

**Trade Union Identities and the  
Role of Niche Unionism: Exploring  
Contemporary United Kingdom  
Trade Unions**

**Robert George Smale**

**The thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of  
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## **Declaration**

**Whilst registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award.**

**Word count: 78,618.**

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores three closely related questions in order to further the understanding of contemporary United Kingdom trade unionism and make an original contribution to knowledge. The first relates to understanding the distinct identities which trade unions project in the public domain. The second relates to those trade unions that display what will be called a niche union identity in order to organise a sector of the labour market, and which are therefore axiomatically not general in character. The third relates to what will be called niche unionism, which is a broader concept incorporating those unions that seek to organise niches through sectionalised structures.

The work both acknowledges extant literature and advances knowledge in the field of industrial relations, and draws upon contributions from other disciplines where these inform the intellectual discussion. It is argued that existing theoretical approaches are inadequate for understanding the identities projected by contemporary UK Certified trade unions, and that the concept of niche in relation to trade unions has received minimal consideration in industrial relations literature. Therefore it is argued that a new conceptual framework is required.

The methodological approach adopted was empirical pragmatism, with data being collected using mixed methods. The work was limited to certified unions operating within the United Kingdom and to data collected between October 2008 and August 2015.

The work makes an original contribution to knowledge by introducing a multidimensional framework for the analysis of trade union identities based upon a limited number of 'primary' and 'secondary' sources that determine the territories within which unions organise, together with certain 'additional' sources. This framework then facilitates the recognition of both niche union identity and the practice of niche unionism.

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## **Abbreviations**

<b>AA</b>	Automobile Association.
<b>ACAS</b>	Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service.
<b>ACB</b>	Association for Clinical Biochemistry and Laboratory Medicine.
<b>ACM</b>	Association of College Management.
<b>AEU</b>	Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union.
<b>AEP</b>	Association of Educational Psychologists.
<b>AFA</b>	Association of Flight Attendants.
<b>AFPTU</b>	Association of Football Players' and Trainers' Union.
<b>AHDS</b>	Association of Headteachers and Deputies in Scotland.
<b>AHM</b>	Association of Headmistresses.
<b>ALACE</b>	Association of Local Authority Chief Executives.
<b>ALAE</b>	Association of Licensed Aircraft Engineers (1981).
<b>AMiE</b>	Association of Managers in Education.
<b>ANGU</b>	Abbey National Group Union.
<b>ANSA</b>	Abbey National Staff Association.
<b>APAP</b>	Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel.
<b>APFO</b>	Association of Principal Fire Officers.
<b>APMT</b>	Association of Professional Music Therapists in Great Britain.
<b>ARC</b>	Association of Revenue and Customs.
<b>ASBSBSW</b>	Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers, Shipwrights, Blacksmiths and Structural Workers.
<b>ASCL</b>	Association of School and College Leaders.

<b>ASLEF</b>	Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen.
<b>ATCU</b>	Associated Train Crew Union.
<b>ATL</b>	Association of Teachers and Lecturers.
<b>AUT</b>	Association of University Teachers.
<b>BACM – TEAM</b>	British Association of Colliery Management – Technical Energy and Administrative Management.
<b>BADN</b>	British Association of Dental Nurses.
<b>BAJ</b>	British Association of Journalists.
<b>BALPA</b>	British Air Line Pilots Association.
<b>BAOT</b>	British Association of Occupational Therapists Limited.
<b>BBC</b>	British Broadcasting Corporation.
<b>BDA*</b>	British Dental Association.
<b>BDA*</b>	British Dietetic Association.
<b>BECTU</b>	Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union.
<b>BFAWU</b>	Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union.
<b>BMA</b>	British Medical Association.
<b>BOS</b>	British Orthoptic Society.
<b>BSU</b>	Britannia Staff Union.
<b>BUIRA</b>	British Universities Industrial Relations Association.
<b>CDNA</b>	Community and District Nursing Association.
<b>COHSE</b>	Confederation of Health Service Employees.
<b>CPD</b>	Continuing Professional Development.
<b>CROME</b>	Centre for Research on Management and Employment.
<b>CSA</b>	Co-operative Secretaries Association.
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation.

<b>CSP</b>	Chartered Society of Physiotherapists.
<b>CSSF</b>	City Screen Staff Forum.
<b>CWU</b>	Communication Workers Union.
<b>DPA</b>	Dental Practitioners Association.
<b>EIS</b>	Educational Institute of Scotland.
<b>EMA</b>	Engineers and Managers Association.
<b>EU</b>	European Union.
<b>FBU</b>	Fire Brigades Union.
<b>FCS</b>	Federation of Clinical Scientists.
<b>FDA</b>	Association of First Division Civil Servants (FDA is now the certified name).
<b>FNV</b>	Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging.
<b>FOA</b>	Fire Officers Association.
<b>G4S JSSA</b>	G4S Justice Services Staff Association.
<b>GFTU</b>	General Federation of Trade Unions.
<b>GMB</b>	General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trade Union (GMB is now the certified name).
<b>GMBATU</b>	General Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union.
<b>GMWU</b>	General and Municipal Workers Union.
<b>GPMU</b>	Graphical, Paper and Media Union.
<b>GPTD</b>	Guild of Professional Teachers of Dance Movement to Music and Dramatic Arts.
<b>GSA</b>	Girls' Schools Association.
<b>HBOS</b>	Halifax Bank of Scotland Group.
<b>HCSA</b>	Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association.

<b>HMA</b>	Headmasters' Association.
<b>HMC</b>	Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference.
<b>HMRC</b>	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.
<b>HR</b>	Human Resource.
<b>IBOA</b>	Irish Bank Officials Association.
<b>ICT</b>	Information and communication technologies.
<b>IDU</b>	Independent Democratic Union.
<b>IFMA</b>	Institute of Football Management and Administration.
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Office.
<b>IOJ</b>	Institute of Journalists.
<b>IPA</b>	Involvement and Participation Association.
<b>IPMS</b>	Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists.
<b>IWW</b>	Industrial Workers of the World.
<b>LDA</b>	Locum Doctors Association.
<b>LGBT</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender.
<b>LODSA</b>	Leicestershire Overmen, Deputies and Shotfireres Association.
<b>LTU</b>	Lloyds Trade Union.
<b>LUSA</b>	Leek United Staff Association.
<b>MSF</b>	Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union.
<b>MU</b>	Musicians Union.
<b>NACO</b>	National Association of Co-operative Officials.
<b>NACODS</b>	National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers.
<b>NAFO</b>	National Association of Fire Officers.
<b>NAGS</b>	National Association of NFU Group Secretaries.
<b>NAHT</b>	National Association of Head Teachers.

<b>NALGO</b>	National and Local Government Officers' Association.
<b>NAOSS</b>	National Association of Stable Staff (as used in web domain of NASS).
<b>NAPO</b>	National Association of Probation Officers - the Trade Union and Professional Association for Family Court and Probation Staff.
<b>NASS</b>	National Association of Stable Staff.
<b>NASUWT</b>	National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers.
<b>NCMA</b>	National Co-operative Managers' Association.
<b>NEZSA</b>	North of England Zoological Staff Association.
<b>NFSP</b>	National Federation of Sub Postmasters.
<b>NGSU</b>	Nationwide Group Staff Union.
<b>NHS</b>	National Health Service.
<b>NL</b>	(The) Netherlands.
<b>NSAE</b>	National Society for Art Education.
<b>NSEAD</b>	National Society for Education in Art and Design.
<b>NUCO</b>	National Union of Co-operative Officials.
<b>NUJ</b>	National Union of Journalists.
<b>NUM</b>	National Union of Mineworkers.
<b>NUMAST</b>	National Union of Marine, Aviation and Shipping Transport Officers.
<b>NUPE</b>	National Union of Public Employees.
<b>NUS</b>	National Union of Seamen.
<b>NUT</b>	National Union of Teachers.
<b>PANN</b>	Professional Association of Nursery Nurses.
<b>PAT</b>	Professional Association of Teachers.
<b>PAtT</b>	Professionals Allied to Teaching.
<b>PCA</b>	Professional Cricketers Association.

<b>PCS</b>	Public and Commercial Services Union.
<b>PDA</b>	Pharmacists Defence Association.
<b>PFA</b>	Professional Footballers Association.
<b>PGCE</b>	Postgraduate Certificate in Education.
<b>POA</b>	Prison Officers Association (POA is now the certified name).
<b>PPC</b>	Principals Professional Council.
<b>PPSA</b>	Palm Paper Staff Association.
<b>PR</b>	Public Relations.
<b>PRPA</b>	Professional Rugby Players Association.
<b>PSU</b>	Prison Service Union.
<b>RCM</b>	Royal College of Midwives.
<b>RCN</b>	Royal College of Nursing.
<b>RFU</b>	Retained Firefighters Union.
<b>RMT</b>	Rail Maritime and Transport Union.
<b>ROA</b>	Retired Officers Association.
<b>RSPBSA</b>	RSPB Staff Association.
<b>SABB</b>	Staff Association of the Bank of Baroda (UK region).
<b>SAU</b>	Scottish Artists Union.
<b>SCP</b>	Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists.
<b>SEA</b>	Society for Education through Art.
<b>SGSA</b>	Shield Guarding Staff Association.
<b>SHA</b>	Secondary Heads Association.
<b>SIT</b>	Social Identity Theory.
<b>SLCC</b>	Society of Local Council Clerks.
<b>SLS</b>	School Leaders Scotland.

<b>SNP</b>	Scottish Nationalist Party.
<b>SOA</b>	Society of Authors Limited.
<b>SPSS</b>	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS is now the recognised product name).
<b>SSI</b>	Society of Somerset Inseminators.
<b>SSTA</b>	Scottish Secondary Teachers Association.
<b>STUC</b>	Scottish Trades Union Congress.
<b>SUE</b>	Society of Union Employees.
<b>SULF</b>	Scottish Union Learning Fund.
<b>SURGE</b>	Skipton Union Representing Group Employees.
<b>SUWBBS</b>	Staff Union West Bromwich Building Society.
<b>TGWU</b>	Transport and General Workers Union.
<b>TSSA</b>	Transport Salaried Staffs' Association.
<b>TUC</b>	Trades Union Congress.
<b>UCAC</b>	Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru - National Association of Teachers in Wales.
<b>UCATT</b>	Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians.
<b>UCSW</b>	Union of Country Sports Workers.
<b>UCU</b>	University and College Union.
<b>UDM</b>	Union of Democratic Mineworkers.
<b>UFS</b>	Union of Finance Staff (UFS is now the certified name).
<b>UGVW</b>	Union of General and Volunteer Workers.
<b>UIU</b>	United and Independent Union.
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom.
<b>ULR</b>	Union learning representatives.

<b>Unifi</b>	Union for the Finance Industry.
<b>URTU</b>	United Road Transport Union.
<b>US</b>	Union Support (is the certified name of the West Bromwich Building Society Staff Union – see also SUWBBS).
<b>USA</b>	United States of America.
<b>USDAW</b>	Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers.
<b>UTU</b>	Ulster Teachers’ Union.
<b>WERS</b>	Workplace Employee Relations Survey.
<b>WES</b>	Work Employment and Society.
<b>WGGB</b>	Writers Guild of Great Britain.
<b>WRPA</b>	Welsh Rugby Players’ Association.
<b>YISA</b>	Yorkshire Independent Staff Association.

\* Where two organisations have the same initials, the full name has been given at each usage in the text.

## **Dissemination of research findings**

2013 - BUIRA (British Universities Industrial Relations Association) Conference, University of University of Brighton Business School Research Conference, University of University of Portsmouth Business School Postgraduate Research Conference: 'Beyond Homogeneity: exploring the heterogeneous identities of UK trade unions and the role of niche unionism' (paper).

2012 - BUIRA Conference, CROME (Centre for Research on Management and Employment) Research Seminar, University of University of Brighton Business School Research Conference, University of University of Portsmouth Business School Postgraduate Research Conference: 'Five Case Studies Exploring Trade Union Identities and the Role of Niche Unions' (paper).

2011 - BUIRA Conference and University of Portsmouth Business School Postgraduate Research Conference: 'Developing the concept of Trade Union Identities (paper).

2010 - WES (Work Employment and Society) Conference (Post Graduate and Industrial Relations streams) and University of Brighton, Brighton Business Faculty Research Conference, 'Change in Trade Unions – developing the concepts of Trade Union Identities and Niche Unionism' (paper).

2010 - BUIRA Conference: 'Change in Trade Unions – developing the concepts of Trade Union Identities and Niche Unionism' (poster).

2010 - University of Brighton, Brighton Business School Research Seminar and University of Portsmouth Business School Postgraduate Research Conference: 'Change in Trade Unions – developing the concepts of Trade Union Identities and Niche Unionism' (paper).

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# Chapter 1

## **Introduction: Exploring contemporary union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism**

### **1.1 Developing an understanding of contemporary union identities, niche unions and niche unionism**

This thesis explores and develops the understanding of contemporary UK (United Kingdom) certified trade union identities and the role of niche in union identities, both of which have received limited attention in recent years. For the purposes of this work, union identity is taken to be the identity that unions project in the public domain, whereas niche union identity is seen to be a union identity which is not general in character, implying that membership is in some way restricted. These unions are referred to as niche unions in this work, whereas the term ‘niche unionism’ is used to encompass both niche unions and those unions which serve niche memberships through sectionalised structures. To explore these phenomena the work addresses three questions:

- How can the identities projected by contemporary UK unions be more fully understood?
- How can niche union identity be understood?
- How can niche unionism be understood?

There has been limited consideration of union identities in industrial relations literature over recent years, whilst the concept of niche has received only scant attention, with no evidence that primary source research has been conducted. It is therefore argued that the extant literature provides inadequate explanation for contemporary UK union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism, and that a new approach is required. The work is conducted within the context of individual unions’ ability to survive and in some cases to prosper within a changed external environment. Whilst certain larger unions practice niche unionism through sectionalised structures, the majority of UK unions have, by accident or

design, adopted, retained or developed a clear niche identity. Therefore it is argued that to understand contemporary UK unions it is necessary to understand the identities which they project in the public domain, and the extent to which unions have embraced niche union identity and niche unionism.

As a result of mergers, the three large general unions (GMB, Unison and Unite) now represent almost half (47.5 per cent) of UK union membership (Certification Officer, 2016). However, the majority of the UK's certified unions are neither large nor general and not all have shown a significant membership decline. Therefore this thesis argues against a normative portrayal of union decline which aggregates the experience of many disparate unions, but rather demonstrates that many unions retaining a niche identity have successfully exploited a niche position in the labour market. It further argues that UK unions have taken two distinctly different approaches in either adopting a general identity or retaining at least some element of niche identity, and that a systematic reconsideration of contemporary union identities is required.

The framework of analysis employed in this work is based upon the identification of the sources of union identity as projected in the public domain through certain 'observable characteristics' (Whetton, 2006, Balmer, 2008). The methodological approach is an exploratory approach of empirical pragmatism employing mixed methods and reflexive interpretation of the data. Primary source research was conducted in four phases: a preliminary survey of union titles, a website survey, a questionnaire and an interview programme. The sources of union identity were then derived both deductively from the extant literature of industrial relations (Webb and Webb, 1894, 1897; Turner, 1962; Hughes, 1967; Clegg, 1979), and inductively through reflexive analysis and pragmatic interpretation of the primary source data.

The research was limited to the projected identities of UK certified unions, although in some cases they were found to be operating more widely, and to primary source data collected between 2008 and 2015. It does not consider the external perception of union identities, which is beyond the scope of this investigation. The research led to the construction of a multidimensional framework of analysis which is presented, explained and operationalised in this work. Operationalisation of this framework facilitated a deeper understanding of UK certified union identities, niche union identity and the role of niche unionism.

The work makes an important and original contribution to knowledge within the field of industrial relations by furthering the understanding of UK unions. This is achieved primarily by adopting a new approach, which involved developing and operationalising a multidimensional framework of analysis. The framework is based upon the sources of union identities that emerged from the primary source research. It comprises three types of source, namely: ‘primary’, which determine unions’ membership territories; ‘secondary’, which further define restrictions to membership; and ‘additional’ which are other important sources of identity, unrelated to membership territories. In presenting the framework, it is recognised that further sources of identity may emerge over time but that the framework is capable of adaption to accommodate future developments. Whilst the framework allows for the recognition of both general and niche union identities, the work also recognises the phenomenon of niche unionism through which general and certain other unions organise a range of niches within the labour market.

Having introduced the work and contribution to knowledge in this section, this chapter will now turn to look at the background and context that informed the study before finally outlining the structure of the thesis.

## **1.2 The background and context to the study of union identities, niche unions and niche unionism**

### **Introduction**

This section explores the background and context to this work, and argues that this investigation is imperative, given the changed external environment experienced by UK unions in recent decades, together with the relative paucity of academic interest in union identities and the question of niche. In contrast to the limited discussion of union identities and the role of niche in industrial relations literature, there has concurrently been an extensive discussion of union decline and responses to it. The background to the decline lies in the success of neoliberalism in supplanting the assumptions of the post-war consensus period during which unions generally prospered. The decline has presented unions with many challenges and provoked a variety of responses to it, including merger, the adoption of new union identities and the formation of new unions. These developments hold significant implications for the questions of union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism explored in this work.

This section first explores the field of industrial relations, the major intellectual approaches to understanding it and the position of trade unions within it. It then considers the decline of UK unions' power and influence, the responses to it and their implications for trade union identities and the role of niche in union identities. Finally, the section draws conclusions that support the rationale for the work.

### **Trade unions and the intellectual approaches to the field of industrial relations**

This work on trade union identities, niche union identity and the role of niche unionism is located within the intellectual tradition of industrial relations, which is described as a 'field of interest' rather than a discipline (Edwards, in Edwards, Ed. 2003). The field embodies a number of intellectual approaches, three of which are seen as relevant to this work. The 'systems approach' takes a functionalist approach in viewing industrial relations as a sub-system within society (Dunlop, 1958; Flanders, 1975; Clegg, 1979). This approach focuses upon unions' relationship with other organisations, including employers and government, together with the functioning of the industrial relations system. In contrast, the 'Marxist approach' views unions as a product of class relations and perhaps as representative of a conscious, if not yet necessarily revolutionary, working class (Hyman, 1975). Finally, social action theory sees unions as social actors formed to advance the interests of workers (Goldthorpe, 1968; Weber, 1991). This work also draws on contributions from other disciplines, including organisational identity, social identity theory (SIT), identity theory and marketing, where these are instructive in addressing the research questions.

The Webbs (1894, 1897, 1920) gave a starting point to the analysis of trade unions although references to workers' combinations pre-date this (Smith, 1776). The Webbs' definition of a union as, "...a continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining and improving the conditions of their working lives" (Webb & Webb, 1920, p.20) provides a simplistic "agency model" together with the foundations of pluralistic employee relations (Farnham, 2008, p.534). Morton & Tate (1979, p.173), suggest the Webbs together with other leading members of the Fabian Society, "began to develop a consciously anti-Marxist, gradualist version of socialism based on orthodox economics and political theory" and that they "took no practical interest in day-to-day trade union struggles...", confirming an early and irreconcilable split with the Marxist approach to industrial relations in general and radical trade unionism in particular.

This raises important questions as to the purpose of unions and how they might be understood. Writing in an American context, Commons (1950, p.23), takes a broadly functionalist approach, arguing that the “Three principal kinds of economic action in the twentieth century are corporations, labor unions, and political parties.” In contrast, Perlman (1928, p.5), argues that “Trade unionism which is essentially pragmatic, struggles constantly, not only against employers...” but also “...against the intellectual who would frame its programmes and shape its politics”. For Perlman, workers’ movements are vulnerable to the impact of ideology, whereas for Hyman (1975), unions are an essential component of a radical approach to industrial relations. Gall (2012), reviewing Hyman’s work, compares it to that of Clegg (1979), which he sees as reporting the pluralist orthodoxy. This highlights two different conceptions of unions as either potential mobilisers of workers to class-action (Hyman, 1975), or legitimate agents of workers’ interests (Clegg, 1979), raising questions for this work as to whether either might be reflected in union identities.

Piore (2011, p.792) suggests that “Industrial relations is in trouble” and thus by implication trade unions, citing the decline of institutions, union membership, collective bargaining and strike activity. His thesis would seem to be based upon a narrow institutionalised conception of industrial relations, overly focused upon western industrial society, and would seem to ignore the development of alternative union strategies. Whilst he recognises that neo-liberalism supplanted Keynesian orthodoxy, he ignores the point that industrial relations and unions have far longer histories. In contrast, it is argued here that industrial relations is a dynamic process in which all the actors have experienced a period of substantial change (Colling and Terry, 2010). Meardi (2014), addressing suggestions that industrial relations is becoming irrelevant, acknowledges the impact of human resource management, Europeanisation, globalisation and austerity. He concludes that it is not irrelevance, but rather that “... Employment relations have become more complex and diverse” (Meardi, 2014, p.603). It is therefore argued here that industrial relations is not so much ‘in trouble’ but rather ‘in change’, that unions remain significant actors within it, and that their identities need to be understood within an expanded field of interest.

### **The decline of UK union membership, power and influence**

Perhaps the most obvious indicator of decline is the contraction of union membership from 13.2 million in 1979 to 6.5 million by 2015 and in density from 57 percent to 24.7 percent

in the same period (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2016). Waddington and Kerr (2009, p.27) argue that: “The end of the long post war boom in the mid-1970s coupled with the election of a Conservative government in 1979 marked the start of a protracted and almost uninterrupted decline in annual trade union membership”. Whilst Waddington and Kerr (2009) assert that internal issues contributed to the decline, Simms and Charlwood (2010) suggest that much of the 1980s and 1990s decline was due to external factors, and that the scope for unions to reverse it was limited. Although external forces are not underestimated, it is suggested here that UK unions were frequently slow to respond to the changing environment, perhaps hoping that the decline would be short lived.

Following the dramatic membership reduction of the early nineteen eighties and subsequent slower decline, there was a brief arrest in this trend towards the end of the last economic boom (McIlroy and Daniels, 2009a). In the period since the economic crisis of 2008, there was a return to very slow decline punctuated by occasional modest increases and overall something close to ‘flat lining’, although there was no cataclysmic decline on the scale of the nineteen-thirties or the nineteen-eighties. Given recent experience, the argument that union membership is closely related to the economic cycle (Bain and Elsheikh, 1976; Bain & Price, 1983) must now be seen as redundant. Whilst Kelly (1998, p.1) suggests that union membership needs to be understood by reference to ‘long wave theory’ and anticipates a resurgence, recent evidence does not yet support this contention.

The anatomy of the decline is inconsistent, being largely focused upon manufacture in the 1980s and reflecting structural changes in the economy (Blanchflower and Bryson, 2009). Earlier research suggested positive associations between a propensity to union membership and persons with trade qualifications, older persons, those who are married (in particular those with an employed spouse), those who were ethnically white, voted labour, or who had higher education qualifications (Brown and Sessions, 1998). Whilst that work is somewhat dated, it suggests that unions need to look beyond a declining proportion of the working population for membership growth. It also raises the possibility that not all unions were affected equally by the decline, such as professional associations where qualifications are a prerequisite for full membership, for example.

The ‘government substitution thesis’ offers a further explanation for decline, suggesting that the propensity of workers to join unions is reduced by government provisions, including welfare benefits and employment protections (Neumann & Rissman, 1984; Jankowski, 1995; Coombs, 2008). Writing in a US context, Neumann & Rissman (1984) suggest the decision to join a union is based on individual cost benefit analysis, although

this might be criticised as being narrowly instrumental. However, evidence supporting the government substitution thesis is mixed (Moore, Newman and Scott, 1989; Coombs, 2008). Further, it is argued that despite the replacement of the voluntary system by one of 'juridification' in the UK, there remains the problem of enforcement (Dickens and Hall, 2009; Dickens, 2012). With Government policies from 2010 reducing recourse to restorative justice and eroding welfare benefits, the impact of government substitution on union decline might now be questioned.

The reduction in union recognition, particularly in the private sector, can also be seen as an indicator of decline. The brief boom in new agreements after the introduction of statutory recognition in 1999 was not sustained (Blanden, Machin and Van Reenen, 2006), casting doubt upon unions' ability to organise in new areas (Gall, 2005). Problems of achieving recognition are seen to relate partly to the inadequacies of statutory recognition provisions (Brodtkorb, 2012) and the fragmentation of work resulting from privatisation and outsourcing (Moore, McKay and Veale, 2013). However, WERS (Workplace Employee Relations Survey) data suggests that workplaces recognising unions remained constant at 22 percent between 2004 and 2011, despite having fallen from 13 percent to 9 percent in private sector manufacture and from 13 percent to 12 percent in private sector services (van Wanrooy et al, 2013, p.59).

De-recognitions are comparatively rare, but not unknown, as evidenced by the case of the AA (Automobile Association), where 'union busting' consultants helped remove GMB (Clark, 2011). Similarly, T Mobile used consultants to avoid unionisation by CWU (Communication Workers Union) (Gall, 2005; Daniels, 2009; Moore, McKay and Veale, 2013). The threat of 'union busters' to free trade unionism in the UK is recognised by Logan (2008). Whilst there was some improvement in gaining recognition after 1997, it would seem that unions are not making sufficient progress to make a significant contribution to reversing membership decline, but conversely that union recognition is not under widespread attack from employers either.

A further indicator of decline is the reduction in collective bargaining coverage after 1980 (Brown, Bryson & Forth, 2009; McIlroy and Daniels, 2009a), from 52 percent of employees to around 39 percent in larger workplaces and 15 percent in workplaces with under fifty employees (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2016). However, the most recent WERS data suggests that between 2004 and 2011 the number of private sector employees covered by pay bargaining remained stable, as did union participation in joint consultation (van Wanrooy et al, 2013). Whilst Brown, Bryson & Forth (2009) focus

upon economic, political and legal factors explanations, Marginson (2012) argues for the central role of actors and institutions in the process, suggesting that unions need not of necessity be seen as passive victims of external forces.

The impact of post financial crisis austerity policies further reduced collective bargaining effectiveness, even in better organised areas of the public sector, as evidenced at HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) (Carter et al, 2012) and in local government (Bach and Stroleny, 2014). Whilst acknowledging that austerity policies have led to severe public sector pay restraint, Bach and Stroleny (2014) found that unions had remained effective in responding to change. More positively, Wright and Brown (2013, p.20) in exploring framework agreements in construction and retail argue that it was pressure from unions (UCATT (Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians) and Unite) which led to employer agreement. Overall it would seem that, despite the dramatic decline in collective bargaining coverage after 1980 and the recent years of austerity, UK unions retain some ability to negotiate in better organised sectors.

Turning to consider the decline in unions' political role, their exclusion from political influence from 1979 to 1997; the experience was not altogether new, their relationship with Government having oscillated over time from illegality under the Combination Acts to incorporation into the state apparatus during the post-war consensus period. This contrasts with much of continental Europe, where unions are seen as legitimate political actors (Hyman & Gumbrell-McCormick, 2010, p.316). Whilst the 1997 Labour victory might have heralded an improvement in union fortunes, Undy (2001, p.638) argues that Labour's modernization programme "...had the effect of distancing the party from the unions". Whilst recognising some reversal of Conservative employment legislation, Smith (2009), criticises the New Labour governments for following much of the Conservatives' neo-liberalism, citing Hall's, description of it as '...a social democratic variant of neo liberalism' (Hall, 2003, cited in Smith, 2009, p.351). Similarly, McIlroy (2009) suggests that, "New Labour 'mutated' from a Social Democratic chrysalis...towards a more sophisticated instrument of the neoliberalism", putting a strain on the alliance and tilting the balance of power.

The TUC (Trades Union Congress) relaunch under John Monks involved encouraging both organising and partnership approaches, but there is a tension between the two (Heery, 1998; 2002), and they were not necessarily embraced by all affiliates (Daniels, 2009). Undy (2001, p.640) argues that 'New Unionism' was an attempt to "...rebrand British Trade unions as 'part of the solution' to Britain's problems" but that "The TUC's

commitment to partnership was not shared...by all affiliated trade unions”. Charting the experience of 1997-2001, he concludes that “What was new in 2001 was the widening ideological gap between New Labour and New Unionism” (Undy, 2001, p.651).

The relationship of unions with the Labour Party is discussed by Minkin (1991), who traces the history of the party from its formation as the ‘Labour Representation Committee in 1900’. Whilst incorporating socialist societies, he argues that socialism was generally symbolic for the Labour Party. He highlights the historic financial dependence of the party on affiliated unions, the frequent criticism that the unions had too much influence over the party, and the inherent strains in the relationship. He raises the possibility of separation at some point but also the potential for the relationship to change over time.

Whilst Hyman & Gumbrell-McCormick (2010) assert that most main unions retain a collective affiliation to the Labour Party, by number most unions are not affiliated. Further, of twenty-four unions having political funds only fourteen are affiliated to Labour, with notable absentees including: NASUWT (National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers), NUT (National Union of Teachers), PCS (Public and Commercial Services Union), Prospect and RMT (Rail Maritime and Transport Union) (Certification Officer, 2016; Labour Party, 2017). Whilst the aggregate membership of unions holding political funds was, using the most recent available statistics, 74.8 percent of all certified unions’, the total membership of unions affiliated to the Labour Party was 57.4 percent (Certification Officer, 2016; Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2016; Labour Party, 2017). However, the number of members paying the political levy would be lower than this. The extent to which affiliation to the Labour Party contributes to the construction of union identities must now therefore be questioned. However, given the Labour Party’s poor showing in the 2015 general election, the introduction of individual voting and the election of a more union positive left-wing leader, it is possible that this position may change, perhaps supporting Minkin’s (1991) contention that the relationship can change and survive.

The developing role of ‘civil society organisations’ (CSOs) in industrial relations is reported by Heery, Abbott & Williams (2012). Williams, Heery and Abbott (2011) argue that with the decline of union membership and collective bargaining there has been an emergence of civil regulation. They suggest that “...it functions, not as a form of private regulation, but as part of a complex and reflective set of relationships related to the (public) regulatory efforts of the state” (Williams, Heery & Abbott, 2011, p.966). Further, Lethbridge (2009, p.125), exploring ‘social movement unionism’, found that the “...range

of alliances and partnerships that trade unions are making in their actions to fight neoliberalism do not fit neatly into one model”. Kollmeyer (2013) reported a strong correlation between participation in unions and civic and political participation. Overall it is suggested that whilst alternative forms of organisation may have developed in recent years, perhaps to fill the vacuum left by the decline of unions’ political role, some actions may be taken in concert with trade unions, as demonstrated in social and community unionism (see later discussion in this section).

Taken together, these indicators of UK unions’ declining power and influence evidenced by the reduction in membership, employer recognition, collective bargaining and political influence, can be seen as indicating the need for renewal and revitalisation. This then raises the question of how the responses of UK unions to the decline have impacted upon their identities and have influenced the role of niche unions and the practice of niche unionism. This section will now therefore turn to look at the implications of renewal and revitalisation for union identities, niche union identities and niche unionism.

### **The responses of UK unions to decline**

The response to decline included the development of new organising strategies, concern over retention, training, the formation of new unions, militancy, partnership agreements and other forms of accommodation with employers, mergers, community unionism and other alternative forms of organisation together with union leadership and the potentialities afforded by digital technologies. However, the response was inconsistent, comprising a variety of initiatives, adopted in different measures, in different combinations, at different points in time and with varying impacts on unions’ identities, niche union identities and niche unionism.

The development of ‘organising unionism’ is seen as fostering “...activism, leadership and organisation amongst workers...” (Heery et al, 2000, p.38). The most visible manifestation of this, the TUC Organizing Academy established in 1998, was embraced by a relatively small number of unions (Heery, et al, 2000; Sims, Holgate and Heery, 2013). In contrast to this, the servicing model is “...dependent upon the formal organisation and its hierarchy of officers...” (Heery et al, 2000, p.38). Heery & Simms (2008) surveyed organisers attending TUC and USDAW (Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers) organizing academies and suggest that both internal and external factors may explain this lack of return on investment, but highlight the existence of ‘internal weaknesses’.

Charlwood (2004) and Simms (2013) further suggest that the effectiveness of individual union organising strategies was inconsistent. However, despite the limited nature of organising successes it can be argued that organising activity helped to arrest the decline (Simms, Heery and Holgate, 2013).

This leads to the question of how unions might organise the unorganised, particularly in new and unorganised areas of the labour market. Pollert (2010) suggests that unrepresented workers might be open to unionisation if unions were to make suitable approaches to them, suggesting unions reposition their organisations to organise the unorganised. Heery (2005) identifies two trends of ‘organising unionism’ and ‘field enlargement’, which involve expanding boundaries. ‘Community’ attempted such repositioning, adopting a new identity to organise outside its traditional occupational and industrial membership territories (Community 2015). Similarly, Unite’s ‘Community’ section is designed to recruit beyond formal employment (Unite, 2013). Although these might be considered as piecemeal responses, they may contribute to renewal and hold implications for union identities. However, whilst some unions, following Turner (1962), may be more ‘open’ to expanding their membership territories, others such as professional associations may remain more ‘closed’.

In addition to recruitment, retention is seen as important to countering decline. Waddington (2006b) found that whilst many members left their unions because of changes in their employment status, a substantial proportion left because of dissatisfaction with some aspect of their union. It is possible that retention is being improved by the application of digital technologies including collecting subscriptions by direct debit and better communication through e-mail, social media and relationship marketing. Despite a paucity of research in this area, Rego et al (2014), researching union websites in Portugal and Britain, recognise the potential contribution of digital technologies to revitalisation and conclude that “... many unions in both countries do not seem to invest clearly in the potential of ICTs” (information and communication technologies) (Rego et al, 2014, p.193). This raises an important question as to the effectiveness of unions’ digitalised communications in projecting their identities.

Training programmes including ‘Union Learn’ can be considered as contributing to renewal. However, concern over their effectiveness is expressed by a number of writers, including: employer failure to recognise ULRs (Union Learning Representatives) (Lee & Cassel, 2009), doubts about long term sustainability due to inconsistent government or employer support (Perrett & Lucio, 2008) and whether schemes lead to union recognition

or improved membership (Hoque and Bacon, 2008). In contrast, it is suggested that training courses for equality representatives may attract new activists (Bennett, 2009), and encourage the establishment of URLs (Moore, 2011). Similarly, Findlay and Warhurst (2011) suggest some contribution to revitalization from the SULF (Scottish Union Learning Fund). Overall it would seem that evidence of any significant contribution of 'Union Learn' to renewal and revitalisation is inconclusive, nor is there any particular indication that it has any direct impact on union identities.

Despite the reduced number of unions over recent decades (Certification Officer, 2016), new unions continue to be formed and might represent a potential source of renewal (Ross, 2013; ACAS, 2012). Ross (2013) found that new unions fell into one of five categories, namely: 'breakaway', which originated in existing unions; 'employer sponsored', which resulted from employer encouragement; 'professional', which developed out of professional bodies; 'political', which were rooted in political parties and 'big bang', which were not rooted in any existing organisation. Whilst she reports that new unions suffered a high attrition rate, representing only 0.4 percent of union membership (Ross, 2013, p.83), she suggests that "...they highlight the number of ways in which the union movement could develop" (Ross, 2013, p.90). Since all unions trace their origins to some point of formation, new unions perhaps should not be overlooked as a source of renewal. Some may develop new identities, such as that of the short lived 'Pop-up Union' formed at the University of Sussex (Certification Officer, 2016). New unions may organise previously un-unionised niches within the labour market, perhaps merging with larger unions, as was the case with many staff associations in the financial sector (Gall, 1997; 2001). In doing so, they may form or join existing sections, contributing to what is termed 'niche unionism' in this work.

In turning to explore militancy as a response to decline, it is recognised that it is constrained in two respects. Firstly, whilst the right to strike is enshrined in Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights which was confirmed by the European Court of Human Rights, there are severe restrictions on industrial action in the UK (Bogg and Ewing, 2014). The UK's impending exit from the EU (European Union) may have further implications in this respect. Secondly, Tapia (2013) highlights the paradox of unions having numerous members and resources but finding mobilisation difficult. New employer policies developed concurrently with legal constraints in the 1980s might be considered as a cause of reduced militancy (Bassett, 1986; Kelly, 1996). Lyddon (2009), exploring the relatively low level of strike activity under New Labour, suggests a 'tertiarisation' of

strikes, mainly confined to transport, communication and public services, although conceding that an impact of secret balloting was to widen the groups of employees prepared to consider industrial action.

Despite the overall decline in strike activity, militancy is still experienced in better organised sectors (Connelly and Darlington, 2012; Darlington, 2012; Beale and Mustchin 2014; Taylor and Moore, 2014). Darlington (2012, p.526) reporting the successes of the RMT credits the late Bob Crow with adopting an “opponentist leadership style...” Despite notable incidents of militant action the trend towards left wing union leaders and activists has not been reflected in significant rank-and-file militancy (McIlroy and Daniels, 2009b). In contrast, Taylor and Moore (2014), reporting the 2010-11 British Airways dispute, emphasise the connection between the labour process and mobilisation, and the collectivism of the workforce, who they describe as ‘emotional labourers’. Whilst militancy might contribute to revitalisation, it may not be embraced by more moderate unions, or where unions have signed partnership or single union no strike agreements, or by less well organised groups who may be open to employer victimisation. Therefore any immediate prospect of mass mobilization as envisaged by Kelly (1998) would seem unlikely.

In contrast to militancy, partnership agreements together with other forms of union participation in employee voice, represent alternative responses to decline. ‘Partnership’ as expressed in ‘partnership agreements’ is seen as deriving from the wider concept of ‘social partnership’ espoused by the EU under Jacques Delors and embraced by the TUC and New Labour (Ackers & Payne, 1998). Heery (2002, p.22) suggests that whereas at company level “...partnership agreements focus very much on the immediate employer-centred interests of union members”, ‘social partnership’ represents a variety of arrangements. Whilst Wills (2004) reviewing the Barclays-Unifi (Union for the Finance Industry) agreement saw positive benefits for representation but also the need for unions to manage attendant risks, Kelly (in Ackers et al Eds.1996) concludes that gains from moderation are limited and rely on employer cooperation.

Whereas partnership implies joint regulation, ‘employee voice’ encompasses a wider range of communication strategies comprising union and non-union channels (Boxall & Purcell, 2008). Employers may draw upon a range of communication devices from the palette known as employee voice (Boxall & Purcell, 2008; Benson & Brown, 2010), reducing union power where unions are recognised or supporting union avoidance strategies where they are not. The decline may not necessarily have signalled the end of union participation,

but rather a shift to dual voice where unions are recognised (Brown, Gomez and Bryson, 2009).

The concept of unions being relatively more moderate or militant might be considered as an aspect of union identity. Heery (2002) highlights the paradox that the TUC from the nineteen-nineties was promoting both organising and partnership strategies, and that many unions have adopted both. He suggests a 'representation cycle' in which partnership might be a stage or an end point (Heery, 2002). Unions may variously adopt organising or partnership approaches or some combination of these (Kelly, in Ackers et al., 1996; Heery, 2002), sometimes employing militancy on an opportunistic basis (Kelly, 1998; Darlington, 2012). Therefore, whilst moderation and militancy might be considered as components of union identities, labelling unions as either moderate or militant might be too simplistic. Unions' approaches may be conditioned by employer strategies, reflecting the contention that unions are 'secondary organisers' whereas capital is the 'primary organiser' (Hyman, 1997; Smith, 2001).

Merger might be considered as the response to decline with the most immediate implications for union identity. The UK experienced a 'merger wave' (Waddington (1995), and despite the occasional formation of new unions (reported earlier), the number of certified unions fell from 467 in 1980 to 145 in 2016 (Certification Officer, 2016). Although largely the result of mergers, some reduction can be attributed to unions being wound up or deleted as being deemed to have ceased to exist by the Certification Officer. Undy (2008, pp.9-14), reporting the scale of merger, reports that from 1967 to 2004 there were 449 mergers, comprising 330 transfers of engagement and 119 amalgamations, with the latter producing fifty new unions. Certain 'major merging unions' are identified as driving the merger wave, with three unions receiving the most transfers (Amicus, GMB and TGWU (Transport and General Workers Union)), with TGWU and Amicus subsequently merging to form Unite (Undy, 2008, p.474).

Whilst some mergers are defensive and a method of survival, others provide consolidation within broad membership territories, perhaps contributing to revitalisation through the application of greater resources (Undy 2008). Whereas some unions have avoided merger others have retained something of their identity by transfer of engagements to larger, in some cases general unions, retaining elements of their former niche identity within sectionalised structures. An outcome of the merger wave was the emergence of 'super unions' (Unite, Unison and GMB) through 'mega amalgamations' (Undy, 2008, p.9), representing 47.5 percent of union members (Certification Officer, 2016). In contrast to

this trend of general unionism, some mergers have consolidated union identity within industrial sectors (GPMU (Graphical, Paper and Media Union), RMT and UCU (University and College Union)).

However, the trend towards general unionism is not without criticism. As their memberships become more heterogeneous the question arises as to how effectively they can accommodate the needs of disparate groups through sectionalised structures (Waddington, 2006a). Further, Waddington (2006a) questions the choices of merger partner, citing that of AEEU (Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union) and MSF (Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union), which formed Amicus. Previously, the largest amalgamation was that of COHSE (Confederation of Health Service Employees), NALGO (National and Local Government Officers' Association) & NUPE (National Union of Public Employees), which formed Unison (Terry, 2000; Undy, 2008). Whilst apparently creating more coherence of representation within the public sector, much public sector membership remains outside, in unions including GMB and Unite. Despite the potential for scale economies achieved by merger, the consequences of post-merger re-organisation are recognised by Terry (2000) in the case of Unison and more generally by Undy (2008). More recently Ackers (in Johnstone and Ackers, 2015 p.107), questioning the trend to general unionism, suggests that workers interests are better built on "...some shared sense of working in the same company, trade (craft), industry or profession", which could be interpreted as a preference for niche union identities.

Although national borders tend to constrain union mergers, the formation of Nautilus in 2009 provides a model for cross border mergers, with Gennard (2009, p.8) suggesting that these "... are firmly on the trade union agenda". It remains to be seen how many other unions will embrace a multinational identity, with a clear constraint lying in the concentration of union membership in nations' public sectors. Overall, mergers have had a significant impact on union identities: firstly through the dilution of some niche identities; secondly, through the creation of new union identities; thirdly, through consolidation of unions within an industry and finally because transfers of engagements have contributed to the development of sectionalised structures in some unions.

Alternative forms of organisation contributing to renewal include community unionism, where unions work with community organizations (Tattersall, 2008, p.417); social movement unionism, which involves "... 'reaching out' to other groups to emphasise social justice aims..." (Parker, 2008, p.563) and other forms of organisation such as LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) sections (Colgan & McKearney, 2012).

However, Cockfield et al (2009, p.464) suggests the "...plethora of relationships labelled as 'community unionism' renders the concept problematic...". She argues that communities have identities distinguished by shared values, citing Flanders' (1975, p.15, cited in Cockfield et al, 2009, p.466) contention that unions had two faces: "...sword of justice and vested interest". This raises a question as to whether participating unions are seeking the support of communities for their own interests or wielding the 'sword of justice' in support of wider communities. Although writers generally see positive outcomes, these initiatives may not provide a universal panacea for reversing decline (Wills & Simms, 2004; Hess, 2008; Tattersall, 2008; Cockfield et al, 2009; Hammer, 2010; Sullivan, 2010). The extent to which unions embrace alternative forms of organisation raises a question as to the extent to which participation might defuse their identities as trade unions.

A contingent factor in the response to decline relates to the effectiveness of union leadership and management. Simms and Charlwood (2010) argue that renewal needs to encourage participation and requires coordination by central leadership. Alternatively, whilst unions might be seen largely as victims of the external environment, even Bain and Price (1983) recognised leadership as influencing union growth. However, disaggregating the impact of leadership is somewhat problematic (Undy et al, 1981). Early work by Michels (1949) views leadership as 'oligarchic' and more concerned with internal political processes, whereas Turner (1962) postulates a threefold classification, recognising the relationship between the leadership and the rank-and-file. Similarly, Heery and Kelly (1994), in work more focused on local full time officials, recognise the tension between professional bureaucracies and membership democracy. More recently, McIlroy and Daniels (2009b) highlight the role of leadership in the development of strategy, but acknowledge the role of the rank-and-file. McIlroy and Daniels (2009b) suggest that Monks and Barber might have been dubbed the 'sensible squad', but acknowledge that the TUC promoted both organisation and partnership, allowing affiliates to draw upon either, both or neither on a piecemeal basis (see earlier discussion in this section).

There is also a question of how union leaderships reflect or represent the interests of particular groups. Whilst the majority of UK union membership is female (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2016), this is not reflected in union leadership, with implications for renewal stemming from a mismatch of personal and collective identity. (Kirton & Healy, 2013) This argument might be extended to ethnic minorities and LGBT members (Colgan & McKearney, 2012). Schnurbein (2009), suggests that members'

interests are not homogeneous and must be reconciled through internal governmental structures. Whilst many unions have created structures to represent women and minorities, the question remains as to how membership diversity is reflected in their leaderships.

As regards the level of professionalism of union management, it is suggested that in the higher echelons it may be related to increasing scale through merger (Dempsey and Brewster, 2009). Thursfield and Kellie (2013) argue that in mainstream organisation's management, development is an essential component for strategic and operational effectiveness but that unions have sometimes been reluctant to address this. Whilst this might be attributed to historic tensions between leaderships and the 'rank and file' (McIlroy, 2014), effective management could be considered as an imperative for reversing decline, albeit that union democracy may provide a countervailing force to wholesale managerialism.

Whilst questions of union leadership, management and professionalism might be considered as tangential to this work, it is suggested here that they are important in influencing the development of union identities, as exemplified by issues such as the choice of merger partner, rebranding, or investment in information and communication technologies.

## **Summation**

In locating this work, this section firstly defined the territory of industrial relations, recognising it as a field of interest (Edwards, in Edwards, Ed. 2003), within which there are a number of competing intellectual approaches (Hyman, 1975; Clegg, 1979; Weber, 1991). It acknowledges diverging views on the role of unions within industrial relations (Webbs, 1894, 1897, 1920; Hyman, 1975) together with concerns regarding the contemporary relevance of the field (Piore, 2011; Meardi, 2014).

The section then reviewed the decline of trade unions over recent decades when membership was at first marked by a sharp fall, followed by steady decline and more recently something closer to 'flat lining' (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2016). This demonstrates that membership no longer mirrors the trade cycle as previously suggested (Bain and Elsheikh, 1976; Bain & Price, 1983). However, other elements of the decline including union recognition and collective bargaining coverage (Brodtkorb, 2012;

Wanrooy, et al, 2013) and the decline in political power and influence (Undy, 2001; McIlroy, 2009) suggest that the need to address the decline was of paramount importance.

The section finally reviewed the responses to decline and the implications of these for union identities, niche union identities and the practice of niche unionism. Responses include: the development of organising unionism (Sims, Holgate and Heery, 2013), the problem of retention (Waddington, 2006b), the formation of new unions (Ross, 2013), union mergers (Waddington, 1995; Undy 2008), militancy (Darlington, 2012; Beale and Mustchin 2014; Taylor and Moore, 2014), other initiatives such as partnership agreements (Heery, 2002; Wills, 2004) and community unionism (Wills and Sims, 2004; Tattersall, 2008) together with the role of union leadership and management (Heery and Kelly, 1994; Thursfield and Kellie, 2013). The section argues that there was no single response to decline but rather that individual unions have drawn upon a range of responses. Despite the difficulty of disaggregating the effects of different responses, it is suggested that the development of organising activities have helped halt, if not reverse the decline (Simms, Heery and Holgate, 2013).

Overall, these responses to decline hold significant implications for the questions explored in this work, as many unions have merged and / or been rebranded whilst some new unions have been formed. Therefore it is argued that the decline and responses to it explored in this section suggest that this investigation into union identities, niche union identities and niche unionism can make an important contribution to the development of a comprehensive understanding of UK certified trade unions. Having established the background and context of decline and the responses to it that make this work relevant and timely, attention will turn in successive chapters to exploring union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism, as outlined in the following section.

### **1.3 Structure of the work**

Whilst this chapter sets out the research questions, rationale, background and context for this work in developing an understanding of union identities including the sources of union identity, niche union identity and niche unionism, successive chapters explore these themes as outlined below.

Chapter 2 explores theoretical contributions that inform the concepts of union identity, niche union identity and niche unionism, including those from the field of industrial

relations and from other fields and disciplines where these inform the discussion. Whilst acknowledging these contributions, it also highlights the inadequacies of the extant literature in relation to addressing the research questions and the need for a new approach.

Chapter 3 first explains and justifies the epistemological approaches of realism, reflexivity and empirical pragmatism together with alternative approaches that were considered. It establishes the industrial relations paradigm within which the research was conducted as broadly pluralistic, whilst introducing a position of pragmatic pluralism. It establishes the ontological position of the researcher as one of objective partisanship. It outlines the research strategy and research design, explaining how these were developed and operationalised and how research ethics were maintained. It explains the process of data analysis and how the sources of union identity emerged.

Chapter 4 explores the sources of union identity, largely drawing on data collected from a website survey and questionnaire on the observable characteristics of union identity. The chapter is organised thematically under subheadings including: union names, abbreviations, logos and union straplines; restrictions to membership and membership benefits; statements of aims and objectives; affiliations and political funds; together with union websites and other forms of digital communication.

Chapter 5 explores the manifestation and extent of both niche unions and niche unionism in the UK. The chapter is largely organised around the ‘primary’ sources of union identity recognised in the preliminary research, together with additional sections for professional and education unions, which were deemed worthy of separate consideration. It demonstrates that despite the general portrayal of decline outlined in this chapter, some unions have maintained or improved their membership position over recent years.

Chapter 6 operationalises the multidimensional framework of analysis, drawing together the analysis from the preceding two empirical chapters, outlining the important contribution to knowledge which the framework makes in advancing the understanding of the projected identities of contemporary UK certified trade unions by recognising the sources of union identity and the significance of niche union identity and niche unionism.

Chapter 7 identifies how this work advances the understanding of union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism beyond the extant literature (explored in Chapter 2). In doing so it explains how what Turner (1962) called ‘closed’ may be understood in the context of contemporary union identities and how the multidimensional framework is superior to earlier systems of categorisation (Webb and Webb, 1894, 1897; Hyman, 1975;

Hughes, 1967; Clegg, 1979; Heery and Kelly, 1994; Visser, 2012) and more flexible frameworks of analysis (Turner, 1962; Blackburn 1967; Undy et al, 1981; Hyman, 1994 and 2001). It also suggests that contributions from beyond the field of industrial relations need to be acknowledged to better understand union identities and the concept of ‘niche’ in relation to niche union identity and niche unionism. Finally, the chapter considers future directions of the research.

## **1.4 Conclusions**

This chapter introduced the concepts of union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism together with the research questions addressed in this work. The research is conducted within the context of declining union membership, power and influence over recent decades, together with attempts at renewal and revitalisation. Whilst many unions followed the trend of general unionism, in some cases retaining an element of the former identity through sectionalised structures, others retained or consolidated niche union identities. However, decline was not consistent, with some unions maintaining or improving their membership. The next chapter explores extant literature drawn from the field of industrial relations and beyond. It argues that the extant literature is inadequate for explaining the questions under discussion in this work and that a new approach is required.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The intellectual antecedents of union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews extant literature drawn from the field of industrial relations and other intellectual areas in order to establish both the contribution and limitations of earlier work in explaining contemporary union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism. This review is conducted in the context of the research questions and against the background explored in Chapter 1. Union identity relates to the identities projected by all unions, whereas niche union identity applies specifically to those unions which are not general in character and therefore restrict membership to some extent. In contrast, niche unionism is seen to be practised both by niche unions and by those that serve niche memberships through sectionalised structures.

The chapter first reviews theoretical approaches to the understanding of trade unions drawn from the field of industrial relations. Whilst these writers do not, for the most part address the question of union identity directly, their contributions inform it. These approaches are grouped under two broad headings. Firstly, there are those writers who adopt some form of categorisation (Webb and Webb, 1894, 1897; Hyman, 1975; Hughes, 1967; Clegg, 1979; Heery and Kelly, 1994; Visser, 2012) and secondly, those who employ more flexible frameworks, allowing for the relative strength of various criteria to be considered (Turner, 1962; Blackburn 1967; Undy et al, 1981; Hyman, 1994 and 2001; Hodder and Edwards, 2015). In the case of the categorisers, it is argued that existing categories are too rigid to provide a satisfactory understanding of the diverse range of union identities projected by contemporary UK certified trade unions. In contrast, it is argued that whilst existing flexible frameworks avoid problems of categorisation, many of their criteria are not relevant to understanding the projected identities of contemporary UK unions, or for explaining niche union identity or niche unionism.

Given the inadequacies of the extant industrial relations literature in explaining the research questions, the chapter then reviews literature from other intellectual areas where these contributions inform the research. These include: organisational identity theories (Balmer, 2008; Whetten, 2006); the concept of niche, drawn from ecology and marketing (Hannan et al, 2003; Dalgic and Leeuw, 1994); self-categorisation theory and social identity theory, drawn from social psychology (Hogg, Turner and Davidson, 1990; Ashforth and Mael 1989; Brown, 2000) and identity theory, drawn from sociology (Hogg, Terry and White, 1995). The chapter demonstrates that there are clear benefits in adopting an eclectic approach, and that contributions from beyond the field of industrial relations should be both acknowledged and incorporated into it.

## **2.2 The developing concept of union identities**

### **The use of categorisations for understanding trade unions**

In considering writers who understand trade unions by categorisation, the Webbs (1894, 1897) provide a starting point with their rudimentary distinction of craft unions from their 'new model' and the later general unions. In their enthusiasm for the 'new model' (Allen, 1963; Hobsbawm, 1967), they tended to underestimate the later phenomenon of 'new unionism' (Allen, 1963; Musson, 1976), which provided the foundations for modern general unionism. However, the Webbs (1894) 'new model' was perhaps more significant for this work in that it was based on the observation of characteristics (see later discussion of observable characteristics in this chapter).

Whilst Hyman (1975, p.38) followed the established categorisations of 'craft', 'industrial' and 'general', Clegg (1979) drew on Hughes (1967), who introduced two additional categories of 'sector' and 'sector-general' unions. The first recruits members within several industries within an industrial sector, whereas the latter is open to all workers within such a sector. However, Clegg (1979) argues that these categories are of limited value because of the complex structure of British trade unionism. It is argued here that these additional categories are now largely redundant because many of the unions categorised as sector and sector general unions have now been absorbed into general unions through merger (Waddington, 1995; Undy, 2008; McIlroy and Daniels, 2009b). As regards those such unions that remain, these might be identified by some combination of industry and occupation, albeit in variable measures.

In contrast, Heery and Kelly (1994) introduced a threefold typology to explain trends in union development which might also contribute to an understanding of union identity. It is focused primarily on the functions of unions and suggests that in ‘professional’ unions, activity is led by full-time officials, whereas in ‘participative’ unions, members are encouraged towards self-reliance in leading activity, and in ‘managerial’ unions members are viewed as reactive consumers. The function and modus operandi of individual unions are not of necessity unrelated to how unions are perceived, as is recognised in organisational identity theory discussed later in this chapter (Albert and Whetten, 1985; Balmer, 2008). However, the work of Heery and Kelly (1994) can be criticised primarily because of an over-focus on the servicing relationship at the expense of other salient factors (Smith, 1995), and for the methodological limitations of adopting a limited typology (Ackers, 1995). It is therefore argued here that whilst Heery and Kelly (1994) provide useful insight into unions’ internal servicing relationships, they do not provide a comprehensive explanation of unions’ projected identities, which are the focus of this work.

More recently, Visser (2012, p.18), writing in a European context, introduced a fivefold typology comprising: blue-collar sectorial; narrow sectorial organising non-manual workers or white collar staff; blue-collar craft union; occupational white collar and general. Any attempt to apply this typology to UK trade unions beyond the ‘general’ and ‘occupational white collar’ categories, would be problematic given the tendency of many of the UK’s blue-collar unions to have merged, albeit sometimes in stages, into general unions (Waddington, 1995; Undy, 2008). Whilst there are unions which are either predominantly blue-collar (RMT) or white-collar (Prospect) it is suggested here that this typology may only be applicable on a piecemeal basis in the UK and is therefore of limited use in understanding contemporary UK union identities.

### **The development of flexible frameworks for understanding trade unions**

Turning to consider writers who have provided flexible frameworks that allow for the relative strength of various criteria to be considered, Turner (1962) provides the seminal work recognising unions as being relatively more ‘open’ or ‘closed’ (Turner, 1962). This provokes the question: ‘what does closed mean?’ For Turner (1962), unions are closed because they restrict membership in some way. Rejecting simple categorization, he states

that terms such as ‘craft’, ‘occupational’, ‘industrial’ and ‘general’ “...may sometimes indicate the union’s...original shape...” (Turner, 1962, p.233). Turner (1962) claims historical determinism, but with successive merger waves (Waddington, 1995; Undy, 2008) and the adoption of aspirational titles by some unions (Balmer, 2008; Gall, 2007), this claim can now be questioned. Whilst many union names do indicate their origins, many others do not (Certification Officer, 2016). Therefore this work employs terms such as ‘occupational’ and ‘industrial’ as potential sources of unions’ projected identities rather than assuming historical determinism.

Turner (1962) effectively sets up a continuum. Towards the closed end he argues that early craft unions were based upon exclusivity and dependent upon their ability to control entry and enforce the standard rate. This can be seen as an expression of ‘occupational closure’ (Weber, 1978). Murphy (1988, p.8) states that Weber used the term ‘closure’

“...to refer to the process of subordination whereby one group monopolizes advantages by closing off opportunities to another group of outsiders beneath it to another group of which it defines as inferior and ineligible”.

In contrast, towards the other end of the continuum, Turner (1962) questions the relative openness of general unions, stating: “Old unions prevented them becoming truly general organisations” (Turner, 1962, p.221). However, it can now be argued that given the diverse range of unions which have merged with both GMB and Unite, they are now far more general in composition. Whereas Turner (1962) wrote in an era when the closed shop provided the ultimate expression of occupational closure, some element of this remains where union rules restrict membership and particularly so where professional qualification is a pre-requisite for full membership. This phenomenon can be related to social identity, self-categorisation and social identity theories discussed later in this chapter. However, for most unions, once abolition of the closed shop became a political imperative (Smith, 2009) and other measures reduced collective bargaining effectiveness (Wright and Brown, 2013), the potential for occupational closure was reduced.

Overall, Turner’s (1962) achievement was to produce a framework capable of application to all unions whilst recognising certain observable characteristics. Its limitation is that it does not explain how the projected identities of contemporary unions are constructed. The concepts of union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism explored in this work do not therefore stand in opposition to Turner’s (1962) work, but rather seek to extend it.

The question for this work is therefore, ‘what does closed mean in terms of contemporary union identities and how does this help us to understand niche union identity and niche unionism?’

In contrast to the simplicity of Turner’s (1962) open/closed continuum, Blackburn’s (1967) concept of ‘unionateness’ employs seven ‘elements’ used to determine how ‘union like’ unions are. Whilst the first three are relative concepts, the last three are absolute, and the fourth falls between the two. As ‘unionateness’ could be considered as an aspect of union identity, the relevance of his elements to this work is considered systematically here.

Blackburn’s (1967) first element sees collective bargaining and the protection of members’ interests as the main activities, in preference to professional or welfare issues. The importance of this element seems to have reduced as a result of the decline in collective bargaining over recent decades (Brown, Bryson and Forth, 2009). However, he recognises that professional associations may be more concerned with professional issues and that some unions have more concern over welfare issues, such as the regionally organised NUM (National Union of Mineworkers).

The second element relates to a union’s independence from the employer (Blackburn, 1967). As this work is confined to certified unions which inevitably hold a Certificate of Independence, this element is not regarded as important. However, Blackburn (1967) sees this as a relative element, and two issues should be mentioned here. The first relates to those in-house staff associations that have achieved certification, including Advance, (formerly the Abbey National Staff Association) and the Lloyds TSB Group Union (formerly the Lloyds Bank Staff Association), together with those which have merged with certified unions (Gall, 1997, 2001). This raises a question of whether there is a ‘direction of travel’ towards independence. The second issue identified by Blackburn (1967) relates to the relative independence of unions where they rely upon facility time to conduct union duties, with the implication that certified unions may have a certain level of dependence upon employers. Whilst facility time is not provided universally and may be withdrawn or restricted, publicly expressed concerns have resulted in restrictions in the public sector, perhaps making consideration of this element worthwhile (Cabinet Office, 2012; Labour Research, 2013; van Wanrooy et al, 2013).

Blackburn’s (1967) third element relates to the union’s propensity to militancy. Despite the substantial decline in industrial action over recent decades (Dix, Sisson and Forth, 2009;

Lyddon, 2009), this element would again still seem to be relevant, given that certain unions such as FBU (Fire Brigades Union), PCS and RMT have attracted a militant reputation (Darlington, 2012; Connelly and Darlington 2012; Taylor and Moore, 2014). However, with so much of the UK's membership now contained within general unions, the position is somewhat more complex. For example, it can be questioned as to whether Unite was a moderate or militant union, given that the union was involved in a long and bitter dispute with British Airways (Taylor and Moore, 2014) but concurrently held a partnership agreement with Barclays Bank (Wills, 2004). It can therefore be argued that large and complex unions may be both moderate and militant on an opportunistic and / or pragmatic basis, making militancy a more problematic characteristic of union identity (Kelly, 1998; Darlington, 2012).

The fourth element relates to whether a union declares itself as such, which Blackburn (1967 p.33), argues relates to a union's "...perception of itself, and the public image it wishes to create." This is perhaps the element that is most closely related to the study of identity, and Blackburn's (1967) makes clear that it is not only by name that unions declare themselves to be such, but also through their activities. This is exemplified by the train drivers union, ASLEF (Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen) which gives no indication of being a union in its name but is perhaps more clearly identified as such by its activity. A factor that has changed since Blackburn (1967) published is the practice of unions such as Accord, Advance, Unite and Unison of adopting names that do not describe who they represent (Gall, 2007), perhaps expressing aspiration rather than function (Balmer, 2008).

The fifth element relates to the question of registration, which Blackburn (1967) describes as a choice. Whilst this has been overtaken by legislative requirement, the public record reports thirteen 'unlisted' organisations which were observed to operate in the manner of trade unions (Certification Officer, 2016). Beyond this there are others, such as the Police Federation of England and Wales, which represents the lower ranks of the police force individually and collectively, albeit without recourse to industrial action by statutory bar (Allen, 1958; Bean, 1980; Seifert and Mather, 2013). However, for new unions, certification may be an important stage in their development and in establishing their identity as unions (Ross, 2013).

The sixth element is TUC affiliation, which for Blackburn (1967, p.37) provided: "The most direct way of expressing shared interests and identity with other unions..." There are

currently fifty unions affiliated to the TUC (TUC, 2016), representing over a third of all certified unions (Certification Officer, 2016). However, the TUC claims that these unions represent 5.6 million members, representing 86 percent of UK certified union membership (TUC, 2016; Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2016). Blackburn (1967, p.38), also suggests that affiliation is "...always a potential source of controversy in white-collar unions." and that "White-collar workers' objections to the TUC are frequently political". Given that the membership of TUC affiliates is now dominated by non-manual workers, this factor would seem less relevant. With the majority of TUC membership now being contained in three general unions and around two thirds of certified unions currently being outside the TUC, albeit containing a minority of union members (TUC, 2016; Certification Officer, 2016), there would seem to be a need to explain the relevance of TUC affiliation to union identity.

The seventh element is affiliation to the Labour Party. Blackburn (1967, p.39) argues that affiliation "... entails more than identification with other unions, for it means support for the labour movement as a political phenomenon". Whilst the three largest general unions remain affiliated to the Labour Party, only fourteen of 145 certified unions are currently affiliated to Labour (Certification Officer, 2016; Labour Party, 2017). Noticeable absentees include; NASUWT, NUT, PCS, Prospect and RMT, many of which are no strangers to political activity. Blackburn (1967) raises issues of white-collar reluctance which are less relevant today, as much of affiliated unions' membership is drawn from non-manual occupations. A more useful distinction today might be with professional unions, as no affiliate could be described as a professional union or association. Although the New Labour period saw increasing distance between the unions and the party, the two recent victories by the left-wing leader, Jeremy Corbyn, may signal a change in the relationship (see discussion in Chapter 1). Therefore, the contemporary relevance of this element in the construction of union identity is considered worthy of further investigation.

Overall, Blackburn's (1967) work on 'unionateness' is valuable both in avoiding categorisation and in developing a multidimensional framework of analysis based upon a broad range of observable characteristics. However, some of his elements are now considered less relevant measures of 'unionateness' and are not necessarily appropriate to developing an understanding of contemporary UK trade union identities.

Although the work of Undy et al (1981) explores change in trade unions, it also informs the question of identity. They again avoid categorisation by setting up a number of criteria

which they termed the 'processes of change', which they group under the headings of government, job territories and systems of job regulation. They then identify a number of 'common influences', which they term 'agents of change', and suggest that the democratic structures and national leadership were the most difficult of these to assess. Three important points emerge from their work that are consistent with this investigation. Firstly, their work is focused on understanding internal factors, in contrast to Bain and Price (1983), who regard external factors as the key determinant of union growth. Secondly, they suggest that a complex interaction of factors contributes to an understanding of individual unions, and therefore employ a flexible framework of analysis. Thirdly, they recognise unions as being in a dynamic situation.

In contrast to other writers, Hyman employs different frameworks of analysis at different times to explain union identities. Although he follows established categories in early work (Hyman, 1975), writing later in the context of European trade unionism he offers two differing, if at points overlapping, explanations of union identities (Hyman, 1994 & 2001). Hyman (1994), suggests a four factor model in which union identity is a result of the interaction of "...the interconnecting dynamics of interest, democracy, agenda and power" (Hyman, 1994, p.131). He argues that business unionism had supplanted class unionism and cites factors including the restructuring of capital and the breakdown of manual and non-manual distinctions.

Hyman (2001) introduces an 'eternal triangle' of 'market', 'society' and 'class', within which the multiplicity of union forms can be located, arguing that (Hyman, 2001, p.3), "All unions face in three directions". He cites Perlman (1928, cited in Hyman, 2001, p.9), who contrasted American unions as being more concerned with employment issues and European unions as being more politicised. Hyman (2001) argues that in continental Europe it was the move to institutionalised relations with employers that led to an increasingly 'ritualistic' profession of class and a drift towards a form of business unionism and political reformism. As regards Britain, he concludes that "Trends in British trade union identity remain uneven, uncertain and contested" and that, "...experience since 1979 has clearly shaken the stability of trade unionism founded on the market class axis" (Hyman, 2001, p.110).

Several problems emerge in trying to apply Hyman's frameworks to this work on contemporary UK trade union identities (Hyman, 1994 and 2001). Firstly, being conceived in a European context, the frameworks are highly generalised in order to accommodate the

diversity of unions operating within very different national structures. Secondly, because these frameworks are so generalised, there is very little to criticise in terms of the factors identified, but rather the problem would seem to be that both have limited value in developing a comprehensive understanding of contemporary UK unions' projected identities. Finally, neither framework would appear to be based upon any empirical work from which the relevant factors were derived, nor is it clear how they could be operationalised. Therefore it is argued that a more sophisticated framework of analysis is required to understand trade union identities, based upon the systematic collection of data on observable characteristics and the identification of sources of union identity.

More recently, Hodder and Edwards (2015) have addressed the question of union identities within a wide-ranging discussion and suggest "a framework to help understand the essence of trade unions" (Hodder and Edwards, 2015, p.833). As with Hyman's (1994; 2001) later contributions, their framework is generalised to accommodate comparative differences and similarly seems to lack any empirical justification. Further, it is unclear whether their framework relates to unions' projected identities as considered in this work or to the perception of trade unions, and if the latter, then by whom. Again, it would not seem to advance the understanding of UK certified trade unions' projected identities.

Theoretical support for the contribution class to union identity is relatively limited (Lockwood, 1958; Blackburn, 1967; Hyman, 2001; Hodder and Edwards, 2015). Hyman omits class in his earlier framework only for it to emerge in his later contribution (Hyman, 1994, 2001). Hodder and Edwards (2015, p.850) include 'degree of class focus' as an element in their 'essence of unions framework', although it is not clear how this could be assessed. In search of empirical evidence, Moore (2011), exploring the role of class consciousness in workplace organisation, found that only half her sample of workplace representatives considered themselves to be working class. However, with her participants being drawn exclusively from general (GMB, Unison, Unite) and industrial (CWU, PCS, RMT) unions and with none from organisational or professional unions, the sample was somewhat skewed. Holgate (2013), exploring community unionism and Tapia (2013), recognising the problems of mobilisation, draw attention to community organisation and provide evidence of new forms of class-based unionism. Whilst these contributions suggest that class remains an issue in understanding UK trade unions, supporting earlier work (Lockwood, 1958; Blackburn, 1967), they do not provide conclusive evidence for a resurgence of class based unionism, or for the contribution of class to the construction of

union identities. It is therefore suggested that the question of class requires further investigation in the context of union identities.

### **Summation**

This section acknowledges that whilst contributions from the field of industrial relations help to inform the question of union identities, they do not generally address it directly. Theorists were found to fall broadly into two groups; those who utilise some form of categorisation (Webb and Webb, 1894, 1897; Hyman, 1975; Hughes, 1967; Clegg, 1979; Heery and Kelly, 1994; Visser, 2012) and those who advocate a framework of analysis that allows the relative strength of various criteria to be considered (Turner, 1962; Blackburn 1967; Undy et al, 1981; Hyman, 1994, 2001; Hodder and Edwards, 2015). Because of the inevitable limitations of applying rigid typologies to a diverse range of union identities, it is suggested that the flexibility of a multidimensional framework would prove to be more useful.

This section has also demonstrated that whilst some of the categories and criteria introduced by earlier writers are useful in understanding contemporary union identities, others are not. This supports the rationale for this research in investigating the questions of trade union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism. Whilst class is discussed by many writers (Hyman, 2001; Moore, 2011; Holgate, 2013; Tapia, 2013; Hodder and Edwards, 2015), its contribution to union identity is unclear and also requires investigation. Although the industrial relations literature has made some contribution to understanding of union identities, it is suggested that there is merit in considering other intellectual approaches and this chapter now turns to look at literature drawn for the most part from beyond the field of industrial relations.

### **2.3 Exploring organisational identity theories**

Having recognised the limitations of the extant industrial relations literature, this section argues that contributions from organisational identity theory can contribute to the understanding of union identities. The field is multi-disciplinary but draws primarily upon marketing, which tends to focus on the external perception of organisations, and on

organisational behaviour, which focuses more on the internal perceptions of members and employees (Balmer, 2008). Whetten (2006, p.221) suggests that organisations are “...more than social collectives...” in having both legal and social identities, and emphasises their uniqueness. If not unique, it is suggested here that unions project distinct identities which can be observed.

It is further suggested in this work that unions’ distinct identities can be understood by the observation of certain ‘observable characteristics’. Organisational identity theorists have suggested that these characteristics should be “central, enduring and distinctive” (Albert and Whetten; 1985, Whetton, 2006) and that it is the “...enduring attributes of an organization that distinguish it from other organizations” (Whetten, 2006, p.220). Similarly, Balmer (2008, p.886) suggests that, “...a corporate identity is characterised as having traits that are substantive and, whose effects are observable”. However, since the seminal work of Albert and Whetten (1985), questions have been raised as to the selection of criteria for observable characteristics and the potential for organisations to have multiple identities (He and Brown, 2013). This raises important questions for this work, which is limited to those characteristics observed to contribute to the construction of unions’ identities projected in the public domain.

Balmer and Soenen (1999) developed four different conceptions of organisational identity which can be related to union identities. ‘Actual Identity’ is what the organisation actually is and is represented by, “...the values held by the staff and management of the organisation and how these values are concretely manifested” (Balmer and Soenen, 1999, p.83). Relating this to unions would require both members and activists to be included. ‘Communicated Identity’ relates to how the organisation is perceived. There are two aspects to this, the “...controllable communication including advertising and PR...” (Public Relations) and “...non-controllable communications such as employee, discourse, rumours and commentaries made about the organisation in the media” (Balmer and Soenen, 1999, p.83). ‘Ideal Identity’ “...refers to the optimal positioning the organisation can achieve in its market or markets” (Balmer and Soenen, 1999, p.83), which can be related to unions’ membership territories. Finally, ‘Desired Identity’ refers to “...the management vision and the corporate mission of the organisation” (Balmer and Soenen, 1999, p.84), which can be related to the strategies and policies adopted by unions from time to time. The term ‘projected identity’ used in this work relates to Balmer and Soenen’s (1999) ‘controllable communications’, together with ‘ideal’ and ‘desired’ identities, because these refer to areas of discretion in relation to what unions say about themselves,

how they define their membership territories and what they hope to be. In contrast, their (Balmer and Soenen, 1999) ‘actual identity’ and ‘non-controllable communications’ relate to perceptions and are therefore beyond the scope of this study.

This then raises an important question as to the extent to which union identities are constructed. The contribution of design is highlighted by Balmer (1998), who points out the role of consultancy in facilitating the process, and by Balmer and Soenen (1999) when discussing corporate identity management. More recently, Burghausen and Balmer (2015) have discussed the concept of ‘corporate heritage identity stewardship’, which relates to the maintenance of past identity that is relevant to the present and future of the organisation. In this respect, whilst many unions have dispensed with historic identities, frequently through merger and / or by adopting new names, many other unions have maintained identities over time.

Overall it is argued that organisational identity theory can make a significant contribution to the understanding of trade union identities in several respects. Firstly, in recognising that organisations have observable characteristics which distinguish them from other organisations (Whetton, 2006; Balmer, 2008). Secondly, in recognising that organisational identities can to some extent be actively managed (Balmer and Soenen, 1999) and may be maintained over time (Burghausen and Balmer, 2015), and finally in acknowledging that there are different conceptions of organisational identity (Balmer and Soenen, 1999). Whilst these theories can inform an understanding of union identities, they do not explain why unions adopt niche union identities or practice niche unionism. The next section therefore turns to explore theories which are instructive in understanding these phenomena.

## **2.4 The concept of niche, social identity, self-categorization and identity theories**

### **The concept of niche**

This section argues that understanding the concept of niche is fundamental to understanding trade union identities. Niche union identity is understood to relate to any union identity which is not general in character, implying that membership is in some way restricted to a niche. In contrast, ‘niche unionism’ relates both to niche unions and to unions which serve niche memberships through sectionalised structures. To explore the

concept of niche and its application to trade union identities, this section reviews industrial relations, sociological and marketing literatures and associated concepts of social identity, self-categorization and identity theory drawn from social psychology and sociology.

The concept of niche organisation is explored in the sociological context by Hannan, et al (2003). They cite Elton (1927, cited in Hannan et al, 2003, p.310) as the seminal writer, albeit within the field of ecology. Hannan et al (2003, p.312) suggest a model of niche organisation as "...a market; an audience with members possessing distinctive tastes; a set of sociodemographic positions associated with the audience members; a set of organisations making offers; and organizations with identities and applicable organization-form codes" which can broadly be applied both to unions and those they seek to organise. Hannan et al (2003) also recognise the relative width of niches and that niches may overlap, which can be related to Turner's (1962) conceptualisation of unions being relatively more open or closed (discussed earlier in this chapter). Following the logic of the ecological model, Hannan et al (2003) highlight the fitness of organisations to compete in competitive situations. In this respect it is observed that smaller unions often survive over time in a relatively poor financial state, but that a defensive merger always remains a possibility (Willman et al, 1993; Undy, 2008).

In contrast to these theoretical insights, there has been little reference to niche in the literature of industrial relations, except for a passing reference by Hyman (2001) and a slightly more developed contribution from Visser (2012). More recently, Ackers (2015) called for union organisation based upon sectional interest, which could be viewed as an argument for niche organisation in preference to general unionism. Despite this limited consideration of niche in the literature of industrial relations, it is possible to identify the origins of what are conceptualised as in this work as 'niche unions'. Turner (1962) recognised that early unions that organised around craft and that were bounded by occupational and geographical membership territories were inevitably 'closed' because they restricted membership. With the development of national unions from the mid-nineteenth century, general unions from 1889 and industrial unions from the early twentieth century, the concept of trade became far less important (Webb and Webb, 1894, 1897; Clegg, 1979; Clegg, Fox, Thompson, 1985). The result was a multiplicity of trade union forms, which, with the exception of general unions, are termed niche unions in this work.

Visser (2012, p.139) argues that “Small unions can only survive if they represent a very specific niche in the labour market...” and highlights the vulnerability of such unions, suggesting that “...the history of vanishing craft unions is a reminder that such niches may not outlive technological or political change...”. Visser (2012) also suggests that niche unions may survive as part of a larger federated union, which can be related to the sectionalised structures found in larger unions practising what is conceptualised in this work as niche unionism. Whilst change may be a driver towards merger, it does not explain the persistence of numerous niche unions in the UK.

Although general unions have numerical supremacy of membership, niche unions represent the vast majority of UK certified trade unions (Certification Officer, 2016; Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2016). Ackers (2015, p.96), arguing against the radical influence of unions with concerns for organisation and solidarity, instead calls for a conceptualisation of trade unions “... as organisations of employees by company, trade (craft), industry, and ultimately profession” (Ackers, 2015, p).97. Whilst this could be viewed as a prescription for niche unions, it perhaps misses the point that unions inevitably represent both wider socio-political concerns and narrower sectional interests, and that larger unions tend to accommodate these through sectionalised structures, practising what is called ‘niche unionism’ in this work.

The term ‘niche’ as used in marketing is defined by Dalgic and Leeuw (1994, p.40) as “...a small market consisting of an individual customer or a small group of customers with similar characteristics or needs”. This recognises that the term applies to markets but not necessarily to organisations. They suggest that “Small companies do not have a monopoly on niches but that they may be better focused and equipped to serve these markets in contrast to their big brothers” (Dalgic and Leeuw, 1994, p.44). Thus it is recognised in this work that whereas ‘niche unions’ organise defined niches within the labour market, ‘niche unionism’ includes unions serving multiple occupational niches through sectionalised structures.

Dalgic and Leeuw (1994) suggest that organisations adopt a niche position to avoid competition and confrontation with larger organisations, to improve opportunity and for survival. In the case of unions, it may be that a niche identity was derived from a union’s origins in an occupation, industry or organisation (Turner, 1962; Webb and Webb, 1894, 1897; Hyman, 1975), or from subsequent choices of merger partner (Waddington, 1995; Undy, 2008). However, Dalgic and Leeuw (1994) suggest that exploitation of a niche

requires appropriate positioning of the product and differentiation from those of competitors. Relating this to unions, it is argued that whereas some unions occupy niches relatively free from competition, such as those of many professional associations, others are in a more competitive situation, as exemplified by the plethora of unions organising in compulsory education.

Overall it is argued here that the literature of industrial relations does not adequately explain the concept of niche or the phenomena of niche union identity and niche unionism (Hyman, 2001; Visser, 2012; Ackers, 2015). In contrast, theories of niche drawn from other intellectual areas are more helpful (Dalgic and Leeuw, 1994; Hannan, et al, 2003). In particular, the term niche can be applied to both niche organisations and larger organisations which serve multiple niches. Further, niches may overlap, some may be more competitive and smaller niche unions may be more vulnerable to change because of their niche identity. The next section demonstrates that theories exploring the significance of niche organisation for individuals and groups drawn from social psychology and sociology may also be helpful in understanding the role of niche.

### **Social identity theory, self-categorisation and identity theories**

Possible explanations for the persistence of niche unions and niche unionism can be found in the literatures of social psychology and sociology. SIT (Social Identity Theory) is defined as a theory of group differentiation through which members can make their group or groups distinct from other groups (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Brown, 2000). Taifel and Turner (1986) draw a distinction between personal and social identity, with the latter being primarily drawn from group membership. For Budd (2011, p.148) “Social identity theory starts with the premise that individuals seek a positive concept of themselves (self-esteem).” Individuals may see themselves as members of ‘in-groups’ as opposed to ‘out-groups’ (Brown, 2000; Budd, 2011). In this respect, social identity could be derived or confirmed by union membership when unions serve individual members’ needs for social identification.

In explaining the nature of ‘in-group’ status, Budd (2011, p.148) suggests that “...the individual engages in self-enhancement by magnifying the differences between those groups the individual identifies with and those he or she does not...” Similarly, Brown (2000, p.755) argues that “...a central assumption of SIT is that in-group bias is motivated

by a desire to see one's group and hence oneself in a positive light". However, two caveats should be entered here: the characteristics ascribed to a person through 'in-group' membership may lead to unwarranted stereotyping, and personal social identity can be constructed through an amalgam of conflicting identities derived from membership of different groups (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). These reservations may go some way to explaining the difficulties unions face in mobilising members towards industrial action (Tapia (2013), where members feel constrained by conflicting loyalties.

Self-categorization theory is a more recent development that explores the extent to which individuals define their own social group or relationship to other groups that tend to polarize around group norms (Hogg, Turner and Davidson, 1990). Budd (2011, p.147) suggests that this "...extends social identity theory by digging deeper into the cognitive process that underlies the categorization process" and that "...the process of categorizing individuals into groups is seen as one of depersonalizing group members by thinking of them as stereotypes of the in-group or out-group characteristics...". However, as both union membership and the level of participation is largely a matter of individual choice, the extent to which union members inculcate group norms might be questioned.

In contrast to social identity and self-categorization theories, which are drawn from social psychology, identity theory originates in sociology and relates to the roles and behaviour of individuals in society (Hogg, Terry and White, 1995). It is argued here that whereas the former may be related to the psychological predisposition of existing and potential union members to join or indeed not to join a particular union, the latter relates more closely to the roles they may perform, and that this might be a motor-force in the persistence of occupationally-based unions and particularly so in the case of professional associations.

Overall it is argued that theories drawn from beyond the literature of industrial relations help to inform questions of niche union identity and niche unionism. In particular, social identity theory (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Brown, 2000; Taifel and Turner (1986), draws attention to what the individual might gain through 'in-group' status. Whereas self-categorisation theory highlights the role of the individual and the extent of norming with the group, identity theory explores the importance of occupational roles (Hogg, Turner and Davidson, 1990; Hogg, Terry and White, 1995). These theories suggest that the persistence of niche unions and the niche unionism practiced by larger unions may be closely related to the identity needs of individual members.

## **Summation**

In summarising this section, it is argued that the concept of niche has received scant attention in industrial relations literature, with limited exceptions (Hyman, 2001; Visser, 2012). In contrast, theoretical contributions from other disciplines help inform the discussion and should be acknowledged in the industrial relations literature. It is recognised that the concept of niche relates both to markets and organisations and that niches may vary in width (Dalgic and Leeuw, 1994), with the implication that niches in the labour market are served not only by niche unions but also by more broadly-based unions with sectionalised structures. Unions may therefore be relatively more ‘open’ or ‘closed’ (Turner, 1962). Union membership can be related to individuals’ need for ‘in-group’ status, perhaps fulfilling members’ needs for self-esteem, or related to the roles which they perform, which perhaps helps to explain the persistence of occupational unions in general and professional unions in particular (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Brown, 2000; Hogg, Terry and White, 1995; Taifel and Turner, 1986).

## **2.5 Conclusions**

This chapter has reviewed extant literature drawn from the field of industrial relations, together with contributions from other disciplines that inform and advance the understanding of union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism.

The review of industrial relations literature recognised that whilst not all the theoretical approaches that were considered explored union identities specifically, they fall into two broad groups. On the one hand, there are those who advocate categorisation of unions (Webb and Webb, 1894, 1897; Hyman, 1975; Hughes, 1967; Clegg, 1979; Heery and Kelly, 1994; Visser, 2012). It was argued that these rigid categorisations are unsatisfactory because they fail to explain the diverse range of contemporary union identities. On the other hand, there are those who employ a multidimensional framework of analysis for unions that allows for the relative strength of various criteria to be considered (Turner, 1962; Blackburn 1967; Undy et al, 1981; Hyman, 1994 and 2001; Hodder and Edwards, 2015). It is asserted that the flexibility afforded by multidimensional frameworks offers a more effective approach to understanding contemporary UK trade union identities than rigid typologies. However, it is also argued that some of the criteria introduced by earlier

writers are now out of date or otherwise inappropriate for understanding contemporary union identities.

Organisational identity theory contributes to this work by providing a more developed understanding of the nature of organisational identities. In particular: the recognition that organisations have characteristics that distinguish them from other organisations and that these can be observed (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetten, 2006; Balmer, 2008). Further: that organisational identities can be managed, at least to some extent, which allows for the possibility of design (Whetten, 2006, Balmer, 2008). And finally: that what is being studied here is the 'projected identity', which may embody the 'actual', 'communicated', 'ideal' or 'desired' types of identity (Balmer and Soenen, 1999).

Although there are few references to the concept of niche in industrial relations literature save for some minor exceptions (Hyman, 2001; Visser, 2012), other literatures were found to be more helpful in explaining this concept. In marketing, the concept of niche is related to small markets rather than to the organisations which serve them (Dalgic and Leeuw, 1994) and is therefore applicable not only to niche unions but to all unions which serve niches in the labour market. The concept of niche can also be related to the idea of group differentiation found in social identification theory (Taifel and Turner, 1986), the tendency of individuals to seek group affiliation and polarize around group norms as recognised in self-identification theory (Hogg, Turner and Davidson, 1990), and the idea that occupational roles may be central to persistence of occupational unions, drawn from identity theory (Hogg, Terry and White, 1995). It is therefore argued that niche union identity and niche unionism need to be understood not only in terms of the sources of union identity or of their observable characteristics, but also through the needs of individuals for affiliation and self-identity.

Three important questions emerge from this review. The first relates to how we understand the projected identities of contemporary UK certified trade unions, given the shortcomings of existing theorisations, whether in the rigidity of categorisations or in the contemporary relevance of flexible frameworks. This review suggests that a flexible framework would be preferable in order to accommodate the diverse range of identities projected by contemporary UK certified trade unions. The second relates to how we understand the nature of niche union identity, which effectively means answering the question, following Turner (1962): 'what does closed mean?'. To do this, it is important to identify how contemporary unions that are not general in character restrict membership, and how this is

reflected in the identities that they project. Finally, an explanation of how unions that serve multiple niches organise niche memberships through sectionalised structures is needed. In the case of both niche union identity and niche unionism, this review suggests that literature from disciplines beyond the field of industrial relations can inform an understanding of these phenomena and that these contributions should be acknowledged in the literature of industrial relations (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Brown, 2000; Dalgic and Leeuw, 1994; Hannan, et al, 2003; Hogg, Taifel and Turner, 1986; Hogg, Terry and White, 1995).

Overall it is clear that the extant literature does not completely answer any of the research questions addressed in this work. In successive chapters this thesis now explores these questions with the aim of developing a deeper understanding of union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism (see Chapters 3, 4 & 5). To achieve this, the work introduces a multidimensional framework of analysis, based on the sources from which the identity of unions is drawn and on the observable characteristics through which these are expressed (see Chapter 6). Finally, this thesis returns to the literature in order to suggest where this work makes a contribution to knowledge within the field of industrial relations (see Chapter 7).

## **Chapter 3**

### **Researching contemporary UK trade union identities, the role of niche unions and niche unionism**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter explains, justifies and defends the primary source research methodology employed in this work to explore the questions of union identity, niche union identity and niche unionism (outlined in Chapter 1). The research is conducted within the context of a significant decline in union membership, power and influence over recent decades together with attempts at renewal and revitalisation (discussed in Chapter 1). It was suggested earlier in this work that the extant literature does not adequately explain the complex identities projected by contemporary UK certified trade unions, or niche union identity or niche unionism (discussed in Chapter 2). In order to understand these phenomena, the research set out to explore the meaning of the term ‘closed’ as used by Turner (1962) in relation to contemporary trade union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism.

This chapter first explains and justifies the epistemological approaches of realism, reflexivity and empirical pragmatism adopted in preference to alternative approaches which could have been employed. It then establishes the industrial relations paradigm within which the research was conducted, locating it broadly within pluralism, introducing a position of pragmatic pluralism. It also considers the ontological position of the researcher as one of objective partisanship.

The chapter then proceeds to outline the research strategy that was developed before describing the research design and how it developed and was operationalised, together with the process of data analysis and how research ethics were maintained during the course of the work. This chapter demonstrates that the research strategy and research design were developed through a number of phases in order to address the research questions. Decisions were made at each phase of the research, and the strategy and design were developed through reflexive analysis and pragmatic interpretation of the data. The strategy

involved employing mixed methods to collect the significant rich data reported later in this thesis. It became apparent during the course of the research that simple categorisation of union identities was unsatisfactory, and that a more flexible conceptual framework was required to better understand many unions' projected identities. To resolve this problem, it is argued that a multidimensional framework is required. The challenge of this research then became the development of a methodological approach that was capable of collecting and analysing data to inform the construction of such a framework.

Finally, a concluding section draws together the main points of the research philosophy, research strategy and research design.

## **3.2 Research philosophy**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this section is to explain and defend the epistemological positions of realism, reflexivity, empirical pragmatism and pragmatic pluralism, together with the ontological position of objective partisanship adopted in this work. Epistemology is seen here to relate to the construction of knowledge, in this instance knowledge of the social world acquired through social research. This is seen as "... academic research related to topics on questions relevant to social scientific fields" (Bryman, 2015, p.4) at an organisational level in this case. The epistemological approach adopted was one of realism (Ackroyd, in Buchanan and Bryman, 2011; Bryman and Bell, 2011; Robson, 2002), together with reflexivity (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011) and empirical pragmatism (Hartsthorne, 1980). The work is broadly located within the pluralist paradigm of industrial relations (Clegg, 1979; Flanders, 1975), but introduces a position of 'pragmatic pluralism', arguing that neither radical pluralism (Edwards, 2015a & 2015b), nor neo-pluralism (Ackers & Wilkinson, 2005; Ackers, 2014) are appropriate. The researcher's ontological position is one of 'objective partisanship' (Darlington and Dobson, 2013).

The importance of establishing these positions is highlighted by Alvesson and Sköldböck (2009, p.8), who suggest that "... it is not methods but ontology and epistemology which are the determinants of good social science". In turn, the implication of these positions for research methods is discussed by Buchanan and Bryman (in Buchanan and Bryman, ed. 2011, p.1), who suggest that the "choice of research methods, shaped by aims, epistemological concerns, and norms of practice, is thus also influenced by organisational,

historical, political, ethical, evidential, and personal factors which are typically treated as problems to be overcome”. Recognising these factors, and with the aim of making a contribution to knowledge within the field of industrial relations, it was necessary to consider the epistemological approaches adopted for this work, the industrial relations paradigm within which it should be located and the ontological position of the researcher.

To address these issues, this section first explains and justifies the relevance of the epistemological approaches of realism, reflexivity and empirical pragmatism which were adopted, together with alternative epistemological approaches which were considered. Secondly, it provides justification for the position of pragmatic pluralism adopted in this work, which is located broadly within the pluralistic approach to industrial relations. Thirdly, it considers the ontological position of objective partisanship adopted by the researcher as being consistent with the epistemological approach and paradigm position adopted, before providing a summation of the research philosophy adopted.

### **Adoption of an approach of realist research together with reflexivity and empirical pragmatism**

A realist approach was considered to be appropriate to this work because realism aims to see the world as it is, recognising that the object of study has an existence beyond its observation, which can be understood through empirical observation and analysis. Bryman and Bell (2011) draw a distinction between realism, which they term ‘empirical realism’, and ‘critical realism’ (considered later in this section). They suggest that “Empirical realism simply asserts that, through the use of appropriate methods, reality can be understood” (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p.19). Realism has many applications in organisational research, potentially drawing on a wide range of research methods (Ackroyd, in Buchanan and Bryman, 2011). Further, it allows for the integration of objectivist and subjectivist approaches (Robson, 2002). Whilst realist research is criticised by Bhaskar (1989) as being superficial because it does not seek to understand underlying mechanisms or causations, neither of these are objectives of this work. Therefore realism is considered to be appropriate to this work because it seeks to understand real phenomena, including unions’ projected identities, by which they are recognised in the public domain, and the extent to which they project niche union identities and practice niche unionism.

The tendency of realist research to produce typologies is highlighted by Ackroyd (in Buchanan and Bryman, 2011), who suggest a distinction between these and taxonomies. Whilst typologies necessarily result in the establishments of ideal types and rigid categorisation, in this work it was considered that taxonomies were preferable in allowing for the flexible application of a range of criteria to be grouped under broad headings. Whilst the research drew on some established categorisations (see discussion in Chapter 2), these were not applied rigidly as categories, but rather were employed flexibly as sources of identity within the multidimensional framework (see Chapter 6).

The practice of reflexivity (Alvesson and Karreman, 2011) and empirical pragmatism (Hartsthorne, 1980) at each stage of the research was central to the process of operationalising the epistemological approach of realism. Reflexivity in this work is understood to relate to the process of systematic in-depth reflection on both the research process and the data collected. Empirical pragmatism is understood to relate to the action of the researcher in the interpretation of empirical data so as to produce useful outputs (Hartsthorne, 1980) and to ‘... Offer the potential of informing robust empirical work in sociology’ (Schneiderhan, 2011, p.589). It is therefore important to acknowledge that the central role of the researcher in the pragmatic interpretation is not unrelated to the researcher’s ontological position (see later discussion on ontology).

The sources of union identity emerged through the process of reflexivity and pragmatic interpretation at each stage of the research. Alvesson and Karreman (2011) argue for critical reasoning in order to challenge illustrative theory and suggest a relaxation of the emphasis on robust data in favour of strong theoretical reasoning. Whilst this work presents robust data, there is inevitably an application of critical reflection in order to understand the significance of the data for the research questions. Alvesson and Karreman (2011) also suggest that reflective critique allows for consideration of that which deviates from existing patterns, problematisation, and the consideration of alternatives. In this work, reflection facilitated the analysis of data in the light of existing theory whilst recognising its limitations in understanding contemporary union identities.

This work employs empirical pragmatism, the intellectual roots of which lie in the development of classical pragmatism by Dewey, James and Pierce (Webb, 2007 and 2012). James, following Pierce, recognised the role of reflexivity in mediating perception with action in developing a “pragmatic theory of meaning” (Hartsthorne, 1980, p.14). Similarly,

Dewey was seen to put "... insight from the reflexive arc at the centre of his philosophy and at the beginning of his analysis of experience" (Webb, 2007, p.1072). It will be demonstrated later in this chapter that the process of empirical observation in this work was mediated through reflexive analysis and pragmatic interpretation of the data. This was important in developing the research design for the latter three phases of the research, the identification of sources of union identity and the construction of the multidimensional framework of analysis (see Chapter 6).

In the course of critical reflection and pragmatic interpretation, the research data was analysed using both deductive and inductive logic, drawing upon both established categories (see Chapter 2) and those derived from analysis of the empirical data (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6). This is consistent with 'abduction', which "... alternates between (previous) theory and empirical facts whereby both are successfully reinterpreted in the light of each other" (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009, p.3). This may also have some similarity with hermeneutics (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009), in which empirical matter, normally in the textual form, is subject to interpretation in the light of existing theoretical constructs.

It is acknowledged that other epistemological approaches could have been adopted in conducting this research. In considering these, it is recognised that there is a broad and generalised division between empiricists and anti-empiricists as represented by positivism and constructionism (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). At one extreme, positivism holds that the only valid knowledge is that which can be verified, as for example by observation, testing, measurement or mathematical proof, whereas constructionism sees knowledge purely as being socially constructed (Alvesson & Karreman 2011). In contrast, the adoption of realism in this work allowed for analysis and interpretation of data (Robson 2002) and for the pragmatic interpretation (Webb, 2007) necessary to develop the multidimensional framework of analysis (introduced in Chapter 6).

In contrast, constructionism is a non-positivist approach that generally rejects 'dataism', regarding theory as a 'point of departure' in seeking 'breakdowns, problematization and mystery' (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). This is seen as leading to creative theorising, construction and reconstruction, reflexive critique and resolution of mystery, and not to solving or categorisation but rather to support ongoing problematization (Alvesson & Karreman, 2011). Although this research does not take a constructionist approach, there

are conceptual aspects associated with it that are acknowledged here, given that this work draws on existing theoretical frameworks (see Chapter 2) and exposes their limitations, which represent points of departure for fresh analysis. However, this work incorporates existing theory where this is helpful in understanding union identities.

As this research is focused upon developing a deeper understanding of the manifestation of unions' projected identities, niche union identity and niche unionism in the public domain, it is argued here that realist research is more appropriate to this investigation than critical realism. In contrast, critical realism (Bhaskar, 1989) is concerned with underlying mechanisms or causation and stresses the generalising task of research, emphasising the distinction of reality from conceptions of it (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009). Edwards (2005) argues for the application of critical realism in industrial relations scholarship, criticising both its problem-solving approaches and its inability to revise the core paradigms established in the 1970s. He argues instead for institutions and processes to be understood from cases chosen from 'context-sensitive' analysis (Edwards, 2005, p.264). This conception of critical realism was also considered inappropriate, not only because this work does not look at mechanisms or causation, but also because a case study approach would have restricted the number of unions observed (see later discussion in this chapter).

It was considered that making progress in understanding union identities would require acknowledging the considerable extant literature and determining where previous constructs were still valid or capable of refinement. Therefore adoption of a grounded theory approach of the type associated with Glaser and Strauss (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009) was considered inappropriate, because it would have resulted in theory being developed entirely from qualitative empirical data with no reference to, or recognition of, earlier theory. What this research has in common with grounded research is the extent to which it uses data to facilitate coding inductively, although in contrast it also acknowledges and incorporates earlier scholarship deductively. However, both inductivist and deductivist approaches share a concern for the separation of data and theory (Alvesson and Karreman, 2011), which is consistent with the approach taken in this work.

Because this work explores union identity at an organisational level rather than that of the group or the individual (Heery, 2005), some approaches were considered least appropriate, in particular ethnomethodology, which has roots in phenomenology and focuses on interpersonal interactions and the lived experience of the actor (Alvesson and Sköldbberg,

2009), and inductive ethnography, which Alvesson & Sköldbberg (2009, p.84), described as “the art and science of describing a group or culture”.

Adopting an epistemological approach of realism locates the research between the extremes of positivism and constructionism (outlined earlier in this section). Whilst positivism allows only objective measurements of the social world, constructionism implies abstraction of meaning from social phenomena. It is suggested that both of these positions are unsatisfactory because positivism requires the observer to be entirely value-free, whereas social constructionism does not accept that objective knowledge of the social world is possible (Darlington and Dobson, 2013). It is therefore argued here that the realist approach adopted in this work facilitates both the objective observation of ‘observable characteristics’ (Albert and Whetten, 1985) of union identity and allows for pragmatic analysis of data to reveal subjective meaning in some areas (see discussion of union logos in Chapter 4), facilitating development of the multidimensional framework of analysis (see Chapter 6).

### **The relevance of paradigms in industrial relations research**

This work is located within the intellectual tradition of industrial relations, which Edwards (2003) described as a ‘field of interest’ rather than a discipline. The field of industrial relations is dominated by number of competing ‘paradigms’ (Kuhn, 1970). Kaufman (2014), reviewing the conventional understanding of the development of paradigms in British industrial relations from the Webbs (Webb and Webb, 1894), sees these as comprising Marxist-radical, pluralist and unitarist approaches. Although Webb (2007) argues that the pragmatic approach of Dewey (considered earlier in this section) specifically eschewed both relativism and dogma, it is acknowledged that it is necessary to position this work within an industrial relations paradigm. After careful consideration it was decided to adopt a position of ‘pragmatic pluralism’, which is broadly consistent with the pluralist tradition in British industrial relations (Clegg, 1979; Flanders, 1975).

Pragmatic pluralism is understood here as a position that sees unions as legitimate social actors within a broadly pluralist system, but which asserts that the research is not of necessity locked into the normative or prescriptive assumptions of classic pluralism concerning the primacy of trade unions and collective bargaining. On the contrary, this

research recognises that both these assumptions in general, and trade unions and collective bargaining in particular, have been under severe pressure for several decades from neoliberalism (see discussion in Chapter 1). Pragmatic pluralism is considered as being epistemologically consistent with the approach of realism in recognising that trade unions' identities can be understood through observation and analysis, whilst avoiding the extremes of both positivism and constructionism (see discussion in previous section).

Different conceptions of union identity have developed within the competing industrial relations paradigms, as for example over the importance, or indeed not, of class (Blackburn, 1967; Clegg, 1979; Hyman, 1994 and 2001). Therefore in adopting a position of pragmatic pluralism, this work acknowledges contributions from other paradigms, including Marxist, neo-pluralist and radical pluralist literature where these are found to be instructive in exploring questions of union identity, niche union identity and niche unionism (see Chapter 2).

As regards the development of pluralism, the 'systems approach' (Dunlop, 1958) can be viewed as a precursor to the 'classic pluralism' of 'Oxford School' writers (Flanders, 1975; Clegg, 1979). In tracing the erosion of many of the assumptions embodied in systems thinking, Heery (2008, p.78) argues that much industrial relations research is positivist and "...modelled on the nomothetic natural sciences...". In contrast, this work employs reflexive analysis and pragmatic interpretation of data drawn from observation of individual unions in order to understand contemporary union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism. It is therefore argued that this work goes beyond either positivist or nomothetic approaches.

Heery (2016, p.3) suggests that whilst pluralism remains the dominant tradition it "... has been challenged by the rise to prominence of unitary and neoliberal writing". Within industrial relations scholarship, two alternative pluralist approaches provide alternative responses to neoliberalism, represented by 'neo-pluralism' (Ackers and Wilkinson, 2005; Ackers, 2014) and 'radical pluralism' (Edwards, 2015a and 2015b), which Ackers (2014) sees originating with the work of Fox (1974). Heery (2016) argues that whereas critical writers tend to assume that the interests of workers are sharply opposed to capital, unitary writers tend to suggest they can be accommodated through sophisticated HR (human resource) practices.

Whilst this work acknowledges that the pluralist tradition is under pressure from neoliberalism, it recognises the range of identities manifested by unions in the public domain, which may or may not be the result of either opposition to, or accommodation with, neoliberalism. Therefore it is argued that the position of pragmatic pluralism is appropriate to this work because both the radical pluralist and neo-pluralist paradigms embody assumptions of opposition or accommodation respectively, which may or may not be applicable to individual unions.

In contrast to the various forms of pluralism, the Marxist approach views unions as a product of class relations and perhaps as representative of a conscious, if not yet necessarily revolutionary working class (Hyman, 1975; Gall, 2012). In adopting an approach of pragmatic pluralism in this work with the objective of disclosing union identities, niche union identity and the role of niche unionism, it was not considered appropriate to limit this study to a class based analysis. However, this is not of necessity to dismiss the role or existence of class in understanding unions, but rather that this was not the main focus of this study (see discussion in Chapter 5).

As a result of detailed consideration and for the reasons stated above, it was decided that none of the existing industrial relations paradigms were entirely suitable for this study. Therefore a position of pragmatic pluralism was developed, which allowed for the recognition of unions as social actors, albeit acknowledging that the pluralistic system of industrial relations, trade unions and collective bargaining are all under sustained pressure. Adoption of this position allows contributions from other paradigms to be incorporated where these are found to be instructive. Having considered the epistemological approach and paradigm position, the section will now turn to look at the researcher's ontological position.

### **The researcher's ontological position**

Having adopted an epistemological approach of realism (Ackroyd, in Buchanan and Bryman, 2011) together with reflexivity (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009; Webb, 2007) and pragmatic interpretation (Hartsthorne, 1980; Webb, 2012) and a position of pragmatic pluralism located within the pluralist tradition of industrial relations, it was also necessary to consider the researcher's ontological position. The ontological position adopted in this work was one of 'objective partisanship' (Darlington and Dobson, 2013), which is

consistent with the researcher's history of active involvement in trade unionism for more than four and half decades. In defence of objective partisanship in industrial relations, it is argued that the field is value-laden and that value-free research is impossible, because "...It is simply implausible to suppose that a researcher is not influenced by his or her own established and preconceived values..." (Darlington and Dobson, 2013, p.287). Following C. Wright Mills, Darlington and Dobson (2013) argue for a clear distinction between the aim of objectivity and detachment or impartiality. This reflects the position adopted in this work, in that the researcher aims for objectivity but does not claim detachment or impartiality.

This work reflects the researcher's commitment to the importance of independent labour representation through free trade unions as manifested in traditional pluralism, which is consistent with a long-standing tradition of involvement between industrial relations academics and trade unions (Wilson, 2009). In making a call for public sociology, Brook and Darlington (2013) highlight the distinction between criticality and partisanship. This distinction may be useful here in recognising that whilst this work is not critical in the sense of critical realism, nor radical in the sense of radical pluralism (discussed earlier in this section), it is both partisan and critical in identifying the shortcomings of existing theoretical contributions.

Buchanan and Bryman (2011, p.12), suggest that "A researcher's training and skills can thus influence the choice of research topic and how it is investigated" and that "Qualitative researchers...self-consciously draw upon their own experiences as a resource to their enquiries". In this respect it is argued here that whilst the researcher's background inevitably influenced the choice, design and execution of the research, that in adopting a position of objective partisanship (Darlington and Dobson, 2013), the researcher made every effort to make an objective analysis of the data.

It is argued here that the researcher's ontological position brought positive benefits to the research, as the researcher's background was made clear to questionnaire respondents in covering letters (Appendices 2 and 3) and to interviewees in the preamble to each interview (Appendix 4). Therefore the researcher was frequently viewed more as an insider, being both a trade union activist and academic researcher, and that it was possible in some cases to elicit more information from participants than otherwise would have been the case. However, it was very clear in the questionnaire and interview phases that the aim

was to understand union identities rather than to influence union development through active engagement in action research, such as that conducted by Ram et al (2015).

### **Summation**

This section considered the concept of social research and potential epistemological approaches to it, together with the industrial relations paradigm within which the work is located and the ontological position of the researcher. The work adopts an epistemological approach of realism in preference to other approaches that could have been adopted. In doing so it argues that union identities have an existence beyond their observation and that analysis was necessary to understand the significance of the data. In support of this approach, reflexivity and empirical pragmatism were employed both in the development of the research strategy and design and in the analysis of data at each phase of the research.

It is acknowledged that a number of competing paradigms exist in industrial relations and that this work is located within that of pluralism. However, it is recognised that classical pluralism has come under some pressure in recent decades. This work therefore adopts a position of pragmatic pluralism, which acknowledges that earlier assumptions may not hold in a dynamic situation and that contributions from other paradigms have informed the discussion.

Finally this section explored the researcher's ontological position, and suggests that within an epistemological approach of realist research, reflexivity and pragmatic interpretation, the researcher adopted a position of objective partisanship. This position may have both influenced and informed the choices of research strategy and design as well as helped in achieving the active involvement of participants in the latter two phases of the research.

## **3.3 Research strategy**

### **Introduction**

To explore the manifestation of union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism, the research strategy was developed within the epistemological and ontological approaches outlined in the previous section. The research strategy adopted was one of mixed methods,

including both quantitative and qualitative approaches. It involved collecting data on the 'observable characteristics' (Albert and Whetten, 1985) of the projected identities of UK certified unions in order to isolate the sources of their identities. 'Observable characteristics' (Albert and Whetten, 1985) are understood to refer to those features of a union from which its identity can be discerned. Projected identities are understood to be the identities that unions project in the public domain, in contrast with those perceived by observers including existing and potential members. The sources of union identity were understood to refer to the source or combination of sources from which a union's identity is constructed.

The work was conducted over four phases of primary source data collection and analysis. The first phase comprised a simple analysis of union names with the aim of starting to isolate the sources of union identity. The limitations of this method quickly became apparent with the recognition that many union names did not give any indication of who the union sought to organise (see discussion in Chapter 4). In the latter three stages of the research, rich data were collected through a trade union website survey, trade union questionnaire and trade union interview programme. The initial aim in each successive phase was to achieve greater depth of knowledge and understanding of unions' projected identities through reflection and pragmatic interpretation of the data. Beyond this, the aim was understanding the implications of union identity for niche union identity and niche unionism. The limitations of categorisation became evident as the work progressed, and it was then considered that union identity would be explained better through a multidimensional framework.

The research strategy was emergent in that reflexivity and pragmatic interpretation of the data at each phase of data collection informed the design of the next. This necessarily involved considering options and making choices, and whilst it was intended to use mixed methods from an early stage, including a website survey, questionnaire and interviews, much of the strategy and design developed during the course of the work. An example of this was the decision not to pursue the original plan for case study analysis in Chapter 5, but rather to present the data thematically.

## **The mixed methods approach**

To investigate the complex phenomena of union identities, it was considered important to employ multiple methods to collect the quantitative and qualitative data that would be required. In adopting a mixed methods approach it is recognised that there is a growing tendency to include both quantitative and qualitative elements, and that to some extent it is becoming a research strategy in itself (Bryman, in Buchanan & Bryman, Eds. 2011).

Mixed methods research is seen by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2011) as having an affinity to pragmatism. They describe it as a 'third approach', also using the term 'methodological eclecticism', which they see as going beyond combining quantitative and qualitative approaches by 'choosing what appears to be the best from diverse sources, systems or styles' (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2011, p.286). This is consistent with the approach taken in this research (discussed in the following section), which employed what were considered to be the most effective methods in each phase of the research. Pansiri (2007), who conducted research in the travel industry, suggests that an advantage of a mixed methods approach is that deficiencies in data collected by one method might be compensated by that collected by another.

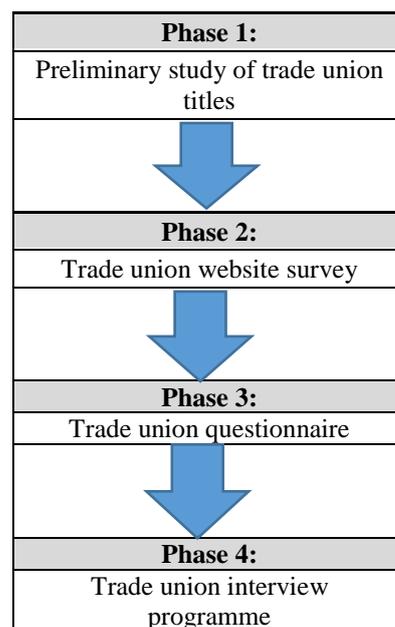
Perhaps the most important benefit of utilising multiple methods was that it allowed for 'triangulation' of the data (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). As will be demonstrated later in this chapter, the sources of union identity were subject to reflexive analysis at each phase of the research, which led to refinements that contributed to the construction of the multidimensional framework (presented in Chapter 6). Triangulation also allowed for increased confidence in the validity of sources, as those identified in earlier phases were applied in later phases of the research. This reflects the process of 'conjecture and refutation' advocated by Popper (1989), despite his aversion to pragmatism (Webb, 2012). Through this process of reflexive analysis and pragmatic interpretation in successive phases of the research, the sources of union identity emerged that comprise the multidimensional framework. It is therefore argued here that using any one of the research methods independently would not have produced the considerable rich data that were collected, or have provided for triangulation.

## Phases of the research

In order to explore UK certified trade union identities and the expression of niche union identities and niche unionism, the research strategy comprised four phases of primary source data collection. As suggested earlier, the four phases of the research developed during the course of the work, as reflexivity and pragmatic interpretation of data from each phase informed the next (see Figure 1).

The first phase involved a survey of union names (Certification Officer, 2008), from which an initial identification of the sources of union identity was achieved. The choice of method was influenced by the need to find a starting point that would begin to isolate the sources of union identity, and it can be regarded as preliminary research rather than an attempt to gather robust data. Identification of the primary sources of union identity was achieved through reflexive analysis and pragmatic interpretation of the data. The sources were derived both deductively from the literature on industrial relations (discussed in Chapter 2) (Webb and Webb, 1894, 1897; Turner, 1962; Hughes, 1967; Clegg, 1979) and inductively from observation of union names. This is considered as consistent with a pragmatic approach in which “What are taken as “objects” in the present inquiry are the end-products of previous enquiries” (Webb, 2007, p.1072). As the primary sources of union identity emerged, this led to a recognition that they were more usefully applied to some unions as relative concepts rather than as absolute categories.

**Figure 1. Phases of the research process.**



The second phase comprised a website survey of all UK certified unions (Certification Officer, 2009) and was conducted to explore how the sources of union identity established in phase one were being projected in the public domain. The potentialities of website research for both quantitative and qualitative analysis and in particular for researching organisational identities (Sillince and Brown, 2009) have been recognised, despite the potential unreliability of some sites (Cobanoglu, Warde and Moeo, 2001). The choice of a website survey allowed for a great deal of data to be collected on each union. Through the observation of union websites it was possible to gain a much deeper appreciation of the identities that unions chose to project in the public domain, not only in terms of exploring how the primary sources of union identity established in phase one were manifested, but also by recording an extensive range of ‘observable characteristics’ (Albert and Whetten, 1985), which were observed to comprise the projected identities of individual unions.

The third phase involved the development of a questionnaire which was sent to all UK certified trade unions (Certification Officer, 2010) and was based upon pragmatic interpretation of data collected in the preceding phases. The decision to issue a questionnaire at this point proved important in making direct contact with unions. A significant element in this was the inclusion of a question asking respondents if they would be prepared to participate in a telephone or face-to-face interview. Whilst the questionnaire allowed for the collection of further data and produced valuable contacts for the interview phase, it ultimately produced far less hard data than either the website survey or interview programme, particularly in terms of the limited number of responses to qualitative questions (see discussion in next section). However, it provided an important bridge between the observation of websites and interpersonal engagement with union officers in the interview programme.

The fourth and final phase of research comprised an interview programme conducted with key informants from selected unions whose respondents to the questionnaire had offered an interview. Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.529), suggest that “By using interviews, the researcher can reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible...”. Interviews were advantageous in both maximising data collection and getting into greater depth. The majority of interviews were conducted by telephone, which gave advantages over face-to-face interviewing by maximising time utilisation (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The interviews were semi-structured and based upon data collected in phases two and three together with a fresh analysis of the unions’ websites. It was considered that whilst structured interviews may provide greater consistency of data,

unstructured interviews would allow greater flexibility. In order to achieve some element of both consistency and flexibility, semi-structured interviews were conducted in preference to them being either fully structured or unstructured.

The research strategy adopted over the four phases (see Figure 1 above) involved focusing on a smaller number of unions at each stage in order to gather more in-depth data. In the first phase the sample included the entire population, as all union names were observed to disclose the primary sources of union identity. In the second phase the sample comprised those unions which were found to have websites, representing roughly two thirds of certified unions, but more detailed data were gathered. In the third phase, questionnaire respondents represented a sample of slightly under half of certified unions, although once again this allowed for further data to be collected and also for participants for the fourth phase to be identified. In the final phase, key informants from twenty-three unions were interviewed, which provided more detailed data, in particular regarding how unions manifested a niche identity or practiced niche unionism.

### **Limitations of the research**

The research was limited to the projected identities of certified trade unions operating in the UK listed in the most recent Annual Report of the Certification Officer (2008, 2009 and 2010) available at the time of the first three phases of data collection. Whilst the majority of primary source data were collected between 2008 and 2012, some union websites were revisited subsequently to confirm or update the findings, and statistics drawn from the public domain were updated to report those most recently published.

As regards the scope of the research and the inherent danger of making unsupported generalisations from the limited data, the work did attempt to investigate all certified UK trade unions in the first three phases (Certification Officer, 2008; 2009; 2010). Whereas in the first phase all UK certified trade unions' titles were observed, in the second only one hundred and nine unions were found to have websites and in the third, seventy-five unions responded to the questionnaire. In the final phase, twenty-three respondents were interviewed, with twenty-one interviews subsequently being consented. Whilst the research was extensive, it was not entirely comprehensive and it is possible that further sources of union identity would be disclosed through further research. Therefore both the multidimensional framework and the conclusions reached in this work (see Chapters 6 and

7) rely to some extent upon the selection of instances together with decisions made in the design and execution of the research.

Inevitably work such as this presents what is effectively a ‘snapshot of a moving picture’. In recognising the dynamic nature of industrial relations, Heery (2008, p.69) highlights a distinction between ‘systems thinking’ following Dunlop (1958), which is relatively ahistorical, and the alternative approach which “...puts history to the fore and comprises models of change over time”. Therefore, whilst developing an understanding of contemporary union identities, this work attempts to understand that these exist within a dynamic situation (see Chapter 7).

As regards transferability, whilst the multidimensional framework of analysis is broadly applicable to contemporary certified UK trade unions it would need to be developed for use in comparative analysis. In other locations other sources of union identity might be required, such as religious or political alignments as is the case in France (Milner, 2015). Therefore, the multidimensional framework presented later in this work is not presented as a universal panacea for the understanding of all union identities in all places and at all times, but rather to represent a significant step towards understanding the projected identities of contemporary UK certified trade unions (see Chapter 6).

## **Summation**

This section has explained and justified the research strategy that was adopted. The research strategy employs a mixed methods approach, comprising four phases of data collection through which extensive rich data were collected in support of the new multidimensional framework for understanding union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism. The mixed methods approach collected both quantitative and qualitative data and employed reflexivity, pragmatic interpretation and triangulation of the data. The process facilitated the identification of the sources of union identity through the four phases of research. It recognises that the research was limited to the projected identities of UK certified trade unions, and that certain caveats need to be entered regarding the scope of the research together with the need to incorporate unforeseen future developments, and the recognition of other sources to allow comparative transferability. The next section provides a more detailed elucidation of how the research was designed and operationalised through the four phases of data collection.

## **3.4 Research design**

### **Introduction**

This section explains the research design together with the operationalisation of the four phases of data collection conducted within the epistemological approach outlined in the section on research philosophy, and following the research strategy outlined in the previous section. It explains how the research developed through the four phases, as each phase informed the design of the next, and how this contributed to exploring the research questions (outlined in Chapter 1).

### **The preliminary study of union titles**

The first phase of the investigation was designed to isolate the primary sources of union identity and was achieved by completion of a survey of UK certified trade unions (Certification Officer, 2008). This work sought to identify all the possible sources by which union identities could be understood from their names alone, and proved to be an essential step in the development of the multidimensional framework. The research method used was to scrutinise union names in order to isolate the sources of union identity and then to use these sources to code individual union titles. The initial scrutiny disclosed four sources of identity, namely: general, occupational, industrial and organisational. It was realised subsequently that a geographical category was required to fully explain the identities of certain unions with operational boundaries within or beyond the UK. Three sources were derived deductively from the literature (discussed in Chapter 2), namely: ‘general’, ‘industrial’ and ‘occupational’, whereas the remaining two, ‘organisational’ and ‘geographical’ were derived inductively from observation of union names. However, many unions were found to draw upon multiple sources of identity, which needed to be recorded when coding individual union identities.

### **The trade union website survey**

The second phase of data collection, which comprised a website survey of UK certified trade unions (Certification Officer, 2009), was undertaken in 2010. It was designed to explore the primary sources of union identity established in phase one. This was achieved

through observation of an extensive range of ‘observable characteristics’ (Albert & Whetten, 1985), to examine how unions projected their identities in the public domain. Whilst it was expected that the content of union websites would generally reflect the identity they wanted to project, a limitation of this method was that websites display data in a format designed by or for the organisation, making data collection more challenging. A survey document was developed to facilitate systematic data collection. This was piloted with a representative sample of three unions of various types. Unite was selected as a general union, whilst the MU (Musicians Union) was selected as being primarily an occupational union and UCU as being primarily an industrial union. The pilot study allowed the survey document to be tested and amended to improve its validity in the full-scale website survey (Appendix 8).

The full website survey was conducted between April and June 2010 and 109 unions were found to have websites (Appendix 9). In each case, extensive data were extracted, with the survey document providing a template for the observation. There were potentially four levels of observation employed in conducting the survey. The first was scrutiny of a website’s home page, and in a few cases this was all that the site comprised. The second level was achieved by accessing all relevant links given on the homepage. Where data could not be obtained from first and second level observations, the third level employed was the use of ‘search’ facilities where these were provided. In some cases the website gave the option of calling up other documents, providing a potential fourth level of observation for missing data. Documents were observed only if they were considered to be of any obvious use in supplying missing data. The website survey also revealed the incidence of unions not having websites. Analysis of the sources of these unions’ identities based upon their titles provided some insight as to why they might not have websites (see discussion in Chapter 4).

The data were coded, entered and analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software. The majority of codes were established ‘a priori’, prior to data collection. Coding of the sources and characteristics of union identity was based both upon the design and upon detailed scrutiny of the completed website survey documents (see Appendix 8) using reflective analysis and pragmatic interpretation of the data. The primary sources of union identity were drawn both from the literature (see discussion in Chapter 2) and from the preliminary survey of union titles (see Figure 2). Other categories emerged during the analysis, allowing for unanticipated findings to be recorded, coded and incorporated into the analysis (see later discussions in this chapter on coding and data

analysis). For example: the incidence of union websites having a discreet members' area was not foreseen, but data was recorded and subsequently included in the coding. The survey forms were contained in a single text file, which facilitated 'key word' searches to isolate recurring characteristics such as the words 'benevolent fund' to identify those unions offering these. Similarly, professional identity emerged as a secondary source of union identity. It was recognised that whilst all professions are occupations, not all occupations are professions and in this respect professional identity was regarded as a subcategory of occupation. Professional unions were classified as such because they were observed to display some combination of certain observable characteristics (see discussion in Chapters 4 & 5).

Whilst the preliminary survey revealed that unions displayed identities derived from one or more of five primary sources (see Appendix 5), it relied only on the analysis of union names. In contrast, data collected from 109 unions observed in the website survey allowed for a deeper analysis (see Appendix 6). It was recognised that some sources of union identity were of greater or lesser importance in understanding certain unions' identities. This led to the important recognition that, where unions have multiple sources of identity, part of determining the identity of an individual union required an assessment of the relative importance of those sources of identity from which its identity is constructed.

### **The trade union questionnaire**

Phase three of the primary source research involved the design and distribution of a questionnaire (Appendix 10). This was designed to build upon the website survey by eliciting further data from unions, and to act as a 'trawl' for respondents who would be prepared to participate in the interview phase. The questionnaire design went through a number of versions as a result of review and feedback, but it was not considered practical to conduct a pilot study in case this prejudiced participants' completion of the final version.

The questionnaire (see Appendix 10) comprised fourteen questions of various types. Question one simply asked for the union name, whilst question three called for a 'yes / no' response as to whether the union had changed its name. The remaining questions sought to elicit more depth of response, seven being multiple choice with tick box options and five that asked respondents to score statements on a Likert scale (Likert, 1932). Six questions

included a qualitative extension, allowing respondents to add a further comment. Whilst the design was informed by the findings of the previous phases, it was also considered important to avoid questions that would merely provide duplication of these findings. The final question asked respondents about continuing contact, their willingness to participate in a telephone or face-to-face interview and whether they would like to receive an anonymised report of the findings from the trade union questionnaire research. No demographic data was requested since respondents were answering on behalf of their organisation rather than of themselves.

To facilitate distribution of the questionnaire, the postal address for each union was extracted from their most recent annual return submitted to the Certification Officer (Certification Returns, 2009-2011) and used to build a database. The opportunity was taken to capture other data from these documents where it was given, including the date of the union's last annual return, the union's declared membership, the male/female breakdown, the name of the person completing the return and their e-mail address if this was stated. A total of one hundred and sixty-three organisations were identified as being listed as certified trade unions (Certification Officer, 2010). Five organisations including the TUC and GFTU (General Federation of Trade Unions) were excluded as being federations rather than unions. This resulted in a sample size of one hundred and fifty-eight, which, it can be argued, represents the greatest possible proportion of the potential population.

In the case of fifty-three unions reporting membership of over five thousand (Certification Returns, 2009-2011), the mailing was addressed to 'Head of Research' whereas in the remaining cases, including two unions which had not stated their membership, it was addressed to the 'General Secretary'. The rationale for this was that it was deemed more likely that larger unions would have a research department or a research officer, and that a researcher might be a more appropriate respondent. Conversely, in smaller unions where there might be fewer staff in general and less likelihood of a dedicated research function in particular, it was considered that addressing the mailing to the General Secretary could be more effective.

Consideration was given to developing an online version of the questionnaire, which in relation to data analysis would have afforded the advantages of cost effectiveness in terms of distribution and time-saving. However, it was not considered possible to construct a reliable database, as many certification returns were found to be handwritten and some e-

mail addresses illegible, whilst others appeared to have been completed by a firm of accountants or solicitors. As an alternative, the cover letter gave potential respondents the option of requesting a digitalised version of the questionnaire. The rationale was that offering a choice of method would encourage the greatest possible response rate (Cobanoglu, Warde and Moeo, 2001). As only two respondents requested a digitalised questionnaire and only one was returned, this is considered as further justification for not developing an online questionnaire.

The questionnaire (Appendix 10) was first distributed on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2011, together with a cover letter (Appendix 2) and a stamped addressed envelope. The first mailing resulted in fifty-one completed questionnaires being returned, representing a response rate of 32.3 percent. Where a union did not respond to the questionnaire within four weeks, a further mailing was sent using an amended version of the original cover letter (Appendix 3) together with a further copy of the questionnaire (Appendix 10) and another stamped addressed envelope. The second mailing was sent out on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2011 and produced a further twenty-four responses. The final total of seventy-five unions responding (Appendix 12) showed a response rate of 47.5 percent. Many unions offered further contact, with twelve offering a face-to-face interview and thirty a telephone interview. The cover letter offered to supply respondents with an ‘Anonymised Summary of the Trade Union Questionnaire’. Forty-three responded positively to this and were subsequently sent a copy of the report (Appendix 11). All quantitative responses were then coded (see later discussions in this chapter on coding and data analysis) and the data analysed using SPSS software, with the results being primarily reported in Chapter 4.

### **The trade union interview programme**

Phase four of the primary source research, the interview programme, comprised twenty-three semi-structured interviews conducted with key informants from unions that had offered this in their response to the questionnaire or in two cases, subsequently. Twenty-one interviews were conducted by telephone with the remaining two, Unite and ROA (Retired Officers Association), being conducted face-to-face, using interview facilities at the University of Brighton Business School. In both cases this was because the interviewee indicated their preference for a face-to-face interview.

Unions offering an interview were entered on a spread sheet (Appendix 15) and listed under six headings, with four of these being related to primary sources of union identity (general, occupational/industrial, organisational and geographical) and two being identified as groups of unions worthy of special interest in relation to niche characteristics (professional and educational). Some unions could have appeared under several headings, and in these cases a judgement was made as to which heading they would be most usefully placed under.

Questionnaire respondents were contacted in turn, initially by telephone, with the aim of gaining a representative sample when identified by the source or sources of their unions' identities. In most cases the respondent became the interviewee, except where they felt that a colleague would be more appropriate or where the respondent was unavailable. In some cases the respondents proved to be hard or impossible to contact, whilst in others it was difficult to find a mutually convenient time for interview. Priority was given to achieving a representative sample, and so more effort was put into pursuing some respondents than others. As an example of this, the respondent from the PFA (Professional Footballers Association) had given an extremely comprehensive interview in which he had discussed the support his union had given in setting up the PCA (Professional Cricketers Association), so it was not then considered a priority to pursue the latter union.

The interviews were 'semi-structured' and based upon a standard list of questions (Appendix 13). These questions were the result of reflective analysis and pragmatic interpretation of the website survey and questionnaire data. In practice, the actual questions asked were framed in the context of the discussion rather than necessarily following those that were 'pre-scripted', to allow the interviews to flow. In many cases interviewees talked freely and much valuable information was acquired without necessarily asking all the questions. However, the standard list provided a useful checklist to ensure that all relevant areas were covered in each interview.

A protocol for conducting interviews was adopted (Appendix 4), with interviewees being briefed at the commencement of each interview concerning the nature of the research and how the data would be used. Face-to-face interviewees were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 14), which embodied permission to make a digital recording. Telephone interviewees were similarly briefed at the start of the call. All the digital recordings were uploaded to a password-protected computer at the researcher's workplace. All the interviews were professionally transcribed, and a written record of each interview was sent

by e-mail attachment to the respective interviewee asking them to confirm agreement. Telephone interviewees were also sent a consent form and asked to acknowledge their agreement when replying (Appendix 14). In all cases where the data were used, amendments were noted and a confirmation e-mail was received to ensure that there was a true and accurate transcript on file.

The interview programme collected a great deal of data, which is primarily reported in Chapter 5. The extent to which interviewees willingly participated in the interview programme provides further evidence supporting the ontological position of objective partisanship adopted in this work (see earlier section on research philosophy). However, consent could not be obtained from two interviewees (Unite and BFAWU (Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union)), and in these cases the data were not used. This final phase of data collection not only confirmed that the sources of union identity which were identified in earlier phases were found to be applicable to all unions interviewed, but also exposed the need for further secondary and additional sources (see discussion in next section).

### **Summation**

This section has demonstrated that detailed consideration took place at each phase of the research regarding its design and operationalisation. Whilst phase one identified the primary sources of union identity, phase two provided for a deeper analysis and the recognition of secondary sources of union identity. Phase three provided some additional data, but was perhaps the most useful in providing a bridge between straight observation in phase two and engagement with interviewees in phase four. In phase four it became apparent that some additional sources of union identity needed to be included. Each phase of data collection therefore represented an essential step towards identifying the sources of union identity. Therefore the research design was to some extent emergent, as each phase built upon the previous one, since data collected in one phase informed the design of the next and subsequent phases. This represents a pragmatic approach to research design and facilitated the collection of substantial rich data in support of the multidimensional conceptual framework (presented in Chapter 6).

### **3.5 Data analysis and coding the sources of union identity**

#### **Introduction**

This section outlines the methods used for analysing the data presented in this thesis, through which the sources of union identity were coded and from which the multidimensional framework of analysis was constructed. This section explains and justifies the processes of data analysis employed, before reporting on how it facilitated the coding of the sources of union identity through the four phases of the primary source research.

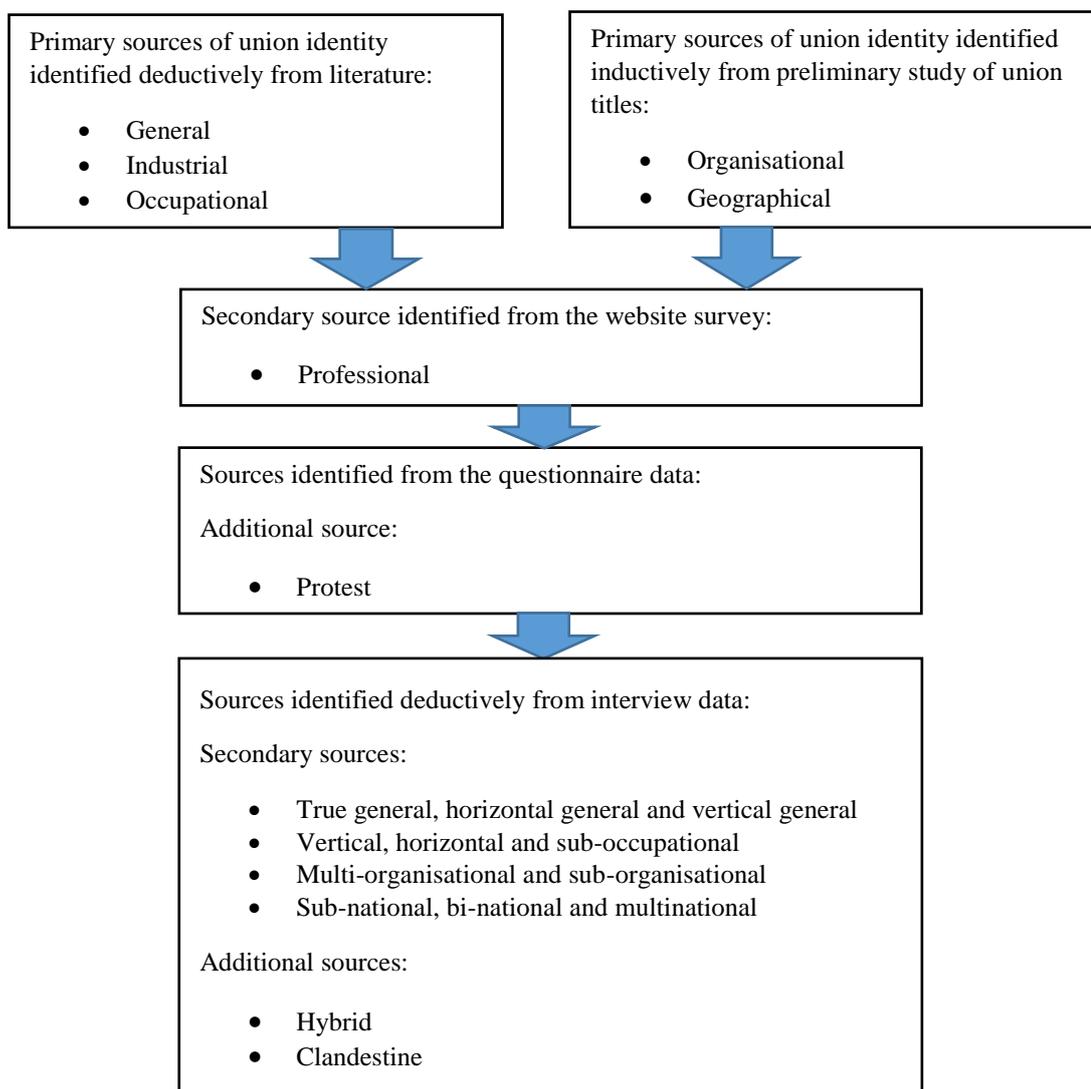
#### **Data analysis**

The process of data analysis was developed through the four phases of the research in order to successfully analyse the primary source data. In the first phase, the preliminary survey of certified union names listed by the Certification Officer (Certification Officer 2008), analysis was achieved by recording the various sources of union identity that union names were observed to project. As explained earlier in this chapter, the ‘primary’ sources of union identity that determine a union’s membership territories emerged both deductively from secondary source material (reviewed in Chapter 2) and inductively through reflexive analysis and pragmatic interpretation of the data (as discussed earlier in this chapter). Therefore the first steps were taken towards identifying the primary sources of union identity through this simple process of data analysis.

In the second and third phases, data collected from both the website survey and the business questionnaire were coded and analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software. This produced quantitative data, which together with the limited number of written comments in the questionnaire, are largely reported in Chapter 4. Because the questionnaire produced so few written responses it was not deemed necessary to use analytical software; rather they were considered as part of the reflexive analysis. In the final phase of data collection, the interview programme, all data from audio recordings were transcribed and the resulting transcripts were used as the basis for reflexive analysis and pragmatic interpretation of the data. In the first instance, these data were written up by individual union, but were later reorganised with the unions grouped under broad headings and the data reported thematically under each heading (see Chapter 5).

Whilst the first phase of the research identified the primary sources of union identity and subsequent phases confirmed these to be applicable to all UK certified trade unions, secondary sources emerged from the second phase onwards, to provide finer distinctions of union identity based upon membership territories. In the fourth phase of research, various additional sources were identified, which although unrelated to membership territories were considered to be significant components of union identities. The development of coding is outlined in Figure 2 (below).

**Figure 2. Development of coding of sources of union identity**



Overall, the mixed methods approach adopted resulted in the application of quantitative analysis to the data extracted from the survey of union titles, the website survey and the questionnaire data, with the latter two also being subjected to qualitative analysis. The

interview data was the subject of qualitative analysis only. The rationale was that using qualitative questions in the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews would allow for unexpected responses, so as to reach a deeper understanding of union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism. The coding used to understand the sources of union identity emerged through the process of reflexivity and pragmatic interpretation of data at each phase of the research.

### **Summation**

This section reported on the process by which data were analysed in support of the research methods employed. This included reflexive analysis and pragmatic interpretation to facilitate the development of coding of the sources of union identity from the first stage onwards. The sources of union identity were identified deductively from the literature and inductively from the primary source research data. In phases two and three, data from the website survey and questionnaire were also subject to coding and analysis using SPSS software to produce quantitative data. Interview data was transcribed and subject to reflexive analysis and pragmatic interpretation in order to find the salient points for this research. Through this process the coding of primary, secondary and additional sources of union identity was achieved.

## **3.6 Research ethics**

### **Introduction**

This section addresses the question of how research ethics were maintained during the four phases of data collection. Issues include how informed consent was achieved, questions of anonymity and confidentiality, the security of data and the safety of the participants and the researcher. The maintenance of research ethics was ensured throughout the design and operationalisation of the primary source research strategy. Early in the research there was an appropriate consideration of ethical issues, which resulted in ethical approval being granted by the Ethics Committee of University of Portsmouth Business School (Appendix 1). This is consistent with the increasing concern in recent years over the conduct of

research and the need to obtain ethical approval (Buchanan and Bryman in Buchanan and Bryman ed. 2011)

### **Informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality**

In the first two phases of the research, the preliminary survey of union titles and the website survey, the data were considered to be "... naturally occurring..." (Peräkylä & Ruusuvaori, in Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.529), as there was no direct contact with participants and therefore no necessity to obtain informed consent. The advent of internet-based research raised new concerns over research ethics (Bryman and Bell, 2011). However, as the website survey was based on observation rather than direct contact with participants, it avoided problems encountered in the conduct of internet questionnaires (Gosling et al, 2004). The website survey was consistent with the approach taken by Sillince and Brown (2009) in investigating the organisational identities of police authorities by observation of websites.

In phases three and four, direct contact with key informants made it imperative to obtain their informed consent. This relates to the agreement of participants on the basis of an informed appreciation of the implications of their participation, which is consistent with maintaining a commitment to individual autonomy (Christians, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). This was achieved by making participants fully aware of the nature of the research and of how the data they supplied would be used. Questionnaire respondents were informed in the wording of cover letters (Appendices 2 and 3). It was considered that the informed consent of respondents was achieved because reading the cover letter would inform them about the nature of the research and how the data would be used, and that completion of the questionnaire would be considered as their acknowledgment of this. Interviewees were informed in the preamble to both face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews. Interviewees were supplied with a consent form which was either signed before face-to-face interviews or confirmed by e-mail in the case of telephone interviews (Appendix 14).

All questionnaire and interview data reported in this thesis is anonymised. The cover letters (Appendices 2&3) and consent form (Appendices 14) made it clear to participants that no individual would be identified in reporting the data but that their union might be named in the thesis. As participants answered on behalf of their organisations they were not asked

for personal data beyond their contact details and position, and are not identified in the text of the thesis. Participants were thus offered full anonymity in data reporting but limited confidentiality in the sense that their names and contact details were of necessity held on file during the course of the research.

### **Data security and personal safety**

The need to maintain data security in this work was related to the storage, security and disposal of both electronic and paper based material. To achieve this, all data in paper format such as questionnaires and consent forms were stored in locked premises and all digitalised material was held in a password-protected computer. All personalised data such as completed questionnaires and consent forms will be shredded after successful defence of this thesis and similarly all personalised data held in digital form will be deleted. Impersonal data held in databases may be retained for use in future research.

Conducting primary source research raises the question of whether it is likely to harm participants (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In conducting this work it was considered that neither the participants nor the researcher were at any discernible risk or harm from participating in the research, as most data were collected by observation, questionnaire or telephone interview. Only in the case of two face-to-face interviews did the researcher come into direct contact with participants, and on these occasions it was by pre-arranged appointment, within normal working hours and using interview facilities at the researcher's place of work (University of Brighton Business School).

### **Summation**

This section reported how research ethics were maintained during the process of data collection and confirmed how the informed consent of participants was achieved and how anonymity was practised in the reporting of data. It outlined the extent to which anonymity and confidentiality was maintained and how data security was ensured, together with consideration of the personal safety of the participants and researcher. It is therefore argued that the data collected for this work was reported ethically.

### **3.7 Conclusions**

This chapter explains and justifies the research methodology adopted in this work to explore questions of trade union identity, niche union identity and niche unionism (outlined in Chapter 1). In doing so, it explores alternative epistemological approaches which might have been adopted before explaining and justifying the adoption of an approach of realism together with reflexivity and empirical pragmatism. The work is located in the field of industrial relations and broadly within the tradition of pluralism. However, it is recognised that some of the traditional assumptions of that approach have been under considerable pressure for some time, and that contributions drawn from other industrial relations paradigms may be of value in understanding the questions in hand. Therefore a paradigm position of pragmatic pluralism has been adopted for the purposes of this work. The ontological position of the researcher is established as one of objective partisanship.

The chapter explains the development of both the research strategy and design together with the methodological decisions taken in operationalising it. It outlines the limitations of the work as being confined to the projected identities of UK certified trade unions. It explains how the four phases of primary source data collection evolved together with the various quantitative and qualitative approaches which were used in analysing the data and how through this process 'primary', 'secondary' and 'additional' sources of union identity emerged. Finally, it gives due consideration to ethical issues which were the subject of ethical approval before data collection commenced (see Appendix 1).

This thesis will now turn from discussion of methodology to reporting the findings and analysis of the data collected. Chapter 4 looks in particular at the question of union identities, drawing primarily on the website survey and questionnaire data, whereas Chapter 5 is focused on niche union identity and niche unionism and draws primarily on the interview data. Chapter 6 then introduces the multidimensional framework for the understanding of union identities and niche union identities, whilst Chapter 7 draws together the strands of analysis developed in this work, returning to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, to identify the contribution to knowledge within the field of industrial relations and to suggest further directions for the research.

## Chapter 4

### Exploring the sources of union identity through observable characteristics

#### 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how the sources of trade union identities (introduced in Chapter 3) are manifested in the public domain through ‘observable characteristics’. These can be defined as “...the central and enduring attributes of an organisation that distinguish it from other organisations” (Whetton, 2006, p.220). In contrast to the sources of union identity, observable characteristics are those features manifested in the public domain through which a union’s identity can be recognised (as discussed in Chapter 2). It is argued that all certified UK unions have an identity that is manifested through some combination of certain observable characteristics and further that it is this combination which gives an individual union its distinct identity. This chapter therefore explains how the sources of any individual union’s identity can be recognised by the observation of a limited number of observable characteristics, and assesses the relative importance of each one in the manifestation of union identity.

This chapter further recognises the significance of ‘primary’, ‘secondary’ and ‘additional’ sources of union identity (introduced in Chapter 3) in the construction of union identity. As reported in the preceding chapter, many union identities were found to be constructed from multiple sources, and the extent to which individual unions drew upon these sources varied considerably. This chapter therefore argues that trade union identities are a complex phenomenon, that any individual union’s identity can potentially be constructed from a number of sources, and that in some cases these need to be applied flexibly in order to understand a union’s identity. Given this, it is argued that rather than a rigid typology (see discussion in Chapter 2), a multidimensional framework of analysis is required, which can be applied more flexibly for the understanding of trade union identities (introduced in Chapter 6).

The primary sources of union identity are those five sources from which the identities of all UK trade unions are derived (see discussion in Chapter 3), and which determine their 'job territories' (Turner, 1962). These sources were derived both deductively from those in the literature on industrial relations (Webb and Webb, 1894, 1897; Turner, 1962; Hughes, 1967, Clegg, 1979) that were established in order to describe the structural forms of UK unions in earlier times, rather than from the identity of contemporary unions (see discussion in Chapter 2), and inductively from a preliminary study of union titles and the website survey (see Chapter 3). It is demonstrated in this chapter that any individual union's projected identity draws upon one or more of the following five sources: general, occupational, industrial, organisational and geographical. General identity implies that a union is prepared to accept virtually any worker into membership and perhaps even those beyond formal employment (see later discussion in this chapter and in Chapter 5). It therefore follows axiomatically, that in all other unions, membership is in some way restricted by the use of occupational, industrial, organisational or geographical limitations.

It was also recognised at an early stage in the research that professional unions formed a subcategory of occupational unions, given that all professions are occupations but not all occupations are professions (see discussion in Chapters 3 and 5). Whilst many occupations might be considered as professions, as in the case of professional footballers or musicians, the concept of professional identity is restricted to those unions that restrict membership on the basis of professional qualifications, and which tend to demonstrate some combination of certain of the observable characteristics (outlined in Chapter 3). Therefore, 'professional' identity was included as a 'secondary' source of union identity, being manifested for the most part by unions that organise a single profession, with the major exception being teaching, where there is intense inter-union competition for membership, particularly in the compulsory sector (see discussion in Chapter 5).

It was further recognised that in competitive sectors there may be room for a 'protest' union, which rejects industrial action, political alignment and political action and that this forms an 'additional' source of union identity. Whereas primary and secondary sources of union identity relate directly to membership territories, additional sources relate to other significant sources of unions' projected identity (see earlier discussion in Chapter 3). This concept of 'protest' union identity might potentially stand in opposition to that of a 'militant' union identity. However, militancy was not found to form an explicit element of any union's projected identity in the same way that 'protest' unions express their

opposition to it. Therefore, militancy was not considered as a source of projected identity, although this is not to say that some unions are not perceived as such.

Whilst there was potentially an extensive range of observable characteristics, observations were limited to those characteristics that were found to be components of union identities, and which were observed as being projected in the public domain. These included both the more immediately visible symbols, such as name, initials, strapline and logo, together with those other characteristics which also contribute to the construction of union identity, including restrictions to membership, membership benefits, aims and objectives together with any affiliations, or political alignment or political activity. Therefore the research was limited to those characteristics which distinguished individual trade unions from one another and excluded any consideration of how their identities might be perceived by existing and potential union members or the wider public, which would have required a different study.

Identification of both the sources and the observable characteristics of union identity provided the conceptual tools employed to explore the extent of niche union identity and niche unionism being practised by contemporary certified UK trade unions (see Chapter 5), and facilitated the development of the multidimensional framework of analysis for the understanding of union identities presented and operationalised in Chapter 6. In addition, the research looked at union websites, and in the interview phase recognised other forms of digitalised communication (such as social networking) as being significant in the communication of union identity (see further discussion in this chapter and in Chapter 5).

The data reported in this chapter is primarily that collected from the trade union website survey conducted, as the most visible expression of union identity, and from the trade union questionnaire (see methodology described in Chapter 3). It also draws at some points on data collected during the interview programme (reported in more detail in Chapter 5), where this informs the discussion, together with other material collected during the course of the research (see methodology described in Chapter 3).

To report and analyse the data, the chapter is organised under thematic sub-headings that explore the significance of the observable characteristics for the understanding of trade union identities, as follows:

- Union names, abbreviations, logos and straplines – these characteristics represent the most visible manifestations of union identity that are observable in the public domain.
- Restrictions to membership and membership benefits – these characteristics establish who can join the union and the benefits they might expect.
- Statements of aims and objectives – these include: industrial, occupational, professional and other aims together with the relative paucity of reference to class based and / or political aims.
- Affiliations and political funds – these characteristics comprise affiliations to trade union federations including the TUC and other national and international union groupings, together with political funds, affiliation to the Labour Party and individual unions' stance on political action.
- Union websites and other forms of digital communications with members – these characteristics relate to the communication of union identity rather than to the construction of it. This section reports on what is a developing area of union activity.

This chapter concludes with a summary of the earlier analysis of the data on observable characteristics and sources of union identity in support of the concept of trade union identities, together with a recognition of the importance of this for the construction of the multidimensional framework (presented in Chapter 6) and for the understanding of niche unionism and niche union identities (explored in Chapter 5).

## **4.2 Union names, abbreviations, logos and straplines**

### **Union names and abbreviations**

The names or abbreviations which unions utilise might be considered as the primary method by which union identity is established in the public domain. However, the research revealed that unions varied considerably in terms of how they were identified on their websites. Eighty-eight unions (80.7 percent) surveyed in the website survey gave their full name on their home page, with seventy unions (70.6 percent) providing an abbreviation in the form of their initials. No such abbreviation was observed to have a discernible meaning by forming an acronym. Many unions displayed both their full name and initials on their

home page and in many cases these were closely located to the union's logo, sometimes together with, or incorporated into it. Twenty-one unions (19.3 percent) in the website survey were observed not to give the full name, but rather an abbreviation only. Whilst some of these are fairly well known, such as RMT, others are relatively more obscure. In some cases, such as FDA (Association of First Division Civil Servants), GMB, POA (Prison Officers Association) and UFS (Union of Finance Staff), the abbreviation rather than the full name was found to be the certified name of the union (Certification Officer, 2015).

A number of unions have adopted 'aspirational' titles in recent years, which do have a meaning and potentially a message about the union (see earlier discussion in Chapter 2). Although these names could perhaps be acronyms, there was again no evidence that the letters contained in the name stood for anything beyond the title. Examples included: Accord, Advance, Unison, Voice and Unite, the full certified name of the latter being 'Unite the Union'. The adoption of such aspirational names would not seem to have any particular relationship to the source or sources of union identity. This is exemplified by Accord and Advance, which are both organisationally based; Voice, which operates in the education sector and Unite and Unison, which are general unions, although the latter is confined to the public sector and public services (see also discussions of Advance, Unison and Voice in Chapter 5).

In some cases, organisationally based unions such as the NGSU (Nationwide Group Staff Union) included the company name in their titles, whilst others were found to have adopted aspirational names, such as Accord or Advance. Aegis alluded to the company name, describing itself as 'the Aegen UK staff association'. It could be argued that there are both advantages and disadvantages for unions in adopting a close identification with the employer. Whilst a union might be seen as being officially recognised by including the organisation's name in its title, conversely it could be seen as being more independent of the employer by not doing so. In contrast, the majority of union names were found to offer a clear indication of who is expected to join, with examples including the 'Association of School and College Leaders' or 'Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union'.

Two anomalies were provided by the United and Independent Union, which gave the name as 'United and Independent' on its website, thus omitting the word union, and the merchant navy officers' union which was certified in the UK as Nautilus UK, but gave its identity as 'Nautilus International' – the identity that was subsequently adopted following the merger

with the Dutch union, Nautilus NL (The Netherlands) (see later discussion in this chapter and in Chapter 5, on geographical identity).

Many unions have adopted new names in recent years, with consequent implications for their identities. This was confirmed by many questionnaire respondents, with nineteen (25.8 percent) reporting that their union had changed its name in the last five years. The main reasons selected for this were to convey the distinctive character of the union, to attract new members and to change or modernise the image of the union. Despite the level of merger activity in recent years, this was less frequently selected as the major reason for changing the union's name (see table 1). These findings suggest that rebranding was the main motivation for changing a union's name. This would seem to be largely reflected in the responses of the eight questionnaire respondents who made comments concerning changing the union name, with the reasons given being: to clarify who could join (2); to improve the union image (2); because the union had merged (1); because the employer had merged (1); to reflect the increased geographical spread of the union's membership (1), with one comment being non-specific.

**Table 1: The main reasons for changing union name**

	Degree of importance			
	Major percent	Moderate percent	Low percent	None/not applicable percent
<b>To change or modernise the image of the union</b>	56.3	37.5	6.3	0.0
<b>To attract new members</b>	56.3	31.3	12.5	0.0
<b>To convey the distinctive character of the union</b>	46.7	53.3	0.0	0.0
<b>As a result of a merger or mergers</b>	40.0	0.0	0.0	60
<b>To better reflect the composition of our existing membership</b>	29.4	52.9	11.8	5.9
<b>Other</b>	33.3	0	0	66.7

*Questionnaire data, n = 19.*

There seemed to be a high level of satisfaction with the new names that unions had adopted, as the overwhelming majority (88.9 percent) of the eighteen questionnaire respondents who assessed the name change saw it as either very or fairly effective, with only two (11.1 percent) selecting the neutral opinion and with no negative responses (see Appendix 16). Despite these positive indications from the questionnaire respondents, two caveats should be noted here. Firstly, the respondents were generally senior officers of

their unions and therefore might not be considered as unbiased observers and secondly, it was not possible to assess what the relative impact of not changing the name would have been. However, it can be concluded that union respondents generally considered the effect of changing their names to be positive.

Whilst the vast majority of unions were found to give a name on their website, many union names no longer indicate who the union represents. In some cases unions are now known only by their initials where this is now their certified name, although in no case was this found to form an acronym. Similarly, a number of unions, mostly of the general and organisational types, have adopted 'aspirational titles' that do not indicate who could join. In contrast occupational/industrial unions were more frequently found to have names that indicate whom they seek to represent by suggesting occupation or industry. Whilst a little over a quarter of the questionnaire respondents reported that their unions had changed their name, there was no particular trend in the reasons for doing this, although there did seem to be a general satisfaction with the new names that were adopted. Therefore it can be concluded that whilst many union names do contribute to union identity, in many other cases they give no indication as to who they represent. As is demonstrated in the next two sub-sections, it is frequently only by observation of the union logo and / or strapline that a union's projected identity is confirmed.

### **Union logos**

The use of logos as visible symbols was found to be an important element in the construction of union identity. Logos were found to be displayed by more than nine out of every ten unions (90.8 percent) observed in the website survey, with a similar proportion of questionnaire respondents (93.3 percent) reporting that their union had one. The majority of union logos observed in the website survey were considered to transmit some message beyond simply being a recognisable symbol alone. Of those observed, more than half (57.6 percent) had an apparent meaning, whereas rather less (40.4 percent) did not and the remainder (two percent) had a logo that was classified as having an unclear meaning. Whilst interpretation of this graphic material necessarily involves some element of subjective analysis, through rigorous observation it was possible in most cases to make a pragmatic interpretation of the messages that were projected and to assess the extent to which this contributed to union identity. These messages were categorised as being

variously about the nature of the union or its target membership, or providing reinforcement to the union name or abbreviation.

Many union logos provided either a graphic representation of the trade or profession which they sought to organise, or to provide at least an association with or allusion to it, which is consistent with the concept of occupational identity (see Appendix 17). Some examples of this included: Equity, which had the masks of comedy and tragedy over the union name; the MU, which was formed of a treble clef in the form of double bass and a double bass player, suggesting both music and musicians; the WRPA (Welsh Rugby Players' Association), which showed a rugby player running with a rugby ball in white on a red background, suggesting the colours of the national playing strip and UCATT, which had a representation of a hard hat forming an arrow, perhaps suggesting protection and moving forward (see Appendix 18 for graphic examples of logos carrying a clear association with trade or profession).

Some logos observed were less clear, but still suggested a trade or profession and therefore an occupational identity (see Appendix 19). The majority of these included either their name or abbreviation in the logo, perhaps suggesting that they relied rather less on the image to convey the message as to what they were or who they represented. Some examples of this include: BALPA (British Air Line Pilots Association), which had their initials over two arrows forming a dart shape perhaps suggesting flight; the CWU, which had the unions initials with a couple of wavy lines, perhaps implying radio waves; the RMT, which had the union's name within an ellipse formed of three shapes, perhaps implying movement or circulation as in the transport network and the RCN (Royal College of Nursing), which had two hands, perhaps suggesting both the helping hands of the union and the healing hands of their members (see Appendix 20 for graphic examples of union logos possibly suggesting occupational identity).

Several health unions used the coiled serpent motif to indicate their association with medicine, thus suggesting a medical identity and perhaps reinforcing both their occupational and industrial identities (see Appendix 21). Such unions were observed to include: the APAP (Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel), which had a badge with the name of the union plus entwined serpents between laurel leaves; BAOT (British Association of Occupational Therapists Limited), which had a representation of a bird over a coiled serpent; the BMA (British Medical Association), which included a coiled serpent motif together with their initials and the HCSA (Hospital Consultants and Specialists

Association), which comprised a serpent motif upon a shield, perhaps suggesting that medicine was central to the identity of the union (see Appendix 22 for graphic examples of union logos using a coiled serpent motif to indicate a medical identity).

A further seven unions utilised a 'badge' style logo (see Appendix 23), with four of these organising in the health sector where the use of a badge-style logo might be seen as being consistent with the badges which many health professionals are awarded and frequently wear as a symbol of professional qualification. Examples of these included: the BADN (British Association of Dental Nurses), which was observed to use a badge-style logo with the name of the union and the year of formation, which could be seen as giving a sense of permanence and the BDA (British Dietetic Association), which had a badge with their name surrounding a crest. Unions outside of health observed to have a badge-style logo would seem to have little in common with each other, and there was also no obvious reason for adopting this format. The exception was the NUM, where the badge-style logo is similar to the badges associated with local miners' lodges. Examples of other unions observed to be using a badge style logo include: ALAE (Association of Licensed Aircraft Engineers (1981), a badge together with their initials surrounded by their full name; the FOA (Fire Officers Association), a badge including the union initials with the full name around it, plus the strapline 'people, not politics' inside a cap-style badge, which would seem to embody a political message within the concept of a uniformed service and perhaps an implied criticism of the FBU and the NUM, which had a badge with the word 'National' together with the abbreviation 'NUM', two miners and mining artefacts (see Appendix 24 for graphic examples of unions using badge-style logos).

Two unions were observed to display a phoenix motif. The APFO (Association of Principal Fire Officers) had a phoenix rising through flames together with their abbreviation, suggesting not only the fire, but also perhaps the union rising above the more militant FBU (Fire Brigades Union). Similarly, the UDM (Union of Democratic Mineworkers) had a heraldic crest-style logo with the phoenix rising plus their abbreviation and full name, perhaps alluding to its formation as a reaction to the 1984-5 miners' strike.

Only five unions (4.6 percent) observed in the website survey included geographical content in their logo, which was less than half of those (11 percent) that were observed to project a geographical identity (see Appendix 25). Whilst some geographically-based unions such as the EIS (Educational Institute of Scotland) made no attempt to reinforce a

geographical identity through their logo, it was observed that the SSTA (Scottish Secondary Teachers Association) utilised the blue and white colours of the Scottish flag and that the WRPA similarly used red and white as its colours, reflecting the colour of the players' strip. Examples of union logos that carried images related to geographical identity observed in the website survey included: the AHDS (Association of Head Teachers and Deputies in Scotland), which comprised a cartoon figure with a mortar board on the head and body formed of the Scottish flag, implying both the occupational and geographical identity; the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World), which had the union's initials over a globe within a circle perhaps indicating the global aspirations of the union; the PFA, which represents football players in England and Wales, paradoxically had a logo that included the crests of all four home nations and a football at the centre overlaid with black and white hands shaking, surrounded by the name of the union and in turn surrounded by laurel leaves (see further discussion of the PFA logo in Chapter 5) and Solidarity, which had the union name with the union flag above, perhaps implying solidarity within a British context and reinforcing their policy of restricting membership to British workers (see Appendix 26 for graphic examples of union logos relating to geographical identity).

Relatively few unions had logos that implied collective organisation, unity or solidarity (see Appendix 27), although this could be conveyed by union names where these include words such as 'union' or 'association', or where the certified name, such as Solidarity, Unison or Unite implied this. Some union logos were observed to incorporate a group of people standing together, perhaps suggesting the union's collective nature and a sense of unity, such as that of Advance. Other examples included: Community, which was observed to have a 'speech bubble' over two figures, which perhaps suggests communication and / or bringing people together; Unity (which merged with GMB in 2014), which had a globe within a heart-shape plus the name and strapline 'Unity - Your future' alongside a photograph of a disparate group of people, perhaps suggesting the union at the heart of the world and Accord, which had two hands and could be seen to imply the support of 'helping hands' (see Appendix 28 for graphic examples of union logos suggesting collectively, unity, solidarity or cooperation).

Twenty-five unions (22.9 percent) observed in the website survey were found to incorporate the unions' initials in their logos (see Appendix 29), whilst a further six unions (5.5 percent) included both their initials and full name in the logo (see Appendix 30). In a very few cases the graphic content of a union logo was seen to be related to their initials, as in the case of the ATL (Association of Teachers and Lecturers), which had an abbreviation

with a tick through the A, perhaps suggesting 'A' grades and teaching. Some of the simplest logos in this category were that of Prospect, which simply had the letter P at a diagonal angle as its logo; NGSU, which gave only 'SU' over the strapline but also gave the full name alongside and UCAC (Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru - National Association of Teachers in Wales), which gave only a letter 'U' in a rectangle, perhaps implying either unity or union. In contrast only two unions, the Alliance for Finance and the UCSW (Union of Country Sports Workers), were observed to use logos as a vehicle for the full name without giving an abbreviation (see Appendix 31 for graphic examples of union logos incorporating the union's initials and / or full name).

Only two union logos had a direct association with their name. ARC (Association of Revenue and Customs) had a shape overarching their abbreviation, whilst Voice had their name in a rectangular cartoon style speech bubble. In both cases it was considered that whilst the logos reinforced the union name, they did not convey any source of identity relating to their membership territories. However, this was also observed in a range of unions that used a logo as a vehicle to carry their abbreviation. Four unions displayed a logo incorporating a flag motif. AHDS (discussed above), Solidarity incorporated the union flag in its logo, Unite had their name with a billowing striped flag above, which perhaps implied flying the flag for workers, whilst USDAW had an abbreviation in italics with a 'tricolour' flag appearing to fly from the top of the letter 'D' (see Appendix 32 for graphic examples of union logos having either a direct association with the union name or incorporating a flag motif).

Whilst many logos contributed to the identity of the union, as reported earlier in this section, more than four in ten had no apparent meaning. Although it might be expected that with frequent observation they could become associated with the union concerned, it would seem less likely that they in any way contribute to the union's identity. Examples included: BECTU (Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union) which had yellow triangles in a blue rectangle; PSU (Prison Service Union), which had its initials in three partial circles; UFS, which had its initials under a large full stop and Unison, which had swirling lines through the name of the union. The Unison interviewee confirmed that the colours of the Unison logo were those of the suffragette movement and that this reflected the predominantly feminised nature of the union's membership (see Chapter 5). However, it might be questioned as to how evident this would be to existing and potential members in terms of conveying the union's image (see Appendix 33 for graphic examples of logos with no apparent meaning).

Of the seventy questionnaire respondents (93.3 percent) who reported that their union had a logo, sixty-two respondents (82.7 percent) identified the main messages that their union's logo were perceived to convey, with the most common responses being: illustrating who the union represents; a sense of solidarity or doing things collectively; conveying the distinctive character of the union and depicting what the members or potential members do. In 'illustrating who the union represents' and 'depicting what the members or potential members do', they are providing a graphic representation of the source or sources of their identity. In many cases the logo was reported to convey multiple messages (see table 2). Nine respondents made a comment concerning the union logo and in all cases referred or alluded to the image of the union. Whilst two respondents mentioned projecting a modern image others mentioned: relating to working people (1); indicating prestige (1); the industry concerned (1); seriousness (1); collectivity (1); strike activity (1) and anti-racism (1).

**Table 2: Main messages conveyed by union logo**

	Degree of importance			
	Major percent	Moderate percent	Low percent	None/not applicable percent
<b>Illustrates who the union represents</b>	41.9	30.6	11.3	16.1
<b>Implies a sense of solidarity or doing things collectively</b>	41.0	13.1	18	27.9
<b>Conveys the distinctive character of the union</b>	33.9	40.3	12.9	12.9
<b>Depicts what the members or potential members do</b>	32.2	23.7	13.8	30.5
<b>Suggests what the union does e.g. representation</b>	24.6	14.0	28.1	33.3
<b>Incorporates the employer's name or logo</b>	15.1	9.4	1.9	73.6
<b>Indicates the geographical coverage of the union</b>	13.0	16.7	9.3	61.1
<b>Other</b>	21.4	10.7	3.6	64.3

*Questionnaire data, n = 62.*

As regards the effectiveness of their union logo, sixty-nine questionnaire respondents (92 percent) assessed the effectiveness of their union's logo, while almost three-quarters of respondents considered that in their view, their union logo was either very or fairly effective (see Appendix 34).

Overall it can be argued that the vast majority of unions utilise a logo, that many of these make a significant contribution to the identities that the unions project, and that the

majority are used to transmit some message beyond the logo being solely a recognisable symbol. The messages carried by logos frequently reflect the union's membership territories and / or provide some reinforcement to the union name or abbreviation. The largest number of unions were found to be those which used their logo to either reinforce an occupational or professional identity. In contrast, virtually no attempt to use logos to imply an organisational identity was observed, perhaps suggesting that organisationally based unions did not want to project too close an association with the employer, even where the organisation's name appears in their title. As might be expected, all three of the major general unions (GMB, Unison and Unite) had logos which displayed a general or at least a non-specific identity, although a significant number of unions that clearly had other identities also did this. More surprisingly, there was only limited evidence of geographical unions using logos to express a geographical identity.

### **Union straplines**

Straplines are potentially an important element in the construction of union identity because they can provide additional information to either confirm or clarify union identity. A strapline may be understood as a line of text which adds to a title or headline. In the case of unions observed in the website survey, these frequently explained who the union represented and / or what it aimed to do, and were therefore an important element in the identity that unions present to both existing and potential members. Straplines were found to be employed by the majority of unions observed in the website survey, with sixty four unions (58.7 percent) being found to have a recognisable strapline on the home page of their website. Similarly, forty-four respondents to the questionnaire (coincidentally representing 58.7 percent of that sample) reported that their union regularly used a 'strapline' after the union logo, name or initials. Although straplines were observed to be an important element in the construction of many unions' identities, they were less frequently observed than either union names or logos.

What unions chose to say in their straplines was found to be highly variable. Some of the more innovative included: CDNA (Community and District Nursing Association), which stated 'Caring for those who care'; Equity, 'Performing for you' and the SCP (Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists), 'Feet for life'. The messages embodied in straplines were found to fall into one or more of a number of categories which can be broadly summarised

as: membership territories, professionalism, representation and unity or solidarity, whilst some were non-specific. In the area of membership territories, it was frequently the strapline that clarified the industrial, occupational, organisational or geographical restrictions to union membership.

In an era when many unions have aspirational titles, such as Accord, Advance, Prospect, Unite or Unity, which give no indication of their membership territories, the strapline may be more important in establishing these (see discussion in Chapter 2). A clear example was provided by Accord, which stated that they are ‘Dedicated to HBOS Staff in Lloyds TSB’ (Halifax Bank of Scotland Group), which provides a clear example of an organisational union that did not have the employer’s name in their title, confirming both its organisational identity and membership territories. This contrasts sharply with Advance, which represents staff at the Santander Bank but merely stated ‘Your voice at work’. Similarly, many occupational unions were observed to use straplines to clarify their membership territories, including ASLEF which stated that it is ‘The train drivers’ union’; the AHDS: ‘Representing School Leaders’ and BECTU: ‘The media and entertainment union’. The IWW, historically the most open union, describes itself simply as ‘The Union for all Workers’.

Where unions compete within contested membership territories, straplines were sometimes observed to reflect this by suggesting exclusivity or asserting dominance, as demonstrated in teaching, where the NASUWT claimed to be ‘The teachers’ union’ in contrast to the NUT’s claim to be ‘The largest teachers’ union’ and Voice’s claim to be ‘The union for education professionals’. A similar pattern was found in transport where the RMT stated that they are ‘Britain’s Largest Specialist Transport Union’; TSSA (Transport Salaried Staffs’ Association): ‘The union for people in transport and travel’ and URTU (United Road Transport Union): ‘The Driver (HGV, LGV, lorry, truck) and Warehouse Union’.

Some unions’ straplines were found to stress professionalism, such as ALAE, ‘The Union for professionals’; ARC: ‘The union of choice for senior managers and professionals in HRMC’; Prospect: ‘Union for Professionals’ and RCM (Royal College of Midwives), which stated that it is ‘The only professional organisation and trade union led by midwives for midwives’. Some straplines reflected the dual role of professional associations in representing both individual members and the profession itself, as in the case of the DPA (Dental Practitioners Association): ‘Promoting Dentistry – Supporting Dental Care

Professionals’ and similarly the Society of Radiographers claim to be ‘Promoting Radiography – Representing Radiographers’.

Representation was a frequently observed theme in straplines with examples including IFMA (Institute of Football Management and Administration): ‘The managers’ voice – representing the views of current and former professional football managers; BMA: ‘Standing up for doctors’; the NGSU: ‘Protecting your interests’; PDA (Pharmacists Defence Association): ‘Defending your representation’ and RCN: ‘Representing nurses, promoting excellence in practice, shaping health policies’. Similarly many straplines expressed the traditional trade union concerns of solidarity or unity, including ALACE (Association of Local Authority Chief Executives): ‘Stronger together’; the BFAWU: ‘Strength in Unity’ and the LDA (Locum Doctors Association): ‘United we stand’. Two unions referred to as ‘protest unions’ later in this chapter were observed to use overtly political messages, these being the UDM, which stated: ‘Democracy Reborn - Established 1985’ and the FOA, which gave the message ‘People not politics’.

Some straplines were observed to convey multiple messages as exemplified by BALPA, which stated: ‘United in the Interests of British Airline Pilots’, combining the concept of unity with clarification of occupational and geographical territories. Similarly, the EIS employed the strapline: ‘Scotland’s largest teaching union’, which combined occupation, industry, and geographical location, whilst the SAU (Scottish Artists Union) used the strapline: ‘The representative voice for artists in Scotland’ to indicate both occupational and geographical identity. The senior civil servants’ union, FDA, used only its initials as the union name and employed the strapline: ‘The Union of Choice for Senior Managers and Professionals in Public Service’, which is particularly important in clarifying its identity given the paucity of information now contained in its name.

Few straplines were very long, but notable exceptions included APFO: ‘APFO exists to promote and protect the interests of those who lead the British Fire and Rescue Service’; WGGB (Writers Guild of Great Britain): ‘The Writers' Guild of Great Britain supports writers for TV, film, radio, theatre, books, online and video games’ and the SOA (Society of Authors Limited), which stated: ‘The Society of Authors is a non-profit making organisation, founded in 1884, to protect the rights and further the interests of authors’. It could be argued that these straplines, whilst offering more detail, are less effective in conveying union identity than the more succinct examples given earlier, although it might also be argued conversely that this would be less of an issue for those within such

occupations, who may be well aware of the organisation’s identity. Whilst most straplines observed in the website survey did contribute something to the union’s identity, some were found to be non-specific, adding little or nothing to knowledge an observer might glean about the union. Examples included Aspect: ‘Achieving change together’; PSU: ‘The Union for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’; UFS: ‘Support when it matters most’; Unite and Community, which both used ‘The union for life’, and Unity, which simply stated: ‘Your future’.

The forty-four questionnaire respondents (58.6 percent) who indicated the relative importance of the messages conveyed by union straplines were remarkably consistent (see table 3) when reporting what they considered to be majorly or moderately important in communicating the following: ‘implies a sense of solidarity or doing things collectively’ (82 percent); ‘says what the union does’ (77.8 percent); ‘conveys the distinctive character of the union’ (75 percent); ‘says who the union represents’ (72.5 percent) and ‘says what the members or potential members do’ (67.5 percent). These results suggest that respondents considered straplines extremely important in communicating and perhaps clarifying their union’s identity, as for example, where a strapline confirmed their membership territories.

**Table 3: Importance of messages conveyed by union straplines**

	<b>Degree of importance</b>			
	<b>Major percent</b>	<b>Moderate percent</b>	<b>Low percent</b>	<b>None/not applicable percent</b>
<b>Says who the union represents</b>	67.5	5.0	7.5	20
<b>Implies a sense of solidarity or doing things collectively</b>	64.1	17.9	7.7	10.3
<b>Conveys the distinctive character of the union</b>	52.8	22.2	16.7	8.3
<b>Says what the members or potential members do</b>	45.9	21.6	10.8	21.6
<b>Says what the union does e.g. representation</b>	41.7	36.1	11.1	11.1
<b>Incorporates the employer’s name</b>	15.2	6.1	15.2	63.6
<b>Indicates the geographical coverage of the union</b>	9.4	18.8	9.4	62.5
<b>Other</b>	9.1	0.0	0.0	90.9

*Questionnaire data, n = 44.*

Only four questionnaire respondents made a comment concerning their union’s strapline and these comments concerned: support for members (1); giving members a voice (1); representing working people (1) and the continuity and reliability of the union (1). As regards the effectiveness of straplines, forty-four respondents (58.6 percent) assessed the effectiveness of their union’s strapline in projecting their union’s identity. Of these, it was

the opinion of more than nine out of ten (93.1 percent) that their strapline was either very or fairly effective (see Appendix 35), which would seem to indicate a high satisfaction rate from questionnaire respondents. Overall it was observed that the majority of unions' straplines made a significant contribution to establishing their identities, often confirming what the union does or who can join. Where unions had aspirational names, such as Accord, or where they were most often known by their initials, as in the case of BECTU, the strapline was often observed to be of primary importance in establishing the union's membership territories. In contrast, in sectors where unions face intense inter-union competition, such as compulsory education, the straplines were frequently observed to stress the importance of the union. Other themes identified in the website survey were professionalism, (particularly in the health sector) and representation. Whilst some union straplines carry multiple messages, it was also observed that others are non-specific. In many cases it was observed that it was some combination of the most visible characteristics, that is to say the union's name, logo and strapline, which more clearly established its identity, and that where one element was not specific, another element or elements would frequently tend to clarify identity.

### **4.3 Restrictions to membership and membership benefits**

Two other important observable characteristics in the construction of some unions' identities observed in the website survey relate to how these unions established membership territories by restricting membership, and to the benefits that they offered in return for union membership. As regards membership territories, unions that restricted membership tended to employ some combination of methods, including restricting who could join by one or more of the primary sources of union identity, establishing categories of membership and raising barriers such as the need for professional qualification (see discussion in Chapters 2 and 5). Sixty-three unions (57.8 percent) surveyed in the website survey were observed to be making clear reference to restrictions or barriers to membership. In many cases this was expressed by stating categories such as 'practitioner', 'student' or 'retired', and in some cases there was a part-time or full-time distinction.

As would be expected, the general unions observed in the website survey were found not to have any particular restrictions to membership beyond the normal geographical bounds of their operation and their questionnaire respondents did not indicate any. The exceptions to

this were Unison, which as reported earlier in this chapter restricts membership to the public sector and public services, and Prospect, which for the most part seeks to organise managers and professionals (see also discussions in Chapter 5). In contrast to the general unions, restricting membership is an essential component of identity for all other unions. Questionnaire respondents reported that membership of their unions was generally restricted by one or more of the sources of union identity, detailed in table 4, with occupation being by far the most common basis of restriction. The implication of this data, in contrast to that reported above, is that more than nine out of every ten unions responding to the questionnaire reported restricting membership.

**Table 4: Restrictions to union membership**

<b>Union membership limited by:</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Occupation	46.0	61.3
Industry	18.0	24.0
Organisation	17.0	22.7
Geography	4.0	5.3
Not limited	6.0	8.0

*Questionnaire data, n = 75.*

Restrictions to membership may change over time, as evidenced by the eighteen questionnaire respondents (24.3 percent) reporting that their union had changed their limitations to membership in the last five years. Sixteen respondents made a comment concerning this, and in all cases it was to indicate an extension of membership territories, with the reasons stated being related to widening occupational territories (9), organisational territories (4), geographical territories (1) and gender (1), with one comment being non-specific. The implication of this may be that unions tend to become more open over time, as the membership territories which they seek to occupy broaden, perhaps even to the point where they become general in character. This is consistent with the experience of the ‘New Unions’ of 1889, which originated by organising dock and gas workers, but quickly broadened their membership territories to secure their position (Clegg, 1979; Morton and Tate, 1979).

For some unions, student or trainee membership provides a productive method of recruiting new members, and the website survey revealed that this was offered by twenty-seven unions (24.8 percent), with thirteen being located in the health sector and eight in education. The SSTA and the NASUWT offered free student membership whilst the EIS and the NUT had student areas on their websites. A further six unions beyond the health and education sectors were found to be offering student or trainee membership,

representing a diverse range of occupations and industries (see Appendix 36), and included unions such as ALAE, Equity, and the WGGB. It was noticeable that in each case student or trainee membership was closely linked to a profession or occupation and that no general or organisational unions offered similar facilities.

In general, professional unions were observed to require professional qualifications as a requirement for full membership, providing evidence of 'occupational closure' (Weber, 1991) (see discussion in Chapter 2). The extent of occupational closure might be related to the ease with which an individual could practice the profession without joining the appropriate union. Interviews revealed the contrasting positions of the educational psychologists union AEP (Association of Educational Psychologists), which claimed to have virtually all the profession in membership, with that of the dental nurses (BADN), which reported organising only a minority of dental nurses (see discussion of professional unions in Chapter 5).

Whilst student membership is related to the prospect of paid employment and retired membership related to the aftermath of it, a range of unions were found to organise members outside of formal paid employment. Subsequent to completion of the website survey, Unite created 'Community Membership', which it publicises as being designed to recruit outside of formal employment, stating (Unite, 2013): 'Those not in employment are welcomed into the union family, adding another dimension to our strength in thousands of workplaces across the UK'. The APAP offers volunteer membership, whilst a number of unions represent self-employed members such as the unions of podiatrists and musicians. It became apparent that in some occupations it is common practice to mix self-employment with formal employment and that a member may themselves also be an employer, potentially of other union members, as in the case of a chiropodist or podiatrist owning a private clinic or a musician being a band leader. Several other unions specifically mentioned representing the self-employed, freelance or contractors, including BECTU, Connect (which subsequently merged with Prospect) and NUJ (National Union of Journalists), together with NFSP (National Federation of Sub Postmasters), which only represents the self-employed. Together, these examples represent a significant break with the traditional association of union membership with formal employment and in some cases could be considered as an attempt by unions to reflect changes in the structure of the labour market and wider society.

As regards the benefits offered to members, all but two unions responding to the questionnaire reported offering these. Whilst the provision of membership benefits may be important to virtually all trade unions in terms of attracting and retaining members, many were found to tailor the benefits they offer to the specific needs of the members that they serve (see further discussion in Chapter 5). The website survey confirmed that what was offered varied considerably, with seventy-four unions (67.9 percent) offering collective representation, eighty-four (77.1 percent) some form or forms of individual representation and eighty-two (75.2 percent) access to commercial benefits. Individual representation was observed more frequently than collective representation with possible reasons including the relative decline in bargaining activity in recent years, lack of success in collective bargaining, or perhaps that unions were using individual representation as a selling point for recruitment. It also became clear during the interview programme that some unions such as BADN do not participate in collective bargaining (see Chapter 5).

Forty-six unions (42.2 percent) observed in the website survey specifically mentioned having a members' area, and whilst it was impossible to access these it is anticipated that further benefits could be available through them. It is therefore likely that the statistics reported here under-report the number of unions in the website survey offering such benefits. In this respect the data may be indicative of what is offered by individual unions rather than providing a comprehensive account of what unions offer. The interview programme also exposed contrasting policies on members' areas, in that some unions believed it was better to put everything in the public domain, often to attract members to the union, whilst others felt that some information should be restricted for members' access only and in some cases this was seen as an encouragement to join (see discussion later in this chapter and in Chapter 5). Fifty-two unions (47.7 percent) of those observed in the website survey were found to offer other online benefits such as access to information on employment or professional issues. Similarly, twenty-three union websites (21.1 percent), provided links to other useful sites such as ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) for employment issues or sites appropriate to a particular profession.

Some unions offered benefits that appeared to be unique to the organisation concerned, as in the case of the ALAE, which offers professional and technical data together with representation on statutory safety bodies. APAP offers technical information and relationship counselling, whilst the UIU (United and Independent Union) offers telephone counselling. BAOT was found to have a membership agreement with Unison, which not only outsourced the provision of industrial relations services including individual and

collective representation and other services, but also gave BAOT members full Unison membership (see discussion of hybrid unions in Chapter 5). Membership of either of the journalists' unions, the BAJ (British Association of Journalists) and NUJ, provides members with a press card. Some of the more unusual benefits offered included commercial advice on becoming a sub-post master offered by the NFSP, a monthly draw offered by the NGSU and a members' golf association run by the PCA (Professional Cricketers Association). However, many of the benefits offered by occupational and particularly by professional unions did seem to be tailored more directly to the needs or concerns of their existing and potential members.

The provision of welfare and insurance benefits to members echoes that of the early craft unions, for which mutual insurance was used in conjunction with exclusivity and rate fixing (Webb and Webb, 1897). Only fifteen unions (13.7 percent) observed in the website survey were found to offer a benevolent fund (see Appendix 37), although it is possible that other unions had these, but that they were either not publicised or that they were only publicised in the members' area. What was offered varied considerably, with examples including Community, which specifically mentioned bereavement, child, convalescent, strike and lockout benefits, whilst the RMT offered death, orphan, accident and retirement benefits. Several unions mentioned some form of health or medical provisions, but again what was offered varied considerably. A group medical legal scheme was provided by the HCSA (Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association). Medical benefits were advertised by the UDM, and health and accident insurance was provided by the SGSA (Shield Guarding Staff Association). Only four unions specifically mentioned offering pension schemes, these being Equity, PFA, Nautilus UK and WGGB, with the latter two confirming in interview that this was because of the casualised nature of their members' employment (see Chapter 5).

Some form of advice was offered by many unions, in many forms and on disparate subjects. In many cases this related directly to the occupation of their members (see Appendix 38), as in the case of the PRPA (Professional Rugby Players Association), which offered health and agent advice, or the BMA, which offered medical advice. Telephone helplines were offered by eleven unions observed in the website survey, with most of these relating to legal services (see Appendix 39). In many cases, this could be related directly to issues of professional competence, as in the cases of the LDA (Locum Doctors Association), BALPA and BAJ. Only two unions, BALPA and Prospect, offered helplines that were open twenty-four hours a day. The SOA operates a tax helpline, which may be

related to the union's membership being self-employed. A further five unions specifically mentioned the provision of professional indemnity, with all of these representing members in the health sector, whilst two teaching unions provided public liability insurance. The first of these, the GPTD (Guild of Professional Teachers of Dance Movement to Music and Dramatic Arts), might offer this because it has a direct relevance to self-employed dance teachers. In the case of Voice, it could be considered less likely that very many of their members would need this, given the employed status of most people working in the education system.

Many unions observed in the website survey were found to offer some facility for their members to either enhance their employability or to gain employment. This may have a direct relationship with occupational and particularly professional union identity, where the union not only encourages new or aspiring members into the union but also helps them in securing employment or in advancing their career. With one exception, all the unions offering one or more of these facilities had an occupational and, in most cases, a professional identity (see Appendix 40). The exception was Prospect, which as reported earlier in this chapter presents itself as the 'union for professionals', and thus might offer such facilities on the basis of its professional membership rather than it being related to any particular occupation.

Eight unions specifically mentioned career development, with all but one being located in the health sector. Twelve unions offered some form of access to continuing professional development, with six of these unions being located in the health sector and four in education. Similarly, eight unions were found to operate some form of job site or job market, with two of these being located in health and two in education. In sectors where self-employment is more common, a number of unions were found to run a professional register including the SCP, which runs a 'Find a podiatrist in your area' facility, and a further four in the entertainment industry, where members are frequently self-employed. In contrast, no organisational unions were found to offer any facility for career development, even where employees might expect to have careers, as in the finance industry. This may perhaps be the result of organisational unions seeing these issues as being more within the domain of the employer, and especially so in sectors where internal labour markets predominate and horizontal mobility is less common than in the health and education sectors, where the unions providing these facilities are for the most part located.

Some form of training was reported as being offered to members by fifteen unions (13.8.percent) observed in the website survey (see Appendix 41). It is likely that this figure understates the provision, as several union interviewees mentioned that information on training was accessed through the members' area of their website. Seven of these are regarded here as professional unions, with six located in education and one in health. Of the remainder, three are industrial / occupational unions, two are organisational unions and three are general unions, one of which was Prospect, which also represents professional staff. In most cases the training offered would appear to be a route into, or designed to support activism, rather than employability or career development.

A published journal was offered by twenty unions (18.3 percent) observed in the website (see Appendix 42), with all but five of these being professional unions. In many cases the publication would seem to mix professional and industrial relations issues. This was exemplified by the journal of SCP, which incorporates articles on medical conditions with union matters. The interview programme revealed that the AEP publishes the academic journal for the profession, whilst the NSEAD (National Society for Education in Art and Design) publishes the 'International Journal of Art and Design Education', also known as 'I-Jade', which is accessible to members through their website's members' area.

A diverse range of other benefits were observed as being offered by unions in the website survey. Library and museum facilities were offered by several unions, with five of these specifically mentioning a physical library facility, although far more had some form of online access to information. Membership of the SOA gave access to the British Library, whilst the BDA (British Dental Association) also operates a dental museum. Eight unions were found to offer some form of retail facility, and in seven cases this took the form of an online shop, whilst three unions offered residential facilities to members including the CWU, which offered hotel accommodation; the NUT, which offers holidays at its training centre and the RMT, which offers London accommodation. Six questionnaire respondents indicated that other benefits were offered by their unions, and these comprised information on job vacancies, pension information, moral support, access to education and training, and benefits that were also open to non-members and / or ex-members. In most cases the benefits offered bore some relationship to the union's identity and the needs of their members, but in other cases there was no obvious connection either to the union identity or to the needs of the members served by the union.

The importance and effectiveness of the benefit packages offered to unions' members were assessed by seventy-two questionnaire respondents (96 percent) (see table 5). The benefits rated as being either majorly or moderately important were individual representation (98.5 percent), collective representation (91.7 percent), free legal advice on matters concerning the members' employment (89.9 percent) and specialist advice or legal services related to members' occupation or profession (92.9 percent). The rating of individual representation as being more important than collective representation was consistent with the findings from the website survey (reported earlier in this section) relating to the incidence of unions mentioning these benefits on their websites. The weightings given to the provision of advice and legal support on both employment and professional matters may be indicative of unions offering more individualised rather than collective support.

**Table 5: Importance and effectiveness of the benefits offered**

	Degree of importance			
	Major percent	Moderate percent	Low percent	None/not applicable percent
Individual representation	91.5	7.0	0.0	1.4
Collective representation	71.2	20.5	5.5	2.7
Free legal advice on matters concerning the members' employment	66.7	23.2	4.3	5.8
Specialist advice or legal services related to members' occupation or profession	64.3	28.6	2.9	4.3
Union newspaper or professional journal?	33.3	29.0	18.8	18.8
Members' call centre and / or telephone helpline	30.9	26.5	14.7	27.9
Members' area on website and / or library facility	22.1	35.3	17.6	25
Benevolent scheme, health, welfare or pension benefits	20.9	23.9	19.4	35.8
Free legal services for non-employment related matters	16.2	32.4	25.0	26.6
Career development or employability training	11.8	29.4	25.0	33.8
Commercial benefits including discounts and retailing	7.4	30.9	41.2	20.6
Other	21.1	10.5	5.3	63.2

*Questionnaire data, n = 72.*

In contrast, the least rated benefit was commercial benefits, including discounts and retailing, which were considered majorly important by very few unions (6.7 percent) and moderately important by less than a third of respondents (30.9 percent). This finding was confirmed by many participants in the interview programme (see Chapter 5), who with few exceptions considered commercial benefits to be of minor importance in attracting and

retaining members. However, it might be that not offering such benefits was some disincentive to joining or retaining membership and particularly so in sectors such as education, where a number of unions compete for members.

The effectiveness of union benefit packages in helping to attract and retain members was assessed by seventy-two questionnaire respondents (96 percent) (see Appendix 43). Whilst less than a third of respondents assessed their unions' benefits packages as very effective (30.6 percent), more than half (55.6 percent) assessed them as being fairly effective, perhaps suggesting that some respondents saw scope for their unions' benefit packages to make a greater contribution to attracting and retaining members.

Overall it was recognised that any union that is not to all intents and purposes general in character must inevitably restrict membership to some extent, and that these restrictions tend to relate to one or more of the primary or secondary sources of a union's identity (see discussion in Chapters 3 and 6). Such restrictions as are enforced by unions are therefore central to establishing their identities. Unions that had changed their restrictions had in each case widened their membership categories. Student or trainee membership was observed to be offered by almost a quarter of unions in the website survey, and in most cases this was related to professional qualification, which in turn was a requirement of full membership of many professional unions. However, the interview programme revealed the extent of occupational closure enjoyed by professional unions to be somewhat variable. Many unions were observed to have categories of member, often including student/trainee, full and retired membership. A significant number of unions organise members who are self-employed or themselves employers, or whose working life comprises some combination of being employed, self-employed or an employer, perhaps reflecting changes in the labour market and wider society. Overall it was found that restrictions to membership enforced by unions and the categories of membership that they have established serve to reinforce union identity.

The website survey revealed that whilst most unions were observed to offer a benefits package, what these comprised was highly variable. Individual representation was observed in the website survey more frequently than collective bargaining. Similarly, respondents to the questionnaire indicated that individual representation was now seen as more important than collective bargaining. A diverse range of benefits was found to be offered by unions observed in the website survey. Welfare and benevolent benefits were observed less often in the website survey than was expected, perhaps because they were

not widely advertised or because information was placed in a members' area. It was observed that many unions offered benefits that related directly to the specific needs of their members and particularly so in occupational/professional unions. It is therefore argued here that, where benefits are tailored to the needs of a union's membership, they may form an important element of that union's identity. Whilst questionnaire respondents saw their unions' benefits packages to be generally effective in attracting and retaining members, far more indicated them to be 'fairly effective' rather than 'very effective', which raises a potential question as to how these could be improved.

Overall it is concluded that whilst restrictions to membership are an important element in the construction of union identity for all but the most open general unions, part of the distinctive identity of some unions is also determined by what they offer to their members and particularly so where benefits are tailored to the specific needs.

#### **4.4 Aims and objectives**

Whilst union identity was observed to be established primarily by the most visible characteristics, namely union names, logos and straplines, and may be reinforced by restrictions to membership and the benefits offered in return for membership (discussed in preceding sections), the website survey also looked at the content of the unions' aims or objectives. Sixty-one unions, representing more than half of the unions in the sample (55.9 percent), stated their aims or objectives in some form. In some cases these were clearly expressed and were perhaps extracted from union rule books, whilst others used a more informal wording that served to communicate the union's goals to existing or potential members. As might be expected, where aims and objectives were stated they were found to be broadly consistent with the identities being projected by the unions' websites. Frequently there was no direct link to this information on the home page of websites, and in many cases it was only found by using search facilities on their websites. In these cases it could be considered as making little contribution to communicating the union's identity to any casual observer, but that this information was available for those who were interested.

The content of aims and objectives observed in the website survey was found to be highly variable with fifty-three unions (48.6 percent) stating aims that related to industrial relations functions, twenty-six unions (23.9 percent) stating professional aims and fourteen

(12.8 percent) stating other aims (see Appendix 44). A number of unions stressed occupational or professional issues as all or part of their aims, with examples including the BOS (British Orthoptic Society), which mentioned professional standards and the SAU, which referred to professional representation. In some cases, such as that of the APMT (Association of Professional Music Therapists in Great Britain, now part of the British Association for Music Therapy) or the ASCL (Association of School and College Leaders), the organisation would not be recognisable as a trade union merely from reading their aims and objectives. Several unions, predominantly in the health sector, combined industrial relations with professional objectives, these including BDA (British Dietetic Association) and BMA. Aims other than those directly related to industrial relations or professional issues observed in the website survey were found to be somewhat disparate in content (see examples in table 6).

**Table 6: Examples of aims other than those related to industrial relations and professional issues**

<b>Union:</b>	<b>Aims:</b>
EIS	Educational and international
POA	Services and benefits
PPSA (Palm Paper Staff Association)	Social and discounts
RMT	Organisation within the transport sector
TSSA	Values and ethics
UCAC	An independent Welsh education
UCSW	The continuity of county sports
UCU	Social objectives including promoting adult, further and higher education equality and other campaigning issues
UFS	Discounts
Unison	Recruitment
Unite	Organisation, education, representation and international goals
Unity	Membership assistance and training
URTU	Equal opportunities

Noticeably absent from the vast majority of the unions aims and objectives was any direct reference to class-based political aspirations, which were considered as a part of some unions' character by Blackburn (1967) or their *raison d'être* (Hyman, 1975) (see discussion in Chapter 2). Only two such instances were observed in the course of the website survey. Perhaps the clearest statement of class identity, if not explicitly revolutionary intent, was provided by the IWW, which stated that one of its objectives lay in "...uniting all workers across trades, industries and countries". Similarly, Solidarity, which calls for "One big union" albeit within a British context, stated in its aims that "Membership is open to people of all ethnic, religious and political backgrounds. Solidarity rejects the internationalism of

existing trade unions, and is a nationalist union with the protection of British workers' interests as the core of its agenda".

There was similarly no direct mention made by any union in their aims and objectives of a positive intention to engage in political activity beyond campaigning over instrumental issues. Whilst many unions mentioned campaigning on their websites, only the FBU was found to make specific mention of this in its aims and objectives, which included 'Campaigning for Firefighters and Emergency Control Staff'. In contrast, several unions stressed what could be considered a negative political aim of independence. The ATCU (Associated Train Crew Union), FOA and IDU (Independent Democratic Union) stressed industrial relations functions together with independence. What might be concluded from the findings of the website survey is that class is no longer a significant factor in the projected identities of certified UK trade unions. With the majority of UK union members now being contained in three general unions (GMB, Unison and Unite), each of which having absorbed a multiplicity of occupational groups, and with the majority of unions by number being professional in character, it also may be considered that it is now only minor general unions (IWW and Solidarity) that allude to a class-based identity, and that these do not state an overtly revolutionary intent.

Overall it is considered that unions' statements of aims and objectives can potentially contribute something to the construction of union identity. Whilst some unions stated aims that clearly indicated them to be trade unions, in other cases this was less clear. Aims and objectives were found to be problematic in two respects. Firstly, the content of aims and objectives, where provided, was highly variable and there was no consistency of content, even to the point that it was not always clear that the organisation was a trade union. Secondly, the aims and objectives were frequently so well-hidden within the website that they would be unlikely to make much impact upon any but the most determined existing or potential members. It was clear that in many cases the aims and objectives stated did relate closely to the sources of the unions' identity, and this was particularly noticeable in relation to industrial, occupational and professional concerns, which were frequently combined with industrial relations objectives. However, there was little evidence of class-based or other political aspiration in union aims and objectives. Therefore it is concluded that, even where stated, aims and objectives make a limited contribution to the unions' projected identities.

## 4.5 Affiliations and political funds

The question of unions' affiliations, particularly to the TUC and / or the Labour Party, and the decision to maintain a political fund could be considered as important components of union identity. Whilst affiliation to the TUC and / or the Labour Party are for Blackburn (1967, p.20) 'elements' of 'unionateness', the research reported here would seem to challenge this in relation to contemporary union identities. It was suggested earlier in this work that TUC affiliation might be relevant in confirming some unions' identity as such (see discussion in Chapter 2). This was confirmed by interviewees from both Advance and NASS (National Association of Stable Staff) (see further discussion in Chapter 5), who both saw TUC affiliation as an important step in their organisations' journeys to becoming independent trade unions. In contrast, Labour Party affiliation may now be a less important factor, given that some left-wing unions are no longer affiliated and that having a political fund no longer implies affiliation to the Labour Party (see also earlier discussion in Chapter 2 and further discussion in Chapter 5).

Unions observed in the website survey were generally found to be less likely to state affiliations, and to give these less prominence than was expected. Where affiliations were observed, it was frequently the result of using search facilities on the websites or by visiting many links. Only thirty-five unions (32.1 percent) were found to positively state TUC affiliation, representing slightly over half the affiliated unions at that time (TUC, 2010), whereas seventy-one unions (65.1 percent) did not mention it and three unions (2.8 percent) positively stated that they were not affiliated. Similarly, only eight unions (7.3 percent) mentioned Labour Party affiliation, whereas ninety-eight (89.9 percent) did not, with two actively stating that they were not affiliated and one being unclear. Finally with regard to other political affiliations, only five union websites (4.6 percent) actively stated that they had any such affiliations, in contrast to one-hundred and two (93.6 percent) that did not, and again two unions that actively stated that they did not have any other affiliations.

Overall the question of affiliations and political funds might now be considered of less importance as an observable characteristic in the construction of the union identity than it was for Blackburn (1967) as an element of 'unionateness' (see discussion in Chapter 2). An important exception to this is the unions that are termed 'protest unions' (see further discussion in Chapter 5). These were observed to include UDM, which was founded to undermine the NUM during the 1984/5 miners' strike; FOA, which competes with the

three other fire service unions and Voice, which operates in the highly competitive education sector. An antipathy towards affiliation to the TUC, the Labour Party or any form of political alignment or activity would seem to be an essential component for these unions, both of their union identity and of their opposition to more militant and / or politically aligned competitors.

#### **4.6 Union websites and other forms of digital communication**

This section focuses on the contribution that union websites and other forms of digital communications with members make to the formation and communication of union identity. In contrast to the characteristics considered previously in this chapter, which have to do with the construction of union identity, digitalised methods of communication are channels through which union identity may be communicated. Union websites are considered here as perhaps the most visible and accessible expression of union identity in the public domain. The research recognised the importance of ‘members’ areas’ to some unions in restricting access to certain digitalised resources, and the growing importance of other forms of digital communication with members, including social networking and membership surveys. What emerged during the interview programme was the pace of technological development in this area, with unions in general making increasing use of a range of digital media. However it became clear that the level of deployment and sophistication of these developments across the unions interviewed was somewhat inconsistent, and that this was not entirely related to their scale (see Chapter 5).

The incidence of unions not having websites also requires some explanation. The website survey found that one hundred and nine unions had websites, representing just under two thirds (65.3 percent) of certified unions (Certification Officer’s Report, 2009). Whilst it was anticipated that in the current era virtually all organisations would have a website, it was surprising to find that there were a total of fifty-eight unions, representing more than a third (34.7 percent) of all certified unions (Certification Officer’s Report, 2009), for which no website could be found through normal internet searches. The sources of these unions’ identities could only be analysed by their titles and these were found to represent unions with identities drawn from a range of sources (see table 7). When these figures are compared with those reported earlier of unions having websites (see Chapter 3), it can be seen that the industrial and organisational categories were again the most frequently

observed sources of union identity, but also that the geographical and organisational sources were observed more often.

**Table 7: Unions not having a website, identified by title only**

	<b>General</b>	<b>Occupational</b>	<b>Industrial</b>	<b>Organisational</b>	<b>Geographical</b>	<b>Unclear</b>
Frequency	2	28	27	21	17	3
Percent	3.4	48.2	46.5	36.2	29.3	5.2

*Website survey data, n = 58.*

The source of this disparity is not too difficult to discern as, of the seventeen geographically based unions, the largest identifiable group were the fourteen unions that represent the regions of the NUM, which are now for the most part effectively unions of former mine-workers, and are both separately constituted and certificated. They also represent a sizeable proportion of the industrial and occupational categories. This legal formation clearly skews the geographical category. Removing them from the analysis reduces this category to three, namely the LODSA (Leicestershire Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers Association), which is also a mining union; the NEZSA (North of England Zoological Staff Association) and the SSI (Society of Somerset Inseminators). All of three were found to be small in membership and appeared to be both geographically and occupationally based. Therefore a further explanation for unions not availing themselves of website facilities would seem to relate to scale, with these unions being fairly minor players in industrial relations and perhaps lacking either the resources or expertise to develop a website, or both.

The twenty-one organisational unions (19.2 percent) that were not found to have websites were classified as such because they were observed to have a name in their title that might reasonably be assumed to be that of an employer. Internet searches were undertaken in order to establish whether an employer with such a name existed. The question then arises as to why these unions would not have a website when twelve organisational unions did. A possible explanation would be that these unions, being organisationally based, use the employers' communication channels including e-mail and intranet facilities, and therefore have less need to place information in the public domain. It can be argued conversely that organisational unions that do operate a website may perceive a greater need for facilities that are independent from those of the employer.

Turning to look at those unions which had websites, the purposes for which they were using them were explored both in the website survey and in the questionnaire, with sixty-

nine respondents (92 percent) reporting on the purposes for which their union website is mainly used (see table 8). The purposes that were reported as being most important were: to give information to existing and potential members, to recruit new members and to provide a gateway to access services. It may be interesting to note here that sixty-eight percent of respondents thought that their union's site was of major or moderate importance in conveying the distinctive character of the union. Twelve respondents to the questionnaire made a comment concerning their union's website and of these, seven indicated other purposes including: communication with the media and press; online publication; as a source of advertising revenue; campaigning; regulatory functions and to present a code of conduct. UCAC, which campaigns for a Welsh language education, had a bilingual website, which may be considered as being closely related to its geographical

**Table 8: Purpose of union websites**

	Degree of importance			
	Major percent	Moderate percent	Low percent	None/not applicable percent
Give information to existing members	94.0	4.5	1.5	0.0
Give information to potential members	76.2	19.0	4.8	0.0
Recruit new members	61.3	24.2	6.5	8.1
Provide a gateway for union members to access services	61.3	22.6	8.1	8.1
Allow access to a members' area	53.3	18.3	1.7	26.7
Convey the distinctive character of the union	52.5	33.9	10.2	3.4
Give information to the general public	24.2	38.7	19.4	17.7
Other	18.8	18.8	0.0	62.5

*Questionnaire data, n = 69.*

Forty-six unions (42.2 percent) observed in the website survey specifically mentioned having a members' area. This was further explored in the interview programme, and two opposing views emerged. Some union interviewees argued that putting some information in the members' area was an incentive to join (GMB, FOA, POA, AEP, BADN, Voice, NSEAD, ROA, SSTA and Nautilus). However, the SSTA interviewee said that their site was now more open and that less information was in the members' area. In contrast, other interviewees said that the members' area was considered to provide little incentive for members to join and that they therefore put all information in the public domain (WGGB, ATL, and NACO (National Association of Co-operative Officials)). NACO was interesting in that it had previously had a members' area but had subsequently decided to make everything freely available. In contrast, the POA said that as their members were required

to sign the Official Secrets Act the members' area allowed the discussion of issues which would be problematic in the public domain. The NSEASD interviewee reported that publicly funded areas of the site covering art and design had to be open to public access as this was a requirement of the funding.

The website survey and interview programme confirmed that many unions that serve an occupation in general or a profession in particular were using their website to provide information or briefings specific to that occupational or profession. Examples included WGGB, which provided information on contracts and copyright, together with unions operating in health, ACB/FCS (Association for Clinical Biochemistry and Laboratory Medicine / Federation of Clinical Scientists), AEP, BADN) and education (ASCL, NSEAD), which gave access to professional articles.

A number of union websites surveyed were found to incorporate other electronic methods of communication. Whilst some offered 'newscasts' (CWU, Unison), others had online discussion facilities (PCS, RCN). Three unions availed themselves of online facilities to present podcasts to members, namely the DPA (Dental Practitioners Association), NAHT (National Association of Head Teachers) and SCP, whilst a number of unions had facilities for online discussion (PCS, RCN). Prospect stated that it was in the process of developing 'E. groups' and branches, a development that might be worthy of further investigation.

The phenomenon of social networking developed during the course of the research, although no mention of either 'Facebook' or 'Twitter' was observed in the website survey, nor was any mention of these made by any questionnaire respondents. However, data collected in the interview programme (see Chapter 5) confirmed that many unions were in the active process of developing the use of digital communications, including targeted e-mails, texts, Facebook and Twitter. Whereas websites are open to public scrutiny, Facebook and Twitter require members or other interested parties to actively engage with them. In contrast, targeted e-mails and texts to mobile phones can be used to communicate directly with groups of members where the union 'harvests' their e-mail addresses and mobile telephone numbers, either when they join, or in subsequent communications. Several interviewees mentioned using 'Facebook' (NACO, NUJ, NSEASD and Nautilus) whilst POA was in the process of launching it. Similarly, a range of unions reported using 'Twitter' (GMB, NACO, NUJ, Nautilus NSEAD and Voice). The Voice interviewee also mentioned the use of 'blogging', whilst the Nautilus interviewee said that the members'

area had been expected to be the primary channel of communication with members, but that it had been overtaken by the use of 'Facebook' and 'Twitter'.

In some cases it became clear that digitalised forms of communication were used not only to disseminate information but also to gain rapid feedback from members. A number of interviewees mentioned the adoption of both social networking and interactive membership surveys, with the SSTA interviewee giving the example of using electronic methods to conduct a 'straw poll' on employers' offers in order to gain rapid feedback and avoid the cost of holding a ballot where there was no evidence of a propensity to take industrial action.

Overall, the website survey found that the majority of unions did have websites, but that the level of sophistication varied considerably from a simple webpage to complex information, confirming the findings of Rego et al (2014) (see discussion in Chapter 1). The website survey also revealed the extent to which unions are using a 'members' area' to provide members with additional information. The interview programme revealed that many websites are in the process of development, and that individual unions had conflicting views about the use of members' areas (see discussion in Chapter 5). It also emerged during the interview programme that many unions are availing themselves of a range of digital communications. One of the implications of the ongoing development of digital technologies is that union identity may be communicated not only by the visible symbols presented on their websites and the information that can be accessed through it, but also by the communication of up-to-date news on current developments through a range of media, as well as the ability to obtain feedback far more rapidly from members than was previously possible. It is therefore argued here that union websites and other forms of digitalised communication including social networking make both a considerable and an increasing contribution to the communication of union identity.

## **4.7 Conclusions**

This chapter has demonstrated how the distinctive identities of trade unions, which can be understood by reference to the primary sources of union identity (established in Chapter 3), are manifested in the projected identities of trade unions through certain observable characteristics. It was observed that whilst some unions can be identified by their title

alone others require the observation of a wider range of characteristics, and that some characteristics are of greater or lesser importance in establishing the identity of particular unions. 'Professional identity' is recognised as a 'secondary source' of union identity related to job territories, whilst 'protest identity' was seen as an 'additional source' that was not so related. Data presented in this chapter confirms the findings of the preliminary survey of union titles (reported in Chapter 3) that the vast majority of UK unions were found to have an occupational / industrial identity and that the majority of these were observed to have a professional identity. Together, the findings and analysis presented in this chapter make possible the discussion of niche unionism and niche union identities (see Chapter 5), make a significant contribution to the development of the multidimensional framework (presented in Chapter 6), and advance the theoretical understanding of trade union identities beyond those offered by earlier writers (reviewed in Chapter 2 and discussed further in Chapter 7).

The most clearly visible symbols of identity on union websites were observed to be the name and / or abbreviation, logo and strapline. Taken together, these were found in most cases to provide the clearest indication of a union's identity. Whilst the majority of unions provided a name, some are known only by their initials, whilst others were found to have adopted aspirational titles. Therefore union names cannot in every case be considered as reliable indicators of union identity. The majority of unions were found to utilise a logo, and many of these gave important confirmation of union identity, particularly where occupational unions gave a graphic representation of the trade or profession. Similarly, many straplines were observed to clarify unions' identity.

The extent to which unions restrict access to membership and the nature of the benefits they offer were considered as important elements in the construction of union identity. General unions were observed to make very little restriction to membership, albeit for the normal geographical territories of their operation. In contrast, professional unions were frequently the most clear in stating categories of membership, which often involved a requirement of professional qualification to obtain full membership, together with categories for students or trainees, the retired and non-practising members. Similarly, organisationally-based unions tended to be clear in restricting membership either to a single employer or in some cases to a group of companies. Whilst most geographically-based unions were found to restrict membership to an area within the UK, as in the case of SSTA, the development of Nautilus as a multinational union is considered to be an important development. Almost a quarter of questionnaire respondents reported that

restrictions to membership had widened, supporting a contention that unions become more open over time. Some unions were found to have extended their membership territories beyond formal employment, with many offering student membership, especially in the professions, whilst others reported representing the self-employed, freelance workers, or contractors. Similarly, Unite was observed to have established 'Community Membership' for those outside of formal employment (see further discussion in Chapter 5).

Whilst virtually all unions were found to offer benefits, it is argued here that part of what forms the identity of some unions is the provision of benefits designed specifically to meet the needs of a particular membership, which in some cases was found to include benefits that were unique to the union concerned. A wide range of benefits was observed during the course of the website survey, with more unions indicating individual rather than collective representation. The majority of unions also gave access to commercial benefits, although these were rated as less important by questionnaire respondents and interviewees (see discussion in Chapter 5). In contrast, many professional unions were found to be offering benefits such as helping members secure work and providing access to some form of professional advice and support.

Many unions' aims and objectives were observed to be well hidden on union websites and were sometimes written in very general terms that did little to contribute to the union's identity. It is therefore argued here that aims and objectives are of minor relevance in establishing or confirming union identity. Similarly, affiliations to the TUC, the Labour Party and other organisations were found to be less prominent than were expected in the website survey, and where these were stated they were frequently hard to find. However, two unions (FOA and Voice) made a point of stating their antipathy to such affiliations, both being in competition with other unions for members. They are therefore considered as 'protest unions', a concept that is developed further in the next chapter. In general it is argued here that affiliations are now of less importance to union identity than they were to Blackburn (1967) when he developed the concept of 'unionateness'.

The use of digital media by trade unions developed during the course of the research, and the interview programme revealed that many union websites were in the process of redevelopment. More than four out of every ten unions were found to have a members' area on their website, but the interview programme exposed markedly diverging views as to their use, and also showed a disparity of practice in terms of what was placed in the members area and what should be put in the public domain. The phenomenon of social

networking emerged during the research, and it became evident that many unions were utilising new methods of communicating with their members including texts, targeted e-mails, 'Facebook' and 'Twitter'. It is therefore argued here that the use of websites and social networking needs to be recognised as increasingly important in the communication of union identity to union members.

Overall, this chapter demonstrates that unions project a range of observable characteristics from which the sources of their union identity can be discerned. The evidence presented would suggest that the identities projected by trade unions have changed considerably from the time when Blackburn (1967) considered 'unionateness'. In particular, this study found that many unions had adopted aspirational titles, frequently omitting or avoiding the use of the word 'union' in their title, and that unions were less likely to stress collective bargaining, political aims or affiliations, and were frequently using websites and other forms of digitalised communication to attract and retain members and to maintain communication with them.

Having explored the manifestation of trade union identities through 'observable characteristics' it was possible to develop a deeper understanding of the sources of union identity (introduced in Chapter 3). This in turn provided an essential step towards understanding the nature of niche unionism and niche union identity explored in the next chapter, and construction of the multidimensional framework (presented in Chapter 6). Chapter 5 firstly explores general unions, which organise niche memberships through sectionalised structures. Secondly, it considers those unions that have an identity other than that of a general union, which are termed 'niche unions' and which are recognised as having a 'niche union identity'. In doing so, it assesses the extent to which maintaining a niche identity may provide a viable alternative for some unions to survive as independent entities in contrast to the potential economies of scale afforded by merger with a larger union. Chapter 5 therefore considers the experience of both general and niche unions, recognising the broader concept of 'niche unionism', which embraces both general and niche unions. In exploring these concepts, Chapter 5 focuses primarily on unions participating in the interview programme (see Chapter 3), and is organised under broad headings based for the most part upon the sources of union identity (as identified in Chapter 2). However, further secondary and additional sources of union identity are recognised as contributing to the multidimensional framework of analysis for trade union identities (presented in Chapter 6).

## Chapter 5

### The manifestation of niche unionism and niche union identity

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the manifestation and extent of niche unionism and of niche union identity in contemporary UK certified trade unions. Whereas niche union identity describes those unions that restrict membership in some way, niche unionism is a broader concept and includes unions that seek to organise niche groups of workers through sectionalised structures. In exploring these concepts, the work acknowledges that of Turner (1962), who saw unions as being relatively more open or closed in relation to their membership territories (see earlier discussion in Chapter 2). Logically it follows that, where a union is not entirely open and therefore general in character, it must restrict membership to some extent. This then raises questions as to how membership is restricted and how this is reflected in the unions' projected identities. It is argued here that any restriction of membership territories of necessity gives rise to a niche union identity. Therefore a major purpose of this chapter is to explain, following Turner (1962), what 'closed' actually means in the context of contemporary UK certified trade unions, and how this is reflected in niche union identities.

As recognised in Chapter 2, the concept of niche has attracted very little attention in industrial relations literature (Hyman, 2001, Visser, 2012). However, there is a more extensive discussion of niche in other academic disciplines and particularly in marketing, where it is frequently used to describe a specialised area of a market as opposed to an organisation. It was further recognised that niche markets are served not only by niche organisations but also by larger organisations, and that niche organisations might adopt a niche position as a defensive measure against the larger organisations (Dalguic and Leeuw, 1994). The literature of social identification theory is instructive in providing a theory of group differentiation through which members may make their group distinct from others in order for individuals to achieve a positive social identity (Brown, 2000; Budd, 2011). Self-categorisation theory (Hogg Turner and Davidson, 1990) explores the extent to which

individuals define their own social group or relationship with other groups and tend to polarise around group norms. In contrast, identity theory, which is drawn from sociology, relates to the roles and behaviour of individuals in society (Hogg, Terry and White, 1995). These theoretical contributions from social identity theory, self-categorisation theory and identity theory raise important questions as to the extent to which certain niche union identities relate closely to occupational and professional roles and the members' needs for personal and social identity.

Whilst it was beyond the scope of this study to explore the individual perceptions, motivations and aspirations of existing and potential union members, it is demonstrated in this chapter that the identities projected by certain niche unions are likely to appeal to the identity needs of individual members. The occupational and professional sources of union identity in particular may appeal to new and potential members; for example, where benefits are tailored to meet the needs of their occupation or profession as exemplified by unions such as the AEP, BADN, PFA and WGGB. However, these and other sources including the organisational and geographical sources may satisfy the identification needs of individuals through association with an employer (Advance, NACO) or geographical area (SSTA).

In exploring the questions of niche unionism and niche union identity (established in Chapter 1), the analysis utilised the observable characteristics (identified in Chapter 4) and employed the primary, secondary and additional sources of union identity (established in Chapters 3 and 4). Although 'professional' was already included as a secondary source, this analysis identified further secondary sources. General unions were seen to be 'true generals', 'vertical generals' or 'horizontal generals'. Occupational unions were seen to organise 'horizontally', 'vertically' or 'sub-occupationally'. Organisational unions were sometimes found to be 'multi-organisational' or 'sub-organisational'. Similarly, geographical unions may be 'sub-national', 'bi-national' or 'multinational'. Further to the identification of 'protest' unions (see Chapter 4), two other additional sources of union identity emerged. 'Hybrid' was introduced to refer to unions that have some form of joint working arrangements with other unions, whilst 'clandestine' refers to those organisations that avoid identification as trade unions. It is argued in this chapter that these sources of union identity can be used not only to understand union identities but also to understand the nature and extent of niche unionism and niche union identity. Together, these sources of union identity provide the basis for the multidimensional framework of analysis that is presented in Chapter 6. However, the sources of union identity that comprise the

multidimensional framework are not necessarily exhaustive, in that further research might reveal more sources and unforeseen developments in union identity.

The analysis presented in this chapter highlights the similarities and differences that give each union its distinct identity, together with the extent to which these unions project a niche identity and / or practice niche unionism. In doing so, it explores the extent to which the evidence supports the concepts of niche union identity and niche unionism, and the ability of certain unions to secure or maintain a niche position within the labour market. It is demonstrated in this chapter that there are degrees of niche union identity, ranging from unions that are closer to being 'true generals' (Prospect and Unison), and unions that are more occupationally closed, as represented by professional unions such as those of the educational psychologists (AEP) and dental nurses (BADN).

However, it is not being suggested here that unions be arranged along a continuum of niche identity, between the most open and the most closed. That would represent a return to the concept developed by Turner (1962), and would ignore the more complex analysis offered in this work by the developments of the multidimensional framework, which recognises the potential interaction of a range of sources in the construction of union identity (see Chapter 6). It is also acknowledged that more broadly based unions also serve occupational niches, as in the case of general unions with sectionalised structures such as Unite and GMB. Therefore the concept of niche is not confined to niche unions, but needs to be explained in the wider context of niche unionism (see discussion in Chapter 2 and in the next section).

The twenty unions that form the basis of the analysis in this chapter were selected from those offering an interview in the questionnaire phase of the research, where an interview was both completed and consented (see Chapter 3 and Appendix 15). In only one case where an interview was consented was the union excluded from the analysis (POA). This was because although the union was interesting in itself it was felt that the data did not add anything of significance to the understanding of niche union identity, with four other occupational / industrial unions being discussed in this chapter. Other unions beyond the twenty unions selected are mentioned where they are pertinent to the discussion, as in the case of Unite when discussing general unions, for example.

The discussion of niche unionism and niche union identities in this chapter is organised under six headings, four of which relate directly to primary sources of union identity

(general, occupational / industrial, organisational and geographical). The occupational / industrial unions were considered under a single heading because they tend to project some elements of both sources of identity. Of the remaining two headings, 'professional identity', which relates a secondary source of union identity, was seen as worthy of separate consideration given the particular characteristics of these unions' identities and because of their predominance by number within UK trade unionism. In contrast, education unions were discussed separately because they operate in what is perhaps the most competitive sector of union membership, and because they have developed distinct, if overlapping, niche union identities. However, it is acknowledged that 'education' is not a source of union identity.

This discussion of niche unionism and niche union identity is therefore organised under the following six headings:

- **General union identity** – This section looks at unions which are variously: potentially open to all types of workers, which are called 'true generals' (GMB); together with what are called 'niche generals', as for example where membership is generally limited to the public sector and public services (Unison), which are termed 'vertical/generals'; or to the professions and higher echelons of employment across the public and private sectors (Prospect), which are termed 'horizontal generals'. It also recognises that these unions practice niche unionism through the use of sectionalised organisational structures.
- **Industrial / occupational niche union identity** – This section explores niche unions that restricted membership by industry and / or occupation (FOA, NASS, PFA and WGGB). It is demonstrated that the emphasis on industry or occupation differs considerably, as illustrated by the FOA which seeks to organise vertically at all levels within the fire service in comparison to the PFA which organises apprentices and professional footballers horizontally across the higher echelons of football.
- **Professional niche union identity** – This section looks at niche unions that were deemed to be 'professional / occupational / industrial unions', which tend to be the sole organisation providing both professional and industrial relations functions within a profession (AEP, BADN, ACB/FCS). The general requirement for professional qualification in order to gain full membership and concern over professional standards distinguish these organisations from other industrial / occupational unions. It is

demonstrated here that whilst each of the unions concerned has clear membership territories, the level of membership density and occupational closure they enjoy is quite different.

- **Niche union identity in education unions** - This section looks at niche unions located in the education sector (ASCL, ATL, NSEAD and Voice). It is argued that unions within this sector have developed distinct niche identities and are deserving of separate attention because of their overlapping membership territories and the intense inter-union competition for members. It is observed that in each case the horizontal and vertical boundaries of their membership territories are markedly different. The term ‘professional’ in relation to education unions is used with some caution, given that some unions also recruit support staff (ATL and Voice).
- **Organisational union niche identity** – This section looks at niche unions that are based either within a single work organisation or a group of organisations with a common identity, where the union seeks to recruit all employees within the organisation (Advance); a horizontal strata of employees within a group of organisations (NACO), which is termed a ‘horizontal / occupational / multi-organisational’ union; or a sub-group within an organisation (ROA), which is termed both ‘sub-occupational’ and ‘sub-organisational’. It is argued that whilst these unions’ identities are more closely linked to that of the employer or employers, they have shown some flexibility in relation to expanding their membership territories in response to changes in the employing organisation or organisations.
- **Geographical niche identity** – This section explores niche unions that have variously: an identity based upon a geographical area within the UK (SSTA), which is termed a ‘sub-national’ union; one which is based in two countries (NUJ), which is termed a ‘bi-national’ union and one which operates in more than two countries (Nautilus), which is termed a ‘multinational’ union. It is argued that for unions such as SSTA and Nautilus, geographical identity is an important element in the construction of their niche union identity. In contrast, in the case of the NUJ, which has many members working abroad, there is less evidence of a geographical component in the construction of its identity. For practical purposes, this category excludes unions that are primarily based in one country and that either have relatively few members working abroad, such as Unite or GMB, or that have members who routinely travel abroad in the course of their work, such as BALPA or RMT.

This chapter reports data drawn primarily from the trade union interview programme, but also data collected in earlier phases of the research or otherwise available in the public domain, where this was appropriate to the discussion. The evidence presented in each section is analysed under the following subheadings:

- **The visible characteristics of union identity** - These subsections explore the extent to which visible characteristics of union identity, including union names, straplines and logos, are utilised to establish or confirm a niche identity.
- **Merger activity and union identity** - These subsections explore the extent to which union mergers have impacted upon union identity, either by expanding or by consolidating the niches within which unions operate, together with the extent to which some unions avoid merger perhaps in order to maintain a niche identity.
- **Membership, recruitment, benefits and union identity** - These subsections explore the relative success of unions in exploiting a niche position in recruiting within their membership territories, and the extent to which benefits are tailored to support a niche identity.
- **Affiliations, political alignment and union identity** - These subsections explore the propensity or antipathy of unions to political alignment, political action and affiliations in the construction of union identity. It is argued that where unions positively eschew political action or alignment together with industrial action, they have a 'protest' niche union identity.
- **Technological development, membership communication and union identity** - These subsections examine the extent to which unions are embracing technological developments to project their identities to existing and potential members and, in some cases, to the general public in support of their members' trade or profession. It is argued that many unions are using digitalised technologies either to project a niche union identity or to support niche unionism where communications are targeted at niche membership groups.

## 5.2 General union identity

### Introduction to general union identity

It is argued here that Unite and GMB are the only major unions that have what is termed here a ‘true general’ union identity, because they are prepared to take in virtually any group of workers within their geographically-defined membership territories. In contrast, Unison, being focused on the public sector and public services, is a ‘vertical / general’ union, whilst Prospect is a ‘horizontal / general’ union, because it seeks to recruit professional and managerial staff across both the public and private sectors. Thus it is argued here that there are degrees of ‘openness’ (Turner, 1962) and therefore of niche union identity, even amongst what are generally considered as general unions. However, given the breadth of both Unison and Prospect’s membership territories, it was considered more useful to discuss them under the broad heading of general union identity rather than in later sections of this chapter, which look specifically at niche union identity.

The three unions being considered in this section were all formed by merger but have clearly contrasting histories. GMB, as with Unite, has its origins in the ‘New Unionism’ of 1889, and can therefore claim that at least some of its antecedents derive from general unionism, although paradoxically both these unions trace their origins to the disputes of occupational groups, namely the gas and dock workers (Morton and Tate, 1979). GMB was formed in 1982 by the merger of the GMWU (General and Municipal Workers Union) with the ASBSBSW (Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers, Shipwrights, Blacksmiths and Structural Workers). In contrast, Unison was formed by the amalgamation in 1993 of three unions (COHSE, NALGO and NUPE) which were all clearly rooted in the public sector. Unison might have remained a public sector union had it not been for the policies of successive governments in transferring workers to the private sector.

Prospect was formed in 2001 by an amalgamation of IPMS (Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists) and EMA (Engineers and Managers Association). The names of the constituent unions are instructive in defining the occupational territory comprising managers and professionals, which the union continues to occupy. Prospect is classified as a ‘horizontal / general’ union because it seeks to organise the higher echelons of employment across many economic sectors. The Prospect interviewee stated that “...managers and professionals do see themselves as linked by virtue of the fact that they are a manager or they are a professional...”. However, he reported that there were

occasional exceptions, such as where the union had signed a single union agreement with small regional airports where employees, from the cleaners to the managers, are covered by the collective agreement.

Prospect does not claim to be a general union, but by virtue of the fact that it is not restricted by either occupation, industry or organisation, it is considered to be a ‘niche general’. Despite its claim to be ‘The union for professionals’, which forms its strapline, Prospect was not classified as a professional union because, in contrast to those professional unions discussed later in this chapter, it does not act as a professional body in relation to the development or the maintenance of professional standards nor does it require professional qualification for full membership. Despite originating in the public sector, the Prospect interviewee suggested that the union now has roughly two-thirds of its membership in the private sector and thus it can be seen that all three unions considered in this section organise in both the public and private sectors.

### **The visible characteristics of general union identity**

The union names adopted by Unison and Prospect are examples of the ‘aspirational’ type of title adopted by a number of unions in recent years and in sharp contrast to that adopted by the GMB (see discussion of union names in Chapters 2 and 4). GMB initially adopted the title of General Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union or GMBATU (General Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union), but this was subsequently shortened to GMB, which is now the certified name. According to the GMB interviewee, this was in order to streamline the image of the union, but it is observed here that in relation to union identity, the name gives no indication as to who is expected to join or indeed that it is general in character. In response to a question as to what the union strapline ‘experts in the world of work’ contributes to the image of the union, the GMB interviewee stated that “We think it tells people what we do...”, and that their market research had revealed that this was generally recognised to be a trade union.

Unison’s name is not an acronym (Terry, 2000, p.2), but was perhaps the first name adopted by a UK union which expresses intent rather than indicating either its origins or who is expected to join. Unison was not observed to have a dedicated strapline but rather rotated a number of current campaign slogans on its website, which related to both national and occupational issues. The Unison logo comprises the union name together with swirling

ribbons of purple, green and silver, which were the Suffragette colours. According to the Unison interviewee, these were picked to reflect the feminised nature of the union which is roughly two-thirds female. She mentioned that this was also reflected in the union structure because by rule, national committees have to include males, females and representatives of low paid members. Despite Unison's public sector origins, their interviewee suggested that around a quarter of their membership is now employed in the private sector as a result of privatisation and outsourcing. A potential criticism of the Unison identity is that there is nothing in the name, logo or strapline that indicates that its membership territories are restricted to the public sector and public services.

The Prospect interviewee explained that the name was not an acronym, and that the union had consciously followed Unison in adopting an aspirational title, explaining that 'Prospect', was chosen because it included the positive elements 'pro' and 'pros' as well as the implication of looking ahead. Whilst the union logo, which comprises a large 'P' with the name 'Prospect' underneath does little to reinforce the union's identity, their strapline, 'The union for professionals', would seem more likely to do so. The Prospect interviewee thought it unlikely that they would change the strapline for the foreseeable future because it formed an important part of their 'brand recognition'. Of the three unions considered in this section, it was only Prospect that clearly projected its union identity through visible characteristics.

### **Merger activity and general union identity**

All three general unions considered in this section are the product of mergers, and in two cases they have been adept at negotiating transfers of engagements from smaller unions. The GMB is seen as a 'major merging union' (Undy, 2008, p.84) in successfully achieving transfers of engagements, such as that with the ambulance workers union (APAP). Minor merging unions are required to join an existing section and do not get any form of sectional autonomy. However, the GMB interviewee confirmed that they can retain a sense of 'brand identity' in that communications aimed at specific occupational groups bear the GMB logo with the name of the occupational or industrial group concerned. Similarly, Prospect has absorbed a number of other unions by transfer of engagements in recent years, including ALAE, Aspect, BECTU and Connect. However, Prospect would seem to offer much greater flexibility than GMB, as their interviewee described their practice of

giving “...maximum possible autonomy...” in order to accommodate minor merging unions. This is reflected in the union’s organisation structure, in which some members are attached to constitutional sections, as exemplified by the BECTU and Connect sections, whilst other members are organised into ‘industrial groups’.

In contrast, Unison has not been involved in merger activity since its formation but has concluded a number of agreements with other organisations to facilitate various forms of joint working, perhaps as an alternative to full merger. The Unison interviewee reported that “We have lots of partnership relationships with smaller unions and with professional associations who are not unions at all.” Two examples of this are the agreements with the occupational therapists union ‘BAOT’ and with ‘Managers in Partnership’.

In the first case, the agreement provides for Unison to supply industrial relations services to BAOT members, whilst BAOT focuses on professional issues. BAOT members are enrolled with both organisations and have access to the full range of Unison services. Many attempts were made to obtain a research interview with BAOT, as one was offered by their questionnaire respondent who had subsequently retired. Despite the union being certified as such, their response was always words to the effect that “...we are not a trade union and you must speak to Unison”. This denial led to the recognition of ‘clandestine’ as an ‘additional’ source of union identity (see later discussion of BADN in this chapter).

In the second case, ‘Managers in Partnership’, the Unison interviewee described it as “...a Health Service creation...”, that it was formed with FDA, and that managers in the National Health Service who were members of Unison or FDA could join what she described as “...a managers-only union...”. The types of arrangement entered into by BAOT and Managers in Partnership are recognised here as an ‘additional’ source of union identity termed ‘hybrid’. This source of union identity allows unions to retain something of a separate identity and enjoy more autonomy than would be experienced by either forming or joining a section within a major merging union, whilst benefiting from many of the resources that such a transfer of engagements would offer (see also later discussions of ACB/FCS and ASCL).

Speculation about a ‘mega-merger’ between major general unions was raised by the GMB and Unison interviewees, but both thought this unlikely. The Unison interviewee felt that the GMB’s private sector membership would dilute Unison’s public sector and public services identity. The Prospect interviewee was also very clear in stating that the union was

unlikely to merge with any larger union, saying that they were financially secure, that membership was holding up despite the impact of the financial crisis, public sector re-organisations and public expenditure cuts, and that they were wary of any union in a less stable financial position. He also mentioned the union's position on party political neutrality which he cited as one of the issues that had prevented the merger of the former union IPMS with MSF some years ago. Whilst this might also be a barrier to merger with either Unite or GMB, paradoxically it would not necessarily be so with Unison, which, as reported later in this section, has already accommodated a merger partner that was not politically affiliated. Given the concerns of both Unison and Prospect over loss of identity, the most obvious merger partners would be the two true generals, Unite and GMB, although such a merger would seem unlikely from the evidence collected in this research.

### **Membership recruitment, benefits and general union identity**

The three largest general unions (Unite, Unison and GMB) represent almost half of UK certified trade union membership (Certification Officer, 2016). Whilst the GMB and Prospect have improved their membership over recent years, this contrasts starkly with the experience of Unite and to a lesser extent with GMB. Unite now reports a membership of 1,382,126, which has fallen dramatically over recent years by 29.2 percent (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015). The cause of this dramatic membership loss is unclear, but possible explanations include the effects of the financial crisis and resulting loss of members particularly in the banking and finance sector, or perhaps the union writing off non-paying members. In contrast, GMB report a membership of 622,596, which has shown an increase of 5.5 percent (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015), whilst Unison report a membership of 1,255,653, which has decreased by 6.6 percent in recent years (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2013). Although Prospect membership of 113,502 appears buoyant, having shown an increase of 10.2 percent over recent years (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015), this can to some extent be accounted for by merger growth.

GMB has a long-standing recruitment strategy with national targets and a 'National Organising Team', which the union interviewee saw as the basis of the union's current recruitment success. Similarly, Unison has long demonstrated a commitment to regenerating its membership, having implemented a 'National Recruitment Plan' in 1995 and a 'National Organising and Recruitment Strategy' in 1997 (Waddington and Kerr,

2009, p.27). However, the Unison interviewee reported that each membership group now had its own strategy, and that with the gradual fragmentation of public sector bargaining, the emphasis was now on organisation rather than on servicing, and on recruiting activists rather than on direct recruitment. This may be seen as evidence of niche unionism in action, demonstrating the orientation of the union to niche groups of members.

Unison subscriptions are levied on an income-based scale to encourage lower paid employees to join, but their interviewee suggested that this could be problematic when attempting to recruit higher paid employees, and particularly so for a vertical / general union. Prospect also reported running recruitment campaigns on an ongoing basis, both in discrete areas of membership and over national issues such as the pension campaigns, although there was less evidence of there being a centralised strategy. The Prospect interviewee reported that they were one of the first two unions to offer online recruitment, and estimated that it now accounted for roughly half of their recruitment. Similarly, the GMB interviewee reported that online joining had grown in every year since its introduction, with around a third of new members now joining this way. When members join online, GMB 'harvests' their e-mail addresses and mobile phone numbers, giving the union the ability to interrogate its database and target communications to relevant members, whilst incurring a fraction of the cost of mailing out printed materials. In contrast, the Unison interviewee reported that her union was quite late in introducing online recruitment but that, from its inception a couple of years ago, there was a noticeable increase in joining. She also reported that there is also a call centre, 'Unison Direct', through which members can join. These responses suggest that these general unions have taken significant steps to make joining easier for members and more cost-effective for the union than traditional recruitment methods, and that this would seem to have helped them to recruit new members and perhaps to retain them.

All three general unions considered in this section were found to offer a wide range of fringe benefits to their members but, in contrast to some of the unions considered later in this chapter, the benefits offered would not seem to be targeted at the needs of any particular occupational niche, as would be expected in general unions. Both the GMB and Prospect interviewees suggested that they did not feel that their benefit packages attracted many members, although it was considered that they may provide a marginal incentive to those considering joining or retaining their membership. Conversely, the Unison interviewee suggested that procuring discounted goods and services could help to offset the cost of union membership, and that support for this contention was evidenced by the

popularity of their insurance services and holiday camp. Despite her reservation on the value of fringe benefits, the GMB interviewee mentioned the facility for legal support and the additional indemnity provided for vulnerable groups of workers who face claims of unprofessional practice, which is consistent with the facilities offered by some of the professional unions considered later in this chapter. Overall it is concluded here that whilst general unions were found to provide comprehensive benefit packages that may be useful in attracting and retaining members, these did not contribute significantly to union identity.

### **Affiliations, political alignment and general union identity**

The three general unions considered in this section displayed some markedly different approaches to affiliation. Whereas GMB is affiliated to both the TUC and the Labour Party and has a political fund, Unison is fully affiliated to the TUC but is only partially affiliated to the Labour Party. This is the result of a historical anomaly, in that NALGO was not affiliated to Labour and there had to be provision in the amalgamation arrangements for members to opt in or out of Labour Party affiliation as well as the political fund. In contrast, Prospect is affiliated to the TUC but not the Labour Party, although it does have a political fund in order to campaign on political issues whilst maintaining party political neutrality. In this respect it shares this observable characteristic with the ‘professional unions’ (discussed later in this chapter), whilst some unions such as NSEAD (discussed later in this chapter) are prepared to campaign on political issues, even though they do not maintain a political fund.

### **Technological development, membership communication and general union identity**

All three unions explored in this section were involved in developing their capacities to communicate with members through the use of digital technologies. The GMB interviewee reported that their website had started as a simple notice board but has gradually developed and is now being updated on a two-yearly cycle to include the latest available technology. Union news was reported on their homepage and also broadcast on Twitter and on other digital media. In addition to a members’ area, the GMB questionnaire respondent also mentioned the ‘post holders’ area’, which is open to volunteer ‘Workplace Organisers’,

giving them access to resources, and that the website was used to conduct membership surveys.

The Prospect interviewee said that as regards a recent website development, cost implications had meant that the union could not do all it wanted, but that members logging onto the site are automatically directed to the most relevant page for their industrial group or section. Members, lay representatives and full time officials can access all the union's online material through a 'document library'. Putting the union journal online had resulted in around five percent of the union's membership opting to receive a reminder e-mail upon publication rather than a hard copy. In contrast, the Unison interviewee considered that the current website was too big, with too much information, and that it was easier to "Google" information than to find it on the site. She added that a new site was under construction, which would allow for surveys to be conducted and would probably have a members' area. However, it seemed that, in respect of website development at least, Unison was somewhat behind other major unions such as GMB and Prospect.

What emerged from consideration of the three general unions considered in this section was that they were all aware of the potentialities afforded by digital technologies in projecting their unions' identities, and also that they were at different stages of evolution in terms of the application of these developments. The success of online joining reported by all three unions is also acknowledged as an additional benefit flowing from the application of digital technologies, which also allows unions to 'harvest' members' e-mail addresses and mobile phone numbers in order to maintain direct communications. Where this data is used to target communications directly to groups of members in occupational, industrial or organisational niches, this provides evidence of unions practising niche unionism.

### **Summary of general union identity**

In summarising this section, it is argued that the defining characteristic of large general unions is their openness to accept a broad range of occupational, industrial or organisational groups, and that disparate groups can be accommodated through the use of sectionalised structures. It is further argued that this type of organisation is a form of niche unionism, in which general unions are able to organise members drawn from a variety of niches within the labour market. However, some general unions are relatively more 'open' (Turner, 1962) than others. It was observed that on the one hand there are 'true generals'

(GMB, Unite) that are generally the most open, whereas on the other hand membership in some generals may be restricted either horizontally (Prospect) or vertically (Unison).

Although GMB is much smaller than either Unison or Unite, it has established a clear ‘true general’ identity, despite having a name which neither says anything to that effect, nor states any collective aspiration as in the case of Unite or Unison. In contrast, Unison has established a clear ‘vertical / general’ union identity, organising within the public sector and public services. Whilst it has avoided further mergers, it has developed various joint membership agreements with other organisations, representing an additional ‘hybrid’ source of union identity. However, it should be noted here that both GMB and Unite are also general unions organising in the public sector and public services, as are many other unions, so that Unison is not without competition. Prospect may be seen as having established a ‘horizontal / general’ union identity, focused predominantly on managers and professionals in both the public and private sectors. It has shown the greatest flexibility in accommodating minor merging unions, even to the point of allowing them to retain their pre-merger identity as in the case of Connect. Overall it has become clear that union identities vary considerably amongst those unions broadly described as general in character, as does the way that they practice niche unionism through sectionalised structures and arrangements with other ‘hybrid’ organisations.

### **5.3 Industrial / occupational niche union identity**

#### **Introduction to industrial / occupational union identity**

From the earliest stage of the research it was clear that by far the largest group of unions were those drawing upon both the occupational and industrial sources of union identity (see discussion in Chapters 3 and 4). This section explores the identities of four such niche unions, each of which has relatively clear membership territories (FOA, PFA, NASS, and WGGB). However, it was also apparent that there are some unions, such as RMT in transport, where industry may be a more significant part of their identity than occupation, whilst for others, such as WGGB, members are united more by the occupation of writing. Similarly, whereas FOA recruit vertically throughout the fire service and beyond, NASS recruit stable staff horizontally through the racing industry. It should also be noted here that unions considered in the next two sections also draw on the ‘industrial / occupational’ sources of union identity, namely the professional unions, where professional qualification

is normally the prerequisite for full membership, and the education unions where there is intense inter-union competition.

The origins of the Fire Officers Association (FOA) lie in an earlier union, the NAFO (National Association of Fire Officers), which transferred engagements to the AEEU. The FOA interviewee said that many members were dissatisfied with the service they got from AEEU, and that it was these members that comprised the core of the FOA membership when it was formed in 1994, when the current name of the union was adopted. The FOA interviewee reported that although the union participates in national negotiations it only has recognition rights for the middle managers, for whom they have one seat on the staff side, compared to the FBU, which has thirteen. The FOA is considered to be a ‘vertical / occupational / industrial / protest’ niche union, because it seeks to organise fire fighters at all levels in the fire service, which means it competes for members with all the other fire service unions (FBU, RFU (Retained Firefighters Union) and APFO which transferred engagements to prospect in 2016). The term ‘protest’ was included as an additional source of union identity because of the FOA’s stance on both militancy and political alignment together with its opposition to the FBU. Whilst the FOA does not have a declared ‘no-strike’ policy as such, their interviewee suggested that “...our members would not entertain going out on strike as we found in surveys we’ve done recently over pensions...” and that “... our ethos is trying to work with employers rather than the confrontational sort of approach”.

The Professional Footballers Association (PFA) was formed following various abortive attempts to form a union of professional footballers. The current union can trace a continuous history back to 1907 with the formation of the AFPTU (Association of Football Players’ and Trainers’ Union). The union organises professional footballers in England and Wales who play in the Premiership, the Football League (which includes the Football Championship) and the Football Conference, together with apprentices and retired players. The union’s membership territory is relatively unusual in two respects. Firstly, because five out of every six apprentices are released by the time they are twenty-one years old, and secondly because the majority of the union’s members are retired. Membership is for life and there are in excess of ten retired members who pay no subscription for each playing, and therefore paying, member. Because the union only seeks to organise players rather than other occupational groups such as trainers or managers, it is considered to be a ‘horizontal / occupational / industrial’ niche union.

The National Association of Stable Staff (NASS), which organises stable staff in the racing industry, was formed in 1975 as the ‘Stable Lads Association’ following a period of organisation by the TGWU within the racing industry and a strike at Newmarket. This led to the creation of national bargaining arrangements between the employers and an employer-inspired association, which was initially known as the Stable Lads’ Association (Miller, 2010). This initiative can be viewed as an attempt by the employers to avoid militant general unionism by substituting a tame occupational union, which was from the outset condemned by its constitution to survive on meagre resources. Remarkably, most NASS members pay no subscription, as the union is largely funded out of racing prize money. As the union seeks to organise stable staff across the racing industry rather than related occupations such as trainers, it is considered to be a ‘horizontal / occupational / industrial’ niche union. Although NASS and PFA both organise within what could broadly be described as the sport industry, they provide a stark contrast, with the former having struggled to effectively represent a low paid and widely dispersed workforce. In contrast, the PFA has achieved a position whereby its members are in some cases extremely well paid and in general well represented and looked after in terms of the ongoing support provided by their union.

The Writers’ Guild of Great Britain (WGGB) organises those who write professionally for a variety of media including television, radio, film, theatre, online materials and video games. It was established in 1959 as the Screenwriters’ Guild, replacing an earlier screenwriters’ union, but subsequently changed its name to reflect the wider range of work undertaken by its members. The WGGB is primarily an occupational union, organising writers within various industries that can be broadly described as ‘entertainment’, and is therefore considered to be a ‘horizontal / occupational / industrial’ niche union.

### **The visible characteristics of union identity of industrial / occupational unions**

The niche unions explored in this section represent members within clearly defined occupational and industrial niches, and all have names that broadly indicate who may join, although this would require observation of the full name rather than their initials. Despite including the word ‘officer’ in its full name, the FOA is prepared to accept all ranks within the fire service into membership, together with those in other industries involved in fire and rescue work, as in the case of a company fire officer. The FOA interviewee reported

that the use of the word 'officer' in the title tended to encourage an association with the middle managers who were the main group they represented. The FOA website was found to display the strapline 'the independent voice for Fire and Rescue Services' although the FOA interviewee stated that they also used "about people not politics", which was adopted "...to distinguish ourselves from other unions in the service that are members of the TUC which is a political organisation." The union logo comprises the union's initials with the full name around it plus the strapline 'about people, not politics' inside a 'peak cap' style badge. Both straplines could be seen to refer to and distinguish it from the FBU, and to represent important observable characteristics supporting the 'protest' component of its identity.

The certified name of the PFA is the 'Professional Footballers Association', which was adopted in 1956, but the organisation is most commonly known by its initials: 'PFA'. The union does not use a strapline, but does employ a logo. This comprises a complex combination of images incorporating a handshake in front of a football encircled by the union name within laurel leaves. The PFA interviewee said that "The handshake was changed to one white and one black hand in the early nineties as an equality message". Curiously, in the lower part of the logo there are four 'shield' like images bearing the national emblems of England (three lions), Ireland (harp), Scotland (lion rampant) and Wales (Prince of Wales feathers), although the union only covers England and Wales. The PFA interviewee thought that "...this is because of the number of UK and Ireland members who made up the vast majority of our membership originally".

Whilst the term 'stable lad' was traditionally applied to both male and female stable staff, the current name, National Association of Stable Staff, was adopted by NASS in recent years because, according to their interviewee, "...there was a general view that the name was now out of date and so we had a competition amongst the membership for alternative names..." The union is commonly known by the initials NASS, although this was unfortunately not available for its website domain, where the union is known as 'NAOSS', (National Association of Stable Staff) which has apparently caused some confusion. Their logo comprises a horse's head within a horseshoe and this, combined with the strapline, 'National Association of Stable Staff', projects a clear 'horizontal / occupational / industrial' niche union identity.

The 'Writers Guild of Great Britain' is the certified name of the union, but it is frequently referred to by the initials WGGB. The first part of the name was chosen to mirror the

‘Writers’ Guild of America’. There has been recent consideration about changing the latter part of the name from ‘Great Britain’ to ‘United Kingdom’, partially to reflect the union’s geographical area of operation but also, according to the WGGB interviewee, “...because some members feel that ‘Great Britain’ has a slight redolence of Empire”. The union logo bears only the name of the union written across a blue rectangle with the word ‘writer’ which is larger and in italics, as if hand written. It uses the strapline: ‘a strong voice for writers’ to reinforce its occupational identity.

What is common to all the occupational / industrial unions considered in this section was that their names alone gave an indication of their niche identity, which tended to be reinforced by the use of straplines and logos. This provided a clear contrast with the GMB and Unison (considered earlier), which offered no indication as to who they expect to join, even where this was to some extent restricted, as in the case of Unison.

### **Merger and industrial / occupational union identity**

The four niche unions reported in this section were all somewhat resistant to merger. In the case of the PFA, NASS and WGGB, this maybe because of they established secure membership territories within a defined occupational niche. Only the FOA face intense competition for membership, although their interviewee suggested that they were wary of any further merger given the earlier experience of NAFO (discussed earlier in this section). There were discussions with the RFU some years ago, but they had ultimately decided to keep their independence. If it were unable to survive in the long run, a merger with the FBU would seem unlikely, but the RFU might appear to be a more promising merger partner or, like APFO, FOA could seek a merger with Prospect. In contrast, the NASS interviewee confirmed that there has been little consideration of merger during its history, but thought that it would remain a possibility should the union get into financial difficulties. The PFA interviewee also saw merger as unlikely, stating that they were the oldest professional sports union in the world, and that they had provided a model for footballers’ unions in other countries and for unions in other sports such as rugby and cricket.

WGGB merged with the smaller Theatre Writers Union some years ago, and has more recently had talks with the SOA. These ended without agreement to merge, which according to the WGGB interviewee was “...principally because the SOA did not want to

progress the idea". The WGGB interviewee confirmed that the SOA was primarily for book-writers and that there was some self-selection by potential members leading to a relatively clear, if informal, demarcation of representation. Given the overlap of professional concerns such as contractual and copyright issues, and the increasing digitalisation of written media, it may be that a merger becomes more attractive in the future.

In general it seemed that these unions were resistant to merger, perhaps because of the implications for their niche identity, even where there was an opportunity for consolidation within an industrial or occupational sector (FOA, WGGB). In the case of PFA, it would seem that the high membership density would make any future merger unlikely. However, merger might be considered where a union is getting into financial difficulties, as suggested by the NASS interviewee. The FOA might be the most vulnerable, given its small membership, but would seem to have secured its position as a 'protest union' (see later discussion in this section).

### **Membership, recruitment, benefits and industrial / occupational union identity**

All four niche unions considered in this section have clear membership territories bounded by some combination of occupation and industry and, with the exception of the FOA, face little or no competition for members. Whilst the PFA would seem to have the most stable membership base, the FOA, despite competition from the much larger FBU, has successfully increased its membership. However, it is not perhaps coincidental that two of the unions considered in this section that were found to have adopted radically new recruitment methods (NASS and WGGB) had shown dramatic increases in membership, albeit from a relatively small base.

FOA is in direct competition for members with the much larger FBU, which reported over 35,810 members (Certification Return, 2015) compared with the FOA's 1,012 (Certification Return, 2015). In the period from 2009 to 2015, FOA membership has increased by 21.9 percent, (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015) compared with a fall of 18.4 percent in that of the FBU (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015). The other unions in the sector are RFU, which reported a membership of 2,350 showing a fall of 29.2 percent in recent years (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015) and APFO, which reported a membership of only 145 and experienced a fall of 22.9 percent over recent years

(Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015), merged with Prospect in 2016. It would therefore seem that despite its small size, FOA is relatively successful in being the only dedicated fire industry union to increase its membership over the period, albeit from a relatively small base. However, the FOA interviewee reported that the union does not run recruitment campaigns as such, but occasionally holds open meetings and they thought that most members come from direct recruitment through the website.

PFA's reported membership stands at 4,773, and shows an increase of 15.1 percent over recent years (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015), although this only reflects those who are playing and therefore paying subscriptions. The Union's long standing claim of having one hundred percent membership could be considered evidence of a closed shop, but rather it can be argued that it is the result of the union having created a situation whereby membership benefits outweigh any potential objections, or perhaps as Walters (2004) has suggested, it is a "social norm". The PFA interviewee explained that all apprentices entering the game are visited by PFA officials at their club in order to explain the benefits of union membership and suggested that "...you'd have to be quite bloody-minded to not join".

NASS report a membership of 6,671, showing a dramatic increase in membership of 291.7 percent over recent years (Certification Returns 2009 and 2015). There are effectively two categories of members, those who pay subscriptions and those who do not. The union does not have a formal workplace representative system, but rather some members are encouraged to become a workplace recipient of mailings and are known as 'mail-box reps'. The NASS interviewee explained that this was "...a first step towards trying to establish a steward system...". In recent years the union has extended membership to those who are outside of racing stables, such as stable staff working in stud farms, but these members do have to pay subscriptions and were reported by the interviewee to be few in number. Members can join NASS online through the website, but the union is also active in running recruitment campaigns including workplace visits to stables, being present at racecourses on race days, and in running prize competitions to encourage 'mail-box' representatives to recruit members.

WGGB reports a membership of 2,061, which has also risen steeply, showing a 59.2 percent increase over recent years (Certification Returns 2009 and 2015). The WGGB interviewee estimated that their membership density was somewhere between a half and two-thirds of those writing for the media. Full membership of WGGB is normally reserved

for those who are or were active as writers, having achieved ‘industry standard contracts’ complying with their collective agreements. The WGGB interviewee said that recruitment was difficult because there is no workplace in which to distribute leaflets or put up posters, and that online recruitment was now the most common method of joining. However, he said the that union did run a recruitment campaign, which involved identifying those writing professionally from sources such as the Radio Times and then writing them a personally addressed letter encouraging them to join. In contrast to the recent success of the WGGB, the SOA, which reported a membership of 9,522, showed an increase of 7.3 percent over recent years (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015).

As regards the membership benefits offered by unions in this section, there was a clear contrast in what was offered, which can be related both to the relative size of the union concerned, and to the occupational status and economic position of their members. At one extreme the FOA offers few fringe benefits, with the main exception being an optional insurance package. Their interviewee stated: “I hope the biggest reason for people joining us is they’re disillusioned or do not feel represented with other representative bodies that are around”. Similarly NASS offers few benefits beyond individual and collective representation, save for some piecemeal arrangements such as discounted green fees at certain golf courses owned by racecourses. As most NASS members pay no subscription, a condition of this arrangement is that the union is obliged to give advice and representation to all racing stable staff, whether they are members or not. In order to contain costs and encourage membership, the union has limited the provision of workplace advice and representation to non-members, whereas legal support requires full membership.

WGGB is relatively unusual in that virtually all its members are both self-employed and yet are covered by collective agreements with the major broadcasters and producers. The WGGB provides individual advice and representation to members over contractual disputes including non-payment, copyright infringement and plagiarism. It also runs a contract vetting service, but does not undertake to negotiate individual contracts. Both the PFA and WGGB run their industries’ pension schemes. In the case of PFA, it is funded out of transfer fees, whereas members of WGGB can sign an extra clause in contracts that commits the contractor and the writer to each pay a certain level of contribution into a personal pension fund. Both unions also run annual award ceremonies to recognise the achievements of their members.

The PFA offers the most extensive range of benefits of all the unions considered in this section, including collective and individual representation. The union supports individual players over contractual and other legal issues, together with commercial matters such as image rights. Most other benefits are focused both on supporting apprentices who do not continue in the professional game and on preparing playing members for retirement from it. Although the union is active in collective bargaining, paradoxically most of its members are employed on individually negotiated contracts. The union's resolve over collective issues was tested on a number of occasions, including an early recognition dispute with the Football Association in 1909 over the abolition of the maximum wage, which was finally achieved in 1961, and more recently over the formation of the Premier League when, as the PFA interviewee confirmed, there was a range of issues including television income, contracts, freedom of movement, and pension and education rights.

Overall, evidence from these four unions to support the contention that niche unions use benefits to support their niche identity was mixed. It was observed that the two unions whose members work on individual contracts (WGGB and PFA) offer a range of benefits closely related to the needs of their members' occupation, which reinforces their niche union identities. In the case of the two smallest unions (FOA and NASS), the fringe benefits offered were limited and also showed little or no association with either of their niche union identities.

### **Affiliations, political alignment of industrial / occupational union identity**

Of the four niche unions considered in this section, three were found to be affiliated to the TUC, whilst none was affiliated to the Labour Party. WGGB and PFA also have extensive domestic and international affiliations, broadly related to the occupations and industries that they serve. NASS has no political fund, and whilst it has traditionally avoided affiliations which were considered to be 'political', the NASS interviewee described a process by which he had at first encouraged affiliation to the GFTU and then later the TUC itself. Thus a union formed to avoid militant trade unionism, if not becoming militant, has over time entered the mainstream of trade unionism and confirmed its identity as an independent union. In stark contrast, the FOA is not affiliated to either the TUC or the Labour Party, and does not have a political fund. As demonstrated later in this chapter by Voice, in education, where representation is also fragmented, there may be room for a

‘protest union’ that is differentiated from its competitors by an adherence to moderation and an aversion to political affiliation or recourse to militancy.

### **Technological development, membership communication and industrial / occupational union identity**

It was again clear that the state of technological development and reliance on digitalised forms of communication of unions discussed in this section was highly variable. The FOA interviewee reported that the union’s website was ‘revamped’ within the last year, but he doubted that many members looked at it very often. Although there is now a members’ area, he thought that only about a quarter of members had obtained a log-in code. He confirmed that all fire stations now have computer facilities and that the majority of staff had work e-mail accounts, with the result that the union was now using this as the primary method of member communication. The PFA website is run in conjunction with commercial partners and is more about professional football than the union itself. Communication with members is achieved both through a magazine and the system of ‘Delegates’ at each club, who act as local union representatives and elect the union’s management committee.

The WGGB website was redesigned in recent years to help their members to access information more easily on issues such as contracts and copyright. As there is no members’ area, all information is available in the public domain. The WGGB interviewee felt that it was unlikely that anyone would join only to access the members’ area, in contrast to some unions, which reported restricting access to certain information as an incentive to join. The NASS website is relatively sophisticated for a smaller union, and gives members access to a wide variety of information tailored to the needs of the occupation. Most information is in the public domain, but the discussion forum requires members to log in. Their interviewee reported that redeveloping the website had allowed for greater contact with members, together with online joining.

What became clear in the course of the research was that the use of a website and other means of digitalised communication was relatively more important for some unions, such as the WGGB and NASS, and relatively less so for others such as the FOA and PFA. This can be attributed to the differing labour processes and spatial distribution of their members,

given the relatively isolated work situations of writers and stable staff when compared with fire officers and footballers, who tend to work in closely-bonded groups and teams.

### **Summary of industrial / occupational union identity**

Three unions considered in this section have successfully secured a significant base of membership within the niches that they seek to organise, and can be considered as ‘horizontal / occupational / industrial’ niche unions (NASS, PFA and WGGB). The exception is FOA, which competes with three other fire service unions as a ‘vertical / occupational / industrial / protest’ niche union. The PFA is particularly successful in organising and securing an occupational area in which the players were formerly poorly paid but amongst whose number must now be included some of the better rewarded employees, not only in the UK, but worldwide. Despite the success of the union in acting collectively, much of the unions’ power comes from the strength of its members’ position in bargaining individually over contracts, although the union has a central role in supporting this. Similarly the WGGB, which also negotiates collectively for members employed on individual contracts, has had some success in organising the occupation of writing within the entertainment industry, with a relatively clear if informal line of demarcation with the SOA.

Whilst relatively small, WGGB has shown significant membership growth in recent years. Despite any immediate pressure to conclude a merger with the SOA, it may be that technological change increases the overlap of their members’ interests and makes a merger more desirable in the future. NASS also has a very clear niche identity, having learnt to survive and to some extent prosper on limited resources. Merger with a larger and possibly general union remains a possibility, paradoxically leading to the situation its founders sought to avoid.

The unions explored in this section represent members in very different occupations, but what they have in common in developing a niche identity is the extent to which they have organised around the needs of the particular groups they serve. The exception to this is FOA, which would seem to be more concerned with differentiating the union from the FBU than servicing the needs of its members. In contrast, much of this union’s identity would seem to be derived from three distinguishing characteristics, namely: its non-political status, its avoidance of industrial action and its antipathy to the more militant

FBU. Therefore, FOA is regarded here as a ‘protest union’ and, in common with Voice (discussed later in this chapter), it is argued that there may be scope for a protest union to exist where multiple unions operate and compete for members within an industry.

## **5.4 Professional niche union identity**

### **Introduction to the professional niche union identity**

Professional niche unions are regarded here as a subcategory of occupational / industrial unions because their identities are inextricably linked both to the occupations and the professions of their members. Two distinguishing features of these unions are firstly, that they perform a dual role, acting both as trade unions and as professional associations, often with concern over the development and maintenance of professional standards, and secondly, that they normally require professional qualification as a prerequisite for full membership. These factors provide a clear distinction from unions such as those of the footballers (PFA) or cricketers (PCA), where the term professional merely implies being paid in contrast to being an amateur. Whereas the three niche unions considered in this section tend to be the sole organisation representing a particular profession, they provide a sharp contrast with the education unions (discussed in the next section), where there is both fragmentation of representation and intense competition for membership.

The three unions considered in this section were highly dissimilar in size, membership density and success in achieving occupational closure. Whereas the educational psychologists union (AEP) claimed a high level of membership, the dental nurses (BADN) struggled to recruit, claiming only a fraction of their profession in membership. Whilst AEP and BADN both represent a single profession, ACB/FCS represents a range of clinical scientists. Therefore, AEP is considered to be a ‘professional / occupational / industrial’ niche union, whereas BADN is seen as a ‘professional / occupational / industrial / clandestine’ niche union, because of its reluctance to identify itself as a trade union (see later discussion in this section). ACB/FCS is recognised to be a ‘professional / occupational / industrial / hybrid’ niche union, because it has outsourced its industrial relations functions (see later discussion in this section).

The Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) organises educational psychologists, who are for the most part employed by local Education Authorities. It was formed in 1962,

initially as a grouping within the NUT (AEP, 2013), becoming completely independent in 1998 and extending membership to educational psychologists in Scotland in 2002. The BADN represents dental nurses in the UK, and was founded in 1940 as the ‘British Dental Nurses and Assistants Society’, later changing the name to the ‘Association of British Dental Surgery Assistants’ and finally in 1994 to the ‘British Association of Dental Nurses’ or BADN (British Dental Trade Association, 2013). Whereas the AEP emerged from a recognised trade union with most of its members employed in the public sector by local authorities, the BADN came to be a niche trade union from origins as a professional association, with the majority of its members located in the private sector and employed by the many thousands of dentists who are predominantly small businesses.

ACB/FCS was founded in 1953 as the ‘Association for Clinical Biochemistry’. The ‘Federation of Clinical Scientists’ (FCS) is the industrial relations arm of the ‘The Association for Clinical Biochemistry and Laboratory Medicine’ (ACB) which is the union’s certified name, although it is the ACB which acts as the professional association. Therefore professional and industrial relations functions are more clearly separated than in many other professional unions. ACB organises scientists and trainees working in laboratory medicine, but the relationship between the two is somewhat complex. Whilst all members of the ACB are members of FCS, except for corporate and overseas members, not all members of the FCS are members of the ACB. This is because some medically qualified members of FCS choose to join the BMA rather than the ACB for professional purposes. Membership of the FCS is restricted to those who would be eligible to join the ACB. The ACB/FCS organises in both the public and private sectors and, having more fluid membership territories than most other professional unions, it has developed in a piecemeal fashion by incorporating other professional groups within the broad territory of clinical science. Unlike the AEP and BADN, ACB/FCS does not represent a single profession but rather a group of closely related ones, and for this reason its niche identity is somewhat more diffused.

### **The visible characteristics of professional union identity**

All three professional unions considered in this section use the word ‘association’ rather than ‘union’ in their titles, as is the case with the majority of education unions (considered in the next section). What was found to be common to all three unions was that, as with the

industrial/occupational unions considered in the previous section, they have all adopted names that clearly state who they organise and they tend to support this with logos and straplines that confirm niche identity.

The certified name of the AEP is the 'Association of Educational Psychologists', which was adopted at its formation, but the union tends to be known by its initials. These appear within the union logo, which comprises their initials within a rectangle, together with the full name and a strapline, '...the Voice of the Profession...'. The AEP interviewee stated that the strapline was "...chosen very deliberately because we do actually have more than ninety percent of the profession in membership." The ACB was founded as the 'Association for Clinical Biochemistry', but has recently added 'and Laboratory Medicine' to reflect its broadening membership. However, there was no consideration of changing the name of the FCS, which the ACB interviewee described as "...designed to be agnostic...". The union does not use a strapline but has a logo, which at the time of the website survey showed a woman hunched over a microscope, although this was subsequently replaced by a coiled serpent motif emphasising the medical orientation of the scientific work their members undertake. The BADN uses the full name to headline its website together with a representation of the union's membership badge, which serves as a logo. This comprises the words 'formed 1940' within an inner circle and then a star motif within an outer circle bearing the full union name. There is no strapline, but a series of messages are rotated every few seconds on the union website.

All three professional niche unions considered in this section would seem to project an identity which goes beyond occupation in order to present themselves as professional associations rather than as trade unions. This was evidenced not only by the use of the word 'association' in preference to 'union' by all three unions, but also by the use of the word 'professional' by AEP, a serpent motif by ACB/FCS, and a badge-style logo by BADN, the latter two being consistent with the findings on unions that project a medical identity (reported in Chapter 4). Therefore it is argued here that the projected identities of all three unions were predominantly those of a professional association rather than of a trade union, supporting the arguments for 'professional' as a secondary source of union identity (see Chapters 3 and 4).

## **Merger and professional union identity**

The tight occupational and professional membership territories reflected in the identities established by both AEP and BADN have perhaps ensured that neither union has ever considered merger with any other union or faced any serious competition, but rather each has sought to be the sole representative of their profession. The BADN, whilst not involved in merger activity, has fostered the formation of other organisations within the profession. It was responsible for founding the 'British Dental Nurses and Assistants Examining Board' in 1943, which later became the National Examining Board for Dental Surgery Assistants and then the National Examining Board for Dental Nurses, becoming independent of the BADN in the nineteen-eighties (British Dental Trade Association, 2013). More recently and in preparation for statutory registration it was involved in setting up a 'Training Advisory Service', which is now independent. Should the union consider merger in the future, given the BADN's non-political stance and clandestine identity it would seem unlikely that it would seek one with Unison, which has a significant health section, but merger with the less overtly political RCN might be a more acceptable proposition.

In contrast, the ACB/FCS has widened its membership territories in recent years to facilitate mergers with smaller professional associations that have not previously acted as trade unions and that were not certified as such, merging with professional bodies in areas such as immunology and medical microbiology. In contrast to BADN and AEP, which organise a single profession, the membership territories of clinical science are sufficiently fluid to allow mergers with smaller professional organisations that clearly fall within the broad sphere of their profession. It is therefore recognised that ACB/FCS, in organising professionals within a group of occupations within an industrial sector rather than in a single profession, has a more diffused occupational niche identity than either AEP or BADN and is therefore potentially more open to minor merging unions. However, given its small size, the lack of professional staff, and the vulnerability to further privatisation of clinical laboratory work, it may in the future need to consider a transfer of engagements to a larger union such as Prospect. Whilst this would on the one hand give them the support of a professional bureaucracy, on the other hand there would be a potential loss of occupational identity. A complicating factor might lie in accommodating the complex relationship between the ACB and FCS and in establishing how a major merging union would represent the interests of their profession.

## **Membership, recruitment, benefits and professional union identity**

The membership and recruitment situations of the three unions considered in this section are very different. The AEP appeared to be the most sophisticated and best resourced of the three unions considered in this section, and has a ‘development plan’, which is updated from time to time. AEP membership is reported as 3,343 and has shown a marginal increase of 3.6 percent over recent years (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015). Their interviewee claimed that they have local representatives in virtually every local authority team who were also active in recruiting, but that recruiting in private practice was more difficult. The union is particularly active in recruiting trainees while they are studying at university, and their interviewee considered that this was the most important source of recruitment. Full membership is restricted to those who are both qualified and practising, whilst associates are qualified but no longer practising, and a retired category provides for on-going legal representation for members facing complaints dating back to their time in employment.

BADN reports a membership of 5,285 members, and has shown a marginal decrease of only 0.1 percent over recent years (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015). Recruitment is a problem for the union because the workforce is so dispersed. The union has no workplace representatives or any collective bargaining machinery. Full membership includes professional indemnity insurance and is designed for practising dental nurses, whereas associate membership is for those with an interest in dental nursing, such as dentists or hygienists or those practising outside the UK. Subscriptions are kept intentionally low because, as the BADN interviewee stated, “...dental nurses are very badly paid...”. As regards recruitment campaigns, the BADN interviewee stated that it was run “...on less than a shoestring...” She reported that the General Dental Council was not prepared to supply them with a copy of the professional register, which would allow them to approach potential members individually, and that recruitment relied to some extent on “...word of mouth...” and on having stalls at dental exhibitions and conferences.

ACB/FCS is unusual in having no full-time officials, in contrast to other small unions that were interviewed that had at least one officer (NASS, ROA). ACB/FCS is relatively small, reporting a membership of 1,492 members and showing a decline of 10.9 percent over recent years, when public sector employment has been under pressure (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015). The union does not run membership recruitment campaigns as such, but rather there is a rolling programme of recruitment by local representatives, which

is also covered in their representatives' training courses. Although the membership of AEP and BADN both appear to be stable, the AEP is well established within the profession whereas BADN faces difficulties in organising a widely dispersed workforce. In contrast, the ACB/FCS membership would seem to be in declining.

The range of benefits offered by the niche unions considered in this section was somewhat variable, but in general the benefits they offered tended to be focused on the particular needs of their members, and were closely related to the profession that they seek to organise. This was exemplified by the benefits offered by the AEP, which include access to up-to-date information and briefings, together with CPD (Continuing Professional Development) courses, and the publication by the association of the profession's academic journal. Individual representation and legal support were considered as important benefits by the AEP interviewee, and particularly so given the sensitive nature of much of their members' work. AEP has a close association with UTU (Ulster Teachers Union), which handles routine casework for members in Northern Ireland, for whom UTU also has collective bargaining rights. AEP provides collective representation at national level through participation on the staff side of the 'Soulbury Committee'. It is also active in consultation with local authorities, which has become more important in recent years with the tendency of local authorities to initiate service reviews.

AEP offers few commercial benefits and their interviewee commented that, whilst she had investigated these, they would struggle to get anything better than that which was available to the general public. AEP is used by local authorities to advertise jobs in the profession through their weekly bulletins and their members' area, and they thus provide a market place for employment within the profession. Whilst the AEP claims to have over ninety percent of the profession in membership, their interviewee refuted any suggestion that it was a closed shop, making it clear that whilst they act as a professional association, they do not run the professional register. However, given the extensive range of professional benefits they offer, it would be significantly harder to practise as an educational psychologist if one was not a member.

BADN similarly provides a range of professional benefits, including a quarterly journal and continuing professional development, but in contrast to AEP, it offers a range of commercial benefits including shop and travel discounts. The indemnity insurance provides a potentially important benefit to full members, given the possibility of malpractice claims, but the union interviewee stated that their own research had revealed

that about a third of dental nurses were working without insurance, and this was to be the subject of a forthcoming membership campaign.

In contrast to BADN, ACB/FCS offers few membership benefits. Although it does not employ any permanent staff it does provide representation at all levels, including in 'fitness to practise' cases and at Employment Tribunals on a case-by-case basis. It has outsourced legal support to the CSP (Chartered Society of Physiotherapists), which provides a legal helpline, fixed fee conveyancing, will-writing and other legal services. These arrangements provide further evidence of a 'hybrid' union identity (see earlier discussion of Unison and BAOT in this Chapter). It may be significant that only BADN, which struggles to recruit members within a poorly rewarded profession, was found to offer a significant range of commercial benefits, in contrast to the AEP and ACB/FCS where better paid professionals may have less need of these. However, all three unions offered benefits that were closely related to their members' professions, supporting their professional niche union identities.

### **Technological development, membership communication and professional union identity**

All three professional unions talked about making increased use of digital technologies to communicate with members and were found to be making extensive use of them, albeit in various forms. They were also using them to give members access to professional information, in two cases by accessing a members' area, which could be important for professional unions in providing a niche service to their members.

The AEP website was developed in recent years and now forms the primary channel for communication with members, who can access a members' area and who also receive a weekly e-mail bulletin. The BADN website is also relatively sophisticated and includes a members' area, providing a range of information and advice on professional practice, health and safety, courses and education. The BADN interviewee stated that access was restricted to avoid people obtaining information from the website without paying subscriptions. ACB and FCS share a website, which has developed considerably in recent years. Communication with members is now mostly through the site or through direct e-mailing. The site provides members with access to both authoritative professional material and briefings on industrial relations issues, but in contrast to AEP and BADN, it does not have a discreet members' area.

## **Affiliations, political alignment and professional union identity**

Of the three niche unions explored in this section, only the AEP is TUC affiliated, having a policy of submitting two motions to Congress, one on employment and one of professional issues. None was affiliated to the Labour Party, nor did any have a political fund. All three were found to avoid party political alignment, although they were acting as pressure groups in seeking political influence. The ACB/FCS interviewee considered the dual identity gave them an advantage in sometimes making two submissions in consultations with government and other bodies, and in approaching issues from different angles. BADN was found to take the most overtly non-political stance, with their interviewee commenting that "...we don't use the term 'trade union', we're a professional association, and whenever we do have to mention it we do stress that we are completely non-political...". Whilst this clearly confirms BADN as a clandestine union, it is not a protest union because, unlike FOA and Voice, it is not in competition with other unions and does not therefore present itself as a benign alternative.

## **Summary of professional identity**

The three professional unions reviewed in this section were found to have developed clear niche identities based around their professions, but they nonetheless provided a clear contrast in terms of the extent to which they have achieved occupational closure. The AEP, although not strictly a closed shop, would seem to have achieved a considerable degree of occupational closure by tailoring what they offer to the needs of their members, making it significantly more difficult for those who remain outside it to practise as educational psychologists. With a high membership density and lacking any competition for members, it would seem unlikely that AEP would embark on any merger in the foreseeable future, and to seem that it is in a strong position to progress as an independent entity with a clear niche identity.

In contrast the BADN, which has done so much to establish professionalism within dental nursing, has paradoxically experienced great difficulty in organising the profession effectively. It has achieved a relatively low level of membership density and hence of occupational closure when contrasted with the unions of other health professionals, such as the doctors (BMA) and nurses (RCN), or with the educational psychologists (AEP). It would therefore seem imperative that the union finds ways to increase membership

recruitment, perhaps adopting new techniques, a strategy that has proved successful for both NASS and WGGB (discussed earlier). Alternatively it may have to seek a merger, with some consequent loss of niche union identity.

The ABC/FCS, organising a variety of laboratory staff across the health sector, has a more diffused professional identity than AEP or BADN. The union does not currently have recognition agreements with employers outside the NHS (National Health Service) and, as staff are being transferred into the private sector, their interviewee acknowledged that this was something the union will need to address. In view of the declining membership of ACB/FCS, the lack of full-time officers, and its vulnerability to further privatisation of clinical laboratory work, it may eventually need to consider a transfer of engagements to a larger union such as Prospect, again with some loss of niche union identity.

## **5.5 Niche union identity in education unions**

### **Introduction to education unions**

Whilst the multiplicity of niche unions based solely or primarily in the compulsory education sector are occupational / industrial unions, they are also to some extent professional unions in that they for the most part represent those who are qualified to teach or manage in education. Unlike the professional unions operating in health, which tend to be the sole body representing a particular occupational group, there is both fragmentation of representation and intense competition for membership. These unions were therefore considered worthy of separate consideration. As each of these unions tends to define its membership territories differently, they present a complex pattern of organisation within the sector. Whilst each may be regarded as a niche union, the niches they seek to organise overlap to a greater or lesser extent.

Two education unions considered in this section (ATL and Voice) were observed not to be entirely professional unions, because they also organise some support staff who may not be qualified to teach. ATL is therefore considered to be a ‘vertical / occupational / industrial’ niche union, whereas Voice is seen as a ‘vertical / occupational / industrial / protest’ niche union, because of its antipathy to political and industrial action (see later discussion in this section). This contrasts with NUT and NASUWT which are considered ‘horizontal / professional / occupational / industrial’ niche unions because they have a broad base of

teacher membership. ASCL is considered to be a ‘horizontal / professional / occupational / industrial’ niche union because it seeks to organise the senior management strata of the profession. In contrast, NSEAD is considered to be a ‘professional / sub-occupational / industrial’ niche union because it seeks only to represent the subject specialisms of art and design within the teaching profession.

Education unions organising within an area of the UK are recognised here as ‘sub-national / geographical / professional / occupational / industrial’ niche unions, with this group comprising SSTA (reported later in this chapter under the heading of geographical unions), AHDS, EIS and UCAC. Thus the niche identities projected by education unions are somewhat more complicated than those projected by some of the professional unions considered in the previous section (AEP and BADN), which represent a single profession. Therefore merely to see education unions as ‘teachers’ unions’ would be too simplistic, and would fail to understand the complex niche union identities that they project. In order to understand the significance of niche union identity in this sector, this section looks at four education unions, each of which have distinctly different membership territories and which project quite distinct niche union identities (ASCL, ATL, NSEAD and Voice).

The origins of ATL lie in the ‘Association of Assistant Mistresses’ formed in 1884 and the ‘Association of Assistant Masters in Secondary Schools’ formed in 1891, which merged in 1978 to form the ‘Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association’. The name ‘Association of Teachers and Lecturers’ was adopted in 1993, although the union is now commonly known by the initials ATL. The union also accepts support staff into membership, but does not actively recruit them in the state compulsory education sector because of agreements with GMB and Unison, although there is no such restriction in the independent sector. The ATL interviewee said that the majority of their support staff members were in colleges, where they tended to recruit librarians and other employees with functional roles, and that they also attract increasing numbers of classroom assistants in the state sector, because they tended to share common interests and concerns with the teaching staff. Therefore the union was considered to be a ‘vertical / occupational / industrial’ niche union.

In contrast Voice was formed much more recently, in 1970, as the ‘The Professional Association of Teachers’. It was commonly known as PAT (Professional Association of Teachers) until 2008, when it changed its name to Voice. It seeks to recruit a wide range of occupational groups across the education sector, as was made clear in the union’s rebranding press release (Voice, 2013),

“...Voice will be an independent trade union representing education and childcare professionals in the public and private sectors, including: teachers, head teachers, lecturers in further and higher education, teaching assistants, technicians, administrators and support staff, nursery nurses, nannies and other child carers and early years specialists.”

Voice is more occupationally open than any other teaching union and thus, it may be argued, it has a more diffused niche identity. As with ATL (discussed previously), it could be considered a ‘vertical / occupational / industrial union’, but what most clearly differentiates Voice from other education unions is its antipathy towards industrial action, as was made clear in its rebranding press release (Voice, 2013), which stated that it believed in “...negotiation, rather than by going on strike or taking other forms of industrial action...”. Therefore it is argued here that, as with the FOA (discussed earlier), Voice should be considered as a ‘vertical / industrial / occupational / protest’ niche union, attracting those within the sector who find more militant or political unions unacceptable.

The ‘Association of School and College Leaders’ is more commonly known as ASCL. It was initially known as the SHA (Secondary Heads Association) and was formed by a merger in 1977 of the AHM (Association of Headmistresses), founded in 1874, and the HMA (Headmasters’ Association), established in 1890, initially to represent grammar school headmasters, although membership was extended to all secondary heads after the 1944 Education Act. The membership territories of the union have gradually widened, as described in the union’s history; it voted to include deputy heads from 1983, assistant heads from 1999 and bursars and other members of senior management teams from 2005 (ASCL, 2013).

The ASCL interviewee explained that the union has a number of sections and arrangements with other unions. The PPC (Principals Professional Council) covers Further Education and was formed as an association of principals, initially associated with the employers’ organisation, the ‘Association of Colleges’. It was later associated with the NAHT (National Association of Head Teachers) which is dominated by primary school heads, and then finally with ASCL, becoming a section within that union. The ASCL interviewee stated that “We kept the brand because it is clearly of value in terms of explaining to people in that context what they’ve joined as it were.” In contrast SLS (School Leaders Scotland) is a semi-autonomous professional association, but it is not separately certified as a trade union. In addition, the HMC (Headmasters’ and

Headmistresses' Conference) and GSA (Girls School Association) although constitutionally independent, have joint membership agreements with ASCL to provide for servicing of their members in industrial relations matters as they do for SLS members. These joint membership agreements provide further evidence of a 'hybrid' union identity (see earlier discussions of Unison, BAOT and ACB/FCS in this chapter). Both the discrete sections and joint membership agreements provide narrower niches for certain educational professionals within the broader niche provided by a union dedicated to the senior management of schools and colleges. However, ASCL was not itself observed to project a hybrid identity, and was therefore considered to be a 'horizontal / professional / occupational / industrial' niche union.

The National Society for Education in Art and Design (NSEAD) traces its origins to the 'Society of Art Masters' founded in 1888 "...to raise the standard of art teaching and improve the status of art teachers" (NSEAD, 2013), following earlier unsuccessful attempts to form an association (Thistlewood, 1988). It later became the 'National Society of Art Masters', having Royal patronage from 1899 to 1936. Following the 1944 Education Act, membership was extended to women and the union was retitled the 'National Society for Art Education' (NSAE). The 'Society for Education through Art' or 'SEA' "...grew out of a framework of an institute for exploring new ideas in art and education, proposed by Henry Moore, Eric Gill, Sir Herbert Read and Alexander Barclay Russell" (NSEAD, 2013), and was formed in 1940 from the 'Art Teacher's Guild' and the 'New Society of Art Teachers'. SEA and the NSAE then merged in 1984 to form the current union. A further merger in 2009 with 'A4', formerly the 'Association of Advisers and Inspectors of Art and Design', finally produced a single organisation for art and design teaching in the UK. Whilst A4 retain something of an independent identity through a discreet area on the NSEAD website, they do not have a constitutional section, a situation which is similar to that of the ambulance personnel (APAP) in Unison (discussed earlier in this chapter). As this union represents a specialised section of the broader teaching profession, it was considered to be a 'sub-occupational / professional / occupational / industrial' niche union.

### **The visible characteristics of education unions**

Three of the four education unions considered in this section were found to have adopted a name that identified who they sought to represent, although they were frequently known by

their initials (ATL, ASCL and NSEAD) and it was the strapline that tended to clarify the union's identity. This was exemplified by the ATL, which had a logo formed simply of a rectangle with the union's initials within it and with a tick over the 'A', which could imply both the positivity of a symbol used widely in teaching and an 'A' grade. When viewed together with their strapline, 'the education union', the ATL interviewee felt that the union identity broadly described what they did and that one of their rivals, 'Voice', had made "...a bit of a brand 'faux pas' in choosing a name that gave no such indication". Voice's aspirational title (Gall, 2007; Balmer, 2008), contrasts with other education unions' names which suggest their occupational coverage (see discussion in Chapter 3). Voice's logo comprises a rectangular speech bubble with the union's name within it and the strapline 'the union for education professionals', which may help to clarify who can join, although paradoxically it also organises unqualified employees. The ASCL adopted its current name in 2005 to reflect its broadening occupational membership (ASCL, 2013). The ASCL identity does not include a strapline, but rather the logo incorporates the union's initials ASCL with a dot in the middle of the A, together with the full name, to clarify the union identity. NSEAD uses a simple logo featuring the union's initials within a rectangle and whilst there is no strapline as such, a paragraph on the union website clarifies who it expects to attract (NSEAD, 2013).

### **Merger and education unions**

All four niche unions considered in this section are the product of mergers, although this has only produced limited rationalisation of representation within the sector. For example, ATL merged with ACM (Association of College Management), following a period of partnership working. ACM has formed the backbone of a distinct section covering school and college leaders and known as AMiE (Association of Managers in Education).

According to the union website, AMiE represents (ATL, 2013):

"... leaders and managers in schools and colleges and is made up of head teachers, deputy and assistant head teachers, school bursars, business support managers, leaders and managers at all levels working in academies, further education, sixth form and adult education colleges and managers in universities, training organisations and other areas of the education sector."

AMiE can therefore be regarded as a horizontal sub-section within what is otherwise a 'vertical / professional / occupational / industrial' niche union, and is in direct competition for members with ASCL (also reported in this section). The ATL interviewee mentioned "conversations" with other teaching unions, and in particular discussions with SSTA (reported later in this chapter), but that nothing had transpired. As ATL has opened a Scottish Office in recent years, this might be a reaction to the failure to conclude a merger with SSTA and secure a more substantial foothold north of the border. The ASCL interviewee mentioned that there was occasional consideration of a merger with the NAHT, but that there were concerns over the very different ways the unions work. Whereas the NAHT holds a democratic conference, the ASCL interviewee said that their annual conference, "...is effectively a training session, and our policy is made by an elected council."

Voice, when previously known as PAT, had absorbed two smaller unions: PANN (Professional Association of Nursery Nurses) formed in 1982, and PAiT (Professionals Allied to Teaching) formed in 2000, both of which had become sections within the union. As part of a rebranding exercise, these sections were subsequently absorbed into the main body of the union. The Voice interviewee stated that this was because "...it was decided to have one single identity, because we had all those other support staff, child care workers in membership as well". As regards any further merger with larger education unions, the Voice interviewee said that although there was some consideration of this years ago, he thought that it would be very difficult because of their particular stance on industrial action. He also believed that the diversity of unions on offer to potential members provided choice.

Whilst all four niche unions considered in this section are the product of mergers, only NSEAD has created any significant coherence, albeit within art and design teaching, where it remains in competition with other education unions. In contrast the formation of ASCL, whilst creating some consolidation within the sphere of school and college leadership, remains in competition with the AMiE section of ATL, NAHT and Voice, which also organise senior staff. The education sector therefore remains highly competitive with significant overlaps in these niche unions' identities.

## **Membership, recruitment, benefits and education unions**

The inevitable competition for members resulting from the multiplicity of unions operating in the sector would seem to have raised the profile of membership and recruitment within all four of the unions considered in this section. ATL reports a membership of 200,631 and has shown a decrease of 3.8 percent over recent years (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015). As regards regeneration, it has a strategic plan for the following three to five years, which is reviewed every year. The union is active in membership recruitment, and especially so amongst education students at university ‘Freshers’ Fairs’, and with newly qualified teachers. It runs campaigns targeted at specific groups, based on research to establish each group’s interests using electronic, print and ‘face-to-face’ methods of communication. Their interviewee said that they saw themselves in a “recruitment battle” with the NUT and NASUWT, but that in addition to schools they also recruit in colleges, Special Needs Centres and Pupil Referral Units.

Voice reports a membership of 19,593, which has declined dramatically by 47.9 percent over recent years (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015). The union is active in running recruitment campaigns targeted at different groups of employees, and at students; this includes attending recruitment fairs and exhibitions. In contrast, ASCL reports a membership in excess of 18,371, and has shown growth of 29 percent over recent years (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015) despite facing competition from the AmiE section of ATL (discussed earlier). As regards regeneration, ASCL has a five year plan, which is reviewed every year. It runs two major recruitment campaigns every year, but the challenge lies in persuading members to leave their teaching unions when they move into management, according to the ASCL interviewee. He said that they tend to get an upsurge in recruitment when the teaching unions take industrial action, because those in leadership positions realise that there is a conflict between supporting a teaching union and the demands to keep the establishment running.

NSEAD is relatively small in size, recording a membership of 2,033 and showing a decrease of 11.8 percent in recent years (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015). The union does not have a regeneration strategy as such, although the NSEAD interviewee said that the matter was “... kept in constant debate.” The union is active in running recruitment campaigns, sometimes linked to CPD provisions and PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education) courses. Full membership of the union is restricted to qualified teachers of art and design in the UK, and benefits include individual advice and representation. Other

categories of membership are not afforded these provisions and include: 'associate', offered to a range of groups including administrators and inspectors; 'collegiate', offered to faculties and departments of colleges or universities and 'student', offered to student teachers.

The benefits offered by the unions considered in this section would seem to be an important element in attracting and retaining members. All four unions offered benefits related to the profession and in some cases these related to the particular niche they seek to organise. The three larger unions all offered a range of commercial benefits, although these were seen as less important by ASCL and NSEAD. In contrast, NSEAD offers collective and individual representation together with a range of professional benefits, but does not offer the kind of commercial benefits offered by other unions.

ATL offers a range of membership benefits, but their interviewee made special mention of the extent of their provision of publications, courses and support for continuing professional development, which she saw as distinguishing them from other teaching unions. In this respect it could be seen that the union is attempting to demonstrate a professional identity more clearly than its competitors. Similarly, Voice offers an extensive range of membership benefits apart from advice and representation, including professional liability, a legal helpline, and other commercial benefits such as insurance discounts.

ASCL offers representation over both collective and individual issues but, as with many professional unions, much of the work of ASCL lies in providing help, support and training about professional issues rather than industrial relations matters. This can lead to some interesting dilemmas for the union, as outlined by the ASCL interviewee. He reported that their members were often asking for advice in relation to dismissing subordinates and in these cases they had to be referred back to their own human resource advisers. He added that the phone line was their most popular benefit, which got in the region of seven thousand calls a year from something over seventeen thousand members.

### **Technological development, membership communication and education unions**

All four niche unions explored in this section specifically mentioned technological change and the development of their websites. Whilst they were all observed to be making extensive use of digital communications, it was also clear that the unions were using these facilities in different ways. For example ASCL was more concerned with professional

issues, whilst NSEAD was more focused on subject-related material, but in both cases the material was reported to be tailored to the needs of their niche membership. In contrast, with ATL and Voice serving broader membership territories, their material was more general in content.

There was also a difference of approach between ATL, which put everything on its website in the public domain, and the other unions, which restricted access to some material through the use of a members' area. The ATL interviewee commented that their websites were at one stage "...a bit of a dog's dinner..." having "...become a repository for the union's information..." but that the website had benefited from extensive research in recent years in order to establish exactly what members wanted from the site, and that it was now focused on giving members information and advice, together with campaigning. She said that there was no 'members' area', as the union believed that it is better to have all the information on the site available to all, in order to encourage people to join. This contrasts sharply with the other three unions, which all have a dedicated members' area. ATL reported moving to a system of 'member relations management', in which it will track every member's interests and involvement in the union to try and target the interests of individual members and build its activist base. The ATL interviewee said that the motivation to do this had come from the shift to local bargaining with academies, and the need for an effective representative system. This development can be seen as important in allowing unions to support smaller niche memberships more effectively.

The ASCL interviewee reported that their website had recently been developed and that it was used as the primary method for giving guidance to members over professional issues, now replacing a great weight of printed material that was formerly mailed out to members. There is a members' area, which gives members access to further information, and where members can also book in for courses and conferences with the union's training department known as 'ASCL Professional Development'. Whilst members could download an application form from the website, they could not join online, and the ASCL interviewee acknowledged this as a weakness and an area for development. The Voice interviewee saw their website as a "...huge growth area for us." The union website was developed over the years to include a members' area and facilities for online joining, together with the introduction of 'blogging' and the use of social media including 'Twitter' and 'Facebook'.

The NSEAD interviewee explained that the union website has developed on a piecemeal basis as and when funding became available. She gave the example of a new craft section funded by the 'Paul Hamlyn Foundation'. As with many professional unions, the content relates both to professional and to industrial relations issues, but the union's campaign over the English Baccalaureate (discussed later in this section) had brought the two strands of its activity together. The NSEAD interviewee explained that roughly half of the website content is in the public domain, and that this was a requirement where content was publically funded. The remainder is located in a members' area through which members can access back copies of the union journal, popularly known as 'I-Jade', which the NSEAD interviewee described as a "...massive resource...". The union has also become active in using social media including 'Facebook' and 'Twitter' to try and engage members.

### **Affiliations, political alignment and education unions**

Only one of the four niche unions considered in this section (ATL) was affiliated to the TUC and none to the Labour Party, nor did any have a political fund. The ASCL interviewee commented that lobbying is largely over professional issues, rather than collective bargaining over instrumental ones, and that this was reflected in discussions within their governing council and other committees. He also said that "...given the nature of our membership we've always felt that it was better to be non-politically aligned." NSEAD reported becoming more politically active in recent years. They had campaigned against changes to the teachers' pension scheme, which included balloting for industrial action, albeit unsuccessfully. They had subsequently run a campaign against the effects on art and design of the introduction of an English Baccalaureate, which the NSEAD interviewee described as "...probably one of the most toxic things to happen to education in anyone's lifetime really". The union has also had consultations with the Department of Education on the art and design curriculum, although the NSEAD interviewee commented that "...what gets lost in translation between the most well-meaning, well-briefed civil servant and a minister is anyone's guess really". The Voice interviewee was emphatic in stating, "No, we're not affiliated to anybody", which together with the union's policy on industrial action (reported earlier in this section) would seem to confirm the contention that 'protest' is an essential component of their niche union identity.

## Summary of education unions

It can be argued that the complex nature of representation in the education sector also results in the most complicated selection of niche union identities found in the UK. ATL and Voice were found to be the most occupationally open of the education unions, being prepared to accept a wide range of members in the public and private sectors, pre and post-compulsory education, and including some support staff. Whilst both could be seen as ‘industrial / occupational’ niche unions, Voice’s identity is also coloured by its policies of independence and antipathy to militant industrial action, which are characteristics that ultimately distinguish it from all other teaching unions. It is therefore seen to be a ‘protest union’ and to have more in common with the position of the FOA in the fire service (discussed earlier). Despite the breadth of its occupational coverage and its spanning of the education sector, Voice may be destined to remain a minor player for the foreseeable future, appealing mainly to those reluctant to support militancy, political action or political alignment.

ASCL has successfully developed a clear niche identity as a ‘horizontal / professional / occupational / industrial’ niche union based upon school and college leadership. It would seem to be more concerned with professional issues than with industrial relations ones. It would seem that this might have prejudiced the possibility of a merger with NAHT, which would have brought some consolidation to representation within the occupation of school leadership, even allowing for the existence of AMiE as a direct competitor. However, whilst membership remains buoyant it would seem likely that it will progress as an independent entity for the foreseeable future. In contrast NSEAD, which has a long and proud history within the field of art and design education, would seem to have successfully combined this with industrial relations functions and to have developed a clear niche identity as a ‘sub-occupational / professional / occupational / industrial’ niche union. Should it cease to be a viable entity, one possibility would be a merger with a larger teaching union in order to become a semi-autonomous section whilst retaining its ‘brand identity’.

What is noticeable about the education unions discussed in this section is that, whilst they have clearly defined occupational niches, they are in competition with each other for some members where niches overlap. In further education, the position is further complicated by the presence of UCU, which also operates in higher education. The result of this is that whilst all teachers, lecturers, school and college leaders employed in the compulsory

education sector may have a choice of union, not all unions are open to all education professionals. This fragmentation would on the one hand seem to result in unnecessary competition and a lack of coherence in representation, but as suggested by the Voice interviewee, it alternatively gives members choices in representation.

## **5.6 Organisational niche union identity**

### **Introduction to organisational union identity**

The organisational unions are such because their membership territories are defined by and for the most part restricted either to those of a single employer or to those of a group of employers. Representation may be shared where mergers and takeovers have extended membership territories, as in the case of Advance which represents staff in the Santander Bank, whilst some former Alliance and Leicester Building Society staff are represented by CWU. Whereas an organisational union can seek to organise an entire organisation (Advance) or a horizontal strata within multiple organisations (NACO), it could alternatively be limited to an occupational sub-group within an organisation (ROA).

Advance was formed in 1944 as the ‘Abbey National Staff Association’ (ANSA), changing its name to Abbey National Group Union (ANGU) in 2002. The Advance interviewee explained that this was because, “...Abbey National had a lot of subsidiaries...” It merged with the ‘Union for Bradford and Bingley Staff and Associated Companies’ in 2009, following the merger of the employing organisations. The Bradford and Bingley members were absorbed into the existing structure of the union with no special provisions for sectional autonomy. Because Advance seeks only to recruit within Santander Bank it is seen here to be simply an ‘organisational’ niche union.

NACO was formed in 1971 as the result of a merger between CSA (Co-operative Secretaries Association), formed in 1908, NCMA (National Co-operative Managers' Association), formed in 1911, and NUCO (National Union of Co-operative Officials), formed in 1917. It represents senior staff in the co-operative movement and has extended this to other mutual organisations in recent years, and is seen here to be a multi-organisational union. It restricts membership to employees of ‘operations’ or ‘area’ manager level or above, and was also therefore seen to be a ‘horizontal union’. The NACO interviewee confirmed that in Co-operative stores, which are also organised by USDAW,

there is a very clear demarcation line based on grading. NACO is therefore classified here as a 'horizontal / occupational / multi-organisational' niche union.

The Retired Officers Association (ROA) represented retired military employees working in the Ministry of Defence until it was disbanded in 2013. It was formed in 1966, initially as the 'Army Department Retired Officers', and included retired Royal Navy and Royal Air Force officers from 1970, becoming a certified trade union in 1972 (ROA, 2013). For much of the ROA's existence, membership was restricted to the retired officer grade within the Ministry of Defence, but this was widened in latter years to include any Ministry of Defence employee at civil service 'Grade D' or above who had served in the armed forces. The ROA interviewee explained that this was because the civil service had closed recruitment to the retired officer grade in 2003, with the result that the union's membership had gone into decline. Given that this union sought to recruit an identifiable group within the Ministry of Defence, it was seen to be a 'sub-occupational / sub-organisational' niche union.

### **The visible characteristics of organisational union identity**

The organisational unions were found to display two distinct trends in terms of their visible identity. Whilst some have adopted a name that includes the name of the organisation or organisations within which they seek to organise (NACO), others have chosen a name that perhaps embodies aspiration rather than an organisational identity (Advance; see also discussion in Chapter 4). In contrast, ROA used a name that related to an occupational sub-group within the employing organisation.

Advance adopted its current name in 2004 following the take-over of the company by Santander Bank because, as their interviewee explained, "...we felt we needed to be identified as a separate identity rather than, say, Santander Group Union". Advance employs a strapline 'Your voice at work' which was adopted, according to the Advance interviewee, because "...we wanted our members to be able to identify what we could do for them". The strapline also forms part of the union logo, together with the union name and the outline shape of a group of people, perhaps indicating collective organisation. Whilst there is no indication from this as to who can join, the website carries a prominent headline 'The only union dedicated to staff in Santander UK', which clarifies the union's organisational identity.

The name 'National Association of Co-operative Officials' was adopted at its formation, although it is now generally known by the initials NACO. Their interviewee commented that the union name was under review, that "...the word 'official' is a very old title" and that they tended to use the abbreviation in preference to the full name. The initials form the basis of the union's logo which comprises the four letters in the four quarters of a rectangle. The NACO interviewee thought that this was "... recognised by the membership quite easily". The logo appeared on the home page of the union website together with the strapline 'the Co-operative trade union', but there was no mention of the union's full name.

The ROA also tended to use the initials in preference to the full certified name, and their interviewee commented that they had tried not to use the word 'officer', which could be off-putting to those coming from the lower ranks of the armed services. They had not considered changing the union's name during a period when its membership base was broadened because they saw the organisation to be in terminal decline. The union had a logo comprising the entwined letters 'ROA', which was given greater prominence than the full name. There was no strapline given on their website, but the ROA interviewee said that on publicity material they used the phrase 'the union for ex-military working in the MoD', which can be seen as clarifying their membership territories.

### **Merger and organisational union identity**

The unions considered in this section seemed to be remarkably resistant to the idea of merger with a larger union, although they did report different attitudes to the possibility of future mergers. The Advance interviewee stated that, whilst Unite would gladly accept all the banking unions and that they would never preclude a merger in the future, she felt that they were different because all her staff were seconded from the business, they understood the business, they were financially secure and so it was not under consideration. The NACO interviewee was somewhat more non-committal on the question of merger, stating: "It's been something the Executive keep their eye on, but no, no decisions have been made at this stage". However, he reported that they were adversely affected by employer mergers resulting from rationalisation of the Co-operative movement. If a merger were considered in the future, Prospect could be a suitable merger partner given their background in representing managerial staff and in accommodating minor merging unions.

In contrast the ROA reported that there was significant consideration of merger in recent years, following the decline in membership from the closure of the retired officer grade in 2003. They had talked to PCS, who they felt were more focused on the lower grades, and with Prospect, which they felt was more interested in taking over their membership and funds. They had also considered FDA, but as the ROA interviewee explained they only had a very few members within the grades that FDA normally represented. Having failed to find a suitable merger partner, the union had decided that it would gradually allow its membership and finances to run down to a point where it no longer became viable.

Whilst none of the organisational unions considered in this section would seem to be likely to merge with any other union in the short term, it was interesting that it was clearly something that each of them had considered. It also became clear that the fortunes of an organisational union are to a large extent linked to that of the employer or group of employers to which they are aligned. In the case of both Advance and NACO, changes in company formation had implications for the union, whereas in the case of ROA the most significant implication for the union's future survival was held in the decision of the employer to close recruitment to the category of membership that they were formed to represent.

### **Membership, recruitment, benefits and organisational union identity**

The three unions explored in this section were in very different positions with regard to membership and recruitment. Advance was found to be the most sophisticated, having a regeneration strategy that is developed on a two-year cycle. The union has a membership in excess of 6,945, showing growth of 1.8 percent in recent years (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015). It runs membership campaigns, including prizes for recruiting members, which range from cash to items such as tablet computers. Advance has tried to keep subscriptions relatively low, with a standard subscription rate for most members. The union would seem to rely heavily on 'face-to-face' recruitment by local representatives, and at the time of the interview there was no facility for online joining, although the Advance interviewee did say that this was under consideration.

NACO reports a membership of 1,388, but has shown a significant loss of 37.6 percent (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015). The NACO interviewee reported that the union had lost membership due to downsizing of administrations rather than due to people leaving

through dissatisfaction, and that members tended to stay until the end of their employment. NACO had no regeneration strategy as such, but the union's interviewee reported that the matter is kept under review as a permanent item on the union's 'Executive Committee' agenda and at an annual strategy away-day. The union runs campaigns in which members get Co-operative vouchers as a reward for recruitment, but there was no facility for online joining, although the NACO interviewee said this was under discussion.

Although the ROA reported a membership of 512 in 2009, its declining fortunes are demonstrated by a 67.5 percent decline in membership to 187 over the last four years of its existence (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2013). ROA relied heavily on members to recruit other members but the ROA interviewee said that quite a few joined through the website. Having failed to find any acceptable merger partner and with declining membership and financial resources, the union adopted what their interviewee described as a 'death strategy' in which the union would eventually run out of money and be wound up. The union's Executive Committee would then recommend to the few remaining members that they join another union.

The range of benefits offered by the three organisational unions considered in this section varied considerably, although all offered both collective and individual representation. Advance offered the widest range of benefits, including insurance and commercial discounts, but prominent amongst these benefits would seem to be their helpline, which the Advance interviewee felt was important as they were receiving about twenty-five calls per day. Collective representation is complicated by the existence of CWU members in parts of the company that originated in the former Alliance and Leicester Building Society. The NACO interviewee reported that the membership benefits they offered tended to be based on discounts offered by Co-operative organisations, but that they also offer legal services through Thompsons solicitors. In contrast, the membership benefits offered by ROA were limited to collective and individual representation, with the exception of the union's annual conference, which was described by the ROA interviewee as being, "...a study-day really" and that, unusually, members were encouraged to invite non-members to attend. In contrast to certain occupational unions in general and professional unions in particular, the benefits offered by organisational unions did not contribute significantly to their niche union identities.

## **Technological development, membership communication and organisational union identity**

Of the three unions considered in this section, both Advance and NACO would seem to have actively resourced the development of their websites and were found to be making increased use of digital technologies, whilst the ROA, in a period of terminal decline, was found to make limited use of such facilities. The Advance interviewee saw their website as increasingly important to communication and that the nature of their members' work was a factor, given that it was far easier for many who worked on bank counters to communicate with the union by a computer than by telephone. The Advance website has a members' area giving access to a further range of information.

The NACO interviewee suggested that although their website was launched in the previous decade, it was only in the last couple of years "...we've started to use it in earnest" and that he thought it had raised the union's profile. He also reported that they were now utilising 'Twitter' and 'Facebook' and finding 'Survey Monkey' very useful in obtaining feedback. The NACO interviewee explained that they previously had a members' area but had decided to put everything into the public domain as a recruitment tool, contrasting sharply with the position of Advance and many other unions, which use access to the members' area as an incentive to join. The ROA website was observed to give limited information in the public domain, although it did have a members' area through which members could access additional information. However, the ROA interviewee was very critical of the site commenting that "...it's hopeless really. One of the reasons it has not developed is we can't persuade our members to look at it". However, given the declining fortunes of the union, it is perhaps not surprising that it did not embrace the opportunities afforded by digital technologies more completely.

## **Affiliations, political alignment and organisational union identity**

All three organisational unions considered in this section favoured a non-political stance, with none being affiliated to the Labour party or having a political fund, although the two larger unions (Advance, NACO) are active affiliates of the TUC. The ROA interviewee, when asked about a political fund, said "If there was, I could tell you which party it would probably go to!" implying that it wouldn't be the Labour Party. He also mentioned that the ROA was not part of the joint staff side bodies in either the Civil Service or Ministry of

Defence. Commenting on their position on industrial action, he said that whilst the ROA did not actually have a ‘no-strike’ rule, “...whenever the other unions strike, my members are the first across the picket line...”. However, in contrast to FOA and Voice (discussed earlier), it is suggested here that the ROA should not be considered as a ‘protest union’, because no antipathy to political activity and industrial action was observed in its projected identity. Any such attitudes prevailing in the union could perhaps be attributed more to cultural norms inculcated by its members during their military service than to the union itself.

### **Summary of organisational union identity**

The three organisational unions considered in this section projected very different identities, with their fortunes tending to be tied to those of the employing organisation or organisations. Advance has a clear ‘organisational’ niche union identity, and has survived thus far despite massive restructuring in the banking industry because it has a defined organisational niche and is financially secure. However, should further changes in the industry undermine its position, merger with a larger union, probably Unite, would be a possibility. In contrast, NACO has a ‘horizontal / occupational / sub-organisational’ niche union identity, having widened its membership territories in recent years by accepting members from mutual organisations outside of the Co-operative movement, and thus making its niche identity slightly more diffused. As with other small unions considered in this chapter (ACB/FCS, NSEAD and ROA), it remains small and thus potentially vulnerable to change. Possible merger partners include USDAW, with which it shares representation within the Co-operative movement, or Prospect, which would enable it to retain something of its horizontal / occupational identity. The ROA can be viewed as having developed a niche identity as a ‘sub-occupational / sub-organisational’ union, although its membership territories were widened slightly in its declining years. The ROA, which had some success in organising an unpromising occupational group, was the victim of circumstances, and having failed to find a suitable merger partner, it declined to a point where being wound up was the only perceived option.

Two issues emerge from this consideration of organisational union identity. The first relates to the extent to which their identity is derived from that of the employer organisation and the second to the extent to which their fortunes are determined by those of

the employer. Whilst their membership territories may seem secure in the short run, in the longer term these unions may be vulnerable to the effects of changes in employer strategies, fortunes or organisational formation.

## **5.7 Geographical niche union identity**

### **Introduction to geographical union identity**

The unions discussed previously in this chapter operate either exclusively or predominantly in Great Britain or the UK. The geographical unions discussed in this section were classified as such because they operate in membership territories significantly different to those discussed earlier. Where unions had a few members in the Republic of Ireland, such as Unite or GMB, or whose members routinely travel abroad in the course of their work, such as BALPA or RMT, this was not considered as contributing sufficiently to recognise them as having a geographical component to their identity. Where unions operate within or beyond the borders of Great Britain or the UK, the question in each case was to consider the extent to which a geographical component contributed to their niche union identity. As demonstrated by the three unions explored in this section (SSTA, NUJ and Nautilus), the extent and manifestation of this contribution was in each case quite different.

Unions operating within a region or nation of the UK include the Scottish, Welsh and Ulster teaching unions, which emphasise geographical identity, as exemplified by the SSTA (discussed in this section). Unions operating beyond 'home' borders include the NUJ and Nautilus. The NUJ was classified as a 'bi-national / industrial / occupational' niche union because it is certified in two nation states, although it also has international branches elsewhere (see later discussion in this section). Nautilus was also initially classified as a bi-national union, being formed by a cross-border merger during the course of the research. However, a further merger has required its reclassification as a 'multinational / industrial / occupational' niche union, as it now covers the UK, the Netherlands and Switzerland, and aspires to bring further nationally-based unions into its fold. In each case these three geographical unions were also observed to project industrial and occupational sources of union identity. This contrasts with the IWW, which represents

an early attempt to form a multinational union, albeit as a ‘true general’ (see earlier discussion in this chapter).

The SSTA represents secondary teachers in Scotland and was established in 1944, with the full certified name being adopted at the outset. According to the SSTA interviewee, it was formed because at that time Scottish primary school teachers were not required to have a university degree and had different salary scales to secondary teachers, and it was felt that the EIS did not represent Scottish secondary teachers adequately. SSTA restricts membership to those qualified to teach in secondary education and to ‘transition teachers’ who are ‘primary qualified’ and who are allowed to teach in the first or second years of secondary education. The union is therefore considered to be a ‘sub-national / professional / sub-occupational / industrial /’ niche union, because it does not seek to organise all teachers and it operates within a geographical area within the UK. Whilst members may retain their membership if they move into other roles within or outside of Scotland, they would not be covered by collective bargaining. The SSTA interviewee reported that there were discussions over the years regarding broadening their membership territories, with specific requests from individuals and groups of primary teachers, but that they had resisted this.

The NUJ was founded in 1907 (National Union of Journalists, 2013) in both UK and the Republic of Ireland, prior to partition. The NUJ interviewee described the union as “...working at home and abroad...” and that it has a number of overseas branches. She confirmed that the union is constitutionally one organisation with a single democratic structure and a national executive committee, although there are also Irish, Scottish and Welsh executive councils which feed into it. She clarified the breadth of the union’s occupational coverage as including:

“...all sectors of the media, as freelancers, casuals and staff in newspapers, news agencies, broadcasting, magazines, online, book publishing and in public relations and photographers.” and that “...we would represent some bloggers, for example, and also public relations and photographers.”

This makes it clear that the union organises the occupation of journalism and is not restricted to print or broadcast media. Although it is considered to be a ‘bi-national / occupational / industrial’ niche union, many members work in foreign countries for employers based in the home countries, and may potentially not be citizens of either of

them. Therefore, as with Nautilus (to be discussed next), it could be considered as a multinational union. However, it lacks any multinational aspiration, although being firmly rooted in two countries and despite having some members overseas. Whilst it is considered a geographical union because of its bi-national formation, the union does not project a geographical identity in the public domain, which contrasts sharply with both SSTA and Nautilus. The NUJ's bi-national identity can be attributed more to an accident of history than to intentional design.

Nautilus International was formed by merger of Dutch and UK unions in 2009, with the Swiss inland navigation workers joining in 2011. The origins of the UK union can be traced to the formation of unions including the 'Mercantile Marine Service Association', founded in 1857; the 'Marine Engineers' Association', formed in 1899; the 'Wireless Telegraphists', established in 1912 and the 'Navigating and Engineer Officers' Union', formed in the mid-1930s. Following a series of mergers, NUMAST (National Union of Marine, Aviation and Shipping Transport Officers) was formed in 1985 (Nautilus, 2013). With the gradual move to two-flight crew aircraft and the resulting disappearance of the flight engineer and navigator roles from the flight deck, the aviation side of the union went into decline and NUMAST became more completely focused upon the maritime and inland waterway sectors. Following a period of cooperation between the UK and Dutch maritime unions, the 'Nautilus Federation' was formed in 2006, with NUMAST changing its name to Nautilus UK and the Dutch union to Nautilus NL as a step towards the full merger.

The membership territories of Nautilus are somewhat complex. As the core of the union's UK membership is merchant navy officers it might be seen as a horizontal union, but it also represents a range of other employees including harbour masters, vessel service traffic controllers, marine pilots and office staff of shipping companies. Whilst the former Dutch union was vertically organised and open to all seafarers, the UK union was always constrained to some extent by the existence of NUS (National Union of Seamen) (now part of RTM), which represents the lower ranks. Whilst the line of demarcation at sea is relatively clear, the Nautilus interviewee mentioned that on land there could be more areas of overlap, as for example where shipping companies established operations on 'greenfield' sites. He also pointed out that as most of its members are at sea most of the time and frequently changing ships, normal ideas of workplace organisation and democratic structures are problematic. The union is therefore organised into only three national branches, each of which having an annual conference to which any member of that branch can submit a motion. Despite the unions' history of horizontal organisation in

the UK, the union is considered to be a ‘multinational / occupational / industrial’ niche union, because the identity it projects is one of a multinational union open to all within the seafaring, inland navigation and associated industries. However, the occupational component of its identity is somewhat diffused when compared to the unions of journalists (NUJ) and teachers (SSTA) discussed earlier in this section, where occupation was considered to be of greater significance.

### **The visible characteristics of geographical union identity**

In comparing the visible characteristics of niche identity displayed by the three geographical unions, it was observed that whereas the SSTA derives a strong element of its identity from its Scottish nationality, albeit as a teaching union, the identity of the NUJ is fundamentally based on occupation and industry. In contrast the visible identity of Nautilus is derived from occupation and industry, and is intentionally non-specific geographically, allowing it to accommodate further mergers with nationally-based maritime unions.

SSTA uses the full name together with a logo, which comprises the union’s initials together with the strapline, ‘the Voice of Scottish Secondary Teachers’. The SSTA interviewee suggested, “...I think the geographical identity cannot be overemphasised in Scotland, our members are very proud of the fact that we’re a Scottish union.” According to the Nautilus interviewee, the Nautilus component of the union’s name was chosen because, “...we needed to come up with a name that worked across both sides of the North Sea...” and that it was “...instantly maritime in the Netherlands and in the UK”. The ‘International’ element of the name also reflects the union’s aspiration to achieve further mergers. The union utilises a ‘compass-like’ logo, but there is no strapline. The Nautilus interviewee explained they had used the phrase ‘uniting maritime professionals’ but that with the move into Switzerland they were now the biggest union representing inland navigation workers, which made maritime references inappropriate.

The certified name of the NUJ remains the full name which was adopted at its foundation, with the word ‘national’ being retained, despite the creation of the Republic of Ireland. Paradoxically, the word ‘national’ in the union name might otherwise imply that a union was wholly or at least primarily committed to operating in a single national state. Today the union is most commonly known by its initials, the NUJ. The union logo comprises the union initials in large font together with the full name in smaller print, within a rectangle

and the strapline ‘winning for you at work’. However, it is the occupation of journalism that most clearly defines this union’s niche identity, as there is no mention of either home country in its certified name, initials, logo or strapline.

### **Merger and geographical union identity**

The geographical unions display quite different propensities to merger. Whereas SSTA and NUJ have not engaged in merger throughout their history, Nautilus was not only formed by merger, but seeks to be a major merging union with multinational aspirations. SSTA reported being approached by ATL a few years ago (discussed earlier in this chapter), with their interviewee commenting that, “They were proposing a merger but we would have become part of them.” Similarly, the NUJ reported valuing its independence, although this has more to do with occupational rather than geographical identity. The NUJ interviewee explained that when the union had encountered a severe financial crisis, the leadership had made survival as an independent union a priority. In contrast, Nautilus provides a model for further cross-border mergers in stark contrast with SSTA which sees its interests largely confined to a sub-national geographical area.

### **Membership, recruitment, benefits and geographical union identity**

The three geographical niche unions considered in this section are in somewhat different positions in terms of membership recruitment. The SSTA reports a membership of 6,861 and has shown a decrease of 7.8 percent over recent years (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015). It faces competition from what their interviewee called the ‘English unions’, and from their Scottish rival EIS. In contrast the EIS has broader membership territories, organising employees across the school and further education sectors in Scotland. It reports a membership of 54,345, and has shown a 10.3 percent drop in membership over recent years (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015). EIS was formed in the middle of the nineteenth century but only “in the 1970s...became a fully-fledged trade union, affiliated both to the TUC and STUC” (Scottish Trades Union Congress) (Educational Institute of Scotland, 2013). This perhaps accounts for the formation of the SSTA some decades earlier, and the resulting competition for members in the secondary education sector. The SSTA interviewee, referring to NUT and NASUWT, commented that “...historically the

two English unions who are in Scotland don't do well." She mentioned that the NASUWT were "...doing better at the moment under their Scottish organizer who is very good, but they have a small presence in secondary schools..." and that "...ATL have never been able to get into (Scotland), you know, their members are school assistants and then a few teachers in the private sector". SSTA does not have a regeneration strategy, but is active in running membership recruitment campaigns. Members can join online, which the SSTA interviewee reported as now being the most common method.

Although the NUJ is established as the journalists union in both print and broadcasting media in the UK and Ireland, it does face limited competition in the UK from the BAJ and the IOJ (Institute of Journalists). It is losing members in some areas because of the changing structure of the industry. The union's UK membership is reported at 27,886, but it has shown a decline of 17.8 percent in recent years (Certification Return, 2009 and 2015). In contrast, the other two unions are relatively small. The BAJ reports 1,035 members, showing a decrease of 8.4 percent over recent years (Certification Return, 2009 and 2015), whilst the IOJ reports 1,073 members and a decrease of 6 percent over the same period (Certification Return, 2009 and 2015). NUJ launched a recruitment strategy in response to the financial crisis of 2008, and their interviewee commented that they tend to base campaigns around issues. She also commented that, "...the industry is quite ruthless..." and "...very highly competitive..." with "...quite acute levels of bullying". She also said they were trying to recruit 'interns' and 'entry-level' journalists, but that it was harder to get to people than in some other industries, especially so where they did not have recognition and with national titles owned by News International. Many members are freelance rather than being employed and thus fall outside of the union's lay representational structure.

Nautilus faces the problem of trying to organise a disparate industry on a multinational basis. Their UK membership is reported at 21,198 and has shown an increase of 33.2 percent over recent years (Certification Returns, 2009 and 2015). Members can join online with a high proportion of members paying subscriptions by direct debit, which was encouraged by the union to aid retention, given the high level of labour mobility in the industry. The Nautilus interviewee reported that the union had developed a regeneration strategy over the last fifteen years (he thought), and also that they use membership surveys to gather data and use this to produce reports and generate strategic objectives. The union has created a 'Recruitment and Organisation Department' in recent years, with the specific responsibility of coordinating campaign activity. Recent campaigns have included inland

water workers, with a particular emphasis on barge crews working on the Rhine, and a campaign aimed at the crews of ‘super yachts’, which have not been organised previously. The Nautilus interviewee mentioned the impetus being given to recruitment by the ‘Maritime Labour Convention’ that came into effect on the 20th August 2013 (International Labour Organisation, 2013). He commented that it was “...the first piece of the globalised regulation to kind of try and deal with working conditions in the shipping industry on a global basis”. Whilst Nautilus seeks to recruit both within its established sectors and beyond, its long-term success may not be unrelated to its ability to attract further merger partners in order to become a truly global niche union.

All three geographical niche unions considered in this section were found to offer a range of benefits, which were related to the occupational niche that they occupied, rather than having any particular geographical significance. Whereas the NUJ and Nautilus were found to be offering benefits that were focused largely on professional issues, the SSTA in contrast also offered a more comprehensive range of commercial benefits, which can be attributed to the need to compete with other education unions (see earlier discussion in this chapter on educational unions). In addition to individual and collective representation, SSTA makes a point of offering professional representation to all members rather than relying on lay representatives.

The NUJ offers a range of benefits, many clearly tailored to the needs of the occupation. In addition to collective representation with some large employers such as the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation), individual representation and legal support over professional issues was seen as most important. The NUJ interviewee described it as one of the “gatekeepers” of the industry in distributing press cards in both the UK and Ireland. As employers also have this role, it cannot be argued that the union is maintaining any sort of closed shop, but as trainees and freelancers may not necessarily have employers, it could be argued that there is some element of occupational closure. The level of workplace representation is highly variable across the industry, and whilst the union has a small number of full-time representatives at the BBC, the NUJ interviewee reported that in regional newspapers there was little or no facility time. However, there is a strong element of ‘self-organisation’ reflected in the union policy of allowing a minimum of three members to form a Chapel (union branch).

Similarly, Nautilus was found to offer benefits closely tailored to the needs of their members, including comprehensive legal protection. The Nautilus interviewee stated that

“...one of the biggest issues for seafarers these days is the concept of criminalisation and the way in which they so often end up in court...”. Nautilus is also active in representing members over professional and health and safety issues, and offers a ‘certificate protection’, which provides financial support in cases where a member’s ‘certificate of competency’ is “...cancelled, suspended or downgraded following a formal inquiry” (Nautilus, 2013). Whilst both NUJ and Nautilus offered benefits more closely related to their occupational identity, none of the geographical unions offered benefits related to their geographical identity, except perhaps their expertise in representing members over matters more locally (SSTA) or internationally (Nautilus and NUJ).

### **Affiliations, political alignment and geographical union identity**

The research revealed that geographical identity was a significant factor in the choice of affiliations for all three unions considered in this section, with SSTA being the most restricted and Nautilus the most broadly affiliated. It should also be noted that many nationally-based unions also have a broad range of international affiliations, and that in some cases this may be related to both the nature of the occupation and the industry that they seek to organise, as in the case of, say, BALPA or PFA. SSTA restricts its affiliations to Scottish borders, being affiliated to the STUC but not to the TUC. It is not affiliated to the Labour Party and does not have a political fund, and despite the union’s Scottish identity, it has no formal link with the SNP (Scottish Nationalist Party), or any policy of supporting Scottish independence. In contrast to the Welsh teachers union (UCAC), which campaigns for the teaching of Welsh history, culture and language and which has a bilingual website, SSTA seemed less concerned with national differences but rather more concerned with differences between the Scottish education system and that operating south of the border.

In contrast, the NUJ is affiliated to the TUC, the Campaign for Broadcasting Freedom, the European Federation of Journalists and the International Federation of Journalists. It does not have a political fund but does have a ‘Cross Party Parliamentary Group’ and would therefore seem to be a politically active union if not politically aligned. The NUJ interviewee explained that there were strict rules about affiliation requiring a membership ballot and that “...there’s lots of groups and campaigns that we support but there’s only very few that we actually formally affiliate to”. Nautilus does not have a political fund and

is not affiliated to the Labour Party, but does have a broad range of affiliations, including those in the home countries and international organisations. It is affiliated to the TUC, the International Transport Workers' Federation, the International Federation of Shipmasters' Associations and the Netherlands based trade union centre, FNV (Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging). As regards this last body, the Nautilus interviewee said that it was "...in a state of meltdown at the moment and there's a new kind of embryonic Dutch TUC being formed...".

### **Technological development, membership communication and geographical union identity**

Whilst all three geographical unions considered in this section gave specific examples of making increased use of communication technologies, the problems and potentialities created by the multinational and multilingual nature of Nautilus's operation would suggest that their need for digitalised communication with members would be paramount.

However, the NUJ also reported having members working overseas and in small units in the home countries. This then raises the question of the relationship between digitalised communications, the labour process and the spatial distribution of their members, which may have a wider significance than that demonstrated in this section by geographical unions (see discussion of industrial / occupational unions earlier in this chapter).

The SSTA website has developed extensively in recent years from a simple information-giving service to include interactive features and is used in conjunction with e-mails and 'Facebook' for the dissemination of news to members and for gaining rapid feedback. The SSTA interviewee reported that although they still had a members' area, the site was now much more open and encouraged membership participation. She also reported using digitalised communications for gaining rapid feedback from members, giving the example of a consultative ballot, conducted using 'Survey Monkey', to obviate the need for a costly membership ballot.

The NUJ interviewee reported that they had been working on a new website for some years, but she was critical of the current site, stating: "... It's a difficult website to work with because a lot of it doesn't work properly". She also saw deficiencies with the members' area, commenting that "Once you log in you can pretty much just access at this point the contact details and a couple of private documents". She was more optimistic

about the future, stating: "...that will be much more extensive on the new site" and also: "...the new website is going to have hopefully a women's network, and a young member's area for discussions and debates". She also mentioned that "A lot of that kind of discussion and engagement happens in the public domain, on Twitter and Facebook at the moment". Online joining is planned as part of the website upgrade, although students can join online through the NUJ's training site.

In contrast, the Nautilus website appeared more sophisticated and reflected the multinational nature of the union, with UK, Dutch and Swiss versions giving English, Dutch and German language options. The website has been the subject of extensive development over the years, but the Nautilus interviewee reported that despite the fact that it had started with many aspirations, it had to some extent been overtaken by developments in social media, commenting that "...what we found increasingly to be the case in social media tends to be the better way, you know, through Facebook and Twitter...".

### **Summary of geographical union identity**

Overall it is argued here that the three niche unions considered in this section demonstrate quite different manifestations of geographical identity. The SSTA has successfully established a niche identity as a 'sub-national / professional / sub-occupational / industrial' union. It has differentiated itself occupationally from the more broadly based EIS in Scotland and geographically from the multiplicity of UK based teaching unions. Although much smaller than its competitors, and despite a decreasing membership, the union would seem able to survive as an independent niche union, at least for the foreseeable future.

The NUJ has developed a niche identity as a 'bi-national / occupational / industrial' niche union, organising the occupation of journalism, albeit defined in broad terms and being successfully based in two countries. The recent membership decline is perhaps related to the restructuring of the industry, and it may be that the union's future success will be dependent upon its ability to organise those working in the new forms of digital media. Another possibility is that the NUJ, which already has members and branches beyond its home countries, might become a multinational union, like Nautilus. In contrast, Nautilus has already developed a clear niche identity as a 'multinational / industrial / occupational' niche union, representing those in the maritime, inland navigation and associated industries, although occupationally constrained in the UK by the existence of the RMT.

The union is unusual in becoming multinational by merger and in having the intention to become more so, reflecting the multinational nature of the industry, and may yet become a model for further multinational mergers.

The question then arises as to why unions adopt a geographical identity rather than being restricted to national borders. The three unions considered in this section offer contrasting explanations as to why this might be the case. The SSTA restricts its area of operation to Scotland because of differences in the education system, but may also benefit from an association with a Scottish identity, if not with Scottish nationalism. In contrast, Nautilus International is the product of cross-border mergers in recognition of the need to organise workers on a multinational basis, because of the multinational nature of the shipping industry. In the case of the NUJ, its bi-national formation is an historical anomaly resulting in the separation of the Republic of Ireland from the UK. However, it is also clear that the union to some extent operates on a multinational basis, with many members working outside of the home countries and in some cases attached to overseas branches. Whilst this research has found relatively little evidence of geographical union organisation beyond that of the nation state, the examples provided by Nautilus and the NUJ provide models for further cross-border mergers and the development of multinational trade unions. Any future secession of Scotland from the UK would raise further issues for geographical union identity. Whilst on the one hand SSTA might be a model for a Scottish identity, on the other hand the NUJ provides an alternative model for post-independence bi-national operation.

## **5.8 Conclusions**

This chapter has explored the manifestation of niche unionism and niche union identity as projected by UK certified unions. The analysis has included both niche unions together with general and other unions that serve niche memberships through sectionalised structures. It has demonstrated that the primary sources of union identity (general, occupational, industrial, organisational and geographical) together with the secondary (professional) and additional (protest) sources identified in Chapters 3 and 4 can be employed to explain the identities of the unions considered in this chapter. However, through deeper exploration, further secondary and additional sources of identity were included in the multidimensional framework of analysis (presented, explained and

operationalised in Chapter 6) in order to achieve a deeper understanding of unions' niche identities.

Secondary sources relate directly to membership territories, and were introduced to provide a clearer explanation of some union identities than would be possible by using primary sources alone. The term 'true general' applies only to unions that were prepared to accept virtually any type of worker into membership (Unite and GMB). In contrast, certain general unions have adopted some niche union characteristics by seeking to organise vertically (Unison) or horizontally (Prospect). The term 'horizontal' was also applied to those unions that recruit horizontally in the labour market (ASCL, NACO, NASS, PFA, WGGB), whilst 'vertical' was applied to those that recruit vertically (ATL, FOA, Voice). Where unions recruit an identifiable group within an occupation or profession, the term 'sub-occupational' was used (NSEAD, ROA, SSTA). Where a union sought to recruit members across a group of organisations, the term multi-organisational was used (NACO) or alternatively, where this was within an organisation, the term 'sub-organisational' was applied (ROA).

The term 'professional identity', which was previously identified as a secondary source (see discussion in Chapters 3 and 4), was exemplified by niche unions that required professional qualification and showed concern over professional issues and standards (AEP, BADN, FCS, NSEAD, SSTA). Education unions were considered separately because in organising members within this extremely competitive sector, they have adopted distinct niche identities. Some education unions could not be described as either 'professional' or 'teaching unions', given their disparate membership territories, but rather projected either more occupationally diffused identities (ATL, Voice) or more narrowly focused ones (ASCL, NSEAD, SSTA).

Several 'additional' sources were introduced to reflect significant components of some niche unions' projected identities that were not related to membership territories. 'Protest' union identity (see discussion in Chapter 4) was exemplified by two unions that organise in more competitive sectors, avoid any form of political alignment or involvement and have a fundamental objection to industrial action (FOA, Voice). It was observed that being a protest union was an essential component of their identities and also differentiated them from their competitors. Some unions were observed to have either outsourced industrial relations functions and / or held joint membership agreements, which was termed a 'hybrid' union identity (BAOT, Managers in Partnership, ACB/FCS, HMC, GSA, SLS).

Finally, some certified unions were found to avoid being identified as such and this was termed a 'clandestine' source of union identity (BADN, BAOT).

In general, occupational / industrial niche unions were found to be the most consistently clear in having identities that reflected their membership territories. Other unions were sometimes less clear, with some having adopted aspirational titles (Advance, Unite, Unison and Voice). Some unions that were previously confined to the public sector had expanded their membership territories as a response to the effects of both privatisation and outsourcing of public services (Unison, ACB/FCS). Similarly, some organisational unions had expanded their membership territories to reflect changes in the employing organisation (Advance, NACO, ROA). Therefore the tendency of many niche unions is to broaden their membership territories over time, although this would be less likely in the case of unions representing a single profession (AEP and BADN).

Niche unions typically reported wanting to remain independent entities, and were frequently averse to the idea of merging. However, merger with a general or another larger union was seen as an option by some niche unions, should they get into financial difficulties (Advance, NASS, WGGB). Geographical identity was an important element in the construction of some union identities, which could potentially be used to either restrict membership (SSTA) or facilitate multinational mergers (Nautilus). All the unions considered in this chapter were found to be using websites to communicate their union identities, although these varied in sophistication and were frequently reported as being in the process of development. There was a disparity of practice in relation to the provision of a members' area, with most unions wanting to restrict access in order to encourage membership and others feeling it was better to put everything into the public domain (ATL, WGGB). In addition a number of unions mentioned using social media, and it was clear that many were using some combination of targeted e-mails, texts, Twitter and Facebook in order to maintain communication with members (GMB, NACO, Nautilus, NSEAD, NUJ, SSTA, Voice), and in some cases to obtain more immediate feedback (NACO, SSTA). Where unions target such communications at industrial and occupational groups with sectionalised structures, this demonstrates an active expression of niche unionism.

What became clear from analysis of the unions considered in this chapter was that some had shown significant membership increases in recent years since the financial crisis of 2008 (ASCL, FOA, NASEAD, NASS, Nautilus, Prospect, WGGB). However, it is not

clear that any particular form or forms of identity were more successful in advancing their membership position than others. For example, whereas the FOA showed an increase, the other protest union, Voice, showed a dramatic decline. In the case of the generals, whereas GMB and Prospect showed modest increases in membership, Unison reported a modest decrease and Unite showed a dramatic decline. Similarly, for all the occupational unions that increased their membership, there were others where membership decreased. Therefore it could not be concluded that any form of union identity is of necessity more successful than any other in advancing union membership or restoring union power and influence. It was clear that for some niche unions, maintaining a niche union identity could help support their survival as independent entities, despite the potential for merger (Advance, AEP, ASCL, PFA, SSTA, and WGGB).

This chapter has explored the manifestation of both niche union identity and niche unionism in individual unions, and demonstrated the importance of these concepts to the understanding of UK certified trade unions. This was achieved by the application to individual unions of the primary, secondary and additional sources of identity that have emerged through this work, facilitated by observation of their observable characteristics together with reflexive analysis and pragmatic interpretation of the data (as described in Chapter 3). It was demonstrated that niche unionism is practised by all the unions considered in this chapter, with the general and some other unions achieving this through sectionalised structures, whilst niche unions practise niche unionism by restricting membership by one or more of the primary or secondary sources of union identity.

In exploring the significance of niche unionism and niche union identity, the chapter has attempted to explain these concepts in relation to understanding what, following Turner (1962), 'closed' actually means in terms of contemporary union identities. However, as was acknowledged at the outset, further exploration may reveal further unforeseen sources of union identity. The next chapter (Chapter 6) draws together the strands of analysis developed in the preceding chapters, presenting and operationalising the multidimensional framework for the understanding of trade union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism, and the contribution that this makes. Chapter 7 discusses the extent to which this work goes beyond the extant literature (analysed in Chapter 2), and outlines the original contribution to knowledge that the work makes to the field of industrial relations, before drawing some implications from the work and suggesting future directions for the research.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Operationalising the multidimensional framework for the understanding of union identities and the role of niche**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter draws together the analysis developed in preceding chapters in order to make sense of the data by explaining, presenting and operationalising a multidimensional framework of analysis. As will be demonstrated, this framework facilitates detailed understanding of the projected identities of UK certified trade unions together with the role of niche as expressed in niche union identities.

The work explores the projected identities of certified UK unions. Union identities are understood to be those identities that all unions project in the public domain. ‘Niche union identity’ relates to the projected identity of those unions that restrict membership by one or more of the primary sources of union identity, and are not general in character. Unions that project a niche union identity are termed ‘niche unions’. In contrast, the term ‘niche unionism’ is applied both to niche unions and to unions that serve a niche membership through sectionalised structures. It is argued that whilst certain, mostly larger, unions practice niche unionism through sectionalised structures, the majority of UK unions have, by accident or design, adopted, retained or developed a clear niche identity. It is further argued that to understand contemporary UK certified trade unions it is necessary to understand the extent to which they employ the concepts of niche union identity and niche unionism. The research is limited to the projected identities of UK certified trade unions, although in some cases these operate beyond UK boundaries (Nautilus, NUJ), and to primary source data collected between 2008 and 2015.

The multidimensional framework together with the recognition of the role of niche is developed against the changing background and within the context of the external environment experienced by UK unions discussed in Chapter 1 in order to make a contribution to knowledge beyond that of the extant literature discussed in Chapter 2, by employing the methodology outlined in Chapter 3, and through reflexive analysis and pragmatic interpretation of the research data reported in Chapter 4 & 5. This chapter first

explains and presents the multidimensional framework before operationalising it. It then considers the implications for the understanding of union identities, niche union identities and niche unionism.

## **6.2 Introducing the multidimensional framework**

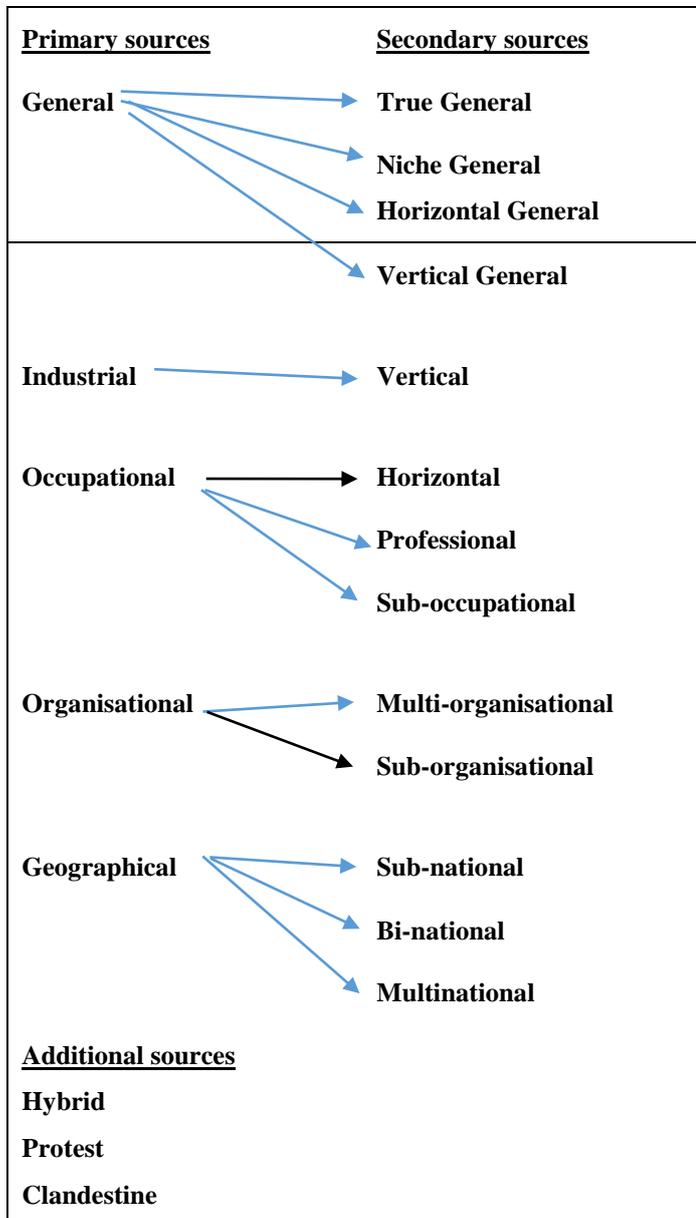
It will be demonstrated in this section that the multi-framework contributes to the understanding of union identities and the role of niche in three important respects: Firstly, it demonstrates the complex and multifaceted construction of many union identities. Secondly, it provides a far more comprehensive understanding of the projected identities of certified UK unions than is provided by earlier theorisations in general and by rigid categorisations in particular (reviewed in Chapter 2). Thirdly, it provides for the recognition and understanding of niche union identities by means of identification of the sources by which a union's niche identity is constructed.

The multidimensional framework incorporates the sources of union identity identified during research (see Figure 3). It was demonstrated in successive phases of data analysis that the primary sources of union identity, i.e. general, occupational, industrial, organisational and geographical, could be successfully employed in analysing the projected identities of all UK certified trade unions. Through reflexive analysis and pragmatic interpretation of primary source data it became clear that further sources of union identity were needed to fully understand the complex identities projected by some niche unions (see Chapter 3). Consequently a number of new terms were included to enhance the multidimensional framework. Whereas 'secondary sources' help clarify unions' membership territories beyond the primary sources, 'additional sources' were included as significant components of some unions' identity that were unrelated to membership territories.

It is acknowledged that the sources currently incorporated in the framework may not be exhaustive and that trade unions operate in a dynamic situation. Therefore the framework as presented in this work is capable of further development should other sources be observed as significant components of union identities. It is further recognised, following Blackburn (1967), that whilst some sources are absolute concepts, others may be variable in application. Overall it is suggested that the multidimensional framework as presented

here provides a robust system of analysis for the understanding of contemporary UK certified union identities in general and of niche union identities in particular.

**Figure 3: The sources of union identity**



Before presenting the multidimensional framework, it is necessary to understand the significance of each of the sources of union identity. The term ‘true general’ describes major unions that accept virtually any type of worker into membership (GMB, Unite) together with minor ‘true generals’ (IDU, IWW, Solidarity). In contrast, the term ‘niche general’, is applied to general unions that have adopted some niche characteristics, either by organising vertically (Unison) or horizontally (Prospect).

The term 'horizontal' is also applied to other unions which recruit horizontally in the labour market (ASCL, NACO), whereas 'vertical' is applied to unions seeking to recruit vertically (ATL, FOA). Whilst it is accepted that the term vertical could be applied to other industrial unions, and similarly that the term horizontal could be applied to many occupational unions, these terms were only used where they enhance the understanding of a union's identity. This is demonstrated by ASCL, which recruits senior staff horizontally in the education sector, whilst ATL recruits vertically, resulting in an area of overlap and competition. Similarly FOA, by organising vertically, is in competition with the other fire service unions, which all recruit horizontally. In contrast NACO organises senior staff within a group of organisations, but it is the horizontal element of its identity that differentiates it from USDAW, with which it has clear lines of demarcation.

Some unions recruit an identifiable group within an occupation or profession, which is termed 'sub-occupational' (NSEAD, ROA, SSTA). The term 'professional' is exemplified by a number of the unions that were interviewed (AEP, BADN, ACB/FCS, NSEAD, SSTA). In each case they require professional qualification for full membership and demonstrate a concern over professional issues and standards, and it was these observable characteristics that distinguished them from other occupational unions whose members may consider themselves to be professionals (PFA, WGGB).

Whilst some organisational unions seek to represent all employees within an organisation, albeit that they may be constrained by the existence of another union or unions (Advance), other organisational unions were found only to organise an identifiable group. This was demonstrated by ROA, which only recruited retired military officers working within the Ministry of Defence and was therefore considered to be both 'sub-occupational' and 'sub-organisational'. Similarly NACO, which recruits senior managers across the cooperative and mutual sector, is considered to be both a 'horizontal / occupational' and 'multi-organisational' union. In contrast to Advance, neither NACO nor ROA held any aspiration to organise vertically.

In the case of geographical unions, their identity may be 'sub-national' (SSTA), 'bi-national' (NUJ) or 'multinational' (Nautilus). NUJ might be seen as a multinational union, given that it has branches and members located beyond the two nation states in which it is certified. However, it is deemed to be bi-national on the basis that members who are organised beyond the national borders of the UK and the Republic of Ireland either tend to be nationals of one of the home countries working abroad, or employees of news

organisations based in one of them. NUJ also lacks the intention to become multinational, contrasting sharply with Nautilus.

Turning to the ‘additional sources’ of union identity, the concept of ‘protest’ union identity was exemplified by two unions, both of which organise vertically in more competitive sectors, avoid any form of political alignment or involvement, and have a fundamental objection to industrial action (FOA, Voice). In each case it was observed that being a protest union was an essential characteristic of their identities used to differentiate them from their competitors. In contrast to the protest unions, it was anticipated that some unions might project a militant union identity. However, militancy was not observed as a source of any union’s projected identity during the research, and was not therefore included in the multidimensional framework of analysis. This is not to say that certain unions are not perceived to be militant, but rather that this did not form part of their projected identity.

The term ‘hybrid’ is applied to unions that outsource industrial relations functions and / or hold joint membership agreements with another union or professional association. This was exemplified by BAOT and ‘Managers in Partnership’, both of which had outsourced industrial relations functions to Unison, and GSA, HMC and SLS, which had similar arrangements with ASCL. In contrast ACB/FCS, which is a certified union, outsources its industrial relations functions to CSP, which is not. In communications with both BAOT and BMA and in interview with a respondent from BADN, it became clear that despite being certified unions, none of them wanted to be seen as such and avoided using the term, preferring to present their organisations as professional associations. This led to a recognition of ‘clandestine’ as a further additional source of union identity.

To construct the multidimensional framework of analysis (see table 9), the sources of union identity which emerged during the course of the research (see Figure 3 above) were plotted against the unions that were the subject of in-depth analysis (see Chapter 5). Whilst the sources of identity are broadly grouped as general, industrial / occupational, organisational, geographical and additional, it should be noted that in some cases a union’s identity can only be understood by sources drawn from more than one broad grouping.

The multidimensional framework (presented below) is applied selectively to the understanding of individual unions. In some cases operationalisation of the framework is straightforward, as for example in the case of Advance, which is seen simply as an

‘organisational’ union, because it only organises staff within Santander Bank. In many cases union identity is found to be complex, as demonstrated by SSTA, which is seen as a ‘sub-occupational / professional / occupational / industrial / sub-national / geographical’ union. In contrast, Voice, also an education union, is seen as an ‘occupational / industrial / protest union’ because it recruits throughout the education system but eschews militancy and political action.

**Table 9: The multidimensional framework**

Union	True General	Horizontal General	Vertical General	Industrial	Vertical	Occupational	Horizontal	Professional	Sub-occupational	Multi-organisational	Organisational	Sub-organisational	Geographical	Sub-national	Bi-national	Multinational	Hybrid	Protest	Clandestine
ACB/FCS				*		*		*									*		
Advance											*								
AEP				*		*		*											
ASCL				*		*	*	*											
ATL				*	*	*		*											
BADN				*		*		*											*
FOA				*	*	*												*	
GMB	*																		
NACO						*	*			*									
NASS				*		*	*												
Nautilus				*		*							*			*			
NSEAD				*		*		*	*										
NUJ				*		*							*		*				
PFA				*		*	*												
Prospect		*																	
ROA				*		*			*			*							
SSTA				*		*		*	*				*	*					
Unison			*	*															
Voice				*	*	*												*	
WGGB				*		*	*												

The efficacy of the multidimensional framework is clearly demonstrated in the case of the education unions, which display the greatest level of complexity. All five education unions interviewed project different union identities, differing from other professional unions (AEP, BADN) in two respects: Firstly, none are the sole body representing their profession, making competition inevitable. Secondly, there is a variable requirement for

professional qualifications, with some organising administrative, technical, managerial and other support staff who may not be qualified to teach (ATL, Voice). The education unions cannot therefore be described as ‘teaching’ unions, as some of them have more occupationally diffused identities (ATL, Voice) or more narrowly focused ones, organising horizontally (ASCL), geographically (SSTA), or by sub-occupational group (NSEAD, SSTA).

As suggested earlier, sources may be applied flexibly rather than as absolute concepts in understanding union identities. In the case of unions drawing upon both occupational and industrial sources of identity, the question arises as to which is the most important component of their identity. The PFA was observed to be an ‘occupational / industrial’ union, where the occupation of professional football was more important than the professional sport industry. In the case of FOA, which is also seen as an ‘occupational / industrial’ union, it was considered that the industry was more important than the occupation, because the union recruits vertically throughout the fire service.

Overall, this section has demonstrated that the multidimensional framework can successfully be operationalised to facilitate the understanding of union identities in general and the role of niche in particular. It demonstrates the complexity of many unions’ projected identities and provides a far more comprehensive understanding of their projected identities than is afforded by earlier theorisations in general and by rigid categorisations in particular (reviewed in Chapter 2). Further the framework recognises niche union identities through the sources from which they are constructed, although it is acknowledged that the framework is capable of further development. The next section further explores the contribution of the framework to the recognition of contemporary union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism.

### **6.3 The contribution of the multidimensional framework to the recognition of union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism**

It was argued earlier that to understand contemporary UK unions it is necessary to understand the identities that they project in the public domain and the extent to which they embrace the concept of niche unionism. Recognition of the sources of union identity and

the development of the multidimensional framework of analysis make possible a clearer understanding of union identities in general, as well as the nature of niche union identity and niche unionism. Operationalising the multidimensional framework led to the conclusion that there are two broad types of union operating in the UK. The first are general unions, which represent almost half of UK union membership (Certification Officer, 2016). The second are those representing the vast majority of unions by number, which organise workers within membership territories constrained by one or more of the primary sources of union identity (see analysis in Chapter 3).

The multidimensional framework facilitates the distinction of ‘true generals’ (GMB, Unite) and ‘niche generals’ (Unison and Prospect). Beyond these general unions, all of which have sectionalised structures, the vast majority of unions are deemed to be niche unions because they restrict membership by one or more of the primary sources of union identity i.e. industry, occupation, profession, organisation or geography. It was observed that the majority of these unions projected an industrial / occupational identity, and that the greatest number of these were observed to have a professional identity. Therefore it is argued here that the vast majority of UK trade unions and UK trade union membership is subject to the practice of niche unionism, either by being organised by niche unions or within unions, which themselves project niche identities through their sectionalised structures.

Whilst operationalisation of the multidimensional framework highlights the preponderance of niche unions, it is argued that there are degrees of niche union identity. These range from unions that recruit more widely, for example those within an industry (ATL, FOA, Voice), and those that organise a specific profession by practising some element of ‘occupational closure’ (Weber, 1991) (ACB/FCS, AEP, BADN). In recognising that niche unions are not homogenous it is argued that they fall into two broad categories. Firstly there are those that have relatively secure membership territories, which organise an identifiable group but which do not generally face competition from other unions. Whilst some of these organise professions (ACB/FCS, AEP, BADN), others represent other occupationally distinct groups (NASS, NUJ, PFA, WGGB). Secondly there are those niche unions that are in intense inter-union competition for members (FOA, ASCL, ATL, NSEAD, SSTA, Voice). Whilst unions in the first group were generally observed to be more focused upon servicing the needs of their membership, unions in the second group were frequently more concerned with differentiating their union from their competitors.

The success of niche unions in attracting and retaining members was found to be variable. Whereas some niche unions were observed to have a relatively stable membership (AEP, ATL, PFA), some had shown substantial increases over recent years (ASCL, FOA, NASS, Nautilus, WGGB) whilst others struggled to recruit (BADN) or were in decline (NACO, NUJ, ROA, Voice). Therefore, despite the relative success of certain niche unions it cannot be argued that niche union identity necessarily provides an antidote to decline or a prescription for renewal, but rather that it has proved successful for certain unions that either have secure membership territories (AEP, NASS, PFA, WGGB) or are able to compete successfully with other unions organising in their niche (ASCL, FOA). Where niches overlap there will inevitably be competition for members as demonstrated by the education unions, which have adopted distinct but overlapping niche identities.

Similarly, niche unionism as practised by unions through sectionalised structures does not represent a single phenomenon. Although the three general unions interviewed (GMB, Unison and Prospect) together with Unite all practice niche unionism through industrial sections, the manifestation of niche unionism was found to be somewhat different, with GMB and Unison affording lower levels of sectional autonomy than either Prospect or Unite. On the one hand Prospect shows remarkable flexibility in accommodating transfers of engagements from niche unions, as demonstrated by the formation of a 'Connect' section to accommodate the union of that name. In contrast, GMB expects transferee unions to join existing sections, and such identity as they retain may be no more than a name or a logo on communications, as experienced by the ambulance union (APAP). Given the stark differences in membership position, with GMB and Prospect showing modest increases in recent years whilst Unison reports modest losses and Unite a dramatic decline (Certification Officer, 2016) (reported in Chapter 5), general unionism can no more be cited as a universal panacea for reversing membership decline than niche union identity.

The tendency for unions to broaden their membership territories and therefore their niche over time as a result in changes in the labour market was recognised earlier in this work (see discussion in Chapter 4). This is exemplified by public sector unions expanding their membership territories into the private sector as a response to privatisation and outsourcing (ACB/FCS, Unison). Similarly, some organisational unions reported expanding their membership territories to reflect changes in the employing organisation (Advance, NACO, ROA). In contrast, unions organising a single profession with members employed by many employers did not (AEP, BADN).

As an alternative to the multidimensional framework, and following the logic of Turner (1962), there could be an argument for creating a ‘continuum of niche’ upon which unions would be placed at points between the ‘true generals’ as the most occupationally open and the professional unions as the most occupationally closed. Whilst this may hold some superficial attraction, it is argued here that it would prove unsatisfactory in application in several respects. The first relates to where unions are to be placed on the continuum in relation to the relative importance of different sources of identity. For example, where one union is more occupationally open, as in the case of Advance, which organises vertically within one organisation, compared with NACO, which recruits horizontally across the mutual sector and is therefore more organisationally open. A second problem is that this form of analysis does not include a geographical component, which was seen as an important element in the construction of some unions’ identities. The third problem is that this analysis could not accommodate the additional sources of some union identities (discussed earlier in this Chapter). For example, in the case of the FOA, which organises vertically within the fire service, it is its protest union identity that most clearly differentiates it from the much larger FBU, which organises the lower ranks horizontally. Similarly, ‘hybrid’ identity is derived from some unions’ relationship with another union or professional association (BAOT, ACB/FCS), whilst ‘clandestine’ identity is demonstrated by unions that show reluctance to identify as such (BADN, BAOT). In each case, accommodating unions that display such disparate sources of identity within a continuum would be problematic.

For these reasons it is argued that a continuum approach is unsatisfactory, because it is not possible to understand the complexity of union identities by reference to a single dimension when union identities are constructed from a multiplicity of sources. The implication for the understanding of niche union identity is that, with the exception of ‘true generals’, application of a multidimensional framework of analysis is required and that this work therefore goes significantly beyond that of Turner (1962), whose work suggested a continuum approach, and of Blackburn (1967), who allowed greater flexibility, and of other writers who suggested more rigid categorisations (Hughes, 1967; Clegg 1979; Visser, (2012).

Whilst niche unions represent a minority of union members, their existence holds a number of implications for union organisation in general and for general unions in particular. Firstly, it can be observed that they frequently organise areas of the labour market where members may have specific needs that might be better served by a niche union. This can

perhaps be seen most clearly in professional unions (ACB/FCS, AEP, BADN) and other occupational unions (PFA, NASS, WGGB). Secondly, new unions are frequently set up to organise occupational or organisational niches and whilst many fail, some survive to successfully exploit a niche position (Ross, 2013). Thirdly, whilst niche unions often provide merger partners for major merging unions (Waddington, 1995; Undy 2008), their persistence deters general unions from organising certain niches in the labour market, supporting Turner's (1962) assertion that general unions are constrained from being truly general by the existence of other unions. Therefore it is argued here that the recognition of niche identity through application of the multidimensional framework holds important implications for understanding union organisation.

Given that almost half of UK of union members are contained within general unions, which accommodate a wide variety of members within sectionalised structures, there remains a question as to why niche unions survive. Five possible explanations emerge from the interview programme, which are in no case seen to be mutually exclusive. The first relates to the historic legacy that concerns unions formed to serve a niche membership, for example within an occupation (PFA, NASS, WGGB), an organisation (Advance), organisations (NACO), or a geographical area (SSTA), and for which independence remains possible and / or desirable. The second relates to niche unions having a defined niche within the labour market, organising membership territories defined by one or more of the primary sources of union identity, namely industry, occupation, organisation and geography. Their survival suggests that there is still a perceived need for organisation within a defined niche, albeit that the niche may be redefined over time, either by being broadened to accommodate other groups (NACO, ROA) or through merger to consolidate a wider niche (ACB/FCS, WGGB).

The third explanation relates to the finances of niche unions, where survival suggests that the union has a sufficient level of financial security to avoid either the necessity of merger with another union or of being wound up (ROA). This finding tends to confirm earlier work suggesting financial insecurity as a motivating force in union mergers (Willman et al, 1993; Undy, 2008). Fourthly, niche unions tend to offer benefits tailored to the needs of their members, which would not be offered by a larger and / or general union, and particularly so where they serve an occupation (NUJ, PFA, WGGB) or profession (ACB/FCS, AEP and BADN). Finally, survival of a niche union can be related to the needs of their members for a derived identity, and particularly so where the union is focused on the needs of a single occupation (PFA, NUJ, WGGB) or a profession (AEP, ACB/FCS,

BADN). Such needs of niche union members for a derived identity can be related to concepts of group differentiation (Taifel and Turner, 1986), self-identification theory (Hogg, Turner and Davidson, 1990) and identity theory (Hogg, Terry and White, 1995) (see also discussion in Chapters 2, 5 and 7).

A further explanation unrelated to the unions participating in the interview programme relates to the formation of new unions (ACAS, 2012; Ross, 2013), many of which display niche characteristics. Whilst not all new unions survive, there is an extent to which new niche unions replace those that have merged with general unions or, like the ROA, that have ceased to exist (see also discussion on new unions in Chapter 1). This suggests a 'direction of travel' from formation to eventual absorption within general unionism. However, whilst this may be the fate of some niche unions, it is also clear from this work that some unions are resistant to the process (Advance, AEP, BADN, NUJ).

Although large general unions may offer greater resources and scale economies than niche unions, it would seem unlikely that a general union could accommodate all the needs of some of the niche unions considered in this work, and especially so where what they offer is tailored to the particular needs of their members. Whilst it is acknowledged that these explanations may not be exhaustive in explaining the persistence of niche unions, it is argued that they provide significant reasons to believe that many niche unions can be expected to survive for the foreseeable future, unless or until they perceive an advantage in merging with a general union, or they merge out of necessity.

Overall this section has demonstrated the importance of the multidimensional framework in the understanding the projected identities of UK certified trade unions. It has explored the limitations either of strict categorisation or of adopting a continuum approach by demonstrating the advantages of a multidimensional framework of analysis. It has demonstrated that by application of the multidimensional framework it is possible to obtain a deeper understanding of the projected identities of all unions that are not entirely general in character. In doing so it has recognised the role of niche as practised both by niche unions and by those which serve niches through sectionalised structures, and it has suggested why niche unions survive.

## **6.4 Conclusions**

In operationalising the multidimensional framework, this chapter has demonstrated the complexity of the identities projected by many UK certified trade unions, and that these can be understood by reference to primary, secondary and additional sources of identity. This has facilitated an understanding of the components of individual union identities by reference to the sources of identity that they project in the public domain. It allows for the distinction of 'true generals' from all other UK unions, which to some extent restrict membership. Further, this chapter has recognised the importance of niche union identity practised by the majority of UK unions, and of niche unionism, which encompasses virtually all UK unions.

It is argued that the multidimensional framework makes an important contribution to understanding UK certified trade unions by providing a more robust and more sophisticated system of analysis than is offered by either a one dimensional continuum or by strict categorisation. It is therefore superior to earlier theoretical contributions. In the next and final chapter this thesis will return systematically to the literature, to identify how and where this work makes an intellectual contribution to knowledge within the field of industrial relations. It will further identify where other literatures need to be recognised in order to more completely understand trade union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism.

## **Chapter 7**

### **A new approach to understanding contemporary UK union identities, niche union identity and niche unionism**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

Having introduced the multidimensional framework of analysis in the previous chapter, this concluding chapter briefly reprises the background and context that makes this work necessary (explored in Chapter 1), before returning to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 to explain why this work advances knowledge of trade union identities and the role of niche beyond the extant literature of industrial relations.

This work has explored three interrelated questions (introduced in Chapter 1), namely:

- How can the identities projected by contemporary UK unions be more fully understood?
- How can niche union identity be understood?
- How can niche unionism be understood?

It is argued that these questions have been under-researched in recent decades, that the extant literature is inadequate, and that this work makes three important contributions to knowledge in this respect. Firstly, the multidimensional framework (introduced in Chapter 6) provides a robust system of analysis that recognises the complex and multi-faceted construction of UK certified trade union identities. Secondly, development of the multidimensional framework allows for the recognition of niche union identities. Thirdly, the work introduces the broader concept of niche unionism, which encompasses both niche unions and certain general and other unions that organise niche memberships through sectioned structures. This chapter also argues that contributions from other intellectual areas including organisational identity theory and marketing need to be acknowledged in industrial relations literature in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary certified UK union identities.

The multidimensional framework was developed through reflexive analysis and pragmatic interpretation of primary source research data collected using mixed methods (outlined in Chapter 3). This research was limited to the projected identities of UK certified unions, although in some cases they were seen to be operating beyond UK boundaries (Nautilus, NUJ), and to data which collected between 2008 and 2015. The multidimensional framework both acknowledges and goes beyond the work of earlier writers who sought to understand trade unions either by rigid categorisation (Webb and Webb, 1894 and 1897; Hughes, 1967; Clegg, 1979; Visser, 2012), or who adopted more flexible approaches (Turner, 1962; Blackburn 1967; Undy et al, 1981; Hyman, 1994 and 2001; Hodder and Edwards, 2015). Whilst the multidimensional framework draws upon this intellectual legacy, it is argued that earlier contributions are inadequate for the purpose of understanding the distinct identities projected by contemporary UK certified unions. It is further argued that the limited attention given to the concept of niche in the literature of industrial relations is similarly inadequate for explaining its contemporary manifestation in niche union identity (Hyman, 2001; Visser, 2012). The multidimensional framework addresses this deficiency by providing an analytical framework for understanding the construction of union identities and exploring the role of niche.

Through application of the multidimensional framework (presented in Chapter 6), the work recognises the concepts of ‘union identity’, ‘niche union identity’ and ‘niche unionism’. Whilst ‘union identities’ are understood to be those identities that all unions project in the public domain, ‘niche union identity’ refers to the projected identity of those unions, termed ‘niche unions’, that restrict membership by one or more of the primary sources of union identity (established in Chapter 3). Niche union identity is therefore applied axiomatically to all unions that are not general in character. In contrast, the term ‘niche unionism’ is applied both to niche unions and to unions that serve niche memberships through sectionalised structures. Whilst certain unions practice niche unionism through sectionalised structures, the majority of UK unions have by accident or by design adopted, retained or developed a clear niche identity. It is further argued that in order to understand contemporary UK unions, it is necessary to understand the extent to which they have embraced the concepts of niche unionism and union identity.

This chapter first briefly outlines the background of decline and renewal, and the implications for union identity (explored in Chapter 1). It then explains the contribution and limitations of extant literature drawn from the field of industrial relations and beyond (reviewed in Chapter 2), together with the contribution of this work to the understanding of

union identities, niche union identities and niche unionism. It then suggests future directions for the research before drawing together the implications for the understanding of union identity, niche union identities and the role of niche unions together with the contribution to knowledge.

## **7.2 Contribution of the work to the understanding of union identities, niche union identities and the role of niche unionism**

### **The background of decline and renewal and the implications for union identity**

The necessity to research UK certified trade union identities and the role of niche results from the severe decline in union membership, power and influence and the adoption of renewal and revitalisation strategies over recent decades (discussed in Chapter 1), many of which have implications for union identity. The decline is demonstrated by UK union membership, which was first marked by a sharp fall, followed by a steady decline and something closer to ‘flat lining’ in recent years (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2016). Further evidence of decline included that of union recognition (Brodtkorb, 2012), collective bargaining coverage (van Wanrooy, et al, 2013) and political power and influence (Undy, 2001; McIlroy, 2009). Together these indicators made the adoption of renewal and revitalisation strategies of paramount importance.

The response to decline included the development of organising unionism (Simms, Holgate and Heery, 2013), addressing the problem of retention (Waddington, 2006b), the formation of new unions (Ross, 2013), union mergers (Waddington, 1995; Undy 2008) and rebranding (Balmer, 2008; Gall, 2007), together with the relatively limited incidents of militancy (Darlington, 2012; Beale and Mustchin, 2014; Taylor and Moore, 2014), other initiatives such as partnership agreements (Heery, 2002; Wills, 2004), community unionism (Wills and Simms, 2004; Tattersall, 2008) and the contribution of union leadership and management (Heery and Kelly, 1994; Thursfield and Kellie, 2013). However, it is argued that no single response can be seen as having halted the decline, but rather that individual unions have drawn upon a range of responses at different times.

The decline in UK unions’ power and influence and the disparate range of responses are seen to have many implications for union identity, perhaps most obviously exemplified by mergers (Waddington, 1995; Undy 2008), but also through the rebranding of unions, in

some cases with aspirational titles (Balmer, 2008; Gall, 2007) (see discussion in Chapter 1). Although some unions changed their identities in recent decades, others did not, in some cases retaining historic union identities. Therefore this research disaggregates the story of decline and responses to it by investigating the experience of individual unions, assessing the impact on their identities and the extent of niche union identity and niche unionism (see Chapters 5).

### **The contribution and limitations of extant literature to the understanding of union identities and the role of niche**

It has been argued that this work provides an important new approach to understanding the projected identities of UK certified unions, the role of niche identity and niche unionism (see Chapter 6). It has been further argued that the extant literature (discussed in Chapter 2) is inadequate for understanding these phenomena, given the unprecedented changes over recent decades discussed above.

Addressing the inadequacies of the extant industrial relations literature, it is recognised that it falls broadly into two categories. Firstly, there are those who employ rigid categorisation (Webb and Webb, 1894; Hyman, 1975; Hughes, 1967; Clegg, 1979; Heery and Kelly, 1994; Visser, 2012). It was recognised through the phases of the research that many unions displayed multiple sources of identity, which needed to be recorded when coding their identities. This led to the conclusion that rigid categorisation of union identities is both problematic and unsatisfactory where unions draw upon multiple sources of identity, and that a multidimensional framework was required to resolve this. However, when conducting the preliminary study on union titles, it was recognised that some of the categorisations derived deductively from the literature had contemporary relevance as sources of union identity (general, industrial and occupational) (see Chapter 3). In contrast, the other two primary sources identified were derived inductively from observation of union names (organisational and geographical).

Secondly, there are those who employ more flexible frameworks that allow the relative strength of various criteria to be considered (Turner, 1962; Blackburn 1967; Undy et al, 1981; Hyman, 1994 and 2001; Hodder and Edwards, 2015). For Turner (1962), unions are relatively more open or closed, and although this simplistic continuum approach retains some merit, this work has concluded that it is necessary to recognise multiple dimensions

to more fully understand the projected identities of contemporary unions. Whilst recognising that unions that are not general in character are closed because they restrict membership in some way, this work has sought to answer the question: ‘What does closed mean in a contemporary context?’ The multidimensional framework answers this question by demonstrating that individual unions may restrict membership in a number of ways, and that it is this restriction that makes them both ‘closed’ and ‘niche’ unions. Therefore this work does not oppose that of Turner (1962), but rather builds upon it in order to explain what ‘closed’ means by incorporating multiple dimensions of union identity.

The multidimensional framework developed by Blackburn (1967) to explain union character also provides insight for this work. Although some of his criteria are now somewhat dated, as for example, seeing Labour Party affiliation as an indicator of social class, what is more important for this work is his recognition that some criteria are absolute whilst others are relative, which is applied to the sources of union identity. For example, whereas Unite and GMB were observed to be ‘true generals’ because they were prepared to recruit both horizontally and vertically throughout the labour market, Unison was seen to be a vertical general union organising only in the public sector and public services, whilst Prospect was seen to be organising management and professional staffs horizontally across the labour market. A further example is that of geographical identity, where some unions were variously observed to be operating within an area of the United Kingdom (SSTA), based in two countries (NUJ) or to be multinational in character (Nautilus).

Although primarily concerned with change in trade unions, the work of Undy et al (1981) is also instructive. Whilst their findings are of little direct relevance to understanding contemporary union identities, three important points emerge that are consistent with this work: Firstly, their focus on understanding internal factors rather than external perception; secondly, as with Blackburn (1967), they employ a flexible multidimensional framework of analysis, recognising that a complex interaction of factors may contribute to understanding individual unions; and finally, they recognise unions as being in a dynamic situation, which in relation to unions’ projected identities means that research observations necessarily take a ‘snapshot’ of a ‘moving picture’.

The work of Hyman (1994 and 2001), which offers two different if at points overlapping explanations of union identity, is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, whereas this work is confined to UK certified unions, both his frameworks are conceived in a European context and are constructed with extremely broad categories to accommodate unions

operating within very different national systems. Secondly, being broadly constructed, it is possible to locate any union within either framework, but this does not explain the complex construction of any particular union's projected identity. Thirdly, it is not clear why two alternative explanations are offered within such a short time period. Fourthly, neither framework appears to be based upon empirical research and therefore, they remain intellectual constructions with of necessity no basis in reality. In contrast, this research observed neither of Hyman's (1994 and 2001) frameworks in general, nor class in particular, as sources of UK certified unions' projected identities (see earlier discussion in Chapter 2).

More recently Hodder and Edwards (2015), addressing union identities as part of a wide ranging discussion, introduce a more complex framework of analysis. As with Hyman (1994, 2001), this is both generalised and lacks empirical justification. Furthermore, it is not clear whether Hyman (1994, 2001) or Hodder and Edwards (2015) are looking at the projected identities of trade unions or at their perception. Therefore it is argued here that these works do not advance the understanding of the projected identities of UK certified trade unions, nor do they satisfactorily explain the role of niche unions or niche unionism as explored in this work.

Contributions from other intellectual areas informed the development of the multidimensional framework (see discussion in Chapter 2), with three important points being drawn from organisational identity theories. Firstly, the recognition that organisations have 'observable characteristics' that distinguish them from other organisations (Whetton, 2006, Balmer, 2008). This provided a rationale for data collection and analysis (see Chapter 3), in contrast to certain earlier works (Hyman (1994, 2001; Hodder and Edwards, 2015), which lack empirical justification. Secondly, that organisational identities can at least to some extent be managed (Whetton, 2006; Balmer, 2008) was supported by evidence gathered from several unions (reported in Chapter 5). However, no reference was found to identity management in the extant literature of industrial relations. Thirdly, it was recognised that what is being studied in this work are unions' 'projected identities', which may embody the 'actual', 'communicated', 'ideal' or 'desired' types of identity (Balmer and Soenen, 1999). Although several writers in industrial relations use the term 'identity' (Hyman, 1994, 2001; Visser, 2012; Hodder and Edwards, 2015), it is not clear that they have a developed concept of what the term means, or whether they were referring to projected or perceived identities.

Turning to the concept of niche, there are very limited references to this in the industrial relations literature (Hyman, 2001; Visser, 2012). However, contributions from other disciplines were found to be helpful in developing both a conception of niche union identity and niche unionism, together with possible explanations for the persistence of niche unions. The concept of niche used in this work is derived from the literature of marketing, and is related to small markets rather than of necessity to the organisations that serve them (Dalgic and Leeuw, 1994). This led to the recognition that the concept of niche applies not only to niche unions but also that it includes unions that organise niches in the labour market through sectionalised structures. Therefore the term ‘niche unionism’ was introduced to cover both manifestations of niche.

Social identity, self-categorisation and identity theories were found to be instructive in explaining the persistence of niche unions in an era when general unions represent almost half of UK union membership (Certification Officer, 2016). The concept of niche was found to be related to the idea of group differentiation found in social identification theory (SIT) (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Brown, 2000; Taifel and Turner, 1986), the tendency of individuals to seek group affiliation and polarize around group norms, as recognised in self-categorisation theory (Hogg, Turner and Davidson, 1990), and to the roles and behaviour of individuals in society as explored in identity theory (Hogg, Terry and White, 1995). It is therefore argued that the phenomena of niche union identity and niche unionism needed to be understood not only in terms of the sources of union identity or their observable characteristics, but also through the need of individuals for affiliation and self-identity. In this respect, social identity derived or confirmed by union membership may help to explain both niche union identity and niche unionism where unions serve individual members’ needs for social identification, and particularly so in professional or other occupations where social identity is acquired or reinforced by union membership.

In some unions that were interviewed, occupational identity was found to be central to their persistence as niche unions and particularly so in the case of professional unions (AEP, BADN) and other occupational unions (NASS, NUJ, PFA, WGGB), where individuals’ self-identity and social identity may to some extent be related to union membership. Similarly, organisational unions were found to stress identification with both the union and employer (Advance, NACO, ROA). However, it is suggested that social identification may be weaker in an industry union where the membership is more diverse, and most diluted in general unions, albeit for any identity derived from sectional membership. Geographical identity was clearly demonstrated by SSTA, where differences

in the Scottish education are considered important, and by Nautilus, where the union reflects the multinational nature of the workforce it seeks to organise. In the case of NUJ, it is considered that the occupation of journalism gives the strongest indicator of niche identity rather than the union's bi-national formation. It could also be argued that union membership may be partially explained by SIT, if membership gives individuals 'in-group' status, and particularly so where the membership density is high and a social norm. However, this last assertion was not supported by the research data and therefore further work on the perceptions of union members would be required, which is beyond the scope of this study.

### **Summation**

It is argued in this section that as a consequence of union decline and the adoption of renewal and revitalisation strategies, the extant literature does not satisfactorily explain questions of union identity and the role of niche explored in this work. However, the contribution of earlier writers to the development of the multidimensional framework is acknowledged. The framework (introduced in Chapter 6) draws upon the 'sources' of unions' projected identity, which were derived both deductively from the literature of industrial relations (Webb and Webb, 1894, 1897; Turner, 1962; Hughes, 1967; Clegg, 1979), and inductively through reflexive analysis and pragmatic interpretation of 'observable characteristics' of union identity. It is argued that the flexibility afforded by a multidimensional framework rather than the adoption of rigid typologies is essential in understanding the complex identities projected by contemporary UK unions.

It is further argued that there are significant limitations to the extant industrial relations literature in understanding the question of niche (Hyman, 2001; Visser, 2012), and that contributions from other intellectual areas should be acknowledged. In particular, recognition of the concept of niche and that this concept relates to niche markets rather than necessarily to niche organisations (Dalgic and Leeuw, 1994) led to the concept of niche unionism in this work as applying to all unions that serve niches in the labour market. Further the persistence of niche union identity may be explained by social identity, identity, self-categorisation and identity theories (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Brown, 2000; Taifel and Turner, 1986; Hogg, Turner and Davidson, 1990; Hogg, Terry and White, 1995).

Overall it is argued that this work is superior to earlier works in three respects: Firstly, in providing a robust multidimensional framework of analysis for understanding the complex and multifaceted identities projected by UK certified trade unions based upon detailed empirical work (introduced in Chapter 6); secondly, by recognising the significance of niche union identity that is projected by the overwhelming majority of UK unions; thirdly, because the work recognises the broader concept of niche unionism, which includes certain general and other unions that organise niche memberships through sectionalised structures. In addition it is argued that concepts drawn from other disciplines including organisational identity theory, marketing, social identity theory, self-categorisation and identity theories, should be acknowledged in the literature of industrial relations.

### **7.3 Future directions for the research**

In limiting the work to UK certified trade unions, it is acknowledged that there is significant scope for further research, which could include: exploring uncertified UK unions, a longitudinal study to assess how union identities are changing over time, and comparative studies to examine how union identities are manifested in other countries. In respect of the latter, it is accepted that additional sources would be needed to explore union identity in other countries, as for example in France, where unions are organised along religious and political lines (Milner, 2015). More extensive research could be conducted, particularly in respect of the website survey, where revisiting websites could disclose ongoing changes, and by conducting further interviews to gain greater insight. Whilst the questionnaire response rate was relatively good and most respondents ticked most of the boxes, the qualitative content was relatively sparse. Therefore further use of this method would require more consideration. In exploring the projected identities of unions, this work has not sought to explore how union identities are perceived by union members or by the wider public, which would require different research to be conducted. Overall it is considered that further research could develop the multidimensional framework, perhaps recognising other sources of identity. Therefore the multidimensional framework is not presented as a universal panacea for the understanding of all union identities, in all places and at all times, but rather as a significant contribution to knowledge in advancing the understanding of union identities and the role of niche.

## 7.4 Conclusions

This work makes an important contribution to knowledge by developing and operationalising a multidimensional framework of analysis for the understanding of union identities, niche union identity and the role of niche unionism. The research was conducted against the background of a dramatic decline in union membership, power and influence over recent decades, when unions have developed a number of responses that would seem to have halted the membership decline. However, these responses were not adopted universally but rather in different measures by various unions at various points in time. The decline and the responses to it are seen to have important implications for the identities of certified UK unions, particularly in terms of new union identities created by merger, rebranding and by the formation of new unions.

The work explores questions of union identity and niche by employing a methodological approach of empirical pragmatism and reflexive analysis, in which successive phases of the research were informed by the preceding sections. In exploring the question of how the projected identities of UK unions could be more fully understood, the work develops a multidimensional framework of analysis, which recognises primary, secondary and additional sources of union identity. Whilst the primary sources establish a union's membership territories and the secondary sources help to clarify these, the additional sources recognise other important components in the construction of unions' projected identities (see discussion in Chapter 3).

The work recognises the inadequacy of extant literature in explaining the projected identities of contemporary UK unions (Turner, 1962; Blackburn, 1967; Hughes 1967; Clegg 1979; Hyman, 1994; 2001; Hodder and Edwards, 2015), and that theorisation of niche in the context of unions is extremely limited (Hyman, 2001; Visser, 2012). Although the existing categorisations of 'general', 'industrial' and 'occupational' are incorporated into the multidimensional framework as potential sources of identity, the new framework goes beyond these in three important respects. Firstly, it recognises these as 'sources of identity' rather than as rigid categorisations. Secondly, this allows for the flexible application of sources that are seen as relative rather than absolute concepts, which is consistent with the approach of Turner (1962), and to some extent Blackburn (1967). It is recognised that, with the exception of what are termed 'true generals' (GMB, Unite), there are potentially degrees of application of the sources of union identity rather than strict categorisation. Thirdly, it allows for further sources of identity to be incorporated to

enhance the multidimensional framework should these be identified. Therefore it is argued that the adoption of the multidimensional framework provides a more satisfactory understanding of UK certified unions identities than would be possible through the application of any earlier contribution.

The work recognises the concept of ‘niche’ (Dalgic and Leeuw, 1994), this having received scant attention in the literature of industrial relations (Hyman, 2001; Visser, 2012). The work has introduced the concepts of niche union identity and niche unions, which by number represent most UK certified unions. These unions are seen to restrict membership by one or more of the primary sources of union identity. Application of the multidimensional framework makes possible a developed understanding of what ‘closed’ (Turner, 1962) means in relation to contemporary niche union identities. The work also recognises that larger and particularly general unions accommodate diverse groups of members through sectionalised structures. It has introduced the concept of ‘niche unionism’ to encompass both niche unions and those unions serving niches through sectionalised structures. By utilising this overarching term, it is argued that, with few exceptions, UK certified trade unions, organising the vast majority of UK trade union members, embrace the concept of niche. Therefore it is argued that the concept of niche union identity, niche unions and niche unionism should be acknowledged and incorporated into the literature of industrial relations.

It is argued that as a result of union decline and renewal and revitalisation strategies over recent decades, existing theorisations do not explain the diversity of union identities currently operating in the UK or the role of niche in union identities. To address these deficiencies, this work makes three important contributions to knowledge. Firstly, by operationalising a multidimensional framework of analysis for understanding the projected identities of certified UK trade unions. This framework provides an original, distinctive and robust system of analysis, which is capable of further development in order to recognise future developments. In doing so it goes beyond the extant literature, which either advocates rigid categorisation (Webb and Webb, 1894; Hyman, 1975; Hughes, 1967; Clegg, 1979; Heery and Kelly, 1994; Visser, 2012) or more flexible multidimensional frameworks (Turner, 1962; Blackburn 1967; Undy et al, 1981; Hyman, 1994 and 2001; Hodder and Edwards, 2015). Secondly, the multidimensional framework permits the recognition of niche union identities and niche unions, which form the greatest number of unions operating in the UK. In doing so the work further recognises the concept of niche, drawn from ecology and marketing (Hannan et al, 2003; Dalgic and Leeuw, 1994), which

has received limited attention in industrial relations literature (Hyman, 2001; Visser, 2012). Thirdly, the work has recognised that larger and particularly general unions also organise niches in the labour market through sectionalised structures. The work introduces the concept of niche unionism as an overarching term, which recognises that the concept of niche has been embraced, with few exceptions, by UK certified trade unions. Finally, it is argued that all three of these contributions to knowledge significantly advance the understanding of UK certified trade unions and effectively help to explain what ‘closed’ (Turner, 1962) means in relation to contemporary UK certified trade unions.

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## Appendix 1: Form UPR16



# FORM UPR16

## Research Ethics Review Checklist

Please include this completed form as an appendix to your thesis (see the Postgraduate Research Student Handbook for more information)

<b>Postgraduate Research Student (PGRS) Information</b>		<b>Student ID:</b>	<b>442601-01</b>
<b>Candidate Name:</b>	<b>Robert George Smale</b>		
<b>Department:</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>First Supervisor:</b>	<b>Stephen Williams</b>
<b>Start Date:</b>	<b>October 2008.</b>		

<b>Study Mode and Route:</b>	<b>Part-time</b> ✓	<b>PhD</b> ✓
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<b>Title of Thesis:</b>	<b>Trade Union Identities and the Role of Niche Unionism: Exploring Contemporary United Kingdom Trade Unions.</b>
<b>Thesis Word Count:</b> (excluding ancillary data)	<b>78,618</b>

If you are unsure about any of the following, please contact the local representative on your Faculty Ethics Committee for advice. Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University's Ethics Policy and any relevant University, academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study

Although the Ethics Committee may have given your study a favourable opinion, the final responsibility for the ethical conduct of this work lies with the researcher(s).

### UKRIO Finished Research Checklist:

(If you would like to know more about the checklist, please see your Faculty or Departmental Ethics Committee rep or see the online version of the full checklist at: <http://www.ukrio.org/what-we-do/code-of-practice-for-research/>)

a) <b>Have all of your research and findings been reported accurately, honestly and within a reasonable time frame?</b>	<b>YES</b>
b) <b>Have all contributions to knowledge been acknowledged?</b>	<b>YES</b>
c) <b>Have you complied with all agreements relating to intellectual property, publication and authorship?</b>	<b>YES</b>
d) <b>Has your research data been retained in a secure and accessible form and will it remain so for the required duration?</b>	<b>YES</b>

e) Does your research comply with all legal, ethical, and contractual requirements?	YES
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<b>Candidate Statement:</b>	
I have considered the ethical dimensions of the above named research project, and have successfully obtained the necessary ethical approval(s)	
<b>Ethical review number(s) from Faculty Ethics Committee (or from NRES/SCREC):</b>	<b>E106</b>
<b>Signed:</b> <i>(Student)</i>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>If you have <i>not</i> submitted your work for ethical review, and/or you have answered 'No' to one or more of questions a) to e), please explain why this is so:</b>	
<b>Signed:</b> <i>(Student)</i>	<b>Date:</b>

## **Appendix 2: Trade union questionnaire cover letter – first mailing**

17<sup>th</sup> May 2011.

Dear Sir or Madam,

### **Research into Trade Union Identities.**

I am a Senior Lecturer at the University of Brighton where my teaching includes industrial relations and a part-time doctoral student at the University of Portsmouth. I am currently a UCU Casework Officer and was previously active in the Musicians' Union and BIFU (now part of Unite).

My research looks at the changing identities of UK unions and in support of this I would be most grateful if you or one of your staff could complete a short questionnaire over the next three weeks. This will take approximately ten to fifteen minutes and I have enclosed a stamped addressed envelope for your convenience.

If you would prefer to complete an electronic version, please email me for a copy at:

b.g.smale@brighton.ac.uk

Whilst no individuals will be named or identified in reporting the data, your union may be named in my work. I would be pleased to supply you with a brief report of the results if that would be of interest to you. When completing the questionnaire, please indicate if you would be prepared to cooperate further with the research by taking part in a face-to-face or telephone interview.

Yours faithfully,

Bob Smale.

Enc. Trade Union Questionnaire.  
Stamped addressed envelope.

### **Appendix 3: Trade union questionnaire cover letter – second mailing**

21<sup>st</sup> June 2011.

Dear Sir or Madam,

#### **Research into Trade Union Identities**

I wrote recently about research I am conducting on trade unions identities. I believe this topic is important for increasing our understanding of how trade unions might prosper in the future. I would really value your opinions and would like to include your union in the research.

I am currently a Senior Lecturer at the University of Brighton and a doctoral student at the University of Portsmouth. I am also a life-long trade unionist, currently a UCU Casework Officer and was previously active in the Musicians' Union and BIFU (now part of Unite).

I would be extremely grateful if you or a member of your staff could complete the enclosed questionnaire. This will take approximately ten to fifteen minutes and I have enclosed a stamped addressed envelope. If you would prefer an electronic version, please email me for a copy at:

b.g.smale@brighton.ac.uk

When completing the questionnaire, please indicate if you would be prepared to cooperate further with the research by taking part in a face-to-face or telephone interview.

Whilst no individuals will be named or identified in reporting the data, your union may be named in my work. I would be pleased to supply you with a brief report of the results if that would be of interest to you.

Yours faithfully,

Bob Smale.

Enc. Trade Union Questionnaire.  
Stamped addressed envelope.

## **Appendix 4: Trade union interview protocol**

### **Trade Union Interview Protocol**

The standard protocol to be used with all interviewees.

Interviewees to be briefed at the commencement of each interview concerning the nature of the research and how the data would be used for the conduct of interviews

Data collected from the interview phase to be used together with other data to inform the discussion in the thesis.

Face-to-face interviewees to be asked to sign a consent form embodying permission to make a digital recording.

Telephone interviewees to be sent a consent form and asked to acknowledge their agreement when replying.

All digitalised recordings to be downloaded to a password protected computer at the researcher's place of work and the content of the interview subsequently transcribed into a written record of the interview.

The standard list of interview questions to be used as a template for the written record of interviews and a copy sent by email to the interviewee concerned to confirm agreement.

In all cases an email confirmation received to be put on file and any amendments noted in order that there is a true and accurate report of the meeting on file.

**Appendix 5: Analysis of union identity from preliminary study of union names**

89 percent of union titles suggested a niche identity, by reference to one or more of the following sources of union identity: industry, occupation, profession or organisation.

73 percent of unions had a title indicating an occupation or profession.

13 percent of unions had a title suggesting an identity derived from that of an employing organisation.

10 percent of unions had little or no discernible niche identity.

## Appendix 6: Sources of union identity from website survey

	General	Occupational	Industrial	Organisational	Geographical
<b>Frequency</b>	11	83	84	12	11
<b>Percent</b>	10.1	76.1	77.1	11	9.1

*Website survey data, n = 109.*

## Appendix 7: Cross tabulation of union identities

<b>Union identity</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>General</b>	10	9.2
<b>Occupation</b>	3	2.8
<b>Industrial</b>	6	5.5
<b>Organisational</b>	7	6.4
<b>Occupation and Industrial</b>	70	64.2
<b>Occupational and Organisational</b>	3	2.8
<b>Geographical and Organisational</b>	2	1.8
<b>Geographical and General</b>	1	0.9
<b>Occupational, Organisational and Geographical</b>	7	6.4

*Website survey data, n = 109.*

## Appendix 8: Trade union website survey document

<b>1. Full name of union?</b>	
<b>2. URL?</b>	
<b>3. Date visited?</b>	
<b>4. What union identity given on site?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Full name given (Y/N)?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Acronym given (Y/N)?</b> <b>Does acronym imply a meaning (Y/N)</b> <b>What meaning does this imply?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Logo?</b> <b>What meaning does imply?</b>	
<b>5. Strapline?</b>	
<b>6. Is a niche identity stated:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Occupational</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Professional</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Industrial</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Institutional</b>	<b>Yes/no?</b>
<b>7. Are links provided to any of the above areas e.g. institutional sub-section?</b>	
<b>8. Are aims and objectives stated?</b>	
<b>9. Are current campaigns reported?</b>	
<b>10. Membership benefits identified?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Collective representation?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Individual representation?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Fringe benefits (e.g. free legal services)?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Commercial benefits (e.g. discounts)?</b>	
<b>11. Are barriers to membership stated?</b>	
<b>12. Are membership subscriptions stated?</b>	
<b>13. Are payment methods:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Explained?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Direct debit?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Salary check off?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other?</b>	
<b>14. How to join made clear?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Workplace representative?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Online recruitment possible?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Telephone recruitment possible?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Postal application?</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
<b>15. Any other online facilities offered?</b>	
<b>16. Any other significant features?</b>	

Union survey proforma.doc

## Appendix 9 : Trade unions observed in the website survey

Accord
Advance
Aegis: The Aegon UK Staff Association
Alliance for Finance
Aspect
Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
Associated Train Crew Union
Association for Clinical Biochemistry
Association for College Management
Association of Educational Psychologists
Association of Head Teachers and Deputies in Scotland
Association of Licensed Aircraft Engineers (1981)
Association of Local Authority Chief Executives
Association of Principal Fire Officers
Association of Professional Music Therapists in Great Britain.
Association of Revenue and Customs.
Association of School and College Leaders
Association of Teachers and Lecturers
Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union
British Air Line Pilots Association
Boots Pharmacists Association
Britannia Staff Union
British Association of Colliery Management - Technical, Energy and Administrative Management
British Association of Dental Nurses
British Association of Journalists
British Dental Association
British Dietetic Association
British Medical Association
British Orthoptic Society
Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
Communication Workers Union
Community
Community and District Nursing Association
Connect: The Union for Professionals in Communications*
Dental Practitioners Association
Derbyshire Group Staff Union
Educational Institute of Scotland
Equity
FDA
Fire Brigades Union
Fire Officers Association
GMB
Guild of Professional Teachers of Dance Movement to Music and Dramatic Arts.
Headmasters and Headmistresses Conference.
Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association
Immigration Service Union
Independent Democratic Union
Independent Federation of Nursing in Scotland

Independent Pilots Federation
Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) – British Isles
Institute of Football Management and Administration
International Federation of Air Line Pilots Associations
Irish Bank Officials Association
Lecturers Employment Advice and Action Fellowship
Lloyds TSB Group Union
Locum Doctors Association
Musicians Union
National Association of Co-operative Officials
National Association of Head Teachers
National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
National Association of Stable Staff
National Federation of Sub-Postmasters
National Society for Education in Art and Design.
National Union of Journalists
National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers
National Union of Teachers
Nationwide Group Staff Union
Nautilus UK*
Palm Paper Staff Association
PDA Union, The
Prison Officers Association.
Prison Governors Association
Prison Service Union
Professional Cricketers Association
Professional Footballers' Association
Professional Rugby Players Association
Prospect
Retained Firefighters Union
Retired Officers Association
Royal College of Midwives
Royal College of Nursing of the United Kingdom
Scottish Artists Union
Scottish Secondary Teacher's Association
Shield Guarding Association
SURGE (Skipton Union Representing Group Employees)
Society of Authors Limited
Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists
Society of Radiographers
Solidarity
Transport Salaried Staffs' Association
UFS
Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (National Association of Teachers in Wales)
Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians.
Union of Country Sports Workers
Union of Democratic Mineworkers
Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers
Unison
Unite the Union
United and Independent Union
United Road Transport Union
Unity

University and College Union
Voice
Welsh Rugby Players Association
Writers' Guild of Great Britain
Yorkshire Independent Staff Association

## Appendix 10: Trade union questionnaire

1. What is the name or acronym by which your union is most commonly known?

.....

2. Is membership of your union generally limited to people from (please tick one or more as appropriate):

- A trade, occupation or profession?
- An industry or industrial sector?
- An organisation or institution?
- A geographical area within the United Kingdom?
- Not limited by any of the above?

3. If your union limits membership according to any of the above criteria, have these limitations changed in the last five years (please tick one option):

- Yes?
- No?

If you answered yes, could you say briefly how these limitations have changed?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

4. If your union has changed its name or adopted an acronym in the last five years, what were the main reasons for doing this? Please indicate the degree of importance that comes closest to your opinion for *all* of the items listed below, by circling the most appropriate answer (1 – 4).

If your union has not changed its name or adopted an acronym please go to question six.

The main reason for changing the name was:	Degree of importance			
	<i>Major</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>None/not applicable</i>
To convey the distinctive character of the union?	4	3	2	1
To better reflect the composition of our existing membership?	4	3	2	1
To attract new members?	4	3	2	1
As a result of a merger or mergers?	4	3	2	1
To change or modernise the image of the union?	4	3	2	1
Other?	4	3	2	1

If you circled *other*, could you say briefly why your union changed its name or adopted an acronym?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

Questionnaire continues overleaf...

5. If your union has changed its name or adopted an acronym in the last five years, how effective do think this change has been in helping to achieve the union's aims (please tick one option):
- Very effective?
  - Fairly effective?
  - Neither effective nor ineffective?
  - Fairly ineffective?
  - Completely ineffective?

6. If your union has a logo, what are the main messages that it seeks to convey? Please indicate the degree of importance that comes closest to your opinion for *all* of the items listed below, by circling the most appropriate answer (1 – 4). If your union does not use a logo, please go to question eight.

The main messages the logo is seeking to convey are that it:	Degree of importance			
	<i>Major</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>None/not applicable</i>
Conveys the distinctive character of the union?	4	3	2	1
Illustrates who the union represents?	4	3	2	1
Depicts what the members or potential members do?	4	3	2	1
Suggests what the union does e.g. representation.	4	3	2	1
Incorporates the employer's name or logo?	4	3	2	1
Indicates the geographical coverage of the union?	4	3	2	1
Implies a sense of solidarity or doing things collectively?	4	3	2	1
Other?	4	3	2	1

If you circled *other*, could you say briefly what other message your union's logo is seeking to convey?

.....

.....

.....

.....

7. If your union has a logo, how effective do think this is in projecting your union's identity? (please tick one option):

- Very effective?
- Fairly effective?
- Neither effective nor ineffective?
- Fairly ineffective?
- Completely ineffective?

8. If your union regularly uses a 'strapline' after the union logo, name or acronym, what are the main messages your union is seeking to convey? Please indicate the degree of importance that comes closest to your opinion for *all* of the items listed below, by circling the most appropriate answer (1 – 4). If your union does not use a strapline, please go to the next question.

The main message delivered by the strapline is that it:	Degree of importance			
	<i>Major</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>None/not applicable</i>
Conveys the distinctive character of the union?	4	3	2	1
Says who the union represents?	4	3	2	1
Says what the members or potential members do?	4	3	2	1
Says what the union does e.g. representation?	4	3	2	1
Incorporates the employer's name?	4	3	2	1
Indicates the geographical coverage of the union?	4	3	2	1
Implies a sense of solidarity or doing things collectively?	4	3	2	1
Other?	4	3	2	1

If you circled *other*, could you say briefly what other message your union's strapline is seeking to convey?

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

9. If your union regularly uses a 'strapline' after the union logo, name or acronym, how effective do think this is in projecting your union's identity (please tick one option).

- Very effective?
- Fairly effective?
- Neither effective nor ineffective?
- Fairly ineffective?
- Completely ineffective?

10. If your union has a website, for what purposes is it mainly used? Please indicate the degree of importance that comes closest to your opinion for *all* of the items listed below, by circling the most appropriate answer (1 – 4):

If your union does not have a website, please go to question twelve.

The main purposes the website is used for are to:	Degree of importance			
	<i>Major</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>None/not applicable</i>
Convey the distinctive character of the union?	4	3	2	1
Give information to existing members?	4	3	2	1
Give information to potential members?	4	3	2	1
Give information to the general public?	4	3	2	1
Recruit new members?	4	3	2	1
Provide a gateway for union members to access services?	4	3	2	1
Allow access to a members' area?	4	3	2	1
Other?	4	3	2	1

If you circled *other*, could you say briefly for what other purposes the website is used?

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

11. If your union has a website, how effective do think it is in helping to achieve the union's aims (please tick one option)

- Very effective?
- Fairly effective?
- Neither effective nor ineffective?
- Fairly ineffective?
- Completely ineffective?

12. How important do you consider the benefits listed below are to your union's membership? Please indicate the degree of importance that comes closest to your opinion for *all* of the items listed below, by circling the most appropriate answer (1 – 4).

The most important benefits to your union's membership are:	Degree of importance			
	<i>Major</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>None/not</i>

				<i>applicable</i>
Collective representation?	4	3	2	1
Individual representation?	4	3	2	1
Specialist advice or legal services related to members' occupation or profession?	4	3	2	1
Free legal advice on matters concerning the members' employment?	4	3	2	1
Free legal services for non-employment related matters?	4	3	2	1
Union newspaper or professional journal?	4	3	2	1
Members' call centre and / or telephone helpline?	4	3	2	1
Members' area on website and / or library facility?	4	3	2	1
Career development or employability training?	4	3	2	1
Commercial benefits including discounts and retailing?	4	3	2	1
Benevolent scheme, health, welfare or pension benefits?	4	3	2	1
Other?	4	3	2	1

If you circled *other*, could you say briefly for what other benefits are important to your union's membership?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

13. How effective do think your union's benefit package is in helping to attract and retain members? (please tick one option)

- Very effective?
- Fairly effective?
- Neither effective nor ineffective?
- Fairly ineffective?
- Completely ineffective?

14. Would you like to (please tick one or more as appropriate):

- Contribute to the next stage of the research by participating in a telephone interview?
- Contribute to the next stage of the research by participating in a face-to-face interview?
- Receive an anonymised summary of the results from this questionnaire?

<p>If you ticked any of the options in question fourteen, please give your contact details:</p> <p>Name: .....</p> <p>Position: .....</p> <p>Telephone: .....</p> <p>Email Address: .....</p>
---

Please return your completed questionnaire in the stamped addressed envelope provided to:  
Bob Smale, University of Brighton Mithras House, Lewes Road, Brighton, BN2 0EX.

*Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire.*

## **Appendix 11: Anonymised summary of trade union questionnaire data**

### **Research into Trade Union Identities**

#### **Anonymised Summary of Trade Union Questionnaire Data**

##### **Overview:**

The research looks at the changing identities of UK unions and in support of this a questionnaire was distributed to 158 certified trade unions last year. The first mailing in May generated 51 responses whilst a further mailing produced an additional 24. Overall, 75 responses were received representing a response rate of 47.5 percent. However, if eleven unions that ceased to operate during or shortly after the period of data collection were excluded, this would improve the effective response rate to 51 percent. This report comprises aggregate data from both ‘tick box’ questions together with a summary of additional comments that were made.

##### **Questionnaire Responses:**

###### **3. Limitations to union membership**

Respondents reported that membership of their union was generally limited to people by one or more of the following categories:

<b>Type of Union Selected</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>percent</b>
<b>Occupation</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>61.3</b>
<b>Industry</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>24.0</b>
<b>Organisation</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>22.7</b>
<b>Geographically</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5.3</b>
<b>Not limited</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8.0</b>

###### **4. Change of limitations to union membership**

Eighteen respondents representing 24 percent of the sample reported that their union had changed limitations membership in the last five years.

Sixteen respondents made a comment concerning this and in all cases it was to indicate an extension of membership, with the reasons stated being related to widening occupation categories (9), organisational boundaries (4), geographical boundaries (1) and gender (1) with one comment being non-specific.

## 5. Reasons for changing union name

Nineteen respondents representing 25.3 percent of the sample reported that their union had changed its name in the last five years and that the main reasons for this were:

	Degree of importance			
	Major percent	Moderate percent	Low percent	None/not applicable percent
To convey the distinctive character of the union?	9.3	10.7	0	0
To better reflect the composition of our existing membership?	6.7	6.6	2.7	1.3
To attract new members?	12	6.7	2.7	0
As a result of a merger or mergers?	8	0	0	12
To change or modernise the image of the union?	12	8	1.3	0
Other	2.7	0	0	5.3

Eight respondents made a comment concerning changing the union name with the reasons given being: to clarify who could join (2), to improve the union image (2), because the union had merged (1), because the employer had merged (1), to reflect the increased geographical spread of the union's membership (1) with one comment being non-specific.

## 6. Effectiveness of union name change

Eighteen respondents representing 24 percent of the sample assessed the effectiveness of the name change as follows:

Very effective percent	Fairly effective percent	Neither effective nor Ineffective percent	Fairly ineffective percent	Very ineffective percent
6.7	14.2	11.1	0	0

## 7. Main messages conveyed by union logo

Seventy respondents representing 93.3 percent of the sample reported that their union had a logo and the main messages that it was seen to convey were as follows:

	Degree of importance			
	Major percent	Moderate percent	Low percent	None/not applicable percent
Conveys the distinctive character of the union?	28	33.3	10.7	10.7
Illustrates who the union represents?	34.7	25.3	9.3	13.3
Depicts what the members or potential members do?	25.3	18.7	10.7	24
Suggests what the union does e.g. representation.	18.7	10.7	21.3	25.3
Incorporates the employer's name or logo?	10.7	6.7	1.3	52
Indicates the geographical coverage of the union?	9.3	12	6.7	44
Implies a sense of solidarity or doing things collectively?	33.3	10.7	14.7	22.7
Other?	8	4	1.3	24

Continued overleaf....

Nine respondents made a comment concerning the union logo and in all cases referred or alluded to the image of the union. Whilst two respondents mentioned projecting a modern image others mentioned: relating to working people (1), indicating prestige (1), the industry concerned (1), seriousness (1), collectively (1), strike activity (1) and anti-racism (1).

## 8. Effectiveness of Logo

Sixty-nine respondents representing 92 percent of the sample assessed the effectiveness of their union's logo as follows:

Very percent	Fairly percent	Neither effective nor Ineffective percent	Fairly ineffective percent	Very ineffective percent
18.7	54.7	13.3	5.3	0

## 9. Main messages conveyed by union strapline

Forty-four respondents representing 58.7 percent of the sample reported that their union regularly uses a 'strapline' after the union logo, name or acronym and the main messages that it was seen to convey were as follows:

	Degree of importance			
	Major percent	Moderate percent	Low percent	None/not applicable percent
Conveys the distinctive character of the union?	25.3	10.7	8	4
Says who the union represents?	36	2.7	4	10.7
Says what the members or potential members do?	22.7	10.7	5.3	10.7
Says what the union does e.g. representation?	20	17.3	5.3	5.3
Incorporates the employer's name?	6.7	2.7	6.7	28
Indicates the geographical coverage of the union?	4	8	4	26.7
Implies a sense of solidarity or doing things collectively?	33.3	9.3	4	5.3
Other?	13.3	0	0	1.3

Only four respondents made a comment concerning their union's strapline and these concerned: support for members (1), giving members a voice (1), representing working people (1) and the continuity and reliability of the union (1).

## 10. Effectiveness of strapline

Forty-four respondents representing 58.7 percent of the sample assessed the effectiveness of their union's strapline in projecting their union's identity as follows:

Very percent	Fairly percent	Neither effective nor Ineffective percent	Fairly ineffective percent	Very ineffective percent
32	22.6	4	0	0

Continued overleaf....

## 11. Purposes of union website

Sixty-nine respondents representing 92 percent of the sample reported that the purposes their union website is mainly used for are as follows:

	Degree of importance			
	Major percent	Moderate percent	Low percent	None/not applicable percent
Convey the distinctive character of the union?	41.3	26.7	8	2.7
Give information to existing members?	84	4	1.3	0
Give information to potential members?	64	16	4	0
Give information to the general public?	20	32	16	14.7
Recruit new members?	50.7	20	5.3	6.7
Provide a gateway for union members to access services?	50.7	18.7	6.7	6.7
Allow access to a members' area?	42.7	14.7	1.3	21.3
Other?	4	4	0	13.3

Twelve respondents made a comment concerning their union's website. Of these seven respondents were indicating other purposes and these comprised: communication with media and press, online publication as a source of advertising revenue, campaigning, regulatory functions and to present a code of conduct. However, four respondents commented directly upon the effectiveness of their union's website and these comments can be summarised as: needs developing (1), recently re-developed (1), currently being redeveloped (2). One respondent reiterated points for the tick box section above.

## 12. Effectiveness of union website

Sixty-seven respondents representing 89.3 percent of the sample assessed the effectiveness of their union's website, in helping to achieve their union's aims, as follows:

Very percent	Fairly percent	Neither effective nor Ineffective percent	Fairly ineffective percent	Very ineffective percent
26.7	48	12	2.7	0

## 13. Importance of elements within union benefit package

Seventy-three respondents representing 97.3 percent of the sample assessed the importance of the benefits offered to their union's membership as follows:

Continued overleaf....

	Degree of importance			
	Major percent	Moderate percent	Low percent	None/not applicable percent
Collective representation?	69.3	20	5.3	2.7
Individual representation?	86.7	6.7		1.3
Specialist advice or legal services related to members' occupation or profession?	60	26.7	2.7	4
Free legal advice on matters concerning the members' employment?	61.3	21.3	4	5.3
Free legal services for non-employment related matters?	14.7	29.3	22.7	24
Union newspaper or professional journal?	30.7	26.7	17.3	17.3
Members' call centre and / or telephone helpline?	28	24	13.3	25.3
Members' area on website and / or library facility?	20	32	16	22.7
Career development or employability training?	10.7	26.7	22.7	30.7
Commercial benefits including discounts and retailing?	6.7	28	37.3	18.7
Benevolent scheme, health, welfare or pension benefits?	18.7	21.3	17.3	32
Other?	5.3	2.7	1.3	16

Six respondents made a comment concerning their union's benefits package with all of these indicating other benefits and these comprised: information on job vacancies, pension information, moral support, access to education and training, that benefits were open to non-members, that benefits were open to ex-members.

#### 14. Effectiveness of union benefit package

Seventy-two respondents representing 96 percent of the sample assessed the effectiveness of their union's benefit package, in helping to attract and retain members, as follows:

Very effective percent	Fairly effective percent	Neither effective nor Ineffective percent	Fairly ineffective percent	Very ineffective percent
29.3	53.3	12	0	1.3

#### 15. Further participation in the research.

In response to the final question on further participation in the research, respondents indicated the following:

40 percent offered to participate in a telephone interview.

24 percent offered to participate in a face-to-face interview.

57 percent requested an anonymised summary of the results from this questionnaire.

**For further information on this research please contact:**

Bob Smale at University of Brighton,  
Mithras House,  
Lewes Road,  
Brighton,  
BN2 4AT.

Telephone: 02173 642694 or email: [b.g.smale@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:b.g.smale@brighton.ac.uk)

## Appendix 12: Unions responding to questionnaire

ACB/FCS
Advance
Aegis
AEP
AFA (Association of Flight Attendants)
AHDS
ALACE
AMiE
ARC
ASCL
Aspect
ATL
BACM – TEAM ( British Association of Colliery Management – Technical Energy and Administrative Management)
BADN
BAOT
BDA (British Dental Association)
BFAWU
BMA (replied by letter but did not complete the questionnaire).
BSU (Britannia Staff Union)
CSSF (City Screen Staff Forum)
Equity
FBU
FDA
FOA
G4S JSSA (G4S Justice Services Staff Association)
GMB
GPTD
HCSA
HSA
IBOA (Irish Bank Officials Association)
IFMA
IOJ
LTU (Lloyds Trade Union)
LUSA (Leek United Staff Association)
MU
NACO
NACODS (National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers)
NAGS (National Association of NFU Group Secretaries).
NASS
NASUWT
Nautilus
NFSP
NGSU
NSEAD
NUJ

NUM (questionnaire completed by NUM - North-East Area)
NUT
PCA
PCS
POA
Prospect
RCN
ROA
RSPBSA (RSPB Staff Association)
SABB (Staff Association of the Bank of Baroda (UK region))
SAU
Search
SGSA
SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks)
SOA
Solidarity
SSTA
SUE (Society of Union Employees)
UCSW
UCU
UDM
UGVW (Union of General and Volunteer Workers)
Unison
Unite
Unity
US
USDAW
Voice
WGGB
YISA (Yorkshire Independent Staff Association)

**Appendix 13: Trade union interview programme - standard list of questions**

**Trade Union Interview Programme - Standard Questions**

**Section A - Personal Details**

Name of Union: .....

Interviewee: .....

Position: .....

Time in position: .....

Telephone: .....

Email Address: .....

Date of interview: ..... Time: .....

**Section B – Union Identity**

**1. What is the name or acronym by which your union is most commonly known?**

Is that the certified name? Yes / No.

**2. Has your union changed or considered changing its name or adopted an acronym in recent years?**

Yes / No.

If yes, why?

**3. Has your union employed consultants, agencies or other media professionals to enhance the union image in recent years?**

Yes / No.

If yes, what contribution did they make in enhancing your union's image?

**4. Does your union regularly use a 'strapline' after the union name or**

**acronym?**

**Yes / No.**

**If yes, what do you think it adds to the way the union presents itself?**

**5. Does your union have a logo by which it might be recognised?**

**Yes / No.**

**If yes, what contribution does this make to enhancing your union's image?**

**6. Which of the following do you see your union identity most clearly projecting:**

- General union**
- Industrial union**
- Occupational union**
- Organisational union**
- Geographical union**
- Professional union**

### **Section C: Union Website**

**7. Does your union have a website?**

**Yes / No.**

**If yes, how has the use of this developed in recent years?**

**What benefits has this brought to the union?**

**If your website has a members' area, how useful has this been?**

### **Section D: Union mergers**

**8. Has your union been involved in merger or considered merger in the last few years?**

**Yes merged / Yes considered merger / No not merged / Not considered merger.**

- **If yes merged, how has it affected your union’s identity?**
- **If yes considered merger, how would this have affected union identity?**
- **If not merged or not considered merger, to what extent was retaining your union’s identify a factor in any discussion or decision made?**

**9. If your union has been the subject of merger(s) in recent years, has your union made special arrangements to accommodate or represent sectional interests?**

- **Yes / No.**
- **If yes, which groups have been included and how was this achieved?**

### **Section D – Membership and Recruitment**

**10. Does your union have categories of, or restrictions or barriers to, membership?**

- **Yes / No.**
- **If yes, how and why have these changed in recent years?**
- **Are there categories for students, trainees, self-employed, freelance or pensioners?**

**11. To what extent have membership benefits been tailored to meet the needs of your existing or potential membership?**

**In particular:**

- **Collective representation.**
- **Individual representation.**
- **Fringe benefits (e.g. free legal services).**
- **Commercial benefits (e.g. discounts).**

**Other?**

**12. Has your union launched recruitment campaigns in recent years?**

**Yes / No.**

**If yes, what form did these take?**

**Were campaigns focused upon specific groups of potential members?**

**13. Have the methods by which new members can join been developed in recent years?**

**Yes / No.**

**If yes, which methods and how were they developed?**

**In particular**

**Recruitment by workplace representatives?**

**Online recruitment?**

**Telephone recruitment / union call centre?**

**Other?**

**How successful have these developments been?**

**14. Have the methods by which members can pay subscriptions been developed in recent years?**

**Yes / No.**

**If yes, which methods have been introduced?**

## **Section E – Miscellaneous**

**15. Has your union changed its affiliations in recent years?**

- Yes / No.**
- If yes, how and to:**
- TUC**
- Labour Party**
- Other?**

**16. Does your union have a political fund?**

- Yes / No.**
- If yes, has the use of this changed in recent years and if so, how?**

**17. Has your union developed a regeneration, revitalisation or similar change strategy in recent years?**

- Yes / No.**
- If yes, would it be possible to have a copy please?**

**18. Are there any other significant features of your union or recent developments that you would wish to report?**

## **Appendix 14: Trade union interview consent form**

### **Research into Trade Unions Identities and the Role of Niche Unions**

#### **Consent for Participation in Research Interview**

In agreeing to participate in this research I understand that:

1. I volunteer to participate in a research project being conducted by Bob Smale in support of doctoral research being completed under the supervision of University of Portsmouth Business School (Director of Studies, Dr Stephen Williams, who may be emailed at [Stephen.Williams@port.ac.uk](mailto:Stephen.Williams@port.ac.uk) to confirm that I am conducting this research).
2. The project is designed to gather information about trade unions, that participation involves being interviewed for approximately 30-50 minutes and that I will be one of approximately 30 people being interviewed for this research.
3. My participation in this project is voluntary, that I will not be paid for my participation, that I may withdraw or discontinue participation at any time without penalty and that any such decision will not be reported in the research output.
4. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview, that I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
5. The interview will be recorded and confirm that I am willing to have a digital voice recording of the interview made.
6. All interview notes and digital voice recordings will be downloaded to a password protected computer, that the content will be transcribed into a written record.
7. A copy of the transcript will be sent to me by email in order to confirm that it represents a true and accurate report of the meeting.
8. I will not be identified by name in the research output and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure but that my union and job title may be used.
9. That this research project has received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of the University of Portsmouth Business School.
10. I have been given a copy of this consent form which I have read and understood, that I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction and that I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**For further information, please contact: Bob Smale on 01273-642694 or email [b.g.smale@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:b.g.smale@brighton.ac.uk)**

This form was developed from a sample downloaded from [www.stanford.edu/group/ncpi/.../pdf/sampleinformedconsent.pdf](http://www.stanford.edu/group/ncpi/.../pdf/sampleinformedconsent.pdf)

## Appendix 15: Trade unions offering to participate in the interview programme

General	Industrial / Occupational	Organisational	Geographical	Professional	Educational
<b>GMB (T)</b>	<b>ALACE (F&amp;T)</b>	<b>Advance ( (T)</b>	<b>Nautilus (T)</b>	<b>ACB/FCS (F&amp;T)</b>	<b>ASCL(F&amp;T)</b>
<b>Unison</b>	BACM (T)	<b>NACO (F)</b>	<b>NUJ (T)</b>	<b>AEP (F&amp;T)</b>	<b>ATL (F&amp;T)</b>
<b>Unite (T&amp;F)*</b>	<b>BFAWU (T)*</b>	<b>ROA (F&amp;T)</b>	<b>SSTA (F&amp;T)</b>	<b>BADN (T)</b>	<b>NSEAD (T)</b>
<b>Prospect (T)</b>	<b>FOA (F)</b>	G4S JSSA (T)		BAOT (T)	<b>Voice (T)</b>
Solidarity (T&F)	NAGS (T)	SURGE (T)			
	<b>NASS (F)</b>	SGSA (T)			
	<b>PFA (T)</b>	SUWBBS (Skipton Union Representing Group Employees) (F&T)			
	<b>POA (T)</b>				
	<b>WGGB (F&amp;T)</b>				
	PCA (T)				

### **Key:**

T = telephone interview offered.

F = face-to-face interview offered.

Bold indicates interview completed.

\* = Interview not consented

## Appendix 16: Effectiveness of the union name change

<b>Very effective percent</b>	<b>Fairly effective percent</b>	<b>Neither effective nor ineffective percent</b>	<b>Fairly ineffective percent</b>	<b>Very ineffective percent</b>
27.8	61.1	11.1	0	0

*Questionnaire data, n = 18.*

## Appendix 17: Union logos clearly suggesting occupational identity

Union name	Graphic content of logo
Association of Professional Music Therapists in Great Britain	Five lines across representing the musical stave.
Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union	Ears of wheat suggesting wheat, flour and bread.
British Association of Colliery Management.	Representation that looks like a figure in a cage descending into a mine.
Equity	The masks of comedy and tragedy over the union name.
Fire Brigades Union	Union abbreviation in a circle with a fire-fighters helmet above, perhaps implying the protection of the union as well as indicating the nature of the occupation.
Independent Pilots Federation	Union abbreviation within a badge, which looks like a dial.
Institute of Football Management and Administration	Union name and abbreviation alongside a football.
Musicians Union	A treble clef in the form of double bass and a double bass player, which suggests both music and musicians.
National Association of Stable Staff	A horse's head within a horse shoe.
National Union of Mineworkers	A badge format with the word 'National' together with the abbreviation 'NUM', two miners and mining artefacts.
Professional Cricketers Association	A cricket bat and ball in rectangle.
Professional Rugby Players Association	Union abbreviation and name with an outline figure of a rugby player within a rectangle.
Royal College of Midwives	A silhouette of couple with baby.
Society of Radiographers	An image of the sun together with a picture of a woman in white coat in front of equipment, perhaps implying radiation from the sun and the technical role of their members.
Welsh Rugby Players Association	A rugby player running with ball.
Writers' Guild of Great Britain	Union name in a rectangle with the word 'writers' in italics as if hand written.
Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians	A representation of a hard hat.

**Appendix 18: Examples of union logos clearly suggesting occupational identity**

**Equity:**



**The Musicians Union:**



**The Welsh Rugby Players Association:**



**Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians:**



## Appendix 19: Union logos possibly suggesting occupational identity

Union name	Graphic content of logo and subjective interpretation
British Air Line Pilots Association	Union abbreviation over two arrows forming a dart shape.
British Dental Association	Union abbreviation within two horizontal brackets, which might be seen as mouth between two lips.
British Orthoptic Society	Union abbreviation with horizontal bracket over it, which looks somewhat like an eye.
Communication Workers Union	Union abbreviation with a couple of wavy lines, perhaps implying radio waves.
Immigration Service Union	A yellow circle between two semi circles, perhaps suggesting the sun rising from a broken earth.
RMT	Union abbreviation within an ellipse formed of three shapes, perhaps implying movement or circulation as in the transport network.
Nautilus UK	Union name within a four pointed star, perhaps representing the points of the compass and navigation.
Royal College of Nursing of the United Kingdom	Two hands, perhaps suggesting both the helping hands of the union and the healing hands of their members.

**Appendix 20: Examples of union logos possibly suggesting occupational identity**

**British Airline Pilots Association:**



**Communication Workers Union:**



**RMT:**



**Royal College of Nursing of the United Kingdom**



## Appendix 21: Union logos suggesting medical identity

<b>Union name</b>	<b>Graphic content of logo and subjective interpretation</b>
Association for Clinical Biochemistry	Coiled serpent around flaming torch.
Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel	Badge with name of union plus entwined serpents.
British Association of Occupational Therapists Limited	A bird over a coiled serpent motif.
British Medical Association	A coiled serpent motif beside the unions initials.
Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association	A figure carrying a staff with entwined serpent over the unions initials.
Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists	Badge with heraldic-style crest together with various symbols including a coiled serpent.

**Appendix 22: Examples of union logos suggesting medical identity**

**The Association for Clinical Biochemistry and Laboratory Medicine:**



**Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel:**



**British Association of Occupational Therapists Limited:**



**British Medical Association:**



**Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association:**



## Appendix 23: Unions with badge-style logos

Union name	Graphic content of logo and subjective interpretation
Association of Licensed Aircraft Engineers (1981)	Badge together with their abbreviation with full name.
British Association of Dental Nurses	Badge with name of union and year of formation, which might be seen as giving a sense of permanence.
British Dietetic Association	Badge with their name and crest.
Independent Federation of Nursing in Scotland	Badge with the year of formation upon thistle within name of the union, which might be seen as giving a sense of permanence in addition to a Scottish identity.
Fire Officers Association	Badge including union abbreviation with full name around it plus the strapline 'people, not politics' inside cap-style badge, which would seem to embody a political message within the concept of a uniformed service and perhaps an implied criticism of the Fire Brigades Union.
National Union of Mineworkers	Badge with the word 'National' together with the abbreviation 'NUM', two miners and mining artefacts.

## Appendix 24: Examples of unions with badge-style logos

**British Association of Dental Nurses:**



**British Dietetic Association:**



**Association of Licensed Aircraft Engineers (1981):**



**Fire Officers Association:**



**National Union of Mineworkers:**



## Appendix 25: Union logos relating to geographical identity

Union name	Graphic content of logo and subjective interpretation
Association of Head Teachers and Deputies in Scotland	Cartoon figure with mortar board on a head and body formed of the Scottish flag, implying both the occupational and geographical identity.
Independent Federation of Nursing in Scotland	Badge-style with year of formation upon a thistle within name of the union, which might be seen to stress both permanence and Scottish identity
Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) – British Isles	Union abbreviation over a globe within circle, perhaps indicating the global aspirations of the union.
Professional Footballers Association (PFA)	An image of black and white hands shaking in front of a football, surrounded by the union name, in turn surrounded by laurel leaves. It also includes the crests of all four home nations.
Solidarity	Union name with union flag above, which would seem to imply solidarity within a British context, which reinforces their policy of restricting membership to British workers.

**Appendix 26: Examples of union logos relating to geographical identity**

**Association of Head Teachers and Deputies in Scotland:**



**Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) – British Isles:**



**Professional Footballers Association (PFA):**



**Solidarity:**



**Appendix 27: Union logos suggesting collectively, unity, solidarity or cooperation**

Union name	Graphic content of logo and subjective interpretation
Advance	A group of people, perhaps suggesting the union's collective nature and a sense of unity.
Aegon	A group of people, perhaps suggesting the union's collective nature and a sense of unity.
Community	A 'speech bubble' over two figures inside, which perhaps suggests bringing people together.
PDA	A group of figures with the one in front having arms held aloft, perhaps suggesting the leader of the group is signalling 'yes' to union.
Unity	A globe within a heart shape plus the name and strapline 'Unity - Your future', perhaps suggesting the union at the heart of the world. In addition there is a photograph of a diverse group of people.

**Appendix 28: Examples of union logos suggesting collectively, unity, solidarity or cooperation**

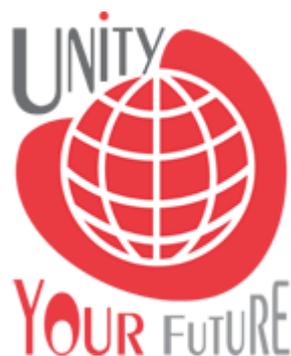
**Advance:**



**Community:**



**Unity:**



**Accord:**



**Appendix 29: Union logo used as a vehicle to carry their abbreviation**

<b>Union name</b>
The Association of Educational Psychologists
Association of Teachers and Lecturers
Associated Train Crew Union
Boots Pharmacists Association
Britannia Staff Union
British Association of Journalists
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
Community and District Nursing Association
Derbyshire Group Staff Union
Educational Institute of Scotland
FDA
GMB
Independent Democratic Union
Lloyds TSB Group Union
NAPO (National Association of Probation Officers - the Trade Union and Professional Association for Family Court and Probation Staff)
National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
National Society for Education in Art and Design
POA
Public and Commercial Services Union
Retained Fire-fighters Union
Retired Officers Association, Scottish
Artists Union
Scottish Secondary Teacher's Association
Shield Guarding Association
Transport Salaried Staffs' Association

**Appendix 30: Union logos carrying both the full name and initials**

<b>Union name</b>
Association of Licensed Aircraft Engineers (1981)
Association of School and College Leaders
Headmasters and Headmistresses Conference
Locum Doctors Association
National Union of Journalists
United Road Transport Union

**Appendix 31: Examples of union logos incorporating the union's initials and / or full name**

**Association of Teachers and Lecturers:**



**Prospect:**



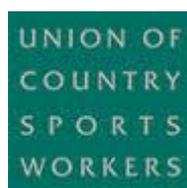
**Nationwide Group Staff Union:**



**Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (National Association of Teachers in Wales):**



**Union of Country Sports Workers:**



**Appendix 32: Examples of union logos having either a direct association with the union name or incorporating a flag motif**

**The Association of Revenue and Customs:**



**Voice:**



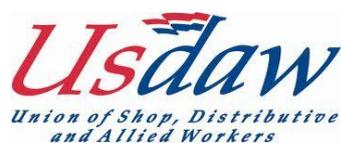
**Solidarity:**



**Unite the Union:**



**Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers:**



## Appendix 33: Examples of union logos with no apparent meaning

### Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union:



### Prison Service Union:



### UFS:



### Unison:



### **Appendix 34: Effectiveness of logo**

<b>Very effective percent</b>	<b>Fairly effective percent</b>	<b>Neither effective nor ineffective percent</b>	<b>Fairly ineffective percent</b>	<b>Very ineffective percent</b>
20.3	59.4	14.5	5.8	0

*Questionnaire data, n = 69.*

## Appendix 35: Effectiveness of strapline

<b>Very effective percent</b>	<b>Fairly effective percent</b>	<b>Neither effective nor ineffective percent</b>	<b>Fairly ineffective percent</b>	<b>Very ineffective percent</b>
54.5	38.6	6.8	0	0

*Questionnaire data, n = 44.*

**Appendix 36: Unions found to be offering student membership outside of health and education**

<b>Union</b>
Association of Licensed Aircraft Engineers (1981)
Association of Professional Music Therapists in Great Britain
British Association of Journalists
Equity
National Union of Journalists
Writers' Guild of Great Britain

**Appendix 37: Unions observed to be offering a benevolent fund**

<b>Union</b>
Association of School and College Leaders
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
Community
Connect
Equity
Independent Democratic Union
National Federation of Sub-Postmasters
National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers
Professional Cricketers Association
Professional Rugby Players Association
Royal College of Midwives
Society of Radiographers
Transport Salaried Staffs' Association
Union of Democratic Mineworkers
United Road Transport Union

### Appendix 38: Unions observed to be offering forms of advice

<b>Union</b>	<b>Form(s) of advice offered</b>
British Medical Association	Medical
Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union	Tax
Immigration Service Union	Tax
Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) – British Isles	Individual matters
Lecturers Employment Advice and Action Fellowship	Employment advice
National Association of Co-operative Officials	Careers
National Association of Stable Staff	Dietary
National Federation of Sub-Postmasters	Commercial and on becoming a sub-postmaster
Professional Rugby Players Association	Health and agent advice
Society of Authors Limited	Contacts and tax
Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists	Business and professional
Union of Country Sports Workers	Not specified
Union of Democratic Mineworkers	Not specified
Welsh Rugby Players Association	Legal and accounting
Writers' Guild of Great Britain	Contract vetting

**Appendix 39: Unions observed to be offering telephone helplines**

<b>Union</b>
Advance
British Air Line Pilots Association
British Air Line Pilots Association
British Association of Dental Nurses
British Association of Journalists
Community
Locum Doctors Association
Society of Authors Limited
The United and Independent Union
Unison
United Road Transport Union

**Appendix 40: Unions observed to be offering support with career, development or employability**

<b>Union</b>	<b>Career development</b>	<b>Continuing professional development</b>	<b>Job site or job market</b>
Association for Clinical Biochemistry	*		
Association for College Management			*
Association of Educational Psychologists	*		*
Association of Professional Music Therapists in Great Britain			*
Association of School and College Leaders		*	
Association of Teachers and Lecturers		*	
British Association of Occupational Therapists	*		
British Dietetic Association		*	*
British Medical Association	*		*
British Orthoptic Society	*		
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy.	*		
Dental Practitioners Association	*	*	
First Division Association		*	
Independent Pilots Federation,			*
Institute of Football Management and Administration			*
National Association of Co-operative Officials	*		
National Society for Education in Art and Design		*	
National Union of Teachers.		*	*
Pharmacists Defence Association		*	
Prospect		*	
Royal College of Nursing,		*	
Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists		*	
Society of Radiographers		*	

## **Appendix 41: Unions observed to be offering training**

<b>Union</b>
Aspect
Association of Educational Psychologists
Association for Clinical Biochemistry
Association of Head Teachers and Deputies in Scotland
Association of School and College Leaders
Association of Teachers and Lecturers
Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union
Britannia Staff Union
Connect
National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
National Union of Journalists, National Union of Teachers
Prospect
Unison
United Road Transport Union
Unity

## Appendix 42: Unions observed as publishing a journal

Union
Association of Educational Psychologists
British Association of Occupational Therapists Limited
British Dietetic Association
British Orthoptic Society
Community and District Nursing Association
Dental Practitioners Association
Educational Institute of Scotland
Guild of Professional Teachers of Dance Movement to Music and Dramatic Arts
Headmasters and Headmistresses Conference
NAPO
National Association of Co-operative Officials
National Society for Education in Art and Design
National Union of Mineworkers
Prospect
Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists
Society of Radiographers
Transport Salaried Staffs' Association
Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (National Association of Teachers in Wales)
Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians
Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers

### **Appendix 43: Effectiveness of union benefit package**

<b>Very effective percent</b>	<b>Fairly effective percent</b>	<b>Neither effective nor ineffective percent</b>	<b>Fairly ineffective percent</b>	<b>Very ineffective percent</b>
30.6	55.6	12.5	0	1.4

*Questionnaire data, n = 72.*

#### Appendix 44: Content observed of stated aims and objectives

Union	Industrial relations	Occupational / professional	Other
Accord	*		
Aegis	*		
Aspect	*	*	*
Associated Train Crew Union	*		*
Association of College Management		*	*
Association of Head Teachers and Deputies in Scotland		*	
Association of Licensed Aircraft Engineers	*	*	*
Association of Principal Fire Officers	*		*
Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel		*	
Association of Professional Music Therapists		*	
Association of School and College Leaders		*	
Association of Teachers and Lecturers		*	
Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union	*		
Boots Pharmacists Association	*		
Britannia Staff Union	*		
British Association of Journalists	*		*
British Dietetic Association	*	*	
British Medical Association	*	*	
British Orthoptic Society		*	
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy	*		
Communication Workers Union	*		
Community and District Nursing Association	*	*	
Educational Association of Professional Music Therapists in Great Britain		*	
Educational Institute of Scotland	*		*
Fire Officers Association	*		*
Headmasters and Headmistresses Conference		*	
Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association	*	*	
Independent Democratic Union	*		*
Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) - British Isles	*		*
Institute of Football Management and Administration	*	*	*
Irish Bank Officials Association	*		
Lecturers Employment Advice and Action Fellowship	*		
Locum Doctors Association	*	*	
National Association of Probation Officers	*	*	
National Association of Co-operative Officials	*		
National Association of Head Teachers	*	*	
National Society for Education in Art and		*	

Design Art			
National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers	*		*
Palm Paper Staff Association	*	*	*
Pharmacists Defence Association	*		
Prison Officers Association	*		*
Professional Rugby Players Association	*	*	
Prospect	*		
Public and Commercial Services Union	*		
Retained Fire-fighters Union	*		
Retired Officers Association	*		
Royal College of Midwives	*	*	
Scottish Artists Union		*	
Scottish Secondary Teacher's Association Educational	*	*	
Shield Guarding Association	*		
Solidarity			*
Transport Salaried Staffs' Association	*		*
University and College Union	*		*
Union of Finance Staff	*		*
Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru	*		*
Union of Country Sports Workers	*		*
Unison	*		*
Unite the Union	*		*
United Road Transport Union	*		*
Unity	*		*
Welsh Rugby Players Association	*	*	

**Appendix 45: Effectiveness of union website**

<b>Very effective percent</b>	<b>Fairly effective percent</b>	<b>Neither effective nor ineffective percent</b>	<b>Fairly ineffective percent</b>	<b>Very ineffective percent</b>
29.9	53.7	13.4	3	0