

**Employee status and collectivism  
- a study of managerial and professional  
trade unionism**

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## Abstract

This research examines the managerial and professional status of members of three case-study unions: Nautilus International, Prospect and the Transport and Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA). It considers the extent to which members' behaviour in these unions constitutes a shift away from the individual and towards the collective. Where these members have traditionally sought to preserve their career and livelihood by reinforcing individualism and self-interest, a definitive set of circumstances driven by labour market and workplace change has produced an unlikely materialisation in the form of collectivism.

This research demonstrates how facets that have previously characterised, in existing literature, the managerial and professional worker, are undergoing something of a reconfiguration. For example, attitudes towards political neutrality, preference for a non-militant, conciliatory bargaining machinery and aversion to industrial action are changing among members of the case-study unions. This sea-change is subtle, inconspicuous, at times tentative, and by no means indicative of a large-scale transformation, and yet it is notable in terms of identifying a behavioural and attitudinal move *away* from what have been considered to be the 'benefits' of individualism and *towards* support for a collective approach.

The research focuses on the roles of key actors (predominantly managerial and professional-grade members of the three unions) and analyses the scope of change to which they have been exposed, and how this has informed an inclination towards collectivism. This process discovered three key themes around which key actors were found to cohere: partnership, industrial action and political profile and affiliation. How these aspects were addressed by the three unions provide a valuable insight into the way in which these unions are sustaining resilience against a more general backdrop of trade union membership decline.

The study concludes that an aggregation of economic, political and work factors have combined to produce an environment that has become conducive to collectivism among managerial and professional workers in the three case-study unions. This

process, termed sub-collectivism here, is sophisticated, and is found to occur in many cases almost by default; cultivated inadvertently as this group of workers attempts to harness stability in a workplace whose complexion is increasingly comparable to that of their manual, or blue-collar, counterparts and whose precariousness is undoubtedly gathering momentum.



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## List of Acronyms

AEEU	Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union
AHVLA	Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency
AScW	Association of Scientific Workers
ASLEF	Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
ASSET	Association of Supervisory Staff, Executives and Technicians
ASTMS	Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staff
ATOC	Association of Train Operating Companies
ATSS	Air Traffic Systems Specialists
AUEW	Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers
BA	British Airways
BALPA	British Airline Pilots Association
BIFU	Banking, Insurance and Finance Union
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
BRB	British Railways Board
BRS	British Road Services
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
COVE	Commission on Vulnerable Employment
CSP	Chartered Society of Physiotherapists
DATA	The Draughtsmen and Allied Technicians Union
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DfT	Department for Transport
DTI	Department for Trade and Industry
DTLR	Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ECDIS	Electronic Chart Display Screen
EMA	Engineers' and Managers' Association
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
ETF	European Transport Workers' Federation
FDA	First Division Authority
FERA	Food and Environment Research Agency
FOC	Freight Operating Company
FSS	Forensic Science Section
FTO	Full Time Officer
GMB	General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trade Union
HRM	Human Resource Management
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
IIP	Investors in People
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IPA	Involvement and Participation Association
IPCS	Institution of Professional Civil Servants
IPMS	Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LRC	Labour Representation Committee
MAIB	Maritime Accident Investigation Branch
MCA	Maritime and Coastguard Agency

MEA	Marine Engineers' Association
MMO	Marine Management Organisation
MMSA	Mercantile Marine Service Association
MNAOA	Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MP	Member of Parliament
MSc	Master of Science
MSF	Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union
NALGO	National and Local Government Officers' Association
NATS	National Air Traffic Services
NEOU	Navigating and Engineering Officers' Union
NUBE	National Union of Bank Employees
NUMAST	National Union of Marine, Aviation and Shipping Transport workers
NUR	National Union of Railwaymen
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
ONS	Office for National Statistics
OPRAF	The Office of Passenger Rail Franchising
ORR	The Office of Rail Regulation
PCG	Personal Contract Grade
PCS	The Public and Commercial Services Union
PRP	Performance-Related Pay
RCA	The Railway Clerks' Association
REOU	Radio and Electronic Officers' Union
RMT	National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport workers
ROI	Return on Investment
ROSCO	Rolling Stock Company
(S)DPO	(Senior) Dynamic Positioning Officer
SoR	Society of Radiographers
SRO	Senior Regional Organiser
TASS	Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Sector
TfL	Transport for London
TOC	Train Operating Company
TSSA	Transport and Salaried Staffs' Association
TUC	Trades Union Congress
ULR	Union Learning Representative
URTU	United Road Transport Union
WB	White British
WiF	Women in Focus
WLRI	Working Lives Research Institute



## **Introduction**

*'There's an isolation of managers. Incessant change and industry fragmentation mean managers are much more isolated—this may be why they're joining—and membership is seen as value for money. This is a reflection of managers' feelings of vulnerability in the workplace in terms of economic situation, reorganisation, downsizing, and also possibly the context of personal responsibility, for example; health and safety accountability legislation'*

- Anthony, Manager, Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC)

Anthony, an IT services manager, and many of his contemporaries interviewed as part of this research, explained the feelings of isolation and vulnerability pervading the managerial and professional landscape in which they worked. These managers described the extent to which reorganisation, economic instability and an increasingly litigious workplace environment had permeated their organisations, institutions and industries. Until fairly recently, these workplaces had represented relatively safe havens for managerial and professional workers, who may have once assumed that their status or position afforded them control sufficient to be able to construct workplaces that were defended against injustice, iniquity and discrimination. That the ability to do this was being conspicuously and expeditiously eroded has caused this group of workers to re-evaluate union membership, to revisit their demands and expectations of it, and perhaps more significantly, to seek fresh ways in which to defend their place in their particular professional hierarchy, their vocational expertise and the status and reward attached to it. This thesis therefore includes a consideration of the class position, status, values and identity of managerial and professional workers and discusses these in relation to historical works and their relevance in a reconfigured labour market and workplace. It also takes account of past writings on class analysis, including discussion of Carter's (1985) contribution and evaluation of contradictory class location.

This thesis aims to identify why employment that is often characterised as individualised has trade union densities that are holding their own in a period of general trade union membership decline. It asks why, during a period of global recession, the three unions under study in this research—Nautilus International (the

seafarers' union), Prospect (the union for professionals) and the TSSA (Transport and Salaried Staffs' Association, the union for transport industry workers) have demonstrated an element of resilience and have been successful in sustaining membership among managerial and professional workers. It examines the factors that cause these workers to cohere and considers the issues that denote a move away from predominantly individualised behaviour and towards a more collective approach. It also identifies the factors that determine the value and pertinence of managerial and professional trade union membership. The thesis will also consider how far the values, behaviour and dynamics of the managerial and professional members of the case-study unions are manifesting themselves as collective—a process that this thesis terms 'sub-collectivism'.

### **The emergence of sub-collectivism**

This thesis will argue that managerial and professional workers' boundaries of tolerance of an increasingly unstable work situation are being substantially tested and that the repercussions from this are manifesting themselves in the form of, what is termed here as sub-collectivism—a *process* of collectivisation that is occurring in spite of pronounced support on the part of many managerial and professional workers for individualised *practices*. The research set out to establish the nature of collectivism among a group of workers whose behaviour is generally regarded as the byword for individualism. It identifies the extent to which occupants of seemingly individualised, or unique, roles have undergone a shift away from individualistic behaviour towards a more collective position on issues such as pay, consultation, bargaining and union participation. Fiercely protective of their skills, reputation and professional expertise, this group of workers was found to be deploying collective methods to seek protection from discrimination, injustice and negative workplace change, despite often having little or no notion that their actions were indeed characteristic of collective, as opposed to individual, behaviour. This thesis terms this behaviour 'default collectivisation' and argues that its facets signify the emergence of a sub-culture of collectivism, and may also signify a reattribution of collectivism.

This thesis acknowledges that differences exist between the managerial landscape and characteristics of Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA and, furthermore, that this reflects

the various definitions of managerial and professional workers. These definitions—and the contradictions inherent in their construction—will now be discussed.

### **The challenge of establishing definition**

Assigning a precise definition to a managerial or professional worker is complex and as the nature of managerial and professional work has become more individualised (Martinez-Lucio and Stewart, 1997), it has become necessary to realign the definition of a managerial and professional worker. The literature review in chapter one will describe the challenges posed by this process and will highlight the fact that while the majority of historical literature that relates to this group of workers does so in the context of ‘white-collar unionism’, it does so without expressly disaggregating managerial and professional workers; the particular group that is the focus of this research. While some historical writings have made a crude distinction between manual and non-manual workers (Lederer, 1912), others have made more complex, broad differentiations (Croner, 1962, whose definition focused on job content, and Bain 1970, who claimed that assembling occupational groups collectively was the most accurate way of identifying workers). Given that the world of work has changed quite significantly, and in some respects is practically unrecognisable to that of the late twentieth century (Brown and Edwards, 2009), however, this thesis must draw a distinction between the historical ‘white-collar’ worker and the contemporary managerial or professional worker, whose make-up, in spite of broad parallels with historical predecessors, is much less generic.

A number of writers (for example, Bain, 1970, Carter, 2012) have suggested that the term ‘white-collar’ is fraught with complexities and this thesis argues that a similar situation applies vis-à-vis attaching a reliable definition to managerial and professional workers. In neither rejecting nor accepting any one exclusive definition of a managerial or professional worker, this thesis therefore draws upon both occupational *and* class definitions in order to account for the various contradictions and ambiguities that present themselves in relation to definition, and which will be discussed later in this, and later, chapters. There is, of course, a distinction between class position and class orientation and in testing this, this thesis argues that a proportion of workers who are *called* managers, and yet who do not control the labour of others, could, given that they are not separated from the rest of the workforce, be

defined as working class, in spite of the way in which they consider their status, or their approach to attacks being made on it.

This thesis recognises that where historically workers who occupied administrative, supervisory or managerial status were all categorised as ‘white-collar’ workers, more recent changes to workplace structures have meant that additional strata have been incorporated into the category of ‘manager’. This has produced a transmutation of the term ‘manager’, which has resulted in those who *perform* managerial work and those whose job title *denotes* managerial function being subsumed into the one group in much the same way as managerial and professional workers are, according to many members and employees of the case-study unions in this research, considered within the context of ‘white-collar’. While once a manager may have held responsibility, either for people, productivity or workplace function, the essence of a manager is often now codified by virtue of their hierarchical (i.e. by band, grade or rank) position in their industry, organisation, or institution. This arguably suggests that the conflation between ‘white collar’ and ‘managerial and professional’ is perhaps not so anachronistic after all.

### **An occupational definition in a changing context**

While Armstrong et al’s (1986) class-based approach—defined in terms of control over labour—is useful in capturing change in the nature of managerial and professional work; this thesis focuses on the Weberian (1968) approach that defines managerial and professional workers in terms of occupational criteria, status and the identity and values of managerial and professional workers. This approach attempts to understand the conditions under which occupations are socially classified as skilled and the processes by which some occupations command higher status than others and how the defence of status plays out in a changed context. The thesis will also ask whether or not the changes that are occurring in managerial and professional work and workplaces denote a threat to *status*, as opposed to a change in class position. As such, this thesis examines the extent to which unionisation is a defensive response to the erosion of status and will ask whether evidence of Strauss’ (1954: 81) theory that ‘white-collar’ workers joined unions ‘not because they reject their middle-class aspirations, but because they see unionisation as a *better way* of obtaining them’ can

be identified among the managerial and professional members of the case-study unions in setting the definition in the wider employment relationship.

This thesis makes the point that, while historical writings on 'white-collar' workers are useful in establishing context, the ramifications of a changed labour market and political and economic landscape have created the need to address the definition of this group of workers from a fresh perspective. This means revisiting things like the nature of the work these workers actually perform, their workplace, their priorities, their motivations and perceptions of union membership and its value. The position adopted by the case-study unions is occupationally-based and this provides the starting point for this thesis. The stance taken by the majority of managerial and professional workers in this study, whose focus is not necessarily class (in their minds), but occupation, has also been instrumental. This thesis therefore acknowledges an occupational definition of managerial and professional workers, which disaggregates this particular group of workers from the more mainstream—and wider—category of 'white-collar'. This definition therefore excludes clerical and 'routine non-manual' (Goldthorpe and Payne, 1986) occupations, and focuses exclusively on workers who occupy managerial or professional bands, grades or ranks as defined by their organisations.

Snape and Bamber (1989: 93) classified managerial and professional workers as 'all those above the level of first-line supervisor, but below senior executive level', a definition that includes 'line managers and professional employees of a comparable status'. The occupations and professions that Snape and Bamber used as examples were: 'professional engineers and scientists, personnel and marketing specialists, and administrators' and this definition is one that aligns closely with the occupational groups targeted as part of this research. This thesis has therefore drawn respondents from this particular group among the three case-study unions and applies this criterion to define managerial and professional workers for the purpose of this study. This thesis, while endorsing an occupational definition of a managerial and professional worker, nonetheless acknowledges that the nature of occupations has changed markedly since that given consideration by writers such as Goldthorpe et al (1968).

That the nature of work is becoming more individualised at a time when this group of workers is showing signs of behaving collectively reveals a very real contradiction—one of several that will now be examined.

### **A contradictory consciousness**

This thesis argues that labour market change is instrumental in affecting definitions and concepts in relation to managerial and professional workers and workplaces. As such, it identifies a series of contradictions that have arisen from the divergence of managerial and professional employment, accelerating workplace change and the effects—compounded by recession—of labour market instability. Characteristics once firmly attributed to manual, or ‘blue-collar’ (an historical term used to define those who perform manual labour), workers, such as a propensity for industrial action or adoption of a collective approach in dealing with workplace issues for example, can now be located among managerial and professional workers in the case-study unions. This thesis therefore focuses on Martinez-Lucio and Stewart’s (1997: 54) identification of the ‘contradictions of the collective worker’ and the ‘individual experience and collective endeavour’ which are instrumental in realigning the definition of managerial and professional workers.

In order to illustrate some of the contradictions inherent in the research findings, this thesis considers managerial and professional workers’ roles in the means of production, which are relevant in explaining the behavioural shift towards a position of sub-collectivism. When capital, in an attempt to establish control over labour, and craft labour in particular (Clegg et al, 1986), began to manifest itself via the dismantling, or destruction, of craft unionism, workers’ jobs became less demanding of skill, and ultimately less skilled as a result. Perhaps more crucially, however, it has been argued by some that these workers lost ‘the capacity for collective action as they became more isolated from each other’ (Clegg et al, 1986: 95). This erosion of the craft tradition is evidenced in accounts from some workers who have participated in this research, and yet an anomaly has arisen in that while the scope for collectivism may have reduced, it has not had the effect of reinforcing individualism. In some cases, the opposite has occurred, whereby workers have begun to collectivise around issues that are threatening not only their jobs, but their skill-set, professional pride and sense of vocation. Despite the arguably logical assumption that a predominantly

servicing position (the servicing model of trade unionism focuses on the provision, usually by union officials, of individual (and collective) services to members (Heery et al, 2000)) equates to one of individualism, this thesis will argue that a significant contradiction is occurring whereby managerial and professional workers are endorsing a servicing position and yet are, albeit not in an immediately obvious sense, behaving collectively.

This research has found that, in terms of hierarchical structures, relationships between groups of workers are not as distinctive as they once were and many workplace changes, such as those that have led towards awarding the title of ‘manager’ as opposed to conferring managerial responsibility for subordinate workers (see chapter four), for example, have contributed to a reshaping of the managerial and professional workforce. Developments such as this may appear more stark as a result of labour market change and this may, to an extent, have contributed towards this group of workers’ inclination towards unionisation.

In discussing the emergence of sub-collectivism, this thesis will examine the differences between individualism and collectivism.

### **The individual and the collective**

Over the last ten years there has been considerable interest in approaches to understanding collectivisation among various groups of workers and while this has included low-paid and migrant workers (Wills, 2004, Holgate, 2005), an omission remains in the sphere of managerial and professional workers. Although a number of studies took place in the 1970s and 1980s (Dickens, 1972, McLoughlin, 1984, Conlon and Gallagher, 1987), there has been a dearth of more recent research in this area. Green (2003), in her observations of managerial and professional union growth in the US<sup>1</sup>, noted that managerial and professional unionism was undergoing quite radical reconfiguration and the relevance of union representation was being revisited by managerial and professional workers, who sought a voice in an increasingly volatile work situation. The 2011 Labour Force Survey (LFS) showed that union density was highest in professional occupations at 45.4 per cent (The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), (formerly the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI), 2011), but showed an overall *mixed* picture of increase and decline among managers,

those in professional, associate professional and technical, and skilled trade occupations (see appendix 1). That membership in the managerial and professional sectors of Nautilus and the TSSA, and within Prospect overall, has sustained a relatively stable course over the last decade (appendix 1.1 shows a breakdown of membership figures for each of the case-study unions between 2001 and 2010 and chapter three includes detailed information on membership of these unions) could therefore authenticate the notion that trade unionism *is* appealing to workers—and workers whom it has historically and traditionally bypassed.

Hyman (2003, 2010) highlights the dichotomy between individualism and collectivism, defining individualism as an ‘emphasis on the freedom of contract, on voluntarism, a narrow focus on company or workplace relations’, which suggests a distinct lack of concern with the tensions and contradictions between ‘market dynamics and larger social policy issues’ (Frege et al, 2011: 222). Given the changes that appear to be taking place not only to managerial and professional *work*, but also to the way that the worker identifies with their work and their workplace, this thesis considers how far the behaviour of the three case-study unions and/or their managerial and professional members reflects these tensions and contradictions.

If we are to accept that managerial and professional workers have traditionally regarded themselves as individualised, having a distinctive status, or possessing the ability to achieve social advancement without the need or preference for external assistance (Allen, 1971), and feeling almost entirely able to protect their own interests (Waddington and Whitston, 1995), then it could be assumed that there is a limited basis for collectivism. Provision for pensions, sick pay and holidays, for example, were once the exclusive domain of ‘white-collar’ workers but are now available to manual workers, which this thesis argues has diluted the value formerly attached to the ‘white-collar’ work status. However, in their discussion on the distinction between individualism and collectivism, Healy et al (2004: 454) considered the forms of collectivism that ‘emerge from the differentiation and marginalisation’ of certain workforce sectors. In doing so, they refer to Fox’s (1985: 192) term ‘atomistic’ individualism, whereby individuals, while prioritising self-interest nonetheless find it ‘expedient to act in concert with others on those issues where collective action yields better results’. This thesis argues that this concept is one to which many managerial



and professional members of Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA sub-consciously subscribe.

In considering the distinctions between individualism and collectivism, it is necessary to evaluate the reasons for managerial and professional workers' unionisation. Research into individual reasons to join a union led Van de Vall (1963) to identify three categories:

1. Instrumental motives; where people participate in order to profit from union facilities, such as financial support during strike action, or protection from arbitrary abuse by employers.
2. Ideal-collective motives; where people participate as a result of their belief in the trade union movement as a vehicle for change.
3. Social pressure; where people participate in response to social pressure from family members, colleagues or peers.

Klandermans (1986), in his empirical assessment of the multidimensionality of union participation, identified that 'ideal-collective' motives are more evident among older, managerial or professional workers than they are among younger, manual workers. Klandermans' findings similarly demonstrated that managers rated trade unions more highly than their manual counterparts. This thesis will demonstrate that despite lack of identification on the part of respondents in this research with the motives outlined by Klandermans, support and recognition for their union's aims and objectives are nonetheless apparent.

While Waddington and Whitston (1997: 523), in describing the 'different agenda' adopted by 'white-collar' workers, observed that these workers were 'more instrumental, less collective and less militant', this research questions whether managerial and professional workers lack collectivism and suggests that individualisation may not necessarily preclude collectivisation. In explaining the emergence of sub-collective behaviour among managerial and professional members of the case-study unions, this thesis acknowledges Carter's (1985: 111) observation that 'conflict within the managerial function may not be overt and collective, but it exists nevertheless. The fact that it frequently takes the form of clashes between individuals is no less a consequence of capitalist organisation than the collective

conflict between management and manual workers'. It is also difficult to ignore Allen's (1971: 92) statement, that far from 'white-collar' workers undergoing a 'revolution in attitude', it was not in fact a new phenomenon for members of this group to 'act collectively', and as such, this thesis argues that the absence of collectivism is no longer as distinct, and that behaviour exhibited among the managerial and professional union members in the case-study unions shows signs of sub-collectivism.

This thesis explores the position adopted by managerial and professional members of the three case-study unions in relation to current employment relations and the environment inhabited by this group of workers and their employers. The research relates to Thompson's (2003) disconnected capitalism theory, which demonstrates that managerial and professional workers' interests are increasingly disconnected from employers and share-holders' objectives. This, in turn, has resulted in employers seeking increasing, and often unrealistic, returns from the engagement and performance of this group of workers, who have started to feel exploited in much the same way as their manual counterparts. The rate, therefore, at which the gap between threats faced by manual, or blue-collar, and managerial and professional, workers appears to be narrowing provides the basis for this thesis to discuss what is termed here as 'equalisation of threat' and will consider the effects and repercussions that this has on members of the case-study unions.

As part of the discussion on sub-collectivism, this thesis will discuss social closure and its role in responding to the question as to how a group of workers that supposedly endorses what are essentially exclusionary strategies, has begun to behave in such a way as to embrace or typify the more *inclusive* strategy of collectivisation.

### **The significance of social closure and its relation to sub-collectivism**

This thesis asks whether managerial and professional workers are defined by status and considers the argument put forward by many managerial and professional workers involved in this research that their work situation bears a growing similarity to that of their manual, or blue-collar, counterparts. It also considers the extent to which these workers perceive their unionisation as a form of 'safeguarding' against potential damage to their professional profile. This thesis therefore considers the

significance of social closure in relation to managerial and professional workers' incentives to unionisation. The concept of social closure, which has its origins in neo-Weberian theory, outlines the tendency of groups to restrict entry to 'outsiders' in order to optimise their own professional benefit. Identified as an alternative to Marxist theories, social closure was seen as the means by which 'commercial and property' classes advanced their social class and mobility; a mobilising power that excluded others from privilege or reward. Given the significance that these workers attach to the way in which their company, organisation or institution, and by association, they themselves, are perceived, this thesis examines this aspect among managerial and professional members of the case-study unions.

In his landmark book, *The Growth of White-Collar Unionism* (1970) Bain, for example, argued that 'the more strongly management disapproves of trade unions, the less likely workers are to join them in case they jeopardise their career prospects' (1970: 122-123). This research would, however, suggest the converse; that managerial and professional workers are now seeking union membership as a means of securing protection of those career prospects and validation, ergo professional status. This thesis therefore contradicts the argument that management dislike or censure of unions is instrumental in deterring the managerial and professional workers interviewed in this research from union membership.

The status position of managerial and professional workers highlights a significant contradiction insofar as this group of workers' unionisation is, in many cases, undertaken with the aim of securing a protective barrier against erosion or devaluing of status or professional standing. While this thesis accepts that status remains a crucial element for many managerial and professional workers, it nonetheless aims to test the ways in which protection of this status is maintained, and how these have changed, as a new set of demands and expectations is made by these workers in the form of increased professionalism in employer-union relations, a transactional approach to bargaining and a fresh approach to protection against hostile or arbitrary employment practices; factors that suggest that perception of union membership among this group of workers is recalibrating.

## Structure of the thesis

Chapter One outlines the theoretical framework of the thesis by examining literature that has been instrumental in establishing a reliable definition of a managerial or professional worker and union. The majority of literature that evaluates this issue in its entirety is relatively dated and despite literature that deals specifically with certain *aspects* of managerial and professional unionism, such as work organisation (Brown and Edwards, 2009), for example, there remains a considerable dearth of literature that exclusively addresses managerial and professional work and workers. This chapter analyses key debates on individualisation and collectivisation, the class composition of managerial and professional workers, the status elements that determine the consciousness of this group of workers, and the changing nature of trade unionism (Heery and Kelly, 1994, Waddington and Whitston, 1997, Kelly, 1998), before moving on to explore the character and development of unionisation among managerial and professional workers.

Chapter Two outlines the epistemological framework and research strategy adopted. This chapter discusses the ways in which collectivisation is researched among managerial and professional workers in the three unions. This is addressed using a multi-method approach whose components (survey questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, observations) are explained in depth. This thesis considers the interactions that construct work both individually and collectively and this chapter uses a constructionist approach to facilitate analysis of the ways in which the group of workers under study conducts and processes these interactions and subsequently constructs its reality.

Chapter Three is a contextual chapter which includes a synopsis of the history of each union, charting developments such as mergers and the impact of economic, political and industrial change. The chapter attempts to establish the industrial position of the unions under study by addressing membership configuration, collective bargaining coverage and density, and the way in which managerial and professional members are organised and how they respond to the implementation of their union's policies. The chapter examines the extent to which these unions are distinct from other unions and outlines their approaches to factors such as union-employer relations, industrial action and political profile. This chapter focuses extensively on research conducted with full-

time officers of each union, whose input set the scene for interviews conducted with members. Findings from research with union officers are evaluated throughout this and following chapters in order to lend additional context to the functions of the unions.

Chapter Four evaluates the nature of managerial and professional work. It addresses the differentiation between unique and individualised occupations and discusses the factors that individualise these occupations. The chapter examines the ways in which members of the case-study unions are responding to workplace change, reorganisation and restructure against a backdrop of economic and political upheaval. It also considers the impact that change has on members' perception of and approach to union membership. The chapter addresses the significance of managerial and professional workers' understanding of what constitutes individualism and collectivism before addressing the factors that challenge individualism, such as pay and job security along with emergent issues such as increased sense of isolation and risk. The chapter concludes by identifying some of the factors that characterise the emerging trend of sub-collectivism.

Chapter Five addresses the factors that cause managerial and professional workers to cohere and how their behaviour indicates sub-collectivism. The chapter examines the unionisation of managerial and professional workers and highlights the ways in which sets of predominantly individual behaviours are manifesting themselves in a collective manner. The chapter analyses survey questionnaire data that provides evidence that this group of workers is collectivising, albeit subtly, and to an extent by default. Central to the research is identification of the reasons *why* this group of workers unionises. This chapter discusses the factors that incentivise managerial and professional workers to unionise and attempts, via interviews, survey questionnaire and observational data, to characterise their union membership.

Chapter Six examines the issue of 'harmonistic collectivism' (Price, 1983) and considers three key themes that emerged as significant among the research population in terms of establishing their wider industrial perspective. These are: partnership working, industrial action and political profile and affiliation. The chapter evaluates the case-study unions' position on these factors and discusses their instrumentality in

shaping members' stance on union membership and its role in society. Analysis of these themes also goes some way to identifying the extent to which this group of workers behaves collectively.

The concluding chapter summarises the key findings, namely in respect of the element of sub-collectivism that appears to be emerging among managerial and professional workers in Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA. This chapter includes discussion as to what the research findings mean for these three unions and addresses their current position with a view to determining the extent to which current industrial, economic and political developments might impact on these unions' future. The chapter also discusses developmental factors that may have influenced, or may influence in the future, further growth and success in securing strong and sustainable unions. This includes analysis of changes to the structure of the unions, in addition to social, political and economic developments that have impacted on the unions since the commencement of the research.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis, in setting out to address the research questions, starts by attempting to establish a reliable definition of a managerial and professional worker. It argues that anomalies exist in relation to defining managerial and professional workers, some of which bear similarity to those identified by writers who have focused historically on 'white-collar' workers (Lockwood, 1958, Bain, 1970). It separates managerial and professional workers from the wider 'white-collar' category and as such, focuses exclusively on those workers who occupy managerial and professional bands, grades or ranks. The thesis acknowledges that the effects of a changed, and changing, labour market are significant to this research and looks at what these changes are, how they have impacted on managerial and professional workers and the way they think about their role and the purpose of joining a union. The thesis identifies the position adopted by managerial and professional members of Nautilus International, Prospect and the TSSA in relation to their unionisation and behaviour and while it recognises that many workers take up union membership with the objective of retaining their status, they more usually do so from a *monetary* perspective, whereas it could be argued that managerial and professional workers do so in order to retain their status in terms of *identity*.

This provides a starting point from which to analyse the factors that influence and impact upon managerial and professional workers and while it acknowledges that changes that have taken place over the last decade—the period covered by this thesis—have been so significant as to warrant an approach to defining this group of workers that takes account of this. This means revisiting a variety of factors, such as the nature of managerial and professional workers' work and work situation, their approaches to union membership and its role in their day-to-day function as managerial and professional workers.

This thesis will argue that the increased sense of job insecurity that has surfaced among managerial and professional workers as a result of work and workplace restructuring (Collinson and Collinson, 1997) is creating a sense of trepidation that is leading managerial and professional workers to establish a culture of sub-collectivism. Issues such as Performance-Related-Pay (PRP), streamlining, rationalisation and restructure are very much at the forefront of many current managerial and professional workplace agendas. Of course, these issues affect *all* workers in the industries and sectors in which the case-study unions are recognised, and yet many managerial and professional workers appear to be less disposed to place trust in their employers' capacity or inclination to look after their interests. It could be asserted that these workers, in demonstrating resilience against a backdrop of labour market instability, are countering individualism; a concept which reinforces a culture of sub-collectivism that this thesis argues is emergent.

## **Chapter one**

### **Employee status and its impact on the collectivisation of managerial and professional workers—an analysis of literature**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter begins with a review of historical literature on ‘white-collar’ unionism before evaluating the factors that define contemporary managerial and professional unionism. Some of this work has analysed how various factors affect workers’ decisions to unionise (Waddington and Whitston, 1997, Cregan, 2005), while others have focused on the changing nature of trade unionism (Frege et al, 2011). Considerable research has also taken place into trade union decline (Machin, 2000, Heery, 2001, Bryson et al, 2004, Pollert, 2005, Bryson and Forth, 2010). Yet there has been a dearth of studies that have examined the disjuncture between overall trade union decline and the fact that union membership is demonstrating resilience among those previously considered to be the least likely to join unions—managerial and professional workers. An important debate has taken place about individualism and collectivism in the fields of management, sociology and industrial relations and this thesis will discuss this in relation to the managerial and professional workers in this study.

In order to establish a basis for responding to the research questions posed in this thesis, this chapter will discuss three significant facets of managerial and professional unionism. These are: definition, character, and change. In doing so, it will revisit the issues that affect managerial and professional workers in relation to class identity, changes in work and workplace, and the context of managerial and professional work. Before proceeding further, however, it is important to establish an historical context to the research, by examining literature that has outlined the institution and development of managerial and professional unionism, and by concentrating on the definition, character, or ‘unionateness’ of ‘white-collar’ workers and unions. What does the classification mean? How have scholars historically defined this group of workers? This thesis aims to address the ‘many gaps in the information about the blackcoated



workers' that Lockwood acknowledged in his conclusion to *The Blackcoated Worker* and will ask whether the value attached to being called a 'manager' is fundamentally different now to that attached to the 'white-collar' workers of the past, and the extent to which changes over time have led to the need to revise these definitions and the criteria upon which they are based.

### **Historical approaches to 'white-collar'**

One of the first people to attempt to define the 'white-collar phenomenon' was a German sociologist, Emil Lederer, who in the early twentieth century, identified 'white-collar' employees as 'all those employees who do not work as *Arbeiter* (worker), that is, in purely manual occupations' (Bain and Price, 1972: 326). Lederer made a clear distinction between manual and non-manual character, where the manual worker receives a 'wage' and the non-manual worker a 'salary'—a crude, but nonetheless apposite indicator of a base distinction that has withstood widespread conjecture over time.

Lederer's concept, however, tends to shift the definitional problem from 'white-collar' and 'blue-collar' to 'intellectual' and 'manual'. This is inconclusive insofar as it would have to adequately demonstrate that work of an intellectual nature is performed either 'exclusively' by white-collar workers, or at the very least involves 'significantly greater intellectual effort' than manual work (Bain and Price, 1972: 328). The problems associated with this are manifold. Bain and Price argued that it would be unlikely that there could ever be any form of white-collar employment so intellectual in nature that it would not in any way merit or involve some form of physical input. Conversely, it would be highly unlikely that manual work would involve a complete absence of intellectual effort. The problem thus becomes one of distinguishing between 'predominantly intellectual' and 'predominantly manual' employment.

Fritz Croner's (1954) functional approach offers a more sociological and objective definition, rejecting the intellectual or educational status definition as being subjective. Croner defined white-collar workers as those who perform the following functions: 'administration...; design, analysis and planning...; supervisory/managerial...; commercial...' (Bain and Price, 1972: 331). Croner believed that these

functional groups represented the distinguishing features of white-collar employment, asserting that in early capitalist development, employers had to perform functions other than those which required the more obvious business or leadership skills, such as 'innovation and risk-bearing' (Bain and Price, 1972: 332).

The problem with the functional approach (and similar to that of the 'brain-brawn' approach, which will be discussed later in this section) is that it diminishes the definition of 'white-collar'. Croner (1954: 129-130) recognised this and justified his classification by stating that his theory was not a 'slot machine into which one can insert a job description and get it out neatly labelled 'white-collar', or 'manual''. In spite of its ambiguity, however, this theory provides a systematic benchmark by which analysis can be undertaken.

Lockwood's (1958) approach focused not only on the market and status—but also work—situation, which Lockwood claimed; 'involves the separation and concentration of individuals, affords possibilities of identification with and alienation from others, and conditions feelings of isolation, antagonism and solidarity' (p. 205) and is one that affects *all* workers. Lockwood also claimed that the class position is generally measured in relation to the manual workforce whereby workers are grouped together both socially and physically, thus providing a basis for collective action. 'Blackcoated' workers, on the other hand, were more attuned to a paternalistic work culture that promoted division and detachment and discouraged uniformity, which culminated in employers encouraging 'individualistic aspirations' (p. 207) among their 'blackcoated' workforce.

An eclectic approach to this definitional debate, adopted by Swiss sociologist, Roger Girod (1961), focuses primarily on the work environment, or 'milieu', whereby the status of an employee is classified in accordance with the environment in which they work. Girod divided the work milieu into two categories: 'mechanical' for manual workers, and 'bureaucratic' (or 'non-mechanical') for white-collar workers. As ambiguous as the brain-brawn and functional approaches, the eclectic approach also merely shifts the problem of definition. It could also be argued that this approach fails to take adequate account of the complex nature and composition of work.

In his second and somewhat more intricate principle, Girod implied that in assigning the description of 'manual' to a job, the job must be concerned with manual objects and the aim of workers' contact with these objects is to render them functional. Girod argued that non-manual work is primarily human-oriented; its function being to 'inform human conduct' (Bain and Price, 1972: 328). The problem with this definition is that many, if not the majority, of occupations will fit neither immediately nor naturally into these categories. If strict logic were to be applied to this theory, then occupations that are generally considered to be typically white-collar would have to be classified as 'material' and vice-versa. This inevitably causes conflict in establishing consistent and reliable definition.

Echoing Burns' (1956: 331) sentiment that management included 'all but the rank-and-file workmen', Bain's (1970) model suggested that managers perceived themselves as having more in common with managerial, rather than manual workers, or are seen by employer-managers as being part of the 'staff' as opposed to being part of the 'works'. This thesis argues that this element is relevant in determining a modern definition of a managerial or professional worker and will address this as part of a broader discussion on the difficulties inherent in defining this group of workers.

Despite Bain and Price's (1972: 325) assertion that the definition of a white-collar worker was 'vague', and often 'means one thing to one person and something else to another', they nonetheless attempted to define white-collar workers by the 'brain-brawn' approach. This approach emanated from recognition that clerical employment emerged from restricted access to minimum educational qualifications, and a high degree of physical exertion was a typically necessary requirement for a manual worker. Bain and Price (1972: 326) termed this the 'intellectual—manual dichotomy in the labour force'. The brain-brawn definition has, however, attracted a certain amount of criticism, in that the terms 'white-collar' and 'blue-collar' are not necessarily divisible.

That historically, writers have acknowledged that difficulties exist in comprehensively defining 'white-collar' workers is not without significance and this thesis similarly acknowledges that problems exist in assigning a *precise* definition to a managerial or

professional worker. The following section will therefore explore some of the challenges posed by the process of definition.

### **The challenge of defining and distinguishing between managerial and professional workers and work**

This research focuses on managerial and professional workers in three case-study unions and tests the criteria that have historically been used to define this group of workers in a changed labour market and context. Various challenges therefore present themselves. The first is to establish a definition of this group of workers that captures variation but also locates it within an historical literature on white-collar workers. It would be inappropriate, for example, to merely attempt to align the managerial and professional workers in this study with the 'white-collar' workers to whom writers such as Lockwood (1958), or Bain (1970), for example, referred, not least because the social, economic and historical positioning of these workers has changed considerably since these influential works were written.

It is claimed that the term 'white-collar' is 'laden with different meanings and assumptions' (Carter, 2012: 1) and defining a managerial and professional worker is no less complex. Certain descriptive elements have also fuelled the debate over who is a managerial or professional worker. Where historically workers 'clocked-on', for example, 'white-collar' workers, or 'staff', had fixed hours of work. Workers' pay was calculated hourly or weekly, whereas staff received a salary. Workers had no pension schemes or sick pay, whereas staff enjoyed both. Workers could be dismissed with immediate effect, whereas staff had the protection of notice periods. As employment legislation has become more refined and sophisticated, however, these status differentiations have been substantially eroded; a development which arguably represents a key factor in relation to the change in definition between manual and managerial and professional. The use of terms like 'supervisory', 'managerial', 'administrative' or 'commercial' are also often interpreted differently according to the individual(s) or organisation(s) deploying them, which may also leave definition susceptible to ambiguity. With these distinctions in mind, this research considers the way in which the case-study unions categorise themselves.

While it is, of course, accepted that self-definitions are not a reliable source of 'fact', unionisation is, nonetheless, shaped by these definitions. The terms by which these unions identify themselves provide a valuable insight into the problematic nature of assigning accurate definition. Officers and employees of these unions revealed the different ways in which they identify their unions: while Nautilus considers itself to be a 'genuine all-grades' union, Prospect describes itself as a 'managerial and professional' union, while the TSSA is the only union that terms itself 'white-collar'. Yet in spite of the predominantly historical significance attached to the term, all three acknowledge their role in a 'white-collar' union context. Many members and employees of the unions involved in this study consider the term 'white-collar' to embrace a wide variety of roles and occupations: clerical, supervisory, skilled, technical or managerial, and yet they concur that the term 'managerial and professional' relates to workers who occupy managerial or professional bands, grades or ranks, but who may nonetheless be categorised as 'white-collar' workers. That they appear to be using an historically anachronistic term suggests that the case-study unions consider managerial and professional workers as integral to a wider, and arguably looser, definition of 'white-collar'. As such, this thesis concludes that the term 'white-collar' has been used to denote non-manual workers, which is a very wide category, and that managerial and professional workers have been subsumed therein.

This chapter will now discuss the definition of managerial and professional workers in a changed work context.

### **Managerial and professional workers in a changed work context**

This thesis argues that change, in its many formats, has had an impact on the complexion of managerial and professional work, workers and workplaces and will start by examining the identification of managerial and professional workers.

#### **Job title distinction and reconfiguration**

Job title distinction is less definitive in determining whether or not a worker is white-collar. In the past, this has been an easier distinction to make, for instance, the term 'supervisor' was clearly distinct from that of 'foreman', yet the explosion of jobs in technologically advanced industries are creating job titles that are becoming increasingly indistinct and in many cases often bear little relevance to the work

actually being undertaken (Edwards, 2003). This frustrates the process of classification into manual and non-manual categories. It could furthermore be argued that as the definition of a manager has become more opaque, so the role has become more sophisticated. Lack of clear delineation between the function of worker and manager has meant that the role has become more complex and relationships between workers and management have less transparent parameters than they have had previously.

Multi-tier management has further complicated the process of classification, as well as increasing the potential for division among workers and weakening their aggregate strength. For example, the nature and content of job descriptions has changed considerably since Network Rail assumed responsibility for the national UK rail infrastructure after Railtrack went into administration in 2002. 'Template' job descriptions were introduced as part of the company's drive for consistency in the way that it operates, as opposed to continuing to allow line managers to arbitrarily amend job descriptions, which resulted in jobs with the same title, or ostensibly the same purpose, having different accountabilities (Network Rail HR manager, 2009). This, while removing a substantial amount of scope to individualise employment contracts has, however, increased the extent to which previously non-management accountabilities are now subsumed into the managerial role. As these companies, organisations and institutions expand and restructure, sub-division and delegation among workers increases. Managerial reporting lines become longer and more convoluted—a worker may no longer report exclusively to one manager; they may have a 'dotted line' reporting structure (reporting to multiple managers, departments or divisions), which obscures their positioning in the company's hierarchy.

Other features that lend themselves to the definition of managerial and professional workers are perhaps less considered facets of the workplace, such as dress-code, which is symbolic, albeit perhaps aesthetically, of a worker's status. Factors such as these indicate where a worker is positioned in the hierarchy of authority, which tends to evoke a 'popular consciousness' notion of 'managerial and professional'. To illustrate; the majority of managerial and professional workers occupy subordinate positions in much the same way as manual workers do, but may set themselves apart by wearing a certain type or style of dress. This is representative of one of the 'readily

identifiable symbols' that Bain and Price (1972: 328) considered instrumental in linking 'white-collar' workers to authority, or association with authority. This suggests that a worker who demonstrates symbolic association with authority is more likely to be defined as managerial or professional than a worker who does not.

In order to examine the extent to which changes in actual work have informed the definition of managerial and professional workers, the next section will consider the degradation—or deskilling—of work in modern capitalist societies.

### Deskilling and the proletarianisation debate

This thesis considers past debates about proletarianisation in relation to managerial and professional work. Some writers, such as Poulantzas (1975), for example, have claimed that deskilling did not constitute proletarianisation, whilst Armstrong et al (1986) asserted that deskilling did not lead supervisors to change sides between capital and labour; indeed that it had the opposite effect, in which case proletarianisation of condition is *not* necessarily synonymous with a changed place in class orientation. Carter (1979: 307) argued that the 'proletarianization of middle class workers may be taking place but their adoption of trade union defences does not mean they accept their eventual equalization with the position of manual worker'. In identifying with Carter's argument, this thesis discusses the element of isolation or distinctiveness that is maintained by managerial and professional workers in the case-study unions and will evaluate the extent to which they subscribe to this notion of 'separateness'.

Braverman's (1974) distinction between conception and execution; where management gains knowledge at the expense of workers and acquires complete control over the production process, is worth noting in relation to the work situation being experienced by many managerial and professional workers. In his analysis of craft occupations, Braverman suggested that both manual and non-manual work were being deskilled, which resulted in proletarianisation of blue- and white-collar workforces. Braverman's focus was on the capitalist mode of production, and the way in which workplace technology was determining the type of work undertaken and changing types of labour processes and the elements of management control. Braverman rejected an 'arbitrary conception' of the 'new working class' on the basis

that in embracing so-called 'specialist' occupations such as engineers, scientists, technicians, teachers, administrators and managerial workers, a fundamentally new meaning became attached to the term 'working class' (1974: 25-26). Braverman therefore argued that the term 'educated labor' emerged to define better paid or privileged workers. Perhaps more importantly, this marked a significant distinction from the term 'manual labor', which signified 'old working class.'

It could be argued that deskilling has had a major impact on managerial and professional workers and their decision to unionise. Carchedi (1977) recognised that the downgrading of roles led to disaffection among an ever increasing populus of workers possessing specialist skills and qualifications, whose employment security, notwithstanding recession, was less certain. It was Roslender's (1983: 42) view that engineers, scientists and technologists were the most 'economically proletarianised' of professional workers in Britain. Roslender identified several factors that he felt were instrumental; firstly he estimated that these workers were 'probably the most numerous of private sector professional workers' and as such were widely employed. Secondly, these workers' professional associations adopted a co-operative mode of working with employers. Roslender also highlighted the 'comparatively sizeable numbers' of these workers who demonstrated an interest in trade unionism. That these workers' roles were formalised and well-established also arguably increases their exposure to Braverman's notion of deskilling. Just as Zimbalist (1979), in his research in the printing industry, contrasted the skills-based work of the late nineteenth century with the deskilled work of the late twentieth century where word-processing technology undermined the traditional 'craft' of typesetting, the post-privatisation UK rail industry has seen systematic fragmentation of work, where workers have gradually lost the integrated skills and knowledge that were once essential industry requirements and this has been accompanied by a marked shift towards generic and templated organisational frameworks.

Specifying a reliable definition of a managerial or professional worker requires analysis of the roles and tasks that are undertaken by these workers. Discussion of the concept of skill and how this relates to the definition of managerial and professional workers is therefore necessary.



## Skills and professions

While this thesis does not attempt to disseminate Cockburn's (1983) perspective on the difference between skill in a *person*, skill required in a *job* and the social setting in which skill is significant, it is nonetheless important to consider the relation of skill to the group of workers involved in this study. The social construction of skill is not straightforward (Attewell, 1990) and current workplace configuration arguably only complicates this further, given that reference is increasingly made to a much broader range of skills, such as 'thinking skills', 'team working skills', 'communication skills', 'basic skills', 'motivation', 'discipline', 'enthusiasm', and even the 'willingness to work hard' (Lloyd and Payne, 2008: 1). Attempts therefore to re-label as skills features that at one time may have been considered to constitute personal behavioural attributes may have resulted in the concept being protracted to the extent that it has lost its meaning (Payne, 2000). That said, some discussion of skill is necessary in order to determine the type of work that the workers and unions under study in this research consider to constitute skill and establish the extent to which this classifies their roles as managerial and professional. Littler (1982) described 'skilled' work as 'task discretion and employee control over the work process' (Lloyd and Payne, 2008: 3), while Korczynski (2005) more recently considered job complexity to be increasingly significant in defining skill and it is this element that is instrumental in defining the skill attached to many roles performed by respondents in this study. This thesis suggests that the diversity of these roles further contributes to this complexity.

The specifically managerial role, according to Thompson (1961: 486) can be defined as an 'organized pattern of behavior in accordance with the expectation of others'. Yet if we are to accept this definition, then how might we account for the status of an individual who occupies a managerial-grade position, by virtue of length of service, pay or incentive, but who does not assume responsibility either for people, projects, budgets or transactions that tend to be more identifiable with the role of a 'manager'? In his analysis of rail industry workers, Strangleman (2004) observed that many managerial-grade workers did not necessarily perceive themselves as managers and considered themselves to be railway workers first and foremost. Management staff in the rail industry were originally recruited externally, often from the armed forces, and there quickly developed, according to Strangleman (2004: 49); a 'sophisticated organisational hierarchy with its own internal labour markets', a process that arguably

highlights the issue of identification with an occupation because of its exclusivity or prestige. The definition of a professional worker is arguably less obscure; confined perhaps more distinctly to the acquisition of professional status or recognition, via a more direct route from qualification or accreditation pathways.

To adequately outline the multidimensionality of the definition of 'managerial and professional', it is necessary to recognise the notion of 'professionalism'. Associative definition, or that which is assigned according to qualifications, is more focused on profession. For example, while scientists, teachers or nurses may not consider themselves to be 'managers' they are nonetheless deemed to fall into the 'managerial and professional' category by virtue of their professional status.

In order to evaluate the way in which managerial and professional workers situate themselves professionally, industrially and personally, this chapter will examine class structures, changing class composition and the problems inherent in the process of class identification.

### **The class position and interests of managerial and professional workers**

Some writers have asserted that over the last century the social class debate has 'mirrored changes in the profile and structure of the labour force' (Marks and Baldry, 2009: 1). The approach in this thesis, however, is not to simply attempt to characterise the class composition of the unions under study, but to acknowledge that they are the product of complex interactions where the demands of members are managed and transformed by the unions themselves. Central to the argument adopted by this thesis is the extent to which managerial and professional workers strive to secure and enhance their role as workers who act as controllers *of* other workers as opposed to furthering their own interests *as* workers. Carter's criteria are useful in locating the different groups of workers studied here in the context of a changed labour market and reconfigured employment relations. In his work on the 'new middle class', Carter (1985) discussed the retheorising of the class location of those who do not own the means of production but who perform roles on *behalf of capital* in the production process, and this view is tested against workers drawn from the case-study unions. This thesis observes the extent to which the different groups of workers in the case-study unions embody the control of others' labour power, or whether the title of

manager is just that—a term by which certain workers are referred, as opposed to one that is *associated with process*, as in authority, leadership or control over others.

Marxist theorists such as Poulantzas (1975), Carchedi (1977) and Wright (1977) have developed complex class structures that have effectively re-theorised class composition. Poulantzas, for example, constructed his theory of class relations on the assumption that productive labour was characteristic of working class membership and by adding an ideological and political dimension to his analysis, Poulantzas identified a ‘new petty bourgeoisie’ who performed ‘unproductive’ labour. In recognising the ‘double nature’ of the work of management, Poulantzas, according to Carter (1985: 75), also maintains that those who ‘perform productive work will not necessarily be working class because the distinction between productive and unproductive labour is not sufficient to delimit class boundaries’.

In attempting to define the ‘new middle class’, Carchedi (1975) claimed that the previously homogenous middle class became fragmented and classes began to ‘proliferate at an alarming rate’ (Rikowski, 2001: 7). Focusing on the distinction between ownership and non-ownership of the means of production, labourers and non-labourers and producers and non-producers, Carchedi classified occupants of the capitalist class as owners, non-labourers and non-producers and the working class as non-owners, labourers and producers (Armstrong et al, 1986). In order to incorporate the ‘new middle class’ into his analysis, Carchedi recognised that the labour process ‘was subjected to continuous revolution, it became complex, and labour was socialised’ (Nichols, in Armstrong et al, 1986: 5). Carchedi observed the emergence of a category of non-owners who performed the ‘global function of capital...without owning the means of production’ (1977: 89) and this element is one that, to an extent, could characterise many of the managerial and professional members of the three case-study unions.

If we are to consider class in relation to the means of production, then it is important to examine Urry’s (1973: 181) work, which discusses two dichotomies: ‘ownership/non-ownership of the means of production [and] production/non-production of value’, which in turn produce two classes—one that owns the means of production, but does not produce value, and that which does *not* own the means of

production, but *does* produce value. Urry illustrates these dichotomies by highlighting the group of workers that owns neither productive property nor produces value. This includes managers, professionals, commercial employees, technologists, and workers who are classified as white-collar, but whose work is largely manual, such as foremen and shop assistants. None of these workers own the means of production, they all carry out actual work and perhaps more significantly, they all hold some sort of status position in the workplace. Managers are 'responsible for controlling workplace operations and for hiring labour, whereas professional workers are neither responsible for operational control or for the hiring of labour—indeed, it could be argued that their prime function is to 'maintain the material and human capital necessary for capital accumulation' (Urry, 1973: 185).

In the past two decades, the concept of empowerment (Blyton and Turnbull, 1998, Rose, 2004) has led to managerial definitions being established for those who are *not* controlling the labour power of others. It could be argued that, for example, the majority of TSSA members do not control the labour of other workers and that their job titles are notional, which could subsequently allow the union (and its members) to be more collective in its/their approach. In Nautilus, however, managers *do* have control over the labour of others and are more concerned with protecting their own status, which may well reinforce its essentially servicing-oriented character.

The scope of the management profile in the 2000s has expanded so substantially as to embrace an increasingly diverse range of managerial *workers*; those who may have previously occupied lower-status roles but who now inhabit complex and multi-layered workplaces whose structures and hierarchies are undergoing significant transformation (Strangleman, 2004). The scale of change that took place when Network Rail assumed responsibility for the national UK rail infrastructure after Railtrack went into administration in 2002, for example, produced a markedly different managerial profile, which included greater numbers of managers and a more intricate and diverse range of roles and responsibilities. That instances such as this could point to a greater need for a class-based definition further reinforces the need to acknowledge the contradictions that are inherent in classifying this group of workers according to a particular class position and this will be discussed in a later section.

Given the extent of differentiation in managerial and professional work that has taken place over the last century this thesis asks whether it is too simplistic, too crude, to refer to the managerial and professional workforce as 'part' of the 'middle class'. Taking the approach that labour market change is a major contributor to the growing differentiation within managerial and professional work, this thesis argues that historical work on 'white-collar' employment has assumed a middle class status for this group of workers. The 1950s, for example, saw a significant differentiation occur within this type of work, whereby highly paid executive positions began to emerge alongside lower paid, routine, non-manual work. This development saw division take place into two major groups: the managerial and professional and clerical and routine non-manual (Goldthorpe and Payne, 1986) which, it could be suggested, has created a polarisation of white-collar employment. This thesis, however, suggests that more recent developments have created further obfuscation.

#### The validity of class theorisation

In discussing the class position of managerial and professional workers, this thesis argues that, as the managerial and professional landscape has been reconfigured, traditional differences between managerial and professional and other workers have been undermined. In 1959 Dahrendorf argued that 'new' managers were 'different by special background, training and experience' and behaved differently from 'old capitalists' (Carter, 1985: 94). More recently, it has been suggested that capital and labour are integral to individuals, as 'social beings incorporating antithetical social drives and forces' (Rikowski, 2001: 17); a claim that not only reinforces the contradictory nature of managerial and professional workers' class position, but also questions the extent to which class analysis among managerial and professional workers is relevant. In terms of class, the implication is that differences have been 'dissolved' (Crompton, 2000). This not only has implications for unionisation, but also problematises any straightforward class analysis in relation to managerial and professional workers. That managerial careers remain subject to sustained, if not increasing, levels of change also suggests that Edwards' (2000:) assertion that it is now even more difficult than it was in the past to draw a sharp distinction between classes is significant and this thesis furthermore supports' Edwards' suggestion that the relevance of class, compounded by the decline of trade unions and collapse of traditional heavy industries, has become undermined.

legal and other services that it expects from a union and will discuss whether there is a passivity, something that Carter (1986: 139) considered to be 'keynote', in its membership or whether managerial and professional workers are adopting a fresh approach to their unionisation. Carter also states, however, that by joining unions (as opposed to staff associations) these workers are identifying with labour in the sense that they are positioning themselves in terms of class status.

Nichols' (1986: 8) discussion of E. O. Wright's (1977) identification of the 'contradictory class locations...within the sphere of waged/salaried labour' is one that also highlights the extent to which class ambiguities prevent any absolute categorisation of managerial and professional workers. Wright (1978: 62) argued that it was necessary to acknowledge that ambiguities exist within the class structure, suggesting that the 'most contradictory locations...are occupied by middle managers'. This would suggest that class identification cannot be a straightforward process as this group 'takes its characteristics from *both sides*' (*exterior to and part of* the process of increasing capital). More recently, Marshall et al (1988: 268) have suggested that 'class ideologies are not that neatly packaged', which reinforces the problematic nature of assigning a definitive class position to managerial and professional workers.

Crompton (1976: 442) argued that 'white-collar' workers occupied an 'ambiguous' class position and recognised, in much the same way as Bain (1970) did; that some workers in this category 'see their interests as being best fulfilled by co-operation with management'. While acknowledging the ambiguities of the class position outlined by Crompton and other writers in relation to 'white-collar' workers is important, it is equally important to recognise that the role of this group of workers needs to be addressed anew. This thesis therefore asks whether changes to the definition of managerial and professional work do not essentially alter class position (i.e. they remain dependent upon a wage within the capitalist mode of production however they might choose to define themselves). The changes that are being described are those that many managerial and professional workers in this study perceive as a very real threat to their status as opposed to a factor that they see as relative to their class position, which emphasises the importance of factors relating to changing *status*, as opposed to *class*.

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The following section will discuss the status and values of managerial and professional workers and will examine the role played by change in compounding the need to test existing criteria in relation to managerial and professional unionism in a new context.

### **Managerial and professional workers—changing status and values**

Traditionally, salaried staff have enjoyed greater job security, higher earnings and generally more amenable working conditions, and yet this thesis argues that the potent fusion of political, economic and workplace change that has taken place over the last thirty years has precipitated a shift in the behaviour of this group of workers. It furthermore argues that managerial and professional members of the case-study unions are either demonstrating, or developing preparedness for, conflict. In doing so, it notes writers such as Allen's (1971), caution against the assumption that a worker who is better off in monetary terms is more complacent about their work situation. It has often been workers such as teachers and doctors, for example, who have displayed significant 'collective aggressiveness' (p. 93). In discussing the development of one of the unions in this study (Prospect), for example, it is also worth considering Carter's (1986: 138) observation that 'white-collar' workers considered themselves 'by-passed by management and over-taken by manual workers'. This has resonance with some managerial and professional union members involved in this research, especially in relation to the issue of pay, grading and salary overlap, which represent factors that are responsible, however subtly, for changing the behaviour of this group of workers. It is therefore necessary to look beyond the work situation in order to adequately account for the collective behaviour of managerial and professional workers.

That changes have taken place to the status of managerial and professional workers in modern workplaces has invited acknowledgement, not only among the wider managerial and professional union movement, but also in discourse about the nature of work and the reconfiguration of workplaces. It was remarked upon, for example, in a debate on casualisation of the labour market in the House of Lords, by Baroness Turner of Camden, that: 'even managers who previously held jobs in the premier league of the labour market are experiencing relegation to the lower divisions, where rewards, status and security are poor when compared with their former positions. That



is a kind of 3D world of the middle manager who has been downsized, delayed and devalued' (Hansard, 1995). Other changes, such as the trend to 'empower' employees (Rose, 2004) and create a high-performance environment have, in many cases, led to the title of 'manager' being nominally or randomly added or incorporated into job titles, thus changing the *meaning* of the word. Job titles and professional nomenclature have changed, leading to the term 'manager' becoming casualised; a process that does little to alleviate the myriad of definitional problems that have accumulated over time.

Urry (1973: 180) argued that managers are 'responsible for the hiring of labour and as a group control the day-to-day operations within the workplace...for bearing or performing the function of capital accumulation', whereas professional workers are *not* principally concerned with the hiring of labour or for general control over capitalist enterprises. While it could, therefore, be argued that professionals work *for* capital, for example, in various technical roles, and may be perceived as a more distinctive economic interest group than managers, they are more likely to identify occupationally (i.e. with their peers), than with their employer (many of whom may be 'just managers'). They can be identified in terms of their skills, although subsequent to needing or requiring skills, professional workers are often embedded in professional qualifications—via licences, for example (see chapter three) or associations that are much less 'unionate' (the concept of unionateness will be discussed later in this chapter). That individuals may use unions in order to enhance their 'social closure' therefore merits discussion.

### The effect of social closure

The way professional workers 'sell' their skills as a commodity within occupational labour markets establishes their distinctive interests, relative to capital's interest in generating surplus from their labour (Bolton, 2004). A more distinctive category to that of 'managerial', 'professional' work still has a distinctive set of interests, for example, excluding the general populus from practice, that makes them more likely to form professional associations than, say, enter general unionism. Where the domains of work governed by professions are particularly broad, skilful and idiosyncratic (especially in the case of lawyers, for example), there are also likely to be tendencies towards individualisation (Noon and Blyton, 2002). This is, in part, attributable to the

way in which the division of labour manifests itself, especially given that many complex work tasks are unable to be divided. For professions that are less successful at achieving social closure and which do not have such idiosyncratic skills-bases, however, qualifications may be individualised less and associations become more sub-collective as a result. This thesis argues that this situation, especially within two of the three case-study unions, is relevant.

The next section will discuss factors relating to managerial and professional union character and the extent to which unions can act as bodies that are based upon or constructed to defend professional status.

### **Managerial and professional union character and identity**

The majority of historical literature in relation to managerial and professional workers has been dominated by discussion on growth and character. According to Price (1983: 147), certain writers have attempted to identify the factors ‘which most influenced’ workers in conventionally classified managerial and professional jobs to decide whether to take up union membership. Other writers, however, have focused on establishing the character of ‘white-collar’ organisations and the wider impact on trade unionism.

The concept of union character was, according to Blackburn (1967: 18), ‘quite straightforward’, yet its main external features—policy, practices, associations and public image, and internal features—organisation and structure, are more complex to define. Expounding Marxist theory, Klingender (1935) argued that white-collar unions were the same as manual unions, any lack of class-consciousness among the white-collar element would rectify itself ‘as true consciousness develops’ (Blackburn and Prandy, 1965: 111). Klingender believed that white-collar unions needed to abandon the pursuit of prestige in order to convince workers of the benefits of trade unionism. Other writers, however, have rejected this position, claiming that white-collar unions are essentially different from manual unions. One of these proponents, Goldstein (1955: 199), for example, was quite resolute in his belief that white-collar unions were ‘significantly different’. In a similar vein, Strauss (1963) focuses on the commonly held view that, although there may be similarities between the two types of union character, the significance of those differences is largely interpretational.

Blackburn and Prandy (1965: 110), in their analysis of the character of staff associations, argued that the aims of 'white-collar' unions were in fact similar to those of 'typical' trade unions, yet their ideology is not. A lack of class solidarity, common interest, the desire to co-operate with other workers, or a need to involve members in the political or global element of trade unionism demonstrated that 'white-collar' workers possessed 'internalist, almost 'isolationist', middle-class ideology'. This thesis argues that Blackburn and Prandy's theory in relation to many 'white-collar' workers who, while endorsing trade union aims or practices, had little real desire to be regarded as 'belonging' to the trade union movement, is evident, to an extent, among the managerial and professional community in the three unions under study in this research.

### Harmony versus conflict

In his conceptualisation of trade union identity, Hyman (2003) indicated three main types of European trade union: market, society and class. Hyman associated Britain with market-oriented unionism, locating it on the axis between market and class. The traditional axes of union policy—free collective bargaining, social market economy and compromise—have, however, according to Hyman; 'become unstable...more complex and difficult to combine' (2001: 173). The twentieth century saw the trade union movement shift from almost exclusively manual composition to one that incorporated a growing number of managerial and professional workers, producing what Hyman (2001: 173) referred to as a 'sedimented' character. This evolution has, to an extent, informed the 'ideological consequences' that this thesis argues is recognisable in the three unions under study in this research.

Despite the suggestion that there exists an element of conflicting interest between employer and employee, it has been suggested that the majority of 'white-collar' unions believe in an underpinning 'harmony of interest' between employer and employee (Crompton, 1976: 424). More recently the same term has been used to reflect the preferred way in which employer-employee relations are conducted (Edwards, 2003). This thesis therefore attempts to evaluate the extent to which adoption of this position is prevalent within Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA.

It could be argued that the 'managerialateness' of occupations may divide types of management work relative to the propensity for collective organisation and the following section will consider the managerial labour process.

#### The concept of 'unionateness' and the extent of 'managerialateness'

Blackburn and Prandy (1965) attempted to define union character by providing a theoretical assessment of the differentiation between manual and white-collar unions. They termed this concept 'unionateness', which comprised seven separate elements (four relate to union relations in the wider society—'society unionateness', and three relate to union behaviour within employment—'enterprise unionateness'). Blackburn (1967: 21) argued that collective bargaining was central to the concept of unionateness and that this, in addition to the general protection of union members' interests, was one of 'the definitive functions of trade unions'. This systematic attempt to objectify union character raises the question as to whether it is possible to adequately measure the ambiguity of union character, and if not, then what alternative criteria might be applied in order to elicit a reasonable measure of character?

'Unionate' behaviour, according to Blackburn, is characteristic of many 'white-collar' organisations, yet Bain et al (in Crompton, 1976: 411) interpret this as a 'pragmatic reaction to specific circumstances', as opposed to being 'an expression of any form of class consciousness'. Despite various criticism of Blackburn and Prandy's approach, the most significant lies in the problem of applying what are, essentially, 'timeless' criteria. Blackburn and Prandy made the implicit assumption that behavioural characteristics would remain static over time. It would be largely implausible, however, that managerial and professional union responses in a societal context will be similarly stable. This is precisely the reason this thesis begins with an historical context, whereafter the components of managerial and professional unionism are explored from a more contemporary perspective.

#### Developments in managerial and professional unionism

Some writers have argued that change—and growth—in 'white-collar' unionism has been responsible for transforming the trade union movement from 'the moribund carthorse image...to a more dynamic and thoughtful movement' (Clive Jenkins and Barrie Sherman, the then General Secretary and Director of Research respectively of

the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs (ASTMS), 1979: 1). In ascertaining contemporary managerial and professional union character, it is important to acknowledge that collective behaviour among managerial and professional members is not unprecedented (Allen, 1971). For example, the National Union of Elementary Teachers was formed as long ago as 1870 and the Railway Clerks were unionised in 1897 (this is now the TSSA). Bank clerks formed a union in 1870 and were fifty per cent organised by 1921 (Allen, 1971). These early examples of 'white-collar' unions show that collectivism among this group of workers has embedded and developed over time. Furthermore, these unions did, on occasion, demonstrate militancy, in the same way as their 'blue-collar' counterparts. Strikes, although by no means commonplace, did take place, in addition to other militant action such as threats of strike action and mass demonstrations. Allen (1971: 93) viewed these forms of action among 'white-collar' workers as relatively reasonable, stating that these workers are 'after all, members of a permanent employed class in exactly the same way as manual workers', although it has also asserted that attitudes towards strikes are 'the most marked feature' of a general aversion to militancy among 'white-collar' workers (Blackburn, 1967: 33).

Being principally concerned with the *behaviour* of managerial and professional workers, Strauss (1954: 73), identified middle-class background and orientation of members as 'the one important special characteristic' of 'white-collar' unions. Strauss sought to establish whether, if white-collar workers *behave* differently to other workers, their reasons for becoming unionised are correspondingly different, and this research asks similar questions in relation to the behaviour of managerial and professional workers. Strauss also commented that 'white-collar' workers 'present special problems both to unions and to managements', suggesting that unions found it difficult to organise and service this particular group of workers. Furthermore, Carter (1985: 152) observed that unions had failed to sufficiently acknowledge the extent to which the recruitment of 'new middle-class labour' presented them with 'special problems'. This thesis therefore attempts to analyse the extent to which these 'special problems' continue to present a challenge to the case-study unions.

Perception is an arguably important determinant of managerial and professional behaviour and consciousness. For example, some unions are resistant to use of the

term ‘union’, preferring to be referred to as ‘associations’ or ‘guilds’; a notion which is not necessarily indistinguishable from the characteristics of professional accreditation or social closure. The former National Union of Bank Employees (NUBE), for example, originated as the National Bank Officers’ Guild, prior to its merger with the Scottish Bankers’ Federation<sup>2</sup>. Avoidance of the word ‘union’ remains a factor in both managerial and professional and blue-collar associations; a trend that has been developing over the past couple of decades—Unison and the GMB are examples. Of the 53 trade unions listed on the TUC’s affiliation register (August 2011), 16 have the word ‘union’ in their title and some unions such as Advance<sup>3</sup>, and Nautilus International, have abandoned use of the word ‘union’ in their titles as they have been re-named following mergers and amalgamations.

Widespread concern was generated in the 1960s that potential ‘white-collar’ workers were failing to be attracted to unions; indeed that union character *itself* was unappealing to prospective members (Bain, 1970). In order to address this, certain unions took the decision to revisit their image and re-adjust the ‘message’—and perhaps more significantly, the format and delivery of that message—that they were sending out, both to members and non-members. The ASTMS took a lead in this process, launching, at the end of the 1960s, a series of relatively successful publicity campaigns that focused specifically on the white-collar element of trade-unionism (Price, 1983). The trade union movement therefore had to implement, in some cases quite radical, changes to its style and structure, as well as widen its appeal to embrace a diverse range of non-manual workers. Price (1983: 148) referred to this process as unions shedding ‘the ‘cloth cap’ image’. Investigation into the progress or development of this ‘image’ change that was deemed necessary to embrace the growing number of managerial and professional workers into the trade union movement has been sporadic, variable, and highlights a lack of pervasive focus on the part played by ‘white-collar’ unions and their members in changing the complexion of modern trade unionism, and it is this hiatus that is explored in this thesis.

This thesis focuses considerably on labour market change and the following section will discuss the way in which this change affects managerial and professional union membership.

## **The impact of labour market and legislative change**

In 1970, Bain commented that the number of 'white-collar' workers was 'increasing so rapidly that they will soon be in the majority' (1970:1). An interesting prediction, given that trade union membership *generally* has continued to decline. So what does Bain's hypothesis mean in the context of managerial and professional unionism today?

Throughout the 1960s, white-collar unionism grew steadily (Lockwood, 1989: 217) and in parallel to the advent of 'new technology', this has been significant in changing perception of—certainly in the case of lower graded—managerial and professional workers. During the 1970s, union growth was considered predominantly in relation to economic structure, management policy and legal and political frameworks (Waddington and Whitston, 1995). While it could be argued that key motivators to this growth were economic, it may be just as likely that historical drives to re-conceptualise the notion or ideology of unions in the modern and rapidly changing work, and market-place has paid off (Jenkins and Sherman, 1979) and it is this argument that will be examined in more detail in this thesis.

As managerial and professional unionism has developed, it is interesting to note parallels with the decade 1969-78. This period saw overall membership increase by two million, with density rising thirteen per cent to 43 per cent, which meant that at the end of the 1970s almost 40 per cent of *all* trade unionists were employed in 'white collar' occupations (Price, 1983). Evidence gathered from the case-study unions would suggest that the decade 2001-2010, although unable to demonstrate similar growth characteristics, has in fact maintained steady membership against a marked decline in other areas of trade union membership. These two periods are, however, similar in that their development has taken place against a backdrop of high inflation, rising unemployment and legislative intervention that has doggedly sought to restrict the collective bargaining machinery. Bain and Elsheikh (1976: 81) refer to this as the 'threat' and 'credit' effects—when two factors work simultaneously to attract union growth. By this, Bain and Elsheikh imply that union growth was reinforced not only by workers joining unions in greater numbers, but by unions' considerable success in defending members' economic interests. In the 1970s, workers reacted to the erosion of real incomes by joining unions en masse, in the 2000s, it could similarly be

suggested that managerial and professional workers have joined unions in a bid not only to combat the deleterious side effects of recession, but also to mitigate the negative effects of legislation that have empowered employers, disadvantaged workers, and created vulnerability among the managerial and professional community generally. Despite a lack of similar trends between 2001 and 2010, the work situation encountered by many managerial and professional workers is characterised by weak legislative provision and an unfavourable economic predicament that, it could be argued, continues to pose a significant threat to the creation of a workplace whose environment could be considered conducive to collectivism.

### Post-1980 and the impact of Thatcherist legislation

During the period post-1980, workers arguably began to experience not only a vastly different, and rapidly changing, workplace environment, but also began to formulate 'radically different' (Brown and Edwards, 2009: 1) perceptions of trade unions. Throughout the 1980s unions were a dominant presence in both public and private sectors and yet it took only two decades for union influence to decline in tandem with a rapidly shrinking public sector. The scale of change that took place to the configuration of employment would also have a devastating impact not only on the role of trade unions, but on workers', and in particular managerial and professional workers', organisation.

The gamut of employment legislation that began to embed during the 1970s and the protective legislation that emanated from the Employment Protection Act 1975, have become diluted, and employment relationships rendered increasingly fragile (Pollert and Smith, 2009: 9). The composition of union membership started to change during the 1980s, when the proportion of 'white-collar' (and women) members increased quite significantly and by 1980 the majority of the labour force was 'white-collar' (Waddington and Whitston, 1995, Bryson and Forth, 2010). In spite of decline in total membership in both manual and 'white-collar' groups between 1979 and 1987, 'white-collar unionism' declined at a slower rate (7 per cent, against a 32 per cent decline in manual workers). This trend of 'white-collar' employment density and manual-worker decline has continued since 1987.



There are a range of arguments and theories that help to explain this disparity. Firstly, the 1980s was a 'key period of changing attitudes among British unions' (Mason and Bain, 1991: 345), where legislation was unfavourable to unions and this, combined with restrictive labour markets, increasing competition, sharp increases in unemployment and ensuing job insecurity, led to the assumption that workers would feel a greater need for union protection. The reality, however, was that unions became debilitated further. Another feature of the 1980s was that managerial employment reduced in sectors where managers were unionised, and the number of employers attempting to derecognise managers unions increased. In 1986, for example, the TSSA lost recognition rights at Pickford Travel, following its privatisation, which resulted in British Road Services (BRS) taking the decision to end collective bargaining for over 500 managers, insisting instead on annual review 'at the employer's discretion based on market conditions' (Snape and Bamber, 1989: 101). Moves towards derecognition such as this reflected employers' determination to revert to individualised, performance-related, salaries for managers.

In considering the ratio of union growth to union power, Bain and Price (1983: 3) suggested that the two were 'broadly related'. The fall in aggregate union membership since 1979 therefore indicates *ipso facto*, a reduction in trade union power. McIlroy (1990: 204), in acknowledging that unions lost members in the 1980s as a result of recession, cautioned that this represented 'a serious setback for the labour movement'. The collapse of manufacturing and nationalised industries was accompanied by a diversification of employment and the introduction of new employment practices, which signified a simultaneous nervousness about trade union capacity. Growth of unionisation in the white-collar sector, however, had an impact on the *character* of white-collar unions, in that it was accompanied by a decline in the number of Labour party affiliated 'white-collar' unions, and those paying the political levy, within the TUC. Manifest rejection of party politics remains a contentious factor and one that modern managerial and professional unions would arguably be irresponsible to ignore.

Corporatist, authoritarian business models and the rise of HRM that sought to repress trade unionism, increased their stranglehold in large organisations, for example, in industries such as engineering and transport, along with previously public-sector

organisations. It is therefore significant to consider whether maintenance of steady-state membership in the three case-study unions can be explained in terms of 'general economic conditions' (Lockwood, 1989: 254) or whether the increasingly conflictual nature of employment relationships has been a more influential factor. It could be argued that increasing bureaucratisation—the process whereby work practices become over-regulated and highly, often unnecessarily, administrative—is the element most likely to produce a climate more generally amenable to managerial and professional unionism, and which may provide a potential platform for membership to expand.

#### The effect of the current labour market and economic determinants of managerial and professional union membership

It is recognised that unemployment among managerial and professional workers is rising. Media projections<sup>4</sup>, while possibly anecdotal, claimed that the number of chief executives and directors claiming the £64.30-a-week jobseekers' allowance rose from 190 in April 2009 to 615 in October 2009, suggesting that many managerial and professional workers stand to experience some form of financial detriment in this period of economic crisis. This situation might also suggest that in endeavouring to safeguard their income at a time of labour market change and fragility, this group of workers is revisiting the option of union membership, or at the very least, looking at it in a new light.

In an article by Smith (1999: 1), it is suggested that 'call-centres have become the cotton mills of the 1990s', which raises the question as to whether, if work situations have changed, and are changing, is the nature of managerial and professional unionism also changing, and if so, to what extent? More recently, research undertaken by market analysts claimed that one in three workers remains in a job for less than two years and people expect to change their jobs more frequently (Mintel, 2011<sup>5</sup>). This thesis therefore considers the contribution that a changing labour market is making towards recalibrating managerial and professional union membership.

That Lockwood, in his seminal study of white-collar workers, recognised this group of workers' 'lack of immunity from the hazards of the market' (1958: 68) is not without significance, especially when considering the impact of recent labour market

change on managerial and professional members of the case-study unions. Lockwood identified this situation vis-à-vis white-collar workers in reference to the depression of the 1930s and given that the UK, in 2008, entered the worst depression since this period it is perhaps all the more crucial that unions like those under study in this research can find a way to appeal to managerial and professional workers.

The economic downturn that began in 2008 has already been branded the 'white-collar recession' because of the numbers of managerial and professional workers who have lost their jobs, according to a report published by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in 2010 (Job Centre Plus report<sup>6</sup>), that found that hundreds of thousands of professionals are unemployed as employers have cut back in a bid to survive the recession. Figures published in December 2009 (ONS<sup>7</sup>) showed Jobseekers Allowance claims for some professions have risen by more than 900 per cent, with architects, surveyors, accountants and lawyers among some of the hardest hit. This trend further reinforces testimony provided by many managerial and professional union members in this research and leads us to consider whether unionism in the industries and sectors represented by Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA can be explained in terms of the 'general economic conditions' to which Lockwood (1989: 254) referred. Blackburn's (1967: 11) argument that workers' 'market situation' is instrumental in union character is also one that this research suggests continues to drive managerial and professional unionisation in the three unions under study.

If we are to accept Richardson's (1977: 280) argument that when 'labour markets are slack, unionisation falls and vice versa', then it is appropriate to examine the impact of the current situation on the managerial and professional sectors in the unions in this study, especially given claims by members of these unions that restructure and redundancy are affecting managerial and professional workers as well as manual, or 'blue-collar', workers, with the spectre of unemployment transcending the two groups of workers simultaneously. An alternative position is adopted by Schneider (1969: 211), who, in suggesting that fluctuating market performance was a critical factor in the unionisation of workers, commented that 'since the worker's job depends on the demands of the market, his job is always in jeopardy'. Given that this situation is resonant with many managerial and professional workers involved in this research, it

is worth examining the extent to which managerial and professional unionism is informed by labour market conditions.

Unions, faced with a variety of production-related issues that emerged in response to economic restructuring (Terry, 1994: 227), have found themselves faced with the challenge of establishing a different approach from that which has traditionally been used to address pay and conditions bargaining. Unions have also had to deal with the effects of radical changes to workforce composition, and according to Carter (1985: 152), they have adapted to these changes ‘unevenly and sometimes reluctantly’, which has implications for both membership and union density. The way in which the case-study unions react to ongoing change will be crucial if they are to sustain steady membership levels.

The economic situation has meant that many managerial and professional workers’ work situation has become more precarious and the next section will discuss the impact that this has upon managerial and professional members of the case-study unions.

### **Managerial and professional workers—an accidental collective or the new vulnerable workers?**

The onset of global recession in 2008 has meant that managerial and professional workers’ work situation has become more precarious. Large-scale restructuring, reorganisation, streamlining, harmonisation, delayering—vocabulary that is synonymous with negative workplace change—have resulted, in many cases, in managerial and professional workers acknowledging a sense of employment precariousness that has perhaps hitherto been alien to them. That managerial and professional workers in the rail engineering industry, for example, have been ‘reorganised’ into specific geographical groups, wider regional groups, groups that deal with certain *types* of work, such as long or short-term engineering planning, and then back into departmental groups has created a sense of unease and transience. The regularity with which these processes occur has further added to this instability, which this thesis will argue is having a distinct effect on the unionisation of managerial and professional workers.

While managerial and professional workers may be less affected by the circumstances that arise from low pay, they are nonetheless, according to officers from Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA, exposed to increasing risk of redundancy and unemployment. These workers have, according to one National Secretary at Prospect; ‘found themselves to be more vulnerable than they thought was the case thirty, forty years ago’. So, has this situation come as a surprise to managerial and professional workers, whose unionisation, it could be suggested, has been a knee-jerk reaction to labour market change and the associated threat of loss or erosion of role or reward? And is the way in which this unionisation is manifesting itself indicative of a sea change in the configuration of managerial and professional union membership?

That many managerial and professional workers in this study have claimed that they find themselves in work situations that are beginning to more closely mirror those of their manual or ‘blue-collar’ counterparts raises the question as to whether this group of workers can be viably and realistically referred to as ‘vulnerable’, either in the standard context, whereby the term is generally used to describe migrant, agency, casual or other workers who perform ‘unsafe, low-paid, insecure work’ (Commission on Vulnerable Employment<sup>8</sup> (COVE), (2008) or in a wider, more marginalised sense (Pollert, 2005). The term ‘vulnerable’ has been used many times in interviews and discussion with managerial and professional workers in this study, which could suggest that they have either heard of or noticed more general reference to the term and have attached it to their own experience of an increasingly unstable work situation, or they are using the term to describe work *insecurity*. This thesis therefore discusses the extent to which the term ‘vulnerable’ can be realistically attached to the work situation being encountered by managerial and professional workers in this study. The DTI (2006: 25)<sup>9</sup> argues that worker vulnerability is; ‘only significant if any employer exploits that vulnerability’. Given that many managerial and professional workers feel that they are exposed to employer exploitation, the research therefore asks if it is surprising that these members feel that they are, in the true sense, vulnerable.

## **Conclusion**

In evaluating literature in relation to ‘white-collar’ unionism, it is important to acknowledge that much of this was written between forty and sixty years ago. Despite

the age of the majority of literature that addresses 'white-collar' unionism in its entirety, however, some of the arguments made by writers such as Lockwood (1958), Blackburn (1967) and Bain (1970), retain some relevance to this research. The Bain model linked the unionisation of managerial and professional workers to changing patterns of employment (1970), whereas Blackburn (1967: 9) believed unionisation to be an 'index of class consciousness' and, similar to Blackburn's view, although perhaps less distinctive, is Lockwood's belief that the trade union movement was a 'working class movement' (1958: 137). Although this thesis identifies some new traits among managerial and professional workers, and traits that have been influenced, in the main, by the labour market, economy and political landscape; certain aspects of these workers' composition remain identifiable from literature aged over fifty years. This thesis will ask whether the politically right-wing, strike-averse professional rail worker identified by Lockwood in 1958 is any less recognisable in 2012. In doing so, however, it recognises contributions from writers such as Brown and Edwards (2009), who have suggested that workplace change has had a significant impact on unionisation. This research makes connections between these changes and analyses the resultant effects on the behaviour of managerial and professional workers in the case-study unions.

This thesis does not articulate a class perspective as such, and although cognisant of its relevance, places greater emphasis upon occupational definition of managerial and professional workers. In 1979 Carter suggested that the 'equation of white collar with middle class needs to be rejected', along with 'that which equates the white collar trade unionist with working class' (p. 316). This thesis also acknowledges that contradictions exist that problematise the application of any strict class definition and suggests that in retaining a sense of individual status; managerial and professional workers find themselves in increasing need of a collective approach in order to navigate their role in a radically reconfigured labour market and workplace. These contrasting perspectives are those that this study believes characterises the culture of sub-collectivism. This thesis subscribes to Weber's (1968) assertion that status is not solely determined by class location and suggests that, as traditional or historical differences that have existed between manual and non-manual workers have become conflated, class theorisation has become undermined.

The escalation and extent of threats posed to the managerial and professional work situation merit closer examination. This involves exploration of the complexity of the relationship between individualism and collectivism. This thesis will argue that evidence of this complexity can be found in the behavioural and attitudinal disposition of managerial and professional workers in the modern workplace, and whose characteristics will be analysed assiduously among membership of the case-study unions. As industrial and social change occur and embed, methods by which occupations are assessed may become outmoded—a process that Bain and Price (1972: 338) referred to as ‘cultural lag’. This is significant to this research in terms of attempting to establish, as both unions and workplaces develop apace, a modern and relevant definition and characterisation of managerial and professional work, workers and unionisation.

The next chapter will explore the methodology used to construct empirical data from a variety of sources: managerial and professional union members, union officers, union representatives, non-union members, clerical-grade workers and parties from unions other than those being case studied. This will enable an understanding of the ways in which data was gathered and used to support the arguments made in this thesis.

## **Chapter two**

### **Establishing the nature of managerial and professional unionisation: research methodology**

#### **Introduction**

This research developed from an absence of recent research in the area of managerial and professional unionism and the lack of analysis of membership in this sector. The research was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and is the result of collaboration between London Metropolitan University, and three UK managerial and professional unions—the TSSA (collaborative partner), Nautilus International, and Prospect. The research was a three-year CASE (collaborative) studentship and the organisations were chosen to provide a contrast between workers who are categorised as managerial and professional but who perform sufficiently different jobs to draw out a range of factors influencing the individual decision to collectivise.

The research objectives were to identify the reasons why the case-study unions were sustaining steady-state membership in contrast to overall trade union membership decline during the period 2001 to 2010. The research aimed to identify the factors that cause managerial and professional members of these unions to collectivise and measure the extent to which a culture of sub-collectivism has established itself within these three unions. This concept has been developed throughout the research and is explained in detail in chapters four, five and six. Methods in this research have been deployed in order to try to extrapolate union member behaviour and the consequences for managerial and professional union membership in the case-study unions.

#### **The theoretical and conceptual framework**

This section will set out the theoretical and conceptual framework, beginning with an analysis of crucial theoretical debates that have taken place. Many of these debates respond to the question posed by Kelly (1998: 4), who asks how workers ‘define their interests in collective or individual terms’. In analysing the position and status of professional and managerial workers and the means by which they collectivise, this



this thesis explores the ways in which collectivism is emergent from an environment that has been dominated almost exclusively by individualism. Healy et al (2004: 464) argue that discussion of individualism in the workplace 'often ignores the role of social relations and understanding how a workplace may be, more or less, collectivised'. This thesis aims to address this omission by exploring the ways in which social relations are constructed and the extent to which these are constructed as individual or collective, and furthermore, how these relations develop and manifest themselves. In order to do this it is necessary to first examine the behaviour of managerial and professional workers in relation not only to their unionisation, but also to their workplace relationships and interactions with their management and organisational structures.

### **Managerial and professional behaviour: analysing the collective dynamic**

Olson's (1965) work on the logic of collective action is useful in testing the theory that if a group has interests in common then it will act collectively. Olson (1965: 1) asserted that just because a group has a common interest, it is not necessarily the case that automatic collective action will result, that a group of individuals would not in fact 'voluntarily act to achieve that common or group interest'. There must either be an individual incentive or compulsion to behave collectively. Identification and analysis of this theory, therefore, needs to be tested among managers and professionals in the case-study unions, whose members are often nested within organisational units and are therefore influenced by organisational context. This provides a starting point from which to evaluate this group of workers' collective behaviour.

Social control via monopoly capitalism is, according to Clegg et al (1986: 159), established through the agency of 'white-collar' workers in the management of production, wherefrom it could be argued that through cultural, technological and organisational developments, skills once reserved for the working class were effectively transferred to 'white-collar' workers. As these developments have more recently been instrumental in unifying certain aspects of manual and managerial and professional occupations, managerial and professional workers have started to encounter and experience a common predicament and trepidation with regard to their job security and economic stability. This thesis therefore aims to measure the effects

of these developments in relation to the current economic climate and employment conditions.

### **Measurement of managerial and professional collective values—a constructionist approach**

This thesis will measure the extent to which collective action, traditionally identified with the manual worker, is becoming apparent among managerial and professional union membership of Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA. It also aims to establish the ways in which certain attitudes, for example; towards taking strike action, are beginning to change among managerial and professional workers. Other measures that may demonstrate a collective approach, such as approaches to union-employer relationships, perception of political activity and affiliation and levels of participation and activism will also be analysed.

This research is underpinned by a constructionist epistemology. While some researchers deploy structural methodologies that permit them to collect and analyse data about broad social patterns, some researchers use constructionist methodologies that allow them to collect and analyse data about the way in which reality is constructed. ‘Construction’ assumes an individual’s understanding of reality is shaped (and therefore limited) by their own experiences (Wendt, 1999). Social constructionists, according to Nightingale and Cromby (1999: 6) ‘all agree that social processes...are central to everyday life and experience’ and the social processes through which individuals create meaning are central to the approach of constructionism. This research required an approach that would enable identification of the processes by which managerial and professional workers in the case-study unions constructed their views, opinions and beliefs. How these processes are formulated is important in terms of establishing the characteristics of managerial and professional workers and this cannot be undertaken on an exclusively empirical basis. It is important to acknowledge the interface between the *social* process of unionisation and the *subjective* process by which these workers conduct that unionisation. The approach taken in this research therefore required an epistemology that captures the complex interpretations and perceptions of managerial and professional union members.

The constructionist approach considers the social context within which individuals conduct their lives and suggests that an individual 'is encountered differently within different social contexts' (Roy-Chowdury, 2010: 342). Given that managerial and professional union members are being researched in the context not only of their unionisation, but as *workers*, this requires an approach that takes due account of the way in which managerial and professional workers prioritise union membership from a personal, or social, perspective. If we are to accept Fantasia's (1988: 10) suggestion that; 'human labor in capitalist society takes place within an exploitative context that generates opposition', then the notion of the 'social being' is similarly instrumental in determining how managerial and professional workers react to exploitation. This suggestion is indicative of the situation in which many managerial and professional workers involved in this study find themselves. In order that this group of workers can meaningfully respond to the threat and insecurity associated with an increasingly volatile workplace, they situate themselves industrially, personally (or individually) and collectively (either as an integral part of a 'team' or by other forms of peer-group association). It is not enough to merely suggest that this is a social action; therefore a constructionist approach assists in establishing how this group of workers creates and manifests response.

The case-study unions posit themselves as ideologically independent, and the way in which members construct behaviour and perceptions in response to this is instrumental in determining how these unions function. To take the inference that managerial and professional workers are 'vulnerable' workers is an example. In recent years there has been much discussion about 'vulnerable workers'. The TUC Commission on Vulnerable Employment (2008) describes vulnerable workers as those whose work situation offers low wages and the statutory minimum in terms of sick pay and holidays, with no pension or training provision. It found that vulnerable workers can 'be fired at will when work dries up, leaving them trapped at the bottom of the ladder', and while more managerial and professional workers find themselves in situations where the likelihood of their being arbitrarily dismissed is disproportionately heightened, they simultaneously find themselves with as little room to manoeuvre as those workers typically defined as vulnerable by the TUC. This study therefore suggests that some managerial and professional workers in the case-study unions may identify themselves with this term because they have heard it attached to

those workers for whom redundancy looms, or low pay and the potential for arbitrary dismissal threaten their livelihood. Or it could be the case that they consider this to be a genuine reality. It could be argued that these workers have in some way 'latched on' to the notion of the 'vulnerable' worker and adapted it to 'fit' their personal circumstances as workers. If we take the objective versus subjective viewpoint, we may be unlikely to term this group of workers 'vulnerable' and yet many of these workers classify themselves thus (this is often the case in relation to pay and hierarchy). The constructionist approach is therefore beneficial in measuring the extent to which these workers' have constructed a reality—that they are the new 'vulnerable workers'—from conjecture or association.

In locating the limits of social constructionism in this research, it is recognised that individual experience leaves us with a set of perceptions and interpretations that shape actions, thought and behaviour. The process, therefore, of situating the union members in this study, both socially and industrially, involves an element of discernment in relation to establishing parameters or 'thresh-holds' of behaviour. Edwards (2006: 4) used the example of performance appraisal to outline the value of the constructionist approach. In this context, the constructionist approach would argue that 'performance' is; 'not an objective characteristic but...would go on to address how different definitions of performance are created and sustained'. In much the same way as Bain and Price (1972: 325) identified the meaning of 'white-collar' as one that 'means one thing to one person and something else to another', it is similarly important to accept that individuals possess a broad range of views and feelings about their union membership and will deploy a correspondingly wide variation of means by which they conduct their relationship with union membership. This research therefore explores the ways in which social processes occur, develop and permutate, both over time and in direct response to events produced by labour market change and factors affecting work organisation.

One of the ways in which the constructionist approach will facilitate the research from this perspective will be to examine the processes by which managerial and professional workers interpret, respond and adapt to labour market and political change. This approach may furthermore complement the approaches to researching collectivism highlighted by Kelly (1998) who, in expanding on Goodman et al's

(1977) study of the footwear industry, acknowledged an 'individualistic workplace culture with little group formation or consciousness, and low cohesion among groups that did not form' (1998: 11). Kelly furthermore asked how a set of individuals 'coalesce into a social group with a collective interest' (1998: 29) and referred to the processes outlined by social movement theorists, who claim that attribution, social identification and leadership are factors that frame this agency, and which may culminate in collectivisation. Individuals have a tendency to seek explanation or reason for actions or events and, perhaps obviously, need to attribute problems and issues to tangible factors, such as processes or personal competences.

Social identity theory, which predicts certain group behaviour on the basis of perceived status, legitimacy and permeability of the group environment (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), assumes that individuals possess a personal and social identity, which uniquely categorise them as individuals. Kelly recognises that this process suggests that individuals can 'think and act individually *and* collectively depending on which facet of their identity is currently dominant or 'salient''. This factor is instrumental in this research insofar as it contributes to explaining the inter-relationship between the types of behaviour expressed among the target research population. For example, a manager who may feel sufficiently disposed to negotiating their pay *may* in fact consult with colleagues with a view to progressing a pay-related issue via their union and in conjunction with multiple workers. Thereby this demonstrates the aptitude for an individual to behave both individually *and* collectively, arguably in response to whichever need is greater *at that particular point in time*. This also relates to Kelly's research in that it demonstrates that workplace changes cannot necessarily be 'divorced from changes in the objective class situation of non-manual work' (Crompton and Jones, 1986: 172-173).

The role of leadership focuses on cohesion and conflict and the ways in which these factors affect collective relationships. Other writers (Cave, 1994, Turner, 1998, Bacon and Storey, 2000) have concluded that union survival 'turned on the willingness of unions and their members to behave 'moderately' and to offer concessions to the employer as part of a new social partnership between labour and capital' (Kelly, 1998: 14). The majority of these conclusions were drawn during the 1990s; a time when, despite a change of government in 1997, the full impact of Conservative policy was

being felt in the labour market and workplace and new approaches to union-employer relationships were being sought in response. If we are to attempt to answer Kelly's (1998: 24) question as to how individuals 'acquire a sense of collective...how, and under what conditions, do individuals organize collectively', then it is imperative to examine the work situation in which managerial and professional workers participating in this research reside, and the influence brought to bear by the current political and economic climate.

### **Connections between the social and how individuals construct it**

The reasons for and means by which managerial and professional workers construct workplace relationships form a crucial part of the approach to this research. Given that the nature of work in today's organisations is undergoing fundamental changes (Sydow et al, 2004), this research aims to identify the extent to which workplace relationships inform managerial and professional behaviour. The research asks whether it is an unfortunate side-effect of managerial and professional working life that it has become much easier to lose sight of workplace relationships. If we are to assume that this group of workers' personal and professional success depends on the existence, or quality, of these relationships then it is similarly relevant to explore the factors that prevent or threaten positive workplace relationships. It could be argued that managerial and professional workers, in an attempt to control the arrangements of their job, are constructing workplace relationships that are individualised. Control mechanisms are frequently hidden and taken for granted as established elements of an employment relationship; embedded in the form of workplace practices, policies and procedures (Burawoy, 1979). It could therefore be suggested that these workers modify or customise the arrangement of their jobs in order to gain an element of control over the workplace relationship—behaviour that is inherently individualised. Given the individualised nature of much managerial and professional *work*, however, this research needs to take account of the extent to which individual workers feel responsible not just for outputs related to that work, but for its value in the overall workplace or industrial hierarchy.

Martinez-Lucio and Stewart (1997: 51) consider the extent to which the workplace relationship is constructed as individual and yet manifested as collective. In recognising the need to 'recontextualise the employment relationship', Martinez-

Lucio and Stewart also deem critical the need to locate the debate ‘on the nature of individualism and collectivism...with respect to a wider, engaging view of collectivism’. The social and political elements to which Martinez-Lucio and Stewart refer are relevant in terms of responding to the research questions posed in this thesis, that seek to discover the factors that cause managerial and professional members of the three case-study unions to collectivise. These factors are also instrumental in defining the culture of sub-collectivism, which this thesis argues has established itself among this group of workers.

Storey and Bacon (1993, in Martinez-Lucio and Stewart, 1997: 66) argued that certain management structures, while giving the semblance of being individualistic, were actually manifesting themselves in consonance with ‘collective identification’; a process that permits the ‘appropriation of collectivism’. The ‘collective worker’ has not, therefore, ‘disappeared in this redefinition of individualism in ‘collective terms’. This thesis argues that this redefinition is constructed with the objective of establishing a collective position from which this group of workers is addressing not only its workplace situation and the factors that shape it, such as change, but its approaches to union membership and participation.

### **Analysing managerial and professional responses to recession**

This research was undertaken in a period of deep economic recession, which began in 2008 and has not been experienced as severely since the Depression of the 1930s. This has profoundly affected many workplaces and workers, who are witnessing an increasing amount of both small and large scale job losses, budget cuts, recruitment and pay freezes, attacks on pension schemes and health and safety initiatives, and release for training and development (TUC, 2009). Given that these deteriorating economic circumstances are affecting managerial and professional as well as manual, and private as well as public-sector, workers, it was crucial to explore any attitudinal or behavioural changes that emerged from the playing-out of the economic crisis during the remit of this research. This involved regular interviews and discussions with officers from the case-study unions, who reported regularly on the issues affecting their membership throughout the duration of the research period.

Re-interviewing union officers mid-way through the research also provided the opportunity to explore the impact, or lack of impact, of particular interventions within

the framework of managerial and professional workers' work situation. It was envisaged that re-interviewing other research participants would be additionally useful in gaining insight to how individuals construct (and adapt) social views and concepts, yet it was possible to do so only among officers from the case-study unions. The lack of opportunity to re-interview members on a formal basis was, in the main, due to access and time constraints (although some managerial and professional members of the TSSA agreed to make themselves available on an informal basis at the union's annual delegate conference, although this was dependent upon them being elected to represent their branch over three consecutive years). All three unions underwent considerable change throughout the duration of this research, which may have contributed to access problems in this context. During this period, Nautilus incorporated its Dutch counter-part (Nautilus Netherlands) and the Swiss seafaring sector, Prospect incorporated the Connect union into its newly merged structure and the TSSA was faced with a plethora of challenges, including the departure of its General Secretary<sup>10</sup> and a failed attempt to merge with the RMT union. Events in all three unions did, however, provide a useful opportunity to chart union officers' thoughts, views and opinions about the nature of change in their union. This constituted a valuable backdrop and insight into the behaviour of managerial and professional workers in these unions.

It is important to consider participants' interpretations of the issues inherent in the research, while at the same time being cognisant of the extent to which perspectives offered by participants are a product of time and place. As with all qualitative research, it was necessary not only to take account of ontological considerations, but to acknowledge practical—and sensitive—factors such as the potentially changing, reconfigured, and in some cases threatened, employment position of the participants. Research into homelessness conducted by Chamberlain and Mackenzie (1992), for example, argued that certain concepts only make sense in a particular community at a given period of time, which supports assertions by social constructionists (Cromby and Nightingale, 1999, Hibberd, 2005) that valuable and in-depth understanding can be gained by a research method that seeks to capture and explain change(s) over time.



## **Ethical considerations**

In order to undertake the various research methods effectively, especially with regard to interviews, it is vital to be clear, not only about the aims and objectives of the research, but also about an individual's rights during the research process. The TSSA and other partners signed a formal collaboration agreement in which they fully accepted the independence of the researcher and allowed privileged access to their organisations for the duration of the research period. The principle of informed consent operates in such a way as to ensure participants are informed of the purpose of the research and are assured, where desired, anonymity and confidentiality. Interviewees were also informed of their right not to answer any questions should they not wish to do so, and that they reserved the right to withdraw at any stage. Signed consent forms (see appendix 2.1 for sample form) were used to explain this to interviewees and also to gain their agreement to the tape-recording of interviews. Respondents were also allocated a pseudonym in the event that they are referred to or directly quoted in any of the research outputs and all documentation was securely stored in a format that anonymised participants. Respondents who occupied jobs so unique that it would be possible to identify them via their job title have also been referred to in such a way as not to jeopardise their anonymity.

Establishing trust is crucial, given the combination of the current corporate climate at companies like Network Rail, for example, and the element of uncertainty that permeates companies and organisations as a compounding by-product of present economic conditions. It was anticipated by some union officers that certain managers, for example, would be concerned, that either by completing a questionnaire, or discussing their views with a researcher on a one-to-one basis, that they may be in breach of confidentiality commitments to their employer, or even data protection regulations. It would also be reasonable to assume that some managerial and professional union members may have been nervous about providing their views on trade unionism, in a similar vein to reluctance to disclose political views. Unease over protection of individual identity is a prevalent issue among this group of workers and one that has not gone unremarked upon by managerial and professional members of the case-study unions during the course of this research.

It was essential to gain the full support of the three unions who have collaborated in this research. In addition to the 'privileged access' basis upon which each union had agreed to permit the researcher, it was necessary to ensure that participants were fully informed as to the research aims and objectives. The unions assisted in this process by issuing joint statements (in conjunction with WLRI, see appendix 2.2 for sample joint statement) to members who were contacted as part of the survey questionnaire process. Union officers also spoke to members directly in relation to the research when the opportunity presented itself, for example; at training events. The unions believed that this research would provide them with the opportunity to gain valuable insight into the position, priorities and concerns of their membership. That this data was generated from an independent source and not a union-driven initiative was also considered important. These unions had all been involved in a variety of surveys and 'in-house' research that had focused on specific aspects of union membership but none had addressed the overall position of managerial and professional membership.

### **Male-dominated target research areas, the problem of positionality and the application of feminist epistemology**

Qualitative and quantitative research methodologies are typically constructed as 'distinct research processes' (Brayton, 1997), whose overall aim is to accurately capture social reality. Contemporary feminist epistemology suggests, however, that both qualitative and quantitative research methods are prejudiced because they present a distorted notion of social reality. Social research orientation has historically reflected the perceptions of white, middle-class, heterosexual males, who, according to Hill-Collins (1990: 203), constitute the 'eurocentric masculinist validation process', whose purpose is 'to represent white male standpoint'. The feminist perspective therefore argues that much of social knowledge is actually *male* knowledge. The question is therefore raised as to whether female bias is adequately or sufficiently reflected in social research. Reflecting a reliable gender dynamic in this research was problematic, given that the case-study unions are male-dominated (see gender profile on page 79). In the UK sector of Nautilus, for example, only 2.2 per cent of the total membership is female (February 2010). It therefore proved difficult to establish any definitive gender perspective.

It is important, nonetheless, to consider the role of the female as a researcher. In order to focus on how the research process can be 'feminised', the feminist researcher will consider the importance of gender as a central aspect of social life (Fonow and Cook, 2005). Female researchers are able to bring their own history and experience to the research process and may possess a finer, more essentialist appreciation of the social dynamics that underpin a particular area being researched. Matsumoto (1996: 165) suggests that the issue of inequality may be successfully addressed if the researcher has an affinity with the context and where people may feel more comfortable sharing information with someone who understands, and is 'within' the situation. Conversely, the feminist researcher who is outwith the situation being researched may also be able to alter the balance of perception. This may enable individuals to feel more open about commenting upon, or criticising their workplace community or situation.

Having previously conducted research in the rail transport and engineering industries, I was confident that it would be possible to establish a reasonable affinity with respondents within the TSSA and, to an extent, from Nautilus and Prospect. The process of establishing trust, gaining access to individuals and recording their opinions, observations and experiences was, thanks to the 'privileged access' agreement entered into prior to commencement of the research, relatively unhindered and took place without major difficulty (with the possible exception of geographical constraints, which were inevitable, given the nature of the industries in which some members work). It is worth acknowledging, however, that sensitivity is required in order to fully appreciate participants' attitudes towards a female researcher, especially in areas that are historically and traditionally perceived as being the exclusive domain of the male.

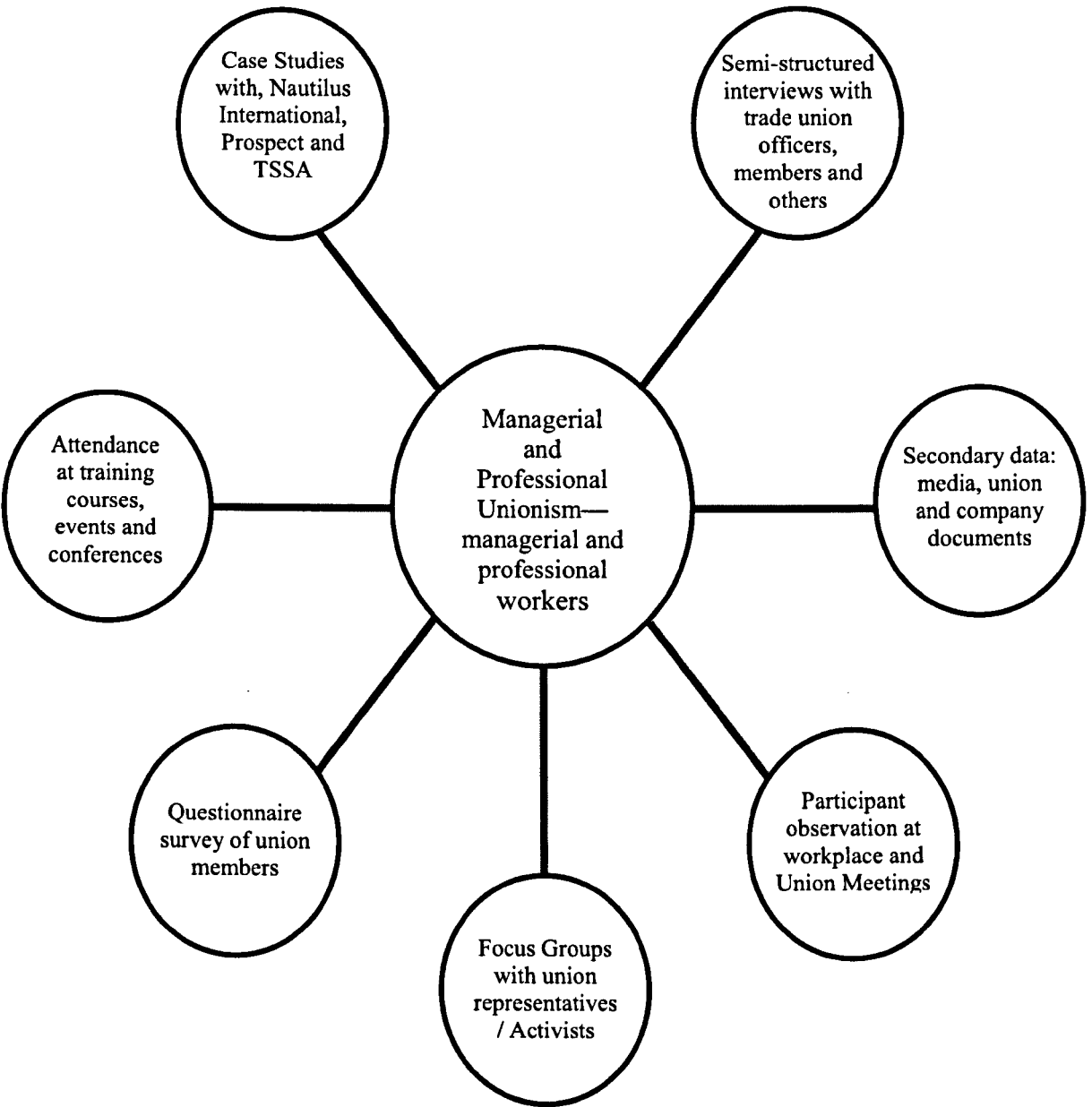
One of the most common problems experienced by researchers is that of access. Gaining access to information, stored data, people, and various other resources may present problems. Burgess (1984: 45) recognises that access is 'not a straightforward procedure', and this was the case in respect of gaining access to women members of the three unions. This proved difficult, and their consent to taking part in interviews and completing questionnaires even more so. Despite providing assurances, via union officers and in liaison with specific forums such as the Women's Advisory Forum in Nautilus and the Women in Focus (WiF) self-organised group in the TSSA, of the

confidential nature of the research, and the fact that the research had been fully endorsed by the three unions, comparatively few women members indicated a willingness to participate in interviews or focus groups (although the figure was higher in TSSA than in Nautilus, where *no* women came forward). Their contribution to group activities at which I was present in a non-participant observational capacity also appeared, in some cases in respect of Nautilus female members, to be restricted. Discussion with Nautilus officers failed to attribute its female members' concerns or lack of willingness to participate in the research.

### **Research techniques**

The research technique deployed for part of the research was a survey questionnaire. The main source of data, however, was through the use of semi-structured interviews, in addition to various other methods. Figure 2.1 (on the following page) describes the methods deployed in this research. Combining these methods provided an enhanced opportunity to optimise the quality of the data.

Figure 2.1---Multi-methods used in this research



**Semi-structured interviews**

Table 2.1 on the following page summarises the interview schedule used in the research (a full interview schedule can be found in table 2.1a, appendix 2.3). The research commenced among the full-time officers of the case-study unions and subsequently among their managerial and professional membership base, and took the form of individual and group interviews and discussions. Informal discussion also took place with non-union members and some manual-grade members in organisations in which the three unions are recognised. The opportunity also

presented itself to make contact with members of other managerial and professional unions (Aspect, FDA, PCS) who were not participating in the research.

**Table 2.1---List of interviewees**

	Nautilus	Prospect	TSSA	Other
Union (male)	4	3	3	
Union (female)	0	1	1	
Managerial-grade union member (male)	9	6	7	
Managerial-grade union member (female)	0	4	4	
Non-managerial grade union member	1 (M)	N/A	1 (F)	
Other				5 (M)*
Focus Group	0	0	1 (5M)	
Total number of interviews	14	14	21**	

\* 1 x non-union member  
1 x FDA member  
1 x former TSSA President  
1 x rail industry historian  
1 x General Secretary (ASPECT)  
\*\* includes 5 from focus group

**Union officer interviews**

A series of formal, one-to-one interviews were conducted with union full-time officers and repeated at the mid-point of the research with one officer from each union (although regular contact was maintained throughout the duration of the research in addition to formal interviews). These officers have different titles in each union. In Nautilus, they are called National Secretaries, or Industrial Officers, in Prospect they occupy the title of National Secretary or Organiser (a department-specific role of equal position), and in TSSA they are referred to, in order of seniority, as National Organisers, Senior Regional Organisers, and Regional Organisers.

The interview topic guide (see appendix 2.4) was composed of fourteen topics, with questions intended to probe not only officers’ perception of their union’s structures in relation to their managerial and professional membership, but also to elicit their own personal definition, or classification, of a managerial or professional worker. Questions also sought officers’ interpretation of the environment in which managerial and professional workers collectivise, and their view or understanding of the reasons *why* collectivisation was occurring. Findings from these interviews were organised thematically, in order to best reflect union officers’ interpretations and observations. Follow-up interviews carried out with officers were designed not only to capture their

views and opinions on changes that had taken place in their members' workplaces and how managerial and professional members had responded to the effects of a declining economy, but also to ascertain their thoughts on feedback from the statistics produced as part of the survey questionnaire process. This included their fears about the potential for a low response rate, which in fact transpired to be well-founded, as is demonstrable from interview feedback given by union officers (and outlined in more detail in following chapters) who had been involved in the research since its inception.

Themes that began to emerge as a result of earlier research into the growth of managerial and professional unionism in Network Rail in 2009<sup>11</sup> were used as a starting point. This research formed the basis for discussion around the definition of a manager and the facets that characterise the managerial and professional worker. Union officers' interpretations of the definition of this type of worker were also important because this related to measurement of the difference in behaviour between manual, or blue-collar, and managerial and professional workers more generally. It also provided a focal point for analysis of the priorities and motivations of this group of workers. What union officers felt represented significant issues to their managerial and professional members was instrumental in shaping the themes that would be addressed at a later stage of the research with members of the case-study unions.

### **Interviews with union members**

The objective of interviews with managerial and professional union members was to gain an in-depth understanding of these workers, their workplace dynamic and the motivators towards, and views surrounding, union membership. The tension between qualitative and quantitative research is highlighted in the advantages and disadvantages of using interviews as a research method. As a primary means of accessing reliable and subjective data, however, interviews provide the researcher with the 'flexibility' (Whipp, 1998: 54) to develop and expand on certain aspects of the research, which is paramount in allowing parameters to be established within the research framework.

Key respondent interviews constituted an essential element of this research in that they provided an invaluable opportunity to establish, through open dialogue, and

within the confines of confidentiality, managerial and professional union members' views, ideas, perceptions and opinions about their trade union membership and their motivations to unionisation (a sample interview topic guide can be found in appendix 2.5). Interview candidates were selected from a pool of members who had indicated a willingness to be interviewed. This indication was made via a specifically-designed field on the survey questionnaire that was distributed to members earlier in the research process (and described later in this chapter). Attempts were made, as far as possible, to be representative, and yet given the age, ethnicity and gender profile of the three unions (see pages 79 and 80), this representativeness remained constrained by a reactive process based on selection of those who made themselves available via the survey questionnaire process.

The semi-structured interview method was selected in order to encourage respondents to be open and describe fully the thoughts, views and experiences that contributed to their decision to unionise and the factors that characterise their unionisation. This method was also useful in determining the ways in which this group of workers responded to workplace events such as restructuring, redundancy and fragmentation of organisational practices. Interviews with members centred around the positioning of managerial and professional workers in the hierarchical structures of their workplace, and how they viewed issues like partnership, industrial action and political affiliation, and the levels of participation and activism that existed among these members. These interviews were tape-recorded with the consent of the respondents.

The opportunity was provided to interviewees to select a location for the interview. The majority of members interviewed were comfortable to be interviewed either at their place of work (as was the case with all Prospect interviewees, given that they were widely geographically dispersed across the UK) or at the WLRI. A minority of interviewees were, however, nervous about being interviewed at their place of work. This was most prevalent among interviewees from the rail transport industry (TSSA members). One, a senior manager, expressed concern that one of his 500 direct-report employees might be unsettled by their manager's involvement or engagement with a researcher. That said, however, this member was at pains to emphasise his desire to take part in the interview because he had 'things to say' and was of the opinion that



research of unionisation among his peers was of value. Arrangements were therefore made to interview this member at the TSSA's head office premises.

### **Survey questionnaire of union members**

This method was used to access as many managerial and professional workers within the three unions as possible, in order to ascertain their views and perceptions of union membership and collectivisation. It was my aim to create an element of 'snap-shot' evidence to be used in conjunction with material elicited from interviews and participant observation. A series of questions was compiled, which were first discussed and debated with full-time staff from the three case-study unions, which related to my research questions. This survey was designed using Survey Monkey software (see appendix 2.6 for model survey questionnaire) and was piloted among the research community at the WLRI and within the three unions. This was then distributed via email, together with the accompanying joint statement from each union and WLRI. The survey posed the same questions in all three surveys with two necessary wording amendments<sup>12</sup>.

It was agreed by Nautilus International and TSSA that the survey could be distributed to the unions' entire managerial-grade membership—6276 members with functional email addresses in Nautilus and 5638 members at TSSA. Given that Prospect's membership is over 100,000, it was decided, in discussions with Prospect full-time staff, to target members drawn from a range of industries across its main sectoral branches, totalling 7817 members. These branches were selected from: National Air Traffic Services (NATS), Air Traffic Systems Specialists (ATSS), British Energy (members working in the nuclear industry ex-BNFL), Central Networks (Distribution Network operator in the electricity sector), FERA (Food Environment and Rural Affairs; including the department and a number of its agencies), Defence Maritime Acquisition (the government agency that provides equipment and support to the Ministry of Defence), Rosyth Royal Dockyard (defence contractor Babcock) and the two regional branches in British Telecom. Members were provided with a 40-day window for completion of the survey questionnaire, which provided respondents with sufficient time to complete the questionnaire, while not leaving it so long that they would forget about it. An additional twenty days was provided to Nautilus members,

who in many cases, experienced limitations to off-shore internet access, hence potentially impeding their ability to complete and return the survey.

Attitudinal surveys, while limited, are systematic, and have the potential to deliver more exhaustive information. Depending on the response rate—between 10 and 30 per cent is generally considered to fall within the ‘normal return rate’ (Etzel and Walker, 1974)—surveys are an effective means of gathering high quantities of information over a relatively short timeframe. It would be reasonably realistic to assume that workers who are often time-poor, and have excessive workloads, would not necessarily relish the prospect of spending vast amounts of time concentrating on formulating responses to protracted or convoluted research questions and it is therefore much easier, and less time-consuming, for individuals to respond using a tick-box, scale or likert method whereby they can rate a particular statement or comment on a high/low or agree/disagree ratings basis. This method also facilitates statistical analysis, as it removes the requirement for the researcher to apply interpretation or assumption, which can be distortive and misleading.

Response rates were ten per cent for Nautilus, eleven per cent for TSSA and fourteen per cent for Prospect. Discussions with full-time staff from the three unions took place to try to pinpoint the reason for relatively low response rates. These revealed that not only were other surveys being undertaken simultaneously with this survey, including a survey about managerial-grade pay in TSSA and a union-wide bullying and harassment survey being run by Nautilus; both of which would, perhaps understandably, have been prioritised over a survey conducted by an external party. Industrial action ballots were also taking place and other union-wide email and online traffic was deemed to be ‘relatively high’<sup>13</sup> at this point in time. Union full-time officers interviewed as part of the initial research were not optimistic about a healthy response rate and their forecast was indeed accurate. Nautilus Industrial Officer, James, attributed this low response rate to ‘the usual thing—apathy’, while TSSA Senior Regional Organiser, Joel, felt that there were more complex reasons, possibly linked to this group of workers’ perceptions of trade union membership:

‘This might be indicative of participation, activism and the way managerial and professional workers see themselves in the context of a trade union. What have I joined for? ‘Have I joined for a service or have I joined to be a part of something?’ and if the answer primarily indicates

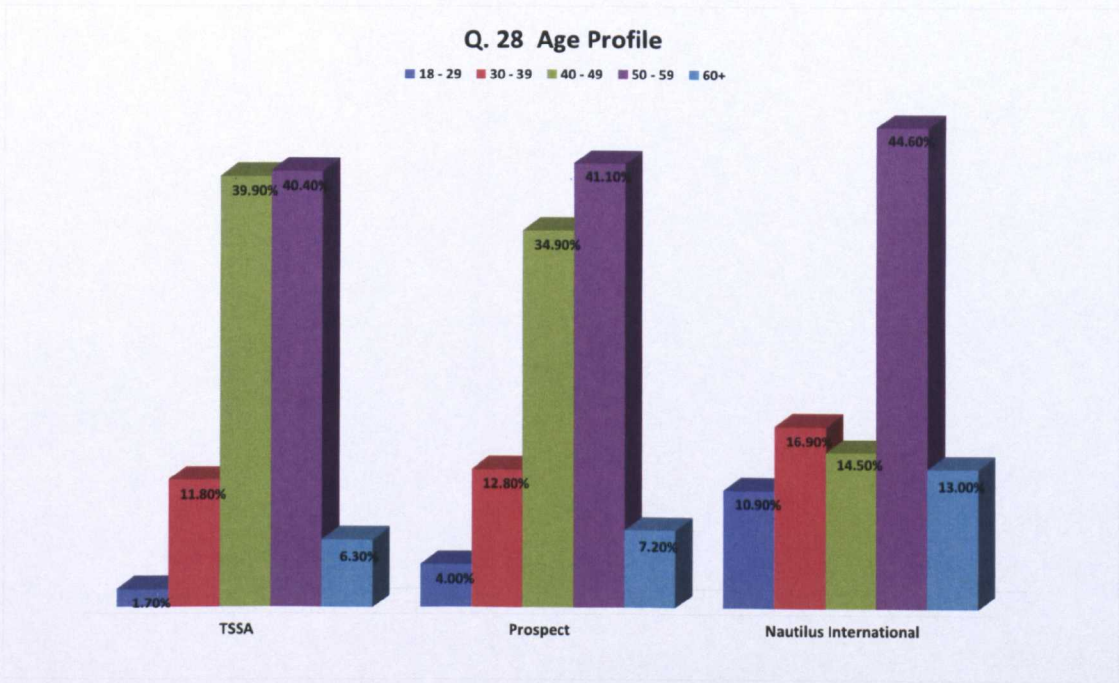
that people have joined because they want something from it then that would probably explain why they haven't played an active role in it [the survey]' [Interview: Joel, 09/11/11]

Joel makes an interesting point and the connection to servicing and participation are themes that will be discussed in greater detail in later chapters.

**Respondent profile**

The following charts show the age, ethnicity and gender profiles (a detailed breakdown of these profiles can be found in Appendix 2.7) of the survey questionnaire respondents.

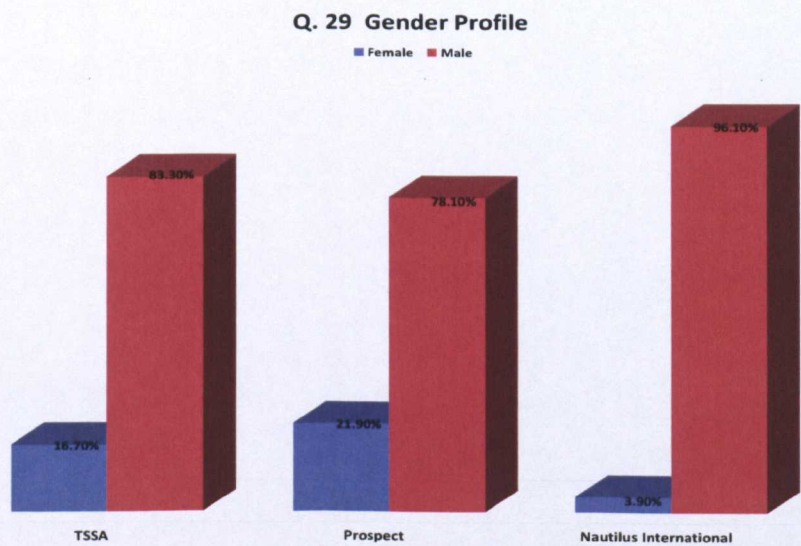
**Graph 2.1—Age profile**



Graph 2.2--Ethnicity profile



Graph 2.3--Gender profile



The survey questionnaire also established the length of service and length of union membership held by respondents (see table 2.2 below)

Table 2.2--Average length of service and union membership held by survey questionnaire respondents

	Nautilus	Prospect	TSSA
Average length of service (years)	18.8	19.6	18.0
Average length of union membership (years)	19.2	16.9	16.5

## **Secondary data, media, union and company documents**

In order to provide supporting context to the work situation in which managers and professionals within the three case-study unions operate, it is useful to be familiar with relevant industry or corporate developments and be acquainted with the various policies and procedures adopted by companies, for example, partnership agreements between unions and employers. A variety of documentary sources have been used in this research. Media reporting and news archives have provided a useful and relevant backdrop to research into union context, against which it has been possible to reflect the evolving nature of the industries whose members are represented by Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA. Political bias is unavoidable in newspaper articles, yet factual reporting of complex industrial and corporate issues is valuable and worthwhile—if accurate.

Specific union documentation, for example; Nautilus International's 'Telegraph', Prospect's 'Profile' and TSSA's 'Journal' (monthly publications for members), is useful in terms of keeping updated about current issues within the unions. This material is similarly useful in tracking specific events, like disputes or campaigns, and provides additional context to the workplace that these members inhabit. Other internal union documentation such as union rule books, annual reports, press releases and company circulars were also useful in cementing background knowledge to unions' industrial issues. Trade journals and company documentation, although useful from a background perspective, are largely descriptive and concern procedural and organisational issues as opposed to anything pertaining specifically to 'news', although these were useful in terms of gaining knowledge of employers' methods and practices and allowed insight into the environment in which members operate.

## **Focus groups with union representatives**

The views of union representatives from the three case-study unions are important indicators as to how managerial and professional members want their union to function. Union representatives' input, therefore, was useful in determining the extent to which managerial and professional workers operate or behave differently to manual, or blue-collar, workers. Focus groups have become more popular recently, especially in the fields of social science and health research (Bell, 2005: 162),



although they have also been subject to a great deal of criticism, especially when used by government and political parties.

Focus groups are a widely used qualitative technique for data gathering, which allow participation by a broadly representative group, with the aim of gaining in-depth knowledge in a particular field. They are valuable insofar as they are a good means of discovering how people '*think* about an issue, their reasoning *why* things are as they are, *why* they hold the views they do' (Laws et al, 2003: 299). The opportunity presented itself to organise a focus group consisting of workplace representatives at the TSSA's National Representatives' Training Seminar (NRTS) in May 2011. Invitation to participate was extended to members upon registration for the event and while not overwhelmingly successful in establishing any meaningful context to the research questions posed in this thesis—participants were distracted by the General Secretary's request to delegates to award him a 'mandate to negotiate' with other unions about a possible merger<sup>14</sup>—it was sufficiently helpful in terms of establishing the basic concerns of some of the union's managerial representatives—primarily worries over potential pay freezing, loss of bonus in the event of taking industrial action, and increased company restructuring and reorganisation. It was not possible to organise focus groups with representatives from Nautilus and Prospect, due in the main, to geographical, access and logistical issues.

### **Participant and non-participant observation**

In order to gain background and context to the managerial and professional work situation, observation was important. It is generally accepted that participant observers 'share in the lives and activities of other people...and interact with people in their own environment' (Burgess, 1984: 45). It is therefore important to understand, as fully as possible, the scenario in which managerial and professional workers operate on a day-to-day basis and how their unionisation intersects with their 'bread and butter' working life. I therefore attended various training courses for members and representatives of the three collaborating unions in order to observe interaction in a participant and non-participant-observation capacity. This enabled me to record conversations with course attendees, which provided useful insight into their motivations to study in a trade union learning framework. I continued to attend these courses intermittently throughout the duration of the research. Separate from in-house

union training programmes, the TUC delivers specific, tailored education and training programmes to members. Courses in the vein of ‘coping with the economic downturn’ (TUC, 2009<sup>15</sup>), designed to equip union representatives to meet the challenges posed by current economic conditions, and ‘strategic corporate research’ (TUC Organising Academy, 2009<sup>16</sup>), created with the aim of teaching representatives how to interrogate company accounts and formulate negotiating briefs, appeared to be popular. It was useful to be able to capture responses to this less generic, more bespoke style of training in order to establish the type of training that managerial and professional members considered important and relevant.

Observing managerial and professional workers in a training capacity was also useful in establishing what was important to them as individuals. For example, a TUC employment law course provides ample opportunity for members to discuss and debate thoughts and views about the employment law system, how it operates and is implemented, and who it protects. The stance adopted by this group of workers goes some way to indicating the nature of their personal priorities and can give vital clues as to their position, or role, within their union.

Invitations were extended to attend each union’s Annual Conference, or Annual General Meeting (AGM), in addition to certain specialist or issue-based events (see table 2.3, Appendix 2.7) from which it was possible to record non-participant observations and sustain contact with members who made themselves available at designated events that took place on a regular basis (training updates, branch meetings for example). May (2001: 174) acknowledges that participant observation is ‘not an easy method to perform’, and as such, I am acutely aware that observing people who are *outside* their normal environment, may not be the most reliable method, yet this nonetheless enabled an outline appreciation of the industrial habitat in which these workers dwell as managerial and professional trade unionists.

## Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the reasons for adopting the various approaches to undertaking the research, with the aim of producing an analytical, in-depth, and focused response to the research questions. There are significant gaps in research into the expansion of managerial and professional unionism and it was the intention to

address these by deploying a constructionist approach. This shaped the research process by taking account of the extent to which research participants, as the agents of change, arrived at the conclusions that drove their behaviour, and subsequently informed their collectivisation. Group dynamics are not categorical (Nightingale and Cromby, 2002) and a constructionist approach allowed the freedom that is necessary to explore complex and multi-layered behaviour. Taking into account Martinez-Lucio and Stewart's (1997) contention that what is constructed as individual may be manifested as collective, research analysis acknowledges the significance of the ways in which research participants interpreted the processes which guide their work situation, experience and behaviour. The research process therefore considered the ways in which individuals responded to the factors that informed their 'reality', such as job insecurity and economic instability.

It was the aim of this research, in analysing the context of the three case-study unions, by conducting interviews, survey questionnaires and activities with officers and members, to establish managerial and professional workers' main drivers to unionisation. It also aimed to establish whether there is any correlation to assertions that workers have been encouraged to embrace a position of moderation against increasingly powerful employers. Or, whether it is more realistic to assert that collectivism has indeed gained a 'new vigour' (Bacon and Storey, 1995: 72). This research also relates to that undertaken by M. J. Kelly (1980, in Crompton and Jones, 1986: 172-173) who asserted that factors such as 'bureaucratisation, feminisation, rationalisation, computerisation and commercialisation' have in part contributed to 'greater union participation and militancy among white-collar workers'. Given that the elements to which Kelly refers are those that in some way affect the majority of the population involved in this research, it is necessary to consider the extent to which the resultant reality that is constructed influences the culture of sub-collectivism that was found to be establishing itself among managerial and professional members of the case-study unions. The absence of any recent comprehensive research in the field of managerial and professional unionisation and collectivisation does not have to be constraining, if anything, it has the potential to provide a liberating opportunity to contribute to knowledge in this area.



## **Chapter three**

### **Politics and perspectives: managerial and professional unions in context—Nautilus International, Prospect and TSSA**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will analyse the character of the three unions collaborating in this research—Nautilus International, Prospect and the TSSA. In order to lend context to the research, this chapter will establish the ideology, political positioning and industrial priorities that underpin these unions and their day-to-day function. The chapter explores the various characteristics of these unions in order to understand the extent to which managerial and professional unions take a different approach to these issues from other unions. If we are to assume that the industrial position adopted by managerial and professional workers is instrumental in determining their propensity to behave collectively, then this may also determine the way in which these unions function, organise and respond to members. This chapter will therefore discuss the position of the different groups of workers who are joining these unions and will test the extent to which these positions are reflected in the character of the unions. In establishing where they position themselves industrially, the chapter also aims to discover the extent to which these unions consider themselves to be ‘professional’, ‘partnership’ or ‘organising’ unions.

This thesis aims to establish why and how Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA have been successful in sustaining membership among managerial and professional workers. ‘Impressive’ was the word Hallas (1974) used to describe the 176 per cent growth of ‘white-collar’ workers that took place between 1911 and 1966 (against a five per cent rise in the number of manual workers), and although this figure is dated, it remains significant from the point of view of contextualising managerial and professional union density. The growth of ‘white-collar unionism’ that was recorded in the 1970s, according to Jenkins and Sherman (1979: 138), ‘took many people by surprise’ and it could be argued that trends in the three unions under study in this research, along with

other managerial and professional unions, are equally surprising, given the overall trend of decline in trade union membership generally.

Aspect<sup>17</sup> (the union representing professionals working in education and children's services), The British Airline Pilots Association (BALPA) and the First Division Authority (FDA)<sup>18</sup>, for example, would appear to be experiencing steady-state membership trends. Aspect's membership grew steadily from 2004 and in an interview with its General Secretary, John Chowcat, this growth was attributed to:

'the greater degree of pressure felt at senior levels, government policy changed in 2004 and lots more insecurity came into the profession and cuts that are now imminent in education have indicated another upward trend.' [Interview: John Chowcat, 17/10/10]

BALPA's membership grew steadily from 2000 to 2009, and only started to decline in tandem with the onset of the global recession and a general contraction of the industry, which saw a series of mergers, redundancies and confrontations with low cost airlines. In response to increases in oil prices, among other things, members, in an attempt to retain jobs, agreed to fly for shorter periods of time, which resulted in fewer flights and therefore less volume; a factor that has undoubtedly contributed to the loss of over 1000 members over the past three years ([www.balpa.org.uk](http://www.balpa.org.uk), 2012<sup>19</sup>). The FDA, on the other hand, has continued its trend of membership growth, gaining over 600 members since 2008. These unions display similar characteristics to at least two of the three unions under study in this research. Non-politically affiliated, partnership-endorsing and largely strike-averse, these unions promote, in similar ways to Nautilus, Prospect and TSSA, the values portrayed by a large proportion of their membership.

The chapter will start by offering an historical context in order to understand the way in which these unions operate, both internally and in terms of their development over time, and more poignantly, how they have assimilated the cultures of other unions with whom they have merged. This is especially pertinent in the case of Prospect.

Material for this chapter has been gathered from archive data contained in the TUC Library at London Metropolitan University, from union-specific documentation, such as union journals and circulars, as well as online sources, and from interviews

conducted with union employees, managerial and professional union members and non-unionised managerial and professional workers.

### An historical overview of Nautilus, Prospect and TSSA

This chapter presents a tabled overview of the relevant facts, figures and statistics that relate to each of the three unions and will outline their composition and historical background and membership configuration. This enables identification of their industrial locus and how this interfaces with their membership, internal structures and core function in a diverse labour market, an often hostile working environment and within an increasingly combative government presence. The chapter will also consider the industrial challenges these unions face as contemporary managerial and professional trade unions.

**Table 3.1 --Union facts and figures**

	Nautilus	Prospect*	TSSA
Total union membership#	22,037	103,925 (Prospect) 16,710 (Connect)	26,830
Total management-grade membership	14,686	Not applicable	10,194
Total union density	70%	Available only by sector	60%
Total management-grade density	84%	Not applicable	60%
Gender**			
Female	2.3%	23%	29%
Male	97.7%	77%	71%
Management-grade gender		Not applicable	
Female	325		1,956
Male	14,361		8,238
Ethnicity**	BME 3% WB 97%	BME 3% WB 97%	BME 9% WB 91%
Total number of representatives	331	4,069 (Prospect) 435 (Connect)	1,000
Total number of management-grade representatives			
Female	2	Not applicable	38
Male	321		218
Total number of manual/classified-grade representatives			
Female	1	Not applicable	181
Male	7		563
Total number of staff employed by union	71	185	65
Percentage of membership opt-out of political fund	Not applicable	Not applicable	6.35%
Collective bargaining coverage	Maritime industry (see table 3.1a, Appendix 3)	Defence, Energy, Air Traffic Control, Nuclear, Heritage, Engineering, Civil Service agencies, Telecomms, Non-governmental department bodies	UK transport industry (see table 3.1b, Appendix 3)
Number of companies/organisations/employers represented	142	2,600 (Prospect) 558 (Connect)	91

(Source: Nautilus UK Branch and Annual Statement 2010, Prospect Annual Report 2010, TSSA Annual Activities Report, 2010)

**As of December 2010**

\* Prospect operates distinctly from the Connect sector, and therefore figures for both, where available, are provided separately

\*\*gender and ethnicity breakdown as of February 2012

#The Certification Officer ranks Prospect the fourteenth largest union in the UK (www.certoffice.org, December 2011<sup>20</sup>). The TUC Register of Trade Unions ranks TSSA and Nautilus 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> respectively (January 2010). The Certification Officer does not keep a rankings register below position 14 (i.e. Prospect) but was able to confirm that both TSSA and Nautilus, as of December 2010, were two of eight unions that fell into the 15,000—24,000 membership category.

The ratio of representatives to members is identical in Prospect and the TSSA (27 members per representative) and 66.5 members per representative at Nautilus. The vast proportion of Nautilus representatives, however, are made up of managerial-grade workers, while managerial-grade representatives only make up one quarter of the TSSA's representatives. Organisationally, this suggests that managerial grades within Nautilus are comprehensively provided for as per the union's more general undertaking to 'service' its members, whereas managerial-grade members of the TSSA have fewer representatives at their disposal.

Density in the managerial grade sectors of Nautilus and TSSA, and within Prospect overall, is remarkably healthy, compared to UK union membership generally. Despite a general decline in overall membership in Nautilus International and the TSSA since 2003/4, managerial and professional density maintains a stable position. In Prospect, where there is no delineation between all-grade and managerial/professional-grade, density also remains relatively constant (with a spike in 2010 occurring after the merger with the Connect union). Certain jobs, or those which are characterised as 'individualised', would also appear to be those that make up what could be described as a reconfigured working environment; one that this thesis argues is producing and nurturing a fresh approach to trade unionism, not only in terms of how unions are *perceived*, but also from the point of view of the demands and expectations that the individuals who undertake managerial or professional jobs and occupations are placing upon unions.





*'The Nautilus International mission is to be an independent financially viable international trade union and professional organisation, committed to equal opportunities, providing a high quality, cost effective service to members and welfare to needy seafarers and their dependants'*

[www.nautilusint.org](http://www.nautilusint.org)

Nautilus is characterised by its self-identification as a 'professional' union, whose priorities and dominant focus are the safeguarding of the specialist skills that the union believes defines professionalism and provides a framework in which members can be reassured of protection in the event of criminalisation or exposure to legislative insecurity. Committed to partnership working, Nautilus continues to prioritise the professional element of its makeup and focuses down on this as a staple of its function and existence as an all-grades trade union.

### **An historical background to Nautilus**

Nautilus traces its roots back to the foundation, in 1857, of the Mercantile Marine Service Association (MMSA), in response to the harsh laws imposed by the 1850 Merchant Shipping Act. The MMSA merged with the Imperial Merchant Service Guild in 1936 and retained its name. Representation for ships' engineers began in the late nineteenth century and the two unions merged to become the Marine Engineers' Association (MEA) in 1899. Meanwhile, in 1912, in response to the growing use of telegraphy at sea, the Association of Wireless Telegraphists was formed and following a series of name changes and mergers throughout the years resulted in the establishment of the Radio and Electronic Officers' Union (REOU) in 1967.

The Navigating and Engineer Officers' Union (NEOU) was born in the mid 1930s and merged, in 1956, with the MEA, to form the Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association (MNAOA). In 1985, the merger took place between the MMSA, REOU and MNOAO to form the National Union of Marine, Aviation and Shipping Transport Officers (NUMAST). In order to reflect the increasing globalisation of shipping in the

new millennium, NUMAST became Nautilus in 2006. Long-standing co-operation with the Dutch maritime union resulted in the launch of the Nautilus Federation, through which Nautilus NL and Nautilus UK worked closely together, both on a political and industrial level. In 2009, Nautilus NL and Nautilus UK merged to create a 'new single trans-boundary union for maritime professionals' ([www.nautilus.int.org/History](http://www.nautilus.int.org/History)). In August 2011, Nautilus International took a further step towards cementing its commitment to trans-boundary trade union organisation with the launch of its Swiss sector<sup>21</sup>, to run alongside the UK and Dutch branches. This international aspect has reinforced Numast's previous representation of the interests of merchant naval officers both nationally and internationally. The union continues to be actively involved with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Maritime Organization (IMO).

Nautilus International has in the region of 24,000 members (April 2010) and represents a wide range of professional maritime workers—masters (ship captains), engineers, officers and trainee officers (cadets), as well as shipping industry personnel—pilots, inland navigation workers, harbour-masters, vessel traffic services operators and oil and gas industry seafarers, and shore-based, administrative and clerical staff. The 'workplace' for Nautilus members is varied: cruise ships, ferries, dredgers, scientific vessels, government resource vessels, small cargo vessels, containers, stand-by and supply vessels. The union is organised into two main branches: one in London and one in Rotterdam. Sustaining a 'regular' form of branch structure is not possible due to the nature of the industry, however, workers are allocated to employer-based 'branches', where liaison officers (or representatives) are appointed and meet to take forward members' issues, in a similar way to which 'regular' branches operate, within either geographically or employer-based structures.

### **An analysis of membership**

Despite overall membership decline in Nautilus since 2001, density in the managerial sector (the 'Top Four' grades; comprising ship masters, chief officers, chief engineers and second engineers) stood at 85 per cent in June 2010. Officers attribute overall decline of UK members to retirement. As junior officers—or junior managers (i.e. third engineers, second officers)—have been promoted, the ranks below them have been filled by employees of non-UK nationality. In the dredging sector, for example,

the two main UK companies in the North Sea and Channel both employed UK seafarers but in recent years these companies have argued that they have been unable to identify suitable UK officers and have sought instead to attract overseas employees. Consequently these companies have employed many workers from Eastern Europe in junior positions that have become available as a result of the decline of the Russian naval fleet, whose staff have relocated to the merchant side of the industry. These workers proved much cheaper for companies to employ and had inferior terms and conditions to British officers. Nautilus does, however, predict a rise in membership in the coming years as the number of UK qualified cadets becoming officers is anticipated to grow (based on 245 cadets training in 1999 and 900 entering training in 2009). Managerial-grade employees however, are continuing to take up union membership in increasing numbers as it is becoming apparent that the need for legislative protection is increasing. Collective bargaining priorities at Nautilus centre around protection of jobs, pay and conditions, seeking to ensure pension rights and pursuing equality clauses in union/employer agreements, and increasing and enhancing training provision for members. Recruitment at Nautilus centres around 'certificate protection'<sup>22</sup>—considered to be an invaluable form of insurance policy for professional maritime workers, who strongly believe that their industry is becoming increasingly criminalised. This issue will be addressed in greater detail in chapter five.

The nature of the industry is, according to industrial officers (the name given to union full-time officers) at Nautilus, a key driver in recruiting members. While officers were keen to emphasise the collectivist position of the union, especially in their recruitment and training packages, 'certification' remains the mainstay of its membership and looks set to continue to retain strong significance. Industrial officer, James, explained:

'the higher the rank, the higher our membership density, so the more senior the grade, the more likely they are to unionise. Managers carry the can; they have more need of an insurance policy than anyone else. There's a high level of responsibility and more heads are on the line if things go wrong'. [Interview: James, 11/03/10]

The principle underpinning certification is very similar to that of occupational regulation (Kleiner, 2000), which relates to the process by which individual workers acquire either government permission, or that of a relevant professional body, in order to 'practice' their occupation. In a similar vein to licensing, whereby individuals must obtain a licence in order to undertake a particular role or occupation, this is a process

which is growing in the US and according to Humphris et al (2010: 7.2), constitutes the ‘right to practice’. The objectives of this form of regulation will broadly ensure that occupants of a particular role or profession will benefit from ‘services’, much in the same way as a union member might expect to receive ‘benefits’ such as discounted insurance, free legal representation and assistance with other forms of occupationally related representation. The significance attached to occupational regulation by the majority of Nautilus members is indicative of the presence of social closure that is described in earlier chapters and is demonstrative of the overall import that these members attach to occupational factors.

The majority of occupations in the UK are nationally licensed and can take the form of certification or accreditation, where practitioners are required to meet a stipulated set of criteria that ‘demonstrate competence and knowledge in a specific area’ (Humphris et al, 2010: 7.4). This process is not mandatory, yet being awarded certification or accreditation could be assumed to confer a certain proficiency or acumen which might otherwise be ignored. In the context of Prospect, and to a greater extent Nautilus, membership, the principle of certification is clearly significant.

Given the high prioritisation of certification as the core benefit of membership for the majority of Nautilus members, recruitment in the union is being forced to focus increasingly on the decline in the size of the merchant navy and UK maritime skills base, which constitutes a serious threat to the ability to provide adequate strategic assets to support future operations. In serious war situations, the merchant navy ‘keeps open the ‘lifeline’ by providing industry and civilians with food, raw materials, energy and other essential supplies’ (see table 3.2 below).

**Table 3.2—‘Don’t Forget the Fourth Arm’—Nautilus report on the strategic requirements for merchant shipping and seafarers, June 2007, p.5**

	1982	2007
UK-owned and registered tonnage as percentage of world total	5.3%	0.6%
UK-owned and registered trading ships (> 500 gross tones)	985	295
British seafarers employed in UK shipping industry	54,955	20,821
Number of cadets in training	4259	1050
Average age of UK officers	34 years	43.4 years



This therefore represents a crucial element of recruitment for Nautilus. In order to illustrate this situation, a report was produced in 2007 to highlight the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Falklands war, which drew attention the escalating level of industry decline that was affecting levels of recruitment within Nautilus. The union is therefore committed not only to campaigning against further decimation of naval fleets and the shipping industry as a whole, but also to implementing a robust recruitment strategy. Recruitment in Nautilus is centred primarily around their Partnership At Work initiatives which comprise comprehensive education and training programmes which Nautilus officers feel is sufficiently robust to ensure steady-state membership and recruitment rates.



*'The Prospect mission is to promote and protect the interests of professionals at work*

*Representing our members' interests at work:*

- *negotiating their pay and conditions*
- *providing personal advice and legal support*
- *advancing their careers and job security*
- *protecting their health and safety*
- *promoting equality and diversity*
- *campaigning to influence employers and decision-makers*

*Strengthening the union:*

- *recruiting and organising new members*
- *supporting and training our network of elected representatives*
- *using our members' expertise*
- *working with other unions, at home and abroad, to promote the rights of workers*
- *maintaining a political voice independent of any political party.'*

[www.prospect.org.uk](http://www.prospect.org.uk)

Prospect identifies itself as the 'union for professionals', whose priorities are the advancement and enhancement of members' careers. Its union full-time employees

have differing views about partnership; these are largely dependent upon the sector or area in which they work. The majority of union officers interviewed as part of this research claimed that while notional approval of organising methods was evident, the practicalities are not always consistent with the reality.

### **An historical background to Prospect**

Prospect's history and development are as complex as Nautilus' and TSSA's. The establishment of Whitleyism (the name given to the system of industrial relations whose principles included the recognition of trade unions and an extensive system of negotiation and consultation, and whose term derived from the Whitley Committee, established in 1916 to investigate 'relations between employers and employed') had an effect on the eventual configuration of Prospect, as it represented a 'major step forward for civil service trade unions' (Mortimer and Ellis, 1980: 18), although this was not to say that it in any way guaranteed improved relations between management and unions.

The origins of Prospect are complex and in order to contextualise its development, the following section examines the implication of mergers and their instrumentality in the eventual creation of Prospect as an independent trade union. Prospect was formed by a merger in 2001 between the civil service union IPMS and the EMA, during a time when several major UK unions were involved in mergers, continuing a trend that established itself in the 1990s (Waddington, 2004).

### **The role of union mergers and the significance of the ASTMS, MSF and TASS**

Creation of the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs (ASTMS) was the result of a merger between the Association of Supervisory Staff, Executives and Technicians (ASSET) and the Association of Scientific Workers (AScW) in 1969. ASTMS had an impressive growth rate and quickly expanded into new services and industries, recording mergers with over 30 different staff associations following its formation. ASTMS had developed a highly successful strategy of 'hoovering up' (IDS Report, 2001), smaller staff associations and moving into traditionally non-unionised sectors of the economy during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Along with the National and Local Government Officers Association (NALGO), ASTMS was

arguably the main beneficiary of the enormous boom in white-collar union membership in the 1970s and 1980s.

It could be argued that the influence of the Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Sector (TASS) on the eventual formation of Prospect is not without significance. TASS, in originating from the Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen (founded in 1913, to later become DATA (the Draughtsmen and Allied Technicians Union)) operated within a federal structure as the white-collar sector of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (AUEW), from whom it broke away in 1985 to join forces with a number of smaller craft unions and later with rival staff union the ASTMS.

The Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union (MSF) was formed in 1988 by a merger between ASTMS and TASS – whose members were skilled, professional workers, employed mainly in the engineering industry – and represented predominantly white-collar workers. The primary objective of the MSF, in the 1970s and 1980s, was to establish a degree of territorial dominance as a representative of a wide range of skilled professional groups. The ‘territorial dominance’ to which the MSF referred is a factor that is by no means unrecognisable in Prospect in the 2000s. The MSF merged with the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union (AEEU) to form Amicus in 2002 (ironically thereby reuniting the former TASS and AUEW). As with the significance attached to occupational regulation and the need for managerial and professional workers to seek protection from potential damage, attack on, or erosion to their professional or vocational status is symptomatic of the characteristics of social closure.

### **The fore-runners to Prospect and the creation of a new union**

#### **The EMA and IPMS**

The Engineers’ and Managers’ Association (EMA) and Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists (IPMS) were also instrumental in the eventual creation of Prospect. The EMA grew out of the Electrical Power Engineers’ Association’s decision, in 1976, to recruit managerial and professional staff outside the electricity supply industry, notably in the engineering, aerospace and oil industries, and in 1979 emerged as the principal union offering a new and widely debated concept—a trade

union for professionals. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, professional engineers were among the most highly unionised professional workers in the UK (Roslender, 1983).

The period between 1964 and 1977 was one of unprecedented growth in manufacturing (Bain, 1970) and Roslender contends that scientists, engineers and technologists in manufacturing may have undergone organisation more exponentially than professional workers in the private sector—which has occurred simultaneously with the overall growth of union membership among corporate professionals since the mid 1960s (Bryson and Forth, 2010). Roslender (1983: 42) further recognised that unionisation of professional workers had become a ‘phenomenon in its own right’, and forecast that it would remain a dominant trend in trade union membership in the future. Given that the TUC verified that Prospect was the fastest-growing trade union in the UK in 2011 (TUC<sup>23</sup>), then Roslender’s projection was indeed accurate.

The IPMS was previously known as the Institution of Professional Civil Servants (IPCS). Founded in 1919, it catered for specialist grades within the civil service—mainly Ministry of Defence scientists and technologists. IPCS, during the period of privatisation in the 1980s and 1990s found that more and more of its membership was now working in the private sector, hence the name change to IPMS. The merger of EMA and IPMS, to form Prospect on 1 November 2001, created a union of highly professional staff drawn from both public and private sectors. At the time of the creation of the union, Prospect stated that 40 per cent of its members were qualified to PhD or post-graduate level, with a further 31 per cent qualified to degree equivalent level (IDS Report, 2010). In 2009, Prospect endorsed a transfer of engagements from the union for managers in the communications industry—Connect, which became a part of Prospect in January 2010<sup>24</sup>. Prospect’s membership is divided approximately 60:40 between the public and private sectors. Despite both the EMA and IPMS witnessing substantial numbers of jobs being privatised in the 1980s and 1990s, they largely retained collective bargaining rights in the private sector. For example; British Telecom (1982), British Gas (1986), Central Electricity Generating Board (1990).

In discussing the creation of Prospect and the part played by union mergers it is relevant to acknowledge the role of vertical recruitment. In their study of the white-collar local government union, NALGO, Blyton and Ursell (1982: 187) recognised

that unions have extended their organisation 'in the white-collar sector in particular...by the recruitment of both managerial and subordinate grades into single representative bodies'. Such structures were by no means unusual. The Association of Professional Executive, Clerical and Computer Staffs (APEX), for example, allowed managers to set up their own branches or sectors and the federal union, the EMA, also sought to recruit managerial and professional workers in both the public and private sectors.

Today, Prospect generates over £12 million a year in income, drawn from its membership across hundreds of companies and public bodies. In addition to its headquarters in London, it has bases in seven regions: Birmingham (Connect sector), Bristol, Cardiff, Chertsey, Doncaster, Edinburgh, Guernsey, Isle of Man, Liverpool, Lutterworth and Wimbledon (Connect sector). The union employs more than forty full-time 'professional negotiators' and runs specialist communication, education, legal, organisation, pensions and research departments and operates a network of 2,700 workplace and safety representatives. Prospect members are organised into workplace branches around their employer, with large branches broken down into smaller sectoral branches.

### **An analysis of membership**

The union represents 122,000 managerial and professional members (January 2011) in a wide range of trades and professions, including agriculture, defence, electricity supply, energy, engineering, environment, health and safety, heritage, industry, law and order, ship-building, science, transport and telecommunications. Prospect claims membership in a growing number of industries and occupation; its website claiming to cater for all professionals in the fields of 'paleontology to project management'. The union negotiates with over 300 employers, not just on pay and conditions, but on a range of issues that affect members' working lives: career development, contracts of employment, equal opportunities, working hours, leave, pensions, implementing changes in law, staffing levels, health and safety, HR and working practices, performance related pay, promotion procedures, privatisation, and company mergers and takeovers. Density in Prospect stood at approximately 60 per cent in the public sector division as at June 2010, with notably high density in certain sectors, for example, 93 per cent in Air Traffic Control.

In 2001 Prospect represented members at 340 employers and negotiated with:

- 18 government departments (including Ministry of Defence (MoD), Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (UK) (DTLR), Home Office, Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) and Inland Revenue;
- 54 executive agencies (the Met Office, Forensic Science Service, Office for National Statistics);
- 91 non-departmental public bodies (Civil Aviation Authority, Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the National Environmental Research Council); and
- 112 private companies and voluntary sector bodies (many of which were created as a result of the fragmentation of previously public companies and organisations)

Prospect has carried out considerable work in the area of membership growth. It set up a 'Young Professionals Network', which has a relatively well attended annual conference. This, coupled with extensive work with union learning representatives (ULRs) and awareness work on issues surrounding environment, international development and climate change, has engaged new entrant managers and professionals. The union has deliberately avoided focusing on pay and terms and conditions, because, according to one full-time organiser at Prospect:

'a lot of young people today don't see staying with one employer as a 'career'...the days of joining an employer for pensions, etc. are long gone.' [Interview: Carl, 14/04/10]

Prospect has therefore channelled its energies into trying to engage new managers in subjects they are *interested* in—and this has overflowed into some of Prospect's recent campaigns. In the Prison Service for example, the union pledged to donate £1 to an overseas charity of the individual's choice when they took up membership. This, according to Prospect officers, has proved to be a successful recruitment tool. The 'Civil Service Fast Stream', similarly, is made up of new graduate entrants and immediately upon entry into employment they are invited to attend an induction where a regional officer will speak about Prospect and introduce the union. Prospect is circumspect about how it captures recruitment opportunities and also has a number of people on 100 per cent facility time, who are able to attend introductory events or

run induction days, with full co-operation from employers. This in turn provides an opportunity to engage new entrants about Prospect and trade union membership.

Organiser, Carl, was involved in a ‘reasons for joining’ piece of research among Prospect members who had joined the union in the MoD sector since 2008 (see table 3.1c, Appendix 3). Questionnaires were distributed to 802 members, which presented a TUC-compiled list of reasons to join a union (taken from research it conducted in 2000). Ten reasons were provided, listed according to popularity. Recipients were asked to select one reason only. A fifth responded (some were invalidated due to multiple responses being selected). This research, according to Carl, constitutes a ‘pretty crude synopsis’, yet in spite of a relatively unremarkable response rate of 20 per cent, the findings nonetheless support assertion by Prospect officers that members’ priority is access to representation. This is not to be confused with *receipt* of representation. The element of accessibility denotes that members join in case they find that they require representation. In other words, they are joining for an ‘insurance policy’. The second most predominant reason for joining was cited as ‘fear of redundancy and major change’, although it is not clear, as some officers have suggested, that uptake of union membership was taken to secure a feeling of collective strength or whether it was to secure the best financial deal in the event of redundancy becoming a reality. One Organiser at Prospect acknowledged that an increasing number of managers seem to be assuming a form of collective behaviour in response to recognition that the benefits that are negotiated for members as part of collective negotiation are better than stand-alone, individual arrangements. It was acknowledged in Prospect however, that some individuals were joining the union with the aim of improving their prospects for redundancy. Notably in the Ministry of Defence (MoD), where one officer interviewed claimed that redundancy was perceived as a reward for long service rather than as compensation for job loss. The officer suggested that while this presented an opportunity to emphasise ‘the principle of a trade union, reminding people of why they joined—it wasn’t to be made redundant’, this was unavoidable, that it was ‘human nature, greed’ and while unsavoury for some union officers to have to deal with, it was nonetheless considered to be a significant driver to unionisation within Prospect. This challenges Bain’s (1970) suggestion that white-collar workers join unions in order to be able to more effectively control their work situation, rather than purely to obtain financial benefits.





*'The TSSA's mission is to be regarded by our members as the best trade union. This will be through:*

- the excellence of our services and representatives*
- the effectiveness of our workplace organisation*
- the positive influence we have upon members and government in pursuit of trade union aims and values'.*

[www.tssa.org.uk](http://www.tssa.org.uk)

Also an all-grades union, the TSSA manages a complex interface between its manual (classified) and management-grade members, who must themselves often manage a challenging and confrontational three-way relationship between worker, employer and union. Leap-frog bargaining structures and convoluted pay and rewards schemes define much of the landscape in TSSA's largest membership base—Network Rail. Committed to organising, union officers strive constantly to seduce managerial members away from their predominantly servicing comfort zone (Wallace, 1996).

### **An historical background to the TSSA**

The Association was founded in Sheffield in 1897 and was first known as the National Association of General Railway Clerks. Deeply controversial was the move, in 1899, to register the association as a trade union instead of a friendly society, and the association was renamed the Railway Clerks' Association (RCA). It was suspected that clerical workers, who were generally regarded as being politically conservative, would be alienated by unease at being identified with manual workers (Lockwood, 1958). This failed to transpire, however, and membership trebled to 12,000 during the ensuing three years. This trend was replicated in respect of the RCA's affiliation to the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in 1903 and its affiliation to the Labour Party in 1910. Campaigning by the RCA against uncompensated Sunday working and for industrial legislation to include office-based rail workers enraged the rail companies, which made concerted and unrelenting attempts to undermine the RCA; victimisation and harassment of members were rife. Undeterred by the rail



companies' aggressive strategies, however, the RCA continued to gain strength and support—and members—and by now had earned itself a somewhat reactionary reputation; such was its strength in opposition to employers.

Encouraged by government endorsement of Whitleyism in 1918-19 (Lockwood, 1958), the RCA forged ahead with attempts, against vehement opposition from the rail companies, to gain recognition for a bargaining unit for rail industry clerical workers. Manual workers were called upon to take strike action for the first time in 1919 and RCA members later came out in full support of the miners' cause during the General Strike of 1926, making it one of the few blackcoat unions to call an official strike. Membership was robust at the time of the General Strike in 1926, with 83 per cent of members contracting-in to the political levy, further compounding allegiance to the union. The RCA's reputation surpassed itself, and unlike any other trade union, attracted a further three thousand members in the months directly following the General Strike (Lockwood, 1958).

In recognition of the dramatic changes to configuration of the Association's membership, which by now embraced all salaried-grade employees, managers, technical and specialist professional transport sector workers, the Association changed its name to the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA) in 1951. 1926 was to be the only occasion in its history, until 2010, that the TSSA would embark upon industrial action in the form of a strike. The closest the TSSA came to industrial action during the intervening years was in 1972, after a joint ballot between the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR), the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) and the TSSA, rejected the British Railways Board's (BRB) pay offer. This effectively set the unions on a 'collision course' (Wallace, 1996: 383) with the government, as it tried—and subsequently failed—to browbeat the unions by 'threatening use of the Industrial Relations Act' (Darlington and Lyddon, 2001: 81). More recent industrial history within the TSSA would however, suggest that recourse to the ballot box has become more commonplace, even among the managerial-grade membership. More comprehensive reference to this evidence will be made later in this thesis.

Bain's (1970) work was based on the premise that 'white-collar' unions would sustain growth in the future only as a result of increasing employment concentration, yet that growth could not in any way be significant unless recognition by employers could be extended, and concessions to recognition by employers could not strengthen unions without government assistance. This reflects Bagwell's (1982: 231) assertion that, despite the early success of the Railway Clerks' Association (RCA) at the beginning of the twentieth century, a climate persisted in which managers and chairmen of railway companies could 'cling with impunity' to non-recognition policies. Nationalisation statutes that emerged during the inter-war period provided a stimulus to white-collar unions, in that it presented an opportunity for members to challenge the paternalistic nature of employment in industries like transport, where a job on the railway, for example, was considered a 'job for life' (Bagwell, 1982: 232). The onset of privatisation, however, brought the creation of new companies and opportunities for derecognition. The RCA, post World War Two, still only had a minority influence and was 'largely hampered' by the numerous rail companies' resolute refusal to recognise the union (Lockwood, 1958: 156).

The post-second-world-war years witnessed an increase in transport growth that saw rail traffic declining in significance, eventually leading to the 'Beeching Plan'—commonly referred to at the time as the 'Great Train Murder' (The Daily Worker, 28th March 1963)—of the 1960s, which would culminate in massive curtailment of rail services and network closures throughout the UK. Industrial developments through the 1970s, such as the Industrial Relations Act 1972, the advent of Thatcherism in the 1980s and the accompanying raft of anti-trade union legislation, as well as undermining the traditional concept of trade union solidarity, also had huge repercussions for TSSA membership.

In 1994 membership underwent a recorded net decrease of 2,301 members (a 5.9 per cent fall) which represented the highest net decrease since 1988. This was mainly attributable to redundancies resultant from BR's 'slimming down' process, undertaken in preparation for privatisation. This, and the continuing effects of London Underground's 'Refocusing' programme (London Underground's review of profitability, 1992) and the privatisation of London Buses (1993), was an additional contributory factor to decline. The requirement, under the Trade Union Reform and

Employment Rights Act 1993, for members to re-affirm their paybill deductions for union membership (by 31 August 1994) also contributed to the fall. Implementation of the Railways Act 1993 resulted in significant parts of the industry moving into the private sector and continued redundancies associated with the privatisation of BR meant that recruitment and retention of members continued to present difficulties in companies where the union lost collective bargaining rights either entirely or for particular groups of staff. Job losses ranged from a few in small undertakings to hundreds in large organisations; for example, in May 1996 BRB HQ employed 600 staff, all of whom would eventually be made redundant. At the end of 1997 part of the legal department and the BR Property Board were the only sectors still owned by the BRB, therefore continued privatisation inevitably led to more redundancies. Privatisation saw membership fall, sharply at first, and then steadily, from 72,070 members in 1978, to 36,933 in 1995—a 48.7 per cent decrease in less than twenty years. The knock-on effect of continuing post-privatisation redundancies in 1998 saw further decline in membership. Overall decline has continued since, except in the managerial sector, which has seen relatively stable membership since 2006.

An interesting development in both Nautilus' and TSSA's more recent history is the discussion that took place in 1986 between the TSSA and NUMAST (now Nautilus) with a view to amalgamation. Trepidation was expressed on behalf of the TSSA, however, that NUMAST did not possess a political fund. Delegates to the 1989 TSSA Conference, according to Wallace (1996: 441), decided that; 'unless a Political Fund was established in the new organisation, negotiations must be terminated'. A way to align the political traditions of the two unions could not be found and negotiations and meetings ceased. Nautilus remains without a political fund and the TSSA remains committed to its political affiliations.

### **An analysis of membership**

The TSSA represents in the region of 24,000 managerial and professional as well as administrative, clerical and technical workers in the UK and Northern Ireland rail transport industry (January 2011). It represents members in Network Rail, train operating companies (TOCs), freight operating companies (FOCs), rail engineering, travel trade, port authorities, ferries, trams, buses and road haulage, in addition to London Underground and Transport for London. The union is made up of a

combination of geographical and employer based branches and divisional councils, with members ranging from board-level, senior managers and highly skilled engineers, to call-centre and booking-office workers. From its struggle for recognition, to its current response to economic down-turn and the challenges posed by a diversifying workforce and precarious labour-market, the TSSA occupies a unique role in industrial relations.

The TSSA has effectively managed an 'all-grades' membership since its inception yet it must still confront apprehension among certain factions of its membership, who remain unconvinced of the benefits and fit-for-purpose functionality of a union whose managerial and manual members occupy the same working environment. The presidential address to TSSA annual delegate conference in 1949 summarises this long-held sense of unease and underlines the challenges posed by integrating managerial workers into a movement traditionally reserved for manual workers, and the unity required for the association's survival:

'We not only had to fight the railway companies, but to overcome the definitive opposition of trade unions and trade unionists who objected to so-called 'gaffers' men' being inside their movement. The long view is invariably the better view...There is another side to trade unionism—what of fellowship? That has been the secret of our success on the RCA. If that fellowship is lost, if it is not constantly renewed, death and decay will follow. The shell of the union may remain, but the animating spirit will have fled.'—*Ald. Percy Morris, J.P., M.P., to RCA Annual Conference, Bournemouth, 23-27 May, 1949*)

A difficult notion to suppress, however, this sentiment has represented an obstinate thread throughout the long history of the TSSA. Another attempt took place to reassure members on this issue once again, in a 1974 TSSA publication entitled: 'A look at life in the TSSA', which ends with a paragraph entitled 'One Last Word', that states:

'if you are not a member there is one point on which we would like to set your mind at rest—if you are apprehensive that joining a trade union may prejudice your future you can stop worrying! We have come a long way since those days, and managements of all the undertakings with which we are concerned have given their support to their idea that their staffs should be in membership of their appropriate trade unions. It is quite likely that the head of your department is one of our members...If you are in fact already in a managerial position, may we dispel any doubt that may be in your mind that membership of the TSSA would be incompatible with your status. The substantial number of senior staff already within our ranks,

which is ever increasing, demonstrates that membership does not prove a source of embarrassment to them in fulfilling their managerial functions.’  
—‘*A look at life in the TSSA*, 1974: 23

Despite the note of optimism in this statement, it retains substantial relevance today, as there remains persistent unease at managers and manual (or ‘classified’ grade workers as they are generally known in the rail industry) all being part of the same union.

Following the wholesale fragmentation of industries like the rail industry, unions were faced with the challenge of acquiring recognition in privatised/decentralized bargaining units. As a result of the privatisation of British Rail by the Conservative Government under John Major, for example, the railway was broken up into a myriad of individual private companies and the single organisation and structure of the railway was lost forever ([www.railwaybritain.co.uk](http://www.railwaybritain.co.uk), August, 2012). The railway was divided up into several principal components:

- Railtrack plc (the infrastructure owner)
- The Office of Passenger Rail Franchising (OPRAF) (lets the passenger franchises to train operators)
- Train Operating Companies (TOCs) (train operators for the passenger franchises)
- Freight Operating Companies (FOCs) (freight operators)
- Rolling Stock Companies (ROSCOs) (own and lease the rolling stock to the operators)
- The Office of the Rail Regulator (ORR) (regulates the railway and ensures fair play)
- Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) (trade association of the passenger rail operators).

Where once unions organised in a single national industry, they were faced, in the 1990s, with a transition that meant they would have to attempt to gain recognition in 25 separate TOCs (there were 33 in 2008), six FOCs and three ROSCOs.

In November 2002 the TSSA held a successful union recognition campaign for Network Rail’s 4,500 managers, who voted ‘overwhelmingly’<sup>25</sup> in favour of formal recognition by the TSSA through the statutory recognition process. It could be argued that this took place in response to the inevitable upheaval and insecurity that followed the takeover of Railtrack in October 2002 by the ‘not-for-profit’ Network Rail. A ballot to determine recognition for managers resulted in 1,999 members voting in

favour (83.5 per cent of the valid vote) and 396 managers (16.5 per cent of the valid vote) voting against (TSSA Circular No. 504, 15/11/2002). This was the largest group in the UK (as of November 2002) to have taken part in a ballot of this nature since introduction of the Employment Relations Act 1999 which established the statutory procedure enabling a trade union to obtain recognition by an employer for collective bargaining purposes where the majority of the relevant workforce votes in favour.

### **Public-sector legacy**

In order to contextualise these unions' approaches to industrial relations it is necessary to explore some of the factors that surround their evolution and development. All three unions were founded either at the end of the nineteenth or the beginning of the twentieth century, and have developed and expanded apace, in spite of the myriad of challenges presented by a diverse labour market, fluctuating economy, and political and industrial upheaval.

Whitleyism figures prominently in the development of two of the unions that are collaborating in this research—Prospect and the TSSA. These unions benefited from the establishment of industry-wide bargaining which constituted the prominent form of collective bargaining until the recommendations, in 1968, of the Donovan Commission, substantially diluted their significance. The breakdown of national bargaining has affected both unions and although they have survived, grown, and retained relevance in the labour movement, industrial disintegration and fragmentation have taken their toll on membership, recruitment and retention. The drive throughout the 1980s and 1990s to restrict the power of public-sector unions saw the Conservative-instigated 'torrent of mass-market sell-offs' (Foreman-Peck, 2004<sup>26</sup>) set in train a process of large-scale decimation of public sector work, which left many workers facing the spectre of unemployment. Privatisation, and the lead-up to it, drove what Strangleman (2004: 73) called the 'deliberate marginalization' of workers, either by changing the organisation of work, or via redundancy.

The prospect of a Labour government's reversal of privatisation policy did nothing to alleviate the sense of threat and exposure to an increasingly popular notion of private enterprise. The 'New Labour' government elected in 1997 made no attempt to suppress the surge of privatisation, and indeed, continued to embrace it. This

government would come to represent the first Labour Party to support a market-based economy; a phenomenon that would substantially reconfigure the political landscape (Giddens, 1998<sup>27</sup>).

By 1990, 42 major businesses, employing almost 900,000 people, had been sold off<sup>28</sup> and further privatisation was in the planning phase. Coal, nuclear energy and rail were privatised between 1994 and 1997, thus compounding the product of the Thatcher administration and changing, irrevocably, the work situation for innumerable workers. Many managerial and professional workers in these industries are now represented by Prospect and the TSSA.

In order to locate ideologically the three unions under study in this research, this chapter will now consider the unions' position relating to organising, servicing and professional approach, and partnership, industrial action and political profile.

### **Union approaches to organising**

Organising—the concept of trade union recruitment and operation that typically involves an active, mobile and campaigning membership base which has its roots in social movement and community unionism—is not one that is normally associated with managerial and professional trade union members. Ideas about organising differed quite significantly between officers from the three unions. Modes of 'organising' also differed between officers; which would support Simms and Holgate's (2010: 157) assertion that there is 'little consensus within British unions about the overall objective of developing an organising strategy'. Worker self-organisation, for example, which features strongly in the TSSA's 'organising agenda', was not deemed a priority for Prospect members, for whom the term was met with a certain ambivalence—between the desire to excel in their professional field, and the enthusiasm to support the union to whose ideals they aspired. Organising in this form, notably in the most highly professional/skilled sectors, was therefore felt to be a casualty not just of personal ambition, but of concern that pursuit of acclaim in their field might somehow be constrained, or frustrated. Organising, in this particular respect, comes at a price in certain professional and managerial sectors. For example, managers were reluctant to take responsibility for the organisation and mobilisation of

workers in instances that may have been construed or perceived as ‘militant’ or combative.

Kelly (1994: 34) stated that where officers are widely geographically dispersed, or have responsibility for high membership concentrations, as officers from the three collaborating unions do, then they may ‘interpret their role in accordance with their own values and ideologies’. This was not, however, apparent among the officers interviewed. Rather, while officers were at times exasperated with the lack of ‘organising’ characteristics among their membership, there appeared to be a general acceptance that their priority was to respond to the needs of members, and should this manifest itself as blatantly ‘servicing’ then officers would, albeit at times grudgingly, be compliant.

Nautilus members, according to Industrial Officer, Iain, ‘expect a service’, although he claimed that this has more to do with the logistical dispersement and physical structure of the union than any particular aversion to the organising approach. There is no traditional branch structure or representatives network. Again, this has more to do with practicality; for example, it would not be feasible to enrol an active seafarer onto a 10-week TUC training course because of the nature of their job. Health and safety law, for example, is different, and legislation like the Merchant Shipping Act 1995 and Marine Safety Act 2003, are in a different sphere to traditional trade union education and training, which is generally centred on EU and domestic UK legislation. It was considered, therefore, that standard TUC training would in many cases be irrelevant for the vast majority of Nautilus members. A comparatively small union, Nautilus does not run an extensive training programme for union members, running, normally, three courses per year. One is a standard training course for newly appointed lay representatives and an advanced course for representatives to update and refresh their skills. A specialist course also takes place annually—in 2010 this was a course designed specifically for women members, and the 2011 course was run for young members. Nautilus’ education officer estimated that the average number of members put through training is approximately thirty per year.

Prospect National Secretary, Gavin, explained what he saw as ‘a false dichotomy’ between organising and servicing:



‘Sometimes the organising model’s appropriate, but sometimes, because of geographical constraint, where you can’t physically *be there*, what you’ll need to do is service the area, bring on your reps, develop your representative structure. It’s not because our members are specialists, it’s because they’re union members that they *want*, and have a *right to*, high quality advice. They want to receive a quality service.’ [Interview: Gavin, 12/04/10]

Prospect members, according to some Prospect officers interviewed, were of the distinct opinion that ‘organising’ was the responsibility of the union’s head office and that they, as members, have little or no part to play. Some members believed that the union existed to solve or assist with their workplace issues or problems, and it was not their place to resolve them themselves, which would appear to be more aligned with the classical servicing concept. It was forecast by Organiser, Carl, however, that organising would imminently benefit from the effects of the economic climate, whereby:

‘managers are actually beginning to see that the only way they’re going to get results is through some sort of collective action, it’s interesting to hear David Cameron talking about it as well.’ [Interview, Carl, 14/04/10]

In spite of an increased and distinct refocus away from servicing to an organising approach, a strong preference for servicing was clearly evident, certainly up until the mid 1990s. Membership, according to the RCA’s 1950 recruitment pamphlet; ‘carries with it the right to expect individual advice and assistance on all matters affecting employment’, and there would appear to be greater reluctance for managers to seek workplace assistance from appointed industrial relations representatives, but instead expect immediate and professional assistance from their full-time officer. The TSSA has enjoyed an element of success in diverting a substantial faction of its membership away from reliance on full-time officers and towards an organising mentality. This shift in policy is tainted, however, by obstinate pockets of managerial and professional membership that relies heavily on servicing as the staple of its membership. This remains a challenge for organisers at the TSSA.

In a bid to embed organising, officers at the TSSA are working hard to establish training and education initiatives, which to date have enjoyed considerable success. The union’s representative recruitment and community organising programmes are robust and representative networks are starting to effectively self-govern, which

significantly improves the quality and fluidity of member representation. Breaking down the concept of servicing, however, is proving harder to achieve. National Organiser, Stuart, recognises that ‘they [managers] want to be represented by professional people who have an ability to represent them’. Managers are demanding a high quality ‘service’ from their union in the same way in which they would expect a high quality service from a lawyer, accountant or other professional individual or organisation. This analogy was used in all interviews conducted with officers from the case-study unions.

### **Servicing—an embedded model?**

Having considered their attitudes towards organising, this chapter will now consider managerial and professional workers’ expectations of trade union membership and how these are managed. The ways in which the three unions responded to the needs of their membership was considered to be paramount by the majority of members and union officers interviewed. The servicing model, where union members join trade unions predominantly with the expectation of securing an ‘insurance policy’ for themselves, is not seen by managers in Nautilus, Prospect and TSSA as being necessarily unsustainable. The preference for servicing methods of trade union operation among many managerial and professional trade union members is, according to some officers, attributable in part to a lack of understanding as to what actually constitutes ‘organising’. Indeed, many members interviewed gave differing accounts of what they perceived to be ‘organising’, yet all were familiar with the servicing model, whose aims are to resolve members’ grievances and secure benefits through less ‘grassroots’ oriented methods. This is an approach with which many managerial and professional members felt more comfortable and identified more instinctively.

Waddington and Whitston (1997) argued that unions have, over the years, tended to cater for members on a predominantly servicing basis, an argument that is, to an extent, supported by data gathered as part of this research. There was a sense, among managerial and professional workers interviewed, that it was entirely reasonable to confine union activity to a minimum and that it was unnecessary for them to be actively involved in union activity. Despite the concerted efforts of union officials to instil into membership the benefits and ideas associated with ‘organising’ unionism—

the ‘servicing’ mentality was clearly evident among the majority of respondents. Many felt that being active in their union was futile, given that the objective of a union was, for them, to provide a *service* to its members, thereby negating the need for *individuals* to become involved.

Many managerial and professional workers viewed receipt of a ‘service’, be it in representational, as in the grievance or disciplinary scenario, or in a practical sense, for example financial benefits such as insurance provision or assistance with will-making, as a fair exchange for their monthly ‘dues’. Moves towards ‘professionalism’ were encouraged in many unions during the 1980s and 1990s, (this was expressly evident in the AEEU) and entailed dilution of lay activist involvement, which coincided with a growing emphasis on business unionism (a term generally used to characterise unions as businesses that sell labour ‘pure and simple’ (Commons, 1966), as opposed to the trade unionism that we recognise in the UK as essentially ‘social’, focusing on the welfare of the working class as a whole, although it should be recognised that while counterposed in this way unions are seldom just one or the other) and social partnership (Heery and Kelly, 1994). Some of the characteristics of these models are demonstrably in existence in the managerial and professional unions under study in this thesis.

Entrenched in a servicing culture, Nautilus prides itself on its professional delivery of ‘services’ to members and officers, despite advocating buy-in to the organising approach, nonetheless stated that it was their belief that their union ‘personalises’ the ‘product’ of union membership:

‘Numast remains dedicated to providing a highly effective service to members through enhanced professionalism.’—*Fighting for the Future—Council’s report to the Biennial General Meeting (BGM), May 2003*, p.11

Nautilus’s 2004 membership survey revealed that members valued and rated highly the union’s services and benefits, which reinforces the union’s belief that it has a duty to its members to offer the best possible service and believes it must:

‘continually challenge itself to deliver enhanced levels of service and benefits’ - ‘*We’re listening: a blueprint for the future*’—*Council Working Group on the 2004 Membership Survey, April 2007*

Prospect is primarily a servicing-orientated union, although it has recently become much more involved in taking an organising approach, especially with regard to learning provision for lay representatives, who are trained to a high standard and are qualified to represent the union at high-level negotiations with employers and external bodies.

Resigned to a significant proportion of their membership's steadfast preference for a servicing approach, TSSA officers appeared to be experiencing a much finer balancing act; between satisfying conflicting demands from members in certain industry sectors, who favoured a servicing approach, with newer members whose propensity to activism indicated a preference for organising over servicing.

Some union officers noticed that many managerial and professional members made a link between servicing and the notion of a 'product' and that this defined the basis for the 'professionalised' union-employer relationship sought by this group of workers.

### **Cultivating a professional profile**

The aspect of professionalism is firmly entrenched in the consciousness of many managerial and professional members of Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA and remains a priority for those for whom membership of a 'professional' organisation is considered valuable, both in an ideological and a practical sense. Linked to the notion of professionalism, it was noticed, primarily in interviews with officers from the case-study unions, that managerial and professional approaches to union representation were similarly different to those of manual, or 'blue-collar', workers. It was felt, according to officers, that a higher or more complex and professionalised, level of representation was sought by managerial and professional workers than ordinarily considered by manual, or 'shop-floor' workers, to be 'traditional' representation practices that involved referral to their representative who would then act on their behalf.

In its pursuit of a genuine professional profile, Nautilus attained 'Investors in People' (IIP)<sup>29</sup> national standard status in 1998 and has a business plan. The union actively encourages its staff to study for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) in order to

formalise their qualifications, and by association, the level of professionalism they can offer to members:

‘Numast is accountable for the advice it gives and members can expect proper professional advice.’—*Fighting for the Future—Council’s report to the BGM, May 2003*, p.9.

A professional approach undoubtedly figures prominently in many members’ minds, and likewise in relation to the work the union undertakes in respect of industrial issues such as improved pay, better on-board conditions and improved health and safety and representation at grievance and disciplinary hearings, Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) investigations and Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) inquiries.

Prospect’s membership is quite resolute in its demand to be represented professionally and by professionally ‘qualified’ staff (often ordinarily full-time officers of the union). Personal casework constitutes a substantial part of the workload of Prospect’s officers and it is generally acknowledged that members expect ‘products’ like home insurance, mortgage services, car, travel and life insurance, member loans, pensions, investments and savings in addition to access to legally qualified staff to represent them in the event of a workplace grievance or disciplinary.

TSSA Senior Regional Organiser, Joel, described the moral discomfort involved in representing members who were, for example, in favour not only of things like performance-related-pay (PRP), but of many things that trade unions traditionally oppose, especially in relation to individualised items such as contracts, pay or other terms and conditions. It could be argued that this goes some way to indicating the change in configuration of managerial characteristics. Joel elucidated:

‘it’s almost like a free-market approach to trade-unionism, they [managers] almost see the way a trade union deals with issues as over-regulated, over-centralised and over-proscriptive and if they’re going to be a part of it [the union], then they seem to want something that’s not as over-bearing.’ [Interview: Joel, 08/04/10]

TSSA Senior Regional Organiser, Elaine, explained that while there is no fundamental difference in the *requirements* of managers, huge differences exist in their *expectations*. This was echoed by testimony from National Organiser, Stuart, who recalled an occasion where a senior manager had, in the late 1990s, insisted on

being represented at a workplace grievance by the then General Secretary, Richard Rosser<sup>30</sup>. This supports Nautilus' suggestion that as new managers enter the industry; they do embrace trade unionism, but a trade unionism whose demands are becoming largely reconfigured and whose traditional and historical characteristics are changing apace. New managers, according to Nautilus National Secretary, Peter, reject the conventional hallmarks of trade unionism and perceive and approach trade unionism in ways that are vastly different to those of their predecessors.

### **Managerial and professional focus on partnership**

It was recognised by the majority of union officers interviewed as part of this research that many managerial and professional members feel that unions need to move away from constant contradiction or conflict with employers, replacing any residual militancy with a non-combative, placatory approach, adopting instead peaceable dialogue and partnership-based initiatives. Signifying a shift away from the traditional collective bargaining machinery, many managerial and professional workers interviewed felt that making changes to *behaviour* and improving *relationships* with employers was the key to successful bargaining, consultation and negotiation. The ways in which this is achieved were therefore considered by this group of workers to be pivotal.

A report published by BIS in 2007<sup>31</sup> assessed the benefits of trade union representation and interaction with employers in the workplace, which indicated that partnership initiatives are favoured as a means of establishing effective employer-employee relations. The TUC, in establishing its Partnership Institute in 2001, endorsed its commitment to partnership between unions and employers, taking the view that it [partnership] 'enables unions to play an active role in shaping an organisation's policy and strategy, and increases union involvement in organisational change' (TUC, March 2011<sup>32</sup>). Both Nautilus and Prospect are heavily involved in and reliant upon partnership initiatives with employers, whereas the TSSA remains reluctant to pursue partnership working. The spirit of conciliation and collaboration are strong within both Nautilus and Prospect in terms of establishing consensus with employers, a spirit which is commensurate with their political stance.

Nautilus, in its endeavour to provide a professional service to members, focuses extensively on partnership-style working with employers. 'Partnership at Work' is, according to Nautilus; 'a concept defined as a trust-based social partnership between employers and unions' (BGM, 2003: 31), which Nautilus identifies as a constructive model for conducting industrial relations. These agreements, according to Nautilus, are key to the union's strategic objectives, which the union attests have resulted in new or improved representational arrangements with employers, including the training of delegates elected to serve on partnership committees. Nautilus relies heavily on its 'Partnership at Work' agreements, which it believes generates successful relationships between employers and the union. It also attributes the success of its 'business' largely to the effective implementation of partnership. While Nautilus officers acknowledged that the interests of the employer and the employee 'were never going to converge', the union endeavours nonetheless to secure and build on agreements with employers. Nautilus' Industrial Objectives for 2007 specifically included greater emphasis on the partnership approach to industrial relations, by 'developing deeper and more extensive relationships with employers' (Nautilus UK News, Omnibus Edition, Spring 2007: 5). An example of this partnership approach included an undertaking to 'where appropriate, seek to negotiate business class travel for members on long-haul flights'. Undertakings such as this arguably define Nautilus' commitment to offering a 'professional service' to its members.

Nautilus National Secretary, Peter, stated that the union's 'whole philosophy and approach...is based on partnership', and Industrial Officer, Iain, confirmed Nautilus' belief that; 'partnership is heading towards collaboration'. Page 3 of Nautilus' partnership brochure highlights a quote from its General Secretary, Mark Dickinson: 'we have much in common—not least an interest in the success of your business'—Peter claims that the words 'success' and 'business' being co-joined in this way are unlikely to be made by other trade unions, suggesting that Nautilus' model of partnership is unique, and relatively rare in the trade union community. Nautilus, in June 2010, also entered into a 'ground-breaking arrangement' with Prospect, on behalf of members serving with the MCA. These members are covered by a collective bargaining agreement held by Prospect, but many maintain their membership of Nautilus after joining the MCA from a seagoing career. Nautilus reached an agreement with Prospect that ensured members working in surveyor grades at the

MCA would be able to retain dual membership of both unions. The nature of the industry dictates the way in which Partnership initiatives are structured and managed. For example, deep-sea companies have a committee where members elect up to thirty officers, who are generally away at deep-sea for between three and five months, but of that thirty there is always a reasonable number who are shore-based and available to attend meetings. These are called 'partnership delegates', who attend meetings with companies to address items submitted by other deep-sea members. Essentially a long-distance scenario, this employer/employee relationship is deemed effective.

Similarly in the ferry sector, 'liaison officers' form part of liaison committees, who act in a similar vein to workplace representatives in the sense that they are elected by their members from a particular constituency and attend meetings and represent at grievances and disciplinaries wherever possible. In total, Nautilus has over 300 partnership delegates and liaison officers (this figure more than doubled between 2000 and 2010). A comprehensive Partnership at Work training programme is offered to all delegates, comprising initially modules offered by the company/employer on interrogating company accounts, financial reporting, the role of HR, business planning, operations and outputs. Ruskin College then completes the training by providing more traditional trade union and collective bargaining training to delegates. A positive example of partnership can be found in the Partnership at Work arrangements that were established following the success of pay negotiations in 2010 between the union and officers serving onboard Cunard and P&O Cruise vessels<sup>33</sup>. At a Partnership at Work initiative that took place in April 2011 for Carnival UK management and Nautilus members and officials, the union claimed that it was 'hopeful that this [partnership initiative] will demonstrate a solid business case for the improvements in terms and conditions' and that it was 'impressed by the way in which the company has positively embraced the concept' (Nautilus journal 'telegraph', 2011: 5<sup>34</sup>).

Prospect also fully endorses the benefits of partnership as a negotiating tool. In air traffic control, the partnership programme 'Working Together' is embedded and representatives monitor employers on how they deal with industrial relations issues—in a similar way to key performance indicators (KPIs), but tailored to industrial relations, as opposed to business performance issues. This initiative commenced in



July 2009 and is working well, but National Secretary in the National Air Traffic Services (NATS) sector, Gavin, was keen to emphasise that this was the case only because equal buy-in has been achieved between employers and members. Prospect Organiser, Carl, however, felt that partnership agreements had to an extent become discredited, although there was acknowledgement that some sort of partnership framework was necessary in order to establish a workable bargaining platform for members and employers. There are representatives within Prospect who meet ministers and negotiate at a very high level, for example, so it is important to reflect that there is a shared goal and employer-member reciprocity can deliver benefits.

Object 3<sup>35</sup> in Prospect's rules is to work for the furtherance of the industries in which members work. This is clearly important to Prospect's members, who identify themselves with, and are loyal to the professions in which they work. They want the union to benefit the industries in which they work *but*, according to Carl, 'the caveat is that there must be something in it for them'. The intention therefore is very much that both the union and employer share in the success of those businesses. Prospect National Secretary, Glenda, explained that:

'The reason they're [partnership agreements] successful is that we're consulted at a very early stage on any potential changes and any comments we want to make go direct to the directing board, 1) before they see any of the final papers, and 2) before they take a decision. So any decision that the directing board takes is in the full cognisance of the comments of the trade unions. It's all-inclusive and by and large we've done significantly well out of Partnership.' [Interview: Glenda, 19/04/10]

It was further explained by advocates of partnership working that approaches like these effectively closed out opportunities for employers to claim that they have had insufficient time to consider proposals or counter-proposals (as is often the case for the TSSA in negotiations with the Train Operating Companies (TOCs) and Network Rail, for example).

Prospect's Guide to Organisational Change<sup>36</sup> ('Fair Change', 2008: 20) states that; 'despite initial scepticism on both sides, it [partnership] has helped to forge a relationship built on trust'. A partnership agreement between Prospect, the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) Union, FDA and Natural England<sup>37</sup> is used to illustrate Prospect's endorsement of partnership. The employer, in this case Natural England,

according to Prospect, recognises that trade unions are an informed and valuable resource and, as such, have been fully engaged in discussions with employers during times at which change is anticipated, for example, in 2008, when office closures were announced. Prospect attests that it was able to minimise the adverse affect on its members. Natural England made a Return on Investment (ROI—see Appendix 3.1) evaluation of the partnership agreement in 2007-2008 using a cost-benefit approach which concluded that for each pound spent on the relationship, £5.55 was recouped by the employer (source: Natural England). Natural England's 'enlightened' approach was expanded when it agreed to participate in a corporate responsibility project with Prospect. It was envisaged that this level of employer-union engagement would not only enhance Natural England's corporate profile, but also generate further savings and improve staff morale and so encourage a more collaborative workforce. Practices of this nature challenge Cole's (1939) argument that business unionism—the aim of which is to confine issues relating to pay and terms and conditions to unions, leaving employers to deal exclusively with the decision-making process—is inherent.

Prospect recognises, however, that not all disputes, potential disputes, or threatened job losses can be resolved successfully by negotiating with employers. In a recent example, the Forensic Science Section (FSS) has been beleaguered by government plans to close three of the seven forensic science service laboratories which would leave large parts of England and Wales without a public sector forensic presence and decimate FSS' ability to process evidence from crime scenes<sup>38</sup>. Prospect reacted to these announcements not only by responding vociferously to ministers' claims that these cuts were needed to make the FSS more competitive in the forensic marketplace, but by mixing campaigning with maximised press exposure of the impact that these cuts would have on the public, and raising awareness within the union as a whole. The challenge of navigating the projected inevitability of work intensification, with a much thinner geographical presence, through a continued demand for expert witnesses in criminal proceedings will arguably be telling, in terms of establishing Prospect's 'take' on partnership as a means of moving forward collaboratively with employers at a time when those employers' objectives have been starkly outlined as being ultimately detrimental to workers.

In comparison, the TSSA does not have a strong partnership ethos and no real initiatives appear to be under way to establish any, despite calls from managerial-grade members who claim to have witnessed the success of partnership in previous employment situations, prior to their entry into the transport industry. The TSSA does have one partnership agreement in place (with Vertex, a call-centre based in Dingwall, Scotland) but it is not an agreement that anyone at TSSA is seeking to replicate elsewhere and the union as a whole is not convinced of the benefits of partnership working with employers. An attempt was made, in 2006, to seek Network Rail's participation in a partnership agreement on diversity, but after the first meeting, the company refused to communicate further with the TSSA. The union has not, to date, revisited partnership working as a viable option in the drive to improve industrial relations with employers.

### **Changing attitudes towards industrial action**

Despite the subscription by the majority of respondents involved in this research to the view that industrial action represents an ineffective dispute resolution mechanism, evidence does exist to suggest that this trend is changing—albeit at varying pace—within the three unions, where historically there has been steadfast opposition to the use of strike action. Testimony gleaned from interviews with union officers from Nautilus, Prospect and TSSA would, however, suggest that aversion to industrial action is indeed still evident. This supports Seidman et al's (1958) assertion that strike action could result in loss of prestige, which reinforces the significance of status among managerial and professional workers.

Attitudes towards industrial action, according to some managerial and professional workers interviewed as part of this research have, however, changed significantly in recent years. As attacks on pay and terms and conditions have become more concentrated, the range of dispute-resolution options has narrowed. Some managers are beginning to recognise that already weak performance appraisal systems are a poor armoury against redundancy, or threat thereof. Development of the unionisation of railway clerks, according to Lockwood (1958: 155) challenges the stereotypical assertion that 'white-collar', or 'blackcoat', workers are without the 'necessary virility for a manly defence of their interests'. It could be argued that the characteristics of some contemporary managerial and professional workers are symptomatic of the lack

of 'virility' to which Lockwood referred, and yet challenge to it, despite a distinct lack of industrial action, is nonetheless beginning to manifest itself.

Not predisposed to seeking industrial redress in the form of strike action, Nautilus and Prospect members have to date maintained a strike-averse position that has only recently begun to undergo an element of change. The TSSA's decision to strike in the early 2000s signified an important marker in the history of the union, whose association banner once bore the slogan: 'Defence not Defiance' (Lockwood, 1958: 158). In contrast to the direct action approach of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) union, whose members are less unfamiliar with industrial action balloting, managerial-grade TSSA members remain, to an extent, reluctant to consider strike action as a viable means of dispute resolution. As in the public sector, widespread fear pervades a large sector of the rail industry and 'not-for-profit' organisations like Network Rail, whose members are cautious. This fear and caution has, in some cases, been exacerbated by militaristic, top-down senior management hierarchies (Strangleman, 2004), which have sought to stymie the few attempts made by managerial and professional members to resolve—predominantly pay-centric—disputes via means of industrial action.

Coupled with the success of organising methods and a series of fresh approaches to recruitment and training initiatives by the TSSA, industrial action has lost some of its fear factor and been replaced with a realisation that its power as a negotiating tool does not necessarily have to be 'last-resort' in order to be effective. Tentative steps were made in the early 2000s towards establishing industrial action as a viable option in negotiations with employers, in response to the imposition of arbitrary performance and disciplinary systems by employers in the rail transport industry.

Going one step further, TSSA members at travel company Thomas Cook staged a sit-in at their shop in Dublin in July 2009 after managers announced that the company was pulling out of the Republic of Ireland by the end of August 2009 (after 125 years in the Republic) and would make over fifty staff redundant. The move coincided with the announcement by the TSSA that their members had voted 100 per cent in favour of strike action together with action short of a strike (with an 84 per cent turnout) (TSSA news release, July 2009<sup>39</sup>). In a statement by the then General Secretary, Gerry

Doherty, it was suggested that Thomas Cook ‘should grow up and adjust to the modern world of industrial relations’. A statement which seems a world away from Ald. Morris’ presidential address to TSSA annual delegate conference in 1949, where the view of the time on strikes was summarised thus:

‘the strike weapon is our most powerful instrument, but I hate it and will gladly discard it once employers convince me they are influenced more by reason and a true sense of justice than by mere numbers or the threat of ‘the big stick’. That time has not yet arrived.’—*Ald. Percy Morris, J.P., M.P., to RCA Annual Conference, Bournemouth, 23-27 May, 1949*

The TSSA does not maintain a league table of industrial action. TSSA’s Head of Business and Campaigns, Frank Ward, stated that between 1996 and 2005, the union ‘rarely reported more than one or two ballots and no formal action that I recall’. Frank added, however, that this situation has changed significantly in recent years and that the union now ballots with much more regularity. In August 2011, managers at Network Rail voted in favour of industrial action consisting of action short of a strike in a dispute over fair pay and respect at work (75.9 per cent of the valid vote (900 members) voted in favour). In a ballot over whether to take industrial action consisting of a strike; 495 members (41.9 per cent of the valid vote) voted in favour, with 687 members (58.1 per cent of the valid vote) against.

According to management-grade representatives, this result significantly closes the gap on previous ballots within the managerial sector, whose outcomes have been much more substantially weighted in the ‘against’ vote. These representatives, at a focus group for management-grade TSSA members (May, 2011), explained that managerial-grade employees are concerned primarily with loss or erosion of their bonus, in the event that they take strike action. It has been made clear to these members that industrial action in the form of a strike will result in their bonus not being awarded. Given that many of these members have had to accept a pay freeze<sup>40</sup>, reliance on bonus payments has increased, along with concern over taking industrial action.

It is interesting to consider the extent to which a changing political and economic context is leading change more generally in the character of unions. Recently, Prospect and other managerial and professional unions, notably the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP), the FDA and the Society of Radiographers (SoR), voted in

favour of supporting the nationwide day of action on 30 November 2011 in opposition to government plans to reform the pensions of public sector workers. These results signify a substantial attitudinal shift on the part of some managerial and professional workers, from that of openly hostile to and dismissive of industrial action as an effective means of dispute resolution to accepting that its usage may be legitimate and effective. The strike on 30 November was the first time the CSP had taken strike action in 31 years; the FDA has only ever held one national strike ballot in its existence, and this was the first civil service-wide ballot to take place in Prospect for more than 30 years (www.unionnews.co.uk, 2011<sup>41</sup>).

**Table 3.3—Votes for industrial action on 30 November 2011**

	Per cent in favour of industrial action	Percentage turnout
CSP	86	66
FDA	81	54
Prospect	75	53
SoR	83	58

It could be argued that figures like these are indicative, if not of a change in character of managerial and professional unions, then almost certainly of a shift in focus away from ‘less adversarial’ (Cave, 1994) industrial relations and towards a more direct, and collective, approach. That these unions indicated support, in some cases for the first time in their history, for industrial action may suggest a partial reconfiguration of their character. It could be deduced that the severity of the economic situation has contributed towards greater cohesion of this group of workers. The strength of the message being articulated by members of these unions demonstrates a relatively clear shift away from the individual and towards the collective, which further reinforces the element of sub-collectivism referred to in this thesis.

In spite of predominantly pay-centric reasons for managerial and professional workers taking a negative approach to industrial action, union officers claimed that there was a sense, in some sections, that all avenues had been exhausted and that some members were beginning to feel that their employers, by, in some cases, devaluing or delegitimising their individualised roles, were limiting the parameters in which they could reasonably be expected to work. This goes some way to explaining Goodrich’s

(1975: 41) remark that pride in individual skill 'stiffens the refusal to be controlled'. If we are to assume that contemporary managerial and professional workers adopt this stance then it could also be assumed that they consider themselves as occupying a 'nothing to lose' position, which may render them more amenable to industrial action. This concept will be explored in more detail in chapter six.

### **Political positioning and affiliation**

This chapter will now examine the political position adopted by managerial and professional workers in the case-study unions and the extent to which they perceive the role of party politics as relevant in modern trade unionism. Through dialogue with many managerial and professional members of the three unions, it became clear that politics is not, for them, viewed in the main as a necessary component of trade unionism. Indeed, for some, it is viewed as distracting, irrelevant and superfluous to the objectives of their union.

There are of course a number of unions with political funds that are not affiliated to the Labour Party (Prospect, for example), but of the 58 unions affiliated to the TUC, only fifteen were affiliated to the Labour Party as of April 2011 ([www.unionstogether.org.uk](http://www.unionstogether.org.uk), 11/04/11). The decision, therefore, by Nautilus and Prospect *not* to affiliate to the Labour Party is by no means unusual, and arguably demonstrative of the more recent stance adopted by the wider trade union movement vis-à-vis its links with the Labour Party. Links between the trade union movement and the Labour Party are often at the forefront of debate among trade unionists, and this is no less the case among membership in Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA.

The majority of union officers interviewed as part of this research declared either Labour Party membership or allegiance to left-wing political views, and described the occasional bemusement, and at times discomfort, at dealing with a membership whose political views were quite often aligned to a party that is well-known for its attacks on and wholesale disregard for trade unionism. Fresh arguments about political affiliation began to emerge in the aftermath of New Labour's attacks on trade unions in the late 1990s and early 2000s and it would be arguably unwise to under-estimate the 'seismic shift' (Hoveman, 2003) that started to take place within unions on the subject of political affiliation. However, traditional labour values such as opposition

to privatisation, support for public services and reinforcement of trade union rights do not appear to constitute mainstream concern for the majority of Nautilus and Prospect members and, despite the TSSA being a long-term proponent of Labour Party affiliation, some of its managerial and professional members are less supportive of political affiliation as a legitimate component of trade unionism.

Political affiliation, according to union officers interviewed at Nautilus, is vehemently opposed by the majority of the union's managerial and professional membership, whose long-term position has been one of non-political party allegiance. Prior to the 2010 general election, Nautilus enjoyed a relatively high level of ministerial access—access that is essential in terms of securing employer obligation. The election of a coalition government in 2010, however, threatened this access and consequently provided a much reduced opportunity to negotiate meaningfully with the government on seafaring industry issues. Industrial Officer, Iain, cited tonnage tax<sup>42</sup> as an example. This would, he said, be left to the 'vagaries of the market' under a Conservative government, which in turn, creates the potential for unease and insecurity among the workforce.

Some Nautilus officers claimed that their membership was largely politically conservative and that political affiliation would be 'off-putting' to membership. Industrial Officer, Iain, remarked that he had received queries from potential new members about political affiliation, which he accepted as evidence that political affiliation was a factor in the managerial and professional decision to take up union membership, despite the benefits of the union's comprehensive certificate protection. One officer stated:

'I'm aware that some of our members are Conservative councillors, one of our General Council members is a Conservative councillor...it's a white middle-class sort of union to be honest with you.' [Interview: Peter, 16/04/10]

The union remains opposed to political affiliation, irrespective of whether its membership tends toward the centre-right of the political perspective, although it is accepted that affiliation may cause irreconcilable conflict for its members.



Prospect's membership adopts a similar stand-point. Both unions maintain that political affiliation would be detrimental to potential membership and that many current members are resolute in their repudiation of political affiliation, preferring instead to adopt a position of political neutrality. According to both Nautilus and Prospect, this places them in a position of strength, whereby they can lobby with impunity any government, regardless of its political stance. Openly cynical about the Labour Party, Prospect includes a 'myth-busting' entry on its website, dispelling the 'myth' that 'all unions support the Labour Party'. The union uses its website to reiterate its position of political non-partisanship and is eager to explain that while the union has a political *fund*, this is a legal requirement that allows Prospect to 'campaign on legislative issues', and that no monies are in fact given to any political party ([www.prospect.org.uk](http://www.prospect.org.uk), March 2011). In much the same way as the professional FDA union claims that its strict political neutrality underpins its belief in 'engaging with employers—not working against them...promotes and protects members' interests and...defends the reputation of members' ([www.fda.org.uk](http://www.fda.org.uk), 2012), Prospect prioritises representation of its membership over political bias and its position is one that is reflected in the majority of its membership.

Prospect National Secretary, Gavin, suggested that if the trade union movement were to be retrospective and disseminate the rhetoric—along with the figures—about the Thatcher years, it would find that; 'the majority of trade unionists in the UK must've voted for a Conservative administration'. It was not something new, therefore, according to Gavin, for union members to be Conservative voters. Prospect believes it has a 'moral duty and responsibility' to engage with all the main political parties if it is going to continue to effectively represent its members. Gavin explained:

'in response to people who say 'you should know better', or 'you shouldn't be speaking to the \*\*\*\*ing Tories', you have to realise this might be the next government, and we're going to need to engage with them in some shape or form.' [Interview: Gavin, 12/04/10]

Gavin used Mark Serwotka's<sup>43</sup> attendance at the 'fringe' event at the Conservative Party Conference in 2009<sup>44</sup> as an example of traditional trade union politics adapting to the mainstream political agenda:

'on the one hand you think a far-left union wouldn't engage, but that was an imaginative thing to do.'

Prospect Organiser, Carl, added that there was ‘a healthy scepticism about the Labour Party’ within Prospect, largely as a result of Prospect members having been:

‘encroached by the Labour government in terms of privatisation, forensic science, air traffic control...areas that not even the Tories would go to.’ [Interview, Carl 14/04/10]

Carl reaffirmed that most Prospect members want the union to be apolitical, observing that, for example, the raising at Prospect’s National Conference, of issues like international development, climate change or developing world economies:

‘a lot of people will say ‘what’s this got to do with the union?’...do we really want to turn our conference into a political debating point?’

This comment appears to demonstrate a quite definitive dissociation of unionisation from the wider global aspects of trade unionism, or the individual from the collective.

Carl commented that:

‘if you were to say it to Tony Benn, he’d probably be very saddened, but most people are very pleased with our [Prospect’s] independence. It’s very important to them.’

Prospect officers interviewed, as with Nautilus’, reasserted however, that the priority for the union must be to respond to its members.

Some Prospect officers suggested that as fewer than twenty unions are Labour Party affiliates, this suggests a wider disengagement with party politics; a situation which, it was envisaged, may deteriorate further in terms of continued fall-out from issues like Iraq, and the furore over politicians’ expenses<sup>45</sup>, over which it could be argued that the public has become significantly politically disenchanted. While it was recognised that the first two terms of the Labour government elected in 1997 delivered some positive aspects, such as the minimum wage, tax credits, and repeal—albeit minimal—of anti-trade union legislation, changes to the labour movement were responsible for key shifts in other areas, according to one Prospect National Secretary:

‘It indicates a move away from traditional views of trade unionism, I think if you look at any government, even the Labour government over the last 13 years, you’d be hard pushed to find anything in terms of traditional views—certainly over the last five years—the labour movement isn’t what it was in the 1950s and 1960s. The whole labour market’s changed, so traditions are bound to change.’ [Interview: Glenda, 19/04/10]

Of the three unions participating in this research, the TSSA is the only one affiliated to the Labour Party and has a long history of links to the political left, despite evidence that a proportion of its membership is not averse to right-wing politics. Lockwood (1958: 156) claimed that out of 60,000 railway clerks in the UK: 'I think I am well inside the mark when I say that quite 50,000 of them are Conservative in politics'. The point was thus made that a deviation, perhaps landmark, from the traditional politics of trade union membership, was taking place. While the TSSA acknowledges that party political affiliation may be 'off-putting' to some managerial and professional members and that a greater number of managers may be enticed into membership were it not for links to the Labour Party, it is nonetheless interesting to note that political ballot results do *not* expose a trend among managerial-grade members that would suggest that political affiliation is in fact a 'deal-breaker' in terms of membership. The situation pertaining specifically to the TSSA will be explored in chapter six.

### **Navigating changes to political and economic context—union responses**

This section takes account of political change and managerial and professional workers' reactions to it. This begins with analysis of the generational aspect inherent in trade union membership. Some union officers interviewed felt that this aspect was instrumental in formulating and shaping managerial and professional members' approaches to trade union membership. In particular, the last quarter of the twentieth century was deemed significant in terms of aligning managerial and professional union membership with political profile. For example, it was argued that what some officers referred to as the 'Thatcher's children' effect, is starting to dissolve, with people born in the 1970s or 1980s now belonging to a workforce whose complexion is markedly different to pre-1979 workplace culture and environment. TSSA National Organiser, Stuart, explained:

'the 'Thatcher's children' theory...they're on their way *through* the system and new staff haven't *heard* of Margaret Thatcher and are looking at things anew.' [Interview: Stuart, 08/06/10]

Nautilus National Secretary, Peter, echoed this:

'young people coming through the ranks have no idea who Thatcher *is*.' [Interview: Peter, 16/04/10]

Peter explained that one of his responsibilities is to represent members in the Cruise sector, where he perceived:

‘one of the things I’ve noticed is how young the officers are there, I would say the average age would have been late 20s, early 30s, and they had no political or old industrial relations baggage with them whatsoever. I don’t believe there’s the same thought process...they see unions differently, there’s no doubt about that.’

It could therefore be argued that this type of view adds a distinctly generational element to the reconfigured notion of what constitutes trade unionism.

TSSA Senior Regional Organiser, Joel, supported this, explaining that in his experience, managers put forward less and less the argument that unions’ objectives are ‘firmly cemented in 1970s militancy’, again as new, and inevitably younger, managers enter the workplace. Joel believed that managers are more preoccupied with concern over whether joining a union would make them appear weak, in a personal sense, or whether it would reflect negatively on their ability to perform as an effective manager. In other words, new managers may be more concerned with the ‘what’s in it for me?’ aspect. As uncomfortable as this clearly made some organisers at TSSA feel, it was nonetheless accepted that in order to sustain managerial membership in the union, this group of workers had to be nurtured. Joel stated:

‘the scope for growth is within management grades, it’s within these grades that we’ve got a clear field of play.’ [Interview: Joel, 08/04/10]

Nautilus National Secretary, Peter, observed that new, modern managers in Nautilus are very attuned to the business world, by virtue of the jobs they do. For instance, most managers are budget-holders; they deal with performance-related issues, fuel consumption, maritime law, financial and passenger satisfaction indicators and are therefore both comfortable and familiar with the use of modern business language. It naturally follows, according to officers at Nautilus, that similar discourse is deployed in the union context, as it was thought that this would ensure consistency and relevance across the employer-union relationship. In Nautilus, the advent of modern technology has changed the industry significantly. For example the traditional paper and pencil navigation charts have been replaced by electronic chart display screens (ECDIS). So, the principal means of navigation has changed and the industry is becoming more technologically sophisticated. Change on this scale has meant that

Nautilus members have had little option but to engage in the new business environment in which they find themselves located. To new entrants to the union of course, this is less difficult.

Officers at Prospect also felt that unions, in order to sustain and grow membership within management grades, had little option but to engage more extensively with employers and less so with the wider trade union movement. Denoting a move away from more mainstream notions of union configuration, National Secretary, Gavin, commented that there was;

‘less allegiance to the politics of tribalism that you get in some union organisations, which has been replaced with a growing recognition that there’s a need to have dialogue with employers and the government.’  
[Interview: Gavin, 12/04/10]

Prospect similarly acknowledges that there is a need for language to be modernised, and also that this has benefits in terms of enhancing relationships with employers, National Secretary, Glenda, commented that:

‘you can meet the employer on a more equal footing, when the employer realises that trade union members are erudite, educated and articulate.’ [Interview: Glenda, 19/04/10]

It was recognised that Prospect members want their union to be independent and robust, but at the same time, according to Gavin; ‘they don’t want them [unions] to be unremittingly negative about the employer’. This balance is a difficult one to strike, because members want to have a stake in the success of the business while at the same time enjoying the benefits their trade union has to offer in terms of protection. This in turn creates a dilemma for the union officer, who must somehow control this pendulum effect by managing expectations on both sides. This may mean entering into negotiations leaving an adversarial, confrontational or argumentative stance behind, replacing it with subjection—or the appearance thereof, if that is what the membership wants. Prospect organiser, Carl, issued a note of caution however, in stating that:

‘we need to be wary about mirroring or mimicking a corporate philosophy and culture that over the last couple of years has been challenged...for example, the mess the banks have got us into, do we really want to be aligned with that?’ [Interview: Carl, 14/04/10]

TSSA Senior Regional Organiser, Elaine, observed that there had been a marked change from the paternalistic culture, where:

‘old managers started at the bottom’ to a new, more dynamic, and demonstrably more professional, industry culture where ‘the new ones [managers] are coming straight in through fast-track or graduate-manager schemes.’ [Interview: Elaine, 12/02/10]

It was therefore considered necessary for the TSSA to ‘be seen as professional’.

Senior Regional Organiser, Joel, explained that while he was reluctant to make any move away from the traditional ideology of trade unionism, he recognised the inevitability that, in order to represent the interests of managers—the most significant growth area of the union—it would be necessary to adapt the TSSA’s approach:

‘the trade union movement and TSSA has to find a way of tapping into a changing society and breaking down misconceptions about the trade union movement and what trade unions are about.’ [Interview: Joel, 08/04/10]

Joel referred to the trade unionism of the 1980s, a period where politics, according to Joel, were ‘demonised’, so a move away from this perception is crucial if the trade union movement is to adapt to change and recruit and retain more managers. It was suggested that unions need to become more integral to communities as opposed to stand-alone political entities, notably, according to Joel, at a time when: ‘old fashioned politics is not an attractive thing for young, or aspiring people, they don’t want to appear to be old-fashioned’. A concept that Joel felt was crucial in gaining access to and engaging potential trade unionists.

Enhanced communication is critical for TSSA, and it was recognised that language and communication are factors that warrant more explorative attention. It was suggested that work could be done to consider the relevance of language to its audience. Harriet Yeo, President of TSSA’s National Executive Committee (NEC) commented that; ‘language is crucial, it’s [currently] antediluvian’ (email correspondence, 19/07/10). Harriet offered the example of replacing the title ‘branch secretary’ with ‘communications officer’, with the aim of making the role more appealing to potential activists. Harriet felt that there was significant scope to make progress in this area if the union recognised the criticality of acknowledging the move away from the ‘paternalistic’ mode of trade unionism referred to by SRO Elaine, who commented that:

‘the 1960s model of trade unionism is manically outdated and unions need to have a ‘we will fit you, you don’t have to fit us’ attitude.’ [Interview: Elaine, 12/02/10]

Elaine’s comment tends to reiterate the assertion that managers do not always, and perhaps more importantly do not feel they are obliged to, fit the ‘mould’ of traditional trade unionism. Joel recognised that; ‘we need to better exploit social networking, we need to make it [trade unionism] more appealing to people who communicate in this way’. TSSA officers felt that changes do need to be made in this area, but issued a note of caution, along similar lines to those issued by Prospect officers, that being seen to align unions too closely with the business world could have negative connotations.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis proposes that, although it is not necessarily shaped by changing employment relationships and the landscape in which managerial and professional workers are located, the character of the three case-study unions is, to an extent, informed by this group of workers’ consciousness and propensity to act collectively. These unions all cater for managerial or professional workers; they have a diverse history and culture and yet share many similarities in their composition, internal structures and membership base. Nautilus, for reasons of logistics and geographical dispersement, has unique issues that cannot be shared by any other union and its structure and mode of operation reflects this. Prospect and the TSSA, however, are more functionally complex. Business perspective and collaboration with industry partners were referred to consistently in interviews with members and officers from Nautilus and Prospect, whose belief that their unions’ closer alignment with employers’ objectives was a key driver in terms of their development, growth and success. The TSSA also appeared to be developing preparedness, but less for collaboration, and moreso for struggle, which indicates a greater element of collectivism among its membership more generally.

Prospect has emerged and grown as a result of many and varied mergers and the TSSA has evolved over time in tandem with an ever-changing, structurally complex and constantly reconfiguring rail transport industry. Prospect is a union exclusively for managerial and professional workers, whereas Nautilus and the TSSA are genuine

'all-grade' unions, whose managerial and professional membership base is significant and robust. Snape and Bamber (1989: 99) claimed that some large unions have, in an attempt to 'modify their generally unfavourable image', provided managerial and professional workers with their own separate, or dedicated, branch and representational structures. As is the case with Nautilus and the TSSA, managerial and professional members are in the same union as their subordinates; they are in a separate bargaining unit and have their own representatives and relatively autonomous negotiating machinery. The TSSA affiliates to the Labour Party, Nautilus and Prospect do not. Nautilus and Prospect advocate partnership-style working between their unions and employers, the TSSA does not. Servicing is a concept that is interwoven through the structure of all three unions and industrial action is a dispute mechanism that has been, until fairly recently, viewed with abject hostility. Far from identical in make-up, these unions do, however, share common ground, from which they represent a demanding membership base, whose priorities are becoming more closely aligned to those of their manual counterparts, and yet whose participation and projected growth are at significant odds with a general declining trend in trade union membership.

From an ideological perspective, the three unions share distinct similarities. Attitudinal factors in relation to industrial action, the role of politics, and to trade unionism more generally were shared across the unions. It was clear, however, that attitudes in some areas were changing; for example, in relation to industrial action (see chapter six). Nautilus and Prospect clearly self-identified with and embraced the notion of a professional union whereas the TSSA appeared to be experiencing a substantial disjoint between its organising aspirations and managerial-grade members' predominantly servicing-oriented approach to union membership. These unions, in spite of the TSSA's resistance to the professional 'label' to which Nautilus and Prospect so readily adhere, are largely characteristic of the professional union. It is from this position that this thesis will aim to analyse these unions' function as successful managerial and professional unions.

It would appear that change is beginning to inform the configuration of the three case-study unions. It could be argued that the extent to which managerial and professional members of these unions are undergoing identification with collective traits, and



perhaps more importantly, with the *objectives* of collective behaviour or actions, represents an element of novelty, especially during a time at which the development of positive characteristics in the trade union movement is unexpected. That they continue to adhere to the predominantly servicing mentality that has dominated trade unionism in the past clearly fails to preclude these workers from the ability to formulate a collective response, especially in relation to the threats posed by workplace change.

The generational aspect is arguably one that deserves particular attention. Many officers interviewed claimed that this has a significant and direct effect on the approaches adopted by managerial and professional members to their trade union membership. Changes in behaviour, language and the ways in which relationships are conducted with employers seemed to be moving towards reinforcement of the social partnership model of unionism referred to by Heery and Kelly (1994). The way that new members of these unions are reacting and responding to change may also indicate a preference for a 'new' way of conducting union-employer practices.

Having established historical and structural context to the three unions under study in this research, the following chapter will address the nature of managerial and professional occupations and will analyse the ways in which individualism is being challenged. It will also attempt to gauge the extent to which managerial and professional workers identify with collective traits and how this behaviour is translating into an expression of sub-collectivism.

## **Chapter four**

### **The individualised nature of managerial and professional work and emerging sub-collectivism**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will consider the nature, content and characteristics of managerial and professional occupations and will address the various issues that have challenged individualism, in terms of the employment relationship and individual values and the ways in which these may have contributed to the emergence of a collective trend within the unions under study in this thesis—Nautilus International, Prospect and the TSSA. The chapter will also consider how far employment relationships produce collective values and will conclude by introducing the elements of collectivism that are beginning to manifest themselves among the managerial and professional union members under study in this research. While writers such as Wright-Mills (1951) and Lockwood (1958) have tended to link the perceived individualised nature of ‘white-collar’ work to a greater sense of employment security and increased levels of identification of ‘white-collar’ workers with employers, this chapter will demonstrate that these trends, between fifty and sixty years after they were identified, are in the process of performing something of a volte-face, with managerial and professional workers experiencing threats to their job security similar to those of manual or ‘blue-collar’ workers. There is a growing distrust of and unease with employers who have made it abundantly clear that managerial and professional workers’ occupations or professions will no longer be ring-fenced as a result of their uniqueness or their complexity.

In order to understand the ways in which managerial and professional workers’ behaviour interfaces with their union membership, it is necessary to examine the relationship between individualism and collectivism. Changes to the organisation of work, the advent of new technologies and rapid labour market fluctuation have all contributed to the individualisation of the employment relationship (Terry, 1994). Concepts that have marginalised unions, such as performance-related pay (PRP),

decentralisation of management decision-making, collective bargaining and consultation structures, have had a demonstrable impact on many managerial and professional workers who have contributed to this research. This impact has arguably produced movement—albeit subtle—away from individualism and towards collectivism.

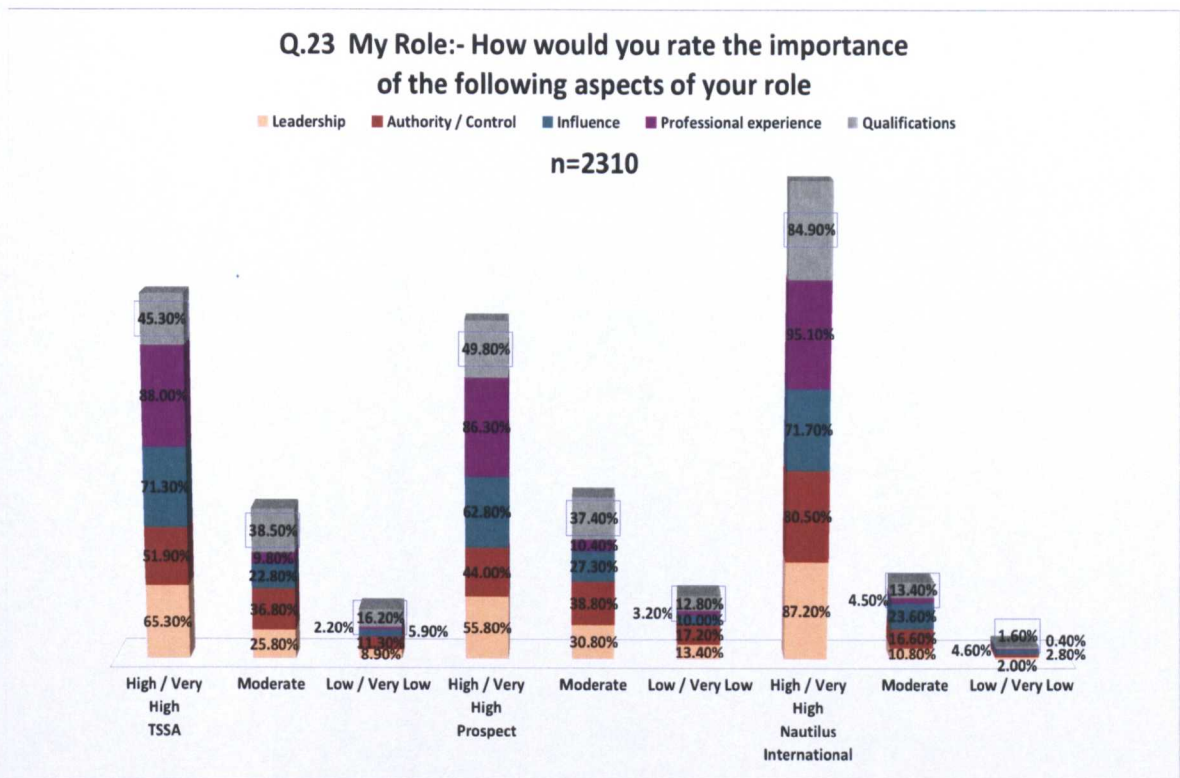
As Fairbrother (1996) proposes, the fact that management has attempted to reorganise collective workforces on an individualistic basis does not equate to the individualisation of social relations of production as such, and data gathered in this research will demonstrate that while there may be resistance on the part of some managerial and professional workers to traditional notions of collectivism, these workers do not necessarily ‘buy into’ the concept of individualisation. Also instrumental in highlighting the way in which this group of workers constructs employment relationships is Martinez-Lucio and Stewart’s (1997: 71) assertion that new management strategies are ‘testing the traditional form and content...of the employment relationship’, which they argue is constituted around ‘the relationship between individualism and collectivism’.

In considering the characteristics of individualised jobs or occupations, it is first necessary to establish how this type of work is perceived to be individualised, or unique, before examining the extent to which this singularity of job or occupation has determined managerial and professional workers’ decision to unionise. In doing so, it is important to establish members’ own perceptions of their role and how their position in their workplace hierarchies intersects with, and affects, their union membership.

### **The characteristics of individualised work and the nature of professional identity**

Managerial and professional workers’ perceptions of their own role are useful in determining the characteristics of ‘individualised’ work. The results of survey question 23 (see graph 4.1 below) show that ‘professional experience’ is rated as the most important aspect of their role by respondents from all three unions—95 per cent of Nautilus, 86 per cent of Prospect and 85 per cent of TSSA members, based on aggregated very high and high ratings.

Graph 4.1



A wide-ranging variety of reasons were given for these ratings. Officers from all three unions attributed these, in part, to the length of time taken by individuals to train and qualify for the roles that they occupy. Clegg et al (1986: 94) took the view that ‘pride in the application of hard-earned and jealously protected skills was an essential element of control of the labour process’, and given the amount of time invested in gaining training and qualifications, a certain possessiveness, or sense of personal pride, has developed whereby individuals consider their professional expertise to in some way set them apart from other workers.

Coupled with escalating fears over job security, it could be argued that a sense of professional protectiveness, or possessiveness, compounds an already unstable foundation from which managers and professionals are expected to justify the uniqueness of their role. This in itself introduces a significant element of risk, which some managerial and professional workers translate as exposure to a vulnerability which could constitute the first step towards potential job or pay downgrading, demotion, loss of status or control, or even job loss. New Prospect member Lynn, a Scientific Officer at Natural England, reinforced this fear:

‘to be going in a particular direction in your career and spending a lot of time getting qualified, to then find this at risk makes me a bit jumpy.’  
[Interview: Lynn, 07/11/11]

Qualifications featured less significantly among TSSA and Prospect respondents, who rated this lowest and second lowest at 45 and 50 per cent respectively, based on aggregated high and very high ratings. Nautilus respondents, however, rated qualifications significantly higher, at 85 per cent (although not as highly as professional experience or leadership). This could suggest one of two things, and perhaps more pertinently in the case of managerial or professional Prospect or TSSA members; either that, whilst essential in pursuing a *professional* career, qualifications may not necessarily possess the same value for a managerial role, whose ‘experience’ is commensurate with knowledge gained in dealing with a challenging set of circumstances or scenarios as opposed to experience gained merely through qualification. It could also suggest, given the age profile of respondents (see respondent profile in chapter two), that members considered professional experience to be in some way proportionate to a ‘time served’ capacity, whereby the length of time served in a particular role was considered to be more significant than the acquisition of qualifications. This arguably opens up debate over the distinction between professional and professionalism, and may be instrumental in the responses made by some members in this section of the research.

Diverse meanings are attached to the notion of professional identity (Shein, 1991, Fisher, 1996, Zydziunaite, 2005). In a study of professional identity at educational institutions where students were trained to work in specific professional areas, it was suggested that self-identity is related to professional identity (Fisher, 1996). This notion is similarly identifiable among many participants in this research, who linked who they are as ‘social beings’ closely to the roles they perform in their career, or professional life. It could therefore be argued that potential exists for professional identity to act as a source of collectivism among managerial and professional union members.

### **Differentiation between unique and individualised roles**

Some jobs, by their very nature, are unique in terms of their description and content and their—often complex—make-up can often drive a particular representational need

from their union. In Nautilus, the roles of the union's 'top four' category of worker—ship master, chief officer, chief engineer and second engineer—are those whose accountabilities and responsibilities have become embedded over time. They are bespoke to the maritime shipping industry and have thus far managed to escape the large-scale reconfiguration and restructure of job titles and definition that have been imposed upon the agencies and professions whose members are represented by Prospect and TSSA. These job titles have effectively withstood the test of time and have come to represent a form of traditionalism that is exclusive to this particular industry. That said, however, the jobs that fall within these ranks, for example; master mariner, navigation watch-keeper, marine engineer or ship's pilot (who report to the rank of master, chief officer, chief engineer and industrial engineer respectively) often have individual contracts, pay and conditions; more usually in conjunction with length of service criteria. So although roles like ship's captain are not unique, they are nonetheless in many cases characterised by individual terms and conditions. No generic pay scales exist for the 'top four' ranks and pay may also be defined in accordance with performance rating structures, which, it could be claimed, further enhances the individuality of these roles. The categorisation of TSSA members' roles is similar to that of Nautilus. Job titles in the transport industry tend to be more generic, or templated, for example; project manager, planner or engineer. Prospect represents members belonging to specialist groups of workers and jobs like plankton ecologist, biodiversity specialist, climate change adaptation manager, maritime liquid waste manager, fast jet programme manager, munitions handling manager, invertebrate specialist, goat consultant (of whom there is only one in the UK), explosive safety licence officer, and horticultural marketing specialist are specific examples of these types of very unique jobs.

It was recognised by union officers that many managerial and professional roles were identified in terms of being less regulated, more open, more flexible and consequently presenting a much greater opportunity for individuals occupying these roles to mould the role into one that is distinct, and consequently highly individualised. It could therefore be suggested that the desire or need experienced by managerial and professional workers to 'tailor' or 'bolster' the uniqueness of their role may also be indirectly contributory to driving these workers to adopt a position of default collectivisation.

### **The distinction between ‘managerial’ and ‘professional’**

In considering the significance that many managerial and professional workers attach to professional identity, it is important to explore the distinction between what constitutes managerial and professional in the case-study unions. Some Prospect officers felt that the notion of being a manager is inextricably linked to hierarchical notions of status, especially in the senior civil service sector. Prospect is a union that represents specialists, and workers have often attained management positions by virtue of their specialist skills. Possession of these skills does not necessarily, however, according to Prospect officers, equip an employee, even a specialist or technically skilled employee, to be a manager. In one interview, Prospect National Secretary, Gavin, gave the example of prosecuting lawyers in Scotland, who spend the majority of their time in court, in an adversarial environment, where; ‘their thinking becomes binary, with life potentially taking on a ‘black and white’ perspective’ [Interview: Gavin, 12/04/10]. Gavin used this analogy in an attempt to explain the significance of recognising, without detracting from the skills of the employee—these are in no way under scrutiny—that specialist skills do not automatically qualify an employee to be a manager. Officers gave similar examples from the scientific sector within Prospect, where workers have been appointed to take managerial responsibility for a team, or for delivering team output, but it does not necessarily follow that these employees are dedicated managers, rather that they are appointed on the sole basis of their scientific expertise, or ‘specialism’.

In interviews with union officers, it was claimed that hierarchical status was crucial for many managerial and professional TSSA members. There is a clearly defined hierarchy in the transport industry that identifies managers in a fairly distinct way. There appeared, however, to be a difference between exercising a full range of managerial responsibilities and being given the ‘title’ of manager; a notion that was not unconnected to status *symbols*, which were considered important by this group of workers. Access to a company car, benefits package or private healthcare featured significantly in many managers’ aspirations—as well as enhanced salary packages, although it was recognised that the title of manager was valued, in some cases, higher than pay. Smith’s (1987: 96) statement that where job identity has traditionally been linked to levels of pay; status, benefits or privileges were ‘subordinated to the issue of

the level of pay' is therefore to an extent challenged by testimony from some union officers interviewed as part of this research.

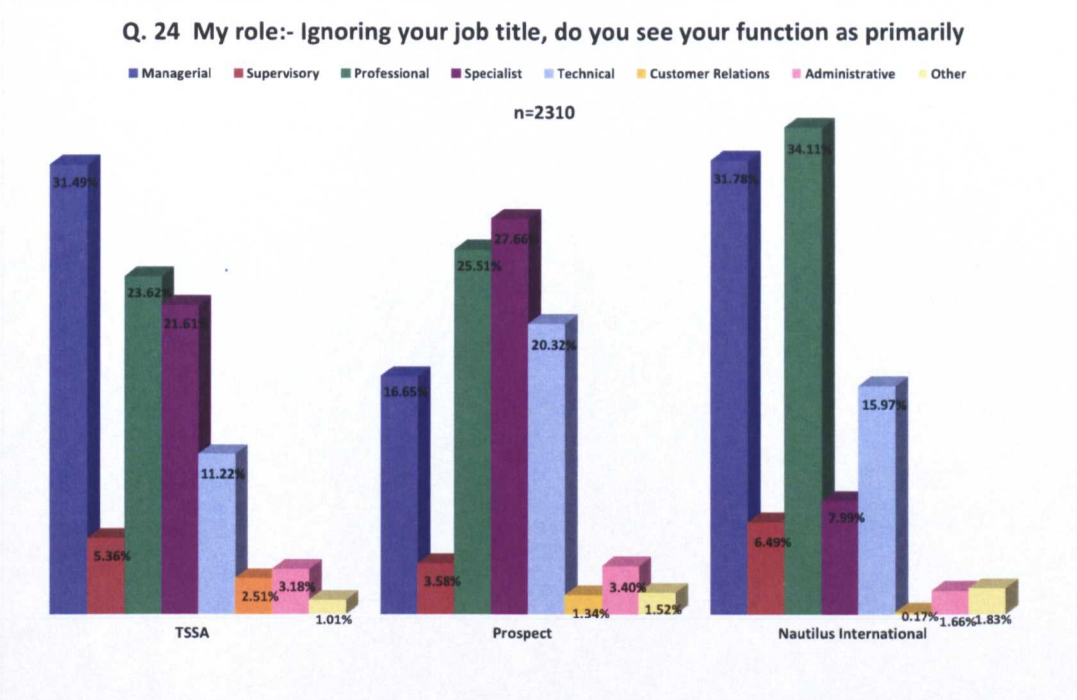
TSSA Senior Regional Organiser, Joel, explained that in many cases some rail industry managers actually get paid *less* than the people they manage, which seems to suggest that hierarchical status may be valued more highly than responsibility. Joel's colleague, Elaine, however, questioned the importance of status over pay; challenging the traditional managerial and professional economic position. Elaine indicated that there was evidence to suggest that the importance of status may be declining. Elaine believed that the make-up of managers has changed significantly, stating that: 'group, rather than individual, characteristics have changed' and that managers were forming, in certain areas, 'some quite militant groups'. Elaine attributed this to the pressures associated with persistent attacks on pay and performance ranking structures in the rail transport industry.

It was claimed by some union officers that the term 'manager' could also be used mischievously, or to inflate a sense of status. There was acknowledgement by officers and some managerial and professional members of the case-study unions that more people are awarded the *title* of 'manager' as opposed to responsibility for staff, projects or budgets. Prospect officers recognised that the reasons for this are not always clear, which arguably increases the relevance of Blyton and Ursell's (1982: 189) argument that, certainly in public-sector managerial and professional unionism, there is an absence of differentiation between 'managers and managed'. Assignment of the term 'manager' may be made, according to some officers, to placate or compensate a member of staff, or give them a *sense* of status, depending on how important it is deemed by a particular employee. This 'cossetting' of employees went largely unchallenged by managers in whose sectors this took place, primarily because instances such as these were perceived to be few and far between, but also because awarding the title of 'manager' outweighed any potential disengagement or discontent of an otherwise valued specialist employee.

To establish managers and professional workers' perception of their roles, question 24 (see graph 4.2 on the following page) was posed.



Graph 4.2



Responses showed that the largest group of TSSA members saw their function as primarily managerial, while most Nautilus and Prospect members viewed their function as almost evenly split between professional and managerial and specialist and professional respectively. Less than four per cent of respondents perceived their role to be ‘administrative’, which could suggest that some workers to whom the title of ‘manager’ has been awarded do not actually consider their roles to be managerial in content.

**The contradiction between managers and supervisors**

Responses to survey question 24 also invite interrogation of the distinction between the managerial and supervisory role. Many managers had no responsibility for people, or teams, and as such, did not appear to define their role in a supervisory capacity. These managers were more likely to have responsibility for budgets or projects, which further compounded their rejection of the term ‘supervisor’. It was not possible to determine, from key respondent interviews, whether managers rejected the term ‘supervisor’ because they did not perceive it to possess the same ‘kudos’ as the term ‘manager’, or whether they felt that *to supervise* was not something that was inherent in their role. No manager interviewed referred either specifically to the term ‘supervisor’ or made any distinction between supervisor and manager. The response

from Nautilus members was especially surprising, given the number of respondents who stated that a relatively high number of workers reported to them (in a 'reporting line' structure or hierarchy). Figures for the TSSA were similarly low and National Organiser, Stuart, offered a possible explanation for this:

'The situation is somewhat confused. There's definitely a grey area between people who are considered to be supervisors and those who are managers. It's not always easy to see exactly where people stop being supervisors and start being managers. Guards on trains for example—this is basically a safety, revenue protection, customer-facing role but the guard has effectively been turned into a 'manager' of a train. This is nothing other than a supervisory role. These people don't exercise the full range of responsibilities that you would normally associate with a manager; they direct their staff to deal with issues that arise during the course of a shift, that encapsulates the fundamental difference between a supervisor and a manager.' [Interview: Stuart, 08/06/10]

The function of a supervisor, according to Wray (1949: 117) is 'both problematic and paradoxical' and it is almost certainly true to say that difficulties exist in trying to establish a reliable definition of a supervisor in the context of this research. These difficulties are similar to those identified by Carter (1995) and Child and Partridge (1982) (in Delbridge et al, 1997: 1), who asserted that supervisors were under-theorised as social actors and the 'situation of supervisors is regularly inferred rather than analysed'. Definitional problems also emerge in recognising that supervisors tend to operate predominantly in a 'self-management' capacity (Barker, 1993).

Strangleman (2004: 48) stated that lower levels of management and supervisors were 'indispensable to the safe and efficient operation of the railway' and were 'deeply embedded' in rail industry culture and yet his observation that many managerial-grade rail industry workers see themselves first and foremost as *railway* workers—in much the same way as signalmen or guards may have done previously—echoes a large proportion of current sentiment in the rail industry; that micro-level bureaucratisation has reinforced industry leadership at the expense of workers 'on the ground'. A concept that is not unrecognisable in the modern-day rail industry.

As part of the key respondent interview process, union members were invited to provide five words that they felt best described a manager. Some respondents attached quite negative connotations to the term 'manager', such as; bumptious, belligerent, disillusioned, inflexible, out-of-touch, self-serving, slippery, weary. Some managers,

on the other hand, focused on the more 'personal' traits which they felt a manager possessed; such as; caring, empathetic, friendly, honest, open, understanding. Only one respondent; a TSSA member and manager at Transport for London (TfL), connected the term 'supervisor' to that of a manager.

To add to the at times hazy distinction between the managerial and supervisory role, it could be argued that some of the jobs held by individuals involved in this research are not in fact managerial jobs. The labour process would suggest that *anything* undertaken as part of delivery or commission of a particular role is considered *managing*. Hence some managers' insistence that their title was justified in accordance with their responsibility for finance, projects or administration. It could furthermore be argued that respondents made a somewhat simplistic distinction between the two terms, in that a manager *manages* and a supervisor *supervises*. The example of a manager who had no staff reporting to them, but who was responsible for delivering a multi-million pound investment programme, or similar, would suggest that some managers perceive their role as being more status oriented. For some managers, therefore, supervising *people*, no matter how many, is not perceived as being as important or valuable as having responsibility for cash-flow, administration or direction and control of work, which goes some way to supporting Bain and Price's (1972) identification of the link between status and association with authority.

Some members also felt that a generational aspect was not indivisible from the notion of being a manager, and that social stratification has played a part in relation to this. TSSA member and manager at TfL, Richard, explained that:

'There's an element of 'bolting-on' the word 'manager' because of job title inflation. It's a bit like the word 'consultant'. A consultant used to be a highly paid medic who worked in a hospital. These days you go and buy a shirt from Marks and Sparks and a sales consultant serves you. So there's an element of workforce changing, but really its just job title games...if you think about it in terms of generations, it might have been your grandfather who worked down the pit, your father worked in a factory and you work basically as a manager and might have slightly moved up the social scale, but not much. That's how the labour market has polarised. Grandfather down the pit and dad in a factory—they've been doing blue-collar jobs and will also have been unionised. That's where your managers are coming from.' [Interview: Richard, 16/09/10]

Accounts of this nature would also support some of the data that was produced in relation to members surveyed coming from a 'union background', (see graph 5.3 on page 177) although taking a generational viewpoint in isolation may suggest that fewer, as opposed to more, managerial and professional workers are becoming unionised.

In an interview with one manager, it was suggested that being awarded the title of 'manager' was made perhaps irresponsibly; as a short-sighted or reflex response to an industry development whose gravity demanded change. TSSA member and manager at TfL, Sean explained:

'After the King's Cross fire<sup>46</sup>, one of the recommendations of the Fennell report<sup>47</sup> was that there weren't enough managers. Tunnicliffe<sup>48</sup> came in and flooded the place with managers. People who had once been called other things were suddenly being called managers. JDs changed overnight. Station supervisors turned into managers and the net effect was that London Transport was swarming with managers. The term 'manager' consequently got devalued as more and more people were called it. The title has no significance any more. If you're a manager—it's simple, you get more money.' [Interview: Sean 15/09/10]

Notwithstanding the obvious connection to pay, testimony of this nature nonetheless lends valuable insight into the reactions of employers to industry-shaping events and circumstances and the uncharted repercussions of job title inflation.

### **The extent to which managerial and professional roles are distinguished by authority, leadership and control**

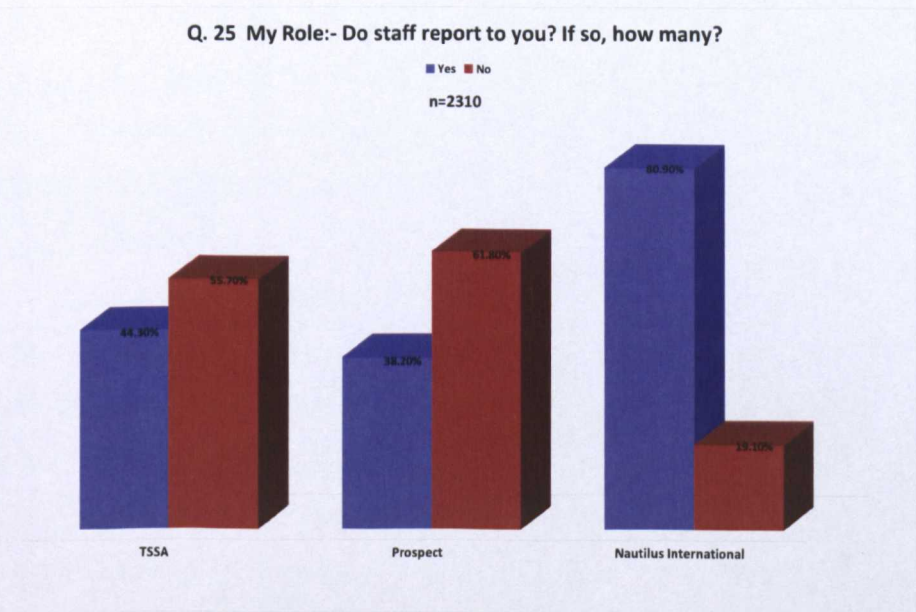
This section will examine the extent to which managerial and professional workers' roles are defined not only by their degree of influence or direction, but also by their responsibility for or authority over other workers. Managers were included in this category in the context of the 'dual professional', who effectively develops their expertise as a manager alongside that in their professional field, much in the same way as a lawyer who had decided to pursue a teaching career would acquire and utilise teaching qualifications while at the same time maintaining their professional expertise (Robson, 1998, Wallace, 2007). 'Influence' was rated by 72 per cent of TSSA and 63 per cent of Prospect members as the second most significant factor of managerial and professional roles, and although Nautilus members rated this at 72 per cent, 'authority and control' and 'leadership' were considered to be higher priorities,



at 87 per cent and 79 per cent respectively. ‘Leadership’ was rated the third highest factor by 65 per cent of TSSA and 56 per cent of Prospect members.

In accounting for Nautilus members’ high rating of ‘authority and control’, Industrial Officer, James, explained that the structure and hierarchy of the maritime shipping profession was highly instrumental. Reporting hierarchies are extremely well defined and embedded, and members are generally conversant with their position in this hierarchy. The rank/position of Master and Captain assumes responsibility for many workers and occupants of these roles consider their leadership to be not only an essential element of maintaining discipline in a unique working environment, but also as being representative of their leadership of a vessel in general. This is also evidenced by Nautilus members’ response to survey question 25 (see graph 4.3 below), where 81 per cent stated that staff reported to them. The variation in Prospect and TSSA may again imply that there are growing numbers of managerial workers whose title affords them managerial *recognition*, but is not necessarily accompanied by corresponding responsibility.

Graph 4.3



**Pay—a traditional managerial and professional priority or a factor of indirect collectivisation?**

Critical evaluation of the managerial or professional role would be incomplete without exploration of issues relating to pay. Pay is a prevalent issue for managerial

and professional workers and arguably one of the most significant factors in determining the individualised nature of the managerial or professional worker's role. Safeguarding pay is a priority for many managerial and professional workers and appears to be an area around which an element of collectivisation is occurring. It could be argued that motivation to increase financial gain during a time of labour market uncertainty is a natural reaction and that union membership is a justifiable by-product of that reaction. Olson (1965), in his research into the behaviour of groups, referred to the assumption that individual members of groups act out of self-interest and that motivations that are driven primarily by self-interest are most likely to be linked to economic gain. Financial reasons for joining a union are rarely mentioned by respondents in this research and yet protection and safeguarding of the mechanism by which these respondents secure economic gain is high on the list of reasons for joining the union (see graph 5.2 on page 180).

Pay remains difficult to evaluate in relation to managerial and professional workers. This difficulty, according to Hyman (in Hyman and Price, 1983: 7-8), emerged as a result of 'substantial changes in the occupational composition of this category' and the scope and range within this category has expanded significantly over the past three decades (Brown and Edwards, 2009). Specific salary information has been difficult to obtain for the purpose of this research, although evidence from research respondents in relation to pay grading and structure suggests that managerial and professional pay has, with the advent of large-scale job redefinition and restructure, become much more complex.

Given the testimony provided by managerial and professional workers and union officers in the three unions under study in this research it appears that Olson's theory, almost half a century later, appears to retain relevance and it could also be argued, goes some way to explaining the lacklustre approach by some managerial and professional workers towards taking any form of action in order to secure improvements to their pay and working conditions.

Managerial and professional workers are often disparately paid and graded (Jenkins and Sherman, 1979) and as job titles and reporting structures have become more convoluted, the veil that shrouds the issue of pay has become more oblique. Many

managerial and professional workers have a tendency to be personal contract holders, whose pay and conditions are calculated on a personalised basis. Many members interviewed were employed on this basis and stated that they were unaware of the amount colleagues were earning. They went on to affirm that it was considered bad practice to discuss pay, or salary, in any context with workplace colleagues. Some claimed that this was in their best interests, as it gave them the necessary autonomy to negotiate the best possible salary package and increments with their employer. TSSA Senior Regional Organiser, Elaine, however, attributed this to the notion that keeping their salary a closely guarded secret would enhance managerial and professional workers' bargaining potential. Which, it could be claimed, is true:

'Managers see pay as a number one issue, and also very much as an individual issue. They don't want the union to be what they see as 'meddling' in their pay. They think they can do a better job of protecting it and negotiating around it than we can. It affects the collective bargaining agenda of course, but that's their position on it.'  
[Interview: Elaine, 12/02/10]

One element that unites Prospect and TSSA managers is that of pay. This issue is also one which has been the most likely to entice members into considering any form of action against their employers. Network Rail deploys a 'Role Clarity' pay system, (see table 6.1, Appendix 4), which contains pay bandings for both managerial and classified—or clerical/administrative—grade employees. The scope for pay disparity is vast, and coupled with its arbitrary methods of application, creates a climate of discomfort and resentment among workers of all grades. Several years ago, Prospect operated a similar pay system—'Unified Banding'—which enabled administrative employees to fit within the same type of structure as managers. This led some workers to experience what they deemed to be an attack on their professional pride, according to Prospect Organiser, Carl, who added that:

'You could sense the feeling that their credibility was being eroded by colleagues who they perceived as 'generalist', which supports the traditional view that 'new' workers shouldn't have the same privileges as someone who's worked their way up the ranks. It's a danger as well for unions, because there's a kind of equality of misery, of bitterness, as well.' [Interview: Carl, 14/04/10]

Few managerial or professional workers interviewed claimed that their employer had deliberately obfuscated the issue of pay among colleagues, but it was hinted at nonetheless. Some employers had made attempts to increase the number of job

accountabilities or responsibilities of employees, either by subsuming them into an employee's contract or including them as 'bolt-on' items to employees existing role profiles (increasingly common terminology used to refer to a job title). Kathy, a Prospect member employed at EDF Energy, explained that:

'Pay just isn't something you talk about. But it generates a feeling of instability. It makes you suspicious. You get asked to take on more and more [work] as part of your profile, but it's hard to negotiate pay because you don't know what the benchmarks are.' [Interview: Kathy, 17/10/11]

Prospect member, activist and engineer at National Air Traffic Control Services (NATS), Martin, reiterated the element of fear associated with debating the structure of pay and personal contracts in the workplace, stating that:

'Once you become a PCG (personal contract grade), you're perceived as being 'one of *the management*' and up to that point, you're just a manager, but still seen as being an engineer. At PCG level though—you're pure management. No-one knows what anyone earns. It's a disciplinary offence.' [Interview: Martin, 18/10/11]

Many members interviewed who occupy unique—or individualised—roles have stated that they are experiencing not only a heightened awareness, or fear, of imminent threats to the continuation of their roles, but also resentment of an employment situation that appears to be frustrating their ability to perform their role to the best of their ability. They are also experiencing indignation at a scenario that has seen them receive pay freezes, or drastically reduced pay increments, while some of their own employees have received what some managers consider to be vastly inflated pay increases, which, in some cases, have resulted in their pay exceeding that of their manager. A seemingly new trend; some managers' own employees (or team members) had started to overtake them in terms of pay. This quite definitive concept invites analysis of a trend that arguably seeks to diminish the significance of pay as a distinguishing feature of managerial and professional work. Where what is essentially 'leap-frog' bargaining (where managerial and professional grades, ranks or bands are considered separately in the collective bargaining process—and during different time periods—from manual or classified-grade employees) is in existence, it has been possible for manual (or classified-grade) workers to be awarded higher percentage pay increases than their managers. One manager at train operating company South East Trains complained that:



'It's difficult to reconcile, when you've got people working for you who get a pay rise—and you're in a position of authority and you get zilch! A lot of managers are in this position and it's frustrating.' [Focus Group: John, 19/05/11]

Bain's (1970: 51) assertion, however, that there has always been, and probably always will be; 'overlap between the levels of white-collar and manual earnings' is, in a period of recession and labour-market fragility, conceivably less readily accepted. This also provides an incentive to collectivism, insofar as managerial and professional workers feel sufficiently aggrieved to pursue action to remedy what they see as clear workplace or professional injustice.

TSSA officer, Elaine, confirmed the existence of this practice in the rail industry:

'Staff in some sectors of Network Rail reject becoming managers because their terms and conditions will actually be worse. They'll get a bonus and few privileges thrown in but if their terms and conditions are worsening then this is negated and there's just no attraction in becoming a manager. Senior management believes all employees aspire to managerial status but we know that's not the case. Trying to confer semi-managerial status is a move which is being resisted and causing upset. This flimsy idea of status, for some people, it's just not worth giving up your contractual safeguards for, it's no choice at all.' [Interview: Elaine, 12/02/10]

TSSA Union Learning Representative (ULR), Campaign Representative, and classified-grade worker, Kate, explained that although her job was highly individualised—Kate is one of a small team that is responsible for managing and implementing the monitoring of CCTV on trains and at stations across the rail network in south-east England—she would be reluctant to accept managerial terms and conditions. Apart from a possible stagnation of pay, Kate claimed:

'I would've said 90 per cent of people [in Kate's department] are safe in their job, but in management grades it's a different story. A manager can get sacked tomorrow. There's a hell of a lot more vulnerability attached to being a manager. I wouldn't seek promotion on that basis alone.' [Interview: Kate, 24/11/12]

Should the process of salary overlap take place with any degree of consistency or regularity, the opportunity thereby presents itself for a manual or 'blue-collar' worker to earn more than the worker who manages them. Processes such as these present a challenge to managerial and professional workers' place in the status hierarchy and are demonstrably causing significant discomfort among this group of workers. This

element of frustration also arguably reinforces Blyton and Ursell's (1982) highlighting of the potential problems raised by managers and subordinates belonging to the same union. Some union officers interviewed, for example, confirmed instances in which they had been called upon to resolve 'conflict of interest' issues whereby a manager had taken out a grievance only to find that the manager (in many cases, occupying equal banding or rank) directing the hearing was also a member of the same union. Prospect National Secretary, Gavin, explained:

'I'm seeing increasingly situations where managers are being set up to compete with each other. I increasingly have to tell people—good managers—that, in their career, they'll often have to expect to be accused of, say, bullying and harassment. They'll get our advice and assistance, but you've got to understand there's pressure from both directions. There's pressure on management from above, and pressure on staff from below. In these circumstances we tend to allocate a rep or FTO to each party and they'll get representation throughout. It can be really frustrating, as once you get to formal grievance processes the agenda unfortunately seems to move beyond 'how do we resolve this'? [Interview: Gavin, 12/04/10]

TSSA officers expressed similar concerns in this area, where some managers felt that they had been positioned confrontationally, for example in a 'petitioner-respondent' situation; one that it was acknowledged has the potential to compromise the make-up or running of a particular sector or department. It could be argued that instances such as these have a certain resonance with the 'special problems' faced by unions and management in relation to the organisation of white-collar workers to which Carter (1985) and Strauss (1954) referred.

Many Managerial and professional workers involved in this research shared—often predominantly pay-related—grievances, and were pursuing these either via formal channels such as the individual grievance procedure, or via their union. It is over this shared sense of injustice that this group of workers was found to be collectivising, although it was acknowledged, certainly by union employees, that it was necessary to be mindful of scenarios like those outlined above, as the pressure to manage equilibrium and impartiality may be as burdensome as the pressure to manage the grievance process through to a successful outcome for all parties.

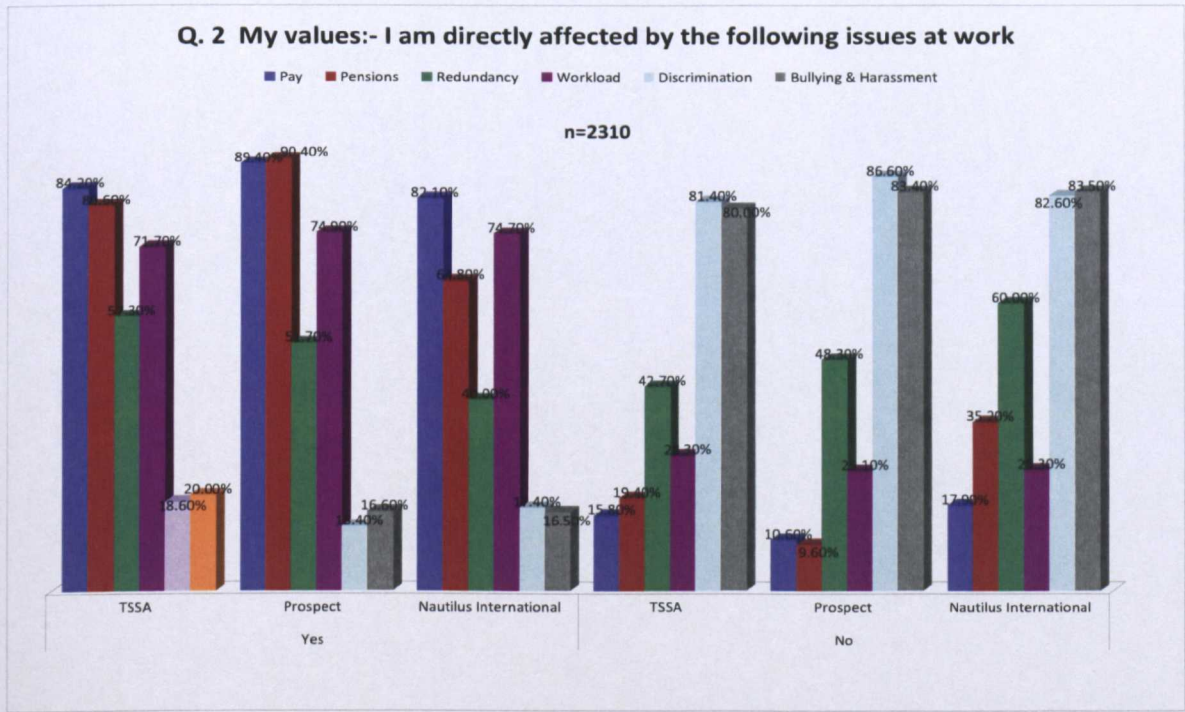
Issues surrounding pay transparency or overlapping with subordinates' pay, however, were not the only issues that managers claimed were responsible for producing an

adverse effect—and not just on the individual. Some members interviewed claimed that pay was used to entice people who did not possess the necessary skills or qualifications into an industry that relied on highly specialised workers and yet whose aim was to create a ‘templated’ organisational structure that failed to take account of professional expertise. This structure, it was suggested, exploited pay as a bargaining lever in a bid to recruit a ‘new’ type of manager who would be compliant with the company ‘brand’—with potentially devastating repercussions. Mick, a TSSA member and engineer at Network Rail gave his verdict on the link between pay and the role of the professional in the rail industry:

‘When I was a teenager I had a choice of which apprenticeship to take. I could’ve gone for one that paid me more money, but I’d always *wanted* to join the railway. You worked your way up through the ranks as an engineer and pay gradually got better. Then in the 80s and 90s pay was massively increased as more managers came in. People didn’t care about the industry any more; they just came for the money. And look what happened. They stopped caring about the railway, took their eye off the ball, brought managers in who didn’t have a clue about the industry, and we ended up with Clapham, Hatfield, Potters Bar [rail industry incidents referred to later in this chapter], all manner of fatalities and near-misses. That’s what happens when you prioritise cash over expertise and know-how.’ [Focus Group: Mick, 19/05/11]

Graph 4.4 below shows that pay and pensions—primarily collective issues—were of greatest concern and evoked significant fear among respondents.

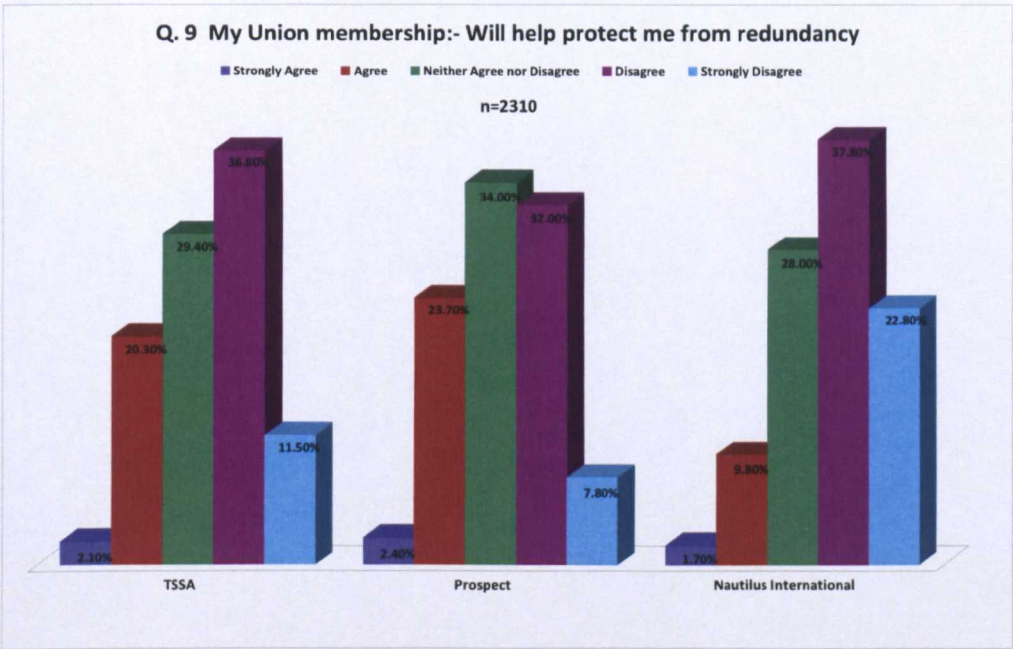
Graph 4.4





Survey questionnaire responses found that 90 per cent of Prospect, 85 per cent of TSSA and 82 per cent of Nautilus members felt that they were directly affected by pay issues, with 91 per cent of Prospect, 81 per cent of Nautilus and 65 per cent of TSSA members claiming that they felt directly affected by pensions issues. In the case of Prospect, this response would appear to be emphasised by the union’s decision to take strike action over pensions on the 30 November 2011 Day of Action. Workload and redundancy, although significant, were not felt so widely among respondents and figures relating to bullying and harassment and discrimination were, according to some union officers, worrying. The fact that so few members felt that their union would be able to assist them in the event of redundancy also led some union officers to believe that underpinning many members’ approaches to redundancy was a general feeling that the economic situation in which many members are currently situated can withstand pressure brought to bear by trade unions and that this pressure is subsequently dissipated (see graph 4.5 below).

Graph 4.5



Based on aggregated disagree and strongly disagree ratings, 61 per cent of Nautilus, 49 per cent of Prospect and 38 per cent of TSSA members felt that union membership was going to be unable to protect them from redundancy. This figure does, however, challenge the assumption that the union possesses the ability to be instrumental in either preventing or mitigating redundancy, especially if we are to accept that

managerial and professional workers are joining unions chiefly for self-interest reasons, such as acquisition of an 'insurance policy'.

### **Reorganisation and its effect on job security**

In order to contextualise the environment in which many managerial and professional workers are located, this section considers the effects that organisational and cultural changes have had on job security, and how these changes have shaped managerial and professional workers' behaviour and actions. In order to understand these workers' fears and frustrations with regard to the pace and nature of workplace change, the effects of the substantial workplace reconfiguration that has taken place over the last three decades will be explored. This is referred to in many forms: reorganisation, restructuring, streamlining, downsizing, harmonisation, and was found to be of major concern to many participants in this research. Brown and Edwards (2009), in their analysis of workplace reconfiguration and structural change that took place during the 1980s and 1990s, recognised that, in addition to the fact that the environment in which managerial and professional work took place was changing, that the management of work was also changing. This is reflected in accounts given by managers who participated in this research. Prospect member, Donald, a Veterinary Investigation Officer at the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) explained:

'There's so much reorganisation, changing of job descriptions, downgrading roles and responsibilities. I found out this morning that in the latest reorganisation, I'll now be reporting to an administrator. I'm a vet, I've always reported to another vet, but now I'll be reporting to an administrator, which has never happened before. I find that quite worrying. These administrators aren't specialists in the veterinary field and with all due respect to their knowledge and ability, they won't know the problems and issues that face vets. It's nonsensical. This is one of the reasons I joined Prospect, I could see what was happening in Animal Health—it's a very proud profession and we don't like being told what to do by people who don't know what our job is and how our job functions. I'm being managed by people that I don't respect, don't necessarily agree with, and who don't understand what I do...this management's over-bureaucratising my role, I spend more time signing bits of paper and filling in forms than I ever did before, we have a proscribed format to follow, a proscribed set of headings and so on, and I find that immensely frustrating.' [Interview: Donald, 15/11/11]

Sean, a TSSA member, and manager at TfL, also commented on changes to the employment situation and hints at the resultant vulnerability:

‘Compare the blue and white-collar sectors and you’ll find workers are more varied in white-collar, they’re more likely to be doing unique jobs, there’s no commonality like there is in blue-collar. So, managers need security and support. We live in a performance review-led system where pay rises are no longer automatic. Employment patterns are also important, there’s no longer any ‘job for life’, there’s more agency, short-term, job-share, contract working, the whole employment scene is different.’ [Interview: Sean, 15/09/10]

An example that comprehensively illustrates the way in which organisational change contributes to a reconfiguration of the managerial and professional workplace can be found in the rail industry, whose safety culture, up until fairly recently, has meant that managerial and professional workers in safety-related jobs have felt comparably secure in their roles, given the industry’s commitment to a safe railway. The advent, however, of the McNulty<sup>49</sup> (2010) recommendations has rendered these workers vulnerable; in some cases perhaps for the first time in their careers. Roles like incident controllers (professionals who investigate incidents on the rail infrastructure) and operational risk specialists (analysts who monitor and assess risks at level crossings, complex junctions and ‘flashpoint’ areas of the rail network) and other types of safety specialist are now at risk under proposals for headcount and cost reduction.

The transport industry has always employed people to undertake a variety of operational roles, but as a result of the current economic climate, some managerial and professional workers in these roles have stated that they feel *more* exposed to the threat of job loss than their manual counterparts. Manual, or blue-collar, workers are essential to the everyday running of the national rail infrastructure, and management and professional roles have, again until recently, been fairly manifold. Engineers in the fields of asset maintenance, design, fleet, track and infrastructure are essential to the overseeing of both work *and* individuals or teams, yet many of them now feel dispensable, and are seeking to move into highly specified projects, in order to at least be guaranteed a short-term position, without the fear or relentless worry over potential redundancy. Those workers who are unable to do this, however, are taking, as far as possible, measures to make their jobs unique, or highly specified, in order that they may be deemed exclusive or essential to their department or organisation. In their joint efforts to individualise their roles, these workers are collectivising—a process that full-time officers from the three unions under study have referred to as ‘accidental’ or ‘inadvertent’ collectivisation, and which this thesis terms ‘default

collectivisation'. Olson (1965: 36), explained a similar type of behaviour in his analysis of small groups of individuals, where he identified that there was an 'attraction of the collective good to the individual members'. In other words, relatively small groups of workers—in this instance managerial and professional workers—are cohering over issues, over shared fear, and over shared threat, and by sharing a commonality of interest, seek to achieve—collectively—a favourable outcome. This is not a development that has been widely identifiable in the trade union movement to date and it could be argued that the behaviour of this group is, to a great extent, creating an agency for change.

It could also be argued that fear of potential job loss has a significant influence on the impulse for collectivism. The structural changes that have altered, in some cases quite radically, the complexion of the workplace (Brown and Edwards, 2009) have brought with them fears and anxieties about not only the motivations of employers in imposing such changes, but also in terms of consequences and repercussions. Work intensification, performance appraisal, stress, and unwanted exposure to the harsh politics of workplace hierarchies, which prioritise profit and fiscal accountability over workers, are issues that a growing number of managerial and professional workers appear to be facing.

Lockwood's (1958, in Bain, 1970: 67) argument that the security of employment was 'perhaps the most significant difference between manual and non-manual work' retains relevance in that many respondents made reference to the high value attached to employment security. The ways in which this element manifests itself is arguably similar to the arguments put forward in this thesis, whereby some managerial and professional workers, despite in some cases seeking union membership as a response to threats to job security and erosion of terms and conditions, are doing so in such a way as to reinforce an element of collectivism. A shared sense of insecurity and more widespread acknowledgement of the extensive nature and effects of that insecurity are, it could furthermore be asserted, symptomatic of a shift towards collective behaviour. Some respondents claimed that they took up union membership as a direct reaction to threats posed by wide-scale change to their work environment or practices. New Prospect member and Ornithologist at the Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA), Robin, stated:

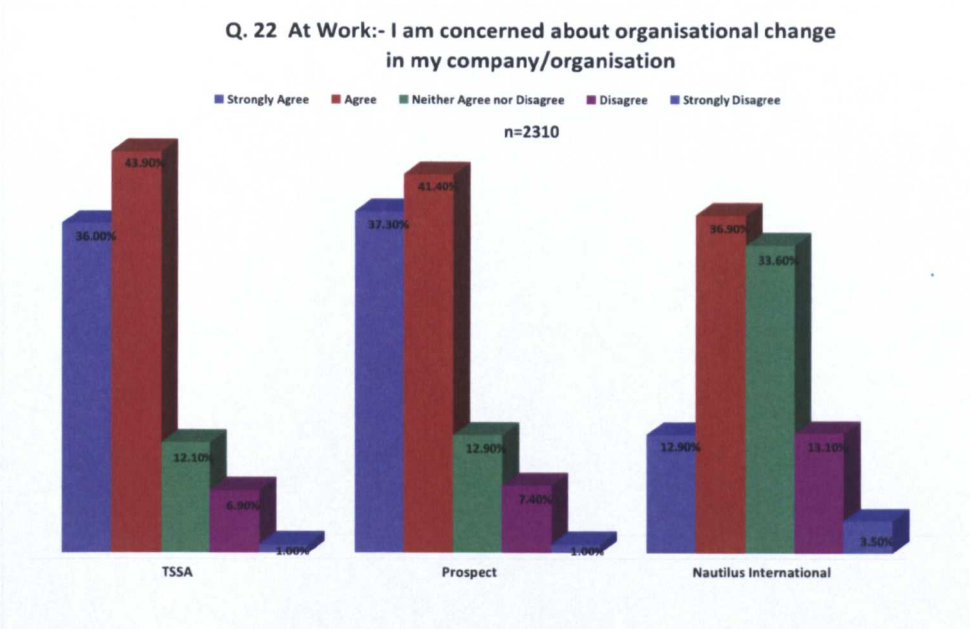
‘In a nutshell, our directorate wants to mutualise—or privatise—the organisation. I’m not altogether happy about that, so joining the union was a form of protest. A whole suite of business development people have come in and they’re doing things in a way that’s very alien to the way scientists work, so it’s a logical step to join a union under these circumstances, I’m not the only one who’s joined Prospect fairly recently, it’s the only thing people can do to protect their jobs or way of working.’ [Interview: Robin, 28/11/11]

Brown and Edwards’ (2009: 9) reference to the employment situation in the 1980s when ‘a major recession was under way and a Conservative government in power... was making its hostility to trade unions increasingly clear’ is interesting in terms of drawing parallels with the situation faced by workers in 2012. The ways in which managerial and professional workers in this research are responding to change, however, are discernible from those of the 1980s. It may be possible to argue that many of these workers will have witnessed or experienced the pernicious and turbulent period of the 1980s, and therefore either developed preparedness for, or made a conscious decision to respond differently to, the possibility of recurrence. Poole et al (1984), in their acknowledgement of the ‘new realism’ of unions, forecast that levels of industrial conflict would remain high throughout the 1980s and possibly longer, and that new forms of work organisation, worker participation and approaches to conducting employment relations would have an effect. It could be deduced that the behaviour and reactions of participants in this research constitute significant evidence of this.

Graph 4.6 on the following page shows that, based on aggregated agree and strongly agree ratings, 81 per cent of TSSA and 78 per cent of Prospect members felt concerned about organisational change. Nautilus members were less concerned with this aspect (49 per cent), although this may be attributable to the more pressing issue, for many members, in relation to employers under-cutting their competitors in order to secure the cheapest form of crewing.



Graph 4.6



Prospect member and engineer at NATS, Martin, reinforced the fear of change that exists among many managers and professionals faced with organisational change:

‘We’ve had constant change [in NATS]—we’ve lost about 300 engineers in the last two years, there’s constant pressure to reduce costs and headcount, but a concomitant reduction in the workload hasn’t happened and people are under pressure and they need union support more than ever.’ [Interview: Martin, 18/10/11]

Restructure, organisational change, and perhaps more importantly their projected effects, were factors that were referred to during interviews with members and union officers, and in discussions with non-members, and featured prominently in debate around bargaining and representation. The ways in which members of the three unions approached issues such as reorganisation were linked, in many cases, to the current economic climate and the anticipated repercussions of further economic downturn.

**The impact of job evaluation processes**

In considering managerial and professional workers’ fears in connection to reorganisation and restructure, this section also acknowledges the sensitivity surrounding job evaluation systems. Crompton and Jones (1986: 173) attributed increases in managerial and professional unionism to the ‘widespread implementation’ of job evaluation, which took place ‘often in occupations where

formal attempts at work measurement had been previously unknown' and which 'reflected profound changes in the organisation of the non-manual labour process.' It could be argued that systems of job evaluation have become more complex, which has led to some managerial and professional workers harbouring feelings of resentment and indignation at the rising levels of scrutiny under which they are expected to work. There also seems to be an associated fear that job evaluation systems may be abused with the specific objective of 'getting rid' of managerial or professional workers. Mervyn, a TSSA member and Operations Manager at train operating company Arriva Trains, explained;

'I think there's a general feeling, especially in the managerial grades, that when performance or functional reviews come around, employers are looking for a way to cut out the managerial posts rather than the workers at the coal-face, so managers feel their positions are at risk. I know I certainly feel that way.' [Interview: Mervyn, 03/08/11]

It was claimed by Waller et al (1995) that evidence exists to suggest that managers' perceptions are shaped by their 'functional background and related reward and penalties' (in Diefenbach, 2009: 7), which would suggest that managerial and professional workers, despite a growing unease over factors such as job evaluation and the ways in which it could be used as a means of further destabilising the individual manager's already fragile role, remain significantly concerned with the potential for erosion of status or reward. TSSA Senior Regional Organiser, Joel, confirmed this:

'Most managers see themselves as entrepreneurial individuals, who feel, if they have a particular skill, that this will be rewarded in a fair and consistent way. So, until fairly recently things like performance-related pay (PRP) systems haven't bothered them. Often, in my experience, managers have tended to feel they'd actually do alright out of PRP if they were left to their own devices. They were pro-PRP and more than happy to take their chances with this as a measurement tool rather than rely on a collective bargaining arena that sought to negotiate on their behalf.' [Interview: Joel, 09/11/11]

Job evaluation is, according to Jenkins and Sherman (1979: 78) 'when stripped of its jargon, merely a method of ranking jobs in a logical manner', and yet despite this relatively harmless sounding process, its potential implications have been known to instil fear into workers at all levels. A feasible prelude to wide-scale restructuring, redundancies or unilaterally imposed changes to conditions and systems of work, job evaluation is at the forefront of managerial and professional workers' minds as they

prepare to subject themselves, in some cases, to almost incessant (initial, interim, periodical, year-end) performance appraisal system, whose composition has provided a platform from which it has become significantly easier for employers to dictate to employees with impunity.

This chapter will now examine the extent to which managerial and professional workers are involved in trade union activity and whether this is a significant factor in their collectivisation.

### **Managerial and professional workers: members or activists?**

It was observed in interviews with union officers and members that differences exist between managerial and professional workers and their levels of participation and activity within their union. Hughes (1967: 9) acknowledged that there is no 'definite order or ranking as to the casual influences bearing upon membership participation ...these influences must operate in quite different degrees in different industrial or occupational situations.' This supports views put forward by most officers from the three unions, who felt that there was a distinct line of demarcation between union membership and union participation.

Nautilus officers admitted that generating activism was difficult, largely due to physical factors and the length of time members spend off-shore. Activity and participation in specific locations where issues were emerging were, however, starting to become apparent. Industrial Officer, James, offered the example where members at Thames Clipper<sup>50</sup>, in late 2009/early 2010 started to organise and take action to increase membership, leading Nautilus officers to believe that self-organisation and increased levels of activism were not necessarily anathema to members.

Prospect officers admitted that there is 'enthusiasm' among its membership, but this has to date failed to translate into full-blown activism. It was frustrating for some officers who were witnessing their representatives, in many cases, operating competently and dealing articulately with company-level negotiations, assisted by generous facility-time agreements with their employers, and yet failing to garner this motivation and direct it in a more active way.

Prospect carries out a survey of its members every two years with a view to obtaining feedback about the union and how it communicates, inviting suggestions on areas in which it could improve, etc. National Secretary, Glenda, explained that while the union is 'quite interactive' with its membership and has successfully attracted more women, black and minority ethnic (BME) and young people:

'what we're finding difficult is the transition from recruiting to getting them active. People are quite happy to be engaged but they also want to do their professional jobs...so they're not interested in getting actively engaged and taking responsibility, because it detracts from their professional work.' [Interview: Glenda, 19/04/10]

According to Prospect's 2010 membership survey, however, participation in the union was relatively high: 42 per cent said they had taken part in a union event in the last year, over a third had attended a workplace event and five per cent attended a union learning event. Core bargaining issues were found to be of most concern to members, closely followed by equalities and health and safety issues. Very few members disagreed with the union's priorities (83 per cent in agreement, compared to twelve per cent who disagreed). These figures would suggest that Prospect is successful in delivering its pledge to commit; 'to ensuring an employment relationship based on efficiency, equity and voice' (Prospect Membership Survey, 2010).

TSSA Senior Regional Organiser, Elaine, identified with this lack of reciprocity:

'the message of 'join and we'll protect you' needs to be 'join and we'll protect each other', but this won't happen overnight.' [Interview: Elaine, 12/02/10]

Activism among managerial-grade workers in the TSSA is similarly low, although there are signs that managerial representatives within the organisation are beginning to demonstrate a certain enthusiasm, for example, in education, where these workers' only frustration appeared to be a lack of persistence on the part of the union to pursue improved arrangements with employers in order to secure release to attend courses. Since the vote in favour of industrial action over pay in 2006, Network Rail managers have been involved in a successful campaign to remove the controversial and arbitrary 'forced ranking' pay award system and are showing signs of becoming more amenable to balloting over proposed changes to pay, terms and conditions. So it would appear that managers *are* organising around issues, but that these issues remain central to pay. This reinforces Jenkins and Sherman's reference to the effects of 'erosion of the reward' (1979: 38) whereby status-focused managers collectivise over

shared fear of redundancy, down-grading of their jobs and devaluation of their skill-set. This would certainly appear to be the case at Network Rail.

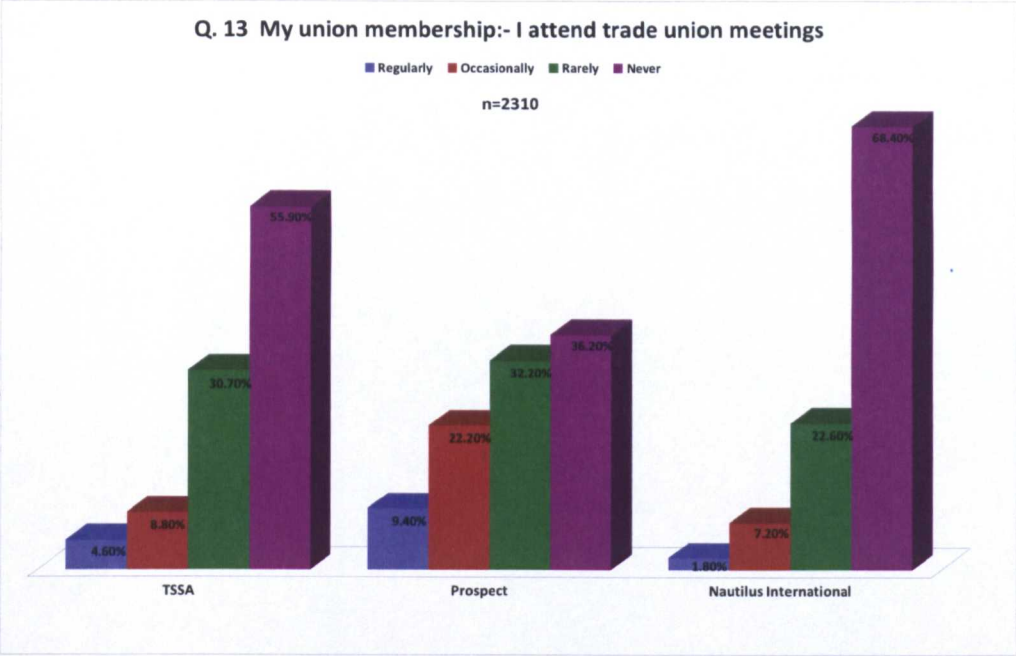
It may be possible to suggest that more work needs to be done to close the gap between membership and participation. The extent to which this reluctance towards participation is a result of lack of political education in union training within the three unions is unclear. This attitude may however, be a consequence, albeit indirect, of the way in which the unions 'sell' or 'pitch' themselves, although it is evident that they are all involved in initiatives to address levels of membership participation.

In a study of union renewal strategies and worker participation, Byford (2010) found that where the partnership model was prevalent in workplaces, 71 per cent of respondents agreed that they did not participate in their union at all, with 15 per cent admitting that they 'participate sometimes on a random basis', and 10 per cent only participating 'when there are important issues at work'. These figures may suggest that some managerial and professional workers trust partnership sufficiently as to negate or preclude their need to become 'involved' in union activity. Some union officers involved in this research agreed that while managerial or professional workers are happy to *join* the union, they may be unwilling to become active participants. Therefore, while they are union *members*, they are not necessarily union *activists*. Byford's study further revealed that 'the belief in trade union principles' was also three times higher in organising and social unionism case studies than in the partnership environment, which would further support claims by officers that some managerial and professional workers, while not necessarily rejecting the aims and objectives of their union, nonetheless lack the impetus to participate in that union's undertakings.

In order to analyse the characteristics of the unionised manager and professional, two questions were posed in the survey questionnaire with a view to eliciting members' views about union participation. Graph 4.7 on the following page shows that the majority of members surveyed either rarely or never attends union meetings.



Graph 4.7



Based on aggregated never and rarely figures, this constituted 91 per cent of Nautilus members, 86 per cent of TSSA members and 69 per cent of Prospect members. Union officers offered various explanations for this inactivity. Carl, Organiser at Prospect, explained that due to the sectoral composition of branches within Prospect, union meetings are increasingly taking place in a new format. They are more likely to take place electronically as opposed to the more traditional format of face-to-face ‘in person’ meetings. Carl also referred to the escalating number of time constraints imposed on managerial and professional members, which, in addition to geographical and logistical differences, meant that e-meetings were increasingly preferential among this particular group of workers. National Organiser Glenda added:

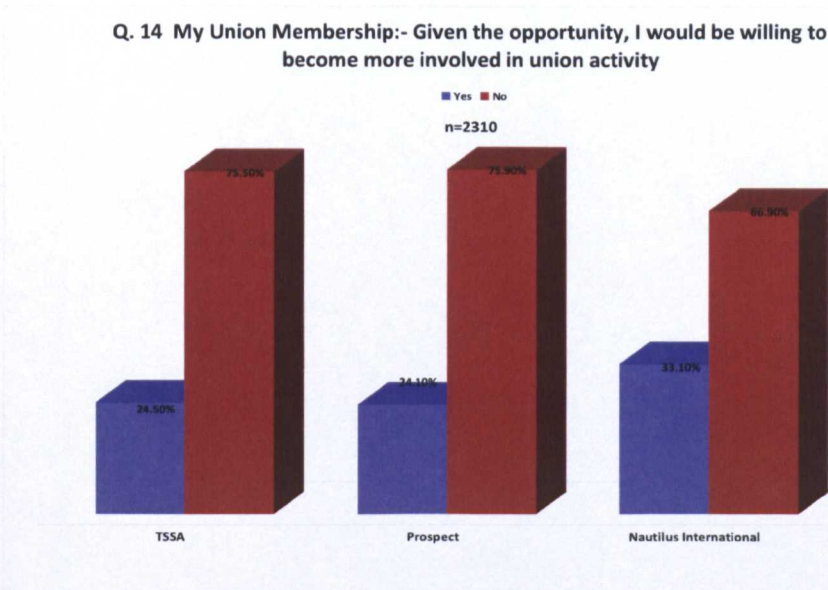
‘the traditional meeting in the pub in the evening just doesn’t engage people, especially young members, they want to be on Twitter or Facebook, this is how people live.’ [Interview: Glenda, 19/04/10]

Evidence supporting the effectiveness of these methods were, however, not available as part of this research.

This ‘silent membership’ element was prevalent among managers and professionals whose ‘day job’ took unconditional precedence over union activity, which was not seen as the managerial or professional worker’s ‘job’. This mindset seemed to demonstrate many of these workers’ prosaic approach to union participation and may

be further evidenced by the number of members (see graph 4.8 below), who were not, given the opportunity, willing to become more involved in union activity—a compelling 76 per cent of Prospect, 75 per cent of TSSA and 67 per cent of Nautilus survey respondents declared their unwillingness to involve themselves in the activities of their union.

Graph 4.8



Members from all three unions were often quite candid in explaining the lack of participation in their union. Some expressed lack of interest, citing the union’s deviation from what they saw as ‘core’ workplace issues to focusing extensively on global issues, or campaigns, which members felt were significantly less relevant to their membership. Initiatives leading up to the national ‘day of action’ to defend public sector pensions against major government reforms that took place on 30 November 2011 were referred to as an example of a union monopolising time, which some members felt, despite in many cases agreeing with the aims and objective of the protest, should have been committed to what they considered to be more pressing issues, such as imminent headcount reductions, proposed redundancies and reorganisations. TSSA Health and Safety Representative and Risk Specialist, Marilyn, represented a typical view when she said:

‘There needs to be less activism and more focus on core job protection issues. It’s unfortunate, but honest, to say people are less motivated by abuses to trade union reps in South American manufacturing plants than the threat to their own jobs. Activism is a “nice to have” outside of the



day job, but certainly won't encourage members to get involved.'  
[Interview: Marilyn, 23/11/11]

Nautilus member and Master on board a vessel that provides marine transportation services to the energy industry, Steven, reiterated this aspect:

'I believe the role the union takes at present is balanced and appropriate but they need to understand better that although they do good work for international standards for seafarers, that isn't always what the membership sees as the priority. Fighting for the rights of the global seafarer's all very well but they need to consider the needs of their fee-paying members first and foremost...they can't afford to lose sight of that.' [Interview: Steven, 11/02/12]

Issues that affected the *individual worker* were deemed, for the most part, to be of paramount importance, and ought not to be considered secondary to collective action. This attitudinal trend is replicated in managerial and professional members' views on industrial action more generally, which will be explored in greater depth in chapter six.

In spite of reasons provided for non-participation, however, approximately a quarter of TSSA and Prospect members and a third of Nautilus members surveyed did in fact express an interest in becoming more involved in their union. Few of the respondents interviewed, however, were forthcoming about ways in which they could increase or improve this participation. That said, one TSSA member and rail industry manager, stated:

'I said on the questionnaire I'd be more willing to get involved in union work. I'd like to help in becoming involved in developing strategies around sustaining the concept of becoming a union member. Activists are not currently activists in *thinking*. They tend to do a lot of *reviewing*, but not a lot of actual *thinking*. The union needs to become better at selling itself, marketing, building relationships...I'd be happy to be more involved in that.' [Interview: Anthony, 25/10/1]

The ways in which members felt they would be willing to become more engaged in union activity would seem, therefore, to be open to a significant amount of interpretation. Responses received from members on this issue support Heery and Kelly's (1994) argument that the mode of 'managerial unionism'—characterised by the 'servicing relationship'—would appear to be a concept that is actively endorsed by many managerial and professional members who have participated in this research. As 'consumers' of a service, these members largely tended to reject active



participation in a mutually co-operative environment ('participative unionism'), favouring instead a concentrated approach that focused almost exclusively on protection of their jobs, pay and conditions.

In considering managerial and professional approaches to union participation, this chapter considers the link—perceived and actual—between the term 'activism' and the word 'militant'. The word 'activist', according to one TSSA full-time officer interviewed, is quite often used in a derogatory sense and is intrinsically linked with the person who 'marches up and down the street with a placard or who chains themselves to the railings, which is the last sort of thing a manager or professional would want to be doing'. The officer likened definition of the term 'activist' to that of the term 'Blue Labour', which he felt was designed to appeal to people who do not on the one hand want to be disjointed from the process of collective action, but at the same time do not wish to be associated with the 'hard' elements of activism and what it means to be an 'activist'. He summed up managerial and professional workers' lack of activism thus:

'the trade union movement has for decades expected that if you march down the street with a placard then everyone will join you, everyone will be behind you. But that's just not the case now, is it? A significant amount of members have said they'd like to become more involved [in union activity] but their reservations over politics, activism—that is, *traditional* activism—and what involvement actually *means*, makes us question how we can give people the opportunity to be active outside of the perception of what the union is all about. We have a responsibility to react and respond to this reality and we need to think more carefully about what involvement means to these workers—is it marching behind a placard, is it going to a meeting or is it about being prepared to contribute in some other way? Because if it's the latter, then we ought to be capitalising on that and not just looking behind the placard where there are only a hundred people standing there.' [Interview: Joel, 09/11/11]

The methods by which these unions need to capture potential activism among managerial and professional workers could therefore be deemed to be crucial to their assimilation into wider trade union activity.

### **Factors that undermine individualism and create a foundation for sub-collectivism**

The next part of this chapter will consider the factors that subvert individualism, and will address the issues that are starting to underpin managerial and professional

workers' occupation of a collective position. Several issues have been instrumental in creating conflict and instability in an area that has been considered in the past to be the exclusive domain of the individualised worker—job security (Lockwood, 1989). This section will consider this in addition to issues surrounding pay, workplace reorganisation and restructure, and will discuss the narrowing of the gap between threats posed to manual workers and those now being faced by managerial and professional workers; a development that this thesis terms 'equalisation of threat'.

### **Equalisation of threat—closer proximity to vulnerability**

From interviews with managerial and professional members of the three case-study unions, it emerged that some workers felt that the threats facing managerial and professional workers were beginning to mirror those faced by manual or classified-grade workers. Nautilus Industrial officers Iain and James outlined the fear experienced by managers as a result of New Labour-perpetuated Thatcherist employment law policy, which it was felt, exposed managers to an increased element of threat, risk and liability (issues surrounding litigation and criminalisation will be discussed in chapter five). Iain remarked:

'neo-liberalism has been allowed to continue and while there's been an increase in managerial jobs, managers themselves are more vulnerable now.' [Interview: Iain, 11/03/10]

Managers' weak legislative position, according to Nautilus officers, has also been exacerbated by the shift from personnel to human resource management (HRM), where it was claimed that unions had witnessed:

'a move away from dealing with the 'person' towards adopting a more policy-based social approach.' [Interview: Iain, 11/03/10]

Many managerial and professional workers interviewed as part of this research made reference to the closer alignment of threats faced by manual or blue-collar workers with those of managerial and professional workers. This process of equalisation of threat, often prompted by the impact and effects of reorganisation and job insecurity was found to have a tangible effect on unionisation. Prospect member, Donald, reinforced motivation:

'There'd been so many concerns over the last few years about rationalisation and job security started to be an issue. Prior to joining [the union], I was much more satisfied all round really. The job was more secure. As far as I was concerned there was very much an "I'm

alright Jack” attitude on my part, but everything seemed OK from my point of view so I never felt the need to join the union. That’s changed now.’ [Interview: Donald, 15/11/11]

In one interview, Sarah, TSSA member and Business manager at Network Rail, explained what she saw as a narrowing of the gap between classified-grade and managerial workers, which has had the effect of some managers finding themselves exposed to a vulnerability that they have hitherto been able to avoid:

‘In the white-collar environment, there are no cohesive groups, you don’t have solidarity with people who do the same job, but you *are* experiencing the same *problems*. There used to be a lot of ‘oh, we don’t need a union, we’re management, we’re sacred, we’re powerful because we’re management’, whereas now you know that you’re *not*, because *everybody’s* fair game.’ [Interview: Sarah, 27/10/11]

New Prospect member, Lynn, echoed this:

‘Mine used to be a job for life, but not any more. That mentality’s gone and the new blood that’s coming in have never known or had that security. There’s so much more risk associated with *all* jobs now, *as well as* white-collar or specialist skilled jobs. We’re *all* more at risk now.’ [Interview: Lynn, 07/11/11]

Another Prospect member reinforced the threat that many managers and professional workers feel is undermining their role:

‘I’ve felt very marginalised at times. I’m very specialised in what I do and some people think that’s great, to be an individual, doing something special, they think it makes you indispensable. To me, I think it makes you vulnerable.’ [Interview: Martin, 18/10/11]

Similar fears were felt to be escalating by some professionals interviewed at Nautilus.

Davey, Master on board a vessel supplying marine services, stated:

With more focus on shipping and the persecution of crews around the world for breaches of regulations, unions are seen more as a ‘protector’ for seamen and their rights than ever before. Shipping companies are sourcing their crews from many different nationalities based mainly on the financial benefits for the company. Seamen are becoming afraid for the security of their jobs and are looking for support.’ [Interview: Davey, 14/01/12]

Some members expressed sentiments that could be interpreted as overcoming individualism, in the sense that isolation and atomisation are factors that have the potential to result in collective behaviour. TSSA member and manager at TfL, Sean,

made the point that it was important for unions to consider how best to accommodate an isolated section of its membership:

‘It’s probably anathema to trade unions, who endorse mixing the sweat and having a collegiate view, but the workplace can be an isolated environment for managers, who are atomised. For some, that’s Orwellian, but if it fits the need, then unions needs to consider it.’  
[Interview: Sean, 15/09/10]

Statements like Sean’s arguably suggest that unions have a ready-made opportunity to make gains in what remains the relatively uncharted area of managerial and professional collectivism.

The rail industry represents an example of an area in which managerial and professional workers feel that they are facing threats to their occupational ‘uniqueness’. Many individuals are deployed on short-term and highly specialised projects, such as the sub-surface upgrade programme; a three-year, multi-million pound contract awarded to EDF Energy for the second stage of the London Underground Sub-Surface Railway (SSR) Power Upgrade. Workers on this project will be expected to be specialists in the fields of design, construction and commissioning of substation electrification work, tunnel cabling and protection systems, and while these are very specialised roles, they are nonetheless time-bound, which culminates in similar fears of redundancy, or erosion of terms and conditions being aroused in the workers who undertake this type of work.

The uniqueness of certain jobs, according to some managerial and professional workers, placed them in a much higher risk category than if they performed standardised or generic roles. For example, Marilyn, a Risk Specialist explained that her job is:

‘kind of unique, in that as a [specific job title omitted] I can’t work anywhere else—this obviously makes me more inclined to have union membership. Knowing that I have no other employer puts me at a distinct disadvantage.’ [Interview: Marilyn, 23/11/11]

New Prospect member and Ornithologist at FERA, Robin, reinforced this:

‘I work on a range of projects that require individual skills, a sort of suite of skills that no-one else has. It’s the sort of work where people develop a bit of a niche, you develop your skills to make yourself unique almost...you’d think that unique skill-set would protect you, but it can make you less flexible and if you don’t have a wide range of skills then

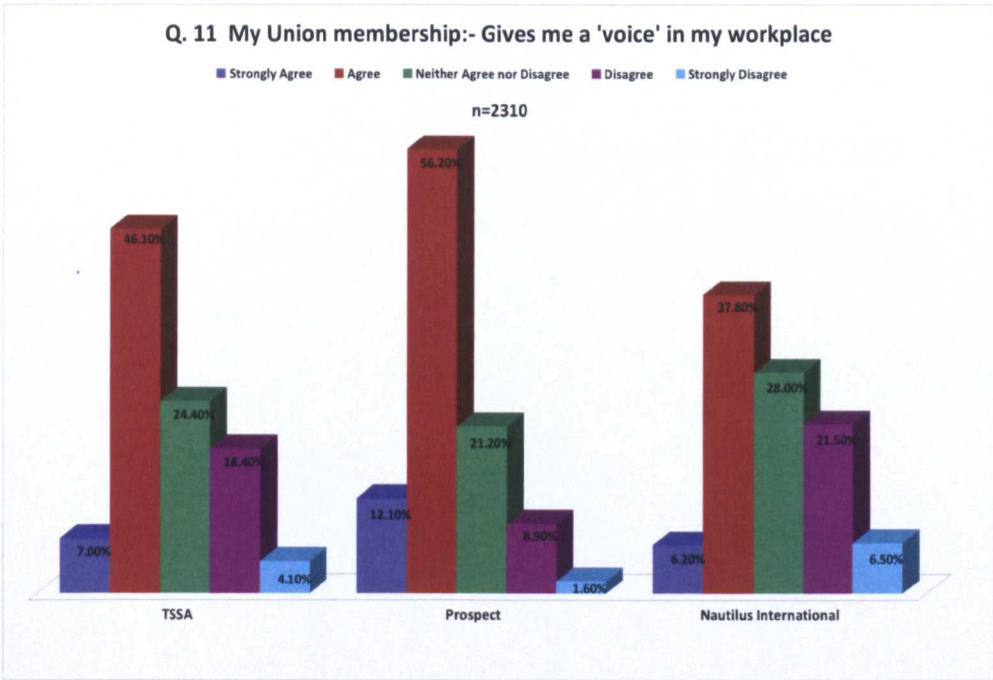
you could be in trouble, especially with market conditions as they are at the moment, so it works both ways.’ [Interview: Robin, 28/11/11]

Some Nautilus members explained exposure to threat in relation to the range of potential offshore situations that may arise. Given the lack of templated conditions at sea, the fact that no two seafaring passages are identical, and the range of factors that affect the seafaring industry at any one given time, it is perhaps therefore unsurprising that members feel a heightened need to prepare themselves fastidiously in order to guard against the complex plethora of risks, hazards and liabilities which present themselves to every captain of every vessel on every seafaring mission. Nautilus member and Master, Davey, explained that:

‘once a vessel leaves port, she’s basically on her own with regards to the elements (weather), any medical incidents, fire, ingress of water, which can all arise or be encountered during passage. Masters have overall responsibility for that vessel and all aspects of its day-to-day running: food, fuel, spares, stores, budgeting, ordering, loading and unloading of cargo, security drills, crew welfare, client and company relations, the list goes on...when things are going well, the Master’s respected by the shore-based management, but when the slightest problem arises, the Master’s blamed by that same shore-based management.’ [Interview: Davey, 14/01/12]

In addition to the issues surrounding increased vulnerability and acknowledgement of a closer identification by managerial and professional union members with their manual or classified-grade colleagues, this chapter aims to establish the extent to which a collective sense is in evidence among this group of workers. Therefore question 11 of the survey questionnaire (see graph 4.9 on the following page) was posed.

Graph 4.9



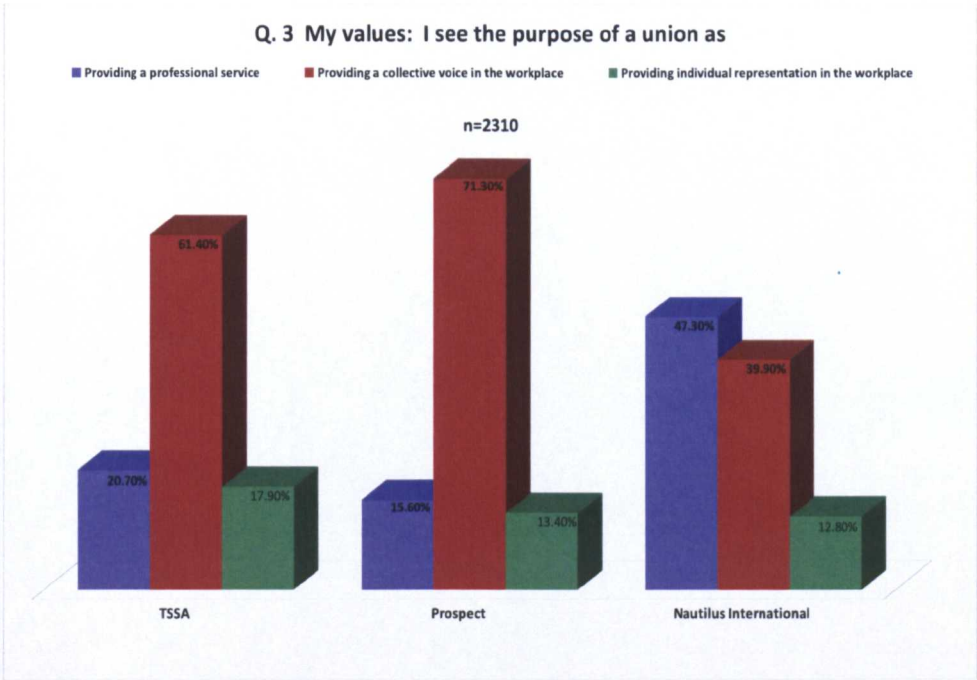
The aim of this question was to ascertain whether managerial and professional workers' felt that union membership provided them with a platform from which they could make collective representation on important issues like pay and job security.

In some interviews conducted with managerial and professional workers it transpired that 'voice' was interpreted as a channel via which they could communicate their thoughts, views and opinions. Based on aggregated agree and strongly agree ratings 68 per cent of Prospect, 53 per cent of TSSA and 44 per cent of Nautilus members agreed that union membership gave them a 'voice' in their workplace. These figures bemused some union officers, who pointed to an anomaly between some members' profession to some form of allegiance to collective spirit on the one hand, and clear signs of seeking to safeguard the individualised aspects of their jobs and roles on the other. Varied interpretations of the notion of collective 'voice', however, may go some way towards explaining this bemusement.

Survey question 3 sought to establish managerial and professional workers' views on the purpose of a union (see graph 4.10 on the following page) and discovered that 72 per cent of Prospect, 61 per cent of TSSA and 40 per cent of Nautilus members felt that the purpose of a union was to 'provide a collective voice in the workplace'.



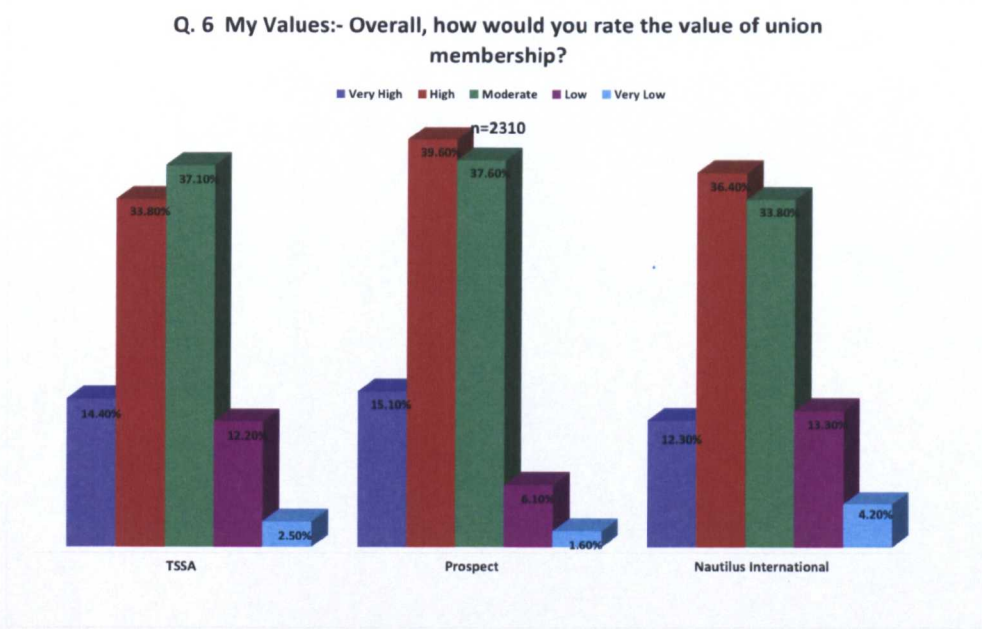
Graph 4.10



The main purpose, for Nautilus members, was provision of a professional service (47 per cent), which reflects the overwhelming value attached to the notion of servicing and the degree of protection afforded by the ‘certification’ element of Nautilus membership. Individual representation, however, figured least significantly for all respondents.

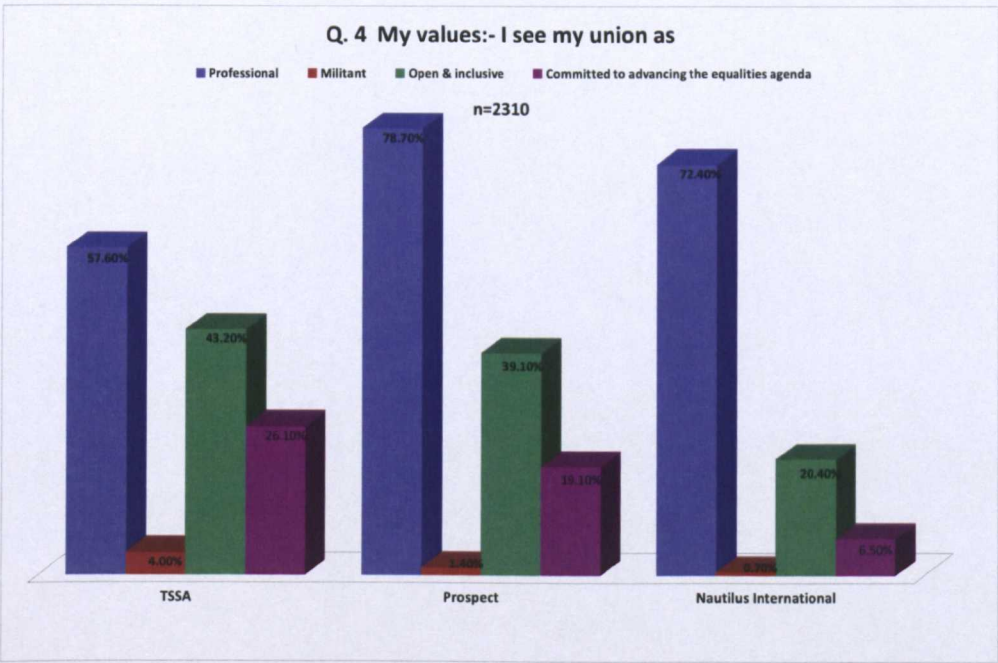
Given the differing levels of value attached by managerial and professional members of the three case-study unions to provision of a professional service, it is interesting to note survey questionnaire feedback that demonstrated that approximately half of the unions’ membership (that is half of the managerial-grade membership in Nautilus and TSSA) attached overall high importance to union membership (see graph 4.11 on the following page).

Graph 4.11



Responses to survey question 4 (see graph 4.12 below) sought to discover managerial and professional workers’ views about the priorities and commitments of their union.

Graph 4.12



Somewhat tellingly, the vast majority of respondents felt that their union was ‘professional’—78.5 per cent of Prospect, 73 per cent of Nautilus and 56 per cent of TSSA members—against just 4 per cent of TSSA, 1 per cent of Prospect and 0.7 per



cent of Nautilus members, who saw their union as ‘militant’. That said, 43 per cent of TSSA, 39 per cent of Prospect and 20 per cent of Nautilus members felt that their union was ‘open and inclusive’ and 26 per cent of TSSA, 19 per cent of Prospect and 6.5 per cent of Nautilus members felt that their union was ‘committed to advancing the equalities agenda’. Despite these figures being, especially in Nautilus’ case, well below the 50 per cent mark, this may nonetheless denote a growing acknowledgement by managerial and professional members that equalities is not a ‘stand-alone’, or optional element of trade unionism.

Although some members were positive about being part of a collective organisation, and interpreted its function as primarily one that existed to defend them against professional instability, some examples given by members to illustrate this could arguably represent forerunners to the ‘membership as insurance’ scenario. For example, Prospect member Lynn remarked:

‘My organisation used to be quite stable but now there’s a lot more at stake. There’s huge change everywhere now; NHS, public sector, teachers and so on, so being in a union does make you feel a part of a bigger framework. There’s a voice and you’re part of that voice.’ [Interview: Lynn, 07/11/11]

The disjoint between the relatively high numbers of survey questionnaire respondents who claimed that union membership did indeed provide them with a ‘voice’ in their workplace and views put forward by some interviewees in relation to what actually constitutes ‘voice’ is therefore arguably indicative of the wide scope attached to the notion of collectivism.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has identified the various components that appear to be shaping and influencing the direction of managerial and professional workers’ occupations. Taking into account a variety of contributory factors—pay, response to an increasing element of risk, and function and positioning within the labour market—the notion that these groups of workers are establishing their own ‘brand’ of union identity is ineluctable.

Trends that have been identified as part of this research would suggest that many managerial and professional workers, who have found themselves unexpectedly exposed to a work situation that no longer safeguards their uniqueness of character or

position, have begun to approach or revisit trade union membership from a different perspective. In relation to this, it is pertinent to consider Simpson's (1983, in Thurley and Wood) pronouncement, in his study of the increasing unionisation of managers, that it is important to recognise that managerial and professional workers are also individuals who experience workplace issues and unfairness. The way in which this reality manifests itself could, however, be significant in determining the extent to which this group of workers will attempt to avoid recourse to union support when faced with workplace problems or injustice. It nonetheless remains important to consider the human aspect of this situation, whereby managerial and professional workers do—by the virtue of the occupations they undertake—experience exposure to the same workplace unfairness that is encountered by their manual, or 'blue-collar', counterparts.

In considering the unique nature of many managerial and professional roles, it is also important to consider the value these workers place on collectivism. That they reject it outright is clearly inaccurate, yet there remains reluctance on the part of these members to immerse themselves in the collective agenda of their union. While there is acceptance of—and indeed approval for—the collective aspect of trade unionism, this group of workers is striving to defend and sustain its independence within that collective framework. This concept supports Waddington and Whitston's (1997: 524) assertion that 'the primacy of collective reasons for joining among these [managerial and professional] occupations indicates that the 'individualization' of aspects of the employment relationship does not necessarily mean abandonment of support for a collective agenda. Furthermore, a belief in trade unions is ranked more highly by managers and professionals than by other occupations.'

Comments like rail industry manager Sarah's earlier in this chapter—by no means unusual among members interviewed—raise two issues. Firstly, inherent in Sarah's opening comment is the suggestion that some managerial and professional workers' understanding of the term 'solidarity', differs somewhat to the definition more likely to be deployed by rank and file trade unionists (this attitude would also seem to support earlier comments made by union officers vis-à-vis indirect collectivisation). There would appear to be a simultaneous lack of acknowledgement that sharing and

experiencing similar problems does in fact form a base from which solidarity, to use its literal meaning—*agreement in aims or interests*—can be achieved.

Secondly, Jenkins and Sherman (1979: 38) described attitudes like Sarah's as the process whereby non-manual workers were 'jerked out of their previously entrenched psychological positions and forced to confront the reality that they, too, were employees, every bit as much as a worker on a production line'. That this scenario was identified and acknowledged over thirty years ago would seem to suggest that, in the context of membership trends in the three unions under study in this research, managerial and professional workers are experiencing a *renewed* fear over threats to jobs and conditions. Their response, either to unionise for the first time or to retain union membership, however, is, in some cases, manifesting itself in a different way.

The condition of the UK labour market has provoked an interesting response from some research participants drawn from this group of workers—a mixture of resignation and unity. Resignation to an economic situation that threatens both the status and stability of a once secure job, and unity achieved through an uncomfortable, perhaps awkward, and almost certainly unfamiliar, attempt to retaliate or defend a role or profession, not single-handedly, in an individualised manner, but in tandem with workers affected by similar threats, and in a unified and cohesive way.

Richard, TSSA member and manager at TfL described this scenario:

'There's all this political stuff about 'let's make the bankers pay', well it's a bit like King Canute trying to stop the tide coming in. It's going to happen and there's nothing [that] can be done about it. You can take the view that that's disgusting, that's disgraceful, but living in the real world—the party's over boys and girls. So, the trick is to manage it in terms of making sure people are treated right, treated fairly. People still don't seem to understand that everything's changed. Things are going to get tougher and people need to understand this. The government aren't going to back down, they can't afford to. Unions need to be slick, that—and being professional—is the way forward.' [Interview: Richard, 16/09/10]

It is key, therefore, to acknowledge that workplace change and contemporaneous reactions of a collective nature on the part of many managerial and professional workers has contributed to a reconfiguration, of sorts, of the 'white-collar unionism' defined and analysed by commentators such as Lockwood (1958) and Bain (1970). A widespread acknowledgement of workplace change and restructure appears to be

taking place among many managerial and professional workers across industries represented by all three unions under study. It was suggested by some key respondents that indivisible from this acknowledgement is a suspicion that their, in some cases highly specialised, occupations are not only being undermined, but are also being subjected to a process that may effectively render their managerial or professional expertise defunct.

Despite starting to collectivise over workplace *issues*, it would perhaps be irresponsible to assume the natural follow-through position adopted by these members would be to take collective *action* over these issues, which, to an extent, echoes Olson's (1965) theory on the behaviour of groups. The way in which these groups behave will form the basis from which the following chapter will explore the issues that cause managerial and professional workers of the case-study unions to collectivise.

## **Chapter five**

### **The factors that cause managerial and professional workers to cohere**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will address the factors that drive managerial and professional workers to unionise and collectivise. In addition to interrogating the more mainstream reasons people have provided for joining a union, for example; support in the event of a problem at work, or most people at their place of work are members, or for improved pay and conditions (Waddington and Whitston, 1997), this chapter considers the complexities added by the managerial and professional dimension. It also examines the extent to which the reasons for managerial and professional workers to join a union are distinctive. These include the potential or perceived conflict of interest between union membership and sustaining, and safeguarding, an effective and successful managerial or professional career and reputation.

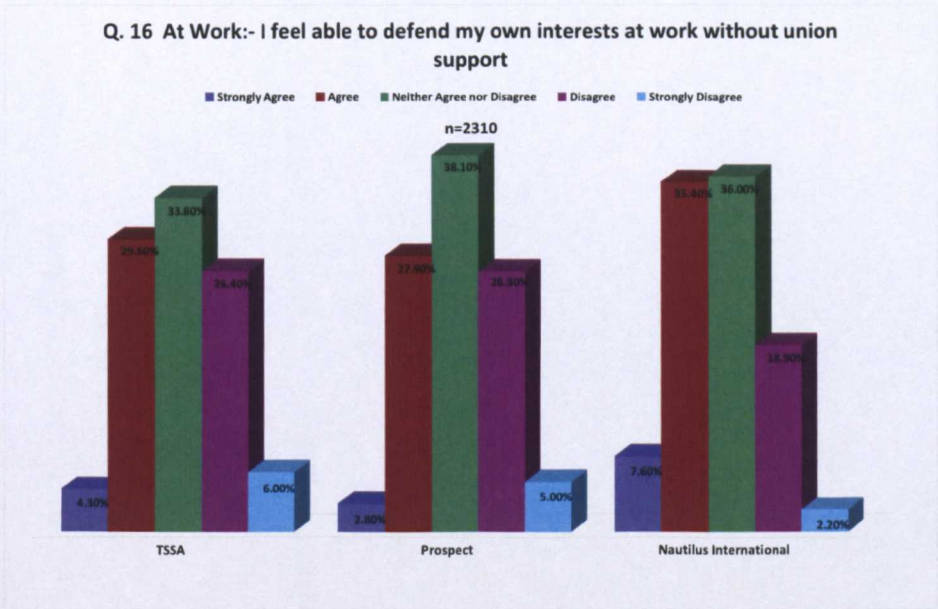
Where the manual worker's decision to unionise may arguably be an easier and more straightforward one to make, Cave (1994: 160) suggests that non-manual unions have had to find ways to attract members that focus less on traditional trade union ideology and more on a 'client-centred relationship'. Less aligned to what could be considered to be the more traditional trade union aims and objectives, many managerial and professional workers in the case-study unions nonetheless appeared, as outlined in chapter four, to be uniting over a shared-interest agenda whose components were symbolic of a culture of sub-collectivism. Having shown how changing employment relations are moving managerial and professional workers away from individualist calculations, this chapter will consider how these calculations are being constructed collectively. It was therefore important to establish the factors that underpin individual members' motivation to unionise. Many managerial and professional workers' motivations were, although perceptibly driven by an individualised need for professional 'services', also predicated by a collective notion of shared need for protection against an enhanced fear of workplace problems or issues that may place

their jobs in jeopardy. As stated in chapter four, labour market developments and concerns that have materialised over the past decade, and from a more concentrated perspective over the last few years, would appear to be producing cohesion among a substantial amount of managerial and professional workers in the case-study unions. This chapter will focus on data gathered from the survey questionnaire that aimed to elicit key factors that drive managerial and professional workers to become union members and establish the issues that are instrumental in that union membership. Before doing so, however, the chapter will first examine this group of workers' inclination to unionisation.

**The propensity for unionisation**

Responses to survey question 16 (see graph 5.1 below) raised the question as to why, given that 42 per cent of Nautilus, 34 per cent of TSSA and 31 per cent of Prospect members (based on aggregated agree and strongly agree ratings) felt able to conduct their working life without the need for union membership, did this group of workers even unionise at all?

**Graph 5.1**



Given the prevalence of the neither agree nor disagree rating (38 per cent of Prospect, 37 per cent of Nautilus and 34 per cent of TSSA members), it may be reasonable to deduce that managers and professionals do *not* actually consider the individuality of their roles as being sufficient to protect them in the event that they should experience

workplace unfairness. The relative even-weightedness of the agree and disagree ratings could be furthermore assumed to represent a degree of ambivalence when it comes to declaring individual ability to cater for ones' own needs in the workplace without union intervention, which in turn may suggest a collective commitment. Among some managers interviewed, handling workplace issues as an individual manager was considered essential to the way in which managers felt they should be viewed and treated in the workplace hierarchy. Linda, TSSA member and Project Manager at Amey Rail, remarked:

'people like to think they can resolve things on their own. As a manager, particularly, you'd expect to be able to do that really, wouldn't you? People look to you, as the manager, to be able to resolve issues they bring to you that they've been unable to resolve themselves, so it doesn't look good when that manager then has to go looking for help when something happens that they can't deal with. That would be undermining and [would] potentially create instability in relationships with people who report to you.' [Interview: Linda, 26/10/11]

A slightly different view manifested itself among some Prospect members interviewed, who highlighted the difference between managerial and professional workers in a corporate environment and those in civil service workstreams, where the relationship between the employer and the union was considered to be an instrumental factor in determining whether the union could provide effective representation to an individual worker. Prospect member and Defence Specialist in the MoD, Beth, explained that:

'the MoD has to dance to the Treasury's tune, so the impact of Prospect is limited anyway, the MoD knows the union doesn't have that much leverage and they don't always pay full respect to the spirit of things like the negotiation process, so relying on it [the union] to represent you as an individual at work isn't necessarily going to be effective.' [Interview: Beth, 09/12/11]

Prospect Organiser, Carl, confirmed this:

'in MoD, for instance, the employer is the government, and so employees are subject to the vagaries of defence policy. There's an obvious conflict of interest there.' [Interview: Carl, 07/11/11]

Consequently, some managers may feel it is preferable to try to support their own interests at work, but because they feel that their union may be unable to represent them satisfactorily, and not necessarily because they fear seeking union representation will make them appear weak or incapable in front of colleagues and staff. This

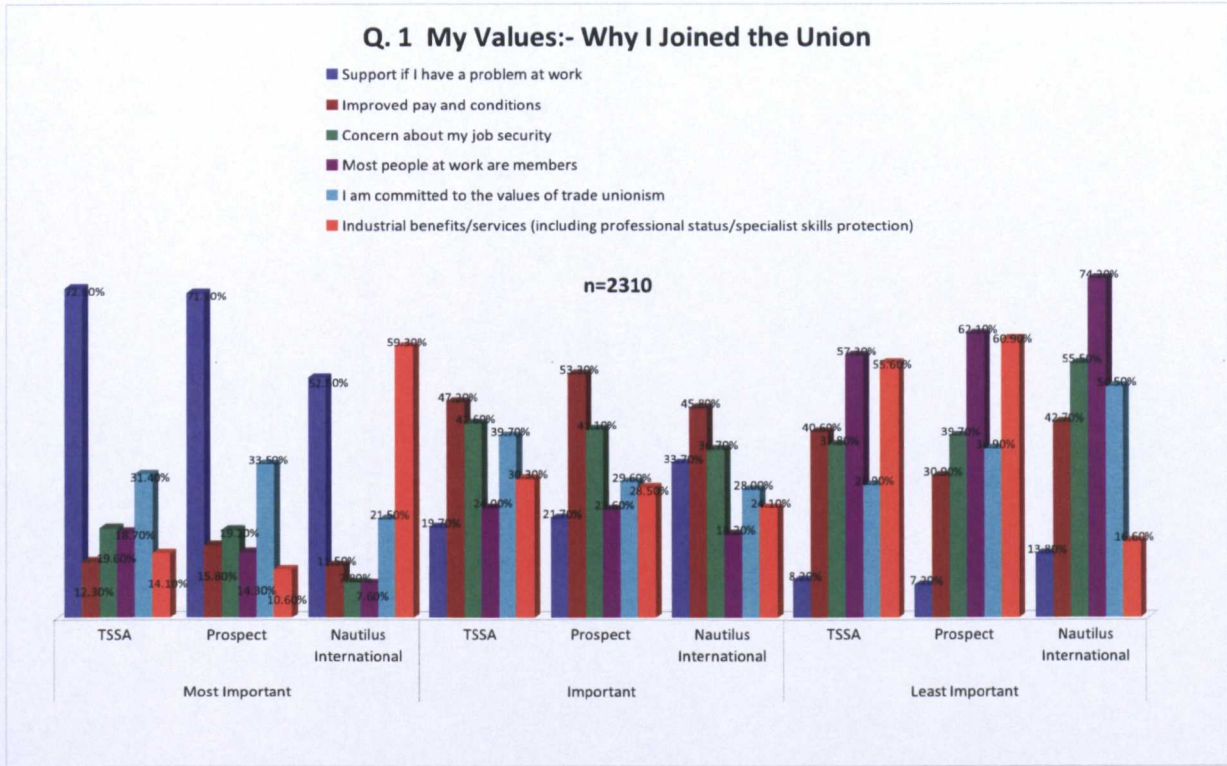


chapter will therefore examine the reasons for unionisation given by managerial and professional members of Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA.

The managerial and professional decision to unionise

The first question posed to members in the survey questionnaire (see graph 5.2 below) was designed with the intention of establishing members’ initial reasons for joining the union.

Graph 5.2



‘Support if I have a problem at work’ was the most significant factor for respondents from Prospect and TSSA—71 per cent of members from each union, and 52 per cent of Nautilus members, for whom ‘individual benefits/services—including professional status/specialist skills protection’ were cited as the most important reason for joining (59 per cent). ‘Improved pay and conditions’ also represented an important reason for members from all three unions—52 per cent of Prospect, 48 per cent of TSSA and 46 per cent of Nautilus members. Based on aggregated most important and important ratings, 71 per cent of TSSA, 69 per cent of Nautilus and 61 per cent of Prospect members cited improved pay and conditions as being an important factor in their decision to unionise.



Respondents discounted the suggestion that they would take up union membership because their colleagues or peers had done so. This was deemed least important by 73 per cent of Nautilus, 61.5 of Prospect and 60 per cent of TSSA members. It may therefore be argued that these figures contribute towards the reinforcement of a predominantly self-interest agenda, which is driving these groups of workers to seek protection in the form of union membership.

In an attempt to establish accurate reasons for this group of workers to unionise, three of the original nine union full-time officers interviewed as part of this research were re-interviewed after a two-year interval (one officer per union). This was undertaken in order not only to obtain officers' views and opinions on industry or union-specific developments that had taken place during that timeframe, but also to gauge their responses to outputs produced by the questionnaire survey and key respondent interview processes. During these interviews, it was claimed that there appeared to be a strong adherence to individualised *traits* and yet this seemed to be underpinned by a general respect for a collective *approach*, and also an unwitting acceptance by managers and professionals that they were in fact behaving collectively. One officer at the TSSA referred to this element of default collectivisation, stating that:

'There's a bit of a conflict between what they [managers and professionals] understand as collective items. It seems there are a lot of people who understand what trade unionism is all about, but they want the option to be selective. They want the individual benefits and they see things like pay as being individual too, because of PRP and personal contracts and so on. They view these things as being individual issues, yet they don't seem to realise that by taking this approach, they are in fact, collectivising.' [Interview: Joel, 09/11/11]

James, Industrial Officer at Nautilus, added:

'You ask them [senior-grade members] a direct question and you don't think there's any collectivism there, but when you scratch the surface, it's reassuring—and surprising—to see that's actually not the case.' [Interview: James, 14/01/11]

Carl, an Organiser at Prospect, reinforced both views, claiming that:

'The 'just-in-case' element of union membership, the perception of it as a service support provision for members, is quite individualistic, and yet there's a contrast with their views on the purpose of a union, that it's to provide a collective voice in the workplace.' [Interview: Carl, 07/11/11]

In all three cases, there was acknowledgement of an underlying contradiction between managerial and professional workers' views about union membership, in that its aims and objectives are categorically collective, and their own personal actions and behaviour, which are primarily individualistic. It was furthermore suggested that the ways in which these groups of workers express these individualised thoughts, needs and feelings are symptomatic of collective behaviour. This behaviour, however, is not manifested in what the rank-and-file trade unionist might deem to be standard, conventional, or generic.

While some union officers interviewed were pleasantly surprised at the data gathered for graph 5.2, some were more cynical. TSSA Senior Regional Organiser, Joel, explained his sense that some TSSA members, although in the process of acknowledging collective issues, persisted in expressing predominantly individualistic motivations that were characterised, in some instances, by a servicing mentality:

'There's a bit of a conflict between what they're [members] saying they know a trade union *is*, and what they actually want from it. Straight off, miles out in front, the main reason for joining TSSA is 'support if I have a problem at work'—so by far and away that's a very individualised response, yet there's a fairly even spread across the collective issues. Not necessarily committed to the values of trade unionism and not all that concerned about industrial benefits or professional status, that leaves the individual—I've joined the AA or the RAC—I want a service.' [Interview: Joel, 09/11/11]

Carl, Organiser at Prospect, however, expressed surprise that:

'quite a large amount of them [members] are looking at collectivism rather than individualism.' [Interview: Carl, 07/11/11]

Many managerial and professional workers interviewed placed a substantial amount of faith in the assumption that if they were to meet all their performance 'objectives' then all would be well; an attitude that supports Edwards' (2000: 149) suggestion that quite often, reliance is placed upon 'old' patterns of loyalty'. An increasing number of managerial and professional members in this study were beginning, however, to question the value and benefit attached to this 'loyalty'. Officers interviewed at the case-study unions, however, reported that companies and organisations are becoming less inclined to appraise a manager or professional worker on the basis of their productivity, contribution or work quality. Where previously many managerial and professional workers felt that 'doing a good job' would be sufficient to secure

immunity from workplace injustice, they were beginning to experience increasing discomfort, primarily as a result of arbitrary or disparate workplace practices, and were being forced to acknowledge the general feeling that no-one was safe. For example, union officers at TSSA partially attributed the upward trend in managerial-grade membership to the scale of reorganisations and associated threat of redundancy, coupled with a rapidly escalating fear factor. Senior Regional Organiser, Joel, explained that:

‘it only takes a couple of high profile cases of employees in fairly senior positions being visibly or demonstrably treated poorly to be sufficient to plant the seeds of doubt in other managers’ minds about the security of their own position.’ [Interview: Joel, 08/04/10]

Joel’s colleague, Elaine, supported this:

‘there’s an increasing recognition that it’s no longer good enough to be good at your job. It’s no longer good enough to be a good engineer, this won’t protect you from random unfairness...managers can’t look after their own interests at work any more in the way they used to.’ [Interview: Elaine, 12/02/10]

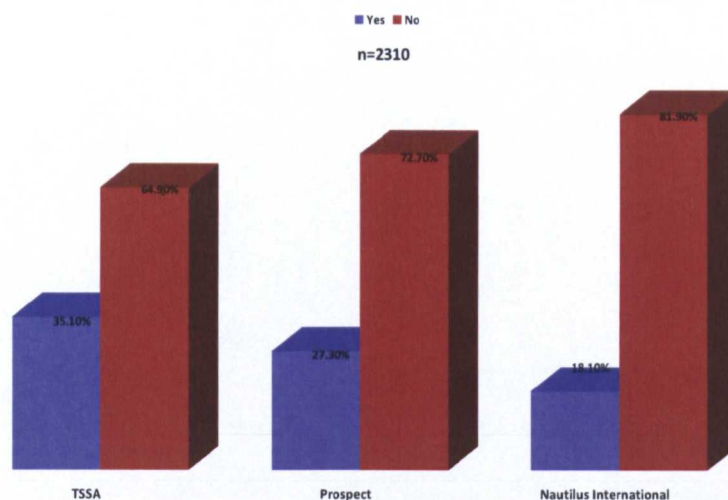
In the past, managerial and professional workers may not have considered union membership necessary in the event of having to defend themselves professionally. This not only challenges Bain’s (1970) contention that workers are less likely to join unions if their management disapproves of, or opposes them, but also goes some way to reinforcing the some of the contradictions that can be found among managerial and professional union members under study in this research.

### **Familial reasons for unionisation**

In order to determine whether managerial or professional workers had chosen to take up union membership for reasons connected to family history or tradition, question 12 was posed in the questionnaire survey distributed to members (see graph 5.3 on the following page).

Graph 5.3

Q. 12 My Union Membership:- I come from a union 'background'  
(e.g. my family advocates the benefits of union membership)



Responses illustrate that the highest number of members who considered themselves as coming from a union 'background' were members of the TSSA. Senior Regional Organiser, Joel, attributed this to a proportion of employees who represented the vestiges of 'old BR' (pre-privatised British Rail), which Joel described as:

'one of those industries where people sat on the trade union side and on the management side and talked about bringing on apprenticeships, and if you'd got any sons or nephews who fit the bill, then give us their names, that sort of thing, that's how it was.' [Interview: Joel, 09/11/11]

Many interviewees from the TSSA had either joined the union at the time of the closed shop or could remember colleagues who had. Some of these members responded to the questionnaire survey as part of this research and it is likely that many are among some of the last employees of what was once British Rail. Kevin, lifelong TSSA member and construction manager at Network Rail, explained:

'I didn't have any choice when I joined, it was closed shop. 1978. I didn't think about it at all. It was the first thing I was given to sign as I walked in the door, even before I got my medical.' [Interview: Kevin, 25/10/11]

Another Network Rail manager reiterated the historical family connection, citing her reason for joining the TSSA as being:

'a lot to do with historical background. My father was prominent in Aslef; he was a convenor, a branch secretary, so I've got a lot of background on that side of it. My mother as well.' [Interview: Sarah, 27/10/11]

Similarly, many industries that were formerly represented by the fore-running unions to Prospect may also still have members who joined at the time of the closed shop, yet none of the members interviewed declared or made reference to this.

### **‘Insurance’, protection at work and representation**

Feedback from key respondent interviews not only supported evidence of fear over potential job loss or threats to job security, but also highlighted some members’ resentment, or sense of injustice, in respect of what they deemed to be unfair working practices in their line management structures. The ways in which this resentment manifests itself arguably, and perhaps inevitably, leads us to the debate around union membership in an ‘insurance’ capacity. Many members interviewed claimed that this was the staple motivation for their membership, and which several members referred to outright as an ‘insurance policy’. Richard, TSSA member and Cost Reduction Manager at TfL, explained:

‘I graduated from university in 1993 in the last recession. I struggled to find a role, as many of my contemporaries did. I got a job with a large consortium of engineers...I had various promises made to me when I entered employment and the organisation didn’t live up to any of them in terms of pay and various other things and I felt I was being poorly treated, therefore when I moved on into a public sector role, I was determined to join a union, with the aim of getting basic insurance, and I regard my union membership basically as an insurance policy.’  
[Interview: Richard, 16/09/10]

In an interview conducted as part of research predating this thesis<sup>51</sup>, the then Employment Relations Minister, Pat McFadden, corroborated this quest for some form of workplace insurance, stating that:

‘Managers still need insurance, and even more so in a recession.’  
[Interview: Pat McFadden, 25/06/09]

Statements such as these would suggest that the notion of ‘insurance’, for many managerial and professional workers, is a crucial element of union membership, and one which openly underpins their decision to join a union. TSSA member and engineering manager at Network Rail, Bill, was forthright about this aspect:

‘Managers join unions because of enlightened self-interest; it’s certainly not a Billy Bragg ‘power in the union’ element. Managers are quite isolated and looking to the union for comfort, to know they’re not alone, and as a fall-back position. Managers’ perceptions are changing. Recent reorganisations [in Network Rail] make managers look to the unions because they’ve likely had first hand experience of unfair treatment<sup>52</sup>.

Union membership is a good, cheap insurance policy—the best you’ll get—against unfair treatment in the workplace.’ [Interview: Bill, 15/07/10]

The insurance aspect of union membership is also, according to some officers from the three unions, a factor which has tenaciously hampered attempts by union full-time staff to instil into members the traditional values and ideology of trade unionism and the labour movement. It was further recognised by some officers that the popularity of insurance as a motivator to union membership occurred as a result of the size and nature of the union. In Nautilus for example, Industrial Officer James explained:

‘If you have a union full of politically-minded, politically-aware individuals, then its going to be small in nature. You’re only going to have a mass movement if you encompass the whole range. That’s the battle we face. As a socialist, it’s a source of continual dismay, how little political consciousness there is in our union, and unions in general.’ [Interview: James, 14/11/11]

Undeterred by some Nautilus members’ apparent lack of politically-motivated desire to collectivise, however, James recognised that there appeared to be some acknowledgement, albeit relatively small-scale, that some managerial and professional workers were seeking insurance for different reasons than had perhaps been sought previously, and were using different methods by which to secure it. This factor may also contribute towards a shift away from the individualistic nature of their union membership, and towards a more collective approach. James felt that the ways in which unions respond to this development is crucial, believing that an opportunity exists for unions to reinforce collectivism without discouraging members, or compromising the way in which they address the needs of members:

‘While you could argue that they’re [members] looking for an insurance benefit rather than a collective one, we can still get our message across in the way in which we provide support to members if they have a grievance, health and safety or contractual issue.’ [Interview: James, 14/11/11]

The challenge remains, however, to successfully integrate this approach into the recruitment of new members. Presently, and according to some young members interviewed, imminent diminishing of insurance as a key priority in union membership seems unlikely. Nautilus member, Aaron, left cadet school four years ago and is in his first job as a Deck Officer (non-managerial grade) for a fuel

transportation company. Aaron joined Nautilus immediately upon entry into full-time employment, not just because 'my mum and dad told me to', but because:

'it's the insurance you get, the ticket protection, not to mention the discounts you can get outside the job—cheap car insurance, things like that. The union's newspaper lists these benefits and they're an incentive. As well as the individual and legal protection you can get if an issue comes up where you need it. There are pay talks coming up and that's an example of where you might need it [the union]' [Interview: Aaron, 23/01/12]

The interview with Aaron also revealed support for Nautilus' unique position as a union committed to the demands of an all-grades union that exclusively represents a highly specialist profession:

'It's highly specialised... [it is] good to know that the union's dedicated, that it just caters for people in our profession. Even in the lower grades, you're looking to progress and need to know that the union supports you and understands what you do. There's an expertise that needs to be understood.'

In relation to representation and insurance, it is relevant to consider the role played by legislative factors. One of the unions involved in this research—Nautilus—has a specific concern in this area, and yet it was evident among many managerial and professional members of Prospect and TSSA that an increasingly litigious working environment was producing a sense of nervousness.

### **The impact of legislative factors**

The dilution of employment rights in the Employment Act 2008 and the revised—and drastically reduced—provisions of the 2009 ACAS Code of Practice on Grievance and Discipline (Smith, 2009) are worrying factors for all three unions, as recourse to legal resolution of members' issues continues to diminish. The implementation of employment law in terms of handling grievances and disciplinaries also presents cause for concern for these unions. Logistics and geography, for example, are key factors in delivering effective member representation to Nautilus members. Where the union deals with UK *establishments*, the actual *employer* may be based in Singapore, or the employer may not be the actual owner or parent company. These are situations that create tension, instability and frustration for the union. The obfuscation, according to Nautilus union officers, of legislative boundaries in the seafaring

industry has meant that employment law has come to represent a significant factor in determining managers' stance on unions.

### Litigation and criminalisation

An issue for Nautilus is the criminalisation of the maritime profession. Despite the union's provision of assistance to members who are involved in maritime incidents that may culminate in professional and/or criminal sanctions, there remains an underlying fear that insufficient or diminishing legislative protection is being awarded to members in these industries. This does not just result, as it would in many industries, in erosion of terms and conditions, but in the erosion of the quality of life of members, and in some cases, threats *to* their life. Taking piracy as an example, concerns were voiced at Nautilus' UK Branch Conference in 2010, about the continuing high level of attacks off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden. Concerns were also raised about other 'hot-spots' which were identified as potentially vulnerable to attack by pirates. The Conference sought to raise the profile of security issues for members working in these high-risk areas by campaigning for the increased use of military resources to protect merchant shipping in vulnerable areas, giving seafarers the right not to sail, supporting measures to bring about the early release of seafarers held hostage, including ransom payments where appropriate, and supporting political measures to address the underlying causes of piracy in countries like Somalia. Political change therefore lends an element of precariousness to Nautilus' progress and advancement in what are potentially life-or-death situations. An element, perhaps, of trade-unionism, that has been hitherto unexplored, but one which, with the concomitant increase of criminalisation, has become prevalent.

Findings from the survey questionnaire would indicate that for the vast majority of Nautilus members, the notion of insurance is the most significant incentive to acquire union membership. Nautilus Industrial Officer, James, explained that maritime professionals, in an industry which, in certain sectors, is becoming increasingly criminalised ([www.nautilusint.org](http://www.nautilusint.org), 2010<sup>53</sup>), have an increasing need for insurance, or 'certification' (Nautilus' bespoke insurance policy and key element of unionisation):

'the higher the rank, the higher our membership density, so the more senior the grade, the more likely they are to unionise. Managers carry the can; they have more need of an insurance policy than anyone else.'



There's a high level of responsibility and more heads are on the line if things go wrong.' [Interview: James, 11/03/10]

All members interviewed corroborated this and used various examples to illustrate its necessity as such. Steven, a Master, summed up the need for legal protection and linked this, as did many of his colleagues, to the criminalisation of seafarers:

'There's increasing criminalisation of seafarers and masters in particular and as such I feel union membership's essential, mainly for ticket protection. It's important to know you have the legal backup there if you ever needed it.' [Interview: Steven, 11/02/12]

Without exception, all Nautilus members interviewed emphasised the threat that they felt was persistent and increasing in the seafaring profession, especially in the higher echelons of the industry. Nautilus member and Marine Engineer Officer, Damian, stated that union membership was essential:

'mainly due to the criminalisation of seafarers. Ask any officer in a senior rank why they pay their union dues and I would expect that most would say that legal representation in case of malpractice claims, accidents or loss of ticket, etc. would be the main factor.' [Interview: Damian, 03/02/12]

Nautilus member and Senior Dynamic Positioning Officer (SDPO), Simon, outlined the risk that many Nautilus members currently face:

'The role I perform on the ship exposes me to many more risks...I'm keeping a watch on a multi-million dollar rig, which could cause huge pollution problems if things go wrong. The legal aspect of this bothers me, but I know I can get help from Nautilus.' [Interview: Simon, 14/01/12]

While it is important to differentiate between the need for legal representation and the collectivisation of grievances, it is nonetheless important to acknowledge the difference between some members' quest for the 'comfort' provided by the knowledge that legal recourse is more or less instantly available and the priority afforded to individual position over collective behaviour.

### **The health and safety perspective**

Members interviewed at Prospect and the TSSA made reference not only to what they considered to be a tightening of Health and Safety legislation that may have ramifications in respect of their 'duty of care' obligations, but also to the Corporate

Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007, which some members felt exposed them to vastly increased risk. Many managerial and professional workers have developed concerns over the potential litigation involved in situations that may render them liable to personal prosecution. This is especially pertinent in the rail industry. Still sensitive in the aftermath of fatalities at several high profile safety incidents—Clapham, 1988, Ladbroke Grove, 1999, Hatfield, 2000, Potters Bar, 2002, and the lengthy inquiries that saw the enactment of corporate homicide legislation, industry managers appear to have realised that they are exposed, for the first time, to *personal* liability in the form of prosecution and potential imprisonment, in addition to having to manage the associated smear of public backlash over safety breaches that culminate in loss of life. Blame and accountability featured strongly in these members' minds, more so in view of recent proposals to make cuts in an already resource-challenged industry that may create an environment in which further serious safety breaches are allowed to occur, with more managers and industry specialists left to bear the brunt of the fall-out. One senior manager at Network Rail explained the link between this fear and union membership:

'the threat of personal prosecution of individuals is increasing. There are more and more pushes for personal prosecutions and union membership gives people a comfort blanket, because if they've got a situation where there was potential litigation against them after an accident or incident, the burden on an individual for legal representation can be fairly heavy. They're also really isolated at that stage and it becomes very difficult. If they're in a union, it gives them a degree of comfort. I've discussed this with others in the industry and they feel the same.' [Interview: Kevin, 25/10/11]

A senior manager involved in one of the aforementioned inquiries stated that union membership had never been so crucial and that the more senior the grade, the higher the risk of personal liability. The senior professionals in these particular instances would have been highly skilled specialists carrying out unique jobs in a very complex and demanding work environment. While the individualised nature of roles like these can be the element of a professional worker's role that produces the highest levels of remuneration, job satisfaction or kudos, it also exposes them to a corresponding element of risk, which may lead some managerial or professional workers to inflate the value of legal representation as a result of unrelenting exposure to risk. As one such manager explained:

'Legal support is a comforting factor in union membership. It allows me to be more adventurous in my dealings and influencing. In an

organisation where, if you're a bit outspoken and prepared to put your head above the parapet, then you need to know there's a bit of a safety net.' [Focus Group: Maurice, 19/05/11]

Many Prospect members who are organised in the Ministry of Defence (MoD), where there is a huge amount of change, explained the sense of liability and fear that existed among members as a result of the nature of the work that they do, especially in respect of health and safety issues. For example, fear and uncertainty was generated over the Haddon Cave<sup>54</sup> Inquest following the death of MoD personnel on a Nimrod aircraft, which crashed during a reconnaissance flight in Afghanistan in September 2006, and where the coroner in the inquest took the unusual step of naming individuals, some of whom were Prospect members. This inevitably heightened the sense of liability and personal vulnerability, which in turn, it was suggested, motivated MoD employees to join Prospect. Fear, not just collective fear over the role of government ministers, but also of the press, misrepresentation and potential repercussions were also key drivers in Prospect unionisation.

Some Nautilus members echoed views put forward by certain rail industry managers in relation to the element of personal liability attached to industry accidents and incidents. Steven, a Master, explained:

'These days there's nothing but pressure. They've taken away all the reasons people used to go to sea, like good money, seeing the world and so on, and peoples' perception of the industry is just what they see on TV about masters being huckled into courtrooms after their ship's gone aground or there's been a disaster, like Costa Concordia, Erica, Herald of Free Enterprise, Exxon Valdez, etc, etc.' [Interview: Steven, 11/02/12]

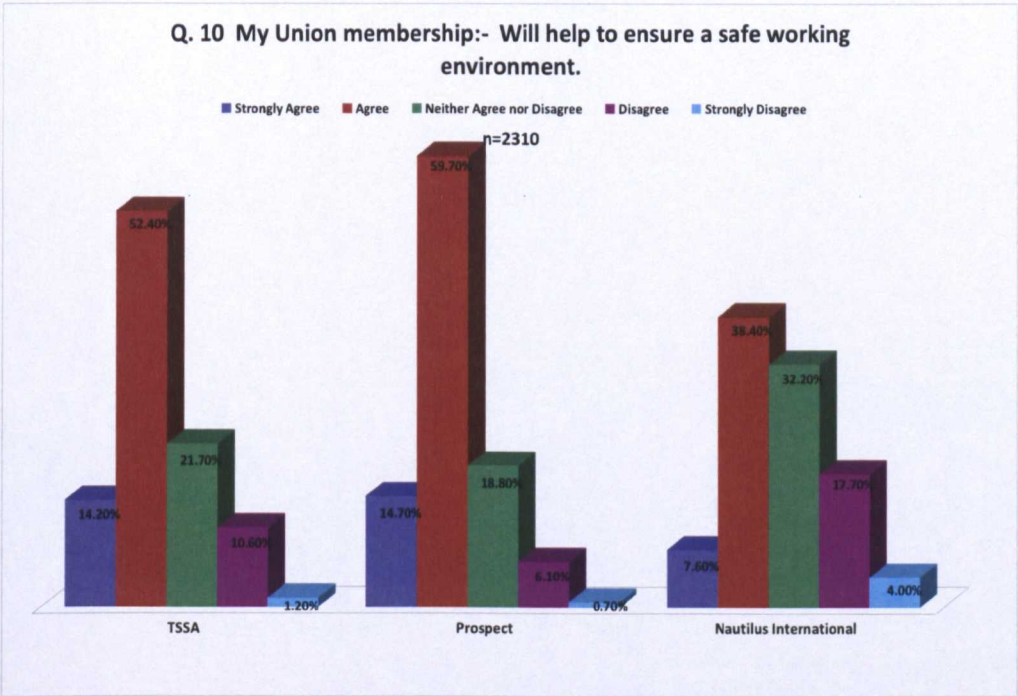
Saul, a Captain on board a vessel which focuses primarily on container transport to and from Africa, linked this fear of personal liability to cost issues:

'Companies are retrenching the more expensive (but well trained) staff for cheaper options to keep the business as competitive as possible. A continual trade-off is being made of costs—cheap labour—against the risk of incurring incidents by using them. Senior staff are retained in key positions to maintain standards, and this is putting an ever-increasing burden on captains, who are ultimately responsible for the actions of all those on board...captains are more likely to join Nautilus these days for the legal assistance they may need, as the risks are getting higher of an incident occurring due to the continual falling standards with the search for ever cheaper crewing. My role as captain is the only reason I'm a member. I wouldn't keep my membership if I wasn't sailing as Master. With the diminishing trust and loyalty felt onboard towards employers, I

think some feel they wouldn't have the company's support should an incident occur, and they could just as well be used as scapegoats to save costs too.' [Interview: Saul, 31/01/12]

Closely linked to the way in which Nautilus addresses concerns related to highly specific issues, such as piracy, is the extent to which health and safety affects the membership of the three unions under study in this research. Many respondents made reference to increasing fears over personal prosecution and health and safety litigation and question 10 of the survey questionnaire (see graph 5.4 below) was posed to members in order to establish the extent to which they felt their union membership could contribute to achieving or sustaining a safe working environment.

Graph 5.4



Based on aggregated agree and strongly agree ratings, 75 per cent of Prospect and 66 per cent of TSSA members felt that their union membership did in fact help to ensure a safe working environment. Nautilus members, however, were less sure (46 per cent). This surprised officers at Nautilus, who were unable to pinpoint a particular reason for their union's low rating, although it was suggested that members may have failed to make a connection between the impact of union membership on day-to-day aspects of health and safety, such as on-board operational safety, and the possible implications of litigation brought about as a result of health and safety breaches.

Prospect officers attributed the high rating among their respondents to the fact that a substantial proportion of their members work in the health and safety profession and are therefore conversant not only with its operation, but also with the dangers that non-compliance brings. Prospect members work as safety managers and engineers in various industries, including the Health and Safety Inspectorate (HSE). It was suggested that members in these particular occupations may therefore possess a more profound appreciation of the value added to health and safety initiatives by trade union input.

Some TSSA officers remarked that the area of health and safety was, in the rail industry, seen as less traditionally confrontational; in that health and safety legislation is well established and employers and unions both see themselves as having equal buy-in to its effective implementation in the workplace. Officers added that health and safety is seen as something that is more acceptable, in a representational capacity, for members to be involved in, mainly because the role is seen as less divisive or controversial than that of the industrial relations representative, or shop steward, whose role is seen as being more confrontational or aggressive.

The TUC estimated that in 2008<sup>55</sup>, there were approximately 150,000 appointed workplace health and safety representatives, who, according to Darlington (2010: 7) are ‘universally acknowledged as a key factor in making workplaces safer’. It is debatable as to whether such widespread consensus could be attached to the perhaps broader and more heterogeneous remit of the workplace industrial relations representative, or shop steward. If we are to acknowledge that workers are liable to health and safety prosecution regardless of their status either as a manager or a union member, or both (Jenkins and Sherman, 1979), then this could not only account for the ratings in this section of the research, but could also produce the effect of equalising potential hostility that may exist around health and safety bargaining procedures.

In an attempt to discover managerial and professional workers’ perception of any link between discrimination and career safeguarding or progression, the research focused on the possible consequences of discrimination.



**The potential for discrimination**

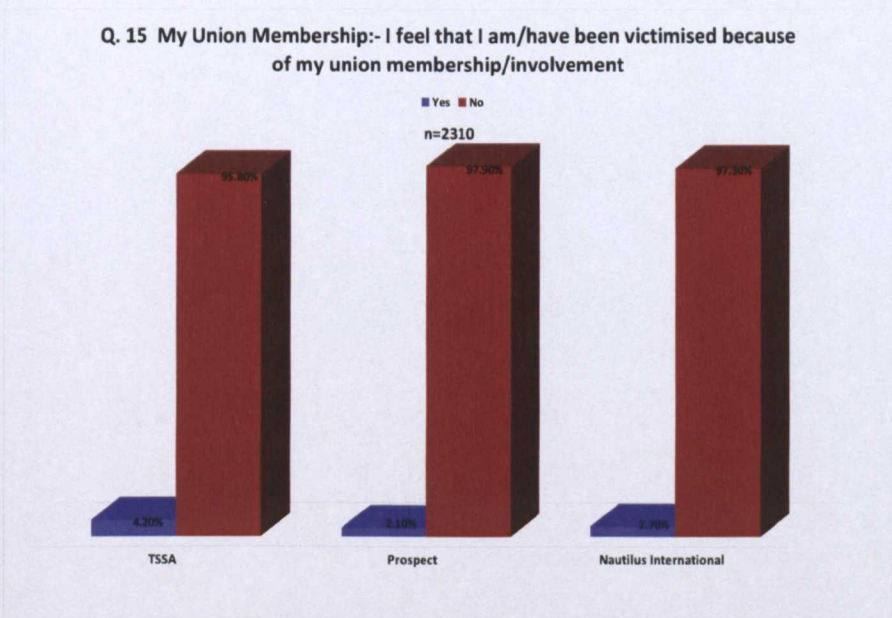
Discrimination was not an issue to which many managerial and professional members alluded; either in interviews or via the survey questionnaire. One manager, however, raised the issue in relation to her reasons for unionising. TSSA member and Project Manager at Amey Rail, Linda, explained that she became a union member:

‘because I was a woman in a male-dominated environment. I’ve been in the union since I started work 25 years ago and I felt I may need support somewhere along the line. It’s the sort of legal aspect of it [union membership] really. The fact you’ve got somebody there who would help you if you needed it. Fortunately I haven’t needed it, but it was a key reason for me, the fact that I was a woman. I thought I might get singled out, because at the time there was just me, working in an office with only men. That’s changed, there’s a lot more women in the industry now.’ [Interview: Linda, 26/10/11]

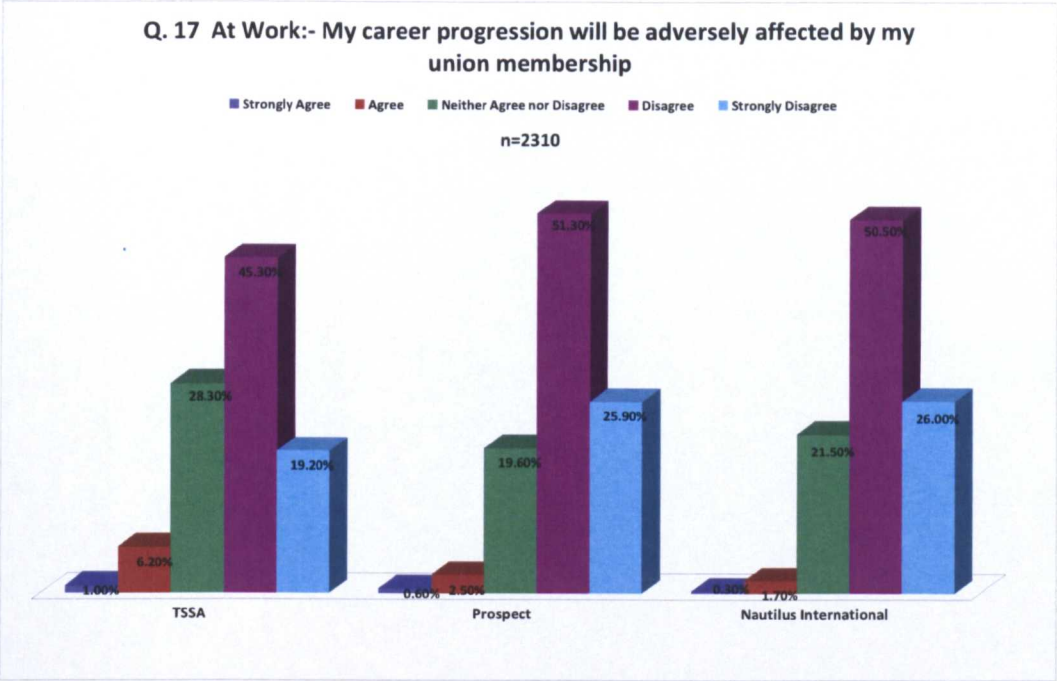
Discrimination issues tended to focus on performance-related criteria imposed by employers, whereby individual employees felt that they had been in some way ‘discriminated against’ in relation to their performance. This was explored primarily in relation to pay and instances of this are referred to in chapter four.

An attempt to further explore this element was made in questions 15 and 17 of the survey questionnaire (see graphs 5.5 and 5.6 below and on the following page); whereby members were asked if they felt that union membership was detrimental to their career progression.

**Graph 5.5**



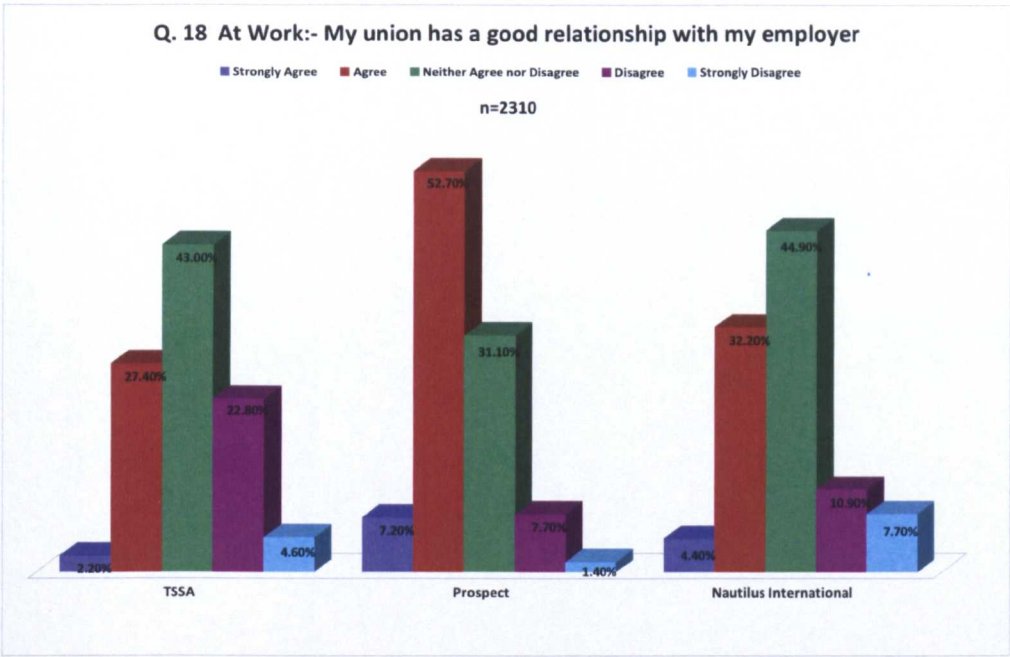
Graph 5.6



Based on aggregated disagree and strongly disagree ratings, 77 per cent of Nautilus and Prospect and 64 per cent of TSSA members did not feel that their career progression had been hampered by union membership. 28 per cent of TSSA, 21.5 per cent of Nautilus and 20 per cent of Prospect members were ambivalent about this issue, all of which could indicate evidence to support the suggestion that managerial and professional workers' do not consider their union membership, despite assertions by some commentators (Bain, 1970, for example) to the contrary, to be detrimental to their career development. In an attempt to establish managerial and professional workers' views about their union's relationship with their employer, however, responses to survey questionnaire number 18 (see graph 5.7 on the following page), which asked members if they felt that their union had a good relationship with their employer, were more surprising.



Graph 5.7



Although 60 per cent of Prospect members felt that their union had a good relationship with their employer (based on aggregated agree and strongly agree ratings), Nautilus and TSSA members were less positive (36 and 29 per cent respectively). Ambivalence in all three unions was, however, quite high (53 per cent of Prospect, 45 per cent of Nautilus and 43 per cent of TSSA members neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement), which may also suggest that there are some members who continue to regard collaborative union-employer practices with an element of cynicism and trepidation.

Evidence of this was noted among managerial members of the TSSA. During observation at a training course for new representatives at TSSA<sup>56</sup>, it was interesting to note the language used by the visiting speaker, a senior manager from Network Rail's Employee Relations Team, who had been invited to give his team's perspective on working with 'the unions'. The speaker referred more than once to his desire for union members of all grades to 'work in partnership with the business', to 'ensure there is a joint interest in the business', and closed his presentation by stating that the company was 'seeking to facilitate a cultural change in employee relations' and that he hoped members and representatives would 'work in the interests of the business as opposed to being self-serving'. The speaker's presentation produced a mixed reaction from the audience. It was met with indifference by the majority of classified-grade



representatives, yet interesting debate ensued among managerial-grade representatives, who suggested that a new form of employer-union communication could bear fruit, but would require buy-in from the union in order for it to work. Fostering good relations between unions and some companies is therefore to be considered an ongoing process, and one whose timeframes clearly cannot be stipulated.

Links between managerial and professional workers' fear of threat to their career and current conditions in the labour market suggest a certain inevitability in terms of drivers to unionisation. The next section of this chapter explores those links.

### **Recession as an impetus to unionisation**

The recessions of 2008/9 and 2012 will have had a deleterious impact not only on jobs, but also on the unionisation of workers. Managerial and professional membership growth has, according to officers from all three trade unions, been affected by recession. Nautilus cited the container sector (notably Maersk) and the off-shore oil sector as examples, where in 2009 the driving-down of consumption brought about by the price of oil meant that many companies have lost contracts and redundancies have been resultant. In the North Sea fewer oil fields are being opened, so employment in this region is declining, the dredging sector has declined and in the passenger market, ferry and cruise work has been substantially damaged, especially in the holiday market, which has had to discount quite dramatically in order to maintain a break-even position. However, in spite of this, there remains a 40 per cent world-wide ship officer shortage (in 2010). Nautilus members therefore find themselves in the position of being able to walk out of one job and straight into another, an employment trend that has not been witnessed in contemporary industrial relations since the boom manufacturing years. Senior managers especially, are able to do this because their skills remain in such demand. National Secretary, Peter, explained that a new German company, Hartmann, was offering salaries of up to 50 per cent above current rates and because they were building new ships they had an immediate staffing shortage that could easily be filled by Nautilus members. Hartmann was seeking (in April 2010) between 20 and 40 British officers—all senior-grade seafarers—because of their specialist skills. This leads Nautilus to consider its potentially strengthened bargaining position. The way in which the union negotiates

in the face of international competition represents a major feature of its bargaining position.

Prospect members, explained National Secretary, Gavin, are taking an accommodating stance in response to the current economic climate. Gavin explained that many members are willing to accept a pay freeze if it is in the best interests of the company and will in some way safeguard their continued employment, which reflects Schneider's (1969) recognition that fluctuating market performance is a critical factor in the unionisation of workers. Prospect representatives are bargaining from an almost entirely concessionary angle, in that they are accepting pay freezes in exchange for employer assurances of twelve month, no-compulsory-redundancy deals. All three Prospect officers interviewed agreed that budgetary 'squeeze' was having an effect on members, not only in the fiscal, but in the political sense too. The impact on defence spending was offered as an example. Carl, an Organiser in Prospect's Ministry of Defence (MoD) sector, referred to this as the 'Afghanistan effect', which embraces issues of public awareness, public scrutiny, media attention and accountability.

Some members interviewed alluded to an ideology that caters chiefly for shareholders and where maximising profit and expanding capitalist monopoly are prioritised over the interests of social legitimacy. For example, some managers who had been employed at Railtrack—a FTSE100 company until it went into administration in 2002 and re-emerged as the not-for-profit company Network Rail—felt that because the motivations of the *employer* were changing, employment relations that had once been conducted in a reasonably successful way would now become weakened, or threatened. Support for this ideology clearly contrasted, however, with concerns put forward by other members, who seemed to accept more readily the ramifications of the labour market when responding to the relevant interview questions, which tends to reflect Schneider's (1969) reference to the link between job stability and the labour market. For example, one manager made reference to the agreement between British Airways (BA) and BALPA, where 94 per cent of BA pilots voted (in an 83 per cent poll) in favour of accepting a pay freeze ([www.balpa.org.uk](http://www.balpa.org.uk), 2009). The manager felt that, instead of compromising or undermining the union, this action by employees demonstrated flexibility and at the same time presented the union with a valuable

opportunity to be seen in a positive light. TSSA member and HR manager at Network Rail, Malcolm, explained:

‘There’s a different marketplace for the union to play in and the union that grasps that requirement to provide viable alternatives rather than reactionary protest will make themselves massively relevant. Taking the example of BALPA last year, the union recognised there was no way the company [BA] could afford to keep pilots on, but in a few years the business might improve again, so accepting a pay freeze would keep headcount stable and provide the capacity to expand in the future. This seems like a responsible approach. The union negotiated and helped the industry come to an arrangement with their members which satisfied the medium-term interests of members and the industry alike.’ [Interview: Malcolm, 03/08/10]

At the time of this land-mark development, BALPA General Secretary, Jim McAuslan, said of the decision: ‘This is an unaccustomed position for a union to be in but we have pressure tested the company’s trading position and cost base and are satisfied that this step is necessary to help BA recover its position as one of the world’s most successful airlines...our members have backed that judgment and are leading the way in contributing to the turn-round plan’. It is impossible to fail to notice the similarities between the linguistic style and tone used to deliver this statement and that deployed by the manager who raised the issue. This is perhaps suggestive of the way in which some managerial and professional workers endeavour to work with their employers’ institutions or organisations and will be explored in more detail in chapter six.

TSSA officers in some industry sectors, notably Network Rail, felt that the recession might not have the same, or as detrimental, an impact and while it was acknowledged that recession coincided with a massive reduction in industry funding, its effects were not as far-reaching as is the case with mainstream public sector industry. It was claimed by TSSA officers, however, that *projected* fears associated with the recession were likely to have an effect on managers’ stability—or perceptions of it. Senior Regional Organiser, Joel, remarked:

‘those people lucky enough to *have* their jobs have definitely started looking at how to *keep* them.’ [Interview: Joel, 08/04/10]

In spite of the various approaches adopted by the three unions, all were nonetheless committed to formulating a strategy by which, in the event that they were unable to

safeguard jobs, then they could effectively limit damage to the industries within their remit to a minimum. How successful this will be in the longer-term will depend, to an extent, on factors outwith the control of the unions' membership, policy and organising machinery.

## Conclusion

It has become clear, from analysing interview and survey questionnaire data, that many managerial and professional workers are seeking union membership in direct response not only to labour market precariousness and threats to their job security, but also to escalating concern over litigation and the potential need for representation. It could be suggested that this group of workers' understanding or interpretation of the purpose of unions differs substantially from the purpose as defined or understood by more rank-and-file or traditionally left-leaning trade unionists, and this could therefore, at least partially, explain managerial and professional motivations to unionise.

Lockwood (1958: 195-196) suggested that the notion of trade union ideology 'implies wider interests of a political kind, all the principles and assumptions arising out of the connection between the trade union movement and the Labour Party', whereas instrumental interests are more concerned with effectiveness, for example; 'the legal status of trade unionism, victimisation, recognition, strike action, negotiating machinery...' It could similarly be implied that a large proportion of managerial and professional union members are characterised more by instrumental interests and less so by ideological ones. Evidence from data gathered as part of this research has shown that managerial and professional members prioritise self-interest items such as pay and career-safeguard structures such as robust protection from workplace unfairness over what might be considered to be more readily identifiable forms of collectivism.

In supporting this view, Price (1983: 174) suggested that few of these workers could be said to espouse a 'strong *ideological* commitment' to trade unionism, and yet their manifestations of support for the work undertaken by the trade unions to which they belong are anything but negative. The apathy among managerial and professional workers alluded to by some union officers, however, seems at odds with the more

positive approach that is being adopted by some managerial and professional union members; which may signify a shift in perception among this group of workers. Many managerial and professional workers who participated in this research have openly suggested ways in which they feel the union could improve its function, increase membership and raise its profile into the bargain. As unpalatable as it may seem to some trade unionists, these behaviours are quite the opposite of those that resist unionisation and thrive to foster a sense of hostility and acrimony towards trade unionism. Some of the traits that characterise the 'conservative militant' identified by Carter (1979) are demonstrably evident among members of the case-study unions and would appear to be contributory to collective worker organisation in these unions.

The next chapter will consider some specific factors that emerged as significant among union officers and managerial and professional members of Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA and will consolidate characterisation of this group of workers and their motivations to unionise and collectivise.

## **Chapter six**

### **Partnership, industrial action, political profile: common denominators in managerial and professional union membership**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will address managerial and professional workers' position on issues that they consider significant and relevant to their union membership—namely partnership, industrial action and political affiliation and profile. Eliciting managerial and professional members' views and beliefs on these issues was instrumental in ascertaining their incentives to unionisation. These themes were recurrent throughout the key respondent interview, survey questionnaire and participant observation processes and the conclusions drawn by managerial and professional workers in relation to these, often emotive, subjects highlights the issues that they consider to be critical in terms of their union membership. Managerial and professional workers are experiencing work and unionisation in rapidly changing, and in some cases completely reconfiguring, workplaces. This chapter therefore aims to capture the position from which this group of workers responds to the circumstances which inform and influence such fundamental changes to their working lives. It is subsequently important to consider the managerial and professional stance on partnership as a means of establishing effective union-employer relationships, on industrial action and its value as a weapon of worth, and politics—on affiliation, the role played by party politics in their union, and in trade unionism generally. It could be argued that their approach to these elements goes some way to explaining the overall position adopted by managerial and professional workers.

This chapter will also address some of the tensions that exist between the position adopted by union members and that adopted by the unions vis-à-vis these issues - issues in which managerial and professional members of the case-study unions are relatively distinct in their collectivity. The tensions, or in some cases, convergence, between members' orientations and the unions' ideological commitments (outlined in chapter three) will be highlighted.

### **Partnership—refocusing collaborative relationships**

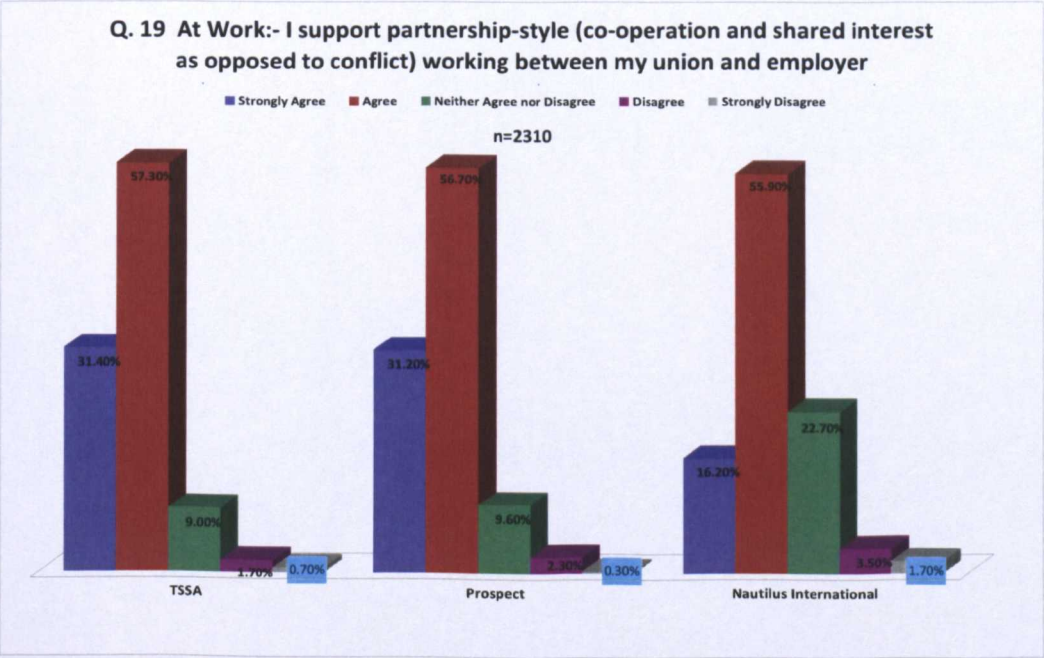
The first of three major issues which were identified as being significant to managerial and professional workers' union membership was that of partnership working. In 1977, Roberts et al claimed that 'white-collar' unions tended to be 'narrowly oriented, conservative interest groups, unconcerned with the pursuit of general social justice, more concerned with specific occupational interests, and preferring co-operation rather than conflict with management' (1977: 126). While these characteristics are broadly similar to those portrayed by the case-study unions, it is also recognised that, in contrast to the collective beginning structures that are a traditional feature of the trade union movement, many managerial and professional union members involved in this research have signified a preference not only to work more collaboratively with employers, but also to formalise any mutuality of obligation that may either already exist, or be predicted, between their union and their employer. While this process may in essence *sound* like the collective bargaining machinery that has operated hitherto, the features and characteristics of its reality are considerably different.

The way in which this group of workers desires employer-union relationships to be conducted is important to this research because consensus does not always exist between the varying, and increasingly complex, workplace and management structures. If we are to accept, for example, Carter's (1979: 298) assertion that 'middle class' workers' roles are dominated 'by the implementation of orders downwards, rather than by conflict with the people above them' then it may also be reasonable to assume that some managerial and professional workers' views of conflict differ significantly to those of manual, classified, or blue-collar, workers. Some managerial and professional members of the case-study unions referred to the management of problems and issues in relation to those who report *to* them and not those to whom they report. In one particular instance, a manager at a TOC outlined the 'awkwardness' of having to deal with a 'sensitive' pay-related issue, whereby the employee who reported to this manager stood to lose a significant proportion of their pay increment as the direct result of having failed to achieve a specific performance objective. This employee considered the criteria by which their pay was calculated to be fundamentally unfair and the manager related in interview that the 'fall-out' that

ensued from this situation was symptomatic of the ‘everyday dilemmas’ facing managers in the corporate environment.

Goals such as achieving beneficial pay and conditions are not largely deemed by managerial and professional workers to be things that can be achieved via conflict with employers. This form of ‘non-conflictual group consciousness’ is, according to Price (1983: 158), termed ‘harmonistic collectivism’, and is evident from data gathered as part of this research and mirrors, to an extent, the notion of default collectivisation described in earlier chapters. With this in mind, question 19 of the survey questionnaire (see graph 6.1 below) and interview question 9 were posed to members, who were invited to give their views on their union’s promotion, or otherwise, of partnership agreements and their effectiveness.

Graph 6.1



Partnership was defined for members as ‘co-operation and shared interest as opposed to conflict’. The identification made by the Involvement and Participation Association (IPA)<sup>57</sup>; that while it is accepted that partnership working may entail a change to deeply held beliefs, unions must accept a need for ‘jettisoning demarcations and restrictive practices’ and that objections made by the union need to be ‘supported by something more than ideology’ was resonant with many union members involved in this research.



Based on aggregated agree and strongly agree ratings, 88 per cent of TSSA and Prospect, and 72 per cent of Nautilus members claimed that they supported partnership-style working between their union and employer. It was widely felt that collaboration, conciliation and dialogue were preferable to conflict, antagonism and aggressive negotiating practices. Many members felt that attempting to conduct negotiations and consultations in a confrontational manner was not only counter-productive, but also representative of an outmoded industrial relations approach that they considered no longer fit for purpose.

### **Substituting confrontation with dialogue**

Some respondents considered avoidance of confrontation to be a more effective approach than commencing dialogue with the employer on an adversarial footing.

TSSA member and Business manager at Network Rail, Sarah, explained:

‘Partnership’s an altogether better way of working, it takes away the confrontational side, it takes away the “us and them” element which tends to get in the way and become a permanent argument. If you can have a *discussion*, then that’s the point where it can really start to work. It’s good to talk and if partnership’s the way to get it going then that’s got to be better than having protracted arguments.’ [Interview: Sarah, 27/10/11]

Prospect member and engineer at NATS, Martin, outlined the way in which an approach of this nature works, and is considered to be successful, in his organisation:

‘The benefit is you effectively have an agreement with both sides, which agrees management and union behaviours and what’s expected of both sides in terms of how we conduct ourselves. We have a “coaching for performance” model where we monitor and “rate” each other. It’s taken seriously by management, it’s not just one-way. And it takes away the “no surprises” thing, the whole thing is about us wanting to be *involved* and not *informed*. They [management] get it. Not everyone does, but it *does* work.’ [Interview: Martin, 18/10/11]

Advocates of partnership were of the distinct opinion that pursuing this approach was preferable to continuing to nurture what they believed were predominantly dysfunctional relationships that were based on mistrust, scepticism and intransigence. Nautilus and Prospect officers’ standpoint on partnership reinforces Waddington and Whitston’s (1997: 415) assertion that proponents of employer-led workplace practices will become more committed to their employers’ goals and objectives, which constitutes a shift away from ‘adversarial relations’, and towards ‘more collaborative

arrangements'. Managerial and professional workers' general endorsement of partnership also challenges Guest et al's (2006: 126) research into partnership and trust, which deems partnership 'relatively undeveloped'. Views expressed by officers from Prospect were clearly aligned with the idea that partnership represents a 'better than nothing' approach to dealing with employers who may otherwise refuse to engage with the unions. Some managerial and professional workers pertained to what could reluctantly represent this approach, whereby working in tandem with the employer meant that the union could hope to achieve *some* level of concession, rather than *none*. That said; few of the respondents interviewed on this subject appeared to recognise this as being negative. For instance, TSSA member and construction manager at Network Rail, Kevin, described the situation thus:

'The new chief executive<sup>58</sup>, every time you see him, he's talking about alliance, about working together, collaborating and so on and so on. TSSA should be pushing against an open door here, saying "can we have some of that? Can we work together closely with you on common industry problems, on the McNulty report, on real big issues?" I think they need to try it.' [Interview: Kevin, 25/10/11]

Whether an approach of this nature is indicative of a real sense of hope among senior grade employees in certain industries, or merely represents a flicker of ambition, is intangible. Some union officers who reacted to feedback on this subject from survey questionnaires and interviews were quick to dismiss these workers' optimism about a shared vision and a constructive union-employer relationship. The TSSA, in particular, appears to remain emphatically opposed to partnership, both as a concept and in practice. At a workshop undertaken with national full-time TSSA officers in October 2010, it was decided that, in spite of the arguments and manifold claims to its success put forward by many of its managerial members, partnership is 'not for us'. Unfortunately there was insufficient opportunity to explore ways in which officers could dovetail this standpoint with managers' increasing requests or support for such agreements without damaging the equilibrium that must be maintained by any all-grade union.

### **Partnership agreements—useful tools or a hindrance to collective bargaining?**

Some managerial and professional workers interviewed were ambivalent about the objective of workplace partnership agreements (although they were in agreement with the principle of working *in partnership with* employers). Most Nautilus members

interviewed, despite Nautilus officers' enthusiasm and conviction in relation to partnership working, were unsure as to what actually constituted a partnership agreement or indeed what purpose such an agreement served, which may support Blackburn's (1967: 21) assertion that 'not all organisations of employees attach equal importance to bargaining and allied activities...some professional associations...have virtually no such aims'. Nautilus members who were conversant with partnership agreements were largely dissatisfied with the way in which they operate. Marine Engineer, Damian, stated that:

'when the company wants something they usually get it. The change of our lengths [time at sea] recently without any recourse to the workforce at all is a case in point.' [Interview: Damian, 03/02/12]

Damian attributed a lack of effective workplace partnership, however, to members' apathy, adding:

'I feel the union acts in our best interests, but quite often it's the members themselves who undermine negotiations. Last year the number of members who didn't bother to vote for the pay negotiations was appalling.'

Some union officers explained that many managerial and professional workers are incentivised to support employers' investment in productive working relationships, which suggests that compromise is no longer 'desirable', but 'essential' in terms of establishing mutual behaviour. The employers with whom Prospect negotiates are cognisant of this and, according to Prospect National Secretary, Glenda, take the view that:

'if we [Prospect] are anti it, then it's not going to work on the ground. They can *impose* things but if there's no buy-in, then they're going to have a lot of problems delivering it. If you look at all the areas where our industrial relations are quite good: take case work for example; we train people to handle case work, because their [employers'] view is that they'd rather deal with a trade union rep than a very difficult member of staff. We're quite mediatory. We'd be hard pushed to say we have a confrontational relationship with employers, even in the private sector.' [Interview: Glenda, 19/04/10]

There is of course, as Glenda states, acknowledgement that employers can impose things, but if there is a lack of consent from the union then it is highly likely that problems and obstacles will emerge. The case-work example referred to by Glenda, meant that employers were keen to approve facility time to representatives in order for them to be trained in personal case-handling because they would rather, in the

event of a workplace dispute, deal directly with a properly trained trade union member than 'a very difficult member of staff'. These observations support Stuart and Martinez-Lucio's (2005: 1) assertion that partnership 'represents an attempt to shift the culture of employment relations away from zero-sum and adversarial relationships'. Stuart and Martinez-Lucio also ask whether partnership represents a 'new form of bargaining' or whether it is merely a 'more extensive form of consultation' (2005: 2).

The majority of managerial and professional workers interviewed and observed as part of this research appeared to favour and seek to promote an approach that reflects Danford et al's (2007) identification of the distinction between 'partnership' with management and the more traditional 'oppositionalist' strategy adopted by rank-and-file trade unionism. Suggestions that partnership may be under threat where employers, especially in the public sector, may fail to deliver their respective commitments under the terms of partnership agreements, were not discussed in depth with members. Those who endorsed partnership had not significantly considered the consequences of any breakdown in this mode of working between their union and employer. Exploration of this was therefore difficult.

### **Support for a business-focused approach to union-employer relations**

Significant support for partnership-style working and initiatives between unions and employers was expressed by respondents from all three case-study unions. A substantial proportion linked this support to a distinctly business, or corporate, model, which incorporated union activity: negotiation, consultation and dispute resolution, into its core function. Many managerial and professional members applauded this, stating that if their union was to be effective at a time when union power was in little short of panoptic free-fall decline, then it would need to find a way of optimising communication and capitalising on shared business interest in order to make gains for members. These workers were convinced, if not in whole, then in the main, of the benefits of communicating with the employer on a business level, and one that mirrors as closely as possible the business environment from which employers operate. It was furthermore suggested that employers would, in the event that the union was prepared to adapt its behaviour in order to be less confrontational and more prone to compromise, be increasingly disposed to make concessions. In other words, if the

union was seen to 'back down', then the employer would make an effort to be more amenable. Complex psychology aside, however, some respondents were clearly proponents of the business angle:

'Businesses have got to succeed if they're going to stay around, so job security only comes with maintaining a viable business and so an effective workforce representative body needs to have the success of the business in mind just as much as the board of directors has to. No board of directors has a monopoly of wisdom and they don't have a monopoly of visibility throughout the organisation either, so alternative ideas shouldn't be seen as a threat or opposition. Any customer-focused organisation—and a union *is* providing a service to its members—needs to ask itself "how do we adjust our approach to make sure we're delivering what's required, both to our membership and to the industry?" Unions need to ask themselves "do we have a better business case?" If the answer's "yes", then it ought to be saying "here's another set of ideas, let's talk about them". Then you get into the realm of partnership rather than an adversarial relationship. If it becomes adversarial instead of being about mutual trust, then you get mutual *distrust* and that doesn't get you anywhere.' [Interview: Malcolm, TSSA member and HR manager, 03/08/10]

Some respondents idealised the relationship between the union and the employer, and yet nonetheless believed there was an inherent ability for the two parties to strive towards a mutually beneficial relationship:

'In my idealistic view there should be a partnership between the company and the unions. The best manifestation of the workforce is through unions, who need to establish shared vision and aspirations with the company. There are clear time horizons—five yearly control periods—unions need to have an insight into these processes and share in delivering success to stakeholders.' [Interview: TSSA member and Finance manager, 04/04/09]

Despite general support for partnership-style working and initiatives, some managerial and professional workers did, however, call into question its effectiveness. Some members made reference to the economic and political landscape and the effect this has on unions' ability to drive partnership in a positive and constructive way. One Prospect member suggested that unions' lack of power was a significant factor in the extent to which unions can be effective in an ambivalent economic and political climate. He claimed that if employers are in a position of power then the incentive for them to seek fair and reasonable engagement with the trade unions is all but removed. This member made reference to the ignominious situation involving UK parliamentary expenses in order to explain this:

‘The Lib Dem MP, Andrew George<sup>59</sup>, is a friend of mine. He got his knuckles rapped over the expenses affair. It was a serious situation but things like this just aren’t *dealt with* by the government—nothing is done. So how can unions expect to make a difference against things like that?...Unions need to implement and monitor things like health and safety and equality and diversity policies, of course, but what are they *fighting* for? Workers receiving a fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work? Because of the economic situation, the government has the upper hand. It doesn’t matter what we discuss—they haven’t got the money.’  
[Interview: Prospect member, 21/11/11]

It could be argued that this somewhat despondent view is realistic in terms of explaining unions’ frustration and curtailment, although there appeared to be a sense that adapting union behaviour and the way in which relationships with employers were conducted would pay dividends. This position also goes some way to supporting Hyman’s (2001: 68) assertion that where once threats to job security may have provoked ‘uncompromising resistance’, circumstances are nonetheless seen to be driving change.

Evidence emerged to suggest that managerial and professional workers appeared to be making decisions on a business transactional, as opposed to ideological, basis. It could therefore be suggested that these workers use the quality of the union-employer relationship to gauge its effectiveness. In reality, should the employer wish to sideline or dismiss the relationship, it would be able to do so with relative ease merely by complying with statutory minimum requirements, and yet acknowledgement of this by respondents in this research was largely absent. This could suggest one of two things; either that members feel, in line with some views put forward in relation to performance and objective-setting, that if they have entered into an agreement based on mutual goodwill and accord, then the employer will abide by the same, or, that by aligning themselves with the business, or corporate, mindset of the employer, they are in some way making a positive identification with the employer which will be taken as affirmation of some form of allegiance to that employer which would override any commitment held by the employee to their trade union membership or principles.

### **Industrial action—self-preservation or a move towards the ‘last resort’?**

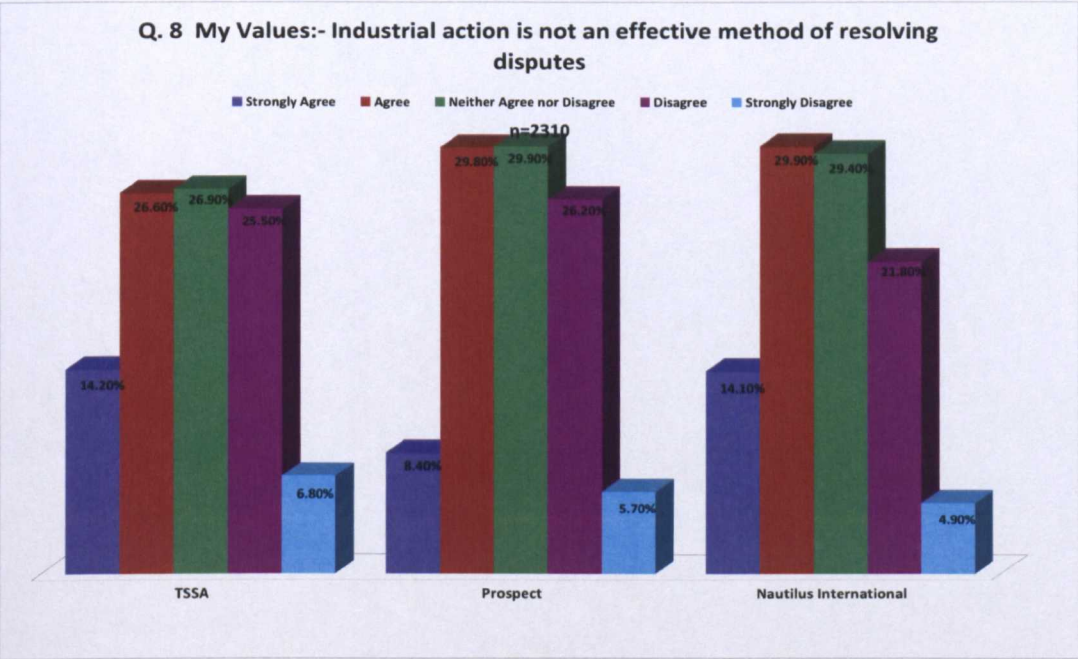
Given the high profile attached by many managerial and professional workers in this study to industrial action, it is important to consider their position on industrial action,

and to the most explicit form of collective action—the strike. In the context of the professional workplace, workers have traditionally tended to profess an aversion to industrial action and approach militancy with reluctance (Blackburn, 1967). While some managerial and professional workers expressed antipathy towards strike action in anything other than an absolute ‘last resort’ scenario, others demonstrated affinity with what could be termed the default blue-collar position on strike action; that it is necessary in certain situations and is a fundamental right that ought not to be dismissed out of hand by managerial or professional workers. The issue of industrial action remains contentious and aroused strong feelings among those involved in the research. Three main themes emerged in relation to rejection of industrial action: effectiveness (or perceived lack thereof), self-preservation, and damage to status or reputation; of the individual and the employer, company or organisation.

Changing views on industrial action

Question 8 of the survey questionnaire and question 7 of the key respondent interview schedule were posed with a view to establishing managerial and professional workers’ position on industrial action (see graph 6.2 below).

Graph 6.2





Based on aggregated agree and strongly agree ratings, 44 per cent of Nautilus, 38 per cent of Prospect and 31 per cent of TSSA members surveyed felt that industrial action was not an effective dispute resolution method. The neither agree nor disagree rating, however (30 per cent of Prospect, 29 per cent of Nautilus and 27 per cent of TSSA members), suggests a certain ambivalence to the deployment of industrial action as an effective dispute resolution mechanism. The aggregated disagree and strongly disagree ratings would similarly suggest an evenly balanced feeling among managerial and professional workers in this study (32.5 per cent of TSSA, 32 per cent of Prospect and 27 per cent of Nautilus members). These figures surprised union officers. Joel, Senior Regional Organiser at TSSA explained:

‘With management-grade staff you’ve got to have dotted every single “i” and crossed every “t” and be able to demonstrate that you’ve done everything humanly and reasonably possible to avoid being in that position [of being faced with the prospect of industrial action]...they do view it as very much a last resort and not in keeping with their professional status. It’s *unseemly* of management staff. There’s the issue of loyalty towards the company as well.’ [Interview: Joel, 09/11/11]

Some officers at Prospect were surprised that a significant number of members had indicated defiance of what they deemed to be the ‘fear factor’. These officers believed that this presented an even more significant factor than economics, which they felt was instrumental in deterring their membership from balloting in favour of industrial action. The longer term effects of a constantly changing workplace were explained by Prospect National Secretary, Glenda, who suggested that this element had the potential to represent a turning-point in the consciousness of some of Prospect’s membership:

‘Performance...how people are accountable at work—all these things are being tightened up, all of which you could say is not unreasonable. But people do see this as threatening to their jobs, their terms and conditions. They’ve seen massive change, massive restructuring, not all of which has been for the best, and although they’re not change averse—they can live with change, as long as they’re consulted about it, convinced of the reasons for it—but its when you get change on top of change and no initiative is bedded down and you forget where you started off and eventually you’ll come full circle. That’s where a lot of these [workers] are now. It frustrates them and it’s not conducive to a healthy working environment.’ [Interview: Glenda, 19/04/10]

Although some Prospect members were reluctant to endorse the use of industrial action in anything but a last resort capacity, they were anxious to explain that this did



not necessarily translate into either hostility or aversion to industrial action. These members were keen to stress that while they were cognisant of industrial action as a *right*, this could nonetheless be open to abuse, or overuse, which some members argued ran the risk of diluting the effect of industrial action. Prospect member and engineer at NATS, Martin, explained:

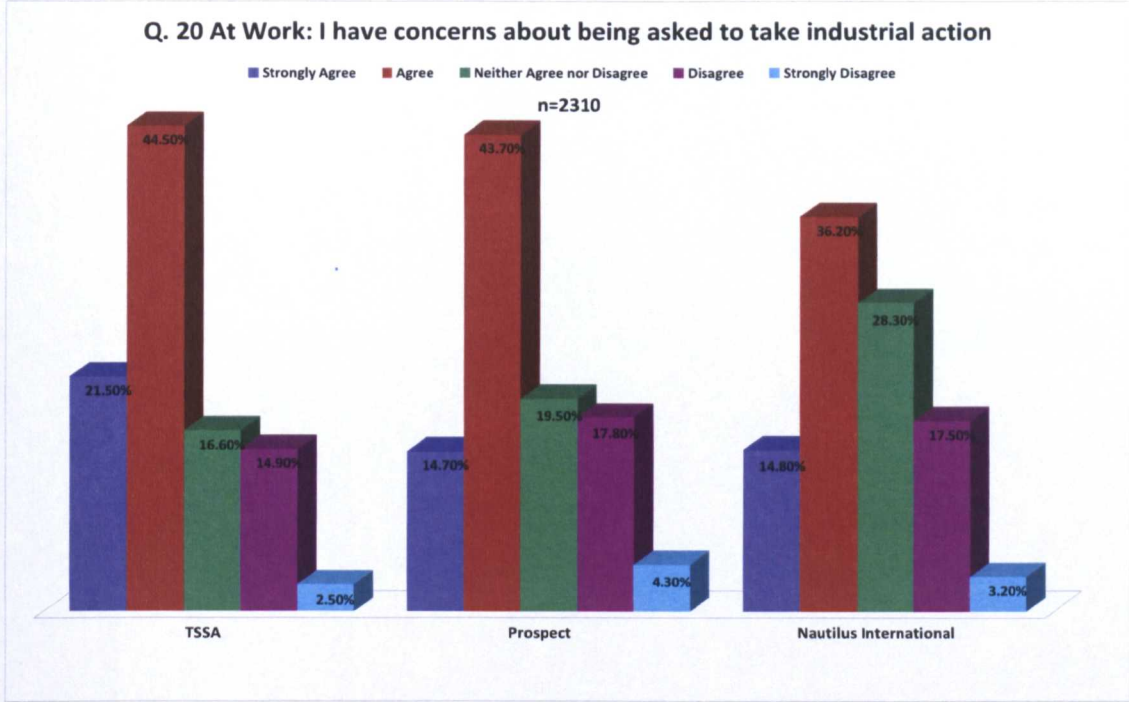
‘My view is that it’s a right that should be exercised with extreme caution because you have to have exhausted every possible avenue and it has to be in extreme circumstances...it needs to be the right tool for the right reason.’ [Interview: Martin, 18/10/11]

Would it therefore be reasonable to assume that some managerial and professional workers have simply had enough of change, to the point whereby they are prepared to consider industrial action where previously they might have dismissed it out of hand? Does the last resort to which many managerial and professional workers refer seem more of a reality in view of the punitive effects of global economic crisis and the detrimental impact of constant and rapid workplace change? Some union officers believed that there is considerable ground to be covered in the quest to coax managerial and professional workers even into so much as the periphery of industrial action, let alone establish it as a standard default position for this group of workers harbouring workplace grievances and disputes, and yet evidence began to emerge that suggested resistance to industrial action was not as unyielding as some union officers would believe.

### **Concerns about the request to take part in industrial action**

In response to survey question 20 (see graph 6.3 on the following page) 66 per cent of TSSA, 59 per cent of Prospect and 51 per cent of Nautilus members (based on aggregated agree and strongly agree ratings) expressed concerns at being asked to take industrial action.

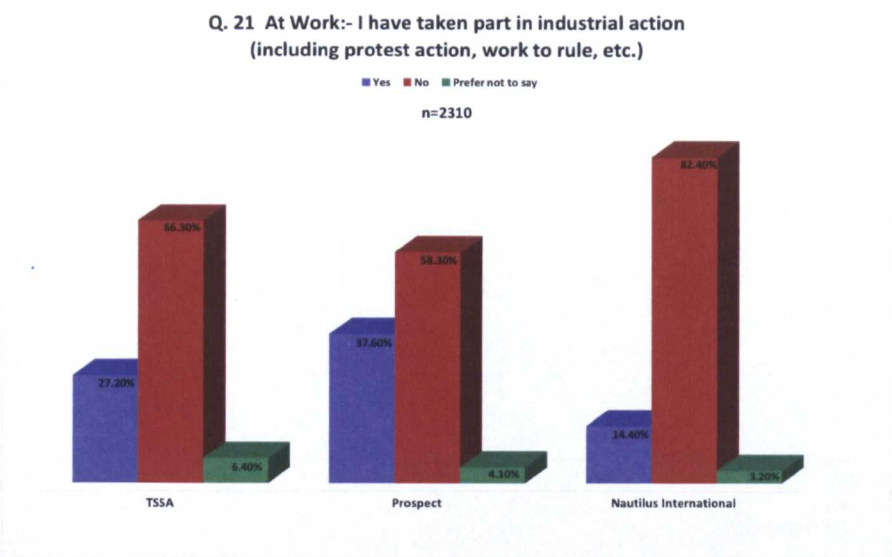
Graph 6.3



It could be suggested that responses highlight the difference between the *idea* of industrial action as a dispute resolution channel and actually being involved in the process of orchestrating that action; in effect the difference between the theory and the practice. This perhaps constitutes reinforcement of the essentially unitarist perspective that continues to pervade managerial and professional union membership, and one that characterises quite strongly the individualised aspect of managerial and professional unionism. It could be argued that a change in attitude, nonetheless, is as valid a starting point as any in the quest to change this group of workers' overall position on the social legitimacy and practical effectiveness of industrial action in the current labour market.

Responses to survey question 21 (see graph 6.4 on the following page) would indicate that in spite of many managerial and professional workers' reluctance to take industrial action, it is by no means a completely alien reality.

Graph 6.4



The graph shows that 38 per cent of Prospect, 27 per cent of TSSA and 14 per cent of Nautilus members had actually taken part in some form of industrial action, which suggests that many members who have participated in this research are neither new to the concept of industrial action nor are without knowledge of the machinery of industrial action.

**The effectiveness and consequences of strike action**

Previous research, in a study of 124 managers—(74 union members and 50 non-members) at Network Rail in 2009 identified an overall aversion to industrial action, irrespective of unionisation. Fear and unease surrounded the projected effect that strikes would have on the industry. Various respondents referred to strikes as the ‘ultimate weapon’, to be used only as an absolute last resort, and when all alternatives had been exhaustively pursued. Interestingly, Lockwood (1958: 159) also made use of the word ‘weapon’ in relation to strike action by blackcoat unions. In his rejection of industrial action, a non-union member respondent condemned strikes as ‘industrial vandalism’, advocating early intervention as a preferable means of dispute resolution (although the respondent could not be drawn on what he felt constituted ‘early intervention’). Claiming that over-use of the ballot box existed in the rail industry and that strikes were chiefly damaging to the whole industry, this respondent explained:

‘The TSSA needs to distance itself from political militancy. There *was* a place for it, if we went back to the time of Victorian mill-owners. There *is* still a place for militancy when all other avenues have been



exhausted, but there are other avenues you can go through in a civilised way, and in a much more mutually beneficial way. The one thing that overshadows everything is the assumption that management equals bad, more jobs equals good. Why are popularist moves wheeled out before asking what's actually going to benefit the business? Take the recent 48 hour tube strike (London Underground strike, 9-11 June 2009); all people could see was straight militancy, both the union *and* the sector lose credibility. If unions pose a question in such a way that only elicits a "strike or put up with it" response, then that's bad, despite the right to strike being in itself a good thing.' [Interview: Non-unionised rail industry senior manager, 03/08/09]

Other respondents reinforced these views on strike action, stating that they felt them to be a sign of failure, the consequences damaging to all—not just the unions or the employer, but also to parties unconnected to the action, which they deemed to be grossly unfair. This directly challenges the pluralist critique (Donovan, 1968), which argued that strikes are effective insofar as they force management to take account of workers' interests. Indeed, many officers at the case-study unions in this study despaired of the lack of management faith in taking industrial action, and it was acknowledged that a fresh approach may be necessary in order to bring about a sea change in this area.

This research demonstrates that some managerial and professional workers feel that unions are insufficiently powerful to achieve successful outcome via industrial action. Some respondents claimed that a more general erosion of union power resulted in dilution of the effectiveness of strike action. These members intimated that there would be little point in supporting strike action—even if they *did* fundamentally agree either with the principle or objective thereof—because the union was 'not powerful enough' to be able to achieve positive benefits. Prospect member and MoD employee, Leonard, stated:

'Thirty years ago, I'd have been the first say "all out", but the effect just isn't the same today. Strike action isn't always effective. Working to rule is much more powerful, removing the flexibility of work is much more worthwhile—you've got your terms of reference and you work with that.' [Interview, Leonard, 21/11/11]

TSSA member and rail industry manager at ATOC, made a similar claim:

'If people—employers—were fearful of sanctions then industrial action would be effective, but they're not. Industrial action is a nineteenth century Dickensian mechanism. It's difficult to see how it can produce

an outcome that can't be achieved through dialogue. And you've got to remember that employers will always have contingencies; for example, managers can and do drive trains [in reference to train drivers taking strike action], so the effects can be limited.' [Interview: Anthony, 25/10/11]

Anthony also likened managerial and professional workers' views of collective action in this format as being similar to the way in which certain factions of society viewed those involved in the riots that took place in the UK in the summer of 2011:

'Look at the riots, those individuals shared similar circumstances, for example, economic disadvantages, but people saw them as a 'gang' thing—a 'collective' thing. It wasn't about that, but people saw it that way. They see individualism equals good, collectivism equals bad.'

Leonard added:

'Unions aren't powerful anymore, the best they can do is 'police' things that go on—negotiations, that sort of thing, making sure employers keep to their side of things. We have a social situation that's evolving, there's unrest. Power has been removed and we don't know how to get it back.'

Some members put forward the suggestion that union power was diminishing as a result of resources being diverted away from issues that members considered stood a reasonable chance of success. For example, Richard, TSSA member manager at TfL, referred to changes imposed in 2010 to London Underground's station operating model, which Richard described as the 'big industrial punch-up of the moment'. He explained that this operating model was being changed:

'partly due to technology and the fact that it's a bit like retail banking—we don't *need* ticket offices any more. It's hard to imagine the underground having a core ticket office network in five or six years' time. It's like banking and ATMs—you need to move to different models...the approach from the unions has just been to fight, to try to stop it. There seems to be a lack of reality that the world is changing. If you're going to go on strike, you have to pick a fight you can win. The unions are shooting themselves in the foot.' [Interview: Richard, 16/09/10]

Some Nautilus members also felt that industrial action would be insufficient to bring about or meet the demands for positive change in their industry. Steven, a Master, stated:

'I think both the union and the companies know that when the companies stand firm on an issue and the only recourse is industrial action, resistance will crumble and people will accept what they're

offered, with a lot of grumbling. Ultimately, I'd question whether industrial action's even relevant any more in this industry. People don't go on strike; they just vote with their feet and leave the company. There's such a shortage of seafarers these days that there's always another, probably better, job to be had, provided you haven't upset anyone and marred your potential references.' [Interview: Steven, 11/02/12]

Steven's attitude supports assertions made in an earlier interview with Nautilus National Secretary, Peter, who outlined various issues and repercussions associated with shortage of seafarers. Prospect member and Scientific Officer at AHVLA, Hannah, reiterated this element:

'There would be no positive impact if the union members in my workplace took industrial action. Not just in terms of numbers, but by the nature of the work we do, it would hardly hold things up.' [Interview: Hannah, 19/10/11]

Many managers, especially in the transport industry, felt that the time it took for any impact of strike action to establish itself would be protracted, therefore rendering the more immediate effects not just ineffective, but also detrimental to their career and/or the 'business'. TSSA members and Business manager, Sarah, explained:

'If managers were to withdraw their labour, then it's going to take several months for an impact to be felt. That's the difficulty managers have—they withdraw their labour, which is the ultimate sanction—so what? Working to rule and action short of strike I would endorse on the right premise.' [Interview: Sarah, 27/10/11]

Some managers suggested that unions need to be better prepared if industrial action is to be effective. TSSA member and manager at TfL, explained:

'Industrial dispute planning is essential. Unions need to be ahead of the pack and be more creative. White-collar unions need to be looking at what the pinch-points are, and what leverage they can use, in a more scientific way. The membership currently sees this hasn't been done and they're not willing to chance their arms. Members need to see the union has taken the trouble to examine non-strike options and that withdrawal of labour is not the only way. Unions are utterly unimaginative.' [Interview: Sean, 15/09/0]

### **Strike action and the self-interest agenda**

Indivisible from the element of hostility or reluctance in respect of strike action was the existence of self-interest factors such as protection from perceived victimisation by employers, fear over being 'labelled' a trouble or mischief-maker, concern over detriment to bonus payments, salary or pensions, and the

prospect of jeopardising future career or financial prospects. Some managerial and professional workers were matter-of-fact about the fear of the negative repercussions that could be attached to their decision to take—or in some cases, even support, strike action. TSSA member and Project Manager at Amey Rail stated:

‘There is an element of jeopardising your own position, particularly in the current market-place.’ [Interview: Linda, 26/10/10]

TSSA member, Sarah, outlined in plain terms the fear over potential career and monetary detriment:

‘Strike action—I personally would lose too much if I went on strike, both financially and career position, everything.’ [Interview: Sarah, 27/10/11]

Prospect member, Leonard added:

‘I didn’t vote for strike action on November 30<sup>th</sup>, I’m worried that taking action might have repercussions for my pension.’ [Interview, Leonard, 21/11/11]

TSSA member and Engineering manager at Network Rail, Bill, combined the element of personal threat with the notion of damage to professional pride, suggesting that strike action goes ‘against the grain’ of the professional worker (this element is also linked to potential fears surrounding attacks on a company or organisation’s reputation, and is discussed in the following section):

‘It’s not professional to strike. There’s always a worry you’re going to get fired.’ [Interview: Bill, 15/07/10]

For many Nautilus members, conflict of interest issues were also instrumental in determining members’ stance on industrial action. While many members were sympathetic to the cause or role of industrial action within their industry, it was nonetheless widely felt that the priority for professionals within Nautilus was to maintain neutrality. Nautilus member, Steven, explained:

‘I often sympathise with the issues but the master of a vessel is in a very odd position in that he’s simultaneously part of the crew and also the owner’s representative on board...I feel I have to remain neutral in any dispute. It would be unethical for me to participate in any vote recommending industrial action when I’m not able to participate in that due to my position as a manager of the company—and my legal position—and for that reason I always abstain from any vote on industrial action.’ [Interview: Steven, 11/02/12]

It was made patently clear in interviews with some members, that what they saw as 'penalties' or 'sanctions' imposed by employers (both in the form of loss of pay and in terms of damage to personal professional reputation) in response to strike action being undertaken was 'unacceptable'. As such, these factors seemed sufficient to deter many managerial and professional union members from considering strike action on anything other than the much debated 'last-resort', or desperate-means, scenario.

### **Industrial action as organisational sabotage**

Many managerial and professional workers interviewed in this study commented on what they deemed to be the damaging effects of industrial action on their company, organisation or institution. These respondents felt that these detrimental effects were indivisible from the effects on them as individual workers. In other words, they viewed intervention against their employer as aggression against them as individuals. Officers from all three unions recognised this element of the managerial and professional career mindset.

Widespread unease over any form of industrial action is prevalent among the Nautilus membership, which is almost completely opposed to any action or behaviour that might damage their company's 'brand', and perhaps consequently, their livelihood. This was not to say that anger and upset did not exist among Nautilus members about certain conditions or situations to which they were exposed, but it was clear that they had no intention of considering resolution of issues via the industrial action channel. When asked how Nautilus members might react to the possibility of being asked to take industrial action, National Secretary, Peter, stated:

'I have no doubt whatsoever that the thought of industrial action terrifies, by far and away, the majority of our members, it's just something they can't do...it's just not in their psyche to take action which is aimed at damaging the company.' [Interview: Peter, 16/04/10]

In spite of any unfavourable issues encountered by Nautilus members, loyalty to the employer remains steadfast and resolute. Industrial action is, according to Nautilus union officers, non-negotiably considered inappropriate as a means of dispute resolution. In negotiating a pay-deal with members in the Cruise sector, Peter went on to explain:



‘they [members] came at it from the angle ‘we’ve had a good year, we want our share, we feel we should be rewarded, however we would never ever think of taking industrial action or damaging the company, because that would damage the brand and that damages us.’ [Interview: Peter, 16/04/10]

Prospect membership once held a similar view, but with the added dimension that, in some sectors, industrial action was not always an effective option simply because of the relatively low numbers of workers taking action at any given time. Prospect membership also echoes the view of some Nautilus’ members, claiming that an attack of this nature on their employer is perceived as an attack on them *personally* and is therefore deemed to be a largely ineffective dispute resolution mechanism. Prospect’s membership remains reluctant to engage in industrial action without full assurance that the case they want to run is strong enough to succeed. For example, if certain areas of the transport industry were to take industrial action then there would be a massive and immediate impact, yet with the exception of key areas like Air Traffic Control or Health and Safety, in Prospect, the effects of industrial action in some sectors may be limited.

Some Prospect members, according to National Secretary, Gavin, lack ‘gung-ho’ about taking industrial action, which compelled Gavin to admit that injecting collectivism into situations that might ultimately require recourse to industrial action was ‘quite difficult’. Gavin explained that:

‘Sometimes you wish they’d [members] be a bit more up for it. Quite a lot of our members enjoy their jobs, a lot of them are proud of their jobs...many of them define who they are as social beings by virtue of the job they do.’ [Interview: Gavin, 12/04/10]

Gavin felt that it was for this reason that it is unlikely that the majority of Prospect members would consider taking action that could be deemed detrimental to the employer. This reflects Goldthorpe et al’s (1968: 184) suggestion that the value and expectation that some workers attach to their jobs shapes ‘the attitudinal and behavioural patterns of their working life as a whole’. National Secretary, Glenda, admitted that:

‘Prospect has a very poor record in terms of galvanising people into taking industrial action, even in areas where we could make a significant difference. An example being that three years ago [2007], employees in DEFRA had a particularly poor pay offer. We wanted to call our veterinary staff out in Animal Health, and by that, you’re

stopping all state cover in terms of any emergency outbreak, etc., so we did get a lot of publicity, but in the end they [members] voted for action short of a strike, and of course that has no impact. It's completely worthless.' [Interview: Glenda, 19/04/10]

Glenda's accurate gauge of membership in this sector is borne out by Prospect member and Veterinary Investigation Officer at AHVLA, Donald, who reinforced this position:

'It's this balance between being a worker and being a professional. I think it's very unprofessional of a veterinary surgeon to take any form of action that goes against all the principles, for example, of being a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. I would hate somewhere to have a welfare problem on a farm or lambs dying, calves dying; and they wanted advice and picked the phone up and were told: "the laboratory's closed because of industrial action". I just think it's a very unprofessional thing to do, simple as that. I'll be walking through the door on the 30<sup>th</sup> [30 November 2011 Day of Action] and I'll be doing the job I normally do...I don't think disruptive behaviour does an awful lot of good. If anything, it can potentially alienate the general public against you and it can alienate you with your employer. The underlying principle is that, as a veterinary professional, I just don't think it's the right thing to do.' [Interview: Donald, 15/11/11]

Whether or not the scale and savagery of cuts being imposed in some sectors of Prospect in the current period of fiscal restraint, will reinforce this reticence, however, is uncertain.

The position adopted by some managerial and professional workers in the TSSA focused on the element of fear attached to the consequences of industrial action, Engineering manager at Network Rail, Bill, explained:

'Fear surrounds the effect strikes have on this industry in general. If Network Rail goes on strike, it's immediately a national issue and affects millions [of people]. Media portrayal is detrimental, and this erodes any good perceptions people have about the industry. It's incumbent on *all*—unions *and* management—to explore every avenue, like ACAS, for example, before taking strike action. It must be the ultimate weapon and a real last resort. In the past I've seen correct and incorrect use of strike action. I believe it did irreparable damage to the British car industry in the 1970s and 1980s, and we have to be careful, as we can't afford to damage the industry.' [Interview: Bill, 15/07/10]

A TSSA member and Financial Controller, added:

'As a manager, you're in a dilemma: you're a key part of the business but also a member of the workforce. It's a difficult position. Industrial

action's a sign of failure, and the consequences damaging for all. There's also a knock-on effect on people who are completely unconnected to the action, like train operators, or people outside the company, and that's not helpful.' [Interview: 04/04/09]

TSSA member and rail industry Risk Manager, Jim, adopted a bitter approach to the whole concept of striking and condemned strike action as ineffective:

'It's not possible for strikes to resolve an issue. It may help focus stakeholders, but that's it. It depends how closely it impinges on how people operate on a day-to-day basis. If it's tube drivers, then no-one outside London could care less. I think any union calling strike action has failed. How would it [strike action] impact on the rail industry? The perception's worse than reality. I'd bet Bob Crow (General Secretary of the RMT union) one hundred pounds that within five years it'll be illegal for any transport union to strike in London. It should be illegal. It's unskilled work, you don't need ten years' training or an MSc, so why should you earn, 20, 30, 40 per cent more than a teacher? What makes you more important than them? Unions are riding what's left of a bit of a wave and they're rightly getting a bit nervous about how they maintain the momentum, because they can't.' [Interview: Jim, 05/08/10]

In spite of aversion by some managerial and professional members of the three case-study unions, however, evidence emerged to suggest that a shift in attitude was beginning to take place.

### **Subtle movement towards support for industrial action**

Support for industrial action was not entirely absent from data gathered in interviews with managerial and professional members of Nautilus, Prospect and TSSA. Support for strike action as a last resort was very much in existence, and yet defence of the morality and rationale behind strike action was also in evidence. Members of these unions were contacted with the aim of eliciting their views on industrial action at a time when this subject was very topical. Strike action took place in the public sector in June 2011, with more protest planned for November of that year. Prospect members, in some cases for the first time, were involved in taking industrial action and TSSA members, although not directly affected at this time, were active in supporting public sector action. Nautilus members also demonstrated an awareness of why and when the action was taking place. Ballots were also occurring in all three unions throughout the duration of this research and it was not claimed by any member participating in the research that they were unaware or indeed unaffected by industrial

action in some shape or form. Prospect member and Scientific Officer, Lynn, explained:

‘The time for industrial action is when negotiations have stopped working. But that doesn’t mean I have any negativity towards it [industrial action]. When there was a strike a few months ago [30 June 2011 public sector strike], my daughter’s school went out on strike and it was a case of having to take a day’s leave, but nothing in me felt that that was bad. I was really supportive of the school even though it affected me. I was very pleased the school had taken a stand.’ [Interview: Lynn, 07/11/11]

Some managerial and professional workers did, however, advocate an end-of-the-line mentality, which was characterised by a general acknowledgement that attempts at dialogue, compromise and collaboration had failed, and the time for the ‘last resort’ had in fact arrived. In response to the ballot by the FDA union for strike action on 30 November 2011, Treasury Manager and FDA member, Tom, stated:

‘Frankly, it’s about time FDA stood up and voted for strike action. It’s time. If we don’t get a “yes” [in the ballot], I’m considering joining PCS, because its time unions—*all* unions—got stuck in. People are used to unions like mine being in the background, drawing a clear line when it comes to anything to do with industrial action, but that’s got to stop. All professionals are in the same boat these days.’ [Interview: Tom, 26/10/11]

New Prospect member, Robin, echoed this sentiment, suggesting that approaches towards industrial action may be shifting away from conciliation and towards challenge:

‘You’ve got to eventually show that you can’t be pushed around. It doesn’t really matter what you’re protesting about. I will be going on strike [on 30 November 2011] as it happens. I personally don’t feel terribly strongly about pensions to be honest, but that’s not the point. It’s about saying “you can’t have it your own way all the time”. It’s about sending a message, both within the organisation and to government. We [Prospect] had, I think, one of the strongest votes of all the unions, [in reference to the ballot for action on 30 November 2011], so I think there’s a change there.’ [Interview: Robin, 28/11/11]

Nautilus member and Second Officer onboard an international freight forwarding vessel, Winston, went further, suggesting that it is the union, and not workers, that is reluctant to endorse industrial action:

‘Industrial action is a must at all times, something which I think this union is scared to use. If they can use it in the public sector to get better pay and conditions, then why can’t we?’ [Interview: Winston, 18/02/12]

Some members were quite categorical in their support for industrial action:

‘If I felt strongly about an issue, I wouldn’t hesitate to take industrial action.’  
[Interview, Nautilus member, Davey, 17/01/12]

The implementation by Network Rail, in 2006, of an arbitrary and hugely controversial ‘forced ranking’ pay system, led managers, for the first time since their recognition by the TSSA in 2002, to vote overwhelmingly (95 per cent) in a consultative referendum, in favour of industrial action. Shortly afterwards, this resulted in the company’s decision to abandon the scheme (TSSA, 2006<sup>60</sup>). More recently, managers have taken further tentative steps towards collective measures that they might once have dismissed without consideration.

### **Political profile—an assessment of managerial and professional resistance to political ties**

Reluctance to affiliate to a political party has been a constant component of the wider debate on political affiliation. Strauss (1954) and Allen (1961), commenting on ‘white-collar unionism’ in the 1950s and 1960s in Britain and the US, claimed that hostility towards party political allegiance represented a hugely significant factor in white-collar unionisation. More notably, Allen recognised that ‘white-collar’ workers were unlikely to identify themselves with the political left; a theme that is reiterated by numerous commentators on white-collar union character (Lockwood, 1958, Abrams and Rose, 1960, Blondel, 1963), who argued that political attitudes are predominantly determined by class factors, where the working class has tended to be ‘left-wing’, with the manual/non-manual middle class leaning to the political right. A powerful indicator of detachment from the labour movement, aversion to party political affiliation points to an overarching desire on the part of managerial and professional unions, to be perceived as apolitical. Robertson (1984: 46) claimed that managers tended to vote Conservative in order to ‘reject the ideological undertones of traditional trade unionism’ and while this thesis does not suggest that this is a conscious action on the part of managerial and professional union members, it set out to examine the relationship between this group of workers’ aversion to the ‘political side’ of trade union membership and their personal and occupational status position.

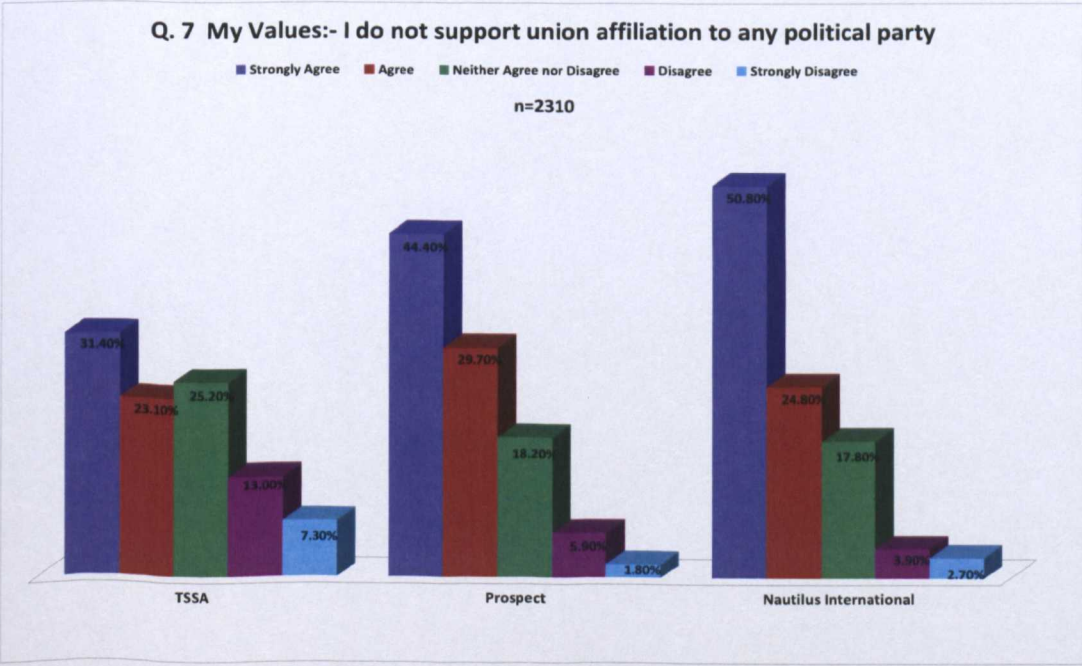
Few managerial or professional workers would seem to advocate the benefits of collectivism—as we traditionally and historically understand it—via party political

association or assimilation. Two of the collaborating unions in this research (Nautilus and Prospect) are without political affiliations which makes it impossible to determine membership based on allegiance to any party political agenda, although the third union (TSSA) is, for a comparatively small union, quite highly politicised, thereby enabling some dissemination of members’ attitudes towards political affiliation.

The political orientation of managerial and professional workers in this study was found to be significant. According to Nautilus Industrial Officer, Iain, the RMT union refers to Nautilus as ‘the bosses union’, the essence of which would seem to support the suggestion that ‘white-collar’ unions, although they developed from the political left (Bain, 1970), are nonetheless striving to remain independent of any manoeuvring by their union that might in some way lead to their being personally associated with a political bias to which they do not, either partially or wholly, subscribe.

Strong feelings manifested themselves among not only managers and professional workers, but also among union officers and other participants involved in this research. Question 7 of the survey questionnaire (see graph 6.5 below) and Question 8 of the key respondent interview schedule were posed to managerial and professional members of the case-study unions with the aim of eliciting their views on political affiliation.

Graph 6.5



Blackburn (1967: 39) asserted that many 'white-collar' unions are 'anxious to make clear their political neutrality'. From their responses to this survey question, it is clear that many managerial and professional members of the case-study unions harbour similar concerns. Around three quarters of Nautilus and Prospect respondents (based on aggregated agree and strongly agree ratings) stated lack of support for political affiliation. In the politically-affiliated TSSA, over half of survey respondents did not support affiliation to the Labour Party.

### **Political fund balloting—the TSSA example**

It is interesting to note recent trends from the TSSA's political fund ballots. These ballots must take place at least once every ten years. TSSA's first ballot, in 1985, took place after implementation of Conservative legislation and 69 per cent of TSSA members voted in favour (turnout figures were unavailable for this ballot). The next ballot took place in 1994, when 89 per cent of members voted 'yes' to retaining the political fund, with a turnout of 42 per cent, which was, according to TSSA's Head of Business and Campaigns, Frank Ward; 'the best result by far of any of the unions balloting' [during 1994]. The next ballot took place in 2004, resulting in a 78 per cent 'yes' vote, on a 26 per cent turnout. The first two ballots were held under a Conservative government, which made making the case for the political fund fairly straightforward. The 1994 ballot, for instance, took place during rail privatisation, which facilitated the TSSA's argument that a political fund was necessary in order to fight this process. The 2004 ballot, under a Labour government, was more difficult as some members saw the ballot as an opportunity to weaken links with the Labour party. The campaign, and its objectives, therefore needed to become more sophisticated.

TSSA Senior Regional Organiser, Joel, made the suggestion of dedicating more time and resources to educating potential members about the political fund and opt-out eligibility, and also considered the possibility of introducing multiple political funds (i.e. a party-political and a *non*-party politically affiliated fund) in order to appease members for whom this issue represented the deciding factor between union membership or non-union membership. At the time of this interview, seven per cent of TSSA members were shown to have opted-out of the political fund, with six per cent diverting this levy into the union's benevolent fund<sup>61</sup>. Joel suggested that an



underlying fear exists that people will want to opt-out of the political fund, so the union confines debate about it to a minimum, when perhaps this debate should be opened up within the TSSA, in order to address the concerns of—potentially significant numbers of—new members. He also admitted that this could be a risk:

‘we might be shooting ourselves in the foot, but it definitely shows a gap and I do think we keep our heads down on it...maybe we need to be more open about what political fund money is for’ [Interview: Joel: 08/04/10]

The 55 per cent figure recorded in response to survey questionnaire 7, despite some members’ testimony to the opposite in interviews, is unsurprising in view not only of the union’s historical links to the Labour Party, but also the role that political affiliation has played in shaping and steering union membership throughout a turbulent and intensively change-ridden industrial environment (Strangleman, 2004). Rail policies established during the nineteenth century required parliamentary approval, for example; for fare increases, or investment for infrastructure projects, and unions’ capacity to delay or frustrate the process of Bills being passed in the House of Commons constituted a powerful sanction (Lockwood, 1958), and therefore TUC and Labour Party affiliation, for the then RCA (now TSSA), were of ‘direct and immediate value in achieving material gains on freedom of association and on terms and conditions questions’ (Lockwood, 1958: 157).

### **Managerial and professional union members—distracted by politics?**

The TSSA has steadfastly maintained its affiliations, yet a substantial proportion of its managerial and professional membership remains hostile to what it interprets as unnecessary interference in party politics, at the expense of member representation.

One TSSA member and HR manager at Network Rail explained:

‘A union needs to be apolitical. It needs to do what’s best for its population and it needs to ask itself what’s the best, say, ten year outcome for the industry, what’s going to maximise the benefits for our members, just the same as if you were a charity. Those items should be linked to the success of the sector rather than any particular ideology, so I’d be keen to support membership of a workforce representative body that had the long term benefits of its members at heart, and *not* driven by a separate party political agenda. It’s difficult to separate long term strategies for a big sector from everyday politics, with a small p. Trying to do the best for individuals *is* a political thing, but it’s not a *party* political thing.’ [Interview: Malcolm, 03/08/10]



Rail industry Risk Manager, Jim, expressed a similar sentiment, suggesting that workers who share this view may be deterred from taking up union membership for this specific reason:

‘Some of the campaigns unions are involved in make you think “what the hell has that got to do with safeguarding jobs for members and helping recruit them in the future?” Unions should be working with universities and things, working out what’s going to be needed in the rail industry in ten or fifteen years’ time, to secure the future for people starting now. A lot of the time members don’t know what’s going on. I sometimes think they’d be better off pooling contributions and setting up an insurance company for redundancy. I guarantee you’ll get a better return on your investment. There’s so much unions can do to improve the lot of employees, they just need to leave political campaigning and leftist rubbish alone.’ [Interview: Jim, 05/08/10]

The issue of Labour Party affiliation has, according to Bain (1970: 115) generated ‘heated feelings among white-collar trade unionists’ and evidence gathered among managerial and professional union members in this research would suggest that this debate is no less vehement forty years hence. Most members interviewed expressed some form—and varying levels—of hostility to political affiliation, although this aversion appeared to point to a number of underlying factors.

The first factor mentioned in interviews with union members was the distinction between personal association with the political ‘left’ and membership of the trade union movement. Closely linked to this is some members’ distaste, and irritation, at being perceived, as a direct result of possessing union membership, as being naturally inclined to left-wing politics. Richard, TSSA member and manager at TfL explained:

‘I’ve gotten increasingly more right-wing as I’ve got older, I would describe myself, probably, as a very right-wing liberal democrat, or left-wing tory, and while I can see the logic of putting pressure on the relevant Labour Party...there’s an assumption made, that if you’re a TSSA member, that you’re naturally a Labour supporter, which is absolute nonsense. One of my [union] colleagues was going to be a Conservative candidate first time round...’ (the interviewee was making reference to candidacy for local elections which took place in 2010, and to assert that his union colleagues were of a similar political persuasion to himself) [Interview: Richard, 16/09/10]

One Prospect member reiterated this aspect. A self-confessed ‘Midlands countryside tory boy’, Donald claimed:

‘I’ve always been a tory, this comes from my father and my grandfather and when I think ‘union affiliation’, I automatically think ‘Labour Party’.

Underpinning all that is the way I've been brought up. To support it [political affiliation] would be going against my father and grandfather.' [Interview: Donald, 15/11/11]

Responses such as these are by no means isolated and suggest that white-collar workers reject political affiliation for what are essentially ideological reasons (Lockwood identified a similar rejection among 'white-collar' workers in 1958, who believed that trade union aims should not commit members to support any political party.) It is, however, evident that self-interest opposition is a concomitant factor to any ideological opposition, especially in light of some managerial and professional workers' testimony. If political affiliation of a trade union—irrespective of the opt-out capacity—signifies a particular allegiance that goes against the grain of the employers' objectives or interests, then it could, according to these workers, be potentially damaging to their career progression and reputation.

Goldthorpe et al (1968: 111) argued that 'white-collar' workers were 'not to any large degree committed to the traditional idea of the trade unions and the Labour Party as forming the industrial and political "wings" of an integrated labour movement'. The characteristics exhibited by many managerial and professional union members in this study reflect this position, with several members interviewed openly declaring their support for a particular political party, be that Conservative, Labour or Liberal Democrat, yet those who had allegiances to right-wing politics were generally those who expressed discomfort at being 'associated' with politics of the left. Irrespective of members' own politics, however, it was nonetheless suggested by many members that a union's commitment to a party political agenda was distracting. Prospect is not affiliated but does have a political fund which is used for campaigning purposes and Nautilus has neither affiliation nor a political fund. TSSA members, being part of a politically-affiliated union, therefore had more opinions to offer on this subject. TSSA member and Business manager at Network Rail, Sarah, stated:

'I'm a Labourite through and through, but I think the arguments the trade unions get into on a political basis are a distraction. I just don't think it should be happening. To me, union membership shouldn't be about supporting a particular political viewpoint, it should be about representing members, working towards strengthening laws, protecting the individual.' [Interview: Sarah, 27/10/11]

A supporter of Labour Party affiliation; Anthony, TSSA member and manager at ATOC expressed the belief that political affiliation gives a political voice to members, is valuable and worth preserving:

‘The TSSA does a lot of good work, for example, in Zimbabwe, but a lot of members see this as just leftist political nonsense. They think it’s a good thing, but don’t see how it benefits them in their workplace, which is what they see the union’s priority as being. Members want the union to work hard on preserving pension rights, reducing inflation, concentrating on the future of the rail industry and individual employment rights—focusing down on the individual.’ [Interview: Anthony, 25/10/11]

A non-union member, and senior rail industry professional, explained that although he was a supporter of unions *generally*, he was deterred from joining from fear and unease over the supposed connotations that ‘others’ would make about his political leanings and the potential effect that this would have on his professional status:

‘It’s the thought process, isn’t it? You’re in the union—you vote Labour. People make that assumption. It’s pretty generalised. You can’t always afford for that to be the case though. Take rail renationalisation. The Labour Party’s supposed to be in favour of it, not so’s you’d notice, yet it flies in the face of everything the employers are trying to achieve; in the train operating companies, in Network Rail and suchlike. The employer gets a much better deal out of the railways *not* being renationalised, so they have to oppose it. At senior level within that industry, you have to oppose it too. Or at least be seen to.’ [Interview: Jake, 03/08/10]

Interviews with Prospect members revealed similar sentiments, although most interviewees had less to offer in the form of detailed explanation for their rejection of political affiliation. Nathan, a manager at the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), a few years into his first job, post-study, and new member of Prospect, stated, simply: ‘Unions should represent their members and not play politics.’ [Interview: Nathan, 17/10/11]. Martin, Prospect activist and engineer at NATS, claimed that political affiliation obscures effective day-to-day functioning of the union and results in the union becoming:

‘bogged down by dogma and policy...it doesn’t get the job done. You can function very well as a union without any party political influence. Prospect has got it right by being neutral. I work with a staunch Conservative activist, yet some are quite Labour. Generally we don’t know one another’s politics. Politics doesn’t come into it. It turns people off.’ [Interview: Martin, 18/10/11]

Kate, TSSA classified-grade member and new rep, added:

‘Peoples’ political allegiances can change over time, so the union’s position isn’t always going to be consistent with an individual’s. If the union does something in a certain way, politically, that you disagree with, then because you’re a member of that union, then you’re agreeing by association, by default, and to me, that’s just not right.’ [Interview: Kate, 24/11/11]

Martin was keen, in a similar vein to Richard at the TSSA, to make the point that individuals who declare right-wing political leanings are no less effective as trade union members, or indeed activists. Martin added that he felt that Prospect members *in general* viewed the issue of political affiliation with significant negativity, and to the extent that this in itself would be sufficient to deter prospective members from joining Prospect, and that at the very least political affiliation ‘would put them off’.

Prospect member and MoD employee, Leonard, suggested that the political debate has extended beyond the ‘main parties’ (Conservative, Labour, Liberal) and that this is a factor worth considering:

‘You’ve got more than the three mainstream parties these days—Greens, Independents, religious and cultural groups. A union needs to be able to remove the possibility of conflict of interest. It can’t do that if it’s affiliated to a political party.’ [Interview: Leonard, 21/11/11]

The issue of neutrality is one that was referred to consistently throughout interviews with members from the three unions. Prospect member, Hannah, supported Prospect’s apolitical stance, stating that:

‘Neutrality is best, that way the demographic of its [Prospect’s] membership and its own organisational structure can dictate its direction from the *inside*, rather than being obliged to an external force.’ [Interview: Hannah, 19/10/11]

Prospect member, Lynn, explained:

‘Political affiliation is definitely a real deal-breaker for Prospect. They’re independent and they’ve got that right, that position of independence. If I thought Prospect was affiliated to any political party, I don’t think I’d be happy about it. The union needs to have the freedom to be able to argue publicly with ministers and political affiliation would thwart that, it would reduce and weaken the union’s position. If we can’t do that, if we can’t have those arguments, then it breaks our legs.’ [Interview: Lynn, 07/11/11]

Prospect member and engineer, Ralph, highlighted the strength of feeling that some members possess on this issue:

'I felt so strongly about this issue when I was a member of IPMS [fore-running union to Prospect], that when it eventually voted in favour of affiliating to the TUC, I almost resigned. I totally reject anything political in connection with trade unions. Impartiality is crucial; the union has more credibility not being affiliated to a political party.'  
[Interview: Ralph, 22/11/11]

### **Political affiliation and the notion of control**

In research undertaken among managerial union and non-union members at Network Rail in 2009<sup>62</sup>, a strong sense emerged that unions should not engage in political undertakings on behalf of members. It was suggested by non-union members that there was a strong element of 'not in my name' attached to the issue of political affiliation. One non-union member claimed that potential members' reticence to join unions could be summed up by their reluctance to be perceived as 'signing up by proxy' to something with which they fundamentally disagreed, and perhaps more significantly, to something that was considered to be outwith their sphere of control. By way of contextualising, and perhaps emphasising, this notion of control, the manager stated that:

'I'm very happy to donate to charity, because I can *see* the charity's mandate and I know it's unable to venture outside that charter. With a trade union, I'm unable to influence that strategy, so there's a loss of control over my support. My support may be used for things that I don't necessarily agree with...it's a deciding factor for many people. I would feel, myself, morally debarred from encouraging union membership because of party political overtones. I don't have any party affiliations, but I would nonetheless feel unable to recommend membership if I knew that a trade union was providing monies to a political party.' [Interview: Non-unionised HR Manager, 03/04/09]

Views similar to this were expressed by many managers interviewed, who focused not only on being unable to influence the strategies chosen and implemented by the government of the union, but on the fact that visibility of these strategies and machinations are restricted, which may result in a lack of trust over how members' money is spent. The majority of interview feedback from non-union member managers suggested that it would be preferable for unions to divert resources away from political affiliation and focus instead on devising alternative strategies for delivering benefits to members. One manager claimed that this could be done by:

‘increasing the human capital of its [the union’s] full-time officers, who should be concentrating on things like business development, not unlike an opposition party, if you like, where there’s a shadow financial director, for example, who looks at how the railway’s being run and how the union can meet its needs. Where’s the alternate brain power located? A union should be able to say to the ORR or DfT ‘there are other business approaches that might work and our research shows...here’s an alternative model that you should consider alongside the ones you’re already considering’. Unions need to consider the arguments that are going to win over members. Protesting solely on perceived moral grounds isn’t going to work because there are too many emotions involved.’ [Interview: Network Rail Manager, 04/04/09]

It is impossible to ignore this manager’s suggestion that the union will enjoy greater success if it adopts the employer’s position in order to establish a successful union-employer relationship. This is echoed in Thompson’s (2003: 363) assertion that employers’ commitment and trust-building measures in the employment relationship will ‘focus on investment and human capital’.

Another (unionised) manager similarly commented on unions’ internal structure, claiming that:

‘Unions sit and wait to see what’s proposed and then react, rather than having their own ‘shadow’ approach. They need to make their responses sector-wide, and consider economies of scale. They should consider, if they were a company or a sector, how they would do things, instead of trying to fight tooth and nail to maintain the status quo. This approach is a litmus paper of fair play...I’d rather my subs were being spent on developing the union’s employees’ expertise in relation to how other countries, providers, organisations, do things, develop a sector-wide approach. It’s easier to adjust peoples’ minds *before* they’ve made a decision than trying to get them to react *to* a decision. *Up to* a decision point people have a pretty open mind, *beyond* it they’re already thinking about something else, so the union’s on the back foot.’ [Interview: Network Rail Manager, 04/04/09]

To infer that unions need to rely less on the moral or emotional factors referred to by some rail industry managers, and increase their appeal to take account of the business mind-set is a concept that clearly aligns itself with the business unionism model referred to by Commons (1966), in particular the notion of creating an internal union structure that mimics, or mirrors, the structure of industry.

Members participating in this research who responded to interview question 8 made reference to the connection between political affiliation and the notion of control. Some members felt that by agreeing, either in principle or by association, to Labour Party affiliation, that they would be forfeiting their ability to control the way in which their money was spent and subscribing to certain actions or behaviour undertaken by the union on their behalf denoted removal of control. For example, Sean, TSSA member and manager at TfL, explained:

‘To what extent should a trade union get involved in Amnesty International, for example? If *you* want to get involved with Amnesty, then *you* join Amnesty, you don’t want to do it through your union. Similarly, you don’t want to join six or seven charities and run *that* through involvement with your union either...when you get older, cynical, rich, etc., you start to want something for *you*. You don’t want things being done in your name.’ [Interview: Sean, 15/09/10]

Inherent in the assumption contained within two of Blackburn and Prandy’s criteria for ‘unionateness’—TUC and Labour Party affiliation—is the notion that these affiliations ‘imply a commitment to a broadly similar body of principles and beliefs’ (Price, 1983: 167). Control over external perception of an individual’s political persuasion is clearly something that arguably continues to figure prominently in some managers’ and professionals’ union membership.

### **The relevance of political affiliation among the unionised managerial and professional community**

For many members interviewed as part of this research, political affiliation was not deemed to add anything of value to the basic or ‘grass roots’ function of a trade union. It was felt that political affiliation ‘has no place’ in modern trade unions and that its role has gone some way to being rendered defunct in view of weakened links with the Labour Party, especially post-1997, when many members suggested that the role of unions was further weakened by the incumbent Labour Party’s refusal to validate the role of unions in the wider political framework. Thus the question was raised as to why their unions should continue to commit funds to a political entity that not only appeared to have diminished respect for the movement to which it is traditionally and historically linked, but which has also manifestly refused to engage with unions with a view to effecting serious and meaningful change in the industries and organisations represented by managerial and professional unions. TSSA member, Sean, focused on

this point, outlining the impact—or lack thereof—that unions have on politics in a wider sense:

‘Looking at transport unions—TSSA, ASLEF and RMT—they’ve had no real impact on Labour’s rail policy...they certainly don’t have any impact on Conservative policy, so why would you bother?’ [Interview: Sean, 15/09/10]

A changing political landscape was referred to by Rodney, TSSA member and manager at TfL, who claimed that:

‘While the Labour Party is still the party that’s most likely to support trade unions, its links to the trade union movement have become destabilised and undermined. The Labour Party’s failure, after its election in 1997, to work towards restoration of trade union legislation was interpreted by many as being representative of political desertion by the party whose support had traditionally and historically bolstered the trade union movement.’ [Interview: Rodney, 15/09/10]

Paul, TSSA member and Data Editor, supported this:

‘The days of the Labour Party fighting for the ordinary workers are long gone, politicians are only interested in feathering their own nests.’ [Interview: Paul, 01/12/10]

A shift in support for the Labour Party was not unnoticed by others. In an interview with Malcolm Wallace, author of *Single or Return* (1996; a book charting the official history of the TSSA), it was stated that:

‘The Labour Party embraces capitalism with a socialist rule book—it *has* done positive things, but the motivation now is to satisfy the interests of the middle class. It attacks working people through legislation and has lost touch with them. It sees no value in them, other than as voting fodder. There’s no incentive to bring railways back into public ownership and the Labour Party is ideologically failing.’ [Interview: Malcolm Wallace, 30/06/10]

Dave Porter, President of the TSSA between 2001 and 2005 reiterated this:

‘I believe the Labour Party sees trade unions merely as a contributor of funds—the rhetoric has changed, but reality has not.’ [Interview: Dave Porter, 23/06/10]

Aware of the majority of their membership’s political persuasion, most union officers who participated in this research noted managerial and professional workers’ apparent failure to make any connection between progressing the collective agenda at an industrial level and acknowledging which branch of politics is more conducive to



progressing that agenda within the legislative framework. There was also acknowledgement that the attitude of: ‘we don’t want that from a trade union. We understand what the purpose is, but we don’t want it, so why do we need to be a part of it’ was likely to be common.

Taking into account McCarthy’s (1960) suggestion that non-manual unions needed to revisit their overall configuration if they were to continue to appeal to a growing workforce, this chapter has considered contributions by interviewees in this research, which infer, in some cases, that unions do not actually *need* political affiliation. It has been suggested that its relevance has become outmoded and modern managerial and professional unions are more ably prepared to act as ‘stand-alone’ organisations, for which political affiliation is no longer a valid pre-requisite. While Prospect and Nautilus are not politically affiliated, there is still a strong sense of rejection of the notion of political affiliation among many members. They were eager to discuss their feelings about it, and some were openly concerned that it may become a factor at some point in their union membership; a factor which is demonstrably unpalatable for the majority of members who have contributed to this research. Goldthorpe et al’s (1968: 111) assertion that ‘in the consciousness of many of our affluent workers the political involvement of their union is not a matter of any great saliency’ is relevant—political fund opt-out figures would support this and yet it remains an issue that invites dialogue. Lockwood (1958: 197) stated—as Bain would similarly iterate twelve years later—that the issue of political affiliation has been ‘hotly debated’ throughout the history of trade unionism. It would appear to be no less the case in 2011.

## **Conclusion**

The approach taken by managerial and professional workers who have participated in this research is, despite certain ambiguities, relatively clear about the lack of alignment of their trade union membership with what could be considered to be the more traditional, or classical, aims and objectives of trade unionism. While the majority of these workers expressed a desire to pursue and sustain union membership, there was found to be little alignment with the ideological dimensions that distinguish the unions themselves.

The role of the employer also appeared to be significant in relation to this group of workers' articulation of collectivism. Blackburn and Prandy (1965, in Hyman and Price, 1983: 223) stated the need to consider the factors that give rise to the 'need and desire on the part of non-manual workers to undertake collective rather than individual action'. They furthermore argued that the behaviour and attitude of the employer were paramount; an element of which appears to have manifested itself in outputs from both interview and survey questionnaire data provided by managerial and professional workers who have participated in this research.

Subtle differences emerged from interviews and observations with managerial and professional members from the three unions, for whom the majority favoured a more collaborative mode of working between their union and employer. The way in which these workers manage a situation whereby these processes fail to function, however, will be crucial. It was difficult to engage members on the ways in which they might articulate tensions in the event that these processes break down. Convinced of their effectiveness, the proponents of partnership-style working were not disposed to consider the model's failure and could therefore not be drawn on the eventuality of dealing with the malfunction of partnership.

As is evident from some of the interview testimony, this position is not always adopted as a 'first choice' (mainly the case within the TSSA), but with the objective of utilising fresh means to achieve a desired end. In the case of Prospect and Nautilus however, partnership working was a more established way of working and was considered to be effective. Where relationships with employers in Prospect, however, had been successful in the past, there was a sense of nervousness among some officers within the union that the element of union-employer reciprocity that had been enjoyed previously might well become fragile, or even breakdown. Nautilus members were largely unconcerned with the way in which partnership functioned, so long as there was some form of mutually agreed parameters in place between the union and employer as this was felt to represent the best way of conducting the 'business relationship'.

Many managerial and professional members of Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA have demonstrated a form of collectivism that appears to be effective not only in terms of

membership cohesion and activity, but also in relation to these unions' ability to maintain steady-state membership and a slower rate of decline to that of manual, or blue-collar, union (or sector, in the case of Nautilus and TSSA) decline. Evidence of this can be found in the increasing numbers of members in Prospect and the TSSA who have voted for industrial action over issues such as pay and pensions and the number of members who are formulating a cohesive approach to managing workplace change. Reynaud, in his reference to A. J. N. Blain's study of British airline pilots (*Pilots and Management*<sup>63</sup>) remarked that 'white-collar' workers 'regarded themselves as an elite group of professionals ...adopting a working class means in pursuit of a distinctly middle class objective' (1969, in Bain and Price, 1983: 266) and this is an observation which, it could be argued, closely mirrors the position in which many managerial and professional members of Nautilus, Prospect and TSSA have situated themselves.

## **Conclusion**

### **Gauging the contemporary managerial and professional climate—an analysis of Nautilus International, Prospect and TSSA**

#### **Introduction**

This research set out to establish the reasons why, during a time of overall trade union membership decline, managerial and professional membership of three case study unions—Nautilus International, Prospect and the TSSA—was found to be relatively stable. The research explored members' drivers and motivations to unionisation and analysed their priorities, attitudes and beliefs. Dissemination of the key characteristics of individualised work and the factors that have been instrumental in attracting managerial and professional workers to union membership led to identification of a process that I have termed sub-collectivism. That these workers seek unionisation goes some way to supporting Bain's (1970: 188) projection that 'trade unions will be just as necessary and useful to the white-collar workers of the twentieth century as they were to the 'sweated' manual workers of the nineteenth century'. This research provides evidence, gathered predominantly from interview and survey questionnaire data, of a shift away from the 'less adversarial' industrial relations climate to which Cave (1994) referred and towards a more collectivist approach. This approach, however, was found to be subtle; less readily identifiable. The way in which this collectivisation was found to be occurring was also novel insofar as it manifested itself almost inadvertently, or by default.

Jenkins and Sherman (1979: 141) referred to the 'realisation of the ever-growing collectivisation in society'; a notion that is not lost on the unions whose members have been involved in this research. This collectivisation manifests itself in different ways and this research highlights the way in which managerial and professional workers have started to adjust their behaviour in a way that impacts quite uniquely on the configuration of managerial and professional unionism. Fifty years ago, McCarthy (1962: 4) advocated the drastic need for unions to extend their appeal if they were to avoid becoming 'the outdated representatives of a declining industrial minority'.

Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA have recognised this need and embraced and interpreted it in a variety of ways.

Evidence gathered as part of this research suggests that these unions are demonstrating an element of resilience. This is due in part to the structural environment in which these workers are experiencing work. While privatisation has ravaged the public sector, the private sector has seen managerial and professional workers become increasingly vulnerable. This work focuses on the damage that is inflicted on morale as a result of reorganisation and restructure and suggests that managerial and professional workers are disproportionately affected by this in the sense that it is they who must carry the burden of risk and navigate the 'trade-off between skills and work security' (Mounier, 2001: 21). The changing workplace terrain inhabited by managerial and professional workers has therefore informed much of this research and that this has had any impact at all on unionisation is in itself a compelling barometer of collectivism among this group of workers.

### **Challenges to the literature**

The majority of literature that has addressed 'white-collar unionism' in its entirety was written over forty years ago. Major contributors to knowledge on 'white-collar' workers and unions such as Lockwood (1958), Blackburn (1967) and Bain (1970) have acknowledged certain characteristics, such as political predilection and an acceptance of militancy (albeit in extreme scenarios), which are recognisable among many managerial and professional members who have been involved in this study. This is not to conflate the two distinct groups, but to emphasise that certain traits exhibited by 'white-collar' workers of the past bear some similarity to those who occupy managerial or professional roles today.

More recently, much has been written on individual aspects of managerial and professional unionism; for example; Bryson and Forth's (2010) work on union membership and influence, Brown and Edwards' (2009) work on workplace change and organisation, Hickey et al's (2009) work on union renewal and Strangleman's (2004) work on industry culture. These writers have highlighted issues that face many of the managerial and professional workers who have been involved in this study. In addition to the large-scale workplace reconfiguration that has taken place over the

past few decades, things like job title distinction and role definition have changed almost immeasurably. Smith (1987: 92), for example, recognised that there is 'an increasing lack of fit between the title and content of a job'. This recognition supports claims by union officers involved in this study, that industry workers are becoming less readily identifiable. Job identity, by which workers were traditionally recognised by their job title, has become obscured and previously clear social identification has become diluted, which may have contributed to a diminishing sense of status among managerial and professional workers. Have attitudes among the managerial and professional work community changed in tandem with these developments? What this research has done is to look at the extent to which this group of workers has developed its mind-set to accommodate significant workplace change in addition to an unstable labour market and a volatile economy. Have the managerial and professional workers interviewed here fundamentally changed their position in relation to the major factors affecting their work and unionisation, or are there other factors at play which distinguish these workers from the white-collar workers of yesteryear?

This thesis has found that a series of contradictions are apparent, which have drawn attention to the need to examine and evaluate managerial and professional workers, work and workplaces from a fresh perspective. It has, furthermore, found that changes to both labour market and the nature of work being performed by managerial and professional workers affects fundamental definitions relating to this particular group. This suggests that any neatly defined parameters into which manual and non-manual workers of the past may have been inserted are no longer so easily distinct, or recognisable, in the contemporary work or market-place. Changes to status—as opposed to class—are demonstrative of this. That many managerial and professional members of the case-study unions in this research have indicated that threats being made to their professional or vocational status are those that cause them the most chagrin highlights the significance of this change and is one that this thesis has found to be significant both in terms of analysing managerial and professional workers' priorities and drivers to unionisation, but also in relation to the way in which the case-study unions are addressing and responding to this particular group.

This thesis has attempted to interrogate the nature of managerial and professional work, class and status position in order to respond to Carter's (1985: 93) acknowledgement of the lack of any 'systematic study of what managers do, the social significance of their day-to-day relations and how changes in their functions relate to their growing tendency to organise'. The way in which organisation among managerial and professional members of the case-study unions was found to be taking place suggests that this group of workers is adopting a more proactive approach to the safeguarding of their managerial, vocational or professional reputation, skills and status. And yet the way in which this approach was being undertaken is not manifested in an immediately obvious sense.

### **A culture of sub-collectivism**

This research suggests that a culture of sub-collectivism among managerial and professional workers in Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA has begun to emerge. While it may be disagreeable among some rank-and-file trade unionists to claim that managerial and professional workers are in fact what some might refer to as the new vulnerable workers, it is nonetheless the case that this group of workers has, over the past decade, experienced equalisation of threat with those faced by manual, or blue-collar, workers. This threat has produced a set of circumstances that many managerial and professional workers are facing, in some cases, for the first time. It could also be argued that less distinct differentiation between 'managers and managed' has also served to counteract focus on separate, or individualised, interests, which may have subsequently contributed to the adoption of a sub-collective approach by managerial and professional workers.

Less likely than their predecessors to be socialised into trade unionism, many new managerial and professional workers are seeking something different from their trade union membership. They have raised their expectations in line with those that they would demand from any other 'professional' organisation or institution and in spite of the overt 'servicing' connotations attached to this notion; this group of workers has begun to behave, often unwittingly, in a way that challenges the traditional position of managerial and professional unionism—individualism. This behaviour is manifested in members' allegiance to the aims and objectives of their union, which is taking place *in spite of* their aversion to all the trade union movement has traditionally held

dear—the ability and need to withdraw labour, collective bargaining, close proximity to the political party whose roots are inexorably linked to trade unionism. While establishment of this sub-culture is not symptomatic of the kind of union growth that Lockwood (1958: 185) likened to ‘an infection going round the country like influenza’, it is nonetheless apparent that a locus in which managerial and professional workers are collectivising is being constructed.

There is recognition among managerial and professional workers that the economic climate makes trade union membership more important than ever. These workers’ jobs are becoming, in some cases, as precarious as their manual counterparts’, their status is exposed to insecurity, they are subject to greater work intensification, and they find themselves in increased need of support, advice, guidance on employment rights, and access to training in order to secure continued employment in the event of redundancy. It could therefore be claimed that one of the repercussions of the current labour market, economy and political landscape is that managerial and professional workers, faced with the prospect of losing their function, their place in the social hierarchy, and what they see as their identity, have left trade unions with little choice but to adapt to the demands and challenges posed by managerial and professional employment. As this has become more concentrated, managerial and professional workers’ ability to take control of the administration and management of their occupations has diminished. Coupled with the current economic situation, this has produced a surge in attempts to fortify this group of workers’ work situation and in doing so, individual workers, with individual concerns, have started to express their unease via collective methods, even if they do so reluctantly, or sub-consciously. It is for this reason that I have termed this process sub-collectivism.

### **The factors that cause managerial and professional union members to collectivise**

This research has undertaken considerable analysis of the factors that are causing managerial and professional members of the three case-study unions to collectivise. In addition to labour market, economic and workplace change, these members displayed categorical opinions and perceptions that framed their wider perspective in relation to trade union membership. These centred around professional behaviour, methods of conducting union-employer relationships, industrial action and political profile and affiliation.



## Revisiting the notion of professionalism

One facet of the managerial and professional profile that has steadfastly prevailed over time; that of status, is a crucial yardstick of managerial and professional occupations and objectives. According to Allen (1971: 93), non-manual workers have always been distinguished by their 'striving for prestige' and most 'white-collar' organisations, according to Blackburn (1967) were concerned with status, and there was once a clear and demonstrable fear that any form of militancy would result in loss of that status (Millerson, 1964). These organisations therefore traditionally limited militancy, preferring to achieve results by less direct or confrontational methods. For instance, making 'representations' to employers, as opposed to 'bargaining', was an approach that was often favoured, with the objective of appearing more reasonable to the employer (Prandy, 1965). Such approaches bear remarkable similarities to many of the approaches attributed to partnership working by many respondents in this study, who have categorically rejected the notion that partnership working represents an 'if you can't beat them, join them' approach, claiming instead that it not only represents a more mature means of establishing mutual investment by union and employer, but also incorporates an additional layer of protection to what is often seen as an already precarious employment relationship. It could be argued that such a position is naïve, and yet respondents were serious about the benefits of collaborative union-employer relationships and practices.

Some respondents involved in this study claimed that they aimed to establish a role as 'stakeholders', whereby they would reinforce the union's ability to contribute more fully to the business or industry, and which they believed stood them in better stead to secure job retention and growth. The way in which this is achieved was of paramount importance to the majority of respondents, who exhibited general consensus that pre-agreed, formalised sets of procedures (and behaviour) would benefit both union *and* employer and that 'winding up' the employer or being deliberately intractable was fruitless. This approach was linked to what many managerial and professional members characterised as 'collective bargaining' and which was therefore rejected as a viable means of conducting successful union-employer relations. To relate to recent literature in this area, the research supports Danford et al's (2007: 309) study of the UK aerospace industry which found that non-manual groups of workers felt that formal partnership agreements 'codified mutual support for the principle that both

sides display “a commitment to work together to achieve certain things and to develop partnership””. It might therefore be reasonable to argue that the notion of social closure that is discussed in this thesis is one that has resonance with the managerial and professional members of the case-study unions.

### **The legacy of industrial action and dealing with a shift in perspective**

Despite a continued hostility and nervousness about industrial action, evidence began to emerge that demonstrates a shift, albeit remote, in managerial and professional workers’ attitudes towards industrial action. The translation of industrial action as a ‘last resort’ *notion* to an *actual reality* seemed to suggest that many managerial and professional workers felt that they had arrived at a position to which they had hitherto not been exposed. At a time when many managerial and professional members feel that employers (and the government) have the ‘upper hand’, some members feel that the time has come to ‘make a stand’ or that there is in fact ‘nothing to lose’ by taking industrial action. In a situation where employers are deemed to have what one manager referred to as ‘clearer shots at heads above parapets’, it would be natural to assume that now might not be the time for *any* worker to resort to the ballot box. Yet this element did not appear to have affected managerial and professional workers in this study to any marked extent.

Where previously the majority of managerial and professional union members might have been persistently averse to any form of action that would in any way damage or undermine the company, organisation, institution, or brand, even a slight shift in approach could signify the potential for considerably reconfiguring the overall managerial and professional standpoint on industrial action. Professional pride as a direct inhibitor to industrial action appeared to be much less prevalent in the face of threats to jobs and livelihoods having become more pronounced. There was recognition that managerial and professional members of the three unions are affected, perhaps now more than ever, by a sense of unfairness. For example, Prospect’s Head of Research described how the ‘top echelons’ of companies and organisations; ‘are subject to a different set of rules, and their pay being unconstrained’. This further reinforces testimony put forward by many members interviewed who admitted to experiencing a heightened sense of resentment, bitterness and injustice at treatment being meted out by employers in the form of

attacks on pay, terms and conditions. This research demonstrates that many members of Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA are in the process of succumbing, in response, to a sense of collectivism that they are realising will pay dividends in if not securing, then at least protecting in the short-term, their career and professional and vocational interests.

Having actively participated in various (pay related) disputes over the past three years, the TSSA's managerial and professional members showed distinct signs of changing their position on industrial action. As this thesis was finalised, the union was preparing to ballot its managerial-grade membership for industrial action after two thirds of its managerial-grade membership voted to reject Network Rail's managerial-grade pay offer of 2.5 per cent. If managerial and professional workers continue to be aggrieved to the extent by which they are prepared to vote for and take industrial action then it might be reasonable to assume that the tide is turning in relation to this group of workers' position on industrial action.

### **The challenge of reconciling unfamiliar politics**

Where it could be argued that politics are fundamentally a disagreement over priorities, would it be fair to assume that the objective of Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA to support and cater for members' standard of living and working conditions overrides party political considerations?

Self-proclaimed 'professional' unions; Nautilus and Prospect, quite categorically rejected the notion of political aims running in tandem with protection of their membership. In doing so, they claimed that they were satisfying fully the expectation and desire of their members to adopt a position of political neutrality. The situation was found to be slightly more complex at the TSSA, where despite the majority of managerial and professional members interviewed revealing antipathy towards political affiliation, political fund ballot results presented a conflicting picture. There were several reasons for this, although evidence emerged to suggest that lack of knowledge or understanding among members as to the objective and function of the political fund may be attributable.

Many managerial and professional members interviewed displayed an unambiguous preference for their union to dissociate itself from political allegiance and adopt a more independent position. Prospect members in particular (and officers) made reference to an 'independent voice'. It was suggested that any voice that is dependent is considered to be partial, fragmentary, limiting, whereas independence is seen as 'sincere', 'representative'. It was furthermore suggested that employers take advantage of situations that occur when independent voice is absent. It is with this in mind that many members of the case-study unions felt that political independence, or neutrality, was critical in permitting them the 'freedom' to function and that political ties were an unnecessary encumbrance.

It became clear, both from findings from the survey questionnaire and from interviews, that the political life of the union was considered to be significant. Many members raised the issue of detachment of the political from the personal and data gathered from this research would appear to reinforce support for political neutrality. In addition to views and perceptions held by many managerial and professional workers vis-à-vis political affiliation, many new entrants into this work community brought with them a sense of distaste at being in some way 'labelled' politically. Association, or *perceived* association, with the ideals of the political 'left' were deemed by many to be unpalatable, and as such were, in the main, rejected by this group of workers. Anathema to many rank-and-file trade unionists, officers were faced with the task of some way aligning their managerial and professional members' politics with their trade union membership. Despite incongruities and diversity in the internal structure, behaviour and practice of the unions, the way in which this could be achieved was not considered to be without significance.

This research has shown that, in spite of the effects and implications of labour market factors, political allegiance or indifference, firm agreement existed among union members interviewed that they considered the most significant purpose of their union to be representation, regardless of the mechanisms of its delivery. In their view, the basic function of that representation should, as Flanders (1968: 42) asserted, provide; 'protection, a shield for their members...protect not only their material standards of living, but equally their security, status and self-respect, in short their dignity as human beings'.

### **Individual characteristics—collective response: accommodating a new type of trade unionist**

The definition of a managerial or professional worker began with analysis of historical definition in chapter one and addressed the characteristics of managerial and professional work and workers in later chapters. Traditionally reserved for the university educated or occupationally accredited, the meaning of the term 'professional' has expanded to embrace a wider range of occupations (Smith, 1987). This expansion has inevitably culminated in more people being awarded the title of 'manager'. This was supported by evidence from both members and officers in the three unions. Such job title expansion, coupled with massive workplace change, has produced a fresh approach among unionised managerial and professional workers. Changes to employment relationships brought about by new management structures and the impact this has had on individualism and collectivism has also been instrumental in reconfiguring definitions of these workers (Martinez-Lucio and Stewart, 1997). Findings from this research would suggest that in the main, this group is characterised as one that seeks collaboration with employers, avoids industrial action as a dispute resolution mechanism (although is less prepared to dismiss it out of hand), adopts a position of political neutrality and accommodates a politically right-wing membership.

Significantly different in both social and attitudinal make-up, members entering these three case-study unions are doing so from a position that has hitherto been scarcely defined. While Nautilus and Prospect are well disposed to accommodate a fresh style, the TSSA finds itself faced with the decision as to whether it should persevere in attempting to instil traditional trade union ideology and values into a new type of managerial and professional worker, many of whom are entering employment with no prior knowledge of trade unionism, or whether it should adapt and respond to a new form of union member, whose politics, priorities and perspectives, to a great extent, redefine managerial and professional union membership? A challenge unmitigated by the fact that the union's largest sector is 'blue-collar', and yet declining, while its smallest sector, the managerial-grade sector, is, if not flourishing then sustaining steady-state membership in addition to representing a promising potential growth market for the union. 'Under new management', the TSSA is presented with the opportunity to revisit its priorities as a genuine all-grades union and consider whether

there is value to be gained in re-examining its position in relation to the demands, ideas and expectations of its managerial-grade sector.

Developments in all three unions led some union officers to propose that it was perhaps now necessary to adapt their union's position in order to respond effectively to their managerial and professional members and the way in which they conduct their union membership. It was suggested that if unions could, without compromising 'what we stand for', make themselves more acceptable, more appealing to managerial and professional workers and their aspirations, then this may be more effective than relying on what officers deemed to be unions' 'traditional strengths'.

### **The future of organising for Nautilus, Prospect and TSSA**

This research suggests that the response to raising the priorities of workers is, in the case of Nautilus and Prospect, to meet the employer on an equal footing, in a collaborative and non-combative manner. The TSSA adopts a somewhat different position. It is with this in mind that we must ask the question: 'what does this mean for organising?'

It could be argued that the existence of the closed shop was accompanied by a certain complacency, which meant that unions generally had forgotten *how* to organise. Unions, during the 1980s and 1990s, had become marginalised and whereas they had previously been an important part of society, new legislation, high unemployment and falling membership meant that they had started to lose power. The 1980s saw political power, along with perceptions of union power, further diminished. Large-scale privatisation that took place during the 1990s brought its own set of challenges to trade unions, and the atomisation of industry compounded threats to union power. The way in which privatisation was undertaken made it difficult for unions to organise. More and more resources were needed in order to be able to effectively organise and yet the three unions under study in this research have managed to organise successfully, albeit by using distinctly different methods.

Former TSSA President, Dave Porter, referred to the workplace as: 'the last area of dictatorship'. Given that capitalist society is one that maintains its own interests and when priorities are profit-related, it seems reasonable to assume that workers' welfare

will be concomitantly subjected to detriment. All three unions under study in this research were therefore undertaking considerable work in order to raise workers' issues, concerns and conditions to a higher priority. The strategies adopted in order to achieve this, however, differed between unions.

As the modern workplace has evolved, career trajectories have become more complex (Brown and Edwards, 2009). They are no longer conducted on a 'cradle-to-grave' basis, traditional patterns of work have shifted to incorporate flexibility and adaptability, and workers are also faced with the challenge of navigating increasingly fraught circumstances brought about by economic instability and political asperity. It is therefore crucial for the unions in this study to be able to build on already reasonably robust densities and develop vigorous retention plans as a means of mitigating the potentially destabilising effects of further economic deterioration. So how is this to be achieved?

In response to publication of the 2011 trade union membership figures<sup>64</sup>, Gall (2011: 1) questioned whether organising is now in fact 'up to the task of working on a terrain that is much more difficult and inhospitable' and as such, it is worth being mindful that many workers involved in this study were experiencing professional insecurity for the first time and that this may consequently present obstacles to organising. Many of these workers, however, retained a positive view that their union membership would help protect them in the face of threat to their career. One rail industry union member claimed that unions remain an important part of the social fabric of the country, and are therefore essential in forming a counter-balance against 'ludicrous globalism'. The ways in which Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA mobilise and manage this process will be crucial to their recruitment and retention of managerial and professional workers not only in unstable labour market conditions, but also from the point of view of their validity in the managerial and professional union community. These unions *are* organising, although they are taking perceptibly different approaches, are constructing different routes, and have distinctly different objectives. What the implications are for each of these unions will now be discussed.

## **Nautilus—expanding further into Europe**

Despite mergers with Dutch and Swiss maritime unions, the main industrial issue for Nautilus presently is an ageing membership. There is an acknowledged decline in the number of maritime professionals and Nautilus forecasts that by 2020 there will be almost 35 per cent fewer than there are today. This not only affects membership but has an impact on the union's strategy in terms of their newly merged position as a genuine international trade union. That said, however, membership is declining at a slower rate than had been anticipated and, according to Nautilus' General Secretary, Mark Dickinson, that which had been projected by the Department for Transport. Nautilus attributes this to its work around retention and the fact that seafarers are working beyond pension maturity. The union has also recently set up a Youth Forum (the successor to its Women's Advisory Forum), whereby young seafarers are approached by the union at training colleges where they are encouraged to participate in the union's activities. This initiative was created in response to the acknowledgement that top-down initiatives to engage young seafarers had received a 'lukewarm' reception and therefore this group of workers has been targeted with a view to taking direct responsibility for its structure and operation.

Nautilus enjoys a unique position in the labour market presently, whereby serious global shortages of qualified, experienced and certified officers mean that the union is favourably positioned. Nautilus recruits 95 per cent of officers at source (training colleges), which is relatively unusual insofar as most unions do not have this single entry-point at which they can gain unhindered access to potential members. In spite of this opportunity, however, there remains a decline in terms of the union's core membership—British merchant naval officers. This leads Nautilus to an interesting and again, unique, dimension. In seeking opportunities to expand membership, the union needs to identify new, and perhaps previously untapped, areas within their sphere of influence as a maritime union. The large yacht sector in Antibes, or Fort Lauderdale, for example, are those in which there are many British interests. These are areas in which many British seafarers who have found a career would not necessarily or automatically look towards Nautilus. The union is therefore taking steps to gain access to these areas in order to explain its purpose and what it can offer to potential members.



There are signs that this approach is already starting to attract new members and the huge potential that this presents is a cause for optimism within the union, although it is simultaneously recognised that much remains to be done. Inland navigation, for example, is an area unrepresented by Nautilus in the UK, but in Europe it is the largest inland navigation union, with close to 1,000 members. Yet there are in the region of 14,000 people in that sector. Again, the potential for the union is substantial. If Nautilus can successfully address both European and UK recruitment and retention then this will significantly compound its standing as an international trade union. The union is fortunate in that, unlike many other unions, it is not confined by being almost entirely associated with just one industry, and where there are often multiple unions present within that industry. The managerial/professional maritime industry belongs exclusively to Nautilus and as such, it operates a model and framework to reach out to maritime professionals in other European countries.

An approach considered to be worthy of exploration is federation working with other unions. As an alternative to full-blown mergers, federations may be valuable in terms of the freedom they provide for unions to continue to function independently. Successful federation working is already underway in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, and Nautilus' General Secretary sees a possibility for the future as being in 'interlocking federations and collaborative structures'.

Nautilus already works with Prospect (in the MCA) and although no formal structures are in place, it was recognised that some positive benefits may exist to work collaboratively with other transport unions. There is a clear understanding that opportunities for expansion within Europe exist. One way in which the union is seeking to undertake this expansion is via work with The European Transport Workers Federation (ETF)<sup>65</sup>, as well as looking at ways to expand and reinforce membership within the UK, for example, in new emerging sectors like off-shore wind farm installation and maintenance. The future for organising in Nautilus, therefore, continues to have a distinctly European flavour, which cements the union's already unique position as a genuine international trade union.

### **Prospect—focusing on professionalism in response to crisis**

Organisational change has, according to Prospect full-time staff, been without doubt one of the most significant industrial challenges to face the union over the last three years. This, and its myriad of consequences—job design, work intensification, professional interests and what Prospect management clearly sees as the occupational versus the personal—is an issue that is very much at the forefront of Prospect's core function as a trade union. The union also, most importantly, recognises the self-identification of its membership with the notion of professionalism and positions itself to respond accordingly. Clearly a successful strategy, the union respects, and voices this respect, for the fact that the prime concerns of the vast majority of its membership are linked to protective elements. Litigation, as evidenced in many interviews with members and full-time officers, is a growing area of concern, as professional occupations become more precarious and exposed to a higher risk element, be that as a result of the economic climate or workplace change and accountability frameworks.

Prospect management does not consider collectivism to be the 'first instinct' of its membership but recognises nonetheless that a mass of people with individual choice preferences are heading in a positive direction towards establishing a collective position. A slow process, and not without obstacles, this development is nonetheless evidence of a clear shift away from the individual and towards the collective. The fact that three quarters of Prospect members claimed that they saw the purpose of a union as 'providing a collective voice in the workplace' is, in itself, a relatively powerful indicator of this emerging trend.

The way in which the union addresses issues such as government cuts is therefore crucial in maintaining this collective approach. In the union's public sector division, for example, cuts to actual *functions* are not taking place, which means that there are fewer people to carry out the work. The corollary being that more responsibility for work that was previously done at a higher level is being dispersed among less senior workers and the resultant sense of injustice is, according to officers at Prospect, simultaneously beginning to filter through. The lack of recognition for being asked to do more in terms of volume and quantity for less reward is similarly causing consternation among this group of workers. It was also noted that the professional view about the consequences of change was less welcomed by employers. Taking

employee engagement initiatives as an example, it was felt that many managerial and professional workers believed so-called corporate identity measurement tools represented little more than transmission of corporate will, as opposed to any useful attempt to gauge employee opinion. This results in dissonance between what an employer is really saying about what it wants from its workforce and the reality, which is increasingly characterised by the exertion of more stringent cost controls or exertion of punishing performance management schemes. Many managerial and professional workers are, according to Prospect, starting to 'see through' this. Their calling into question, and potential rejection of the concept, furthermore has the potential to reinforce a collective response.

Prospect made reference to the significance of media portrayal of professionals, which suggested that this group of workers in the economy are seen by certain parts of the media as 'one more interest group'. The example of doctors was used<sup>66</sup>, where it was claimed that the public 'love' doctors when they are saving lives, but they are considered greedy by complaining about their pensions and are overpaid, earning sums in the £100,000 per year region, and need to be 'reined in'. The issue of professionalism is, according to Prospect, important in the sense that the way in which it is perceived can have a knock-on effect in terms of unionisation. Prospect claimed that professionals, by their nature, seek 'evidence, rational conversation, and outputs'. The deregulation of banking was offered as an example of the decline of professional input and control, which was, according to Prospect, a contributory factor to instances like the LIBOR<sup>67</sup> situation, which attracted large-scale media attention during the summer of 2012. Prospect officers suggested that professional institutions can therefore suffer in the same way as unions. Professionalism, it was intimated, is only ever recognised when there is seen to be a need for it, which again raises the potential for collective response.

Prospect claims it is organising 'on the less obvious'. The union pursues the dual objective of organising on 'professional voice' and on the ability to manage organisational change in an 'economically literate way' in both public and private sectors'. It is crucial to the union that this is done in such a way that does not detract from an individual's 'compelling reason' for joining the union. Realisation of the gravity of what was previously only ever an *implied* threat, such as job loss or

detrimental changes to work organisation has led Prospect to believe that there is ground to be gained in focusing on what people do professionally while at the same time seeking ways in which it can reinforce and strengthen the message that it does not just organise on terms and conditions. Because people have been hurt by the consequences of micro and macro unfairness, the banking crises and resultant corporate decisions, the union feels that it is now in a position to be more confident about articulating this.

From this perspective, Prospect is extending its organising agenda to incorporate its members' attitudinal or perceptive stance, in a sense positively manipulating and perhaps subsequently galvanising their sense of injustice. Prospect believes that this approach has the potential for success, given the already positive results from the 30 November 2011 action (see table 3.3 on page 122). In a period of sustained economic difficulty, how successfully Prospect can organise around 'professional voice' will be crucial. If findings from this research, however, are considered to be a reliable indicator, then it would seem highly likely that the union is favourably positioned to achieve success in this area.

### **TSSA—a union in flux**

The TSSA is an established union; its roots deeply entrenched in history, its independence maintained throughout turbulent and manifest industrial change and upheaval. It survived the recession of the 1930s, two world wars, rail privatisation and large-scale deregulation which saw the rail industry shockingly scarred by the 'Beeching cuts' of the 1960s and further decimated under the Thatcher administration in the 1980s and 1990s. Mid-way through this research project the TSSA announced its aspiration to form either a federation or merger with another union. This development arose in response to the cumulative effect of a deteriorating financial situation, continuing decline in overall membership and a doleful recognition that further cuts to the rail and transport industry would thwart recruitment initiatives, growth and expansion. In May 2011, the TSSA's Annual Delegate Conference therefore endorsed a new strategic vision for the union, which included building partnerships with sister unions, and with a view, ultimately, to creating a federation or merger.

As general membership decline continued to take place at the TSSA, the union's bargaining power and financial standing also began to decline. The onset of the recession in 2008 saw the union's finances begin to suffer further. The steady-state of managerial-grade membership has not been sufficient to equalise the sharp fall in manual/classified-grade membership that is taking place across the rail and transport industry, and jobs in the industries in which the union organises continue to disappear. The strain on resources is concomitantly rising as the union commits more resources to campaigning on issues such as ticket office closures, the projected and potentially disastrous effects of the McNulty Report, and the fight to save jobs, for example, at the Bombardier<sup>68</sup> plant in Derby. The union's ability to maintain its independence, therefore, has been called into question.

In a bid to act before the union's assets became exhausted, the TSSA approached the United Road Transport Union (URTU), Nautilus International, ASLEF and the RMT to see whether they would be interested in forming a federation or merger. The RMT initially expressed interest in exploring building a federation as a first step towards an eventual merger. This led to talks with the RMT about the possibility of creating a new union. In July 2011, negotiating committees were established within each union to conduct these talks, initially with the aim of gaining a better understanding of one another and agreeing a process for undertaking further discussions and negotiations. From October 2011, regular meetings were scheduled to take place to see whether it would be feasible to form a new union.

A dedicated email forum<sup>69</sup> was created by the TSSA, whereby members could make their views and opinions known to members of the union's negotiating committee. In turn, the union despatched regular email updates to all its members, taking care to ensure they were appraised of all developments during the discussion process. By the end of September 2011 members had raised the following concerns:

1. Managers/Supervisors. In response to concerns lodged in respect of the position of managers under a merged TSSA/RMT administration, the TSSA negotiating team stated that it recognised 'the different aspirations and cultures of different groups of members...if a new union emerges, managers/supervisors—and others—will need to continue to have there [sic] own separate decision-making structures, as you have your own bargaining arrangements'. Clearly, some managerial-grade workers felt

sufficiently concerned to enquire as to the envisaged nature of their status under a merger with a large and relatively powerful union whose membership base is exclusively manual/classified.

2. Political affiliation. The negotiating team stated that if a new union were to become a reality, then it would need to affiliate to both the UK and Irish Labour Parties. Given the RMT's disaffiliation from the Labour Party in 2004, however, this issue would inevitably present an obstacle to an eventual merger. To some managerial TSSA members, non-political affiliation, perhaps ironically, was seen as one of the main—if not the only—advantageous element of a potential merger between the two unions. The RMT's affiliation to the left-wing pressure group The Labour Representation Committee (LRC)—represented in parliament by the Socialist Campaign Group—however, may have been sufficient to negate any appeal it may have had to reluctant TSSA members, especially in the managerial sector, for whom the RMT's non-affiliation to the Labour Party arguably represented its one saving grace. That these two elements were those that prompted some TSSA members to contact the union to express concern goes some way to corroborating findings gathered in this research, namely that many managerial-grade TSSA members were at best uncomfortable with, and at worst vehemently opposed to Labour Party affiliation.

Substantial overlaps exist between the TSSA and RMT in terms of both sectoral and industrial organisation and therefore the potential for growth as part of a merged union would have been manifold. For a process to emerge that would effectively guarantee a satisfactory convergence between the diverse organisational, aspirational and cultural needs of both unions, there not only needed to be compromise on both sides, but also a willingness to reconfigure certain structural elements. The two unions would need to arrive at a mutually satisfactory method of conducting collective bargaining that benefited a majority manual/classified membership, while at the same time pacifying a managerial membership that would appear to feel considerably marginalised and vulnerable, and revisit the thorny subject of political affiliation and representation. Despite goodwill on both sides, there were obvious differences, not only in configuration of the two unions, but also in terms of their history, ideology, and political and industrial perspectives, not to mention differences in approach to industrial relations generally, and in a communication to members in March 2012, it was announced that it had 'become clear that the differences between the TSSA and

the RMT are such that the discussions to create a new union cannot currently proceed any further'. As this thesis was finalised, the TSSA had entered into informal discussion with Community<sup>70</sup> with a view to exploring the possibility of the creation of a new union<sup>71</sup>.

In his opening speech to the union's Annual Delegate Conference in 2012, the newly-appointed General Secretary, Manuel Cortes, forecast that 'white-collar workers will be the most powerful group of workers'. A powerful statement, and one resonant with many members and potential members in the UK rail industry. In the same speech, the General Secretary reinforced the TSSA's position on Labour Party affiliation, stating that it was essential for operation of the union's 'flag-ship policy' of rail renationalisation. Many managerial and professional TSSA members who have participated in this research have stated, however, that it is impossible to ignore the Labour Party's conspicuous lack of support for many of the initiatives instigated and supported by the TSSA. Notwithstanding lack of support for rail renationalisation, the Party has done little to support the union's campaigns to fight ticket office closures and staff cuts at stations. These 'real-time' issues are those about which members feel most aggrieved and resentment was palpably brewing in regard to the union's support for a political party that arguably provides little more than lip-service in return for the significant amount of affiliation donations it receives on an annual basis. Given that its financial survival is under scrutiny, how the union justifies its continued support for a political party which, according to many managerial and professional TSSA members, offers little in the way of investment in the future of the UK rail industry, will be crucial.

Committed to the organising model since its inception, the TSSA remains steadfastly dedicated to organising at all levels. Managerial and professional members of the TSSA are, however, largely less disposed to laud organising as a viable model of trade union operation. Some claimed that organising was being manipulated by 'the union' in order to 'cherry-pick' campaigns and initiatives for support. One member explained what he saw as a dichotomy between servicing and organising, providing the example of the union training members to be proactive while at the same time 'arguing about ticket office closures', which was felt to be 'ironic, given that all employers are trying to do is get people to do things for themselves—just like the

union's doing'. Attitudes such as this have left attempts by the TSSA to convince some of its managerial-grade members of the benefits of an organising approach effectively stymied, at least until such time as these members arrive at a different conclusion in respect of dealing with the threats and repercussions of job loss. Unlike the other 'all-grades' union participating in this research—Nautilus—the TSSA is therefore faced with the challenge of responding to two distinctly separate sets of members: its manual/classified grades and its managerial grades, both of whom occupy vastly diverse positions on organising, its value, and the role it plays in the overall structure of the union.

Incongruities aside; if Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA can successfully organise around factors that are crucially important to their members at a time of economic, political and industrial uncertainty, both current and projected, then the political messages that their membership are already absorbing and formulating responses to, can arguably only serve to fortify and enhance their current organising functions.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis has sought to account for a growing number of trade union members whose priorities demonstrate a shift away from what many writers have deemed to be the underlying common purpose of a trade union; be that to maintain or improve working conditions (The Webbs, 1920), to assign primacy to collective bargaining (Blackburn, 1967), or to secure economic benefits for members (Hyman, 2001). Managerial and professional members of Nautilus, Prospect and the TSSA have instead shown that they are focusing on a more economic, market-driven approach. Many of these members also prioritise protection of the integrity of their profession, vocation, trade (or craft) over socio-political or militant endeavour to advance class interests. It is therefore perhaps worth considering Cole's (1939: 538) assertion that a trade union is 'compelled so to act as to look after the immediate interests of its members'. There is little doubt, however, that those interests are likely to differ from what we historically understand to be the prime motivators to unionisation. It is clear, from this research, that this element is one that the majority of managerial and professional workers consider to be paramount. The way in which these interests are served further supports evidence that managerial and professional union members are starting to utilise collective means in order to pursue workplace fairness.



This research demonstrates that significantly reconfigured approaches, or challenges, to collective spirit as traditionally understood by rank-and-file trade-unionists, are apparently—albeit perhaps subtly—underway. Whether these changes will produce the effect of future growth in the sectors represented by the three unions under study, or whether parochial pockets of unionism will become embedded into a movement that, in the main, is experiencing wide-scale decline and deterioration, does, of course, remain to be seen.

# Appendices

Table 1.1--Labour Force Survey 2011  
Trade union density (1989-2011)

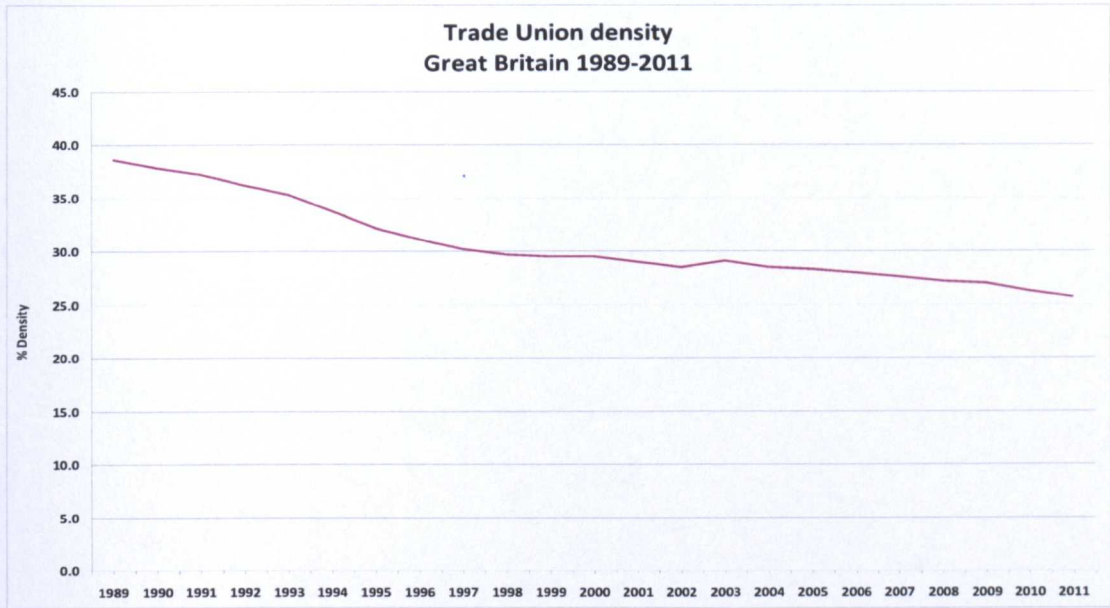
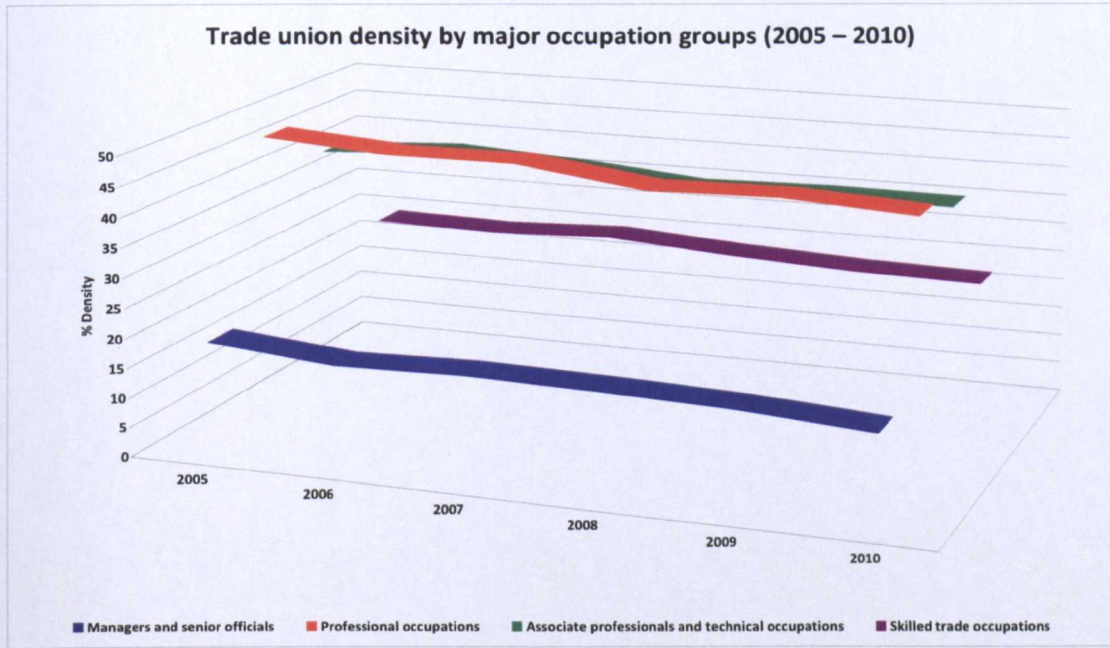


Table 1.2--Labour Force Survey 2011  
Trade union density by major occupational groups\* (2005-2010)



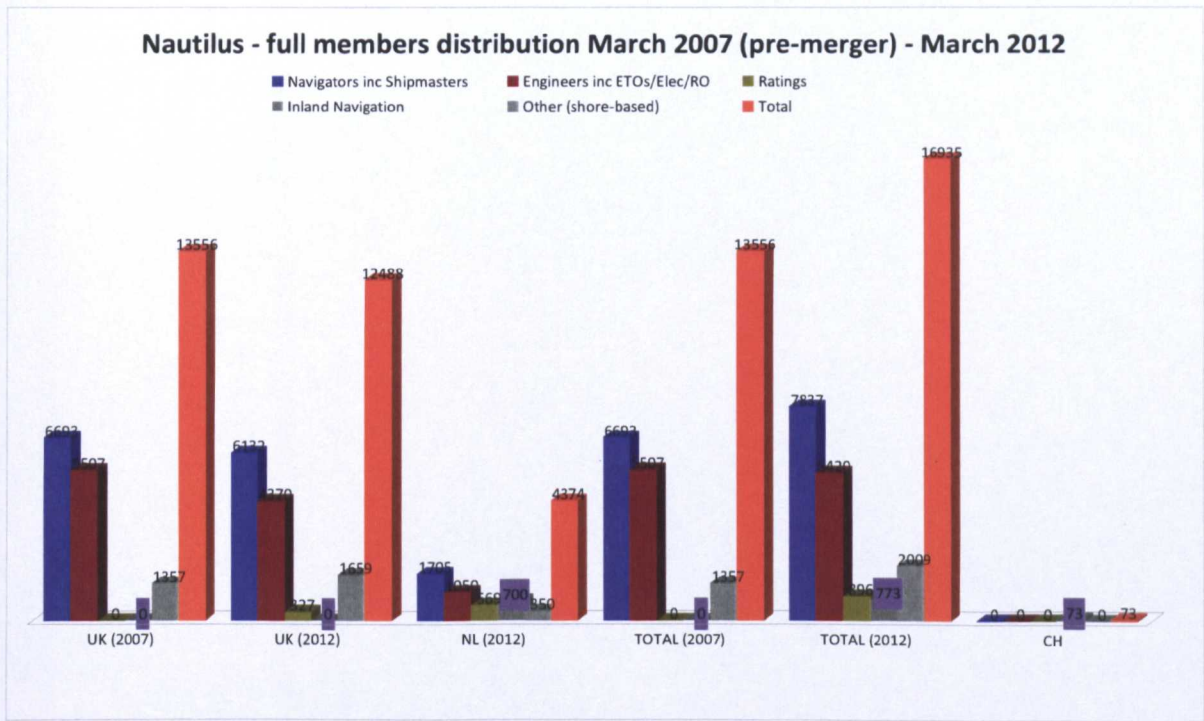
\* Statistics predating 2001 were difficult to capture as some occupational groups were categorised slightly differently, which may have an impact in terms of establishing reliable comparison. The following table demonstrates an example of this.

Table 1.3--trade union density by job related characteristics (Autumn 2000)

	2000
Managers and administrators	19%
Professional occupations	50%
Associate professional and technical occupations	43%
Craft and related occupations	31%

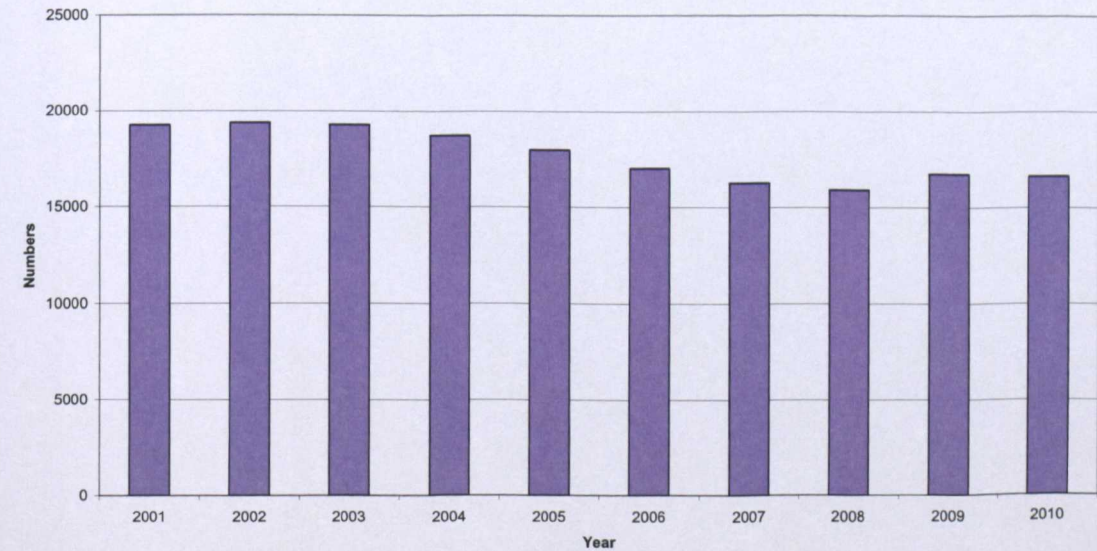
Appendix 1.1--Case-study union membership trends

Graph A



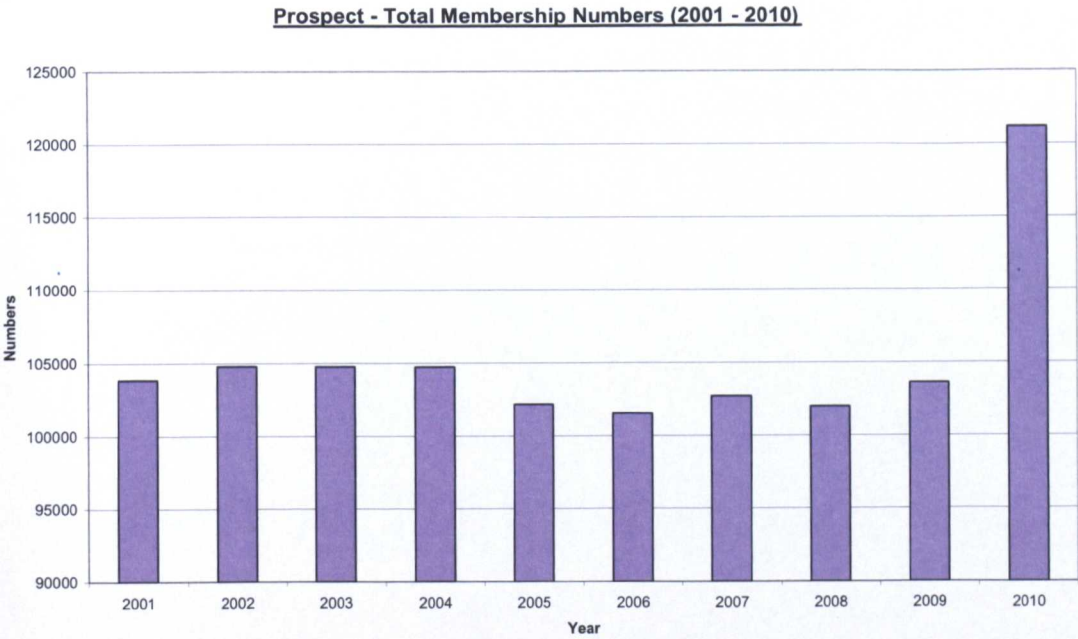
Graph B

Nautilus International - Total (combined managerial and classified/manual grade)  
Membership Numbers (2001 - 2010)

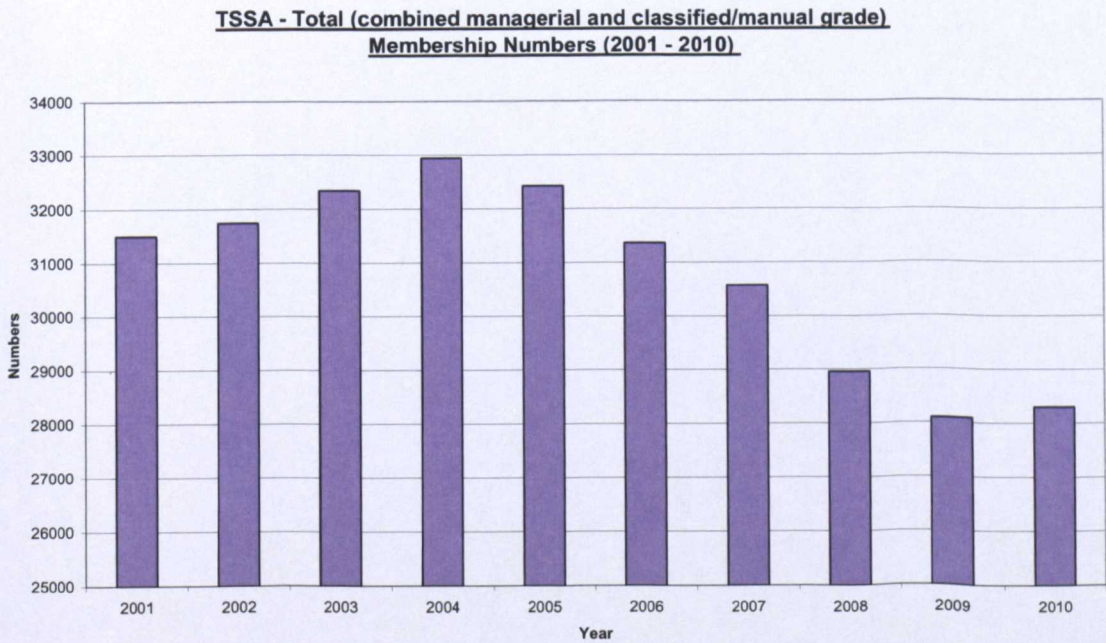




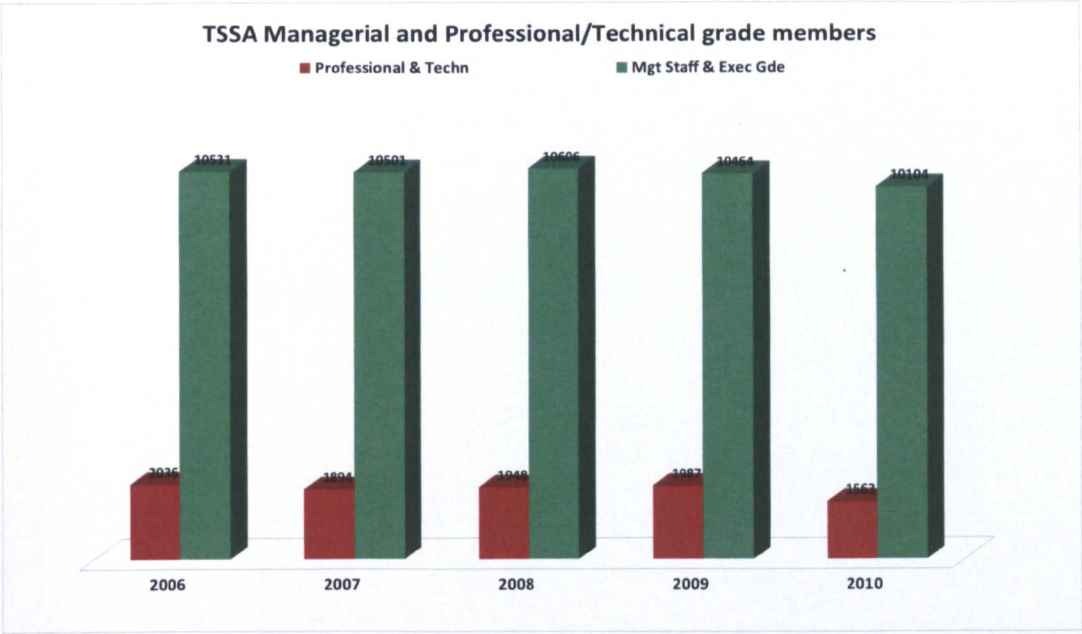
Graph C



Graph D



Graph E



Appendix 2.1—Sample Interviewee Consent Form

Research Project:

Managerial and Professional Collectivism

Name of Interviewer(s):

Jane Copley

Contact Details of Interviewer(s):

07712 121668 / j.copley@londonmet.ac.uk

Name of Interviewee:

Organisation:

Objectives:

The project aims to:

- Explore the disjoint between overall trade union decline and the rise in managerial and professional unionisation;
- Analyse the nature of collective organisation among managerial and professional managerial workers;
- Identify trends within three collaborating trade unions (Nautilus International, Prospect and TSSA).

Do you consent to... (Please tick)

YES      NO

The recording and transcription of the interview?

Direct quotes being used but on an *anonymised* basis?


Signatures

Interviewee:

Interviewer:

Date of Interview:



## Appendix 2.2--Sample Joint Statement



Dear Member,

The Working Lives Research Institute at London Metropolitan University, in conjunction with Nautilus International, is conducting a piece of research into the views, issues and concerns of managerial-grade and professional/specialist trade union members. This research is being supported by Nautilus International and the union would encourage you to participate by completing the attached survey questionnaire by no later than 28 October 2011. Completion of the questionnaire should take approximately 15-20 minutes of your time. Please click on the attached link to complete and submit the questionnaire:-

Thank you for your assistance,

On behalf of:

**The Working Lives Research Institute, London Metropolitan  
University,**

**Nautilus International**



## Appendix 2.3

Table 2.1a—Interview Schedule

No.	Name / Pseudonym	Union / Organisation	Title	Employer / Organisation	Date of Interview	Gender	Age
1	Elaine	TSSA	Senior Regional Organiser	TSSA	12/02/2010	F	40-49
2	James	Nautilus	Industrial Officer	Nautilus	11/03/2010	M	40-49
3	Iain	Nautilus	Industrial Officer	Nautilus	11/03/2010	M	40-49
4	Joel	TSSA	Senior Regional Organiser	TSSA	08/04/2010	M	40-49
5	Gavin	Prospect	National Secretary	Prospect	12/04/2010	M	40-49
6	Carl	Prospect	Organiser	Prospect	14/04/2010	M	30-39
7	Peter	Nautilus	National Secretary	Nautilus	16/04/2010	M	50-59
8	Glenda	Prospect	National Secretary	Prospect	19/04/2010	F	40-49
9	Stuart	TSSA	National Organiser	TSSA	08/06/2010	M	50-59
10	Dave Porter	N/A	TSSA President 2001-2005	N/A	23/06/2010	M	N/A
11	Malcolm Wallace	N/A	Author—TSSA historian	N/A	30/06/2010	M	N/A
13	Bill	TSSA	Engineering Manager	Network Rail	15/07/2010	M	50-59
14	Jake	Non-union member	HR Manager	Network Rail	03/08/2010	M	40-49
15	Jim	Network Rail	Risk Manager	Network Rail	05/08/2010	M	30-39
16	Sean	TSSA	Manager	TfL	15/09/2010	M	40-49
17	Rodney	TSSA	Manager	TfL	15/09/2010	M	50-59
18	Richard	TSSA	Manager	TfL	16/09/2010	M	40-49
19	John Chowcat	Aspect	General Secretary	Aspect	17/10/2010	M	50-59
20	Paul	TSSA	Data Editor	Network Rail	01/12/2011	M	50-59
21	Mick (Focus Group)	TSSA	Engineer	Network Rail	14/05/2011	M	40-49
22	Maurice (Focus Group)	TSSA	HR Manager	TOC	14/05/2011	M	40-49
23	John (Focus Group)	TSSA	Project Manager	TOC	14/05/2011	M	40-49

24	Mervyn	TSSA	Manager	TOC	03/08/2011	M	50-59
25	Nathan	Prospect	Manager	MMO	17/10/2011	M	18-29
26	Kathy	Prospect	Technical Advice Dept	EDF Energy	17/10/2011	F	30-39
27	Martin	Prospect	Engineer	NATS	18/10/2011	M	50-59
28	Hannah	Prospect	Scientific Officer	AHVLA	19/10/2011	F	40-49
29	Anthony	TSSA	Manager	ATOC	25/10/2011	M	40-49
30	Kevin	TSSA	Construction Manager	Network Rail	25/10/2011	M	50-59
31	Linda	TSSA	Project Manager	Amey Rail	26/10/2011	F	40-49
32	Tom	FDA	Manager	HM Treasury	26/10/2011	M	18-29
33	Sarah	TSSA	Business Manager	Network Rail	27/10/2011	F	40-49
34	Lynn	Prospect	Scientific Officer	Natural England	07/11/2011	F	40-49
35	Carl	Prospect (Follow-up)	Organiser	Prospect	07/11/2011	M	30-39
36	Joel	TSSA (Follow-up)	Senior Regional Organiser	TSSA	09/11/2011	M	40-49
37	James	Nautilus (Follow-up)	Industrial Officer	Nautilus	14/11/2011	M	40-49
38	Leonard	Prospect		MoD	21/11/2011	M	50-59
39	Ralph	Prospect	Engineer	MoD	22/11/2011	M	60+
40	Kate**	TSSA	Clerical Officer	TOC	24/11/2011	F	40-49
41	Robin	Prospect	Ornithologist	FERA	28/11/2011	M	40-49
42	Donald	Prospect	Veterinary Investigation Officer	AHVLA	15/11/2011	M	60+
43	Marilyn	TSSA	Risk Specialist	Network Rail	23/11/2011	F	40-49
44	Beth	Prospect	Defence Specialist	MoD	09/12/2011	F	40-49
45	Conrad	Nautilus	Chief Officer		09/01/2012	M	30-39
46	Davey	Nautilus	Master		17/01/2012	M	40-49
47	Daniel	Nautilus	Engineering Officer (Chief Engineer)		02/02/2012	M	30-39

48	Simon	Nautilus	Senior Dynamic Positioning Officer (2nd Officer)		16/01/2012	M	30-39
49	Aaron**	Nautilus	Deck Officer (non-managerial)		23/01/2012	M	18-29
50	Saul	Nautilus	Master		31/01/2012	M*	40-49
51	Damian	Nautilus	Marine Engineer Officer		03/02/2012	M	30-39
52	Adam	Nautilus	Chief Engineer		03/02/2012	M	50-59
53	Steven*	Nautilus	Master		11/02/2012	M	40-49
54	Winston	Nautilus	Second Officer		18/02/2012	M	30-39

- \* Steven was the only interviewee who did not classify himself in the 'White UK' ethnicity group. He declared himself as 'Other White—South African'.
- \*\* interviewees were non-managerial grade workers

I include below a schedule of interviewees whose testimony I have incorporated from 2009 research conducted as part of earlier research.

Name / Pseudonym	Title	Date of interview	Gender
N/A	Non-unionised HR manager, Network Rail	03/04/2009	M
N/A	TSSA member and Financial Controller, Network Rail	04/04/2009	M
N/A	Non-unionised manager, Network Rail	04/04/2009	M
Pat McFadden	Labour Minister for Employment Relations	25/06/2009	M
N/A	Non-unionised rail industry senior manager, Network Rail	03/08/2009	M

## **Appendix 2.4—Sample interview topic guide—union officer**

1. Could you explain what you understand by the term ‘manager’? What factors do you believe characterise a manager?
2. To what extent do you think managerial and professional workers are defined by the following elements: pay, experience, qualifications, reporting lines, status, job content, other?
3. Do you think, in relation to experience in your specific area of responsibility (or department), that there has been an increase in the number of managerial and professional workers joining the TSSA?
4. What factors do you think have contributed/are contributing to this?
5. What do you consider to be managerial and professional workers’ priorities in terms of their union membership?
6. Why do you think managerial and professional workers feel that they need union protection?
7. Do you think managerial and professional workers have different requirements and/or expectations of the union to other workers?
8. Do you think there has been a shift in managers’ perceptions of unionisation? If yes, what do you think accounts for this?
9. What impact—if any—do you think the recession is having/has had on managerial and professional workers in terms of their unionisation?
10. In what way do you think can unions respond to this impact?
11. To what extent do things like workplace cultural change or restructure played a part in managerial grade members’ attitudes towards union membership?
12. Do you feel that managerial grade members are displaying any signs of collective behaviour and if so, how is this manifesting itself?
13. On the whole, have the characteristics of managerial and professional workers changed? If so, in what way?
14. What are the main workplace issues affecting managerial and professional members?

## **Appendix 2.5—Sample interview topic guide—union member**

**Name:**

**Employer:**

**Job title/role:**

**Length of employment:**

**Length of union membership:**

1. Why did you become a union member?
2. Union membership generally has been declining since 1979 but has remained steady, and indeed has more recently risen within Prospect over the past decade. What do you think accounts for this?
3. Do you view your role as ‘individualised’, i.e. do you perform a ‘unique’ role in the sense that your job is non-generic or templated?
4. Does the individuality of your role make you feel more or less inclined toward union membership? Do you feel that you need union membership more or less because of the individualised nature of your role?
5. In your view, have changes that have taken place in your industry/sector/organisation since you started work had an effect on attitudes towards union membership? Do you think that union membership is viewed differently to how it was, say, five, ten, fifteen years ago (depending on how long you have been employed)?
6. What do you think the role of a union should be (for example; insurance policy, collective spirit, industrial benefits)?
7. What are your views on taking industrial action?
8. Prospect is not affiliated to a political party. What are your views about political affiliation and the role played by party politics in trade unionism?
9. Prospect operates and endorses Partnership Agreements in your workplace. Are you aware of these and how they operate?
10. How effective/valuable do you consider these agreements? Do you feel they are the best way of achieving benefits for workers (advantages/disadvantages)?

11. Do you think your union has an effective relationship with your employer?  
Can you provide examples?
12. Are you satisfied with the way in which your union operates (for example; the way in which it conducts negotiations, etc.)?
13. Do you think your union needs to make changes to its strategy in order to become more effective? If so, could you provide examples?
14. What do you believe your union needs to do in order to grow membership in the future?
15. What do you think your union needs to do in order to become more appealing to new entrants to the industry/sector/organisation in which you work?
16. Definition of a manager. How would you say a manager is defined in your organisation (for example; in terms of pay, status, experience, qualifications)?
17. Characteristics of managers. Could you give me 5 words that you think best describe a manager- what does it mean to be a manager?

Appendix 2.6—Model survey questionnaire

1. My values

The main reason I joined Prospect (give up to 3 reasons in order of priority, i.e. 1 = most important...) is

	1	2	3
Support if I have a problem at work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved pay and conditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Concern about my job security	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most people at work are members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am committed to the values of trade unionism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Industrial benefits/services (including professional status/specialist skills protection, e.g. licensing, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>		

2. My values

I am directly affected by the following issues at work

	Yes	No
Pay	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pensions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Redundancy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Workload	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discrimination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bullying & Harassment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. My values

	Providing a professional service	Providing a collective voice in the workplace	Providing individual representation in the workplace
I see the purpose of a union as	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>		

4. My values

	Professional	Militant	Open & inclusive	Committed to advancing the equalities agenda
I see my union as	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



5. My values

	Managers, professionals and specialists	Everyone in my workplace
My union is for	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. My values

	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low
Overall, how would you rate the value of union membership?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. My values

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I do not support union affiliation to any political party	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. My values

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Industrial action is not an effective method of resolving disputes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. My union membership

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Union membership will help protect me from redundancy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. My union membership

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Union membership will help to ensure a safe working environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. My union membership

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Union membership gives me a 'voice' in my workplace	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. My union membership

	Yes	No
I come from a union 'background' (e.g. my family advocates the benefits of union membership)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



13. My union membership

	Regularly	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
I attend trade union meetings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. My union membership

	Yes	No
Given the opportunity, I would be willing to become more involved in union activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. My union membership

	Yes	No
I feel that I am/have been victimised because of my union membership /involvement (if you wish to provide details please do separately)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Details

16. At work

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel able to defend my own interests at work without union support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. At work

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My career progression will be adversely affected by my union membership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. At work

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My union has a good relationship with my employer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. At work

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I support partnership-style (co-operation and shared interest as opposed to conflict) working between my union and employer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. At work

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I have concerns about being asked to take industrial action	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. At work

	Yes	No	Prefer not to say
I have taken part in industrial action (including protest action, work to rule, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22. At work

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am concerned about organisational change in my company/organisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

23. My role

How would you rate the importance of the following aspects of your role

	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low
Leadership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Authority/control	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Influence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Qualifications	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

24. My role

Ignoring your job title, do you see your function as primarily (please mark one circle only)

	1
Managerial	<input type="radio"/>
Supervisory	<input type="radio"/>
Professional	<input type="radio"/>
Specialist	<input type="radio"/>
Technical	<input type="radio"/>
Customer Relations	<input type="radio"/>
Administrative	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

25. My role

	Yes	No
Do staff report to you? If so, how many?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Number of staff reporting to me	<input type="text"/>	

26. My role

	Yes	No
I would be willing to be interviewed as part of this research (this will be a strictly confidential interview conducted at a time and location of your choice, lasting between 45-60 minutes)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your name & contact details (email address or phone number)	<input type="text"/>	

27. My personal details

My personal details Job title	<input type="text"/>
Band/Grade	<input type="text"/>
Length of service	<input type="text"/>
Length of union membership (approximate)	<input type="text"/>

28. My personal details

	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
How old are you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

29. My personal details

	Female	Male
Are you	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

30. My personal details

Please tick the box that best describes your ethnic group

<input type="radio"/>	My personal details Please tick the box that best describes your ethnic group	African
<input type="radio"/>	Asian UK	
<input type="radio"/>	Asian—Other	
<input type="radio"/>	Black UK	
<input type="radio"/>	Chinese	
<input type="radio"/>	Greek	
<input type="radio"/>	Greek Cypriot	
<input type="radio"/>	Indian	
<input type="radio"/>	Irish	
<input type="radio"/>	Japanese	

- ☐ Mixed—Any other
- ☐ Mixed—White & Asian
- ☐ Mixed—White & Black African
- ☐ Mixed—White & Black Caribbean
- ☐ Other European
- ☐ Other White
- ☐ White UK

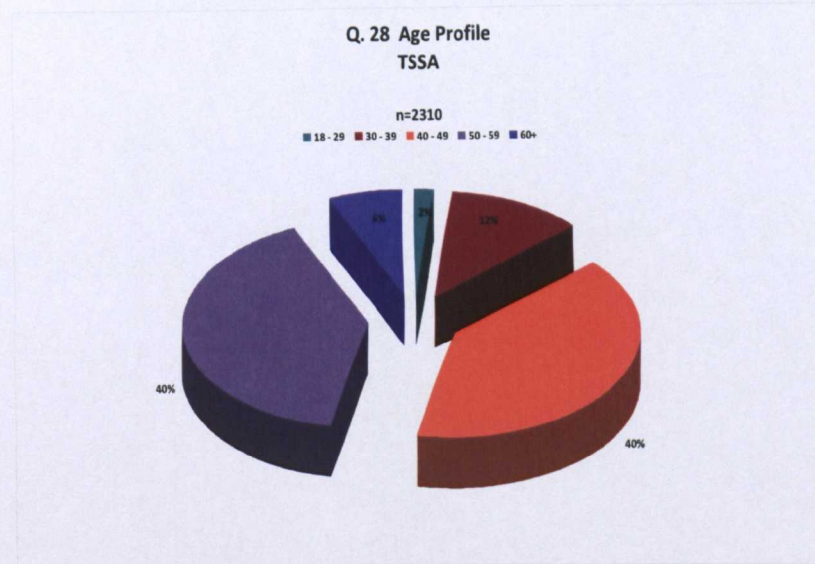
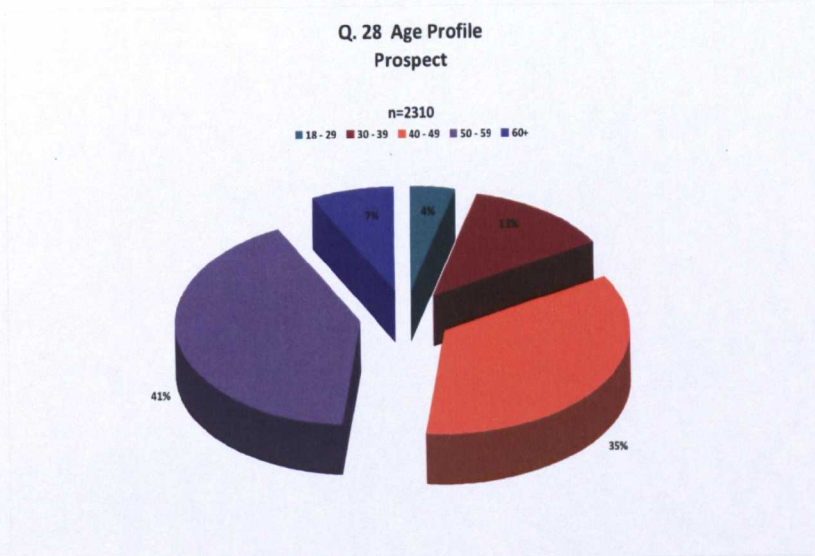
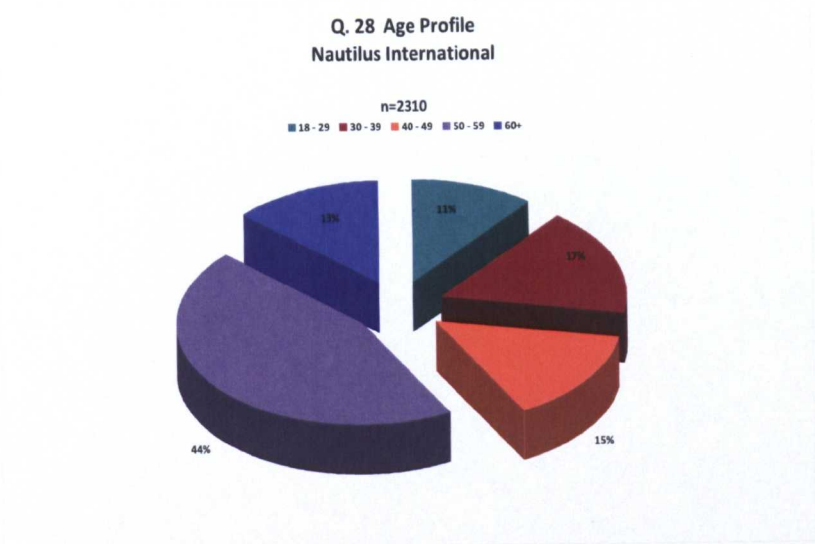
Other (please specify)

Done



Appendix 2.7a

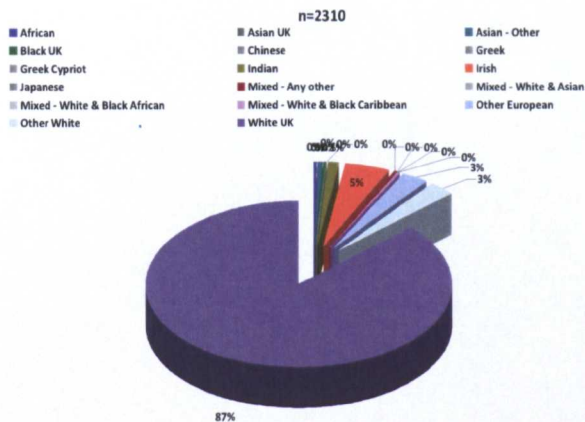
Case-study unions age profile



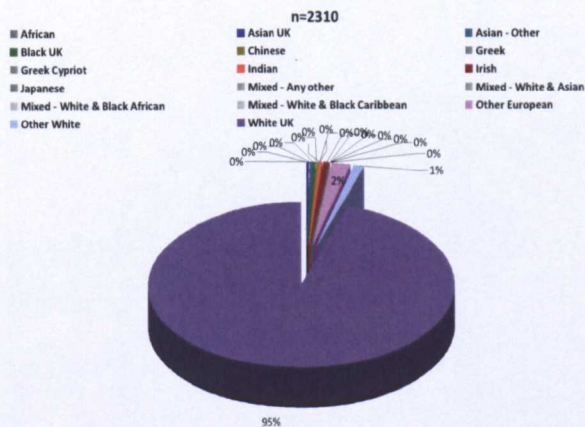
Appendix 2.7b

Case-study unions ethnicity profile

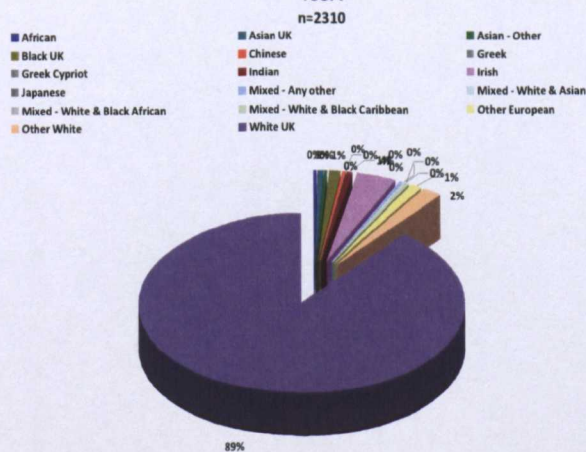
Q. 30 Ethnicity Profile  
Nautilus International



Q. 30 Ethnicity Profile  
Prospect

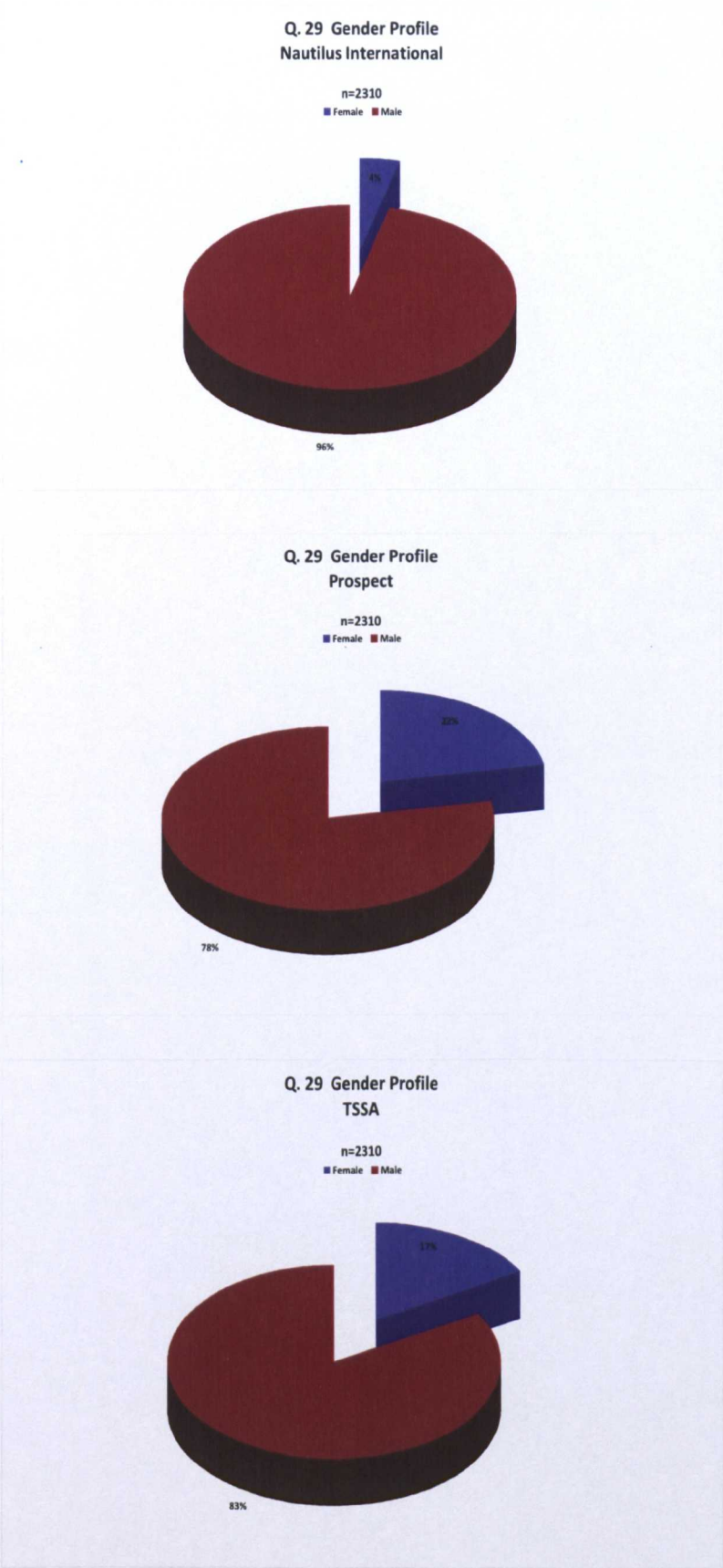


Q. 30 Ethnicity Profile  
TSSA



Appendix 2.7c

Case-study unions gender profile





## Appendix 2.8

**Table 2.3—Meetings, events and observation record**

Event	Date	Location	Attendees
Introductory meeting with Nautilus	27 October 2009	London	Nautilus Assistant General Secretary
Introductory Meeting with Prospect	28 October 2009	London	Prospect Deputy General Secretary
Introductory Meeting with TSSA	2 November 2009	London	TSSA Assistant General Secretary
TSSA Self-Organised Group 'Women in Focus' Meeting	18 February 2010	London	Female TSSA (all-grade) members
Network Rail Business Briefing	30 April 2010	London	Network Rail (union member and non-member) all-grade employees
TSSA Branch 510 Monthly Meeting	Throughout 2010-2011	London	TSSA (all-grade) members and reps
TSSA Annual Delegate Conference	23-25 May 2010	Dublin	TSSA (all-grade) members, reps and full-time officers
TSSA National Representatives Training Seminar	25-37 May 2010	Dublin	TSSA (all-grade) reps
Prospect AGM	2-4 June 2010	Liverpool	Prospect members, reps and full-time officers
Prospect Casework Handling (TUC-facilitated) course	10 June 2010	London	Prospect reps
Nautilus Representatives Induction (Stage 1) Course	14-18 June 2010	Ruskin College, Oxford	Nautilus (all-grade) members and reps
Nautilus UK Branch Conference	22 June 2010	London	Nautilus (all-grade) members and full-time officers
Nautilus Piracy Seminar	22 June 2010	London	Nautilus (all-grade) members and full-time officers
TSSA Self-Organised Group 'Women in Focus' Meeting	19 August 2010	London	Female TSSA (all-grade) members and reps
Nautilus Representatives Induction (Stage 2) Course	11-15 October 2010	Ruskin College, Oxford	Nautilus (all-grade) reps
Prospect Employment Law (TUC-facilitated) course	18-19 October 2010	Eastbourne	Prospect reps
TSSA Self-Organised Group 'Women in Focus' Meeting	21 October 2010	London	Female TSSA (all-grade) members
TSSA National Organisers Workshop	25 October 2010	Birmingham	TSSA full-time officers (organising staff)
Rail industry Employee Engagement Forum	1 March 2011	London	Rail industry all-grade (union member and non-member) employees
Presentation to TSSA Executive Committee	25 March 2011	London	TSSA Executive Committee
TSSA National Representatives Training Seminar	12-14 May 2011	Norwich	TSSA managerial-grade reps
TSSA Annual Delegate Conference	15-18 May 2011	Norwich	TSSA (all-grade) members, reps and full-time officers
TSSA Industrial Relations (TUC-facilitated) course	1-3 June 2011	London	TSSA (all-grade) members
Nautilus Women's Advisory Forum	4 June 2011	London	Nautilus female (all-grade) members



Presentation to Prospect full-time officers	27 June 2011	London	Prospect full-time officers
TSSA Self-Organised Group 'Women in Focus' Meeting	11 August 2011	London	Female TSSA (all- grade) members
Presentation to Nautilus full-time officers	14 December 2011	London	Nautilus full-time officers
TSSA Self-Organised Group 'Women in Focus' Meeting	30 November 2011	London	Female TSSA (all- grade) members
TSSA Representatives Induction (in-house) course	26 January 2012	London	TSSA (all-grade) members
TSSA Introduction to Organising (TUC-facilitated) course	6-7 February 2012	London	TSSA (all-grade) members and reps
TSSA specialist (conducted by lay rep) course on dealing with cancer in the workplace	14-15 February 2012	York	TSSA (all-grade) members and reps
PCS Employment Law (TUC-facilitated) course	28 February 6/13/20/27 March 2012	London	Prospect members and reps
Presentation to TSSA Executive Committee	22 March 2012	London	TSSA EC members
TSSA WiF Meeting	22 March 2012	London	TSSA female (all-grade) members and reps
TSSA Branch Officers (in-house) course	26 April 2012	Derby	TSSA (all-grade) reps
TSSA Annual Delegate Conference	13-16 May 2012	Cardiff	TSSA (all-grade) members, reps and full-time officers
Meeting to discuss research outputs	1 June 2012	London	Nautilus General Secretary
Meeting to discuss research outputs	29 June 2012	London	Prospect General Secretary, DGS and Head of Research
Presentation to Nautilus National Executive Committee	13 September 2012	London	Nautilus NEC members

### Appendix 3

**Table 3.1a--Nautilus collective bargaining coverage--industry breakdown**

CONTAINERS	Refrigeration; Car Carriers; Bulk Carriers
FERRIES	Passenger/Freight
CRUISE	Passenger
TANKERS	Chemical; Gas; Nuclear; Oil
CABLE INSTALLATIONS	
DREDGING	
YACHTS	
NORTH SEA SECTOR	Supply; Platform Supply Vessels; Subsea Construction Vessels; Rescue Recovery; Anchor Handling; Tug Supply; Standby Vessels; Safety Vessels
DIVE SUPPORT VESSELS	
PUBLIC SECTOR	Research Vessels; MOD
SHORE BASED	Lighthouse Companies
INLAND WATERWAYS	
PILOTAGE	Vessel Traffic Services; Vessel Recovery

**Table 3.1b--TSSA representation by sector (year ending 2010)**

<b>Sector Counts</b>	
<b>Total membership by sector</b>	<b>2010</b>
Bus and Tram	387
Docks Shipping Waterways	422
Engineering	2190
Ireland	1572
Miscellaneous	290
Rail--Network Rail	8430
Rail--Rail Freight	659
Rail--Train Operators	5952
Retired	579
Road Haulage	98
Service	944
Transport for London	3451
Travel Trade	1856
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>26830</b>

**Table 3.1c—Prospect research on new members in MoD (2008/09)**

**Reason for joining Prospect:**

1. Advice and representation if something goes wrong in the workplace	90
2. To improve pay and conditions	5
3. For a healthier and safer workplace	1
4. For fear of redundancy and major change	27
5. To be better informed about what is happening at work	4
6. To have a say in what is happening at work	2
7. Because all workplace colleagues are in the union	
8. Because they believe in trade unions	6
9. For the range of members' services provided	3
10. To use the union's educational services	
11. Other:	21
"Spoilt" questionnaires	16

Sent = 802, received 159

**Comments:**

Chose #1 – What a selfish reason – sorry! 2, 4 and 8 are important to me too

Chose #1 – Most responses apply, except 5, 7 and 10

Chose #4 – i.e. Relocation

Chose #4 – in particular – MoD jobs transferring to industry as part of the SSS programme

Chose #1 – This was due to false allegations being levelled at me by the Manager of another Department. Had I then been a Union member, I would have raised a grievance against him.

## 11. Other & response

1. Previous Union voted for strike action
2. I was in PCS Union and hated their militant attitude. I wanted a Union who represented my views and was more professional.
3. Disillusioned with previous Union strategy and representation (PCS)
4. A little of many of the above but mainly as Prospect has recognition for my grade/group etc
5. Ex member of Unite (not happy with how they conduct Union activities and political party affiliation)
6. I joined Prospect because I was very unhappy with Unite as they a) Don't seem to be interested in Civil Servants, b) Unite's political bias towards Labour, c) The militant way the Unite union are acting towards BA
7. Was with PCS and was not well informed of what was going on (no meetings etc.)
8. After have meaningful discussions with your Branch Secretary
9. I am seeking proper representation as CYWU (unite) was not up to the job and PROSPECT represents MoD employees and JNC Youth and Community Workers
10. My main reason for joining at the time that I did was negotiations were on-going re a change to our watch pattern. Reasons 1 / 2 / 6 & 7 also apply. The reason I didn't join sooner was that I hadn't been approached by a union re joining
11. Re-location
12. Advice and representation at all times
13. Fear of redundancy and apathetic attitude of MoD H.R.
14. Under a TUPE transfer from MoD to Serco Denholm I joined Prospect to look after my TUPE MoD pay and conditions and advise on other TUPE issues. NB: I no longer work for MoD
15. Had to change Union from UNITE to Prospect on promotion to Officer in DFRMO
16. Had been a PCS Branch Officer for years but have become disillusioned with them as a union so joined Prospect
17. Didn't realise we could join Prospect. Disillusioned with PCS
18. Because the MoD do not acknowledge the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy—the Union which I must be a member of to practice

19. Advice and representation if involved in any restoring efficiency/disciplinary process
20. 1. To have access to the support from the union in case of work related difficulties, 2. To have a say and be kept up to date with work related issues such as pay and terms and conditions
21. I started work at what is now SPVA at Norcross in March 2003 at the age of 56. My previous career had been 33 years teaching in the same secondary school, culminating in a breakdown owing to stress

On being made "permanent" I joined PCS but quickly became aware that the union did not seem to be united, with rival power blocks, mostly very left wing, vying for power, and the moderate "4th members" on the sidelines

In teaching I had been a member of NAS/UWT, and strongly believe the antics of left wing activists in the NUT did a lot of damage to the profession

In 2009 I was disquieted when PCS called a strike after only 23% of the membership had voted and 19% endorsed the action. Mark Serwotka claimed the ballot had overwhelming support!

To me, to call an action that commands so little positive support makes the union a laughing stock to the employer and the public. I did not support the 2009 and more recent actions

Unless that seems to make me seem feckless, I can honestly state I always supported the NAS/UWT when called, including action during the year long dispute in 1985-86

PCS, then, seems to me to be a modern reincarnation of Militant in the 1970s and 80s, and is consequently sidelined by our employers

In addition, PCS is involved in many side issues beyond our workplace, such as support for Palestine (which I do), and an obsession with equality, ethnic and GLBT issues. The monthly journal is a constant rant against the employer. The current leadership of Goodrich, Serwotka, et al, have a wider political agenda via links to the Socialist Workers Party with which I don't wish to be associated, plus they are now hoping to use PCS to launch political candidates. By the way, I have never voted Tory!

In contrast, the Prospect journal seems to give a more balanced representation of the members' concerns and issues

So, coming back to the reasons for joining Prospect, from the list on your letter, reasons 4, 2 and 1, in that order are important to me. Now aged 63 and not wishing to retire in 18 months time, long term job security is probably the major issue

## Appendix 3.1—A Return on Investment (ROI) Evaluation for 2007/08

### Natural England's partnership relationship with its Trade Unions (PCS and Prospect)

The purpose of this document is to consider an analysis of the relationship between Natural England (NE) and its Trade Unions (TU) using a cost/benefit approach. There are three recognised Trade Unions in Natural England: PCS, Prospect & FDA. Of these, PCS and Prospect have large and active memberships. While FDA is recognised, they do not generally play an active role in day-to-day engagement between management and the unions. The relationship is set out in the Partnership Agreement document that was signed by the Chief Executive of NE and representatives of the three trade unions in December 2006.

There has been an informal review and assessment of the relationship after approximately one year of operation and this assessment is based on the findings of that review. As an organisation we have invested significantly in this relationship (both in time and direct costs), and this assessment is intended to, as far as possible, assess the accrued costs and benefits in financial terms.

#### Initial costs to establish the relationship

Areas	£
Time to prepare and agree the Partnership Agreement including legal advice and meeting to sign.	27,000

#### Ongoing costs

Areas	£
6.7 FTE for TU reps (3 full time and 3.7 local accredited) Time and T&S for TU duties.	300,000
OD management relationship management, monthly meetings, weekly tel conferences, pay negotiations, ad-hoc discussions etc. Time and T&S	50,000
NE Management time—NJG costs, Project/business liaison as/when, regional/national dialogue (still developing), other NE people meeting TU. Time and T&S.	39,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>389,000</b>

<b>Total initial costs and operating costs for 2007/08</b>	<b>£416K</b>
--	--------------

## Benefits in first year

The following are based on the review completed in January 2008.

	Trade Union Contributions	Estimated Impact (Return on Investment)
A	Close engagement in pay negotiations and subsequent OD and TU joint working on pay roadshows helped to secure a very positive ballot first time round accepting the Natural England pay deal from Prospect, and an outcome on the PCS ballot which accepted the structure of the award. This also incorporated the Natural England terms and conditions.	<p>Potential additional costs of pay award not being accepted = <b>£30K total costs.</b></p> <p>Morale issues in terms of helping people to acknowledge and accept the NE pay award and terms and conditions. Based on salaries budget, if this resulted in a 2% positive impact i.e. people feeling more focused about their role in NE, this provides a value of <b>£1.4M.</b></p> <p><b>Total = £1.43M</b></p>
B	Constructive input on people casework. The relationship between OD and the TU works at both formal and informal levels. Regular relationship management meetings take place between OD and the TU which has helped in dealing quickly with people issues.	<p>Constructive TU input to majority to help manage and resolve realistically. If 80% of cases are resolved quicker so time reduced by 20% = <b>£134K saving</b> and that time spent on delivery = <b>£268k</b></p> <p>Legal challenge (i.e. Employment Tribunal cases). If fully contested = <b>£300K minimum</b> for time and legal costs. If TU contribute to resolving in 1/3 of cases = saving of <b>£100K.</b></p> <p><b>Total = £368K</b></p>
C	Industrial action managed professionally and constructively.	<p>We had 70 people on strike = 1/3 of a FTE. Less constructive position could have increased disruption and negativity. If doubled, increased costs to <b>£20K.</b></p> <p><b>Total = £20K</b></p>
D	Constructive input to OD policies and procedures.	<p>Based on 28 policies, if one day extra to negotiate/agree policies = 28 days. Potential for increased problems/complexity if using founder body policies for longer = <b>£10K</b></p> <p>Constructive working together achieves better results and reduces potential impact of some issues. If 20% of people impacted by only 2 hours = cost of <b>£20K</b></p> <p><b>Total = £30K</b></p>

E	<p>The TU were very constructive and positive in their involvement with the ISS change project and work proactively on a range of other organisation changes.</p>	<p>On basis of two major change projects per year and five smaller ones, less constructive approach and additional days of project manager/senior manager time to involve TU and additional OD time = 25 days = approx <b>£75k</b>.</p> <p>Employees working with change, approximately 550 people (ISS 400, CSR 100, other 50). Those people more focused by 1% = <b>£198,000</b>.</p> <p>Plus grievances averted – if just 2% of people put in a grievance = 11 grievances. Based on average costs of £13.4K per grievance x 11 = <b>£150K</b>.</p> <p><b>Total = £423K</b></p>														
F	<p>An open relationship has been created where information sharing on both hard and soft issues is the norm, (feedback from staff, discussions on morale etc).</p> <p>Both parties have operated a no surprises approach.</p> <p>TU understanding of the big picture has helped in conveying this to our people, (who may not have this wider awareness).</p>	<p>Approximately 1500 TU members. If ¼ of members raise issues or seek advice from the TU and are either closed at that point, or the enquiry is more focused so manager/OD time needed to deal with the issue is reduced.</p> <p>If two thirds concluded by TU = saving of <b>£35K</b> If one third more tightly focused = <b>£6K</b>.</p> <p><b>Total = £41K</b></p>														
		<p><b>Totals benefits</b></p> <table><tr><td>A</td><td><b>£1.43 M</b></td></tr><tr><td>B</td><td><b>£368K</b></td></tr><tr><td>C</td><td><b>£20K</b></td></tr><tr><td>D</td><td><b>£30K</b></td></tr><tr><td>E</td><td><b>£423K</b></td></tr><tr><td>F</td><td><b>£41K</b></td></tr><tr><td><b>Total =</b></td><td><b>£2.31 M</b></td></tr></table>	A	<b>£1.43 M</b>	B	<b>£368K</b>	C	<b>£20K</b>	D	<b>£30K</b>	E	<b>£423K</b>	F	<b>£41K</b>	<b>Total =</b>	<b>£2.31 M</b>
A	<b>£1.43 M</b>															
B	<b>£368K</b>															
C	<b>£20K</b>															
D	<b>£30K</b>															
E	<b>£423K</b>															
F	<b>£41K</b>															
<b>Total =</b>	<b>£2.31 M</b>															

### Summary analysis

On the basis of this Return on Investment analysis, if we use £416K costs in year one and savings of £2.31M, for each pound we spent on this relationship, we recouped £5.55

Principal Specialist Employee Relations  
Organisation Development  
October 2008.



Appendix 4

Table 6.1—Network Rail Role Clarity salary ranges

(published 2008/09)

Band	Minimum £	Maximum £
Band 1 (managerial)	66,000	-
Band 2 (managerial)	46,000	99,000
Band 3 (managerial)	32,000	75,000
Band 4 (managerial)	24,000	55,000
Band 5 (classified)	19,000	41,000
Band 6 (classified)	16,000	31,000
Band 7 (classified)	14,000	25,000
Band 8 (classified)	12,000	20,000

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, managerial and professional workers accounted for 60 per cent of the overall US workforce in 2003.

<sup>2</sup> The Banking, Insurance and Finance Union (BIFU) was founded in 1946 as the National Union of Bank Employees, as a result of a merger between the National Bank Officers' Guild and the Scottish Bankers' Federation. It was renamed BIFU in 1979 and merged with the Natwest Staff Association and the Barclays Group Staff Union in 1999, to form UNIFI, which merged with Amicus in 2004

<sup>3</sup> Formed in 2002, Advance is an independent trade union affiliated to the TUC which represents workers within the bank Santander, a UK subsidiary of Banco Santander. Formerly the union was known as The Abbey National Group Union (ANGU)

<sup>4</sup> Evening Standard, 'Victims of the white collar recession, Friday 13 November 2009, p. 9

<sup>5</sup> 'Retraining and Career Change', Mintel, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Job Centre Plus Customer Satisfaction Report No. 89789, DWP publication.

<sup>7</sup> Office for National Statistics, Social Trends 40—Labour Market, publication date 4 December 2009.

<sup>8</sup> TUC report of the Commission on Vulnerable Employment, published 7 May 2008

<sup>9</sup> DTI (2006b) Success at Work: Protecting Vulnerable Workers, Supporting Good Employers. A policy statement for this Parliament, March, London: Department of Trade and Industry

<sup>10</sup> Gerry Doherty resigned as TSSA General Secretary on 4 November 2011

<sup>11</sup> Submitted as part of MA Industrial Relations and Employment Law, Keele University, 2009

<sup>12</sup> Question 1—Line 6; it was necessary to amend the wording in each survey in order to enable members to recognise the specificity of the term 'industrial benefits/services'

Question 25—Line 2; it was necessary to amend the wording in the Nautilus survey to best capture the 'grade' of the respondent, i.e. in shipping, 'grade' is generally referred to as 'rank'. The terms 'band' or 'grade' are less readily identifiable

<sup>13</sup> Email from Prospect National Secretary, Jonathan Green, 4 October 2011 11:05, <Jonathan.Green@prospect.org.uk>

<sup>14</sup> TSSA Annual Delegate Conference, Norwich, 14-18 May, 2011

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.tuc.org.uk/organisation/tuc-15820-f0.cfm>, April 2009

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.tuc.org.uk/organising\\_academy\\_course](http://www.tuc.org.uk/organising_academy_course), April 2009

<sup>17</sup> Aspect transferred engagements to Prospect to become an autonomous professional section in February 2012. 'Swimming against the tide'—SERTUC's Ninth Survey of Equality in Trade Unions, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Founded as the Association of First Division Civil Servants in 1918, the union changed its name to the First Division of Civil Servants (FDA) in 2000. A trade union for senior civil servants and public service professionals in the UK, the FDA represents 18,000 members whose professions include Whitehall policy advisors and senior managers, tax inspectors, economists and statisticians, government-employed lawyers and crown prosecutors, schools inspectors, diplomats, senior national museum staff, senior civil servants, accountants and National Health Service (NHS) managers

<sup>19</sup> [www.balpa.org.uk/News-and-campaigns/News/Balpa seeks to minimise job losses](http://www.balpa.org.uk/News-and-campaigns/News/Balpa_seeks_to_minimise_job_losses) 8 September 2011

<sup>20</sup> [http://certoffice.org/CertificationOfficer/files/1f1f6626ee-c\)ae-4d4b-ac0b-278486c60547.pdf](http://certoffice.org/CertificationOfficer/files/1f1f6626ee-c)ae-4d4b-ac0b-278486c60547.pdf) 31 December 2011

<sup>21</sup> Under an agreement with the Basel-based Unia union, around 800 Swiss maritime workers transferred to Nautilus International, creating a Swiss branch and national committee

<sup>22</sup> Certificate Protection provides free financial protection up to £102,000 against loss of income if a seafarer's certificate of competency is cancelled, suspended or down-graded. Protection may also include entitlement to legal representation at investigations or inquiries

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.tuc.org.uk/prospect\\_org/](http://www.tuc.org.uk/prospect_org/) February 2011

<sup>24</sup> Formed on 1 January 2010 when the Connect union became part of Prospect. The sector represents 19,000 managers and professionals in over 600 companies in the communications industry, from multinationals to self-employed consultants. Their members work on fixed line telephony, mobile, wi-fi, internet and IT applications and solutions

<sup>25</sup> 'Union rights for worried NR staff', Guardian, 12 November 2002

<sup>26</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/4061613.stm>, 3 December 2004

<sup>27</sup> Giddens, A. (1998), 'Beyond Left and Right'. *The Observer*, 13 September 1998, p. 27

<sup>28</sup> [http://www.macro-economics/privatisation/statistical\\_framework-privatisation.html](http://www.macro-economics/privatisation/statistical_framework-privatisation.html) 2004

<sup>29</sup> Investors in People was created in 1991 as an outcome-focused standard whose aim is to help organisations transform their business performance

<sup>30</sup> Baron Richard Rosser, General Secretary of TSSA 1989-2004, before taking his seat in the House of Lords on the Labour Party benches during the Summer of 2004

<sup>31</sup> The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), (2007), *Britain at Work*, BIS

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.tuc.org.uk/union/index.cfm> March 2011

<sup>33</sup> Part of Carnival group cruise brands, which also comprise: Princess Cruises, Seabourn Cruise Line, P&O Cruises Australia, Holland America Line, Carnival Cruises, AIDA and Costa

<sup>34</sup> 'Carnival partnership talks', telegraph, May 2011, p.5

<sup>35</sup> The objects of the Union shall be: (3) to promote the advancement and efficiency of industries and organisations where members are employed

<sup>36</sup> 'Fair Change', Prospect Guide to Organisational Change (2008).

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk> Natural England is the government's advisor on the natural environment. It provides practical advice grounded in science, on how best to safeguard England's natural wealth

<sup>38</sup> 'A Bloody Injustice—slashing forensic science—a body blow to criminal justice', Prospect, 2010, <http://www.prospect.org.uk>

<sup>39</sup> 'Thomas Cook staff in sit in after bosses quit Ireland early', TSSA news release, 31 July 2009

<sup>40</sup> [http://www.balpa.org.uk/News-and-campaigns/News//94% BA pilots vote yes to cost reduction package](http://www.balpa.org.uk/News-and-campaigns/News//94%+BA+pilots+vote+yes+to+cost+reduction+package), 13 July 2009

<sup>41</sup> <http://union-news.co.uk/2011/11/four-more-unions-vote-to-strike-as-day-of-action-gets-bigger>, 15 November 2011

<sup>42</sup> Tonnage Tax is an alternative method of calculating corporation tax profits by reference to the net tonnage of the ship operated. The tonnage tax profit replaces both the tax-adjusted commercial profit/loss on a shipping trade and the chargeable gains/losses made on tonnage tax assets. Other profits of a tonnage tax company are taxable in the normal way [www.nautilusint.org.uk](http://www.nautilusint.org.uk)

<sup>43</sup> General Secretary of the PCS union

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.gmchamber.co.uk/conferencecorner>, 'The future of public services after the election', Tuesday 6 October, 2009

<sup>45</sup> Political scandal caused by publication by the Telegraph Media Group, on 8 May 2009, of expense claims made by members of the UK parliament over several years

<sup>46</sup> The King's Cross fire broke out on 18 November 1987 on an escalator at King's Cross underground station, a major interchange on the London Underground network, and killed 31 people. The subsequent public inquiry determined that the fire had started due to a match being dropped onto the escalator.

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.railwaysarchive.co.uk/documents/> Investigation into the King's Cross Underground Fire, Desmond Fennell, OBE, QC, November 1988, HMSO ISBN O-10-104992-7

<sup>48</sup> Denis Tunncliffe (Baron Tunncliffe, CBE) was managing director of London Underground Ltd. between 1988 and 1998.

<sup>49</sup> Published on 19 May 2011, Sir Roy McNulty's independent Rail Value for Money Study (Realising the Potential of GB Rail. Report of the Rail Value for Money Study, Summary Report, May 2011) - jointly sponsored by the Department for Transport and the Office of Rail Regulation—maintained that £1 billion a year could be saved in the rail industry, which inevitably means massive reductions in the size of the workforce will need to take place in order to cut the wages bill.

<sup>50</sup> A water-bus service operating in London on the River Thames. The company offers commuter services between eastern and central London, as well as tourist services under licence from London River Services. They transport around 7,000 passengers daily [www.thamesclippers.com](http://www.thamesclippers.com)

<sup>51</sup> Conducted as part of MA Industrial Relations and Employment Law, Keele University, 2009

<sup>52</sup> The reorganisation to which Bill was referring saw many managers demoted or lose their jobs in a scheme whereby employees had to apply for their own jobs as part of a 'job-matching' process, which identified post-holders to a checklist of role criteria. This particular reorganisation saw a surge of managers take up union membership. The reorganisation commenced in 2009 and to date remains incomplete

<sup>53</sup> For more information see 'Nine in 10 fear criminalisation', article in Nautilus' monthly publication (telegraph), outlining Nautilus' survey on seafarers' legal rights, [www.nautilusint.org](http://www.nautilusint.org) vol. 43, no. 10, October 2010

<sup>54</sup> <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/DefencePolicy/AndBusiness/AinsworthApologiseForLossOfNimrodXv230.htm>

<sup>55</sup> TUC (2008), Organising for Health and Safety: A Workplace Resource. TUC publications.

<sup>56</sup> Representatives Induction Course, TSSA Head Office, London, 26 January 2012

<sup>57</sup> Involvement and Participation Association (IPA) UK organisation specialising in assisting unionised and non-unionised organisations to develop information and consultation processes and workplace practices <http://www.ipa-involve.com>

<sup>58</sup> David Higgins, chief executive of Network Rail, was appointed on 7 February 2011

<sup>59</sup> Andrew George, Liberal Democrat MP for St Ives, was under scrutiny for his submission of a parliamentary expense claim for a £300,000 London flat used by his student daughter

<sup>60</sup> TSSA Management Circular No. 138, May 2006

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<sup>61</sup> April 2010 figures based on overall TSSA membership, it was not possible to isolate management-grade opt-out figures

<sup>62</sup> MA Industrial Relations and Employment Law, Keele University, 2009

<sup>63</sup> *Financial Times*, 8 February 1977.

<sup>64</sup> [strongerunions.org/2011/05/03/trade-union-membership-2010](http://strongerunions.org/2011/05/03/trade-union-membership-2010)

<sup>65</sup> Created in Brussels in June 1999, the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) is a new pan-European trade union organisation which embraces transport trade unions from the European Union, the European Economic Area and Central and Eastern European countries

<sup>66</sup> Doctors took industrial action on 21 June 2012 for the first time in 37 years over changes to their pension scheme, the British Medical Association (BMA) has confirmed  
[www.nhs.uk/news/2012/05may/Pages/nhs-industrial-action-says-bma.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/news/2012/05may/Pages/nhs-industrial-action-says-bma.aspx)

<sup>67</sup> The London Interbank Offered Rate is the average interest rate estimated by leading banks in London that they would be charged if borrowing from other banks

<sup>68</sup> Train maker Bombardier lost out to German group Siemens as preferred bidder for the £1.4 billion Thameslink contract to build 1200 carriages for the UK rail route between Bedford and Brighton

<sup>69</sup> [www.strategicpartnerships@tssa.org.uk](mailto:www.strategicpartnerships@tssa.org.uk)

<sup>77</sup> Community represents members across the UK economy, from Steel and Wire to Footwear and Textiles, from Plastics to Betting Shops and from the National League of the Blind and Disabled to voluntary organisations. [http://www.community-tu.org/Information/About\\_Us](http://www.community-tu.org/Information/About_Us)

<sup>78</sup> TSSA email correspondence—Strategic Partnerships: TSSA and Community, 31-10-12

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