

Why Do People Join Unions in a Period of Membership Decline?

Jeremy Waddington and Colin Whitston

Abstract

Drawing on a large survey of new members, this paper examines the reasons why people join unions and the methods of their recruitment. It shows that collective reasons remain central to union membership and that individual services are secondary in the recruitment process. While there is little variation in reasons for joining across industry, occupation and sex, there are marked differences in the methods used to recruit new members. These findings are used to examine existing explanations of membership decline and to assess the efficacy of the different recruitment policy options available to unions.

1. Introduction

Many believe that union membership decline in the UK has reached critical proportions. Continuous annual membership decline since 1979 has led unions to reassess their agenda and to highlight the importance of recruitment. Although many recruitment initiatives have been launched and a recruitment culture promoted, overall membership continues to fall. By examining why workers join unions and how they are recruited, this paper isolates many of the key features underpinning recruitment, and within this focus assesses explanations of membership decline and associated policy issues faced by unions.

Several interrelated arguments have been advanced to explain membership decline. Proponents of the business-cycle explanation assume that high levels of unemployment have eroded the constituencies of workers from which unions have traditionally recruited (Carruth and Disney 1988; Waddington 1992). Changes in the composition of the labour market have also been associated with membership decline (see e.g. Booth 1989). Others argue that shifts in power towards employers have enabled them to resist unionization in areas of employment growth (Waddington and Whitston 1995a; Gallie *et al.* 1996). While there is considerable debate regarding the

Jeremy Waddington is in the Industrial Relations Research Unit, University of Warwick. Colin Whitston is in the Department of Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations, University of Keele.

relative strengths of these explanations, it is agreed that membership is concentrated in the public sector and manufacturing and, compared with the 1970s, is less representative of the labour force as a whole. More white-collar, women, young and part-time workers employed at small sites and in private-sector services need to be recruited if membership decline is to be reversed and unions can claim to represent all sections of the UK labour force. Debates on why these groups have been under-represented have a long tradition within industrial relations. Central to these debates are the questions, do these groups of workers have different attitudes from those in membership, and are the same methods of recruitment appropriate for them?

Proponents of a rather different approach argue that a 'new individualism' has marked an era of social structure and policy characterized by the dissolution of labour movements (Phelps Brown 1990; Skidelsky 1995). According to this view, the diminution in the bargaining power of unions is evidence of the attitude shift among workers towards more unitary conceptions of society. Political change at the centre is regarded as the driving force of this 'new individualism'. Recent legislation, for example, has incorporated a highly atomized and individualistic conception of union rights and obligations (McKendrick 1988). Furthermore, in order to adjust to this 'new individualism', it has been suggested that unions 'reinvent or re-engineer themselves' and move towards a more client-centred relationship with members (Cave 1994: 160–91). Questions raised by these arguments concern the attraction of individual services provided by unions to new members and the nature of workplace collectivism.

In broad terms, these arguments suggest rather different policy directions for unions. If unemployment and restructuring are paramount, the debate centres on whether unions can identify a collective agenda that is appropriate for potential members in under-represented groups and make this agenda available in recruiting them. If a 'new individualism' is as pervasive as is suggested, policy must revolve around the provision of individual services to individual members. Furthermore, as the 'new individualism' is often associated with unitary views, it also follows that unions should seek alliances with employers rather than pursue interests contrary to those of employers. In practice, a number of interrelated policy trajectories have been either implemented or recommended.

The TUC attempted to generate a recruitment culture in the 1980s. Six local labour market studies were conducted by the TUC, each of which was to be followed by a TUC-coordinated recruitment campaign involving affiliated unions. However, only two campaigns took place—in London Docklands and Manchester Trafford Park—as they failed to produce many members and were regarded as costly by participating unions. In addition, the TUC established a Special Review Body (SRB) in 1987 to examine new methods of recruitment. The First Report of the SRB acknowledged a change in recruitment circumstances and recommended that packages of financial services be offered by affiliated unions to recruit members in the expanding areas of the economy (TUC 1988a, b).

Unions also launched a variety of recruitment initiatives. These had two purposes. First, they were to increase recruitment in areas of expanding employment. Two groups were targeted: those in unskilled, low paid and insecure jobs, and those in managerial and professional occupations with more job security and higher pay. Second, they were intended to raise the level of involvement in the recruitment of union full-time officers and active members. An extended range of individual membership services was integral to these campaigns, including insurance, travel and shopping discounts; union credit cards and mortgage facilities—and, in the case of some non-TUC-affiliated unions, reductions in subscriptions for private health insurance. Many unions also introduced free legal advice for non-work-related issues. Individual services were thus seen as appropriate for workers in very different employment circumstances. Furthermore, these services represented a more individual and consumerist appeal to non-members. Indeed, initial survey returns among unions indicated that they were an aid to recruitment as ‘it was now easier to appeal to a potential member’s self-interest than to explain the more traditional industrial relations benefits associated with a union’ (IRRR 1990: 12).

A further policy recommendation arises from Bassett and Cave’s (1993) proposition that unions need to accommodate the ‘new individualism’ and low levels of membership participation by developing similar relations with members, as the Automobile Association has with its clients. Whereas the TUC and affiliated unions envisage financial services as supplementing existing collective trade union functions, Bassett and Cave view them as a central element in an individualized agenda, comprising *inter alia* a new financial relationship based on direct debit, and support for individual members to conduct their own contract negotiations with employers. This is similar to the ‘associate membership’ programmes offered by American unions, as it stresses consumer benefits in return for membership contributions to the relative exclusion of representative functions (see Jarley and Fiorito 1990; Hecksher 1988: 177–91). While this view has been criticized in the UK for its exaggeration of individualization and the absence of any analysis of power (Kelly and Waddington 1995), it does raise the issue of individual services in the promotion of recruitment. It also suggests that union recruitment can be achieved by means of a central appeal from Head Office to potential members, rather than through workplace organization and activity. This paper addresses both of these issues.

A final policy recommendation arises from the assumption that unions have two ‘markets’, employees and employers, and that unions have failed in the second of these (Willman *et al.* 1993: 50–3). The key relationship identified here is between union and employer, and is exemplified by the spate of single-union deals concluded during the mid-1980s, when relationships were established with employers before any members were recruited. A more recent formula arising from this position is that unions enter into some form of ‘social partnership’ with employers to encourage recognition and recruitment. Proponents argue that unions must establish themselves as

mediating organizations between employers and workers if they are to recruit in expanding sectors of the economy, such as private-sector services (Bacon and Storey 1996). While 'them and us' attitudes remain entrenched among workers (Kelly and Kelly 1991) and managers (Poole and Mansfield 1993; Waddington and Whitston 1995b), it remains to be seen if unions have been able to engage employers in private-sector services to promote union membership. This paper explores the extent of managerial promotion of membership.

It is clear that all these measures have merely mitigated the extent of aggregate membership losses, although some individual unions have secured membership gains. Issues concerned with why members join unions and how recruitment takes place thus remain central to the new agenda for which unions are searching. By reference to survey results, this paper isolates some key issues concerning recruitment. It argues that traditional collective reasons remain central to union joining and that workplace activity is key to maintaining levels of unionization. Furthermore, packages of financial services are found to be of very little attraction among new members both in areas of traditional union strength and in areas where they were intended to raise membership levels.

Before examining these arguments in relation to the data, it is worth discussing non-members, who are not represented in our sample. Does this exclusion mean that the sample can be regarded as unrepresentative beyond existing union members? We argue that this is not the case. Three points support this position. First, there is no consistent evidence to indicate marked differences between unionists and non-unionists in the UK, apart from their membership. For example, there are no significant differences in the responses of unionists and non-unionists to the question, 'what should the unions do at your workplace?' (Millward 1990: 37), and there are 'no fundamental attitudinal reasons why non-unionists would not join a union' (Kerr 1992: 51). Second, a key explanation of non-membership appears to be the inability of unions to make contact with, or provide sufficient support to, potential members, rather than a principled opposition to unionism. Workers in expanding areas of employment are not individually more predisposed to non-unionism, but they are less likely to have a union available (Green 1990). Similarly, less than 14 per cent of non-members are opposed to unions in principle and less than 5 per cent of members leave because of a principled opposition (Marshall *et al.* 1988: 164), whereas no fewer than 45 per cent of non-members were not union members simply because they had not been asked to join (TUC 1995). Third, there are no significant differences in the views of unionists and non-unionists towards their employers (Kerr 1992) and no relation between employers' use of HRM strategies and non-unionism (McLoughlin and Gourlay 1994). Of course, these arguments do not suggest that, once organizational or other shortcomings have been addressed by unions, membership decline will necessarily be reversed, but they do suggest that there are few inherent differences between union members and non-members, and that there is

certainly not a total contrast. The data discussed here, therefore, do have a resonance beyond the immediate constituency of union members, although the sample is drawn exclusively from within this group.

The sample of new members is taken from a survey of 12 unions, conducted between 1991 and 1993. Further details of the survey are provided in the Appendix. In 1991, the combined membership of the 12 participating unions comprised 49.1 per cent of the total union membership in the UK. While these unions should not be treated as being statistically representative of all UK unions, they organize across a wide range of industries and occupations. The overall response rate to the survey was 21.3 per cent, but this varied between 10.9 per cent and 55.0 per cent in individual unions. We anticipated that social, occupational and employment differences would result in lower rates of return in some areas—retailing for example—and sample sizes for unions in these areas were thus increased. While this procedure was generally successful, it failed for health service workers, where the rate of return was higher than anticipated, resulting in the over-representation of such workers in the sample. The distribution of responses disaggregated by the principal categories is as follows:

- *Sex*: men, 5672; women, 5357
- *Industry*: engineering, 1815; other manufacturing, 978; private-sector services, 1247; privatized agencies and utilities, 854; local government and education, 820; health, 3936; national government, 621.
- *Occupation*: Class I: managers, administrators and professionals, 1600; Class II: semi- (or associate) professionals and technicians, 3198; Class III: clerical and sales personnel, 1131; Class IV: personal and protective service occupations, 1267; Class V: skilled manual workers, 1922; Class VI: unskilled manual workers, 1576.

The paper comprises two main sections: why do people join, and how are new members recruited? Within each section there are three parts covering industry and occupation; sex; and a composite category, 'targeted groups', in which responses from young workers and part-time workers are examined.¹ The distribution of responses among the targeted groups is as follows:

- *Age*: up to 20: 1048; between 21 and 25: 1939; between 26 and 30: 1978; between 31 and 40: 2927; between 41 and 50: 2095; between 51 and 60: 854; over 60: 96.
- *Hours worked*: 18 or less hours per week: 622; between 19 and 30 hours per week: 1216; between 31 and 40 hours per week: 6535; 40 or more hours per week: 2290.

The implications of the results for academic debate and union policy are analysed in the conclusion. The methods used in data classification are also specified in the appendix.

2. Why do people join unions?

We asked respondents to specify the one or two reasons why they joined a union from a list provided. The category 'Another reason: please specify' was included; however, only 6.9 per cent chose this response, overwhelmingly in cases involving a particular event where the then non-member thought s/he had been unfairly treated. While there are inherent difficulties in collecting and analysing data on motives, our results make an empirical contribution to other forms of research and theory on union joining.

Responses are classified into two broad categories: collective reasons and individual benefits. Collective reasons comprise mutual support, improved pay and conditions, peer group pressure and belief in union organization. Individual benefits include training and education, industrial benefits and professional services, free legal advice and financial services.² It is acknowledged that some of the reasons for joining traditionally treated as collective include an individual element. For example, 'support if I have a problem at work' is clearly individual in so far as it represents an individual's need for advice or representation. However, this does not mean that such support is not a collective matter, since both its provision and its effectiveness depend on collective organization, and is often embedded in a framework of collectively bargained procedures. The Webbs pointed this out clearly one hundred years ago in their discussion of 'mutual insurance' as a trade union method (1897: 152–72). The distinction between collective and individual reasons for joining is traditionally used in analysing reasons for union membership. This traditional usage is retained here, with the above-mentioned qualification. In data collection it was not possible to distinguish between recently introduced non-work-related legal advice schemes and traditional 'mutual insurance' largely relating to workplace rights. Data are examined in three stages, disaggregated by industry and occupation, sex, and an analysis by age and hours worked. Each stage contains at least one of the groups targeted in recent recruitment campaigns.

Industrial and Occupational Variation

Table 1 shows the reasons for joining for all respondents. It is clear that two reasons remain central: 'support should I have a problem at work' (mutual support) and 'improved pay and conditions' (pay). This confirms the centrality of collective reasons for joining, and support among new members for traditional trade union activities. Compared with some earlier studies, there is a greater importance attached to mutual support (van de Vall 1970; Klandermans 1986). However, the breadth of the gap between these two reasons and all others confirms Perlman's (1928) original contention that they underpin union joining.

The third and fifth ranked reasons for joining—'because I believe in trade unions and want to take part' (belief) and 'most people at work are

TABLE 1
Reasons for Joining a Union

<i>Rank order</i>	<i>Reason for joining</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Support if I had a problem at work	72.1
2	Improved pay and conditions	36.4
3	Because I believe in trade unions	16.2
5	Most people at work are members	13.8
4	Free legal advice	15.1
8	Industrial benefits	4.4
7	Training and education	5.0
9	Financial services	3.5
6	Professional services	6.2
	Other reasons	6.9
		N=10,823

members' (peer group pressure)—are also collective. The result on belief is consistent with studies showing that 'ideal-collective' motives remain central to joining generally (Klandermans 1986), and in the context of the supposedly individualized UK (Dibden and Millward 1991).

'Free legal advice' (legal advice) is the most frequently cited individual benefit and is ranked fourth by all new members. Its prominence is, however, related largely to health service occupations. The second most highly ranked individual benefit was professional services, also reflecting the large number of health service professionals in the sample. No other individual benefit was cited by more than 6 per cent of new members. Financial services, which the TUC claimed would attract new members, were cited by fewer than 4 per cent, which confirms other findings (see Sapper 1991; Kerr 1992) and suggests these are, at best, a secondary reason for joining, rather than the basis for recruitment initiatives in unorganized areas. Indeed, on the basis of the evidence from all new members in Table 1, traditional industrial benefits are more popular than the recently introduced financial services. Moves to replicate the 'associate membership' programmes of American unions thus have little support in the UK.

We do not claim that our respondents are representative of new union members as a whole, so it is necessary to consider the data in disaggregated form. Tables 2a and 2b show variations in reasons for joining by industry and occupation. Professional services in health are tabulated, although their effect is concentrated in one industry. Data are thus presented for four collective and four individual reasons applicable to all industries, plus one industrially specific individual reason.

The overall dominance of collective reasons is reproduced in most industries, and individual membership services remain of secondary importance. Notably, reasons for joining unions in private-sector services reproduce this pattern, suggesting that the key issue here is the provision of support, and not new packages of financial services.

TABLE 2(a)
Industrial Variation in Reasons for Joining (%)

<i>Reason for joining</i>	<i>Engineering</i>	<i>Other manufacturing</i>	<i>Private-sector services</i>	<i>Privatized agencies and utilities</i>	<i>Local government and education</i>	<i>Health</i>	<i>National government</i>
Support if I had a problem at work	67.3	71.9	70.5	71.5	72.9	76.0	72.0
Improved pay and conditions	43.1	42.9	45.4	46.8	35.1	23.1	54.0
Because I believe in trade unions	17.4	15.6	19.3	24.2	19.7	11.3	22.3
Most people at work are members	15.6	20.3	17.5	12.2	11.7	10.4	11.0
Free legal advice	12.4	10.1	7.6	1.5	7.4	25.9	4.2
Industrial benefits	7.8	10.0	5.9	0.8	5.2	0.5	2.5
Training and education	1.5	1.0	0.5	0.2	1.0	12.2	0.5
Financial services	1.3	2.2	2.2	6.1	6.1	4.0	7.5
Professional services						17.3	
	<i>N=1784</i>	<i>N=964</i>	<i>N=1208</i>	<i>N=839</i>	<i>N=809</i>	<i>N=3882</i>	<i>N=600</i>

TABLE 2(b)
Occupational Variation in Reasons for Joining (%)

<i>Reason for joining</i>	<i>Class I</i>	<i>Class II</i>	<i>Class III</i>	<i>Class IV</i>	<i>Class V</i>	<i>Class VI</i>
Support if I had a problem at work	70.7	74.2	74.5	77.6	68.4	68.5
Improved pay and conditions	43.3	24.2	47.5	32.2	40.5	45.4
Because I believe in trade unions	23.5	12.6	15.1	15.0	16.2	17.8
Most people at work are members	8.5	9.7	17.7	15.5	17.3	19.0
Free legal advice	2.7	26.0	5.4	17.4	12.7	12.2
Industrial benefits	0.9	0.6	4.5	2.7	9.7	10.2
Training and education	0.5	13.0	0.4	4.8	1.3	1.5
Financial services	8.0	3.3	2.6	5.2	1.2	1.2
Professional services	0.5	18.3		4.6		
	<i>N=1572</i>	<i>N=3175</i>	<i>N=1099</i>	<i>N=1247</i>	<i>N=1881</i>	<i>N=1554</i>

There are two significant industrial variations. In national government and privatized agencies and utilities, pay and belief were cited by more new members than elsewhere, and within these industries by white-collar members in particular. These variations remain a puzzle, as these white-collar workers are relatively well paid. Local government, education and, in

particular, health show another variation. Here the importance of pay is downplayed, suggesting a peculiarity in these areas. In health, additionally, legal advice, professional services and training and education were also emphasized, suggesting particular concerns about litigation, and a union role in professional matters.

An enduring debate on occupational class and union membership seeks to explain the lower union density of white-collar workers. Explanations have been based on the more individualized nature of white-collar work, greater security of employment and the greater identification of white-collar workers with the employer (Wright Mills 1951; Lockwood 1958; Bain 1970; Prandy *et al.* 1983). It is also argued that, once unionized, white-collar members have a different agenda from that of their manual counterparts, tending to be more instrumental, less collective and less militant (Lockwood 1958; Lumley 1973; Crompton and Jones 1984). Our analysis of occupation is based on the premiss that crude distinctions between manual and non-manual are insufficient to capture variation within the unionization process. We have, therefore, adapted Goldthorpe's (1987: 40–7) class categories to construct six occupational classes, shown in Table 2b: Class I, managers, administrators and professionals; Class II, semi- (or associate); professionals and technicians; Class III, clerical and sales personnel; Class IV, personal and protective service occupations; Class V, skilled manual workers; and Class VI, unskilled manual workers. The Data Appendix includes details of this system of classification.

If the propositions above are true, reasons underpinning union membership should vary between these occupational classes. White-collar workers (Classes I, II and III) should emphasize improvements in pay and conditions while downplaying mutual support and peer group pressure; the reverse should be the case for manual workers (Classes V and VI). This pattern should be qualified by Classes II and IV, which will exhibit some of the features that characterize union joining in health, because nurses, auxiliary nurses and care assistants dominate our sample in these two occupational classes.

Expectations arising from existing literature are, however, not met. All white-collar classes emphasize mutual support more than pay, and they emphasize mutual support more than manual workers. Furthermore, results on pay show no clear pattern. The expectation that white-collar classes would be less influenced by peer group pressure is realized, with the exception of Class III. However, belief in trade unions is consistently cited more frequently than is peer group pressure by Classes I and II. The emphasis placed on belief by new members in Classes I, II and III is not replicated by a similar emphasis on peer group pressure expressed by manual workers. In other words, there is a fairly consistent effect on manual workers arising from peer group pressure, but the effect of this is not a markedly greater influence on their joining unions than a belief in unions.

There are two points of occupational variation that bear further examination. The first concerns the managerial and professional occupations of

Class I, identified as one of the TUC's prime recruitment targets, and foremost among occupations experiencing individual contracts and pay. The primacy of collective reasons for joining among these occupations indicates that the 'individualization' of aspects of the employment relationship does not necessarily mean abandonment of support for a collective agenda. Furthermore, a belief in trade unions is ranked more highly by managers and professionals than by other occupations. This finding confirms studies that show 'ideal-collective' motives to be most pronounced among white-collar workers (see Klandermans 1986). However, it is only among managers and professionals that belief is so important, and there is less peer group pressure among managers and professionals than in other occupations.

Sex Differences in Union Joining

Throughout the postwar period, unionization among women has been lower than among men, but the difference has tended to narrow (Beatson and Butcher 1993; Waddington 1992). Differences have been explained by variations in the 'propensity to unionize' (Shister 1953) or the employment location of women in the labour market (see e.g. Green 1990).

Recent growth in the employment of women has been concentrated in two areas: in white-collar jobs that are often skilled, and, more significantly, in low-skilled or unskilled jobs, often on part-time or temporary contracts. In recognition of this, a range of recruitment and representation initiatives have been launched to attract women and to encourage participation in union activity. Many of these have failed to reach potential women members (LRD 1991), have yet to dissolve the barriers to women's participation (Rees 1992: 98–105), and have not broadened the scope of bargaining to address the concerns of women (Colling and Dickens 1989).

TABLE 3
Sex Differences in Union Joining (%)

<i>Reason for joining</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Support if I had a problem at work	68.4	76.0
Improved pay and conditions	41.8	30.7
Because I believe in trade unions	19.5	12.8
Most people at work are members	15.0	12.4
Free legal advice	11.5	19.0
Industrial benefits	6.5	2.1
Training and education	2.1	8.1
Financial services	3.4	3.7
Professional services	1.3	11.4
Other reasons	7.5	6.2
	<i>N</i> =5566	<i>N</i> =5255

Although both men and women join primarily for collective rather than individual reasons, Table 3 shows some differences between them. In particular, women in our sample emphasized support issues more than men.

Women were less likely to cite improved pay and conditions, although they tended to be lower paid than male new members. Men are also more likely than women to mention a belief in unions, but this difference results from the large numbers of women in our sample from health, where belief is downplayed (see Table 2b), rather than a sex difference. There is no significant difference between men and women in the impact of peer group pressure on union joining. None of the individual reasons for joining underpinned the union membership of either men or women, and financial services were equally unattractive to both.

Disaggregating the data by industry, occupation and sex should show up any consistent differences between men and women in their reasons for joining, but in practice there are very few differences. Where differences exist, the composition of the sample suggests that these are a function of employment location rather than sex.

Thus, women do tend to emphasize mutual support more than men in most industries and occupations, and men tend to emphasize pay more than women, but the pattern is far from clear-cut. For example, women in Class I in both manufacturing industries and privatized agencies and utilities stress pay more than their male counterparts, a pattern reproduced when comparing women and men in Classes V and VI in most industries. Nor is there a consistent gender effect concerning a belief in trade unions. In engineering men in all classes cite belief more than women, but that was the only industry to exhibit this pattern. Although Table 3 showed a greater impact of peer group pressure on men than on women, this effect is not uniform, which suggests that its effect is more likely a function of specific workplaces than of sex.

These results suggest that neither employment restructuring nor differences in propensity to organize are strongly reflected in basic attitudes to union membership. This does not mean, of course, that bargaining agenda are uninfluenced by sex or employment location. These issues are explored in a further paper. The results obtained here contrast somewhat with those of Gallie *et al.*, who found greater occupational variation in reasons for membership (1996: 140–74). Two points may explain this difference. First, Gallie *et al.* examined the views of members rather than new members. The difference between the two studies thus may arise from the variation in the samples on which they are based. However, this explanation is at best partial, as other studies based on members rather than new members also unearth little occupational variation in reasons for joining (see e.g. Millward 1990; Kerr 1992). A second contributory source of this variation may be the restricted range of reasons for joining used by Gallie *et al.*³ For example, no individual reasons for joining were analysed, while ‘condition of job’ was an additional reason for joining included in their analysis. Putting aside these technical points, however, the results of the two studies are consistent in that mutual support is cited as the prime reason for joining by all occupations, and pay is ranked second in the reasons for joining by all occupations analysed here and by

every occupation except those in management, administrative and professional work by Gallie *et al.* (1996: 145).

Young and Part-Time Workers

This section examines the reasons for joining of two groups targeted by unions: young workers and part-timers.⁴ Several campaigns are specifically directed towards these groups and there is certainly a large potential membership available. Union density in 1991, when the initial questionnaires were distributed, was only 20 per cent among those aged 16–24, and 22 per cent among part-time workers (Beatson and Butcher 1993).

There are competing explanations of the unionization of young workers. One is that they are more likely to unionize than older workers because they are more mobile, lower paid, less loyal towards their employers and thus less tolerant of arbitrary managerial treatment (Shister 1953). In contrast, older workers are supposedly more likely to unionize because their productivity is declining and they are thus more in need of union protection (Bain and Price 1983b).⁵ Two propositions emerge from these competing explanations: that younger workers will be less concerned with mutual support than older workers but will emphasize improved pay and conditions, and that older workers will stress the importance of mutual support in joining.

However, it is also likely that the state of the labour market will be important. This survey was distributed when unemployment was rising and it would be expected, *ceteris paribus*, that the number of young workers entering employment would be reduced. Our cross-sectional data do not allow for the direct testing of this proposition. The relatively small proportion of young workers in our sample, however, does lend some indirect support: only 9.6 per cent of new union members were aged 20 or under. Several unions claimed that a ‘Thatcher’s Children’ effect also influenced recruitment; that is, those employed for the first time after 1979 expressed more individualized views than previously. For this claim to be confirmed, a marked difference should be observed in the reasons for joining between those under and over 30 years of age.

Table 4 shows reasons for joining disaggregated by age. Neither of the existing explanations provides a satisfactory understanding of the data. Contrary to Shister’s expectation, younger workers are more concerned with mutual support and are less likely to emphasize pay than their older counterparts. Similarly, Bain and Price’s argument that older workers will stress mutual support more than younger workers is contradicted. A more feasible explanation of unionization and age rests on the issue of job security, which may compromise the mobility of young workers to which Shister attached so much importance.

While younger workers are less likely to cite improvements in pay and conditions, they are more instrumental than older workers in other respects; for example, they place more emphasis on industrial benefits, training and education and professional services, no doubt reflecting the relatively junior

TABLE 4
Age and Reasons for Joining a Union (%)

<i>Reason for joining</i>	<i>Up to 20</i>	<i>21-25</i>	<i>26-30</i>	<i>31-40</i>	<i>41-50</i>	<i>51-60</i>	<i>Over 60</i>
Support if I had a problem at work	79.9	76.2	69.7	68.5	67.7	65.7	59.4
Improved pay and conditions	29.5	35.5	38.4	35.1	36.5	38.4	35.4
Because I believe in trade unions	7.2	12.8	16.1	18.6	17.9	18.7	22.9
Most people at work are members	16.8	15.0	12.9	12.6	12.5	13.1	18.8
Free legal advice	18.9	15.3	14.0	15.1	13.3	13.5	13.5
Industrial benefits	6.7	4.6	3.9	3.4	4.3	4.7	5.2
Training and education	5.3	7.1	4.8	4.7	4.1	3.0	1.0
Financial services	4.4	3.1	2.7	3.2	4.0	4.2	4.2
Professional services	6.4	7.6	6.2	6.1	5.6	3.4	1.0
Other reasons	4.6	5.3	6.9	7.0	8.4	6.8	10.4
	<i>N=1048</i>	<i>N=1939</i>	<i>N=1978</i>	<i>N=2927</i>	<i>N=2095</i>	<i>N=854</i>	<i>N=96</i>

positions of many. Conversely, a belief in trade unionism is inversely related to age. Furthermore, there is a difference in the extent to which belief is cited between those aged under 25 and those aged 31 or more, suggesting that, while there may be a limited ‘Thatcher’s Children’ effect, this is not wide-ranging, as there are no clear breaks in views on other reasons for joining.

Trade union density among part-time workers in 1991 was 22 per cent compared with 42 per cent among full-time workers (Beatson and Butcher 1993). Explanations of this pattern vary markedly. Research shows that the extent of part-time employment is not a significant influence on variations in inter-industry levels of unionization: other factors such as establishment size are more important (Bain and Elsheikh 1979; Richardson and Catlin 1979). Two points are implicit in these findings. First, union availability is an influence on unionization rates of part-time workers; and second, there are no significant differences in the reasons for joining between part-time and full-time workers.

However, individual analyses of Australian, American and British data do point to a negative effect on unionization associated with part-time work (Deery and DeCieri 1991; Antos *et al.* 1980; Bain and Elias 1985). These authors argue that union services are less attractive to part-time workers. Research for the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW) among non-members in part-time employment confirms that there is no marked anti-union sentiment among them, but does suggest that unions find it difficult to contact them, as not being asked to join was the main reason provided for non-membership (Frieze 1987). Campaigns by unions to remedy these shortfalls intensified throughout the 1980s as part-time employment rose. Integral to these campaigns were reduced rates of contributions and a higher profile assigned to bargaining objectives of

specific concern to part-time workers. Thus, in practice, unions argue that there is a specific agenda appropriate for part-time workers. Table 5 shows that this agenda is partially reflected in reasons for joining.

TABLE 5
Hours Worked and Reasons for Joining a Union (%)

<i>Reason for joining</i>	<i>≤18 hours/ week</i>	<i>19–30 hours/ week</i>	<i>31–40 hours/ week</i>	<i>40+ hours/ week</i>
Support if I had a problem at work	72.3	78.1	70.9	65.7
Improved pay and conditions	27.3	28.9	36.6	40.2
Because I believe in trade unions	10.9	11.3	16.0	19.5
Most people at work are members	16.6	12.1	13.8	13.3
Free legal advice	22.5	19.6	13.7	12.1
Industrial benefits	2.7	2.2	4.3	6.1
Training and education	7.2	6.4	5.1	2.2
Financial services	2.9	3.8	3.2	4.1
Professional services	10.0	9.5	5.9	2.1
Other reasons	4.3	4.7	7.0	7.8
	<i>N=622</i>	<i>N=1216</i>	<i>N=6535</i>	<i>N=2290</i>

Contrary to arguments that differences in unionization rates between part-time and full-time workers are due to sectoral variation in union availability, Table 5 indicates key differences in joining according to hours worked. In particular, part-time workers stress mutual support and legal advice compared with their full-time counterparts. However, their emphasis on mutual support poses problems for union organization in terms of communication and contact.

Better pay and conditions are cited less by part-time workers compared with full-timers. Other instrumental reasons, such as industrial benefits and financial services, were also relatively downplayed by them. In other words, part-time workers remain committed to collective reasons for joining, but are less concerned about the immediate financial benefits. The lack of support for financial services runs counter to the expectation of the SRB, which assumed that financial services would be particularly effective as an inducement to membership to part-time workers. While the research for USDAW, mentioned above, showed no anti-union sentiment among part-time workers, Table 5 indicates that a belief in trade unions is not as well developed as among full-time workers. The collectivism of part-time workers thus seems to rest almost exclusively on the support function.

3. How are new members recruited?

Accounts of union growth based on the business cycle and restructuring emphasize external factors and individual propensities to join. By contrast, it was claimed that in the United States union leaders affected membership levels of individual unions through the recruitment campaigns they

implemented (Shister 1953). A similar claim was later advanced for the UK by Undy *et al.* (1981: 127–66), who took the argument further in assigning ‘a critical role’ to national union leadership in explaining aggregate unionization as well. Undy *et al.* thus expect large numbers of new members to state that their recruitment resulted from a central office initiative. This argument was criticized for placing too much emphasis on national officials and downplaying the role of local full-time officers and shop stewards (Kelly and Heery 1989). In fact, little empirical enquiry has been devoted to establishing just how members join unions. Our data allow us to assess the contribution made by union representatives in recruitment, thus making an important contribution to the debate on union viability (see Kelly and Heery 1994: 101).

A second, connected issue concerns relations between unions and employers, particularly as it has been suggested that unions enter into ‘social partnerships’ with employers to accelerate recruitment (Bacon and Storey 1996). These authors assume that the ‘virtuous circle’ of membership growth→recognition→participation in collective bargaining→membership growth (Bain and Price 1983b: 18) has been broken. However, whereas the virtuous circle was ‘won’ from employers, proposals for ‘social partnership’ assume areas of common interest between employers and unions. Our purpose here is to establish how far management influences recruitment, because it is further argued that ‘social partnerships’ could be particularly important in private sector services where the terms of employment supposedly inhibit traditional organization (Bacon and Storey 1996).

To examine these issues, data are presented in the same pattern as previously. Eleven options were provided in the question on recruitment methods, from which respondents selected one. Only 3.5 per cent of respondents were recruited by ‘other’, confirming that the ten main options captured the principal methods. These options were classified into three broad groups: (1) ‘union recruitment’, comprising recruitment by a shop-steward, branch secretary, leaflet, full-time officer, direct approach from union head office⁶ and magazine or journal; (2) ‘informal methods of recruitment’, which include ‘made contact myself’ and ‘through a friend’; (3) membership arising from ‘relations between unions and employers’ including ‘recommended to join by management’ and ‘joined at a training course’.

Industrial and Occupational Variation

Table 6 shows that union recruitment accounts for 41.2 per cent of new members in our sample. By far the most effective union recruiting agents were shop-stewards, who recruited almost 30 per cent of new members; branch secretaries and full-time officers recruited a further 9.4 per cent, indicating that local union organization is key to recruitment. Bearing in mind that more than 70 per cent of new members specified mutual support

TABLE 6
Methods of Recruitment

<i>Method of recruitment</i>	%
Shop-steward	29.7
Made contact myself	30.9
Branch secretary	5.9
Through a friend	9.1
Recommended by management	8.2
Recruitment leaflet	1.4
Full-time officer	3.5
At a training course	7.1
Direct approach from union head office	0.5
Magazine or journal	0.2
Other	3.5
	<i>N</i> =10,787

among their primary reasons for joining, it is clear that local union organization underpins recruitment.

The 3.5 per cent of new members recruited by full-time officers may not accurately reflect their role. In several unions full-time officers co-ordinate the recruitment activities of lay activists rather than participating directly. However, assuming that the overwhelming majority of members recruited by shop-stewards and branch secretaries are working at sites of established organization, the small proportion recruited by full-time officers indicates the extent of difficulty in establishing footholds at new workplaces, and of releasing full-time officers from other duties to concentrate on direct recruitment.

Other union recruitment methods accounted for only 2.1 per cent of new members. This poor performance confirms the importance of direct contact in recruitment. Recently, two novel approaches to encourage recruitment have been the subject of discussions within unions: advertising on national television,⁷ and union shops in city centres. Our data suggest that such initiatives are unlikely to result in significant gains, certainly at reasonable cost.

Informal methods of recruitment account for 40.0 per cent of new members, only 1.2 percentage points less than union recruitment methods. Furthermore, 'made contact myself' was the single most frequently cited means of recruitment. Effectively one in three union members finds the union before being found by the union. In practice, these data suggest that, for every member recruited by the union, another will join on his/her own initiative.

Importantly, 'made contact myself' was not a function of previous membership. While there was a difference between previous union members and non-members, it was not great: 53.6 per cent of those who had made contact had been union members in their previous job, whereas 46.4 per cent were not. We also examined whether peer group pressure was associated with recruitment through a friend. Again, there was no

association; only 8.6 per cent of new members citing peer group pressure as a reason for joining were recruited through a friend.

Recruitment through relations with employers accounted for a further 15.3 per cent of new members. The extent of this recruitment may lend some support to the view that relations with employers may encourage membership, but equally, it may reflect union strength or older industrial relations practices. Subsequent analysis will examine whether recruitment through relations with employers is effective in private-sector services.

Tables 7(a) and 7(b) show variations in methods of recruitment by industry and occupation. It is clear that effective workplace organization is a factor in explaining industrial variation in the method of recruitment. In engineering and other manufacturing, for example, shop-stewards were at their most effective, accounting for half of total recruitment compared with under a quarter in the public sector and in privatized utilities and agencies. While it is claimed that union renewal may be brought about by the introduction of local bargaining in the public sector (Fairbrother 1994), the relatively low level of recruitment by shop-stewards here suggests that this remains some way off. It is also noteworthy that shop-steward recruitment accounts for more than a third of new members in private-sector services, so that, where workplace organization has been established in private-sector

TABLE 7(a)
Industrial Variation in Method of Recruitment (%)

<i>Method of recruitment</i>	<i>Engineering</i>	<i>Other manufacturing</i>	<i>Private-sector services</i>	<i>Privatized agencies and utilities</i>	<i>Local government and education</i>	<i>Health</i>	<i>National government</i>
Shop steward	48.4	51.9	34.4	22.8	29.1	14.0	32.1
Made contact myself	21.0	13.5	13.8	41.7	27.8	45.1	29.4
Branch secretary	3.8	5.5	5.9	12.6	6.8	4.4	11.8
Through a friend	7.1	8.9	8.1	6.7	18.6	9.3	7.6
Recommended by management	8.9	10.7	22.8	3.9	5.7	4.1	5.6
Recruitment leaflet	1.3	0.8	0.8	4.0	0.6	0.8	3.8
Full-time officer	4.3	4.0	7.2	2.7	3.4	1.7	2.5
At a training course	0.6	0.4	2.8	1.3	1.0	17.5	2.2
Approach from union head office	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1	1.5	0.5	0.2
Magazine/journal	0.6	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.0
	N=1796	N=948	N=1195	N=846	N=803	N=3863	N=602

TABLE 7(b)
Occupational Variation in Method of Recruitment (%)

<i>Reason for joining</i>	<i>Class I</i>	<i>Class II</i>	<i>Class III</i>	<i>Class IV</i>	<i>Class V</i>	<i>Class VI</i>
Shop steward	20.4	15.2	36.5	23.8	47.3	47.5
Made contact myself	41.2	43.6	18.2	32.9	19.5	15.4
Branch secretary	10.8	4.4	5.8	6.9	3.7	6.4
Through a friend	9.9	7.3	9.6	14.4	7.6	8.8
Recommended by management	3.6	4.3	18.5	7.2	10.1	12.2
Recruitment leaflet	2.9	0.7	1.2	1.2	1.7	0.7
Full-time officer	3.5	1.5	5.1	3.3	5.8	3.4
At a training course	1.2	19.0	2.0	7.3	0.5	1.2
Approach from union head office	0.8	0.6	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.6
Magazine/journal	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.5
	<i>N=1565</i>	<i>N=3148</i>	<i>N=1093</i>	<i>N=1242</i>	<i>N=1887</i>	<i>N=1548</i>

services, shop-stewards are almost as effective as those in manufacturing, and more effective than in the public sector.

Recruitment by branch secretaries is proportionately almost twice as great in national government and in privatized agencies and utilities as elsewhere. This is a function of union organization, as unions in these industries relied more heavily on branch secretaries in the conduct of day-to-day activity than did others. Additionally, full-time officers are almost twice as effective in private-sector services as they are elsewhere. Although this result is at the margins, it would seem to suggest that unions are having some success in private-sector services where full-time officers can be deployed in direct recruitment activity.

There is a relatively wide industrial dispersion regarding the importance of informal recruitment, ranging from 21.9 per cent in private-sector services to 54.4 per cent in health. In general, where workplace recruitment is relatively weak, informal recruitment, particularly 'made contact myself', tends to be more prominent. However, this relation is not universal. For example, informal means are least effective in engineering, other manufacturing and private-sector services where there are very different levels of workplace organization.

There are three industrial variants regarding management recommendation to join: high level, which includes only private-sector services; middle range, including engineering and other manufacturing, and low range, including the industries in the public sector and privatized agencies and utilities. In private-sector services relations with employers account for almost a quarter of new union recruits. In other words, unions in private-sector services are most reliant on employers to maintain recruitment levels, suggesting that there are employers prepared to encourage unionization. However, two caveats should be entered. First, in some areas of private-sector services, for example non-food retailing, managers comprise the majority of full-time staff, and hence are more likely to be unionized than other staff. In these circumstances the recommendation to unionize may have come from union members in managerial positions. Second, some

employers may encourage membership of specific unions in order to retain single unionism. While it is not possible to quantify the extent of these practices, interviews with national union officers conducted in conjunction with the survey suggest that their effects are not inconsequential.

Even where workplace union organization is relatively well developed, as in engineering and other manufacturing, a recommendation from management accounts for about 10 per cent of new members. The point about single unionism may apply here, but it may also reflect more general managerial support for collective bargaining. This argument would have been more strongly supported had public-sector managers also recommended union membership. In practice, the converse is the case, which may also reflect the impact of government-driven managerial reforms and the peculiarities of recruitment in health.

Table 7(b) shows occupational variations in methods of recruitment. There are marked differences between the occupational classes. For manual workers a single pattern of recruitment is in evidence. Union recruitment accounts for about 60 per cent of new members in Classes V and VI, about a quarter of new members are recruited through informal means, and between 10 and 13 per cent are recruited through relations with employers. Furthermore, shop-stewards account for the largest proportion of union recruitment among manual workers.

Each of the other occupational classes display different recruitment characteristics. After manual workers, shop-stewards are at their most effective in Class III. Since it was among Class III that the most significant membership gains of the 1970s were recorded, it is not surprising that union recruitment should account for almost half of the new members and shop-stewards the vast majority of this. A quarter of new members in Class III were recruited through informal means. Contact with employers was almost twice as prominent in recruiting from Class III as it was among manual workers, so that there is still a reliance on relations with employers for over one-fifth of new members.

There is a similar reliance on relations with employers for the recruitment of new members in Class II, although this took the form of recruitment at a training course. As with professional services, training and legal advice figure strongly in the reasons for joining; these results reflect the dominance of qualified nurses in our sample. In health, where unions have been able to negotiate access to training courses, their links with professional bodies and the range of professional services offered have a significant effect on the pattern of recruitment. Relations with employers and recruitment through informal means compensate for weaknesses in union recruitment, which accounts for less than 23 per cent of new members in Class II, the lowest among all the occupational classes.

Informal means also account for more than half of recruitment in Class I. More workers in Class I make contact with their unions than are recruited by all union recruitment methods in combination. It is also noteworthy that less than 5.0 per cent of workers in Class I join a union as a result of relations

between unions and employers. Evidence on the occupational spread of derecognition suggests that it is concentrated among senior grades (Claydon 1989; *IRRR* 1994). The absence of employer support for membership among Class I suggests that attempts to weaken unionism among these grades are more widespread than derecognition alone.

A final pattern of occupational recruitment is shown by Class IV. This class also comprises a majority of workers in health. However, it differs from Class II in that workers from Class IV are attracted by the links established between unions and the professions, but to a lesser degree than their more qualified counterparts in Class II. Comparisons between Class II and Class IV on recruitment at training courses provide the clearest example of this variation. Union recruitment is also more effective in Class IV than Class II. Recruitment by shop-stewards accounts for about a quarter of all recruitment in Class IV.

Sex Differences in Methods of Recruitment

Table 8 shows the variation in the methods of recruitment disaggregated by sex. For ease of explanation, the categories 'magazine or journal', 'recruitment leaflet' and 'approach from union head office' have been combined within a single category, 'union literature'. In broad terms, 50.6 per cent of men and 31.1 per cent of women defined themselves as being the subject of union recruitment; 32.8 per cent of men and 45.6 per cent of women joined through informal means; and 10.9 per cent of men and 20.1 per cent of women were recruited as a result of relations with employers. These data suggest marked sex differences in recruitment methods. However, the industrial and occupational concentrations of membership distort the aggregate figures. The key theme is that there are very few significant differences between the recruitment methods reported by men and women. It thus appears that industry and occupation have a more marked impact on recruitment methods than does sex.

It has been argued that the predominance of male full-time officers inhibits the recruitment of women (Heery and Kelly 1988). The relatively

TABLE 8
Sex Differences in Methods of Recruitment (%)

<i>Recruitment methods</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Shop-steward	37.6	21.3
Branch secretary	6.4	5.4
Full-time officer	4.0	3.0
Union literature	2.6	1.4
Made contact myself	26.6	35.5
Through a friend	8.2	10.1
Recommended by management	8.5	7.9
At a training course	2.4	12.2
	<i>N</i> =5548	<i>N</i> =5237

small numbers directly recruited by full-time officers makes assessment difficult. In aggregate terms, 4.0 per cent of men and 3.0 per cent of women were recruited by full-time officers, thus lending some support to the argument. However, disaggregating by industry and occupation reveals no substantial differences. Furthermore, the majority of shop-stewards and branch secretaries are also male, yet there are no significant differences in their relative effectiveness in recruiting men and women. Again, this points to the significance of industry and occupation, rather than the sex of the recruiting agent.

Apparent differences in the effectiveness of informal recruitment between men and women also disappear in the light of the disaggregated data. Workers in Class I and II are more likely to make contact themselves, irrespective of whether they are men or women. The explanation of the differences in the aggregate data lie in the concentrations of women in health, where informal means of recruitment are relatively effective across all occupational classes, irrespective of sex. This concentration of women new members in health also explains the relatively large number of women recruited at a training course (women, 12.2 per cent; men, 2.4 per cent).

Young and Part-Time Workers

As with reasons for joining, insecurity at work is a consistent theme among these groups, reflecting a tendency to compliance rather than taking an initiative on union membership. This is illustrated by relatively low levels of making contact and relatively high levels of compliance with recommendations from managers in addition to approaches from shop stewards. Putting aside those aged over 60, Table 9 reveals two unambiguous trends. First, informal methods of recruitment, particularly 'made contact myself', become more important with age, thus supporting the argument that older workers actively seek the protection of unions (Bain and Price 1983b). The small proportion of the youngest workers that make contact with unions suggests either that they lack the confidence to approach a union or that the union agenda is insufficiently attractive. The emphasis placed by young workers on mutual support as their reason for joining suggests that the first explanation is more convincing. The relative lack of contact made with unions by these workers may support the presence of a 'Thatcher's Children' effect, although the argument would have been more strongly supported if a steep rise in the extent of making contact had been found between ages 30 and 31 rather than at age 21. The 'Thatcher's Children' effect is normally stated in terms of individualization. However, these results suggest that this may be better expressed in terms of young workers 'keeping their heads down' as they persevere in insecure work and wait for a prompt to join a union.

A second theme apparent from Table 9 is that relations between unions and employers become less important with increasing age. This trend exists for both 'recommended by management' and 'at a training course'. The

TABLE 9
Age and Methods of Recruitment (%)

<i>Recruitment method</i>	<i>Up to 20</i>	<i>21-25</i>	<i>26-30</i>	<i>31-40</i>	<i>41-50</i>	<i>51-60</i>	<i>Over 60</i>
Shop-steward	36.3	34.0	29.8	26.7	26.9	28.3	36.2
Branch secretary	4.3	5.8	5.7	6.1	6.3	7.7	5.3
Full-time officer	5.5	3.6	3.5	3.0	3.4	2.6	4.3
Union literature	2.1	1.6	1.8	2.1	2.1	2.1	3.2
Made contact myself	9.7	23.0	32.5	37.0	36.7	36.7	25.5
Through a friend	7.6	8.9	9.2	8.4	10.2	10.6	9.6
Recommended by management	11.4	9.0	8.2	7.8	7.1	6.6	5.3
At a training course	20.1	12.2	6.1	4.7	2.9	1.0	1.1
	<i>N=1027</i>	<i>N=1895</i>	<i>N=1941</i>	<i>N=2866</i>	<i>N=2042</i>	<i>N=833</i>	<i>N=94</i>

diminishing effect with age of a manager's recommendation points to a further aspect of young workers' insecurity: they are more prepared to comply with a request from their manager to join a union simply because it is their manager who is asking them.

Table 5 showed that job insecurity was also a key issue for part-time workers. Other things being equal, we should expect a similar pattern of recruitment methods among part-time workers as among young workers. However, as Table 10 illustrates, there are marked differences between the two groups.

TABLE 10
Hours Worked and Methods of Recruitment (%)

<i>Recruitment method</i>	<i>≤18 hours/ week</i>	<i>19-30 hours/ week</i>	<i>31-40 hours/ week</i>	<i>40+ hours/ week</i>
Shop-steward	17.7	23.4	32.2	30.9
Branch secretary	4.1	4.9	6.0	6.7
Full-time officer	4.0	2.0	3.7	3.7
Union literature	1.9	1.4	1.9	2.5
Made contact myself	32.5	36.6	29.4	32.6
Through a friend	9.6	11.3	8.8	9.0
Recommended by management	18.5	8.1	7.4	8.4
At a training course	9.4	9.7	7.2	1.4
	<i>N=606</i>	<i>N=1198</i>	<i>N=6404</i>	<i>N=2243</i>

The effect of informal recruitment does not vary markedly from around 42 per cent for each of the four groups with different working hours. There are substantially more workers working 30 or fewer hours per week recruited through informal means than by either union recruitment or relations with employers. As a belief in trade unions was relatively rare among part-time workers, it is clear that belief and informal methods of recruitment are not strongly associated. The consistency of informal recruitment methods across all the hours groups confirms the view that anti-union attitudes are not more strongly pronounced among part-time workers than among their full-time counterparts (Frieze 1987).

Relations with employers are more important the shorter the hours worked. A recommendation to join a union from a manager is more common by over ten percentage points for those working 18 or fewer hours per week compared with those working 40 or more hours per week. Indeed, for those working 18 or fewer hours per week, links between unions and employers account for as many new members as union recruitment. Shop-steward recruitment is less important among this group than is a recommendation to join from a manager. Although these results were probably influenced by the presence of managers as full-time employees and union members in private-sector services, they also confirm the difficulties of establishing and retaining contact with part-time workers at workplace level.

The proportion of new members recruited by unions increases with hours worked. Shop-stewards and branch secretaries are at their least effective in recruiting those working 18 or fewer hours per week. In contrast, full-time officers recruit more new members working 18 or fewer hours per week than among any other group. This suggests that the appointment of full-time recruitment officers may be necessary to raise recruitment levels among part-time workers. Such officers could be available in the workplace at the times that part-time workers are on site. Table 5 showed that part-time workers stressed mutual support as a reason for joining compared with other groups. The relative inability of local union representatives to make contact with part-time workers in order to recruit them brings into question their capacity to contribute to their support.

4. Conclusions

This paper addressed two core issues: explanations of membership decline, and union recruitment policies. Our evidence provides little support to those arguing that individualization has dissolved labour movements since 1979. On the contrary, collective reasons remain central to union joining and individual services are secondary to the joining process. Furthermore, this pattern is reproduced across most industries and occupations, suggesting that views among workers in expanding areas of employment do not differ substantially from those held by workers in areas of traditional membership strength. In other words, collective organization is absent from areas of employment growth for reasons other than the ascendancy of individualism and/or the rejection of collectivism.

The explanation of membership decline based on a shift in power towards employers arising from unemployment and restructuring is generally supported by these data. In particular, the capacity of employers to resist recognition, or even an effective union presence, has made unions unavailable to vast numbers of potential members. Almost one-third of new union members make contact with their unions. If unions are prevented from establishing a presence, either by employers or through deficient

organization, they are simply not available for potential members to join. Widespread job insecurity and legislation favourable to employers add a further element to this equation, in encouraging many workers to 'keep their heads down' by not actively seeking to join unions. Also, in workplaces where unions have established a presence, traditional recruitment methods are not as effective for some groups among whom employment growth is steep. For example, shop steward recruitment is at its weakest among part-time workers. The restructuring of employment has thus further weakened workplace recruitment.

We are also in a position to comment on different approaches to recruitment. It is clear that packages of financial services are not major inducements to membership. Furthermore, the proposed shift to individually oriented client-based services (Bassett and Cave 1993) receives little support from new members, for whom mutual support at the workplace is the central reason for joining. The key issue is thus to ensure that unions are available to potential members and are able to support members in their workplaces.

In broad terms, there are two objectives of most union recruitment policies: to deepen recruitment at organized workplaces, and/or to extend membership into hitherto unorganized areas. Estimates suggest that in 1991 about 1.7 million potential members work at sites where unions are present (Metcalf 1991). Our results suggest two means whereby recruitment self-sufficiency may be raised at organized workplaces: first, it may be useful to identify specific workplace representatives and offer them training in recruitment methods; second, the provision of more accurate membership information should enable local representatives to identify non-members. Although the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993 phased out state support for trade union education, these proposals entail neither huge costs nor substantial changes in union organization and practice. Current balloting requirements, for example, necessitate that accurate membership records are maintained; the issue is whether these can be made available to local representatives in a form that can assist in the recruitment process.

Deepening membership at organized workplaces is relatively cheap and, as our results indicate, is how the overwhelming majority of new members are recruited. Extending membership into unorganized areas, however, is important for the long-term future. It is necessary to establish a substantial membership presence in areas other than manufacturing and the public sector, if trade unions are to represent the entire labour force. Given the extent of employer hostility, the absence of legislation to support recognition or representation, and the extent of union financial weakness, the options are not wide-ranging. It may be possible to extend the range of work-related services, that is, to build on the success of legal advice. Options might include some form of job search facility, unemployment insurance or tax advice.

The weakness of this approach is that it is passive and relies on attracting

the non-member into membership. A more assertive approach centres on the appointment of full-time recruitment officers who could recruit at unorganized workplaces and among workers at organized sites which existing local representatives are unable to contact. Similar initiatives have been taken by unions in the United States and Australia, where it is claimed that they are cost-effective, in that contribution income from new members recruited by these officers is greater than their wage costs.

The prime advantage of such an approach is that recruitment officers are free from the day-to-day servicing requirements which preclude the more extensive participation of existing full-time officers in recruitment activities. However, if this approach were adopted, it would also be necessary to review ways of supporting newly recruited members in their workplaces, because if recruitment officers only recruit, new members will need support from other officers, particularly in building effective and self-sustaining local organization.

Advocates of mergers claim that they lead to improvements in the quality of workplace support services. If these benefits can be achieved, mergers will meet the demands of new members for workplace support. Increases in membership heterogeneity arising from mergers do not pose significant questions for union organization with respect to the reasons why new members join, although differences in methods of recruitment could usefully be incorporated into recruitment campaigns. It remains to be seen whether these relatively narrow differences in reasons for joining are reproduced in the collective bargaining priorities of the various groups of new members. Our next paper addresses this issue.

Final version accepted 23 May 1997.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank Val Jephcott for her assistance with the analysis of the data, and Paul Edwards, John Kelly and two anonymous referees for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

Data Appendix

The data are drawn from a survey of new members in 12 unions. The survey was distributed between 1991 and 1993 on a union-by-union basis rather than throughout the 12 unions simultaneously. While these unions cannot be regarded as being statistically representative of all UK unions, they comprise unions with a range of membership sizes (in 1991 the membership of the largest union was 1.1 million and that of the smallest, 12,000), which organize membership across most of the industries and occupations of the UK labour force. Three of the 12 unions participating in the survey were not affiliated to the TUC. The questionnaires were distributed by the participating unions

and returned to the Industrial Relations Research Unit (IRRU) in pre-paid envelopes. Ten unions drew the sample from centralized computerized membership records. In two unions records were maintained by the regions rather than at head office. For these unions the sample sizes were established on a regional basis and the questionnaires distributed from regional offices. Respondents in all unions returned questionnaires directly to the IRRU rather than to their union.

For the purposes of the survey, a 'new' member was defined as someone who had been in membership for a minimum of three months. As the survey also addressed membership participation in branch activity, this period was chosen to ensure that each new member had the opportunity to attend a union meeting and to have received union literature. The first new member in the sample for each union had been recruited three months before the distribution of the survey, the second member of the sample was the previous new recruit, and so on until each sample was complete. Thus, the sample from each union reflected the actual new membership rather than the existing membership. Within each union the survey distribution was timed to ensure that the distribution was not subject to any predictable seasonal variations. However, in two unions new recognition agreements meant that there were concentrations of new members within two particular companies. The duration of membership varied according to the recruitment rate of each union. In practice, the overwhelming majority (90.6 per cent) of those defined as new members had been in membership between three and six months. Some responses were received from those who had been in membership for more than one year and were excluded from the data presented here.

A total of 51,708 questionnaires were distributed and 11,035 were returned: the overall response rate was thus 21.3 per cent. However, there was considerable variation between unions in the rate of return, which varied from 10.9 to 55.0 per cent. This variation is largely attributed to differences in educational background and occupation. While efforts were made to allow for these variations in response rate by altering the sample sizes within each union, we do not claim that this procedure was entirely successful. For example, the rate of return among health service workers within several unions was higher than anticipated, hence such workers are over-represented in the sample.

Respondents were asked to write in their occupation and the name of their employer (or whether they were retired or unemployed). These responses were classified by the authors using the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) and the Standard Industrial Classification 1980 (SIC) respectively. While the use of the SIC was manual, the SOC entries were categorized using the CASOC (Computer Assisted Standard Occupational Classification) programme (for details, see Elias *et al.* 1993).

In order to examine variation within the unionization process, occupations were grouped into an adapted version of Goldthorpe's (1987: 40-7) occupational classes. Four of the occupational classes used here reproduce

those introduced by Goldthorpe: managers, administrators and professionals; semi- (or associate) professionals and technicians; skilled manual workers; and unskilled manual workers. A fifth of Goldthorpe's classes—Class IV, small proprietors, self-employed artisans, and all other 'own account' workers apart from professionals—was represented by only 50 union members within our sample and is thus discounted from our analysis. A sixth occupational class—Class V, lower grade technicians and supervisors of manual workers—we categorized either as technicians (lower grade technicians) or as manual workers (supervisors of manual workers). This approach was necessitated because the SOC does not allow the isolation of these groups. This leaves a final Goldthorpe class: Class III, routine non-manual—largely clerical—employees in administration and commerce, sales personnel, and other rank-and-file employees in services. Following Goldthorpe, clerical and sales personnel are combined in a single occupational class. However, the class used here, unlike that of Goldthorpe, excludes 'other rank-and-file employees in services'. We classified these workers into a separate class of personal and protective service occupations.

Two points underpinned our approach. First, a significant proportion (75 per cent) of those in personal and protective service occupations worked as auxiliary nurses, nursing assistants and care assistants and attendants. As such, they exhibited many of the peculiarities of the health industry regarding their unionization. These peculiarities contrast with those exhibited by clerical and sales personnel. To follow Goldthorpe in combining these groups would thus conflate two different unionization processes within the same occupational class. Second, between 1981 and 1991 employment growth was particularly sharp among personal and protective service occupations, and that of care assistants and attendants was the largest among all occupations (Rose and Elias 1995). Separating these groups from clerical and sales personnel thus allows analysis of the recruitment profile of a group which unions need to recruit if membership decline is to be reversed.

Our schema thus comprises six occupational classes:

- Class I: managers, administrators and professionals
- Class II: semi- (or associate) professionals and technicians
- Class III: clerical and sales personnel
- Class IV: personal and protective service occupations
- Class V: skilled manual workers
- Class VI: unskilled manual workers

In broad terms, Classes I, II and III are white-collar occupations and Classes V and VI comprise manual workers. The allocation of Class IV is more problematic. Indeed, Goldthorpe treats this class ambiguously, allocating it as a white-collar class and as an 'intermediate' class on different occasions. For our analysis it is treated as intermediate throughout.

The industrial disaggregations are based on the 1980 SIC. As we did not survey all unions and the rate of questionnaire return varied between occupations, we are not in a position to present results from all industries.

The data are thus disaggregated into seven industrial categories which are specified below together with their SIC classes (two digit) or activity headings (four digit):

- Engineering: 22, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37
- Other Manufacturing: 24, 25, 26, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49
- Private-Sector Services: 64, 65, 66, 81, 97, 98
- Privatized Agencies and Utilities: 15, 16, 17, 7902, 91*
- Local Government and Education: 9112, 92, 93,
- Health: 95
- National Government: 91 (excluding 9112)

In sectoral terms, engineering, other manufacturing and private-sector services are combined as the private sector; and local government and education, health and national government are grouped as the public sector. Throughout the paper the privatized agencies and utilities are considered as separate from these two sectoral groups. Three of these industries are combinations of several minimum list headings from the SIC. The composition of these industries in terms of the number of new members is shown in Table A1.

TABLE A1

	<i>Number</i>	<i>SIC class</i>
Other Manufacturing		
Food and drink	344	41, 42
Chemicals	171	25
Cotton and textiles	43	26, 43
Clothing and leather	145	44, 45
Bricks, building materials and pottery	40	24
Timber and woodworking	9	46
Printing and paper	30	47
Rubber and plastics	196	48, 49
Private-Sector Services		
Banking, insurance and finance	167	81, 82
Retailing and distribution	453	64, 65
Entertainment	4	97
Miscellaneous services	623	66, 98
Privatized Agencies and Utilities		
Gas	19	1620
Water	44	17
Electricity	106	15, 1610
Telecommunications	422	7902
Agencies	263	91*

* This category includes only those respondents who specified that they worked in an agency. Other responses classified as 91 were allocated either to national government, if activity heading 9111, or local government, if activity heading 9112.

Notes

1. There are clearly relations between the targeted groups and other sections of the labour force considered here. For example, the majority of part-time workers are women. However, these targeted groups are considered separately here, as they have been specifically identified by unions as the members they want to recruit. Our purpose is to identify whether there are specific features relevant to part-time workers that are not apparent when analysing data on women.
2. Industrial benefits were offered by all unions in the sample, albeit for different issues and at different levels. Prominent among the benefits offered were dispute benefit, funeral benefit and sickness benefit. Not all the unions in the sample offered professional services. Professional services include indemnity insurance, access to library facilities, and head office personnel with specific responsibility for liaising with the professional body relevant to the occupation.
3. Gallie *et al.* (1996: 145) presented an analysis based on the following reasons for joining: condition of job; way of creating a more just society/solidarity; higher pay and better conditions; everyone else is a member; protection if problems come up in the future; other.
4. It was also our intention to examine differences in joining between races, but only 5 per cent of respondents classified themselves as non-white. In so far as this indicates that the recruitment of non-white workers is poor or employers were not employing such workers at the time of the survey, it is a significant finding. However, the small number of non-white respondents precludes analysis of ethnicity here.
5. It has also been shown that highly unionized industries tend to have a higher age profile among the work-force (Richardson and Catlin 1979). However, as these authors acknowledge, the causality of the relation between age, industry and unionization is difficult to establish.
6. In the questionnaires the wording of this option varied from union to union, depending on how each union's head office was generally referred to within the organization.
7. Over the Christmas and New Year period of 1995 Unison ran a series of adverts on national television. At the time of writing the results of this initiative were unknown.

References

- Antos, J., Chandler, M. and Mellow, W. (1980) 'Sex differences in union membership'. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 33(2): 162–9.
- Bacon, N. and Storey, J. (1996). 'Individualism and collectivism and the changing role of trade unions'. In P. Ackers, C. Smith and P. Smith (eds.), *The New Workplace and Trade Unionism*. London: Routledge.
- Bain, G. (1970). *The Growth of White-Collar Unionism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- and Elias, P. (1985). 'Trade union membership in Great Britain: an individual-level analysis'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 23(1): 71–92.
- and Elsheikh, F. (1979). 'An inter-industry analysis of unionisation in Britain'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 27(2): 137–57.

- and Price, R. (1983). 'Union growth in Britain. Retrospect and prospect'. In G. Bain. (ed.), *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 21(1): 46–68.
- (1983b). 'Union growth: dimensions, determinants, and destiny'. In G. Bain (ed.), *Industrial Relations in Britain*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 3–33.
- Bassett, P. and Cave, A. (1993). *All for One: The Future of the Unions*, Fabian Pamphlet no. 559. London: Fabian Society.
- Beatson, M. and Butcher, S. (1993). 'Union density across the employed workforce'. *Employment Gazette*, January: 673–89.
- Booth, A. (1989). 'What do unions do now?' Discussion Paper in Economics, no. 8903, Brunel University.
- CAB (1993). *Job Insecurity*. London: NACAB.
- Carruth, A. and Disney, R. (1988). 'Where have two million trade union members gone?' *Economica*, 55(1): 1–19.
- Cave, A. (1994). *Managing Change in the Workplace*. London: Kogan Page.
- Claydon, T. (1989). 'Union derecognition in Britain in the 1980s'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 27(2): 214–24.
- Colling, T. and Dickens, L. (1989). *Equality Bargaining: Why Not?* Equal Opportunities Commission Research Series. London: HMSO.
- Crompton, R. and Jones, G. (1984). *White-Collar Proletariat*. London: Macmillan.
- Deery, S. and DeCieri, H. (1991). 'Determinants of trade union membership in Australia'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 29(1): 59–74.
- Dibden, J. and Millward, N. (1991). 'Trade union membership: developments and prospects'. *Policy Studies*, 12(4): 4–19.
- Elias, P., Halstead, K. and Prandy, K. (1993). *Computer Assisted Standard Occupational Coding*. London: HMSO.
- Fairbrother, P. (1994). 'Privatisation and local trade unionism'. *Work, Employment and Society*, 8(3): 339–56.
- Fiorito, J. and Dauffenbach, R. (1982). 'The determinants of occupational unionization'. *Journal of Labor Research*, 3(4): 473–85.
- Frieze, J. (1987). *Part-Time Workers: Conditions, Rights and Unions*. Workers' Educational Association Studies for Trade Unionists, 13(49). London: WEA.
- Gallie, D., Penn, R. and Rose, M. (eds.) (1996). *Trade Unionism in Recession*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goldthorpe, J. (1987). *Social Mobility and Class in Modern Britain*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Green, F. (1990). 'Trade union availability and trade union membership in Britain', *The Manchester School*, 58: 378–94.
- Hecksher, C. (1988). *The New Unionism*. New York: Basic Books.
- Heery, E. and Kelly, J. (1988). 'Do female representatives make a difference? Women full-time officials and trade union work'. *Work, Employment and Society*, 2(4): 487–505.
- Hirsch, B. (1980). 'The determinants of unionization: an analysis of interarea differences'. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 33(2): 147–61.
- Industrial Relations Review and Report (IRRR)* (1990). 'Union services: the way forward?' no. 457, February: 6–12.
- (1992). 'The changing role of trade union officers 1: the devolution of pay bargaining', no. 526, December: 5–12.
- (1994). 'Union derecognition and personal contracts', no. 553, February: pp. 6–13.

- Jarley, P. and Fiorito, J. (1990). 'Associate membership: unionism or consumerism?' *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 43(2): 209–24.
- Kelly, J. and Heery, E. (1989). 'Full-time officers and trade union recruitment'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 27(2): 196–213.
- (1994). *Working for the Union: British Trade Union Officers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- and Kelly, C. (1991). 'Them and us: social psychology and the New Industrial Relations'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 29(1): 25–48.
- and Waddington, J. (1995). 'New prospects for British labour'. *Organisation*, 2(3/4): 415–26.
- Kerr, A. (1992). 'Why public sector workers join unions: an attitude survey of workers in the health service and local government'. *Employee Relations*, 14(2): 39–54.
- Klandermans, B. (1986). 'Psychology and trade union participation: joining, acting quitting'. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 59: 189–204.
- Lockwood, D. (1958). *The Blackcoated Worker: A Study in Social Consciousness*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- LRD (1991). *Women in Trade Unions: Actions for Equality*. London: Labour Research Department.
- Lumley, R. (1973). *White-Collar Unionism in Britain*. London: Methuen.
- McKendrick, E. (1988). 'The rights of trade union members—Part 1 of the Employment Act 1988'. *Industrial Law Journal*, 17(3): 141–61.
- McLoughlin, I. and Gourlay, S. (1994). *Enterprise without Unions*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Marshall, G., Rose, D., Newby, H. and Vogler, C. (1988). *Social Class in Modern Britain*. London: Hutchinson.
- Metcalfe, D. (1991). 'British unions: dissolution or resurgence?' *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 7: 18–32.
- Millward, N. (1990). 'The state of the unions'. In R. Jowell, S. Witherspoon and L. Brook (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: The 7th Report*. Aldershot: Gower, pp. 27–50.
- Perlman, S. (1928). *A Theory of the Labor Movement*. Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1979 edn.
- Phelps Brown, H. (1990). 'The counter-revolution of our time'. *Industrial Relations*, 29(1): 1–14.
- Poole, M. and Mansfield, R. (1993). 'Patterns of continuity and change in managerial attitudes and behaviour in industrial relations 1980–1990'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 31(1): 11–36.
- Prandy, K., Stewart, A. and Blackburn, R. (1983). *White-Collar Unionism*. London: Macmillan.
- Rees, T. (1992). *Women and the Labour Market*. London: Routledge.
- Richardson, R. and Catlin, S. (1979). 'Trade union density and collective agreement patterns in Britain'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 17(3): 376–85.
- Rose, D. and Elias, P. (1995). 'The revision of OPCS social classifications'. *Work Employment and Society*, 9(3): 583–92.
- Sapper, S. (1991). 'Do members' services packages influence trade union recruitment?' *Industrial Relations Journal*, 22(4): 309–16.
- Shister, J. (1953). 'The logic of union growth'. *Journal of Political Economy*, 61: 413–33.
- Skidelsky, R. (1995). *The World After Communism*. London: Macmillan.

- Stewart, M. (1983). 'Relative earnings and individual union membership in the United Kingdom'. *Economica*, 50: 111–25.
- TUC (1988a). *Meeting the Challenge: First Report of the Special Review Body*. London: TUC.
- (1988b). *Services for Union Members: Special Review Body Report on Services*. London: TUC.
- (1995). *Trade Unions and Insecurity at Work*. London: TUC.
- Undy, R., Ellis, V., McCarthy, W. and Halmos, A. (1981). *Change in Trade Unions*. London: Hutchinson.
- van de Vall, M. (1970). *Labor Organizations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Waddington, J. (1992). 'Trade union membership in Britain, 1980–1987: unemployment and restructuring'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 30(2): 287–324.
- and Whitston, C. (1995a). 'Trade unions: growth, structure and policy'. In P. Edwards (ed.), *Industrial Relations: Theory and Practice in Britain*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- (1995b). 'Work Intensification and Grievances at Unionised Workplaces in the UK'. *Industrielle Beziehungen*, 2(4): 414–43.
- Webb, S. and Webb, B. (1897). *Industrial Democracy*. London: Longmans.
- Willman, P., Morris, T. and Aston, B. (1993). *Union Business: Trade Union Organisation and Financial Reform in the Thatcher Years*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wright Mills, C. (1951). *White-Collar*. New York: Oxford University Press.