friendships, which might also be construed as the accumulation of networks, were more readily identified and cited as one of the positive effects of their trade union activities. As previously discussed, this reflects the potential problems associated with the use of value laden terminology by both researchers and participants when undertaking research projects. Overall, 20 (87%) of the employee questionnaire respondents who identified networking as a result of their trade union activities were under the age of 50, these results reflecting the interviewee responses.

In order to address participants' different reactions to the terminology discussed above, the percentages of responses attributed to 'networking' were combined with those attributed to 'friendship'. The figures were extracted from Tables 17 and 18 on p.155.

Table 19 Interviewees' 'networking' and 'friendships' results combined

	Employee Numbers	Percent	**Freelancer** Numbers	Percent	**Total** Numbers	Percent
Networking	0	0.0%	3	20.0%	3	11.1%
Friendships	4	33.3%	7	46.7%	11	40.7%
TOTAL	4	33.3%	10	66.7%	14	51.9%

Note: Percentages are calculated based on the number of interviewee responses recorded in Table 17, p.155.

Table 20 Questionnaire respondents' 'networking' and 'friendships' results combined

	Employee Numbers	**Percent**	**Freelancer** Number	Percent	**Total** Numbers	Percent
Networking	17	37.8%	6	22.2%	23	32.0%
Friendships	13	28.9%	11	40.7%	24	33.3%
Total	30	66.7%	17	62.9%	47	65.3%

Note: Percentages are calculated based on the number of questionnaire responses recorded in Table 18, p.155.

Tables 19 and 20 illustrate that, when combined, the effects of 'networking' and 'friendships' rank as the most often cited by both interviewees and questionnaire respondents.

Although there remained a marked discrepancy between the employees' and the freelancer interviewees' responses, this might still

be accounted for in the arguments made previously about freelancers' relative isolation in between work contracts, and how that affected their views. For questionnaire respondents, employees and freelancers views were more equitable, although as was acknowledged above, this may be because they were particularly directed to the choices of both friendship and networks, whereas the interviewees had to construct and articulate their choices themselves. However, in this study, it appears that the accumulation of friendships and networks, however they were articulated, were the most often cited positive effects of trade union activities.

(iii) Professional experience, skills and knowledge

The acquisition of cultural capital in terms of professional experience, skills and knowledge, was ranked highly as a positive effect of their trade union activities by both interviewees and questionnaire respondents in my study. The acquisition of this professional experience was cited by (40.7% (n=11) of interviewees. This option ranked joint second with the making of friendships discussed above. Similar proportions of employee interviewees, 41.7% (n=5), and of freelancers 40%, (n=6) identified the accumulation of such professional experience as a positive effect of their union activities (Table 17, p.155).

Employee interviewees tended to describe the skills and knowledge that had been gained as a result of structured training courses provided by BECTU, while freelancers referred to the experience of being involved actively with the union and learning from their colleagues. In many cases for freelancers this method of acquiring both technical and trade union skills has replaced the more traditional learning acquired by employees in the workplace, which is rapidly disappearing because of the increasing casualization of the workforce in the creative industries (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2011).

Of the five employee interviewees who felt that they had gained specific skills as a result of their union activities, four were employed

by a public broadcaster, and one (Arthur) by a commercial broadcaster. They spoke of the training courses organized by BECTU which provided them with tangible skills and put them on an equal footing with managers when entering into negotiations. One example was Cheryl, who recalled a particular training course which had included role playing a redundancy negotiation, and how she was subsequently involved in a similar real life situation:

> 'I had to do a redundancy consultation… I thought, I've done this… I know what's happening…I've been trained to do this… and of course, when you consider that BECTU trains the Reps in the way that the [major public broadcaster] trains its managers… so you're actually getting… some form of management training that the [major public broadcaster] does not give people of my grade' (Cheryl, employee, November 2014).

Others described how they were able to utilise their skills to support their colleagues. Alison epitomised these feelings when described how she had worked to form a strong group of activists within a public broadcaster:

> 'I think we've gathered momentum going over the years, we've had… certainly more support from BECTU Head Office… in terms of training and support… we've got a group of activists who are genuinely interested in serving its members' (Alison, employee, November 2014),

Alison went on to describe how she was able to pass that support on to her colleagues:

> 'with the skills and knowledge that I've gained through the union I'm able to… look up case studies… and the support that I've been able to give … and have… a direct effect on how that person feels in themselves, to not allow their… mental health to be… impacted further by the actions of their employers… so I guess, that's what the union have given me' (Alison, employee, November 2014).

These experiences illustrate and epitomise the skills acquired by employee activists as a result of their trade union activities, which

enabled them to organise and represent other members within their workplaces more effectively, and which also generated the respect of management and employers.

Four of the six freelancer interviewees who described the acquisition of skills and knowledge as a positive effect of union activity had previously been employed by a public or commercial broadcaster. These four respondents similarly spoke of the more tangible skills they had acquired from training provided by BECTU, as is also noted by Heery *et al.* (2004) and discussed in Chapter 2. Carol described how the union provided its members with information about their employment rights, and enabled them to stand up for themselves and others:

> ‘the union can give them the tools to do that, you give them the knowledge to do that, and it helps’ (Carol, freelancer, February 2014, ex-employee of a public broadcaster).

These respondents were also aware that the tangible skills that they had gained as a result of their union activities were useful in all areas of their lives, and that they had been able to utilise them within their freelancer careers. Fred described:

> ‘a whole gamut of skills that I’ve gained over the years that have had, not just a role for my union work but also have benefited me throughout the whole of my life really… good life skills’ (Fred, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

However, the freelancer respondents who had never worked directly for a broadcaster described how the useful knowledge and skills they had acquired came as a result of their union experiences, rather than from structured training courses provided by BECTU. They spoke differently about the nature of the knowledge and support they received from the union as a positive result of their union involvement, and described how they used those skills in other areas of their lives as well as in their union activities Their descriptions perhaps portrayed the difference in their relationship with and views about the union,

compared to the employee (and ex-employee) interviewees. Glenda spoke of:

> ‘the support that you get, just to be able to check things… where else are you going to get independent free advice on things like that from someone who knows your industry … I know we pay… a membership so I guess it’s not free… but it’s… free at the point where you go and ask for it’ (Glenda, freelancer, April 2014).

Edwina described how:

> ‘one of the things the union provides… is a supportive environment to try out ideas and experiences… I think just even learning how to work on a committee… clearly learning how to negotiate … whether it’s negotiating with your health care provider or negotiating with… your committee members is… going to stand you in good stead in lots of different areas’ (Edwina, freelancer, April 2014).

Unless they had previously been employees of a public or commercial broadcaster, freelancers had less experience of supporting others because they did not represent their freelancer colleagues in disciplinary or other cases. For individual freelancers such issues were passed on to BECTU’s paid officials via freelance representatives, a practice described by Heery *et al.* (2004) as ‘officer-dependence’ (p.25). However, Fred (aged over 50), recalled how the skills and experience he had acquired as a union representative when he was an employee at a commercial broadcaster, had enabled him to continue to help his fellow freelancers by speaking on their behalf. He went on to describe how he was still able to be active because he was at the latter stages of his career, working as a trainer and not directly for the broadcast industry, and therefore less likely to be discriminated against for his union activities:

> ‘at the… end of my working life… I feel as though I’m able to… represent people effectively without worrying about the consequences to me, however, I do think that other people find that difficult sometimes as a freelance of putting their head above the parapet so to speak, and saying I am the union rep – unions

still have… a negative connotation and that is something that I think is wrong but is a fact of life' (Fred, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

Dean expressed a similar attitude towards the possibility of his trade union activities affecting his career prospects:

'... at this stage I really don't care... I've never ever felt oh I'm going to … mess up my own, my life… if I'm perceived to be a trade union activist, no I've never believed that at all… I always sort of think that… you stand on your principles' (Dean, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a public broadcaster).

The increasingly restrictive changes in trade union legislation, and the prevailing negative attitudes towards trade unions discussed in Chapter 1, particularly affected freelancer union members in this study, and increased their reluctance to speak openly of their activities, or even of their membership of a union (Saundry *et al.*, 2007). Employee members within workplaces where unions were recognised were happier to speak openly of union actions and successes (Fiorito *et al.*, 2011). However, as Fred's and Dean's comments demonstrate, older freelancer activists felt that being more open about their trade union membership and activities would have less of an effect on their work prospects than was the case for younger workers.

The acquisition of professional experience, skills and knowledge was also ranked highly by 33.3% of questionnaire respondents (N=72), joint first with the making of friendships. 37.8% of employees (N=45) and 25.9% of freelancers (N=27) selected this option as an effect of their trade union activities. 71.2% of employee questionnaire respondents compared with 28.8% of freelancers (N=66) had undertaken BECTU training courses. This reflects the findings from the interviewee data that employees were more likely than freelancers to view their acquisition of professional experience, skills and knowledge to be the results of structured training opportunities, rather than of their trade union activities.

(iv) Work opportunities

The acquisition of work opportunities did not rank highly as a positive effect of union activities in either the qualitative (25.9%, n=7) or quantitative data (7%, n=5). Work opportunities were viewed as a positive effect of their trade union activities by seven (25.9%) of interviewees: six of them were employees and one was a freelancer. As the data reflects, employee interviewees more readily identified the positive effects of their trade union activities on their work prospects (refer to Table 17, p.155).

Both Arthur and Lionel (both aged over 50), who worked as employees of major commercial broadcasters, felt that their union activities had raised their profiles and the respect they received from management, and Lionel in particular expressed the opinion that:

> 'being active in the union has actually helped to protect me… I mean most people within (a commercial broadcaster's) HR department know who I am... so I think actually for me personally it's probably, certainly in… my later career it's probably helped me actually' (Lionel, employee, August 2014).

Cheryl (aged under 50) identified similar attitudes in management at a public broadcaster:

> 'it's very useful for the management at [the major public broadcaster] to have a conduit for communication with staff… 'cos rather than talking to a mass of people, they can talk to an individual… it gives you… I don't want use the word 'status' 'cos I'm not looking for status, but it gives you… a role' (Cheryl, employee, November 2014).

The respect gained by employee activists did not appear to be affected by their ages, as both William and Phil, who were members of BECTU's young members forum (aged under 35) also referred to their good relationship with management, and how it was:

> '... a good thing to be a part of the union… it's actively promoted here, to be a member… even management do… so, in terms of

career progression, I don't think that it would have an effect' (William, employee, October 2014).

Several employee respondents who worked in both commercial and public broadcasters cited examples of union office holders being promoted into management. As a result, they believed that management often valued union representatives' work because they themselves had previously been activists, or were still union members, as Arthur and Brenda illustrated:

> 'historically in [the major independent broadcaster] a few of the shop stewards have been promoted to management in good order' (Arthur, employee, commercial broadcaster, January 2014).

> '… oddly enough in most cases…[major public broadcaster] management… don't hold it against people if they're active in the union… that's one positive thing… maybe because so many of them are in the union, or at least used to be' (Brenda, employee, public broadcaster, November 2014).

These findings that activism was more likely to occur in workplaces with more positive attitudes towards unions reflect Fiorito *et al.*'s (2011) conclusions in their study into the effects of activism on unions. Further, the findings in this study indicate that in such workplaces, trade union activities can actually have a positive effect on activists' work prospects.

Other employee interviewees felt that their union experience would stand them in good stead if they decided to leave their own particular craft occupations within the broadcast industries. Saundry ***et al.*** (2012) described how BECTU offered training for its members which provided them with 'not only negotiation skills, but also legal expertise' (p.277). In this study, employees Nadine and Jason foresaw that the skills and experience they had gained as a result of their trade union activities might eventually lead them into other employment areas such as Human Resources, or as Nadine explained:

> ‘[if] I had to get another job… I’d look at trade unions, I’d look at CAB Advisory offices, those kind of things…’ (Nadine, employee, September 2014).

Two of the interviewees, one of whom was previously employed at a public broadcaster, the other previously freelancer, had actually become full time paid officials of BECTU, as a direct result of the skills they had acquired as activists. Bryan spoke of how the skills he had gained had bridged his life from freelancer to BECTU official:

> ‘I’ve learned an enormous lot about all sorts of… you know, about Employment Law, and Tax Law, and Copyright, and all sort of fascinating areas of policy… but it’s all within the context of being an active trade unionist, whether as a member or an official’ (Bryan, freelancer, November 2014).

Thus as a result of their trade union activities either within a workplace as employees, or as freelancers, these interviewee respondents had gained transferable skills which provided them with new employment opportunities.

Una’s experiences typified the difference between how activists were perceived when they were employees and when they were freelancers:

> ‘before I left [a major commercial broadcaster] they actually said, we don’t suppose you’ll take a job in management will you, we’ve got a really good job for you, and so the union in effect brought me to the fore... it gave me a voice and a face and a… they could see what I could do… so they were offering me quite a high position, but … there’s no way I could be a manager because I was a… soul, gut trade unionist, there’s no way I was going into management’ (Una, freelancer, October 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

However, she also acknowledged that her high profile as an activist had a negative effect once she became a freelancer:

> ‘when I was freelance it was a totally different ball game… it was very hard, it was the freelance sector, and I was still active in the union… I was seen as a union person… I didn’t want to be seen

> as that, I was there as a worker... and yet, [it] had that terrible effect on people… if you appeared on a shoot or anything they thought you were there… checking the cards and seeing if you were up to date… it was that sort of image you get, and also when you're freelance you can't put your head above the parapet else you'll never be employed again… it's harder, to be an activist in the union if you're freelance, it was far easier in permanent employment…' (Una, freelancer, October 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

Thus it could be argued that the positive social capital accumulated by a number of employees as a result of their trade union activities, converted into negative social capital (Portes, 1998) when they became freelancers. In their experience the contacts and visibility they accumulated as employees which gave them the respect of both their colleagues and of management, worked against them in the freelancer workforce.

However, it was difficult for freelancer interviewees to state with certainty that their trade union activities had impacted on their working lives and prospects; they were more likely to suggest that this *might* be the case, or to point to other factors which could have affected them. The quantitative data findings reflected the interviewees' views that the acquisition of work opportunities and work contacts as positive effects of their trade union activities were ranked lowly by participants. Only five (7%) of questionnaire respondents identified the acquisition of work opportunities as a result of their trade union activities. However, in contrast to the interviewee data, on initial analysis it appeared that more freelancer (14.8%, n=4) than employee (2.2%, n=1) questionnaire respondents felt that they had gained work as a result of their trade union activities. However, on further interrogation of the data it emerged that none of these particular respondents had undertaken any roles in the union other than attendance at conference. Thus their activities were less likely to have raised their profile in the workplace as employees or as freelancers, but only amongst other

conference delegates. Their acquisition of work prospects may therefore have been a by-product of the networking opportunities and social capital accumulated at conference.

It is worth noting that the accumulation of work *contacts* as a result of their trade union activities was ranked lowest by interviewee respondents, selected by only two people, one freelancer and one employee. Slightly more questionnaire respondents cited the accumulation of work contacts (16.7%, n=12) overall: seven were employees and five were freelancers (refer to Table 18, p.155). The higher numbers of freelancer questionnaire respondents identifying the accumulation of contacts may have been because of the context in which they were completing the questionnaire. They were attending a conference where they were likely to meet colleagues who were trade unionists. In other areas of their lives, including their work environments, it was unlikely that freelancers would be aware of whether their colleagues belonged to the union or not. On the other hand, it is likely that employee questionnaire respondents may have attributed the accumulation of work contacts to their employment situation rather than their trade union activities.

No interviewee or questionnaire respondents, employees or freelancers, stated that they had gained nothing from their trade union activities. It appears therefore that overall, participants in this study felt that their trade union activities had had some beneficial effects on their professional and personal lives. The following section interrogates the data to uncover what participants felt that they had lost as a result of their trade union activities.

5.3 Negative effects of trade union activities

Perhaps unsurprisingly, considering that the interviewees were selected because of the high levels of their union activity, they identified few negative effects. It could be argued that if they had believed that there were a great number of negative effects, then they would have already ceased to be activists, and would not have been

considered as interview candidates in this study. Another factor which may have affected their responses was the context of the interviews and the fact that they had been informed in advance that the research topic was about their attitudes towards their trade unionism and its effects on their professional and personal lives. The identity of the interviewer, and the interviewees' knowledge of the other people to be interviewed may also have influenced their responses towards a more positive slant (Costley *et al.,* 2010), as is explored in Chapter 3.

The interview data revealed that only two negative effects of trade union activities were identifiable from the narrative analysis of the interviewees' final dataset – the loss of time and the loss of work opportunities. Loss of time was identified by seven interviewees, of whom three were employees and four were freelancers; loss of work opportunities was identified by five interviewees, one employee and four freelancers.

Table 21 Questionnaire respondents' views about what they had lost as a result of their trade union activities

	Employee Numbers	Percent	**Freelancer** Numbers	Percent	**Total** Numbers	Percent
Work contacts	0	0.0%	1	3.2%	1	1.2%
Networking	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Work opportunities	9	18.0%	13	41.9%	22	27.2%
Professional experience	0	0.0%	1	3.2%	1	1.2%
Confidence	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Friendships	1	2.0%	1	3.2%	2	2.5%
Nothing	38	76.0%	16	51.6%	54	66.7%
Other	2	4.0%	3	9.7%	5	6.2%
TOTAL	50		35		85	

Note: the total number of responses (n=85) exceeds the number of those who responded to this question (n=81) because questionnaire respondents selected more than one option as was requested in the questionnaire. Twelve respondents did not answer this question. Percentages are calculated based on the total number of employees and freelancers who responded to this question, n=50 and n=31 respectively.

It should be noted that the loss of time was not listed as an option in the questionnaire, as this only emerged from the final analysis of the

Interviewees' complete data set. As previously described, the questionnaire was compiled based on the responses of the first seven interviewees.

(i) Loss of time

The loss of time and the resulting effects on their professional and personal lives was noted by both employee and freelancer interviewees in all age groups, as Moore (2011) also found in her study into motivations for activism. Of the employee respondents in this study, Cheryl who worked for a major public broadcaster, and was a lay union representative (but not full time) stated that:

> 'I would say, I've probably lost quite a lot of personal time… because I am properly busy… and I suspect some of the more creative aspects of my life… the creative and personal fulfilment have probably got lost, because the extra time is filled with union rep [work] but that's kind of up to me to manage my time a bit better' (Cheryl, employee, November 2014).

Edwina, who had always been freelancer, and had also worked as a teacher, spoke of the effects on her life of the time she had committed to her union activities:

> 'the hours I've spent being a trade unionist meant that I wasn't putting probably some extra hours into the… broader expanse of teaching… I got more out of ACTT, BECTU than I did… in other ways and so that's a choice I made but I do think… we have x number of hours in a day, and as I said I think also that I've lost probably in not doing some of my own project work quite as much… because [of] the hours spent' (Edwina, freelancer, April 2014).

Cheryl and Edwina's responses typified the interviewees' attitudes towards the time they had lost as a result of their union activities – they had made a conscious choice to give their time to the union, and accepted that the union was their first priority.

Some interviewees spoke of the effects of the time spent on their trade union activities on their family lives, including Lionel who felt that:

> ‘certainly if you’re married with kids then there is a huge period in the middle of your life when, you know, you could be active in the union but you probably… you just don’t have the time or the inclination’ (Lionel, employee, August 2014).

This reflects Gall and Fiorito’s (2012) acknowledgement that different levels of activity were possible at different life stages. Fred admitted that the time he had spent away from his home at meetings had been a regrettable factor in the failure of his first marriage:

> ‘I think probably my marriage may have been affected by it because I did spend time away from home at meetings in London… talking about pay and terms and conditions, to try and hammer out agreements, so… my ex-wife… was left alone a little bit and I suppose that is something that… I regret’ (Fred, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

Jason was aware that ‘… there’s a time cost to my… family… to my personal life for… this activity’ (Jason, employee, July 2014). However, for them, as for Dean:

> ‘If you become a trade union activist, then… you sacrifice a certain amount, there’s no doubt about it, but I think it enriches your life … I like to think I’m a better person… for having made decisions about joining a trade union’ (Dean, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a public broadcaster).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, more freelancer interviewees referred to the loss of time resulting from their union activities, because they were not reimbursed in any way for that time, while employee interviewees, for the most part, undertook their trade union duties on paid release during their working days. As ‘time’ was not offered as an option in the questionnaire, because it only emerged as a negative effect during final analysis of the qualitative data, it cannot be quantified in terms of the questionnaire data.

(ii) Loss of work opportunities

Only five interviewees, one employee and four freelancers, felt that they had lost work opportunities as a result of their relatively high level trade union activities. The relatively larger proportion amongst freelancers reflected their views about the precariousness of their work prospects, compared to employees, as is noted elsewhere.

Alison, (the only employee interviewee who felt that her union activities within a major public broadcaster had affected her work prospects negatively) recounted that:

> 'there have been things I've lost… as much as my employer has valued my input … I do think it has had an impact on my progression… within the workplace, without a doubt… they're quite happy to bring me out of my box to help them out on difficult issues… but in terms of my own personal progression, it has stunted me… one of the first comments to me was, we hope that your union work isn't going to affect this… I am now, as I say, a lower grade than I was… so yeah, my union work's got a direct impact… it doesn't matter what job I apply for within [the public broadcaster]… I won't get it, I know that... that's what I've lost… but, like I said, I now have a role with the TUC… but that's a direct impact of my activism…' (Alison, employee, November 2014).

Milly, a freelancer who had previously been employed by a major commercial broadcaster stated:

> 'because I've been on a lot of different committees on behalf of the union, you become known as a BECTU person and sometimes that hasn't really helped me in my career… sometimes I think there has been prejudice… that's quite common really I think, especially if you speak out on behalf of the union very, very strongly and make your views heard then it can backfire…… and I have been asked sometimes, you know… if you're going to do something for us then it mustn't be as part of the union… it's just a shame that people are frightened of the

> union sometimes and… maybe organisations are frightened to use people that have too much of a link to the union' (Milly, freelancer, August 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

Both Alison and Milly worked in a specific geographical region of the UK, where the broadcast industry was relatively small and contained, and employers and workers tended to know one another on a personal basis, so that there was more awareness of individuals' activity, which may have impacted more on the employer/employee relationship. There was also a linguistic tendency in this region to identify individuals according to their employment or interests, thus 'Milly Researcher' became known as 'Milly BECTU' because of her visible involvement on committees on behalf of the union. She felt that such an overt and obvious connection to the union had had a blatantly detrimental effect on her career in broadcasting.

However, as was the case for others in this study, both Milly and Alison had subsequently used the knowledge, skills and experience they had acquired as a result of their trade union activities to find work in other broadcast or union related areas, although not working directly for the broadcasters or independent producers. Alison, who was leaving the public broadcaster to begin a new job, was aware that:

> 'the role that I've currently attained… I wouldn't have gotten that role without the support of my union and without the training from my union, and with the… skills that I've picked up along the way… if I hadn't sat on those committees and done the personal cases, I wouldn't have had the knowledge and expertise to undertake this role…' (Alison, employee, November 2014).

Milly who had eventually found freelancer work in a training position peripheral to the union, felt less vulnerable as a freelancer activist now that she was not working directly for television companies, because 'I don't need industry endorsement anymore' (Milly, freelancer, August 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster). Thus Milly and Alison had converted the negative effects of their trade union activities

into a positive effect by using the experience acquired as a result of their union activities to move into different occupations.

However, amongst other freelancers tangible negative effects were harder to identify. It was difficult for most freelancers to pinpoint the specific reasons why they were not offered work, other than the overt examples cited above, and Tricia's experience of the detrimental effect of her high level trade union activities while she was employed by a major commercial broadcaster in the 1980s resulting in her being blacklisted:

> 'my television career, I think it definitely affected it for the worse, there's no question in my case' (Tricia, freelancer, October 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

Saundry *et al.* (2007) identified the fear amongst freelancers that 'any visible connection with the union would damage their employment prospects' (p.185). Such fear was expressed more by freelancers in this study who had never previously been an employee of a broadcast company, including freelancer Paul (aged over 50) who explained that:

> 'I say what I sometimes think… but obviously try and do it diplomatically so that I keep employed' (Paul, freelancer, September 2014).

Some freelancers who had previously been employed by a commercial broadcaster expressed less fear about their trade union activities affecting their employment prospects, but this may have been because they were in the later stages of their working lives, and had moved out of direct broadcast work, including Fred who felt that because he was 'at the... working end of my life, I'm not trying to curry favour with people' (Fred, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster). Dean, previously employed by a public broadcaster, and still working directly for the broadcast industry, was adamant that his work was not affected, but understood the fear in others:

> 'I'm in control of my own destiny… people have always known that I'm a trade union activist… I've never been afraid to… talk

about that… I mean I can see in certain situations some people might find it a hindrance, I've never found it at all' (Dean, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a public broadcaster).

However, it may be that Dean was in a relatively strong position compared to other freelancers, because he was a producer, and was therefore less dependent on others for his work than those who were in craft occupations such as sound recordists or camera operators. Although Dean still had to be commissioned by broadcasters to produce programming, he could decide in which areas of programming he wanted to work. He could therefore approach programme commissioners who shared his vision, and who were less involved in the employment relations aspects of broadcasting, and thus less aware of, and affected by any trade union activities.

Echoing the interviewees' views, questionnaire respondents identified very few areas of loss as a result of their union activities, as is demonstrated in Table 21 (p.180). The loss of work opportunities was identified by 22 (27.2%) respondents, of whom nine were employees, and 13 were freelancers. The only other negative effects identified by questionnaire respondents were: one freelancer who felt he/she had lost work contacts; one freelancer who felt she/he had lost professional experience; and one employee and one freelancer who felt that they had lost friendships. Additionally, one freelancer questionnaire stated under the option 'Other' that he had lost 'Jobs as known as an activist'. Overall 54 (66.7%) questionnaire respondents, 38 employees and 16 freelancers, specifically stated that they had lost nothing as a result of their union activities. However, this response must also be considered in the context in which the questionnaire was undertaken, at a union conference, reflecting Fiorito *et al.*'s (2011) findings that the perception that a research project was supported by or integral to the union could elicit more positive responses from participants.

It is apparent that interviewees and questionnaire respondents identified very few areas of loss as a result of their union activities. The higher percentage of employees who felt that they had lost nothing

may reflect the fact that they were less vulnerable within the workplace because of their trade union activities than their freelancer colleagues, as previously discussed.

The emerging themes in this study reflect Snape *et al*.'s (2000) findings that activism requires 'a great deal of sustained effort and individual initiative, and are likely to be the reserve of a select group of union activists' (p. 215). However, even those employee and freelancer activists who acknowledged the potential for loss as a result of their trade union activities continued to be involved with and committed to the union. Supplementary research question 2(i) which explores how participants' relationship with their trade union affects their responses is addressed in the next section of this chapter.

5.4 Relationship with the union

As discussed in Chapter 4, activists who had previously been employees of commercial broadcasters joined the freelancer divisions of BECTU, bringing with them a historical concept of the meaning of activism, its capabilities and effects, and their views about the power of lay activists. Milly described how both as an employee and as a freelancer:

> 'sometimes I think there has been prejudice, I think, you know that's quite common really I think, especially if you speak out on behalf of the union very, very strongly and make your views heard then it can backfire… but on the good side… you have that reputation, hopefully, of being someone… people will phone and ask about joining the union, and then ask for ongoing support over a number of years, so… it's a mixed blessing I guess, there's the good and there's the bad and… you know, I'm not sure that I'd have done anything hugely different if I had the chance again' (Milly, freelancer, August 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

More recent redundancies from a major public broadcaster have also created a further forced expansion of the freelancer workforce (Holgate

and McKay, 2009) and of the numbers in the freelancer divisions of BECTU (see Table 1, p.13). Those freelancers who had previously worked for the public broadcaster brought with them a different attitude towards activism, based on their experiences within the ABS, and subsequently BETA, and latterly BECTU. Dean, who was a freelancer at the time of the interview, but who had previously been employed by a public broadcaster, expressed how the difference in his employment status had affected his relationship with the union:

> 'the relationship that you have as a freelancer with… the union… I find it much more personal, it's a much more personal relationship… because when you're at [a major public broadcaster] you're one of… many, and when… you're a freelancer you're… virtually on your own… I think that's the big difference, so therefore your relationship with the union is a much more personal one' (Dean, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a public broadcaster).

Vernon, who had always been a freelancer epitomised the attitudes of those who felt that they may have lost work opportunities as a result of their union activities:

> 'I would say the job's not worth having … I would not say that I regret joining the union because I lost a job, no way' (Vernon, freelancer, October 2014).

It appears that, for respondents in this study, despite the potential for some losses as a result of their trade union activities, both employee and freelancer activists continued to be involved with and committed to BECTU, because as Roger stated:

> 'You know it is my union and they've always been there for me so I've got to be there for them' (Roger, freelancer, October 2014).

Both employee and freelancer respondents' experiences reflect Fiorito *et al.*'s (2014) findings that activities may be perceived as a more covenantal relationship with the union than an instrumental one, that 'activism is more about doing good according to an internal ideological scheme than about doing well in self-interest terms' (Fiorito *et al.,* 2014, p.19), as expressed by Dean:

> ‘if you’re a trade union activist, the trade union comes first, that’s number one in terms of your priorities, you know … your own personal situation is… secondary’ (Dean, freelancer, April 2014, ex-employee of a public broadcaster).

These views reflect Klandermans’ (1984) findings that individuals calculated the personal costs and rewards when deciding whether to undertake trade union activities. Although participants in my study recognised that such activities might have both positive and negative effects on their professional and personal lives, their commitment to the union was their first priority.

As has become apparent during the analysis of the data gathered, both the employee and freelancer activists involved in this study believed that they had lost little as a result of their activities, and gained much more. Their attitudes support Gall and Fiorito’s (2012) findings that most activists’ offer the union a willingness to work (WTW) without financial reward, and such commitment from activists can and does lead to union renewal (p.205). The rise in BECTU’s freelancer membership (Table 1, p.13), as discussed in Chapter 1, reflects the success of its lay representatives’ commitment to the union, and to attracting and retaining more members.

Such attitudes towards the relatively higher importance of union activities compared to other areas of individuals’ lives also reflect Yu’s (2013) findings that activists placed a higher value on their work for the union than on other aspects of their lives. This was echoed by respondents in my study, including Nadine, who worked for a major public broadcaster. She reported that her original personal ambition to produce award winning programmes, had been superseded by her involvement with the union, and by her ability, through her trade union activities, to change employment practices within the public broadcaster. Compared to her union work her old job in production had bored her, and she had gone on to become a full time lay officer of the

union and a prominent member of the NEC. Working on behalf of others gave her far more satisfaction and made her life less complex:

> ‘I wasn’t very happy as a Director because it was constantly about me and my career, and now it’s not about me and my career any more, it’s easier’ (Nadine, employee, September 2014).

Although Yu’s (2013) respondents argued that paid union officials were less ideologically motivated because they were paid by the union, the two interviewees involved in this research who were paid officials of BECTU, both of whom had previously been lay activists, had certainly maintained their ideological beliefs, described by Andy as:

> ‘the highest moral status that was available was to be… an activist in… the Labour movement or other progressive causes and movements … that was being a good citizen and a good person, to be actively involved and to be putting yourself out to do that, that was what life was for’ (Andy, employee, November 2014).

The satisfaction which they gained as a result of their trade union activities was also expressed by a number of interviewees. Although this was not a tangible or quantifiable effect it is worth further exploration. Five employee interviewees and two freelancers spoke of the satisfaction they gained from helping others, and of the importance of doing so. Alison described how helping her work colleagues as a lay union representative at a public broadcaster enabled her to give something back to the union by helping others:

> ‘sometimes it’s just the… small things that you say to an individual has a massive impact on the way they go forward, the way they view the world, and the way they view unions’ (Alison, employee, November 2014).

This desire to ‘give something back’ reflects Moore’s (2011, p.26) findings in her exploration into individuals’ motivations for their activities. Bill spoke of how representing individual members in his workplace was equally rewarding for him:

> ‘even if you’re not entirely successful in terms of… the outcome you hope for, you know a disciplinary hearing or something, the fact that you can actually go along and be with somebody … it has always been obvious to me it’s a comfort to them… So I get satisfaction from that, I like to look after people and make sure ... they’re well treated’ (Bill, employee, January 2014).

In this study, younger activists initially portrayed a more instrumental commitment, based on an expectation of a quantifiable return for their activity, such as networking opportunities, or subsidised Public Liability Insurance, while older activists indicated a more affective or ideological commitment to long term membership and to helping others (Snape *et al.,* 2000). However it appears that the majority of the respondents in my study had, or had developed over time a covenantal relationship with BECTU based on ‘shared values and ideological identification’ (p.224).

Both employee and freelancer respondents described how their trade union activities enabled them to repay BECTU by recruiting others to join. However, how this was articulated was influenced by factors such as age, for example Milly noted that younger people had different perspectives towards trade unionism, and needed different motivations for joining the union. She discussed how as a result BECTU was developing different ways of attracting members:

> ‘the younger people coming into the industry aren’t… don’t understand the union perspective… the union in a way is recruiting through a different means… not so much by collective bargaining, but through insurance policies, through training, and through people knowing that there’s a support network for them… so the whole reason that people are joining is totally different’ (Milly, freelancer, August 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster).

As a result, different incentives were required to encourage mobilization among younger workers. As is noted in Chapter 1, BECTU works as both an organizing and a servicing union as defined by

Simms *et al.* (2013). Its organizing remit includes facilitating meetings, negotiating collective agreements, and overseeing industrial action when necessary. Its servicing remit involves providing incentives such as subsidised Public Liability Insurance, legal advice, and individual representation for its freelancer members. It promotes all of these incentives to recruit, retain and mobilize its membership. The role of BECTU's Young Members' Forum (YMF) was pivotal in the mobilization of BECTU members under 35 years of age.

Younger members spoke of the satisfaction they gained from recruiting and mobilizing others. Phil, a member of the YMF described how he raised the profile of the union within his workplace, and hoped to inspire others to become active in the union:

> 'I try and make an activist out of as many of the members we've got here as possible… and that can just be for the simple things, just… getting them to… sometimes you throw a pebble in the room, like you start a conversation with a couple of people and… 'oh isn't great that pay rise you got', or 'didn't you do really well the last time round when you had that issue', and you get someone talking about it and… then you walk away and you let them have their conversation with a third person and that's… inadvertently the member being an activist… and they don't even realise they're doing it…' (Phil, employee, September 2014).

Heather, also a member of the YMF, and a freelancer who worked as a trainer for the broadcast industries, but not directly within or for broadcast or production companies also described how she worked to raise awareness of the union and what it could offer:

> 'I constantly talk to people about union membership… you know, whatever job it is… it becomes a running joke with anyone I talk to now… 'are you in a union, are you signed up', anyone who's remotely linked to media I'm trying to sell BECTU…' (Heather, freelancer, April 2014).

These responses support Gall and Fiorito's (2012b) findings that the most effective form of recruitment into the union, and of mobilization, comes from existing activists approaching potential new members and encouraging them to join and to become active (pp.723-724). Heather described herself 'selling' the union:

> 'having members that are just stood there, just volunteering, just telling people, "this is my experience, I'm a freelancer, I'm like you… this is [what] I got out of it, and the way that… being a member made a difference", and I think however much a [BECTU] staff member can sell the benefits… of being a BECTU member, it does take that member to member, peer to peer thing' (Heather, freelancer, April 2014).

It should be noted that Heather joined the union as a freelancer when she discovered that the union offered subsidised Public Liability insurance to its freelancer members, as well as other legal and support services. She also described the tangible benefits that had opened up for her as a result of her trade union activities, in particular the opportunities to represent BECTU as a young member at conferences outside the UK:

> 'a massive amount of benefit that just being in BECTU a few years has given me directly… lots of opportunities… it's not going on a jolly and going on a holiday for a few days, it's kind of hard core work, but it's also meeting new people and going to new places that I wouldn't necessarily have been to anyway' (Heather, freelancer, April 2014).

It was these services and opportunities that she emphasised and 'sold' to others when trying to recruit them. By working together within the YMF both employee and freelancer young members had gained the confidence to recruit others, albeit utilising different approaches. While freelancer Heather emphasised more the opportunities she had gained as a result of her membership in order to recruit other freelancers, employee Phil spoke to people about industrial results within the workplace in order to promote union membership and to mobilize the workforce.

5.5 Summary

Participants in this study identified many more positive than negative effects of their trade union activities. However, as has been noted, the interviewees were selected based on the high levels of their activities, and it could therefore be argued that they would not continue to be active if they felt that the negative effects outweighed the positive. More employee interviewees stated that they had gained work opportunities as a result of their activities, and more freelancers felt that they may have lost work because of their union activities. However freelancers were more likely to express concern about the possibility that there might be an adverse effect on their employment potential than to state categorically that they had lost work as a result of their trade union activities. It could also be argued that, because of the relative precariousness and isolation of their work situation, freelancers displayed the greater 'self-initiation and self-direction' which Gall and Fiorito (2012a) identified as crucial requirements in order to confront the obstacles faced by trade unions in the 21st century.

The findings reported in this chapter undoubtedly reflect Fiorito *et al.*'s (2014), Yu's (2013) and Snape *et al.*'s (2000) findings that activists' commitment to the union is based on ideological commitment rather than on the expectation of tangible returns, and illustrate what Fiorito *et al.* (2014) described as activists' covenantal relationship with their unions.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the following research questions in order to contribute to the on-going debates about trade union activism in the early twenty-first century:

1. How is trade union activism understood by lay members of the broadcast union BECTU, and does their understanding of the term ‘activist’ vary depending upon their employee or freelancer status?
2. In what ways might activist lay members of the broadcast union BECTU view the effects of their trade union activism on their professional and personal lives, and might their views differ depending on the employee or freelancer status of the activist?
    i. In what ways might lay activists’ relationship with the union affect how they view the impact of their activism on their professional and personal lives?

This chapter summarises the findings reported in Chapters 4 and 5, and the issues which have arisen during the analysis process. It identifies associated areas which may inform future research. The ways in which the findings of this study may be analytically generalised are also discussed.

Additionally, the ‘unexpected findings’ (Bryman, 2012, p.642) of my research opened the study into other interesting avenues and enriched the interpretation of the data. Specifically, as McBride *et al.* (2015) advocated, it became apparent from interviewees’ responses early in this study that the key word ‘activist’ required more careful consideration and definition, which led to the formulation of Research Question 1. Subsequently, during interrogation of the data, it emerged that the term ‘freelancer’ should also be explored in order to enrich the findings of this study, and to inform future research.

Rubin and Rubin (2012) state that it is vital that '*qualitative interviewers listen to hear the meaning of what interviewees tell them*' (p.6). [emphasis in original] and that those meanings should be given equal, if not more weight than any predetermined definitions utilised in or developed from other literature. Further, as Fiorito, Padavic and DeOrtentiis (2014) argue, researchers must take into account their participants' views about the definition of the terms they are asked to address concurrently with those utilised in previous academic studies if they wish to provide more authentic reflections within their own research. In this study, the fact that the very first interviewee did not self-identify as an activist, despite the number of very high profile and visible roles he undertook on behalf of the union, caused me to re-evaluate my own views about the definition of the term 'activist' as it was used in this study, and to re-consider some elements of the research. An unexpectedly high proportion of the other interviewees similarly did not self-identify as activists, despite their having been selected for this study because of their high level and visible involvement with the union. This illustrates that how individuals experience and interpret their own professional and personal backgrounds (or habitus) may influence their views about how the capitals they have acquired have affected their lives. It supports Lane's (2000) arguments against the determinism inherent in Bourdieu's theories about the effects of individuals' internalisation of their habitus. Additionally, the way that 'activist' is often used by the media as a pejorative term may have influenced participants' lack of self-identification as activists. If individuals have been conditioned to view activists as 'troublemakers' or 'protesters', it is unsurprising that they do not identify with the term.

Thus, the unanticipated responses of a number of interviewees at the beginning of the data collection process to what I originally perceived to be a straightforward question about respondents' self-identification as activists resulted in an early re-evaluation of the direction of this study. Rather than utilising a pre-determined measure of the term

‘activist’ I took a ‘bottom up’ approach which allowed the respondents’ views to inform the definition, and enabled them to reflect on the extent of their own activism. These findings also informed the development of the questionnaire which provided quantitative data in order to enrich the qualitative findings in this research.

6.1 ‘Union activist is a very frightening term’ (Tricia, freelancer, October 2014, ex-employee of a commercial broadcaster)

The following section addresses Research Question 1 and the findings reported in Chapter 4 by summarising participants’ views about the meanings of the term ‘activist’ and whether their understanding varies depending upon their employee or freelancer status. Although their responses did vary, the reasons for that variance were more complex than initially anticipated. It emerged that other factors including the way in which activists in this study defined themselves, and freelancers’ previous employment histories, also affected their responses.

By combining qualitative and quantitative methods, my research illustrates the differences inherent in the relative anonymity of gathering data via a questionnaire (Gillham, 2000), compared with the unanticipated and unconscious influences which may affect interviewees’ responses. In this study, it emerged that the same context can have different effects depending on the research methods utilised. Specifically, in the qualitative research, it appears that the identity of the interviewer, who was also the researcher, and of the other interviewees, all of whom undertook high profile activities within BECTU, may have affected some of the participants’ views of themselves and their own activism. While denying their own activism, they identified others as activists – despite those individuals undertaking less visible roles or what employee Jason and others perceived as ‘lower’ levels of trade union activity than themselves. This illustrates their unconsciousness of their own activism as a concept, despite their deep commitment to activism in practice. Chapter 4 explored how participants expressed their views about the meanings of

activism, and how those views may have been affected by the external circumstances surrounding the data collection process, and by participants' own interpretation of the term 'activist'. As has been noted, if they felt that it had more negative than positive effects on their lives, it is probably unlikely that they would have continued their active involvement with the union. They would therefore not have been selected as participants because they would not comply with *my* initial definition of an 'activist' as 'a person who was actively involved in union activities at a local as well as a national level and who was willing to commit some of their time and energies to the union'. Most of the interviewees, both employees and freelancers, whether they self-identified as activists or not, defined the term 'activist' as an individual who undertook *high levels* of trade union activities. Employees, and those freelancers who had previously been employees, described concrete activities including direct involvement in representing others, negotiating with management, and leading strike action. Those freelancers who had not previously been employees had less experience in these specific areas, but spoke of supporting their colleagues, representing them within the union, and signposting them to union services.

The differences and similarities of the views expressed by those who **did** consider themselves to be activists and by those who **did not** so consider themselves were also compared and contrasted during the interrogation of the data. Many of the respondents who did not self-identify as activists spoke of how the way others might perceive them and the levels of their activism was different from their own views, and acknowledged the contradictions thus illustrated. This concept of 'unconscious activism', whereby individuals who are committed to the union take on additional activities without acknowledging the impact and value of their contribution emerged as a key factor in how they defined themselves in terms of their own activism.

Differences about the connotations of the term ‘activist’ were also identified between the views of those freelancers who had previously been employees and those who had always been freelancers. For the latter the negative connotations they identified may have been because they had little experience of positive reactions to their activism compared to those who had previously been employees. The freelancers who had previously been employees acknowledged that their trade union activities had provided them with social capital in terms of their relationships with management and colleagues when they were working as employees. However, their responses also illustrated that they were aware that it transformed into negative social capital when they were working as freelancers.

The most cited definition of the term ‘activist’ which emerged from the quantitative data in this study was ‘Someone who speaks openly about being in the union’. As discussed in Chapter 4, the higher numbers self-identifying as activists amongst questionnaire respondents may have been a result of their relatively low expectation of what was required of an activist, as well as the context and nature of the data collection process.

In this study the few negative connotations of the term ‘activist’ identified by the interviewees were ascribed to others’ opinions, while the positive characteristics were acknowledged and owned by the participants themselves. It emerged that how the connotations were viewed was affected by both the circumstances in which the data was collected, by some of the demographic characteristics, and by the previous employment status (habitus) of the participants themselves. The consequently nuanced nature of the responses underlines the argument that, as previously stated, the subjective views of participants in a relatively limited study within one specific institution cannot be utilised to infer generalized conclusions (Gall and Fiorito, 2012b). However, they may provide insights into the importance of seeking to understand and utilise participants’ definitions of value

laden terms, rather than depending on researchers' initial interpretations.

It emerged that the views expressed by the participants in this study were influenced by several unanticipated external factors, and these are explored in Chapters 4 and 5. Employment status, and for freelancers, whether they had previously been employees, and in some cases, age were found to be relevant factors in terms of how participants viewed the term 'activist' and its characteristics. Younger members in particular felt that it was the context in which it was used which affected perceptions about activism - for them 'trade union activist' had especially negative connotations. As previously noted, despite their involvement as workers in the broadcast industries the participants in this study were nevertheless influenced by the hegemonic manipulation of public opinion by the media towards negative views of the trade union movement. This uncovers an implied contradiction in the influences which affected participants' views in this study. They may have felt more positive towards trade unionism because that was the context within which the research was conducted – both interviewees and questionnaire respondents were made aware in the paperwork provided to them that the researcher was a BECTU member and that the study was being undertaken with the union's knowledge. However, it emerged from the data gathered that in the wider context of their everyday lives their perceptions of trade unionism were that it had negative connotations, which in some cases led them to deny being *trade union* activists while acknowledging their activism in other areas of their lives. In neighbourhood initiatives or local politics they would self-identify as activists – it was a less loaded term for them when not associated with the union. It could therefore be argued that the context of the definition affected their views.

My study does not provide a definitive definition of the term 'activist'. However, it has highlighted the fact that researchers must be mindful that the researched are responding to their own definitions of specific

terms, and that their views may also be value laden. It suggests that closer exploration and consideration of participants' definitions, and how they have developed, can enrich the findings of research projects.

6.2 Freelancer status

This section addresses the need, which emerged during analysis of my research data, to refine the definition of the term 'freelancer', and to acknowledge the significance of that definition in relation to the findings of my study. As was noted in Chapter 4, in the relatively limited existing literature into freelancer involvement in trade unions, 'freelancer' has been defined as a 'freely chosen' (Heery, 2009: p.4) employment category. As is illustrated in this study, this description does not reflect the reality of the freelancer status. Many freelancers had been forced into freelancing because of the regulatory changes in broadcasting instigated during the 1990s which resulted in mass redundancies from broadcasting organisations (Holgate and McKay, 2009). In comparing employee and freelancer views during the course of this study it emerged that freelancers' employment history could also affect how they viewed their own activism and its effects on their professional and personal lives. Consequently, this study argues that an understanding of freelancer workers' background is essential when soliciting their views, and that the term 'freelancer' should be re-evaluated when undertaking research into that employment status and its consequences.

Nowak (2015) argues that 'as the labour market has changed and diversified' a new kind of trade unionism is required to deal with the consequences in terms of labour relations. As the casualization of the workforce in UK broadcasting becomes prevalent in other industries (Kitching and Smallbone, 2012), it could be argued that BECTU's freelancer activists' experiences may provide insights for other unions representing freelancers (Heery *et al.,* 2004). It may contribute to the development of activists with 'higher degrees of both self-initiation and self-direction' (Gall and Fiorito 2012, p.194) to overcome the obstacles

faced by unions in the twenty first century. For example, freelancers in this study who had previously been employees of broadcast organisations noted that rather than acting as lay union officials and representing their colleagues in negotiations and disputes with management, freelancer activists act as a conduit between their colleagues and BECTU. They signpost them to the appropriate paid union officials when they have issues with their employers, such as non-payment for work carried out. Freelancer union activists also raise awareness of matters which have particular relevance for them, which may be different to the issues affecting employees. Freelancer activists suggest solutions which enable the union to meet their specific needs and requirements. They provide trade unions with opportunities for 'offensive mobilization' (Tilly, 1978) on behalf of their freelancer members, as well as the more traditional provision of preparatory mobilization for employee members.

6.3 The effects of trade union activism

The following section addresses Research Question 2 and the findings reported in Chapter 5. It discusses the views of participants in this study about the effects of undertaking trade union activities on their professional and personal lives. It posits that any differences may be ascribed to more than a simple differentiation between employee and freelancer status, but that freelancers' previous employment status as well as other contextual issues must also be taken into account when analysing the data.

(i) Positive effects

Early in the analysis process it became apparent that participants in this study identified many more advantages than disadvantages as a result of their trade union activities. Most respondents felt that they had gained more than they had lost as a result of their activism, and many felt that any work they may have lost 'was not worth having' (Vernon, freelancer, October 2014). The positive effects identified as a result of

undertaking trade union activities included increased confidence. Employees, and freelancers who were ex-employees' confidence resulted from the organizing and negotiating skills they had acquired which enabled them to deal with authority figures on a more equal basis. For those who had always been freelancers the confidence they had acquired was related more to their social and working relationships with their colleagues, and to their personal development.

Participants also reported that their union activities had led to the accumulation of friends and contacts, expressed specifically by younger respondents as 'networking'. The acquisition of social capital from friends and networks accumulated as a result of trade union activities was acknowledged by employee participants in this study, and by those freelancers who had previously been employees. They recognised that their high profile activities as employees within a workplace raised their profile and provided them with the respect of their colleagues and of management. However, those employees who had become freelancers were aware that this high profile could have negative consequences in the more precarious freelancer marketplace, thus converting into negative social capital (Antcliff *et al.,* 2007; Portes, 1998).

(ii) Negative effects

Few negative effects of trade union activities were acknowledged by the participants in this study. The loss of time, and the consequent effect on their personal lives, was identified by three employee and four freelancer interviewees as the most significant negative effect of their trade union activities. However, in many cases they felt that it had been their choice to make the union their first priority, and they viewed it as time well spent. The only other negative effect identified by interviewees in this study was the loss of work opportunities, identified by more freelancer interviewees than employee interviewees, four and one respectively. This may reflect the relatively precarious nature of freelancer working, and the awareness that trade union activities could

have a negative effect on work prospects, which reflects Siebert and Wilson's (2013) findings. As has been noted, my own experience of not being offered work in the broadcast industries because of my high profile union activities had sparked my initial interest in exploring fellow BECTU activists' views. However, interrogation of the data (Yin, 2011; Bryman, 2012) revealed that for most freelancers it is impossible to tell why they are not offered work, as employers do not have to justify their choices, and other than in one particular geographical region very few broadcasters or producers would openly acknowledge that an individual's involvement with the union might affect which freelancers they employed.

A small number of both employees and freelancers who felt that their trade union activism had affected their prospects as workers within broadcasting itself had utilised the skills, knowledge and experience gained as a result of their activism in order to move into other occupations, thus converting negative social capital into positive. Participants in my study had accrued social capital from their background and experience (habitus). The way they had interpreted its effects was affected by the context, or fields, in which it had been utilised. However, those fields may shift, and the effects of social capital are altered accordingly, which reflects Gauntlett's (2011) arguments against the deterministic nature of Bourdieu's theories.

A greater proportion of questionnaire respondents than of interviewees identified any negative effects as a result of their trade union activities. As has been discussed, this may have been because of the relative anonymity of the questionnaire process (Gillham, 2000), but it may also have been because possible negative effects were suggested in the questionnaire, whereas interviewees were merely asked whether they felt there had been any negative effects, and identified very few. Additionally, and more in line with the interviewees' responses, 66.7% (n=54) of the questionnaire respondents selected 'nothing' as their option for what had been lost as a result of their activism.

6.4 A covenantal relationship

This section addresses Supplementary Research Question 2(i) by reflecting on how activists' relationship with their trade union may affect the way in which they view its effects on their professional and personal lives. As discussed in Chapter 5, in this study the nature of activists' commitment, whether initially instrumental (reward-based) or affective (ideological), resulted in the development of a covenantal relationship with BECTU as their union, based on 'shared values and ideological identification' (Snape, Redman and Chan 2000: p.224). It is apparent that in this study many of the participants' responses were coloured by their perceptions of that covenantal relationship and that it affected their views about their own activism, the connotations of the term 'activist', and how their union activities had affected their professional and personal lives. This covenantal commitment was expressed irrespective of contributors' current or previous employment status, or age, or whether or not they considered themselves to be activists.

Overall, what emerged as a key determinant of activism for interviewees in this study appears to be the willingness to work (WTW) for the union without being paid for those activities, also identified by Gall and Fiorito (2012a). However, this study argues that 'without financial reward' (p.193) has different implications for employee members than for freelancers and that this determinant also has implications for the analysis of the nature of activists' relationship with the union. It could be argued that freelancers (who are not paid for any of the time they commit to the union and may in fact lose money if they choose to attend a meeting and thereby miss a work opportunity) display a different kind of commitment than their employee colleagues who are paid for at least some of the time they spend on union activities. In this study the freelancer respondents who had previously been employees articulated a similar ideological attitude towards the union to those who had always been freelancers. Although employee

activists also expressed their commitment to the union, many of them identified that their activism had had a positive impact on their working lives, citing examples of the respect they themselves had gained from management, and recalling previous activists who had moved into management roles. Both employee and freelancer participants in my study recognised that their trade union activities could affect their professional and personal lives negatively as well as positively, reflecting Klandermans' (1984) findings about activists' calculations of the costs and benefits of undertaking collective action. However, their commitment to the union overcame any perceived costs or negative consequences. It should however be noted that, within the confines of this research project it was not possible to explore how many individuals who were activists while they were employees ceased those activities after leaving permanent employment, which might imply that their union activities were motivated by other factors, including the prospect of advancement within the company.

6.5 Associated avenues for exploration

This study has identified several areas which would benefit from further research. The concept of 'unconscious activism' could be explored by compiling a list of activists identified by paid union officials as providing a significant contribution to the union, and comparing their opinions with the activists' own views about how their activism impacts on the organisation. Additionally, it would be interesting to identify ex-employee activists who did not continue with their activism when they became freelancers, in order to uncover whether it was only those who had always been ideologically motivated as union activists when they were employees who continued with their activism as freelancers. Alternatively, the findings of such a study might support Gall and Fiorito's (2012b) argument that participation as employee activists developed an ideological commitment to the union in individuals so that they continued to be active in the freelancer sphere. Future comparative studies into industrial relations practices in other highly

regulated areas such as health and education could also provide valuable insights into how and whether trade unions mobilize their atypical, or what could be defined as their ‘freelancer’ membership, such as locum doctors and supply teachers. The importance of recognising that freelancing is not necessarily a ‘freely chosen’ (Heery, 2009: p.4) employment status should also be taken into account when undertaking future research into the freelancer workforce.

Although the effects of Thatcher’s acknowledged antipathy to trade unions (Davidson, 1992) were discussed briefly in this study, another potential area for future research could involve a more thorough analysis of how the negativity surrounding Thatcherism (Coffey and Thornley, 2014) was still articulated more than a quarter of a century after her resignation as prime minister, and whether those perceptions were more affected by her gender than by her actions.

6.6 Summary

While no definitive definition of the term ‘activist’ was identified during my research, the importance of the context in which the term is used is acknowledged, as well as how that context affects its meaning and its associated connotations. During the analysis of the data it became apparent that the term ‘freelancer’ also required further defining. It emerged that an understanding of freelancer workers’ background is essential when soliciting their views, and posits that the term ‘freelancer’ should be re-evaluated when undertaking future research into that employment status and its consequences.

Participants identified few disadvantages associated with their trade union activities and for the most part felt that they had benefited from their experiences. Employees viewed the advantages in more concrete terms, such as skills and knowledge gained, and the confidence to utilise them when representing their colleagues in negotiations and disputes with management. The resulting social capital acquired was also perceived as being beneficial to those who were, or had been

employees. For freelancers the confidence acquired was more likely to affect their personal lives and how they interacted with their colleagues and with the union itself. Freelancers also valued the accumulation of networks, although the positive social capital resulting from visible trade union activities as employees could transpose into negative social capital if they became freelancers, and might affect their work prospects. This study also found that freelancer activists had a much more personal relationship with the union, because they dealt more directly with the union and its paid officials than their employee colleagues whose association with the union might only ever be via their workplace representative. This study finds that, while not all those who were undertook trade union activities on behalf of BECTU defined themselves as activists, the majority, whether employee or freelancer, articulated a similar ideological commitment to the trade union and to their fellow members.

Throughout this study it is acknowledged that generalizable conclusions cannot be drawn from the data gathered from the study of one particular union (Gall and Fiorito, 2012b). However, as Yin (2011) argues, while statistical generalization may be utilised in longitudinal quantitative studies, analytic generalization is acceptable in qualitative studies in order 'to generalize to other situations (on the basis of analytic claims)' (p.284). This study supports the analytic generalization that research projects should recognise the importance of ascertaining participants' understanding of the terms used in research questions and in the data collection process (Fiorito *et al.,* 2014). Further, it argues that participants' views and opinions are formulated according to how they experience and interpret their own circumstances (habitus), and that even individuals' who share a similar habitus may react to it differently. Thus, although this study has uncovered that its participants understood the term 'activist' differently from my original definition it is not possible to claim that their definitions are generalizable across other studies. However, in the context of this study the participants' definitions thus elicited have affected their views

and the inductive interpretation of the data gathered, and have enriched the research findings.

It is apparent that although my research uncovered data that was relevant to certain aspects of Bourdieu's capitals theories, and to mobilization theory, no one theoretical approach could be encapsulated in the findings. However, this study underlines the importance of acknowledging that participants' understanding of certain value laden terms may differ from that of the researcher. It recognises that researchers should bear in mind that participants are responding to *their* definition of any terms used, which may not correspond to the researcher's understanding of those terms. It argues that participants' understandings of value laden terms should be given equal weight to those of the researcher during the development and evaluation of research projects.

Throughout this study I have acknowledged the following limitations of the research design. The constraints of time and budget limited the numbers of interviews which could be undertaken, and a decision was taken not to undertake a focus group discussion. However, although the interview sample size (n=27) could not be deemed representative, the quality and quantity of the data accumulated provided a rich source of material for analysis. Additionally, although the quantitative research involved a relatively small cohort (n=93), the data extrapolated helped to illustrate, enrich and in some cases, to challenge the qualitative findings.

I have also acknowledged that my own involvement as an insider researcher and the circumstances in which the quantitative research was undertaken (at BECTU's Annual Conference in 2014) may have influenced participants' responses. Every attempt has been made to mitigate this influence by emphasising my role as an academic researcher, by bearing the possibility of bias in mind throughout the data collection and analysis processes, and by utilising specialist qualitative (NVivo) and quantitative (SPSS) data analysis software.

The above limitations in the research design were as a consequence of the nature of the study, which was one where hard conclusions could not be drawn. Additionally, as Fiorito *et al.* (2014) acknowledged the data drawn from research based on an 'occupationally and industrially narrow' (p.17) segment of the union movement cannot be utilised to infer generalized conclusions (Gall and Fiorito, 2012b). However, my research contributes to the emerging and increasingly relevant research into freelance working practices, and trade union representation of atypical workers in the twenty-first century. The data gathered illustrates BECTU's experience of enabling freelancer union activists to work effectively with the union to raise awareness of matters which have particular relevance for atypical workers, and to suggest solutions which enable the union to meet their specific needs and requirements. Once those services are in place, they become a valuable means of recruiting others into trade union membership. I argue that BECTU's experience with and support for freelancer activists may provide a template for other unions seeking to recruit and organise atypical workers.

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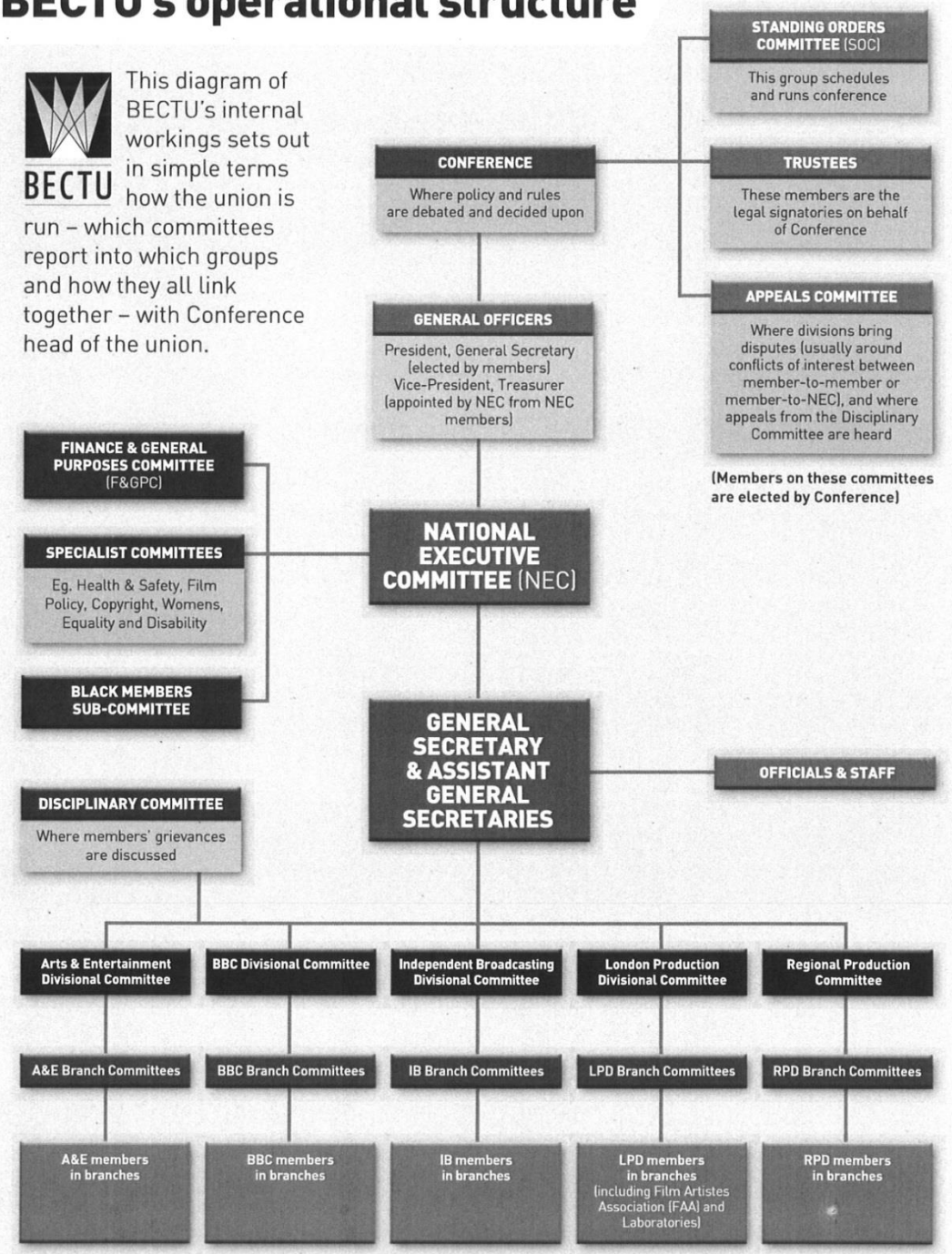
Appendix A

BECTU's operational structure

BECTU

This diagram of BECTU's internal workings sets out in simple terms how the union is run – which committees report into which groups and how they all link together – with Conference head of the union.



NB: Branches may participate cross-divisionally in national/regional area committees
All committee positions, except for officials and staff, are elected by members

From: Edith Ann Jones, Professional Doctorate Candidate, London Metropolitan University

To: Gerry Morrissey, General Secretary, BECTU (Broadcast, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union), 373-377 Clapham Road, London SW9 9BT

1 September 2015

Dear Gerry Morrissey

I am completing a doctoral thesis at London Metropolitan University and I am contacting you to request permission to include the following material within the electronic version of my Professional Doctorate:

BECTU's Operational Structure - Organisational chart outlining job titles of employee and lay officials of the union; Conference, National Executive Committee, Divisional and Branch structures; and outlines of other regulatory, specialist and equality committees (accessed 2015) ["the Material"]

My thesis will be made available as an electronic version deposited in London Metropolitan University's online repository https://repository.londonmet.ac.uk/ Once available in digital format, access to the thesis will be freely available via the Web and through the 'Electronic Thesis Online Service' (EThOS) provided by the British Library (http://EThOS.bl.uk/) where a copy may also be held. The User of the thesis will be required to agree that they shall only use the thesis for non-commercial research, private study, criticism, review and news reporting, illustration for teaching, and/or other educational purposes in electronic or print form.

I would be grateful if you, on behalf of BECTU, could grant me permission to include the Material in my thesis and to use the Material, as set out above, royalty free in perpetuity. Please be aware that the Material will be archived by the British Library as part of EThOS in perpetuity.

I HEREBY GRANT PERMISSION FOR USE OF THE MATERIAL FOR THE PURPOSES AND ON THE TERMS IDENTIFIED ABOVE

Signature.....

Gerry Morrissey, General Secretary, BECTU

Date..... 1ST SEPT 2015

Yours

Edith Ann Jones, London Metropolitan University

Appendix B

Union activism: an exploration of the differential consequences of staff and freelance experiences

Interview Schedule

Go through the disclaimer form with the interviewee and ensure that she/he is comfortable with and understands the research area. Explain that the interview will last approximately 30 – 45 minutes, and reiterate that it will be recorded and transcribed, but that all information will be treated in confidence, and that any quotes will be used anonymously.

Confirm that the interviewee is happy to proceed, ask her/him to sign the disclaimer form. Indicate when the interview is coming to its conclusion.

*these questions may be unnecessary if already answered
** ask only if employment status has changed (staff/freelance)

Interview questions	*Prompts*
1. Will you tell me a little about your first job in the media/theatre industry, and then about your current job and how you got there/the progression?	
2. When you started working in the media/theatre industry was your first job as a staff member or as a freelancer, and why was that? In terms of your current job are you now a staff member or freelancer?	
If employment status changed 3. If your employment status has changed (staff/freelancer), how long ago was that, and would you mind talking about the circumstances that led to the change? **	3a. Redundancy, retirement, own choice?

If employment status changed 4. If your status has changed, how has that affected you/your work/your life? **	
5. What made you first join a union, and which union was that?	5a. Were there any family members/friends who were union members, if so, who and which union? 5b. As a result of a dispute or other issue? 5c. Compulsory?
6. Was BECTU/ACTT the first union you joined and if so, what were the circumstances that encouraged you to join it?*	6a. In your opinion how well-organised was the union in the workplace when you joined? 6b. In your opinion have things changed since you first joined and if so, in what way?
7. Will you give me an example of how the union has helped or represented you or others?	7a. Have you any direct experience of being helped by the union, or by one or more of its members? Do you know of others who have been helped, or have you helped others?
8. If I was to use the term 'union activist' in talking to you what would you think that meant? Do you think of yourself as an activist? What roles have you undertaken in the union?	8a. If no, how would you describe someone you think of as an activist?

9. How have your trade union activities affected you, your life and your work?	9a. Do you think you have gained anything as a result of your trade union activities? 9b. Is there anything which you feel you have lost as a result of your trade union activities? 9c. Are there any examples you would be willing to share with me about things that you have gained as a result of your union activities, such as meeting new people, learning new skills, being able to help colleagues.
10. Is there any way in which, in your mind, your union membership and/or activism has affected your work prospects, for the better or worse, and if so how?	
If employment status changed 11. Given that your employment status (staff/freelance) has changed since coming into the industry, has that affected how you perceive your union membership, and if so, how? **	
12. In your view is union membership generally advantageous or detrimental, and why do you feel that?	

13. Has being a union member encouraged you to take part in other activities – community/faith/anti-cuts/political, and if so can you tell me a little about that?	
14. Are there any other things that I have not asked you about but which you have the time to talk about now?	

Demographics	
Gender	M F
Age range	20-25 26-30 31-35 36-40 41-45 46-50 51-55 56-60 61-65
Level of education	O levels/GCSEs A levels Diploma Degree Post graduate (specify) Other qualifications
Do you consider that you have a disability?	Y N

How would you describe your ethnic background?	
What jobs were your parents doing by the time you left home?	

Thank the interviewee, and reiterate that all information will be kept in strictest confidence.

Job Title	
Status (Staff or Freelance)	
Place of work	
Time as staff	
Time as freelance	
Home base	

Appendix C

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Dear Participant

I am asking for your help today in connection with a research project being carried out by Doctoral candidate E. Ann Jones, (07831 352393) under the supervision of Professor Sonia McKay (020 7320 1382), and Dr. Anna Paraskevopoulou, (0207133 2927), Working Lives Research Institute, London Metropolitan University. Before you decide to participate it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please do not hesitate to contact me at: s.mckay@londonmet.ac.uk if anything is unclear or if you would like further information.

The research is looking into the experiences of activist members of BECTU, the union which representsworkers, other than performers and journalists, in the film, broadcast, theatre, and live entertainment industries. The aims of the project are to:

- explore how members experience trade union membership.
- examine whether staff or freelance status affects membership of, and involvement in, the union.
- explore the effects of trade union membership on members and their personal and professional lives.

Ann's aim is of course primarily to complete her doctoral thesis but she also hopes that her research may contribute to academic debates concerned with the experiences of trade unionists.

If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form.

The one-off interview will last a maximum of 1 hour. You may also be asked to take part in a focus group discussion at BECTU's Annual Conference in May 2014. Ann will be exploring your experiences of being an activist in BECTU, and how those experiences have affected you. She will be interviewing a minimum of 20 activists, and also circulating a questionnaire at conference. From the responses received she will identify key themes which will inform her final thesis.

If you decide to participate in this study, your participation and any information collected from you will be strictly anonymous and confidential, and only available to Ann and, where she determines, to her supervisors.

I would like to thank you, in advance, for your participation.

Professor Sonia McKay

Appendix D
CONFIDENTIAL, ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNAIRE FOR BECTU MEMBER ANN JONES'S DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROJECT

PLEASE NOTE THAT A BOX WILL BE AVAILABLE AT BECTU ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN EASTBOURNE ON 17 MAY 2014 FOR COLLECTION OF THESE QUESTIONNAIRES

My supervisor outlines the purpose of my research below. Thank you for your interest. Ann Jones

I am asking for your help today in connection with a research project being carried out by Doctoral candidate E. Ann Jones, (ann.jos@btinternet.com) under the supervision of Professor Sonia McKay, and Dr. Anna Paraskevopoulou, Working Lives Research Institute, London Metropolitan University.

Research project title

Union activism: an exploration of the differential consequences of staff and freelance experiences

Before you decide to participate it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. The research is looking into the experiences of activist members of BECTU, the union which represents workers, other than performers and journalists, in the film, broadcast, theatre, and live entertainment industries. The aims of the project are to:

- explore how members experience trade union membership;
- examine whether staff or freelance status affects membership of, and involvement in, the union;
- explore the effects of trade union membership on members and their personal and professional lives.

Ann's aim is of course primarily to complete her doctoral thesis but she also hopes that her research may contribute to academic debates concerned with the experiences of trade unionists.

If you decide to participate in this study, your participation and any information collected from you will be strictly anonymous and confidential, and only available to Ann and, where she determines, to her supervisors.

I would like to thank you, in advance, for your participation, and of course please do not hesitate to contact me at: s.mckay@londonmet.ac.uk if you need any further information.

Professor Sonia McKay

PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE BOX UNLESS OTHERWISE REQUESTED

About you

1. For how many years have you been a member of BECTU (or one of its founding unions, e.g., ACTT, BETA)?

Less than 5		Less than 10		More than 10	

2. Were you a member of any other union before joining BECTU (or one of its founding unions)?

YES		NO	

If 'yes', please specify which union……..

3. Are you currently a member of any other union

YES		NO	

If 'yes', please specify which union……..

4. Can you remember what made you join the union? **(please select up to 3 reasons, and rate them 1-3, 1 being the most relevant reason**)

Support in work	
Protection in work	
I believed in collective organisation	
It was 'the right thing to do'	
There was a closed shop	
There was a family tradition of union membership/activity	
To acquire skills	
Public Liability Insurance	
Somebody asked me	
Other (please specify)	

5. Are you currently

A directly employed member of staff	
Working as a freelancer	

6. Has your staff/freelance status changed during your working life in the industries covered by BECTU

YES		NO	

7. If you have answered 'yes' to question 6, please indicate:

How long you have been staff	Years
How long you have been freelance	Years

8. Are/were either one or both of your parents Trade unionists?

Mother	
Father	
Both	
Neither	

Was there any other relative who was influential in encouraging you to join a union and if so what was their relationship to you?

……..

9. Do you hold a position within BECTU (e.g., branch or divisional secretary, chair)

YES		NO	

If 'yes', please specify your role(s)……..……
……

10. Have you attended any of BECTU's training courses?

YES		NO	

If ‘yes’, was it

Vocational (e.g. Avid, Pyrotechnics, Finance for Freelancers)	
Union related (e.g. Rep’s course, Web Editor’s course)	
Both	

Please specify what courses, if any, you have attended……..

……

11. Have you been helped by the union?

YES		NO	

If ‘yes’ did you receive help (**please tick all that apply**)

As an individual (e.g., advice re Wills, Personal injury cases)	
Collectively (e.g., in an industrial dispute, agreeing rates of pay)	
Other, please specify	

12. What do you consider the most significant factor which has affected trade unions in your lifetime?

…….....

……

……

……

Activism within the union

13. In your view, is a trade union activist one who is:

(please select up to 3 descriptions, and rate them 1-3, 1 being the most relevant)

A member of a union	
A conference delegate	
A member of a branch committee	
A branch officer (e.g., Chair, Secretary, Steward, Equality Officer)	
A branch representative on a divisional committee (e.g., Regional Production Division, London Production Division, BBC Divison, IB Division, Arts and Entertainment Division)	
A divisional committee officer (e.g., Chair, Secretary)	
A National Executive Committee member	
Someone who speaks openly about being in the union	
Someone who goes on demonstrations	
Someone who takes strike action	
Someone who speaks up for themselves or others	
Other (please specify	

14. Do you consider yourself an activist?

YES		NO	

If ‘yes’, did you become active

Soon after you joined the union	
Some time later	

If ‘no’ please go to question 16

15. What made you become an activist? **(please tick one box)**

I wanted to help other members	
Somebody asked me	
I was voted onto a committee at a meeting	
Other (please specify	

16. In your opinion, what connotations does the term ‘activist’ have?

Positive	
Negative	
Neither positive nor negative	
No connotations	

17. Do you see any contradictions between being active and engaged in the union and being active and engaged in work?

YES		NO	

If ‘yes’, please specify why

……

……

18. In your opinion, what, if anything, do you think you have gained as a result of your trade union activities? **(please tick one box)**

Useful work contacts	
Networking opportunities	
Work opportunities	
Professional experience (e.g., public speaking)	
Confidence	
Friendships	
Nothing	
Other (please specify)	

19. In your opinion, what, if anything, do you think you have lost as a result of your trade union activities? **(please tick one box)**

Useful work contacts	
Networking opportunities	
Work opportunities	
Professional experience (e.g., public speaking)	
Confidence	
Friendships	

Nothing	
Other (please specify	

Organising in the union

20. Do you communicate with other union members and/or co-workers via social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)

YES		NO	

If ‘no’ please go to question 22

21. If you have answered ‘yes’ to question 21 do you use social media to discuss any of the following **(please tick all that apply):**

Work opportunities	
Rates of pay	
Work conditions (e.g. hours, holiday pay – please specify)	
Training requirements	
Union membership benefits	
Other (please specify	

22. Do you encourage your co-workers to join the union?

YES		NO	

If ‘yes’, what would you say is the most important reason to join the union?

……

……

If ‘no’, please explain the reasons……

……

Outside the union

23. Are you active in other areas outside the union (e.g., in your community, politically, faith)

YES		NO	

If 'yes' please specify

…….....

…….....

Demographics

Current job title ……..

Gender (please tick)

Male		Female	

Age range (please tick)

20-25		26-30		31-35		36-40	
41-45		46-50		51-55		56-60	
61-65		66+					

Level of education (please tick highest level achieved)

O levels/GCSEs		A levels	
Diploma		Degree	
Post graduate (specify)			
Other qualifications			

Do you consider that you have a disability? (please tick)

Yes		No	

How would you describe your ethnic background? ……..

What jobs were your parents doing by the time you left home? ……..

24. If you have any other comments about the union and your membership, whether positive or negative, please note them here:

……

……

……

……

Thank you very much for taking part in this academic survey.

Ann Jones

5.5.14

Appendix E

INTERVIEWEE CONSENT FORM

Union activism: an exploration of the differential consequences of staff and freelance experiences

Please tick below:

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at anytime, without giving any reason. ☐

3. I agree to anonymised quotations being used in reports and other publications. ☐

4. I agree for a recording and transcription of the interview to be made. ☐

5. I agree to take part in this study. ☐

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

All data will be stored securely.

Tick this box if you would like to receive a summary of the results by e-mail ☐

E-mail: _____

Researcher: E. Ann Jones, (07831 352393) ann.jos@btinternet.com under the supervision of Professor Sonia McKay s.mckay@londonmet.ac.uk, and Dr. Anna Paraskevopoulou, A.Paraskevopoulou@londonmet.ac.uk

Working Lives Research Institute, London Metropolitan University