The organising model of trade unionism in England's social care sector

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Declaration

I, the author, confirm that the thesis is my own work. I am aware of the University's Guidance on the Use of Unfair Means (www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means). This work has not been previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, university.

Abstract

This thesis critically analyses the 'organising model' of trade unionism in England's social care sector. Using 60 interviews with members, non-members, organisers, and officers, it compares the strategies of GMB, UNISON and IWW. The workers interviewed were employed at a home care company, a residential home, and support providers in the north of England. The findings of the thesis are structured around three aspects of the organising model: mobilisation, union activism, and the relation between unions and employers and local authorities. The research analyses these findings using a Marxist theoretical framework, drawing on value theory, the circulation of capital, and dialectical materialism.

The research finds an absence of mobilisation arising from workplace injustices and collectivism, as non-members frequently prioritised quality of care over improvements to working conditions and viewed economic struggles as detrimental to care recipients. The findings also highlight low levels of activism and emphasise a class exclusivity within union participation. Overwork, fear of retribution from managers, and a perception of the union as a service impeded activism, as did recruitment targets set by unions. Bargaining was constrained as employers argued that pay and working conditions were determined by funding levels. Attempts to focus union campaigns on funding, however, did not necessarily improve working conditions or lead to effective organising: local authorities' regulation of providers was limited. Overall, the thesis finds that the ability of the model to represent a politically radical approach to trade unionism is limited in the context of social care. The thesis also contributes a Marxist analysis of the political economy of care provision. It argues that in the sector, an aim of the state is to save money by minimising public spending while private care providers aim to extract profit. This dynamic negatively impacts pay, working conditions, and the success of union strategies.

Acknowledgments

My first thanks go to everybody who I interviewed. They were all incredibly generous with their time and provided thoughtful perspectives on work and activism. I am also indebted to the workers and care recipients who I met whilst working in the care sector; I hope this research does some justice to their experiences too.

I am very grateful to my supervisors Jason Heyes, Diane Burns, and Ed Yates for their patience, insight, inspiration, and dedication to the project. Thanks also to the administrative and support staff at Sheffield University Management School, the Sheffield branch of the University and College Union, and everyone involved in the 2018 London Critical Theory Summer School at Birkbeck, University of London.

Thank you to my friends for their support – Mike Elsam, Patrick Hyland, Joe Todd, Nick Clare, Jonny Mears, the rest of the Sharrow Space Program, and the Kropotkin reading group. I am grateful to have had the encouragement of my family: Mike, Julie, Franny, and Joey Whitfield. Without Joey's academic support I would have dropped out of university after the first year of my undergraduate degree. I am, I think, glad that I didn't.

I owe a huge amount of gratitude to Ellis Jones for reading my work, standing on picket lines with me, and being proud of me even when I have done nothing.

And to the worker who said to me: 'I don't suppose any job's perfect really, apart from yours, just sitting here asking me questions, I mean, *come on*' – I agree. Thank you to the Economic and Social Research Council for funding me to ask questions.

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Acronyms & abbreviations

Acas – Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service

ACORN – Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (community union)

AEEU – Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union

AFL – American Federation of Labour

CAC – Central Arbitration Committee

CQC – Care Quality Commission

FTO – Full time officers

GMB – General Municipal Boilermakers

IWGB – International Workers of Great Britain

IWW – International Workers of the World (also referred to as Wobblies or Wobs).

IWW WISE-RA – International Workers of the World, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, England Regional Administration (regional division)

LPT – Labour Process Theory

LTV – Labour Theory of Value

MSF – Manufacturing, Science and Finance (union)

NEU – National Education Union

NHS – National Health Service

NLW – National Living Wage

NORS – National Organising and Recruitment Strategy

PCS – Public and Commercial Services Union

PFI – Private Finance Initiative

SEIU – Service Employees International Union

SMU – Social Movement Unionism

TSSA – Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (union)

TUC – Trades Union Congress

TUPE – Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations

UVW – United Voices of the World (union)

1. Introduction

This thesis evaluates the organising model of trade unionism. It considers approaches used by the private sector union GMB, the historically public sector union UNISON, and the grassroots union IWW in England's social care sector – an area of work with low levels of union membership. The findings draw upon interviews with union organisers and union officers from the three unions, alongside interviews with union members, non-members, company managers, and employers in the sector. Using this range of data, the thesis questions the effectiveness – alongside the assumed political radicalities – of fundamental tenets of the organising model of unionism. The organising model is, the findings suggest, substantially constrained by dynamics of political economy, by workers' embedded notions of the purpose of trade unions, and by the contradictory actions of trade unions.

The organising model emphasises the importance of mobilising workers, promoting workplace activism, and using grassroots campaigns. In the mid-1990s, the model was envisaged as a means of revitalising the union movement by the UK's Trade Union Congress (TUC). It has become a prevalent 'ideal' throughout the UK trade union movement – despite a growing view among union practitioners and researchers that organising strategies have failed to live up to expectations (Gall, 2010; McIlroy, 2011; Simms et al. 2019). Undoubtedly, union membership has not recovered to pre-Thatcher levels. In 1979 union density UK was at its peak at 55.8% of the workforce (Waddington and Kerr, 2015: 187); in 2018, union density was 21% (BEIS, 2018). The failures of organising are frequently attributed to the way that strategies have been enacted – with implementation marred by an ambiguity over what organising is attempting to achieve, by a 'dilution' of organising with other forms of unionism, and by a pragmatic as opposed to principled use of tactics. This thesis presents a more holistic understanding of the external factors which impact organising than these approaches by analysing the political economy of care, whilst still differentiating between the more effective and less effective strategies used by unions.

The unions utilised as case studies in this research adopted the TUC's imperative to 'organise' to different extents. GMB required that all officers undertake training on organising (Simms and Holgate, 2010), and implemented an organising agenda, 'GMB@Work', which had some successes in improving finances and membership levels of the union (Donaldson, 2010: 26). UNISON sponsored trainees in the TUC's Organising Academy, brought in the National

Organising and Recruitment Strategy in 1997 with the aim of building an 'organising culture' (UNISON, 1997), and in 2010 established a Fighting Fund training program to train organisers. As a union which has never been TUC affiliated, IWW sits outside of the 'turn to organising' (Simms et al., 2019: 331) but has a long-held history of focussing on organising with an aspiration to make 'every member an organiser.'[1] The grassroots, bottom-up approach to unionism of the IWW arguably represents the ideal that TUC affiliated unions are (or, perhaps, were when the organising model was first adopted) working towards.

Union membership in the social care sector is low (Baines and Cunningham, 2015; Cunningham, 2015; Hayes and Moore, 2017), but it is a sector in dire need of effective union representation and bargaining. Poor employment practices and low pay are rife after decades of marketisation carried out by successive governments. In 1979, local authorities or the NHS provided 64% of residential and nursing home care and 95% of domiciliary care, and by 2012, these numbers had fallen to 6% and 11% respectively (Hudson, 2016). Governments have also sought to minimise public expenditure when commissioning care to private employers: new Labour's 'Best Value' policy, for example, called on each local authority to 'secure continuous improvement in the way in which [their] functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness' (Labour, 1999). The 'prime motivator' behind this policy approach was cost cutting as opposed to sectoral innovation (Rubery and Urwin, 2011: 123). The austerity policies of the 2010-15 Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government and post-2015 Conservative government pursued similar cost cutting initiatives (Baines and Cunningham, 2015: 183). Funding levels in 2018/2019 were £0.4 billion less than funding levels in 2010/2011 (Bottery and Babalola, 2020). Facing a funding deficit (Bolton and Wibberley, 2014; Cunningham, 2015; Hayes and Moore, 2017), large care providers have increasingly utilised financial support from private equity firms (Davies, 2017). The pressure to meet debt repayments has had further negative effects on the employment conditions and wages of workers (Burns et al., 2016; Horton, 2017).

As such, social care is an economically 'fragile sector' (Bottery and Babalola, 2020) both in terms of the care provided and in terms of employment conditions. Requests for care provision have increased, but care providers frequently hand contracts back to local authorities after going out of business and job vacancies are rising (ibid.). The effects of Covid-19 appear to be,

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[1] A phrase used in IWW training material.

at the time of writing, worsening this fragility.[2] The sector has been shaken by large numbers of additional deaths of social care users. The reduction of hospital admissions during the first months of the pandemic increased pressure on social care services (Hodgson et al., 2020), and Covid-19 testing of staff employed in the sector (who were not at first categorised by the government as essential workers) was delayed (Deeny and Dunn, 2020). The UK government's response has thus far included a campaign to 'Clap for Carers' (initially focussed on NHS workers but then expanded to care workers), and claims from Prime Minister Boris Johnson that individual care companies did not sufficiently 'follow procedures' (ibid.) to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

The role of unions within the precarity, low-pay, and privatisation of social care has been comparatively under-researched in extant literature on the sector. This thesis responds to this dearth of research, focussing questions on the utility and politics of the organising model, as applied to social care. It asks whether workers who experience workplace injustices and have a collectivist orientation will mobilise (as predicted by the 'mobilisation' aspect of the model, described below), whether unionism built upon the work of activists is feasible and sustainable, and whether campaigns provide an effective means of improving employment conditions and pay. The research also unpacks the supposition that organising entails a more radical politics than alternative forms (notably, than service unionism or partnership unionism) and responds to calls to include class in analyses of organising (Simms and Holgate, 2010; Simms, 2011; Gall and Fiorito, 2011; Martínez Lucio et al., 2017).

The research is qualitative, drawing upon the views of individuals involved in organising initiatives (employed by unions or as union activists), and a mixture of non-members and union members employed in home care, residential care, and at supported living facilities. This approach goes beyond the 'numbers game' used to evaluate union strategies (Towers, 2003: 187), whereby membership levels and the number of recognition agreements signed between unions and employers are the focus. The research also uses an expansive theoretical framework to analyse organising within contemporary political economy. Unionism, caring labour, collectivism, and class are all interpreted using a Marxist theoretical framework. Social care work is situated within the circulation of capital: the thesis explores the imperative to save money (for the state) and make money (for private employers) as simultaneous dynamics

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[2] The fieldwork for the thesis was carried out prior to the spread of Covid-19.

shaping employment in the sector. Again using a Marxist conception of value production and capital circulation, the thesis contextualises unions' efforts to deal with public sector, private sector, and financialised employment relationships within politics of distribution.

The following sections of this introductory chapter continue to establish the research context – the contemporary characteristics of union organising and of social care – and lay out the focus and structure of the thesis. Section 1.1 introduces the key debates which this research contributes to: conceptualisations of organising, evaluations of organising, politics of organising, and theory on caring labour and capitalism. Section 1.2 defines the thesis' research questions, Section 1.3 details the research methods used, and Section 1.4 provides an outline of the thesis chapters.

1.1 Key debates

This research contributes to scholarship regarding the implementation of organising, the negative effects of privatisation on the social care sector, and debates over work, resistance, and unionisation under capitalism. The findings provide insight into how the organising model has been applied. Researchers have highlighted the 'top-down aspect' to the adoption of organising in the UK (Heery, 2015: 547) with direction largely driven by the TUC (arguably going against the spirit of organising). Organising has variously been adopted as an 'ideal' or, less emphatically and more pragmatically, as a framework suggesting direction for unions. When unions interpret the organising model as a 'toolbox' of strategies, then some aspects of organising fall to the wayside. For example, scholarship has emphasised that unions frequently carry out recruitment without attempting the more challenging aspects of organising (Heery, 2000; Saundry and Wibberley, 2013; Looker, 2019) like transitioning members into activists. The rhetoric of organising has become mainstream within unions, yet the specificity of organising has arguably been lost.

Alongside contributing to debate over how unions interpret and apply organising strategies, the thesis asks why and how organising has failed. In part, employment relations researchers have related the failures of organising to its lack of conceptual clarity, as described in the above paragraph. Research has suggested that the effectiveness of organising has been diluted by service unionism (Carter and Kline, 2016) and by partnership strategies (Gall, 2010). Further, research by Heery and Simms (2008) and Carter (2000) indicates that unions have not provided

sufficient resources to carry out organising initiatives. There has also been internal opposition to organising among unions (Gall, 2010). The ambitions of individual organisers to engage in 'organising' can be inhibited by national union strategies (Looker, 2019), and organising initiatives can become a 'disciplinary mechanism' for union employees (Carter, 2000: 131). In addition, the aversion of members towards becoming activists (Greene and Kirton, 2003) presents a significant obstacle to the organising model.

Scholarship has also emphasised the role of external constraints in the inhibition of organising. The actions of the successive governments of New Labour, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition (2010-2015) and the Conservative government (2015- ongoing) have acted as political constraints to unionism in the UK (McIlroy and Daniels, 2009; McIlroy, 2018). Further, research has pointed to the structural employment changes which negatively affect unions, for example the growth of the service sector and de-industrialisation (Hyman, 2007) and the transition towards privatisation and outsourced provision of public services (Fairbrother, 2000). These discussions over the internal and external factors preventing organising will be explored further in the second chapter of this thesis.

This research also contributes to a third debate – related to and emergent from the debates over the conceptualisation and effectiveness of organising – over the *politics* of organising. The organising model has been viewed as a more politically authentic unionism, 'a refraction of the soul and raison d'etre of labour unionism' (Gall, 2009: 2), which 'identifies employers as the problem' (McIlroy, 2011: 97) and aims to empower workers. Yet scholarship has also questioned the extent to which organising in practice acts as a political approach: 'UK scholars have largely accepted organizing as a set of practices and tactics rather than as a wider political initiative' (Simms and Holgate 2010: 159). The TUC's simultaneous promotion of organising tactics, service unionism, and partnership unionism has led to accusations that the model's political aims are ambiguous. In addition, theorists have questioned whether mobilisation – arguably the political core of organising, as conceptualised by UK industrial relations theorist John Kelly (1998) – can be viewed as a Marxist, class–based approach to unionism (Atzeni, 2010; Cohen, 2011).

To examine these debates, this research draws upon theoretical concepts which have been applied to analyses of caring labour and union organising. It utilises the notion of emotional labour – an imperative to 'act' a certain emotion (Hochschild, 1983; Korczynski, 2003; Bolton,

2005) – and affective labour, referring to an extraction of the affective tendencies of workers (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 2004, 2009; Bolton, 2009). Literature on 'dirty' labour is used to examine the physical aspects of caring labour, and the role of gender in care provision is analysed with reference to Wages for Housework literature (Dalla Costa and James, 1971, Fortunati, 1995, Federici, 2012) and social reproduction theory (Bhattacharya, 2017). The thesis understands the commodification of this caring labour, and the role of unions under capitalism, using a Marxist approach to value, labour and the circulation of capital (Fine and Harris, 1976; Marx, 1979; Fine and Saad-Filho, 2010; Lapavitzas, 2013; Harvey, 2017; Cleaver, 2017).

1.2 Research questions

The thesis is focussed on the following research questions:

1. *How have unions utilised an organising approach in social care?*

The first research question considers the extent to which GMB, UNISON, and IWW have adopted practices of an organising model in social care. The aim is to examine how unions have interpreted organising, both as an ideal and in practice, and to analyse how organising relates to different forms of work. The thesis explores how national policy on organising methods from the three unions compares with the perspectives of individual union officers and organisers interviewed. It examines how union structures – such as resource allocation and recruitment targets – affect the organising ambitions of individuals within the unions. The thesis also asks what members and non-members expect of unions, what they *want* from unions, and how they have experienced organising initiatives.

2. *What are the obstacles to organising in social care?*

The second research question focuses on difficulties faced, both by paid organisers and unpaid workplace organisers, when implementing organising strategies. The thesis explores the obstacles to mobilising non-members around injustices and collectivism by examining the persistence of apathy among workers and the varieties of collectivism emergent from the labour process of care. The research shows the difficulty of implementing activism among members, and asks whether unions can rely upon on workers willingness to become activists, or whether

they have to revert to 'insurance selling' tactics. The thesis also examines the constraints on establishing effective partnerships or campaigns, situating the strategies of unions within the funding structures of social care. In addition, the thesis explores the contradictions between different models of unionism, firstly in relation to the simultaneous utilisation of service and organising tactics, and secondly in relation to the combination of 'top-down' organising strategies and recruitment aims.

3. *In what ways is organising in social care political?*

The final research question focusses on the assumption among unionists and researchers on the political left that the organising model represents a (more) radical approach to unionism. The thesis examines how organising strategies relate to power dynamics in the workplace, how class and empowerment factor in to activism, and how unions approach antagonisms between employers and workers under capitalism. Social care is viewed in the thesis as an area of work where issues of consumption (the needs of care recipients[3]) and distribution (public policy and financialisation) are often at the forefront, both in literature and in the public perception. Kelly's (1998: 123) question over the role of workplace politics is relevant in this context: 'perhaps the crude and forceful reassertion of class power at the point of production sounds too much like the class politics from an era that is supposed to be disappearing before our eyes?' This thesis examines whether union organising reflects a retreat from production and, if so, what this retreat might mean in terms of effectiveness and union renewal.

1.3 Methods

The research contributes to debate on organising using three trade unions as case studies. It draws upon interviews with union officers and union organisers, alongside interviews with workers and managers at companies where the unions were either organising or had recognition agreements with the employers. The workers were a mixture of union members and non-members. A total of 60 individuals were interviewed. The union interviewees in the research comprise full-time paid officers and organisers from GMB and UNISON and members of the

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[3] I use the term 'care recipients' rather than the more commercialised terminology of clients, service users, or customers which are used in the sector (and by some interviewees). Care recipients is not a perfect term either; as noted by Horton (2017: 17, footnote 11) it implies passivity when care is instead co-produced. Further, individuals using support services might more accurately be termed 'support recipients' but I have used 'care recipients' throughout to maintain consistency.

IWW who had taken on unpaid organising responsibilities within the union (as well as one IWW paid administrator). The fieldwork also includes an interview from a TUC officer and from a Trades Union Council officer. Interviews with workers included UNISON members, GMB members, IWW members, and non-members who had a varying level of interest in unionism. Access to workers was attained through the unions: in some instances, contact was made with management first, while in others a more informal 'snowballing' method was used.

The methodology of the thesis draws upon dialectical materialism, reflecting the Marxist framework of analysis. Dialectical materialism is used as 'an approach to problems that visualizes the world as an interconnected totality undergoing minor and major changes due to internal conflicts of opposing forces' (Sherman, 1976: 57). This philosophical method views capital and labour as ontologically grounded in the structural contradiction of class conflict. Work, collectivism, and unionism relate to this structural contradiction. The thesis approaches knowledge as a dialectical process: understanding of phenomena is gained through an analysis of contradictions, and contradictions contain the potential for change. Further, the research emphasises an additional dialectical relation between the research and the researcher – a dialectic necessitating reflexivity – and a dialectic between theory and practice, expressed as 'praxis', whereby knowledge is justified by its social utility (Oquist, 1978). The philosophy of dialectics will be detailed in Chapter 3 of this thesis, along with a more in-depth description of the research methods used.

1.4 Thesis structure

This introductory chapter has established the research focus of the thesis and outlined the debates to which it contributes. The chapter has described the emergence of organising as a union model and the context of the care sector, along with the methods that will be used. Chapter 2 goes into further depth to review debates around organising, focussing on how organising has been defined, utilised and evaluated by unions and academics, and examines how researchers have approached the outsourcing and fragmentation of the care industry. The chapter then outlines the Marxist feminist framework of the thesis, theorising caring labour, labour and value under capitalism, unions, class, and gender. Chapter 3 details the methods and methodology of the thesis. It discusses the theoretical underpinnings of the philosophy of dialectical materialism and the use of reflexivity throughout the thesis. The chapter goes on to

describe the choice of a case study approach, site of study, selection of interviewees, issues encountered in fieldwork, and the deductive and inductive process of analysing findings.

The analysis portion of the thesis is divided into three chapters, each focussing on a different aspect of organising. Chapter 4 focusses on the role of the worker. It examines the mobilisation aspect of the organising model, focussing on the grievances of workers, and asking whether workers blame their employers for grievances and whether a collective identity exists in the workplace. The chapter makes distinctions between the perspectives of non-members and members to evaluate the usefulness of the framework as a predictor of unionisation. Chapter 5 turns to the participatory, activist element of organising. First, the chapter uses interviews with union organisers and officers to consider how the mainstream unions (TUC affiliated unions) allocate resources to organising in social care and to highlight issues with sustaining activism in IWW's organising structure. The chapter then turns to the obstacles to building workplace activism. The last section of the chapter examines the politics of empowerment and explores how class and gender factor into workplace activism. Chapter 6 broadens out the analysis to assess how organising strategies approach recognition agreements, examine the use of partnership approaches, consider the impact of different company structures within the sector on union bargaining, and explore the ambitions of unions to utilise campaigning strategies.

Chapter 7 discusses and analyses the research findings of Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6 and situates the findings within existing literature. The chapter begins by returning to the research questions to summarise the key findings of the research. It then outlines the empirical findings of the thesis – related to the application of the organising model and to working conditions in social care – and the thesis' theoretical findings, related to conceptualisations of caring labour, the use of Marxist theory, and the role of unions in society. The chapter ends by outlining practical contributions of the thesis and reflecting upon the research process.

2. Literature review

The following chapter situates the thesis' motivating questions within literature on the organising model, social care, and work under capitalism. Section 2.1 examines research on organising strategies and characteristics of the social care sector. Section 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 define the organising model, exploring how the mobilisation framework and union participation contrast with strategies associated with partnership unionism and service unionism. Section 2.1.3 considers the 'failures' of the organising model. Section 2.1.4 examines literature on the organising strategies carried out by the unions researched in this study. Section 2.1.5 turns to literature on the social care sector, exploring working conditions, critiques of the restructuring of the industry under austerity politics, and research on the role of financialisation in the sector.

Section 2.2 explores the theoretical framework of the thesis. First, different conceptualisations of caring labour are outlined in Section 2.2.1 through reference to literature on emotional labour, affect, and 'dirty' labour. Section 2.2.2 turns to Marxist analyses of value, labour and the circulation of capital. The section presents aspects of consumption (around the specific needs, wants, and desires involved in social care) and distribution – state funding allocation and processes of financialisation – as relevant to understanding organising in social care. Section 2.2.3 explores how trade unionism has been conceptualised in relation to capital and class. Section 2.2.4 examines literature on gender dynamics of social care and of union organising, arguing that both areas are structured by gender expectations and norms. The conclusion outlines how the areas of literature discussed throughout the chapter could be developed further, and discusses how the findings chapters will build upon extant theory on organising and care.

2.1 The organising model and social care

This thesis takes the perspective that analysing the organising model requires understanding of what the model has been posed against, specifically service unionism and partnership unionism.[4] Section 2.1.1 begins by examining partnership unionism, before discussing the organising model's approach to the employment relationship and the mobilisation framework. Similarly, Section 2.1.2 examines service unionism before exploring the organising model's

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reliance on member participation, highlighting the relevance of 'commitment' to member engagement and participation. Section 2.1.3 turns to evaluations of the organising model, discussion over what is being evaluated, and debate over the politics of mobilising. Section 2.1.4 examines literature on organising carried out by UNISON and GMB, and – to a lesser extent – literature on IWW. Section 2.1.5 discusses the context of organising in social care, focussing on the interplay between structural changes in the industry, working conditions, and the labour of care.

2.1.1 Partnership and mobilisation: top-down and bottom-up union strategies

'Partnership' can refer to refer to an array of collaborations and trade union practices. Definitions of partnership – while an issue of contention (Stuart et al., 2011) – broadly emphasise less combative approaches to unionism, with a focus on 'co-operative' working between unions and employers. Martínez Lucio and Stuart (2005: 799) write that trade unions engaging in partnership strategies 'have committed themselves to move away from an "adversarial" culture of industrial relations and to enhance the productive aspects of the firm, in return for a series of employer commitments.' In some instances, partnerships move beyond individual workplaces: Fairbrother (2000: 71) views partnership as a 'co-operative and engaged form of unionism prepared to work with employers, governments, and other relevant agencies at workplace, regional and national levels.' Partnerships at the national level with government bodies are termed 'social' partnerships. Unions, particularly in Europe, have used social partnerships to gain influence on a national level via participation in bi-partite and tri-partite social dialogue. The success of this strategy is apparent in instances of social dialogue between the European Commission and the European Trade Union Confederation (Heery, 2002: 21).

In a 'turn to Europe' (McIlroy, 2011: 51) in the 1990s, the TUC aimed to steer the UK union movement towards social partnerships. However, these partnerships are reliant on a sympathetic (i.e. left-wing or centre-left) 'political context' (Sisson and Marginson, 2003: 173; McIlroy, 2011). Without this context, the TUC found social partnerships unforthcoming. Partnership unionism lacked institutional support at the national level in the UK and 'dwindled' into workplace bargaining (McIlroy and Daniels, 2009: 104). The TUC instead began to promote collaborative workplace bargaining to employers by highlighting the potential for 'mutual gains' (Kochan and Osterman, 1994; Ackers, 2002). This mutual gains approach posits

that improvements to workers' wages and terms and conditions are contingent on the success of the business that employs them. In turn, improvements for workers are seen as positively impacting business profits. Scholarship endorsing the use of partnerships has highlighted the potential for 'trust' between employers and workers (Ackers, 2002; Nolan, 2004), and thus to re-legitimatise the position of unions (Ackers and Payne, 1998). Other scholars have noted that workers – or unions – take on a disproportionate amount of the risk when such partnerships are established (Martínez Lucio and Stuart, 2005; Jenkins, 2007). Research has been mixed on the concrete impact of partnerships: Bacon and Blyton (1999: 649) argue that there remains 'evidence of limits on what co-operation may deliver for employees', and Richardson et al. (2005) refer to the inability of partnerships to improve job security.

Evaluations of partnerships are complicated by the wide variety of 'partnership' style strategies used by unions and by ambiguity over what aspects need to be present for a relationship between unions and employers to be termed a partnership. Guest et al. (2008: 127) note that 'action and the presence of practices rather than agreements' can be more substantial than a formal agreement in assessing whether the union-employer relationship is a partnership. The authors differentiate between high and low levels of partnership within organisations, an approach also taken by Martínez Lucio and Stuart (2005). Similarly, this thesis situates union strategies on a continuum of partnership style practices. These strategies can be understood as motivated by particular values, i.e., the mutuality and trust referenced above, alongside involvement, communication, and respect. The adoption of these values can be 'weak', 'partial', and one-sided (Dietz, 2004). The method through which agreements are established between employers and unions also acts as an indicator of whether either party is utilising aspects of partnership unionism. According to Kelly (2004: 167), recognition agreements incorporate partnership: 'the union is confirmed as the bargaining agent for a designated bargaining unit whilst at the same time pledging to work in 'partnership' with the employer.' However, Kelly goes on to note that these agreements are 'normally' signed after organising efforts, which is not the case in the workplaces with agreements examined in this thesis.

Organising strategies were promoted by the TUC in the 1990s simultaneous to the promotion of partnership unionism. The organising model – unlike partnership – promotes bottom-up methods which prioritise recruiting members and building workplace activism. This model suggests a more combative approach to unionism, in comparison to partnership unionism's reliance on external recognition and legitimacy (Heery, 2002: 20). The transition (or return) to

bottom-up, combative organising unionism involves the *mobilisation* of workers. Mobilisation has variously been approached as a particular aspect of organising or as the roots of organising: Dixon and Fiorito refer to the organising model as 'a call for unions to return to their activist roots (i.e., more aptly described as a 'mobilising model')' (2009: 173). Alternatively, mobilisation has been considered to be 'an important tool and activity within organizing […] not, on its own, organizing' (Holgate et al., 2018: 4). This thesis takes this latter approach in its understanding of mobilisation.

The predominant theorisation of mobilisation is Kelly's (1998) framework (Heery, 2002: 27-28; Gall, 2010: 8). It has become a key theoretical approach to analysing industrial relations; notably, the journal 'Economic and Industrial Democracy' devoted a special issue to Kelly's work in 2018 (Gall and Holgate, 2018). Drawing upon the approaches of McAdam (1988) and Tilly (1978), Kelly (1998: 1) posits mobilisation as a framework that 'allows us to analyse the processes by which workers acquire a collective definition of their interests in response to employer-generated injustice.' Kelly argues that the mobilisation of workers occurs in the following stages: workers identify a shared grievance, attribute this grievance to another group, establish a social identity in opposition to this other group, and unionise. Out of the social relations of the workplace – the injustices and identity constructions – comes a 'desire for unionism' (Kelly, 1998: 51).

Within the substantial amount of writing using interpretations of these 'stages' of mobilisation, there has been comparatively little critique of Kelly's theoretical approach. Empirical research has generally substantiated as opposed to reject the framework, in particular, by developing the role of leaders (Weststar and Legault, 2015; Jiang and Korczynski, 2016; Cregan et al. 2017; Darlington, 2018). These studies have focussed on specific industries. Legault and Weststar (2015) and Weststar and Legault (2019) have used Kelly's framework to assess unionisation among video game developers. In that sector, workers met the 'requirements' of recognising injustices, attributing blame and achieving collectivism, yet nonetheless 'interventions remain[ed] localized and disjointed' (ibid.: 857). Jiang and Korczynski (2016) explored mobilisation among migrants in London employed as domestic workers. The authors refer to the importance of 'framing' workplace grievances as injustices and emphasise that mobilisation was largely reliant on 'one or two charismatic leaders' (ibid.: 833). Similarly, Cregan et al. (2017) have emphasised the importance of transformative leaders for mobilising union members (a factor which relies upon member participation, explored in Section 2.1.2).

Darlington (2018: 633) highlights the need both for quality (enthusiastic leaders with social capital) and quantity of workplace representatives and calls for more in-depth research on the role of leadership in workplace action.

The more critical approaches, discussed in Section 2.1.3, point to the ambiguous theoretical foundation of 'injustice' in Kelly's text. Kelly (1998: 64) explicitly posits injustice as rooted in a Marxist analysis of 'exploitation and domination within capitalist economies.' Injustice is described as a 'conviction that an event, action or situation is "wrong" or "illegitimate"' (ibid.: 27). This description assumes a system of morality or perception of legality which Kelly does not provide, and seems distanced from Marx's analysis of exploitation as a relation between value and labour (described in Section 2.2.2). Kelly (ibid.: 30) also relates collectivism to a moral framework. In-groups (e.g. workers) are differentiated from out-groups (e.g. employers) because of their 'different interests and values.' This thesis unpacks presumptions regarding the political foundation of the framework, exploring the emphasis on morals and values, whilst at the same time evaluating the framework's ability to provide 'testable propositions' (Kelly, 2018: 1). Injustice and collectivism are analysed in Chapter 4, and the role of leadership in mobilisation is analysed in Chapter 5.

The mobilisation framework also represents an *ideal* of unionism in direct contrast to partnership strategies – '[o]rganizing poses mobilization and grassroots democracy; partnership poses incorporation, the positioning of the union closer to management and potential withering of the sinews of adversarial mobilization' (McIlroy and Daniels 2009: 111). In turning away from workplace partnerships, the mobilisation framework draws heavily on theory on social movements, such that the two theories are sometimes viewed as synonymous. Kelly (2005: 66) himself alludes to 'social movement theory […] sometimes referred to as mobilization theory.' The focus on injustice in mobilisation theory draws upon the discontent captured, and built upon, by social movements. Hyman (2016: 19) argues that unions can develop their strategies using inspiration from post-recession social movements like UK Uncut and Occupy, and Simms et al. (2019) highlight the ways that unions can learn from social movements in terms of union renewal.

As well as the adoption of strategies of social movements, organising strategies can involve coalitions between unions and social movements, for example between union and community groups (Wills, 2001). Scholars have referred to these 'community-union alliances' as social

movement unionism (SMU) (Engeman, 2015: 445). SMU proposes allegiances with community groups as a productive way for unions to regain legitimacy in society.[5] Organising strategies in social care have utilised the community coalition aspect of SMU. In the United States the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) adopted the 'unorthodox tactics' of SMU (Milkman and Voss, 2004: 2), mobilising workers by identifying workplace leaders and by developing campaigns with community groups. Using these tactics, the SEIU recruited 74,000 home care workers in 1999 (Delp and Quan, 2002). This thesis does not explicitly explore the potential for unions to work alongside community groups, such as groups advocating for care recipients and stressing the negative effects of spending cuts and privatisation on quality of care. However, as will be explored in Chapter 6, the unions analysed for the thesis often orientate campaigns around the needs of care recipients, while not directly working with external, community organisations.

Alongside evaluating the mobilisation framework and using the framework to understand absence or presence of unionism in workplaces, this thesis explores the relationship between mobilisation and partnership strategies by focussing on recognition agreements. Workplace recognition has variously been viewed as an unimportant aspect of organising efforts – Blyton and Turnbull (2004: 135) argue, 'under the organising model, the objective is no longer recognition but organisation (the former is simply one element of the latter)' – or as a key goal of organising. Heery (2002: 28) comments that the organising model functions to build up membership as a lever to 'pressure reluctant employers into conceding union recognition.' This view tends to assume that the agreement is achieved through statutory processes or that a voluntary agreement has been entered into due to pressure from workers. As Hickey et al. (2010: 75) note, when recognition is procured through statutory procedures then 'individual participation and loyalty to the union are central to the campaign', yet a partnership approach is more 'at odds' with adversarial organising. This thesis examines how these voluntary recognition agreements achieved through a cooperative approach relate to organising tactics and mobilisation of workers.

2.1.2 Service unionism and participation: the role of the union member

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[5] These organising strategies which embrace SMU have been viewed as necessary for a globalised society – Fougner and Kurtoğlu (2011), for example, combine transnational unionism, which extends across national borders, with SMU.

In addition to positioning the organising model as conceptually opposite to partnership unionism, researchers have defined organising as opposite to service unionism (Carter, 2000, 2006). Service unionism involves a reliance on others (member reliance on officers, union reliance on membership dues) and a *reactive* disposition – unions responding to member needs by providing work-related support such as advice, assistance, or representation in grievances. Service unionism also involves a culture of blame, whereby union officers and union members blame each other for unions' ineffectiveness. Union practices can be mapped onto a continuum between service unionism and ideals of organising, from 'dependent' to 'independent' (Danford et al., 2002). The role and function of union officers and union representatives is key to understanding dependency levels within a union. Heery and Kelly (1994) write that the role of the union officer has progressed through different stages in the UK. In the 1940s to the 1960s, union officers acted as 'professional negotiators' providing services to a 'largely passive' membership. In the 1970s, union officers took on more of a facilitatory role, with an emphasis on members as activists. The 1980s brought an approach to unionism which Heery and Kelly describe as characterised by professionalism (retaining a reliance on employed officers), a managerialism which involves meeting specific needs of union members, and a more participatory style of unionism.

This 'managerialism', implying a focus on customer service (with union members positioned as customers), can also be understood as 'consumer unionism.' While the terminology of consumer unionism and service unionism is sometimes conflated (Bassett and Cave [1993], for example, refer to 'consumer-service unionism'), consumer unionism implies a movement away from traditional services of representation. 'Consumerist' services can range from educational training to discounts on insurance provision or on gym membership. Service unionism can, but does not always, involve the provision of these 'additional services' (Blyton and Turnbull, 2004: 138). These add-ons are typically used to improve the capacity of unions to attract and recruit workers (Heery et al., 2000; Heery et al., 2006). After recruitment the ability of unions to provide ongoing services to members becomes fundamental to retaining members. Consumerism alone becomes inadequate; unions must also demonstrate their effectiveness at providing core, traditional services such as representation (Waddington and Kerr, 2015).

In its most 'ideal' form, the organising model rejects transactional relationships within unions both in terms of servicing and consumerism and promotes 'participative unionism" (Fairbrother, 1989, 2000). Union members are posited as activists who are best placed to recruit

fellow workers. This is apparent in the 'the iron law' of the organising model: 'never do for others what they can do for themselves' (Blyton and Turnbull, 2004: 134). Participation is then linked to political empowerment (Gall and Fiorito, 2011: 236). Members use techniques to 'empower themselves' (de Turberville, 2004: 777) and experience 'a sense of self-empowerment because they have organised to gain something for themselves' (Gall, 2010: 35). The *process* of organising becomes, in this instance, of almost equivalent importance to the outcomes.

While member participation is particularly important for the success of the organising model, unions have always been reliant on member participation for their 'survival' (Tetrick et al., 2007: 820). Participation in unionism has generated a substantial amount of literature. Researchers have emphasised that motivation to participate can come from a variety of psychological and social factors and necessitates member 'commitment' towards the union (Gall and Fiorito, 2012). Etzioni (1975) refers to a continuum of commitment attitudes towards organisations (such as unions), from negative, to neutral, to positive. Negative union attitudes lead to 'alienative' involvement, whereby individuals view the organisation as actively harmful. Etzioni then refers to neutral attitudes as 'calculative' – the level of involvement becomes dependent on the inducements offered to members. Last, positive involvement is unrelated to level of inducements and rewards, and is instead an internalised, moral attitude. Using this model of commitment, if the attitude of the member is neutral then participation can be understood as contingent on the actions of the union. If members have a positive attitude, their commitment to the union – and participation in union activities – will be relatively unconditional.

Further, scholarship has explored how the relationship between unions and members impacts levels of member commitment and participation. Tripti and Ginni (2015) write that an instrumentalist view of the union (using Etzioni's category, a neutral attitude) can act as an antecedent for commitment. The instrumentalist, exchange relationship established between the union and the member contrasts with 'social' relationships, whereby members feel *supported* by the union and feel obligated to reciprocate this support. Reviewing commitment literature, the authors argue that instrumentality is important for encouraging member attachment; an economic exchange can lead to a social exchange, but it is social relationships which are 'directly related' to participation. Snape and Redman (2004: 856) likewise differentiate between exchange relationships and social relationships. The authors note that if

the relationship between members and the union is perceived by members to be transactional then it can create 'specific performance of obligations, with no incentive to perform beyond contract' (ibid.: 856). In contrast, if unions emphasise a 'covenantal' social relationship with members and embed 'pro-union attitudes' among workers (ibid.: 859), then it can increase the likelihood of activism. The instrumentality of exchange relationships can be the basis for union 'viability' if it develops – or is developed by unions – into this covenantal relationship. The authors argue that the way to develop instrumental relationships into covenantal relationships is through the organising model: encouraging self-reliance among workers, adopting community campaigns, and recruiting in low-paid sectors.

Alongside psychological factors, commitment levels of members are influenced by social factors. Commitment to the union can be viewed as a 'process of socialization' which might begin in childhood (Fullagar et al., 1995). Klandermans (1986: 194) refers to 'socialization variables', listing 'a person's political sympathies and those of parents, class consciousness, image of society, and political-economic ideology' as related to levels of participation. Socialisation may be a tactic which can be used by unions. However, as noted by Newton and Shore (1992: 289), there are pre-existing 'moderating effects': members' long-held beliefs about the purpose of trade unions can mitigate union efforts to establish a less instrumentalist culture. Workplace norms can also have a moderating effect on whether members become activists. 'Social customs' theory suggests that when workers see that others in the workplace have joined the union, and when joining a union appears to improve reputation and status of workers, they will be more likely to join (Visser, 2002; Kranendonk and de Beer, 2016). Similarly, workers might engage in activism if they see others in the workplace doing so.

While research on psychological and social factors provides general insight into participation, it is also important to distinguish between *types* of participation. Kelly and Kelly (1994) highlight the varying 'ease' of participation in different union activities. Fosh (1993) emphasises the difference between 'formal' and 'informal' participation: the former refers to voting in elections and attending meetings and the latter refers to interacting with union representatives and reading literature produced by the union. Similarly, Gall and Fiorito (2012: 191) use categories of active participation, describing 'carrying out the work of the union', and passive participation, 'reading union literature, voting in union elections and attending membership meetings.' Monnot et al. (2017) provide a further distinction between militant and non-militant participation. Non-militant actions do not interfere with the organisational goals

of members' workplaces, whereas militant goals, such as strikes and work stoppages, do act to interfere with work processes and contradict management aims in the workplace.

Levels of participation vary depending on these types of involvement. As Greene and Kirton (2003: 320) comment, 'attendance at membership meetings is notoriously low' throughout the UK trade union movement (see also Kelly, 1998: 121). Participation levels of an individual vary over time; Klandermans (1986: 200) writes that 'participation is far from stable [...] in the course of a mobilization campaign the willingness to participate fluctuates.' Recognition agreements can also act as a factor influencing participation levels in 'formal' union activities, as these agreements can involve paid facility time (allowing union members to participate in training offered by the union). Importantly though, facility time can be insufficient to deal with the workload involved in being a lay representative/steward (Cunningham and James, 2010, Waddington and Kerr, 2015).[6]

In addition to variation across type of union activity, participation varies across groups in society – across different identities and different types of workers. The gender of union members acts as a factor in union participation: Greene and Kirton (2003: 320) argue that 'non-attendance is not evenly distributed through all social groups [...] rather it is especially associated with women and part-time workers.' Analysis of gender disparity in participation levels requires consideration both of the opportunity structures of unions and of the *propensity* of members: 'it is possible to argue that within formally democratic unions all members already have equal opportunity to participate in the structures of decision-making' (ibid.) but this does not translate into an equal propensity towards activism. Male dominated power structures in the union can result in 'lower favourability' towards activism among women in the union (Kirton and Healy, 1999: 32).

The type of job and income of union members can also impact members' attitude towards the union. Snape and Redman (2004: 870) suggest that 'it may be that those for whom economic needs are more pressing will place greater emphasis on instrumentality when considering their willingness to remain a member and to exert effort on behalf of the union.' Monnot et al.'s (2017) analysis of militant and non-militant participation indicates that activism is impacted

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[6] The Trade Union Act 2016 has increased the difficulty of using facility time: the public sector must now provide detailed reporting on any trade union activities to the employer.

by the type of job held by members. They conclude that while white collar union members are more likely to take part in non-militant action than militant action, blue collar workers are equally as likely to partake in the two types – a finding which the authors attribute to the greater leverage generally held by white collar workers.

The status and income level of members not only impacts on their propensity towards activism, and the character of such activism, it also affects what workers *want* from a union. Research indicates that workers employed in low paid and 'non-standard' work – characterised by precarious contracts – prioritise union services. De Turberville (2004: 784) argues that 'the weak collective organization experienced by many non-standard workers means that they tend to be especially reliant on individual services or the use of existent legislation' and summarises this propensity as 'a significant proportion of this expanding work-force appear[ing] to be more amenable to servicing than to organizing strategies.' According to this perspective, low-end care work – as 'non-standard' employment (Murphy and Turner, 2014) – is an area where union services might be prioritised by members. Further, Saundry and Wibberley (2013) have found evidence of support for union services among members working in the public sector. They note that

> [t]here was a strong view among full-time officers and branch officials that the primary reason for members joining the union was for representation and support. While this may be characterised as 'servicing', for many in the union the provision of individual representation was central to advancing the employment interests of workers (2013: 21).

In acknowledgement of the ongoing importance of services to union members, researchers have suggested that organising and servicing strategies should be combined – and in practice generally *are* combined – by unions (Fletcher and Hurd, 1998; Saundry and Wibberley, 2013). Fairbrother (2000: 29) argues that 'the emphasis on service and organisation has been integrated rather than contrasted as alternatives as was initially the case.' One way they are integrated is through recruitment practices that promote services – 'unions often organize around services' (Fiorito and Jarley, 2008: 11). This thesis considers how a pragmatic combination of organising and servicing strategies impacts member attitude: as noted earlier in this section, instrumentality of service unionism might be a precursor to attachment and loyalty towards the union (Snape and Redman, 2004; Tripti and Ginni, 2015).

This thesis will also explore how unions promote participation by considering the varying emphasis placed on paid organisers within organising strategies. The role of paid organisers in the organising model continues to be a subject of debate, highlighted in a conversation between Carter (2006) and de Turberville (2007). De Turberville (2007: 566) argues that based on Carter's 'purist' interpretation of organising, 'the goal of the OM [organising model] must be to remove [paid] posts; to disestablish bureaucracy.' Yet proponents of organising strategies tend to balance paid organising alongside organising efforts of unpaid activists. Gall and Fiorito (2011: 248), for example, argue that 'only an ultra-left approach would argue that the pre-dominance of EUOs [employed union officers] is a problem per se.' The inclusion of IWW in this study, a union which rejects the position of paid organisers, provides insight into this 'ultra-left' perspective.

2.1.3 Evaluating organising

Research suggests that at best, organising has slowed the decline in union membership (Gall, 2010; Gall and Fiorito, 2011; McIlroy, 2011). Theorists have also suggested that the *application* of the organising model, as opposed to the tenets of the model, is at fault. For Heery et al. (2000: 42), 'the evidence suggests that in the UK there is at best a patchy and uneven use of the methods and principles associated with the organizing model.' While the use of one-to-one recruitment, petitions, surveys and demonstrations is widespread, the 'specific organising techniques' (ibid.: 27) of workplace mapping and organising committees are confined to a minority of unions. Heery (2015) argues that a tendency to emphasise recruitment of members in recent organising initiatives side-lines effective organisation in the workplace.

Research has also highlighted the external factors that influence organising. Blyton and Turnbull argue that assessment of organising strategies, such as recruitment levels and number of recognition agreements, needs to be accompanied by 'a careful analysis of the causes of trade union decline' (2004: 141). Martínez Lucio and Stuart (2009) emphasise the importance of situating evaluations of organising within UK labour relations. They note that '[it] is not always clear whether the problem lies in the nature of organising strategies per se' or in 'the lack of resourcing' (ibid.: 23). The changing structure of employment is also a factor in assessing organising: 'aggregate gains and losses, regardless of organising and new recognition agreements are […] heavily shaped by fluctuations in private and public sector employment'

(ibid.: 22). This fluctuation is an important consideration for analysis of the social care sector given the sector's position as a public and private sector hybrid.

Alongside difficulty in ascertaining whether the application of the model or the *context* of this application is at fault, evaluations of organising are limited by uncertainty over what is being measured. Numbers of subscriptions, stewards, recognition agreements and bargaining successes can dominate measurements of the effectiveness of organising (Martínez Lucio and Stuart, 2009). However, the tenets of organising do not easily fit into these quantitative paradigms: Jiang and Korczynski (2016: 833) refer to the outcomes of organising as 'psychological empowerment and the development of labour consciousness', outcomes which would be difficult to measure. This uncertainty over how to measure the impact of organising campaigns also relates to a lack of clarity regarding the political aims of the organising model. The definitions of organising outlined above imply a political aspect to organising – with an antagonistic approach to the employment relationship and an aim to empower workers through participation – but increasingly organising has become untethered from political ambitions. The pragmatic combinations of union strategies exacerbate this absence of an agenda, leading to a 'corruption and watering down of the potency of the model of union organising in implementation' (Gall and Fiorito, 2011: 237). Simms and Holgate criticise the way that the TUC removed the 'political objective' of the organising model (2010: 160). Similarly, Mcllroy (2011: 97) argues that 'the socialist inspiration which characterised organising in the past is largely absent.'

However, it is unclear *what* the political ambitions of organising are. Jerrard et al. (2009: 100) comment that 'a number of authors see the main limitation of the organising model as the absence of a political agenda.' Gall and Fiorito (2011: 234-235) refer to the organising model as 'conceptually and politically ambiguous and broad', with the effect that organising tactics 'can be used for explicit political ends and ends of "no politics" (if such a phenomenon could exist).' There is, for example, no guarantee that mobilising on a basis of injustice will lead to a radical form of unionism. Heery (2002: 28) argues that 'the object of mobilisation is rather traditional and even relatively unambitious; to establish or maintain a union presence within the enterprise which can use collective strength and other 'levers' to extract concessions from the employer.'

The basic elements of mobilisation do not have a clear political orientation. As noted in Section 2.1.1, Kelly interprets injustice and collectivism as broad concepts, and his mobilisation framework has been critiqued as both too radical and not radical *enough.* From a neo-pluralist perspective, Ackers (2002: 14) refers to Kelly's approach as a 'Leninist model', acting as an 'academically sophisticated' version of class consciousness (a concept explored in Section 2.2.4). Ackers (ibid.: 15) goes on to argue that injustice is 'a moral inflection not anchored in any ethical framework, merely accruing automatically to economic militancy.' Kelly (1998: 127) does not refer to ethical or moral frameworks; he refers only to 'consensual social values' which may or may not develop in the workplace. Like Ackers, Atzeni (2010) reiterates that injustice is not 'anchored' in Kelly's approach to mobilisation, yet Atzeni comes to the opposite conclusion regarding the politics of the framework. Atzeni (ibid.: 18) argues that focussing on injustice rather than exploitation results in a moral view of injustice, a 'simultaneous obscuration of class relations and the conceptual upgrading of injustice to the basis of mobilization.' Similarly, Cohen (2011: 374) questions the reliance of the mobilisation framework on 'an idealist invocation of "injustice"' rather than 'objective, structural trajectory of resistance triggered by the exigencies of exploitation and the capitalist labour process.'

The organising model's proximity to social movements – in terms of unions learning from social movements (Hyman, 2016) or working alongside social movements (Wills, 2001) – is likewise politically ambivalent. Hyman (2016), Simms (2011), and Holgate (2010) suggest that SMU presents a more radical politics. Other theorists have argued that SMU moves unionism away from the workplace, thus diluting its class politics. Upchurch et al. (2012: 859) contend that 'much literature on social movement unionism […] tends to de-politicize and de-class the nature of unions as movement in itself.' Upchurch and Mathers (2012: 276) suggest that social movements should 'reinforce the class-based struggle of organized labour' rather than supersede or engulf class as the focus of organising.

Attempts to emphasise the role of class in organising, however, highlight the difficulty of defining class politics. Simms and Holgate's (2010: 165) call for 'a more political understanding of organising' focusses on the hierarchical implementation of organising and argues for a more thorough examination of how power is enacted internally in organising initiatives. Yet their approach has been questioned by Gall and Fiorito (2011: 252), who argue that 'despite its professed intention' Simms and Holgate's article describes 'competing versions of practice' within the organising model as opposed to macro-level politics. Gall and

Fiorito's (ibid.: 247) own call for a political approach to organising is tempered by an acknowledgement of the 'not inconsiderable difficulties in inserting "class" into union organising.' Similarly, Simms (2011: 113) argues, 'of course, any invocation of class […] risks entering complex and contested territory.' This thesis enters into the 'contested' territory of class in relation to worker collectivism, union activism, and the politics of organising campaigns. The concept of class – its position within labour and capital and its relation to consciousness – is explored in the subsections of Section 2.2.

2.1.4 Organising in UNISON, GMB, and IWW

The general challenges theorised in the above section can be understood by considering the specific approaches of GMB, UNISON and IWW – unions which have received different amounts of attention in research scholarship. UNISON 'has been more studied and dissected than any other trade union' due both to its 'openness to research' and to its 'significance' in the UK labour movement (Terry, 2002: 2). Analysis of UNISON is particularly significant in debates over privatisation in the UK. NALGO, NUPE, and COHSE formed UNISON in 1993 out of a fear that an assortment of public sector unions would be unable to 'meet the challenges' of government restructuring (Carter and Fairbrother, 1999: 10) and 'reconfiguration of the welfare state' (Terry, 2002: 9). Within this context of outsourcing, UNISON focused on recruitment. UNISON instigated the National Recruitment Plan from 1995 to 1997, followed by the National Organising and Recruitment Strategy (NORS) from 1997 to 2012. NORS focussed on transitioning regional organisers away from service roles and emphasised the importance of recruitment, retention, training workplace representatives, and increasing member participation (Waddington and Kerr, 2009).

The application of NORS was obstructed first by time constraints on officers, and second by membership passivity: 'wide-ranging initiatives' carried out by UNISON to encourage members to become union stewards '[did] not appear to have been effective' (Waddington and Kerr, 2009: 49). In an effort to ease workload for officers, and make up for the absence of stewards, full-time organising officers were recruited in the second stage of NORS (from 2009-2012). UNISON established the Fighting Fund to pay these additional organisers, whereby regions bid for funding to employ organisers. As noted by one of the regional UNISON organisers (organiser, 9) interviewed, these Fighting Fund Organisers were employed on temporary contracts – some of which would be extended to a permanent contract.

In addition to the reorganisation of officer's responsibilities, organising at UNISON has included an emphasis on training. The union sponsored trainees in the TUC's Organising Academy; organisers attended the TUC's 'Winning the Organised Workplace' training initiative and from 2005 and 2007, nearly 2,000 stewards went through UNISON's own training programme, 'One Step Ahead' (Nowak, 2009: 147). UNISON also aimed to extend solidarities beyond the workplace. Holgate (2015: 442) argues that in the '"turn" to community organising […] Unison is perhaps the forerunner', citing involvement with a living wage campaign alongside the community organisation 'London Citizens' in 2001. Likewise, Saundry and McKeown (2013: 535) comment that UNISON has been at the 'forefront' of community unionism, although the authors note that UNISON has placed less of an emphasis on organising strategies within the workplace. UNISON prioritised 'in-fill recruitment' (recruiting workers in companies with recognition agreements) during this period rather than pushing for new recognition agreements with employers (Waddington and Kerr, 2009: 30). This approach is characteristic of organising in the public sector and demonstrates the different emphases which unions place on achieving recognition:

> There is little reason to believe that all organising goals are equally applicable to all unions […] a glaring case is that of the public sector union, Unison, which is generally recognised, whereas the Iron and Trades Confederation […] experienced extensive de-recognition and, therefore, viewed recognition as a central organising goal (de Turberville, 2004: 44).

UNISON's approach to recruitment has been viewed as a combination of service unionism and organising unionism (Waddington and Kerr, 2001: 235). More recently, research has suggested that their strategies act as a superficial interpretation of the organising model, which remains ultimately reliant on a servicing approach (Looker, 2019). Looker (ibid.: 259) argues that 'organising has been distorted to the short-term objective of achieving nationally set recruitment targets' within UNISON. This thesis will examine this tension between organising and recruitment within UNISON, first through the perspectives of UNISON employees, and second through the perspectives of workers in the social care sector.

Like UNISON, GMB is the result of a large number of amalgamations. Whereas for UNISON, the goal of amalgamating was to secure 'leverage […] in the traditional meaning of uniting workers against the employer (the state)', GMB's merger process demonstrated an ambition to 'develop into a super-union' (Waddington et al., 2005: 227). GMB's acquisitions have led to

an established membership within the public sector, i.e. in areas where UNISON might have members. UNISON's potential membership has further converged with that of GMB due to the prevalence of Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) – agreements which enact outsourcing by transferring employment from the public sector to private firms (first put in place by John Major's government in 1992). While UNISON took the 'dominant role' in campaigning against these PFIs, GMB's reaction has been complicated by the fact that the union is 'more familiar with negotiating company specific agreements in the private sector' (Bach and Kolins Givan, 2013: 123). In a number of ways then, GMB has increasingly had to adapt and move away from the union's conventional strategies.

Against this background, GMB's approach to organising has largely reflected that of UNISON, with an adoption of organising alongside servicing. However, while UNISON created organising roles within the union, GMB 'made organising sit alongside servicing in their existing internal structures and their generalist officers' roles' (Gall, 2010: 16). The election of Paul Kenny as General Secretary in 2006 had brought a 'concerted effort to break down barriers' between roles (ibid.: 14). GMB 'stayed aloof' from the TUC's Organising Academy (Heery and Simms, 2010: 5), and instead established its own National Organising team in 2006. Yet different regions retained autonomy in how organising strategies were enacted (Daniels 2009: 265) – an autonomy which has been referred to as a 'balkanized' union structure (Simms et al., 2013). The 'over concentration of power' in these regions was challenged when the union moved towards a steward system (Upchurch et al., 2002: 129).

Opinion on the success of GMB's consolidation of organising within the union, compared to the approaches of other unions, is divided. Upchurch et al. (2002: 136) comment that 'the GMB have developed a systematic process of recruitment initiatives which rely primarily on the use of full-time recruitment officers who are "flown in" from the outside'. They refer to GMB's approach as the 'least innovative' (ibid.: 136) adoption of organising techniques. In a more positive assessment, Nowak (2009: 145) cites GMB's aim to 'put lay reps at the centre of its national organising strategy' as evidence that there are many '"good practice" examples showing how unions can not only recruit and retain reps, but also get them focused on organising and building the union'. Like UNISON, GMB has opened up the scope of organising through involvement in community organising. GMB received £305,000 from New Labour's Union Modernisation Fund in 2008, promoting projects emphasising a 'new type of open and relevant unionism' (Stuart and Martínez Lucio, 2014: 6). GMB sought to engage

vulnerable communities, to learn from community organising and 'understand the social capital of communities' (Holgate, 2015: 445). GMB has also established educational initiatives for members: in a comparison of GMB and Unite Community's projects with migrant workers, Heyes (2009: 192) refers to GMB's work as an attempt to 'link their support for ESOL [English for Speakers of Other Languages] to an organising strategy'.

GMB has also pragmatically combined organising with a partnership approach. Blyton and Turnbull (2004: 137) found that 'where workers are subject to poor terms and conditions of employment […] GMB have found that organising is a more appropriate, and successful, strategy', but 'where [GMB] have a more established relationship with both the workforce and the employer […] a more co-operative approach is often more attractive'. In his comparison of partnership and organising as 'alternative futures', Heery (2002) uses GMB as an example, as it had both signed partnership agreements and invested in organising. GMB have continued to utilise a combination of organising and partnership; their recognition agreement with a large healthcare provider (explored in Chapter 6 of this thesis) has resulted in a collaborative campaign, which the provider refers to as a partnership. In addition, GMB and UNISON have also entered into a joint recognition agreement with another major healthcare provider, Four Seasons, which UNISON General Secretary Dave Prentis has referred to as a 'positive commitment to partnership working' (UNISON, 2013).

Whereas debates surrounding UNISON and GMB's application of the organising model have been well-mapped, IWW – as it exists today – represents comparatively uncharted territory. After it was founded in 1905 in Chicago, IWW grew rapidly, particularly among migrant workers. By 1920 the union was weakened, facing resistance from governments, employers and the moderate AFL (American Federation of Labour). Brief references to the union in current literature refer to it as an organisation which is firstly, overtly political, secondly, confined to the US, and thirdly, currently defunct. For example, Thompson's (1983: 259) consideration of Labour Process Theory (LPT), *The Nature of Work,* includes an endnote: '[t]he Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) was a radical syndicalist union whose efforts in organising among all skills, sectors and races sharply contrasted with the conservative, craft-orientated American Federation of Labor.' This view of the IWW as historical persists in debates over the organising model. De Turberville (2004: 778) invokes IWW as an example of 'growing union power vis-a-vis the organizing model' yet goes on to refer to 'the eventual failure of the IWW to maintain a viable bargaining organization in the face of employer and

state hostility.' When Carter (2006: 422) responded to de Turberville by arguing that 'there is much that is defensible […] in the organizing approach to trade unionism', de Turberville (2007: 570) commented that 'much of the material within my original article was historical in nature (the IWW).'

This focus on the IWW as an historical entity is understandable given its influential legacy. Cole et al. (2017), in their edited collection on the IWW, argue that '[t]he general public […] does not know of the IWW even when they invoke its ideas and tactics' (2017: 18). US unions have utilised these ideas: 'although the IWW has always been a minor player in US labor relations, their influence on debates – and most particularly on the left of the US union movement – is undoubtable' (Simms et al, 2012: 40). Given that UK unions took inspiration from US organising (ibid.), the IWW has therefore indirectly influenced both GMB and UNISON. While the role of IWW as an 'influencer' will be explored in this thesis – for example, how IWW members react to mainstream unions drawing upon 'their' strategies – the primary aim is to examine IWW as a currently existent organisation.

The inclusion of IWW also allows for analysis of overtly class-political organising campaigns. The politics of GMB and UNISON are comparable with each other: UNISON might be considered a more moderate union given that public sector unions tend to be regarded as 'right-wing versions of private sector unions' (Terry, 2002: 2), yet GMB is often viewed by researchers as less militant than its private union counterparts (Undy, 2008: 97). Neither union explicitly positions workplace struggles within capitalism or attempts to imagine post-capitalist work structures. IWW, in contrast, states in their constitution: 'it is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism […] by organising industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.'[7] This tension between political ideals in unionism will be explored throughout the thesis. Section 2.2.3 will examine literature contextualising this tension.

2.1.5 Working conditions in social care

The external political influences on the care industry are integral to understanding and evaluating union initiatives which aim to organise social care workers. It is therefore essential

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[7] https://iww.org.uk/preamble/

to identify issues within the sector both at a structural level and at a workplace level. As described in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the UK care industry has been progressively privatised since 1979. These changes in funding and commissioning structures have influenced employment conditions in the care sector. Working conditions have increasingly been characterised by low wages and zero-hour contracts (Rubery et al., 2013, Moore et al., 2017). The labour process has been further intensified by management expectations and reliance on unpaid labour (Aronson and Neysmith, 1996; Baines, 2011; Bolton and Wibberley, 2014) and by the introduction of electronic monitoring technology in the sector (Hayes and Moore, 2017). The public response to the social care crisis, from media and from opposition political parties, has been to call for funding increases. Research has emphasised the potential deficiencies of this approach: from a survey of 14 local authorities, Rubery et al. (2013: 432) highlight a 'relatively low conversion of higher fees [for care packages] into higher wages.' The authors point to the minimal impact of 'more generous' payment to the private providers and emphasise that 'a need for commissioning to promote better employment practices among independent providers is still overlooked' (ibid.: 434).

In residential care, working conditions have also been impacted by the trend towards financialisation in care. Financialisation refers to a 'pattern of accumulation in which profit-making occurs increasingly through financial channels rather than through trade and commodity production' (Krippner 2004: 14). Social care providers have become increasingly reliant on financialisation for funding through investment of private equity firms. For private equity firms, care providers represent low levels of risk in investment: a company can be bought by investing a small amount of their own equity, topping up a large amount of publicly issued debt. If the company cannot meet the debt repayments, the owner loses only their initial investment and the debt remains with the company. Closure of a company can have a huge negative impact on residents' and workers' lives, as well as a severe economic impact for the local authority (see Burns et al., 2016: 5, on the closure of Southern Cross).

Private equity firms invest in residential care with the expectation of receiving up to 12% return on capital (Burns et al., 2016). The return of 12% was calculated by the health consultants LaingBuisson as a 'fair price' model for investors based on purchaser expectations which – LangBuisson argue – provides an objective and neutral finance model. Questioning this claim, Burns et al. (ibid.: 31) have emphasised that the 12% target is set at an arbitrarily high level; it is a 'political target not an economic calculation' which has been normalised across the sector.

This imperative for care companies to produce profit for private equity backers also problematises the argument that low wages are the result of government and/or local authorities underpaying for care. The 'trade narrative' (Burns et al., 2016) that care providers receive an unfairly low price for care provision creates a 'false necessity' for more money – money which is directed towards private equity firms. The 'unfair price' narrative which shapes public perception of working conditions in social care neglects to acknowledge these processes of financialisation. While this thesis does not seek to ascertain whether companies are *genuinely* unable to improve employment in the sector due to low levels of funding (an ambition which would likely require access to company accounts), the analysis does focus on the impact of the tension between funding and employment conditions on organising strategies.

Research has also emphasised the impact of privatisation, outsourcing, and financialisation on the 'caring' dimension of labour in the industry. Sector-wide processes represent an increased commodification, which can impede the 'authentic' emotion involved in the labour process of care (Hochschild, 1983, Gorz, 1989). Bolton and Wibberley (2014: 683), in an analysis of the working practices in UK domiciliary care, point to 'inherent tensions of care work in the context of the push to marketise care services.' Research has also suggested that authentic care is resistant to the prioritisation of economic value (Johnson, 2015: 124; Baines, 2016); despite 'the strong rationalising forces structuring the [care workers'] labour […] the ethic of the caring self will continue to play a key role within their labour' (Korczynski and Brown, 2017: 836). Section 2.2.1 will explore the tensions between these different types of labour in social care further.

The different types of company researched in this thesis provide an opportunity to examine how work structures and funding structures interact with union strategies. Unionisation in the sector is low (Hayes and Moore 2017: 335). In their introduction to a special issue in the journal 'Competition and Change' on 'Care work in the context of austerity' (with research on Canada, Australia, and the UK), Baines and Cunningham (2015: 118) comment that '[o]ne of the advantages of outsourcing services to the voluntary and private sectors is the relatively low (and in the case of the latter virtually non-existent) levels of unionization and organization.' Cunningham's piece in this special issue, examining austerity and the personalisation of social care in the UK, refers to 'the weakness of unionization in the sector' (2015: 243), and elsewhere Cunningham and James (2014: 14) write that the outsourcing of care to the voluntary sector in

Scotland left 'limited opportunities for workers to express discontent through collective bargaining.'

Given the low level of union membership in the sector the lack of research focussing specifically on unionisation might not be surprising. But the picture of unionism in social care is not entirely bleak: home care workers in Birmingham successfully resisted shift changes which would have resulted in pay cuts, taking part in an 82-day strike between 2017 and 2019 (Jackson, 2019). In 2014, 70 workers employed by Care UK went on strike for 90 days (Lezard, 2014). Both actions led to improvements to pay and employment conditions. It therefore remains important to unpack *how* union strategies could organise the sector more successfully; the workers should not be written off as 'unorganisable.' It also remains important to consider in what context organising is, and is not, successful. Unlike the workers interviewed for this thesis, the striking workers in Birmingham were employed directly by the local authority, and the Care UK workers were striking due to the transferral of their contracts from the NHS to a private care provider.

2.2 Theoretical framework

As an examination of trade union strategy *as applied* to the social care sector, this thesis requires conceptual clarity in two respects. Firstly, it is necessary to evaluate of the concepts of care, labour, gender, and the positioning of the sector in relation to capital production. Secondly, the thesis needs to establish how the practical union strategies which have been explored in Section 2.1 can be conceptualised. The sections below outline a theoretical framework to understand these concepts. Section 2.2.1 explores how paid care has been theorised – the 'product' associated with caring labour and the potential for resistance which theorists have identified in relation to that product. Section 2.2.2 outlines the Marxist approach which this thesis takes to analyse care work. The section emphasises the usefulness of value theory in understanding the commodification of care and explores the positioning of caring labour within the circulation of capital. Section 2.2.3 relates this Marxist framework to unionisation, class consciousness, and the organising model of unionism, and Section 2.2.4 explores how gender factors in to union organising and the provision of care.

2.2.1 The labour of care

Literature on emotional labour, affective labour, and dirty labour has highlighted the distinctive 'product' of care. Emotional labour is a broad term which has predominantly been used to describe service work. In her classic text *The Managed Heart,* Hochschild (1983: 7) introduces the term to argue that service work compels the worker to 'induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others.' Drawing on Stanislavski's notion of method acting, Hochschild (ibid.: 43) views this outward countenance as sustained either through surface acting, which serves a purpose of influencing the audience, or deep acting, which acts to 'convince the person doing deep acting that […] events are really happening.' Workers becomes 'estranged' from their labour and from themselves, increasing experiences of alienation (ibid.: 7).

Theorists have developed Hochschild's approach by emphasising the authentic, unmanaged aspects of service work, which are viewed as particularly prevalent in caring labour (Lopez, 2003; Bolton, 2005). Johnson (2015: 115) has highlighted the genuine aspects of care in residential homes, asking: 'what of the case where the client is less a customer and more a person with a need for care?' Bolton and Boyd (2003: 293) stress the 'philanthropic' emotion enacted outside of management requirement, which can lead to the *emotional gift* (Bolton, 2005: 147) of unpaid labour. Bolton identifies a further contribution to literature on emotional labour from the 'Italian neo-Marxist School – Lazzaroto, Hardt and Negri' (2009: 3).[8] Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004) refer to 'affective' labour as one aspect of *immaterial* labour, a category which also includes intellectual and creative labour. These forms of work are 'an immaterial process creating immaterial products' (Bolton, 2009: 3). Affective labour creates the immaterial product of 'a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement or passion' (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 292).

It is important, however, to consider the physical aspects of caring labour and the material impact of this labour on care recipients. Dalla Costa (2012: 15), writing on the work of Hardt and Negri, notes '[t]he work of [domestic] reproduction [...] has always been a combination of a lot of material work grafted on immaterial work of reproduction.' Caring labour characterises this combination of material and immaterial work. Care work cannot be reduced to labour which produces an affective reaction of wellbeing, but instead it involves a variety of acts with a variety of outcomes, for example assisting 'soiled, hungry, anxious people' in becoming 'clean,

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[8] These authors are more often grouped under the label of 'autonomous' Marxists.

replete, calm people' (Bolton and Wibberley, 2014: 4). The material aspects of caring labour, which have been highlighted in literature on 'dirty labour' (Stacey, 2005, Wibberley, 2013) are part of the societal devaluation and economic neglect of care work – (a devaluation analysed as gendered in Section 2.2.4).

The corporeal and affective dimensions of care work can also vary depending on the context and on the needs of the care recipients. In some instances, care recipients might view their care in a primarily practical sense and might find a focus on workers' displays of emotion rather than on their own needs and independence to be patronising. Cartwright (2015: 31) argues that affective relationships can entail a narrative of 'pity and awe' which is troublingly stigmatising towards disabled individuals. Furthermore, the *production* of emotion and affect goes both ways. Goodley et al. (2018: 207) highlight the societal expectation on disabled people to affectively 'comfort' non-disabled people, by suppressing any negative emotions that might embody the 'stale ableist trope of the angry, bitter crip.'

Another area of research on care has highlighted the ways that emotional or affective aspects of care work are neglected by the social care system, with a negative impact on care recipients. This neglect was touched upon in Section 2.1.5 in relation to the structural changes in the UK social care sector. Researching the subjectivity of care recipients in residential homes, Hyde et al. (2014: 24) argue that financial imperatives 'serve progressively to reduce older people to the status of physical bodies.' The material aspects of caring – which are arguably easier to measure – have become the focus of care providers and of the broader care commissioning system. Bolton and Wibberley (2014: 684), writing about home care, argue that emotional effort has been displaced, and care has become a 'tightly defined, task-based commodity.' They emphasise, however, that *individual* care workers do not necessarily forego emotional elements of caring labour, even as the system financially neglects these acts.

Care work therefore encompasses a variety of types of labour which are difficult to demarcate (Bolton and Wibberley, 2014: 695). The physical 'dirty' labour and the emotional labour involved are both devalued, culturally and economically, and involve different forms of exploitation. Authentic relationships between care workers and care recipients can result in the 'self-exploitation' of carrying out additional unpaid work or purposefully intensifying one's own labour process (Aronson and Neysmith, 1996; Baines, 2011; Johnson, 2015). When managers are aware that workers will place additional pressure on themselves to carry out work,

it becomes less important for these managers to create work structures which control the workforce and aim to increase the output of labour. 'Self-exploitation' is not, however, confined to industries characterised by emotional labour. Burawoy's (1979) study of US factory workers, for example, described how in their 'self-organisation' workers developed 'games' intended to impress fellow workers, yet effecting an increase in the generation of surplus value without any necessary increase in control from management.

The bonds formed between workers and care recipients in workplaces of social care can both increase productive output – i.e. increase the amount of unpaid labour carried out by workers (Aronson and Neysmith, 1996; Bolton and Wibberley, 2014) – and can make workers reticent to engage in workplace resistance. Folbre (2001) argues that such bonds make the worker a 'prisoner of love.' Yet paradoxically these bonds between workers and care recipients have also been viewed as acts of resistance – both towards the expectations of management (Baines and Van den Broek, 2017) and towards the commodification of care (Skeggs, 2014). Hochschild (2013: 370) approaches 'push-backs' to the commodification of community and family life as acts of resistance against the market realm; Skeggs (2014: 16) argues that care workers' acts of altruism allow them 'momentarily to resist capitals' logic.'

Scholarship on emotional labour and on affective labour has also emphasised that these forms of work are likely to result in collectives between workers which might then transition into workplace resistance. Hardt and Negri (2000: 294) argue that in instances of affective labour, 'cooperation is completely immanent to the labouring activity itself.' Korczynski (2003: 58) builds on Hochschild's brief references to 'collective emotional labour' to explore the new coalitions inherent in the labour of service work centred on the role of the customer, as a response to the irate, abusive customer, or as a way to defend the customer and improve the quality of service. In response to criticism that a focus on customers can create a 'narrow set of sectional demands' for trade unions (Brook, 2009: 369), Korczynski argues that this focus does not supplant traditional trade union issues, but rather supplements them. In a broader sense, this view could propose coalitions with consumer groups, as suggested by SMU. Accordingly, this thesis examines whether a focus on the customer in a care context might supplement unionism or whether, from the perspective of workers, unions and quality of care are opposed.

2.2.2 Value, the labour process, and the circulation of capital

This section situates caring labour within broader capitalist production utilising Marx's value theory of labour and conceptualisation of the circulation of capital. 'Value' is extracted through commodity production: commodities have a 'tense' duality, containing both the 'usefulness of the thing' (Marx, 1976: 16), their use value, and a quantifiable 'exchange-value', a property specific to use values that are bought and sold. Marx also distinguishes between types of labour. Concrete labour — the expenditure of labour to produce use value — is separated conceptually from abstract labour. Abstract labour contains 'not an atom of matter' (Marx, 1976) but produces value because of its character as *socially necessary* labour (Pitts, 2017: 33). Socially necessary labour time is the average amount of labour required in normal conditions of production in the given society, with average labour skills and labour intensity, which allows the commodity to have an exchange value (Marx, 1976: 129; Fine and Saad-Filho, 2010).

Value necessitates an objective factor – the means of production – and a subjective factor, the ability of workers to carry out labour ('labour power'). For the working class, labour power has only exchange value (the site of struggle in wage disputes). For capitalists it has a use value – its use is that it produces surplus value. Surplus value can be distinguished into two types, absolute surplus value and relative surplus value. To illustrate these categories, Marx (1976: 645) divides the working day into the line A-B-C: A-B is the necessary amount of labour required to produce the value to match the value of the workers' labour power, B-C is the surplus labour. One way to create surplus value is to increase the length of the working day, whereby A-B remains the same but B-C increases. This process produces absolute surplus value. The other way by which surplus value is produced is by *decreasing* A-B – the amount of socially necessary labour – in order to *increase* B-C. This production of relative surplus value (mainly in the sectors producing goods and services that workers consume) occurs through changes to the labour process, such as the introduction of machinery and technological innovation in production (Fine and Saad-Filho, 2010: 38). Importantly the production of relative surplus value is dependent upon competition between capitalist organisations; this competition drives down the value of labour power.

The experience of selling one's labour power can cause feelings of alienation, 'symptoms of dissociation' from the product produced, the labour process, fellow workers, and the workers' sense of self (Braverman, 1976: 282). This alienation has been analysed in relation to caring labour. Brook (2009) argues that alienation is at the core of Hochschild's interpretation of emotional labour. However, he contends that Hochschild provides only a 'partial' analysis of

alienation: the concept of emotional labour focusses on the 'deleterious individual experience' of being alienated from the product and from the labour process (providing a service). Hochschild's portrayal of alienation, Brook argues, neglects the alienation from other workers and alienation from sense of self – essentially, it neglects to situate individual feelings about work within capitalism. Likewise, research which argues that care work is *less* alienating due to the potential for authentic relationships between care workers and care recipients takes a view of alienation that is confined to individual reactions. Stacey (2005: 831) writes that home care workers draw 'dignity' from care work, especially workers who are 'fleeing an alienating service industry.' In contrast to these approaches, this thesis considers the role of class consciousness and collectivism in union organising – the absence of collectivism suggesting an alienation from fellow workers. In doing so the thesis approaches feelings of alienation as 'bound up with the presence of *class-antagonistic* social relations of production' (Smith, 2014: 87, italics in original).

The extraction of surplus value in the sphere of production is one 'moment' of the circulation of capital. Because value is a social relation, the value of the commodity only becomes *real* when it is exchanged on the market and is represented by money. The transition of value from commodity to money hides the origins of the surplus value and the process of exploitation (Harvey, 2017: 61). In the sphere of exchange the relationship between capitalists and workers is replaced by a relationship between sellers and consumers. To ensure that goods are purchased by 'consumers', capital redefines 'rational consumption': the physical or emotional needs of individuals are configured in relation to capital accumulation (Harvey, 2006: 91). Attempts to untether needs from capital – for example to resist consumerism or to call for improvements to social services which might detract from capital accumulation – are social struggles.

This thesis argues that in the case of health care, 'rational consumption' is shaped by an imperative to *decrease* consumption. For example, data shows that the number of individuals requesting care from local authorities rose 3.8% between 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 but fewer individuals receive care (Bottery and Babalola, 2020). However, the privatisation of social care creates a dynamic whereby local authorities are aiming to decrease consumption while private companies aim to *increase* consumption. Private providers bid for the maximum amount of care packages from local authorities, then seek to maximise the amount of care which individuals receive. In some cases, this includes encouraging care recipients to use additional services provided by the company. For example, care recipients in supported living might be encouraged

to utilise the company's day facilities too (this is explored in relation to charities in Section 6.3). Financialised funding structures can strengthen the urgency of increasing consumption. Notably though, increases to consumption are the ideal: in practice, low staffing levels have the effect that private providers frequently give care contracts back to local authorities. This tension between decreasing and increasing consumption is considered below as a tension between productive and unproductive labour.

The next 'moment' of circulation is the distribution of capital. Distribution enacts a division of the means of the production of commodities into the hands of capitalists – which is what drives workers to engage in a process of production. Once workers have been paid to the extent that they can reproduce their labour power, the remaining profit is divided between industrial capitalists, merchant capitalists, owners of land, money capitalists, and the state. Power can shift towards the money capitalist – who was initially only a 'simple cashier' pre-capitalism (Marx, 1991: 435) – at the expense of the industrial capitalist. When this shift occurs the worker experiences 'secondary exploitation' (Harvey, 2017: 25). This allocation of profit towards the money capitalist has been explored in the most recent 'wave' of Labour Process Theory, which highlights the impact of financialisation on workplace relationships. Thompson (2003: 366) argues that research focussing 'solely on the workplace is likely to neglect the underlying machinery of markets.' Cushen and Thompson (2016) stress the need to analyse how financialisation not only expands the ways that value is created, but also how it disrupts and changes the processes of labour.

The state also drives financialisation through command over central bank money and over the global flow of money, and through alterations to legal and institutional regulations over financial markets (Lapavitsas, 2013: 192). As described in Section 2.1.5, the impact of financialisation on labour processes is evident in the different business models of social care. Financialisation also has an effect on solidarities in the workplace, an effect which is relevant to analyses of union renewal. Simms and Grady (2019) argue that financialisation creates a 'perfect storm' for unions. Financialisation – in particular, new means of accumulating wealth and of funding work – leads to new divisions between workers, generations, and workplaces. It can then be difficult for unions to establish alternative solidarities to organise around in the face of increased divisions. The authors comment that 'there is work to do to understand better how to build and sustain organic solidarities […] to organise more effectively in a financialised world' (ibid.: 25).

This thesis argues that social care and organising efforts in social care are both affected by changes in consumption and changes in distribution. The relation of social care to production – as opposed to consumption or distribution – is arguably more complex. To unpack this relation, I draw upon Marx's analytical categories of productive and unproductive labour. While productive labour accelerates capital as surplus value is extracted from it, unproductive labour consumes capital in the form of wages for workers.[9] Savran and Tovak (1999: 126) refer to this categorisation using a distinction between 'labour exchanged against capital, on the one hand, and that exchanged against revenue, on the other.' Social care is 'unproductive in a contingent sense' (ibid.: 139), since its categorisation depends on the way the labour is organised. When social care is organised by the state, employees 'do not create surplus value but depend upon it', as their wages are paid from tax revenue which is a deduction from surplus value (Fine and Harris, 1976: 104). By commodifying and financialising social care – as in the UK – the state can reduce state spending and the associated taxation on capital and increase the production of surplus value. The companies analysed in the following chapters present a combination of privately funded care recipients, publicly funded care recipients, and financial input from private equity firms. This thesis will unpack how the tensions between productive and unproductive labour, saving money and making money, diminishing and enhancing the needs of care recipients, manifest in this context.

2.2.3 Unions, capital, and class

This section utilises the above literature on value, labour, and the circulation of capital to conceptualise trade unionism – beginning with the relation of unionism to labour and value. As explored in Section 2.2.2, for capitalists, labour power has a use value as it produces surplus value. For the working class, labour power has only an exchange value, which becomes a site of struggle when workers dispute wages. Trade unions primarily attempt to increase the exchange value of labour power through demands for real wage increases but do not challenge the dominance of value *over* labour. Marx (1976: 1069) writes: 'the value of labour-power constitutes the conscious and explicit foundation of the trade unions', organisations which 'wish to prevent the price of labour-power from falling below its value.'

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[9] Importantly, the categorisation of labour as unproductive or productive is not a judgement on the extent of exploitation; Harvey (2017: 88) notes that 'conditions of exploitation of living labour in these unproductive activities can be as vicious (and in some instances even more so) as in production.'

The requirement to work for a wage is therefore generally taken as a given by unions, with only the conditions of work contested (Webb and Webb, 1894). Marx (1985: 191) argues that as arbiters of the employment relationship, unions do not utilise 'their power of acting against the system of wages slavery itself.' The limits of trade unions have been an ongoing focus in scholarship. Gorz (1989: 116) contends that without confronting the system of capitalism trade unions act to reinforce the abstraction of individuals: 'it was only as labour power that individuals were to be defended and represented.' Similarly, Holloway (2010: 157) notes that 'trade union struggle does no more than defend the conditions of wage labour, whereas it is necessary [for radical change] to struggle for the abolition of wage labour.' In the area of industrial relations, Hyman's early work (1971, 1975) highlights the limited ways in which trade unionism engages with capital (Frege et al. 2011: 214; Martínez Lucio, 2011: 40). The perception of unions as 'partners' in the employment relationship, (as explored in Section 2.1.1), provides an explicit demonstration of unions bolstering rather than opposing the accumulation of capital.

The role of union members also needs to be considered to understand the arguably conservative nature of unions. As will be explored in the findings of this thesis, unions which seek to challenge the capitalist relation struggle to maintain this ambition when workers instead prioritise wage increases or improvements to terms and conditions. This is because unions – if they are democratic – are shaped by their members, and because they are reliant upon members for survival. As argued by Gramsci, unions are constantly in flux as they respond to the desires of members:

> The union becomes a determined definition and, therefore, assumes a determined historic form when the strength and the will of the workers who compose it, impress upon it a direction and impose upon its actions those ends which are affirmed by their definition (1977: 386).

Some scholars have argued that moving away from workplace struggles towards societal campaigns can broaden the scope of unions away from negotiation over the price of labour. This move entails emphasising injustice in the other spheres of capitalism – exchange, consumption, and distribution. Holgate (2015: 451) suggests 'it is perhaps time that we, as industrial relations academics, take a much greater step outside the arena of workplace industrial relations', in order to focus on 'the neglected spaces of social reproduction and

consumption.' Holgate is building on the position of Ellem and Shields (1999: 546) here, who contend that 'the sphere of production – the traditional focus of attention of both traditional and radical industrial relations scholarship – extends directly into the spheres of labour reproduction and commodity consumption.' As outlined in Section 2.2.2, the needs of care recipients can be viewed as part of the sphere of consumption. Social reproduction, although historically related to caring labour, has less of an association with the work analysed in this thesis because it describes childcare and the maintenance of a healthy workforce (as explored in the final section of this chapter).

Challenges to the relationship between the finance sector and the state similarly move away from the 'moment' of production. Hyman's (2016: 20) rallying call for democratised finance, for example, suggests a fairer way of dealing with the money capitalist: '[l]et us demand democratic transparency so as to subject financialized capitalism to public scrutiny!' Taking a stronger stance than Hyman towards financialisation, Lapavitsas (2013: 323) argues that regulation 'poses no obstacle to financialization' as regulation does not challenge the accumulative compulsion to create capital. The call for trade unions to campaign outside of the workplace – whether in relation to issues of distribution or issues of consumption – is particularly associated with the organising model of trade unionism (Kelly, 2005; Simms et al, 2019). The social care industry provides an appropriate context to examine this 'step outside' of the workplace, given the emphasis on policy and the needs of care recipients in public discourse concerning employment in the sector.

The call to direct union strategy away from the workplace presents an ambiguous class politics. Holgate (2015: 454) acknowledges that her reiteration of the importance of consumption 'could be seen as a move away from the "class" arguments which have been central to left politics.' Yet Simms (2011: 101) regards organising 'beyond the workplace' as an opportunity to build a broad, class-based 'imagined solidarity'. Simms (ibid.: 100) makes this argument by retaining a focus on class *consciousness*: contemporary union resurgence requires going beyond a perception of workers as a class 'in itself' – based on commonality between workers – to instead emphasise the importance of the 'working class for itself.' A class *for* itself recognises class position in relation to capital and engages in resistance based on that position – it has gained class consciousness. This concept of class consciousness has a central role in Marxist approaches to resistance (Lukács, 2000). The objective and historical conditions which structure class are challenged only by a subjective moment of consciousness (this is a dialectical

movement, as will be discussed in Section 3.1). Theorists have emphasised that the development of class consciousness is not, however, an inevitability; ideology plays a role in preventing class-based revolution (Gramsci, 1971). Along with all other social institutions, trade unions have the potential to either challenge or uphold ideological discourses which inhibit the development of class consciousness.

The different types of consciousness related to unionism can be categorised either as class consciousness (or political/revolutionary consciousness) or as 'economic' consciousness. Mann (1973) outlines four aspects to class consciousness: class identity, class opposition, class totality, and 'the conception of an *alternative* society.' Class identity refers to the understanding of individual position as part of a collective of workers, class opposition acknowledges the capitalist, and (dialectically) these elements form class totality. If all four aspects are present then the worker achieves the rare 'true revolutionary consciousness' (ibid.: 13). More often, however, workers have a 'reformist' consciousness, which 'implicitly accepts the boundaries of the capitalist system' (Cohen, 2006: 176). The struggles which result from a reformist consciousness are confined to the workplace and have been denigrated as 'parochially economistic' (Cohen, 1987: 45). Views which emphasise the need to move beyond economic struggles draw, implicitly or explicitly, upon Lenin's (1987: 112) perspective: 'we shall never be able to develop the political consciousness of the workers […] by confining ourselves to the economic struggle, for the limits of this task are too narrow.' When trade unions act solely as arbiters of the value of labour power, they do not work to develop a political consciousness among workers and instead encourage a non-revolutionary ideology among workers.

Existing scholarship appears divided over the connection between class consciousness and care. While Livingstone and Scholtz (2016: 483) note that the 'highest incidence of working-class identity is consistently among industrial workers', literature has also pointed towards workers' propensity towards class consciousness in the care industry. Jones (2001: 282) uses a survey of care workers to argue that '[t]he commodification of care tends to put caring laborers at odds with commodifying institutions and leads them to develop working-class consciousness.' Yet Jones (ibid.: 297) also notes that this consciousness relates to 'the concern with others' welfare' – suggesting a potential *absence* of 'worker' consciousness. The theorists discussed in Section 2.2.1 points to a relation between care and collectivism yet veer away from class analysis in their perception of collectivism. Brook (2009) has critiqued the absence of class in Hochschild's work; Bolton (2005: 75) argues in her analysis of emotional labour

that class and gender 'tend to act as static, objectifying mechanisms, especially in the study of a lived experience such as emotion'; and Hardt and Negri (2000: 256) argue that the 'hegemonic position of the industrial working class' has been lost. This thesis refocuses on class, in doing so placing a research emphasis on the various forms of consciousness – class and economic – among care workers.

This thesis also explores if, and how, unions encourage class consciousness. Chapter 5 will examine the role of union leaders. Marxist theory has positioned 'leaders' as essential in bringing about class consciousness and, eventually, revolution. A focus on political leadership (Lenin, 1987) has been developed into a focus on intellectual, or ideological, leadership (Gramsci, 1971). Gramsci distinguishes between 'traditional' and 'organic' intellectuals as leaders. Traditional intellectuals are members of Lenin's conceptualisation of political leadership; organic intellectuals arise 'naturally' (or rather, dialectically) from the relation between labour and capital and are individuals who feel the negative impact of capital most acutely. Buchanan (2010: 353) describes these organic intellectuals as the opposite of 'yuppies', in that they 'are not upwardly mobile and their concern is for the conditions of their class as a whole, not for themselves.'

The organising model, which aims to encourage workers to recruit fellow workers, would seem to ideally rely on organic leaders. Yet Fairbrother (2005: 258, 261) argues that Kelly's mobilisation framework is 'predicated on one form of unionism, namely a vanguardist conception of unionism […] [A]ll is well, the leaders will lead and we will be led.' Gall and Holgate et al. (2018) reject this charge, arguing that Fairbrother neglects to acknowledge the effectiveness of organising unions outside of issues of participation. Yet it remains important to consider the positionality of leaders: even if leaders do not politically embody a vanguard, a disconnect between workers and workplace organisers will have an effect on the success of the organising model. In addition, an aim to recruit using 'organic' leaders might, in practice, translate into recruitment using 'traditional' leaders.

2.2.4 Gender, care, and unions

This thesis stresses the importance of gender to analyses of social care and of union organising. Social care is gendered both because the workforce is made up predominantly of women (for example nine out of ten home care workers are women [Rubery and Urwin, 2011]) and because

'the work itself has a gendered identity' (Ravenswood and Harris, 2016: 616). This tendency to gender caring labour has been emphasised in feminist literature and in literature on social reproduction in particular. Social reproduction theory studies the structures and processes by which workers' labour power is reproduced – an effort which is largely unpaid, and largely carried out by women. Social reproduction can entail bearing children, ensuring that workers can reproduce their labour power (by remaining healthy enough to work), and socialising individuals into accepting and reproducing capitalist relations (Connell, 1987; 42). The work involved has been viewed, both by Marx and by capital, as an 'autonomous sphere of activity providing in effect a free gift to capital' (Harvey, 2017: 14).

Theorists writing on social reproduction, a focus which began in the 1970s, have argued against this designation of the reproduction of labour power as 'free' in part by campaigning for Wages for Housework. Some have argued that unpaid housework 'produces [capital's] most precious commodity, labor power itself' (Dalla Costa, 2012: 1) and questioned who 'produces' the worker (Bhattacharya, 2017: 1). The social care examined in this thesis does not necessarily produce a worker – it involves long-term care for older people or disabled people who will generally not be returning to paid work. The work of social care is therefore less useful to capital: Federici (2011: 116) writes that 'because the elderly are seen as no longer productive […] elder care suffers from a double cultural and social devaluation.' Potentially, the labour allows *someone* to go to work – social care systems transition care out of the home, allowing individuals who would have been carrying out unpaid care at home to seek employment – yet this relation is less direct than in instances of housework. The usefulness of social care to capital accumulation relates instead, as detailed in Section 2.2.2, to its commodification and a pressure to reduce state expenditure.[10]

The forms of social care explored in this thesis therefore have a tenuous relation to socially reproductive labour. Yet the insight from social reproduction theory that there is a '*systemic* connection' between economic exploitation and gender-based subordination (Connell, 1987: 43, italics in original) is still relevant. Although it is paid, the social care provision analysed in this thesis remains devalued as a consequence of its gendered status as care (as evident in the

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[10] Further, states need to retain some political legitimacy among civil society through ideology, as described by Gramsci (1971). Burawoy (2003: 215) writes that 'the expansion of the state' has included 'what Gramsci merely glimpsed, namely welfare agencies.' Care for people who cannot work therefore serves to legitimise the existence of any state apparatus which primarily protects capital.

working conditions and low pay, detailed in Section 2.1.5). Stereotypical perceptions of gender posit emotional labour as a feminine activity, and then devalue the activity on the basis of its femininity. Writing on aged care work in Australia, Palmer and Eveline (2012: 271) argue that 'the suggestion is that the women's capacity to care well is the very skill that justifies care work as appropriately low paid.'

Scholarship associated with second wave feminism counters this devaluation of *feminised* labour by demonstrating the importance of an 'ethic of care' to society (Gilligan, 1982). Gilligan emphasises care as its own form of morality, which is opposite to dominant 'masculine' notions of individualism. While highlighting the link between individualism and masculinity is useful to challenge the ways that power relations in capitalist society are constructed, this emphasis on an ethic of care has been questioned. Baines and Daley (2015) note that an ethic of care is 'overly rooted' in current, existent gender relations. The argument that care ethics should be promoted to demonstrate the value of women's labour contains within it an assumption that women's labour will always be connected to a caring attitude. Baines and Daley emphasise that critique of the devaluation of care needs to instead imagine a society where this essentialist view of 'caring' women no longer exists.

The debate over valuing care ethics also connects to contentious discussion over the categorisation of skilled and unskilled work. Bolton (2005: 32) argues 'emotion work is indeed skilled work', as it requires 'social skills' and 'adaptability.' Payne (2009: 362) questions this focus on labelling emotional labour as skilled, arguing that there is no assurance that it will lead to benefits for workers: 'most of these workers [carrying out emotional labour] may very well end up with the label but none of the other material benefits traditionally associated with skilled status.' Duffy (2005: 60) contends that a negative consequence of promoting care ethics and emotional labour is that a new hierarchy of skills is created. The professionalisation of 'emotional and relational' acts can reflect negatively on 'menial' labour involved in care work (ibid.: 80). The dirty work described in Section 2.2.1 involved in care can be viewed as menial – and, like emotional labour, this work has been positioned by society as women's work (Ungerson, 1983; Twigg et al., 2009). Viewing one aspect of caring labour as skilled does not contest the devaluation of *all* caring labour.

Further, the gendering of care work occurs alongside the racialisation of caring labour (Mirchandani, 2003; Baines and Daley, 2015: 137). The construction of work as racialised

applies both to emotional labour and to dirty labour. Twigg et al (2011: 181) write, 'body work is increasingly dependent on migrant workers or other racialised groups', citing the importance of immigrants to the building of the UK's NHS. White, middle- or upper-class women also disproportionately divest caring labour to migrant workers on an individual level (Anderson, 2000). Promoting a care ethic by arguing that *feminine* work should not be devalued insufficiently recognises the variety of power relations involved in the devaluation of care. While I approach caring labour as subject to gender power relations, racial power relations and class power relations, the findings of this study do not provide insight into the racialisation of care as the workers (and union organisers and officers) interviewed were overwhelmingly white British (a factor explored in Section 3.2).

Alongside examining the gendering of caring labour, the thesis will explore the role of gender in union organising. First, the initial stage of organising – recognising injustice – is complicated if workers hold a gendered sense of duty towards care recipients and approach care as an altruistic act. These responses are stereotypically feminine emotions (Baines and Daly, 2015): which is not to say that all women who are care workers *will* approach care as altruistic and disconnected from economic reward, but rather that they experience a societal expectation to do so. Going against this expectation, i.e. unionising, then acts to contradict femininity. Further, when workers mobilise or are organised then the subsequent level of union participation is gendered (Kirton and Healy, 1999; Greene and Kirton, 2003) – as explored in Section 2.1.2.

Gender also factors into the foundational tenet of the organising model that 'like recruits like.' This tenet has been used to refer not only to a principle that 'workers recruit workers' but also to the principle that 'women recruit women' (Blyton and Turnbull, 2004: 131) – which suggests that women have access to a located and embodied knowledge of each other's experiences because of their gender. This perspective is a form of standpoint theory, an analysis of knowledge initially used to describe the development of class consciousness. Standpoint theory has been adopted by feminist theorists to identify consciousness as not only shaped by the labour process but also by the *gendered divisions* of the labour process (Cockburn, 2015). Standpoint theory in relation to gender can, however, have a negative effect of reaffirming essentialist notions of what it means to be a woman – the notions which criticisms of a feminine (devalued) ethic of care fight against. Further, standpoint perspectives do not acknowledge the multiplicity of standpoints; for example, knowledge and experiences are racialised as well as gendered.

To understand how gender factors into organising then, I avoid any assumption that women *inherently* have a superior knowledge of other women. Knowledge may be 'situated' within gender norms, but it is also always only partial. Haraway (588: 1988) writes that '[g]ender is a field of structured and structuring difference […] feminist embodiment, then, is not about fixed location in a reified body.' Ravenswood and Harris (2016: 615) have used a similar analytical approach to Haraway to consider how managers and institutions 'do gender' in a context of aged care, by looking at the ways that gender is 'constructed and reconstructed.' Their approach provides insight into the performance of gender and the valuation of gender within care organisations. The thesis examines the construction and co-construction of gender, and the simultaneous structuring effect of gender, in employment in social care and participation in unions.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter began by outlining extant literature on union organising. Section 2.1 described conceptualisations of the organising model and emphasised the need for a more politically grounded analysis of organising strategies. Section 2.1.1 examined different forms of partnership unionism and the 'mutual gains' principle of partnership. The section introduced the organising model by exploring the pervasive popularity and frequently uncritical acceptance of Kelly's mobilisation framework in industrial relations research. Given this popularity, the framework is extensively referred to in the following findings chapters and in the final chapter of the thesis. Section 2.1.2 explored the role of union members proposed under the logic of organising. In contrast to service unionism, organising unionism prioritises member engagement, participation and empowerment – literature on gender and union participation demonstrates some of the constraints to this inclusive approach to unionism (Kirton and Healy, 1999; Greene and Kirton, 2003). Section 2.1.3 considered evaluations of the organising model, debate over *how* to evaluate organising and debate over whether 'true' organising has, in fact, been carried out by unions. Section 2.1.4 explored research on the strategies of UNISON and GMB – which are indicative of the synthesis of organising, partnership and service unionism – and argued that the inclusion of IWW in the thesis broadens understanding of how organising is applied in practice. Section 2.1.5 examined the characteristics of the social care sector: the 'crisis' in social care provision, the trajectory towards privatisation and financialisation, and the impact of these structural changes on working conditions.

The thesis draws upon a Marxist/feminist theoretical framework to expand upon these areas of ongoing debate over organising. Section 2.2.1 explored differing conceptualisations of the labour of care: the thesis will utilise concepts of emotional labour, affective labour, and dirty labour to examine the workplace experiences of care workers. Section 2.2.2 examined the relation between value and labour – a relation which will be used in the thesis to understand the intensification of caring labour – and the spheres of exchange and distribution. Section 2.2.3 examined conceptualisations of trade unionism as organisations working within the confines of capitalism (Webb and Webb, 1894) or as organisations who should focus efforts on dismantling the structures of capitalism (Gorz, 1989; Holloway, 2010). This thesis considers how officers, organisers and members of GMB, UNISON, and IWW define unionism. Section 2.2.4 explored the relation of care and union organising to gender; the thesis considers how caring labour is gendered and analyses the role of gender in activism.

3. Methods and methodology

This chapter describes the philosophical foundations of the thesis and the methods employed. Section 3.1 explains the ontological and epistemological position taken in the research, and presents dialectical materialism as an appropriate philosophical approach to theorise change and structure in a context of capitalism. Section 3.2 explores the methodology of case study research utilised in this thesis – the case studies utilised in the thesis being the unions IWW, GMB and UNISON – and considers criticisms of qualitative methodologies. The section then details the choice of research sites, considers issues related to access in the research process and describes how access to trade union organisers and access to workers was obtained. Section 3.3 explains the research process and outlines the focus of the interviews. Finally, Section 3.4 describes the ethical issues involved in the research process, in relation to participant consent and the content of the research, and the steps taken to address these issues.

3.1 Ontology and epistemology

The following section explores the ontological and epistemological orientations of the research using dialectical materialism. Dialectics rests on the ontological presupposition that phenomena are in opposition – 'everything is shot through with contradiction' (Krapivin, 1985: 162) – and in a constant state of change. According to Hegel's 'idealist' dialectics (1977), the universe consists of disembodied ideas of Being and Nothing which are brought together in the synthesis of 'becoming.' Marx (1976: 102) positioned his dialectical *materialist* method as 'exactly the opposite' to Hegel's idealism, arguing: 'the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man [sic], and translated into forms of thought. [Hegel's dialectics] must be inverted, in order to discover the rational kernel within its mystical shell.' Marx's dialectical materialism emphasises that 'the source of action […] is located in materialism' (Allen, 1975: 191). Dialectical materialism is 'inevitably' historical, and movement is 'continuous and inexorable' (ibid.).

This inexorable movement is not, however, completely determined by material structure. Dialectical change occurs within a finite set of possibilities: change is 'structured' but not 'pre-determined' (Oquist, 1978: 156). This approach to structure and agency extends beyond dialectical materialism. As Baines (2011: 13) notes, 'structural, feminist, anti-racist, and Marxist social work draw on (modernist) epistemologies emphasizing the existence of social

structures that shape, but do not determine, everyday experience.' The 'methodological structurism' of Fine and Milonakis (2009: 154) provides a contemporary example of a dialectical (although not explicitly dialectical) understanding of change: agency is not a 'passive responder to the structural imperatives but is actively involved in the shaping of these structures.'

Dialectical materialism described thus far provides ontological and epistemological insight into social reality. But dialectical materialism is a *method,* not only a philosophy. This thesis uses Ollman's (2008: 10) six stages, or 'moments' of the dialectical method. First, the ontological stage: concerning the existence of phenomena in the world which form a 'structured whole.' Second, the epistemological moment of understanding the patterns contradictions, interactions, abstractions and changes in the world. Third, the moment of inquiry: these patterns are conveyed using categories which are aids to inquiry. Fourth, the process of intellectual reconstruction where the results of the inquiry are put together. The fifth stage is exposition – conveying results to an audience. Last is the moment of praxis, of acting upon the world to change it and, in doing so, deepening understanding. These stages cannot be isolated from their totality; once combined (dialectically) they become 'workable and immensely valuable' (ibid.: 11).

Drawing on Ollman's approach, Chapter 2 focussed on the ontological moment of the dialectical method. The subsections of Section 2.2 explored the ontology of the concepts which will be referred to throughout the thesis. Labour, value, and class, as utilised in those sections, are the result of Marx's own dialectical inquiry. The commodity, the 'simplest social form' (Marx, 1989: 544), contains a dialectic as the value of the commodity is 'duplicated […] into a use-value and an exchange-value' (Lefebvre, 2009: 77). Exchange value 'creates fresh determinations: abstract labour, money, capital', with each aspect of capital emerging 'dialectically from the preceding one's (ibid.: 83). Class struggle presents another dialectic as it refers to capital as 'the subject of production, producing above all itself' and labour as capital's dialectic negative, its 'sublated foundation' (Arthur, 2004: 35). Labour power then has oppositional values. As described in Section 2.2.2, it has an exchange value (price) for workers and a use value for capital – the ability to produce surplus value.

The epistemology of dialectics emphasises that knowledge is a process. Dialectics calls for restructuring of knowledge of reality, 'replacing the common-sense notion of "thing" […] with

notions of "process" […] and "relation"' (Ollman, 2003: 13). The 'thing' exists as a 'concrete unity of interacting contradictions' and breaking down these contradictions is a dialectical, epistemological endeavour. Allen (1975: 263) uses this dialectical approach to argue that trade unionism emerges out of the 'prime contradiction in capitalism' as unions promote the interests of members and exist within, and are confined by, the *totality* of the structures of capitalism. 'Alternative' formulations arise out of these structured constraints:

> The shop stewards organisations, rank-and-file committees and the like have arisen in Britain because of the defects of permanent institutionalised trade unionism. This development is of ephemeral bodies, with the minimum of procedures, the simplest and most direct form of representation, the fullest possible rank-and-file involvement. In effect they are not bureaucratised (ibid.: 274).

If it were not for the fact that Allen was writing in 1975, this description of alternative forms of unionism could have referred to the development of the organising model. Organising unionism presents one ideological response to the contradictory pressures on trade unions. As noted in Chapter 2, unions' and theorists' views of organising are structured around what organising is *not* (not partnership [Heery, 2002] and not service unionism [Carter, 2000]). The 'ideal' organising model is oppositional. The implementation of the organising model has, however, been somewhere in between this ideal and the contrasting models of partnership and service unionism – it exists as a dialectical synthesis, first between organising and services, and second between organising and partnerships. Using dialectics, the organising model can be analysed as vacillating between an ideal and pragmatic strategies. A UNISON organiser commented: 'I sometimes don't like the term "model", because it's a living, breathing, live thing – the organising model is not a Meccano [toy model construction] set, it's not a paper, it's not a thesis – sorry, with all due respect' (organiser 9). This thesis argues that dialectics provides a means of analysing the model as a 'living, breathing, live thing.'

The epistemology of *process* in dialectics is in contrast to a positivist epistemology of 'truth.' Dialectical materialism posits knowledge as historically embedded within the dynamics of materialism and as impacted by the positioning and identity of individuals. Criteria for judging truth are 'likely to be those of the dominant groups' (Hartsock, 2008: 227) and knowledge is viewed through a lens of power: 'the gaze of the winners, of the ruling classes' (Zizek, 1999: 137). As such it is important throughout the research to understand the factors shaping perspectives. Views of union organisers, officers, members, non-members, and managers on

unionism, organising, and provision of care are all influenced by their material position and identity.

The research process is also influenced by my own position and identity. From a positivist perspective, the ideal objective researcher is assumed to be both neutral and rational. My research turns away from locating an objective truth in the findings, and instead views all research as informed and shaped by the subjectivity of the researcher. In carrying out fieldwork and analysing findings I have aimed to be aware and reflexive: firstly, by sufficiently explaining processes in ways that an outsider can understand, and, secondly, by critiquing my already established frameworks of knowledge. Bhavnani et al. (2016: 170) views reflexivity as a 'dialectic […] among the researcher, the research process, and the analysis.' Reflexivity emphasises the accountability of research towards interviewees. This approach to epistemology counters the reification of rigour in positivist research as neutrality and objectivity, and instead adopts an understanding of rigour as 'situatedness, trustworthiness and authenticity' (Tobin and Begley, 2004: 391).

Providing an example of reflexivity, Burawoy (1998: 11) makes the observation, 'the data I gathered was very much contingent on who I was – a white male recently graduated from a British university.' Similarly, this research will be affected by factors related to my own background and position. My identity is that of a white, British, middle-class, female graduate. I am actively involved in a union (within academia rather than social care) and I have previously worked within the care work industry for two years (in home care and support work). My experience as a care worker provided the motivation for the research and also impacted interview responses as I generally told interviewees that I had been a care worker. In interviews with workers I did so to put the workers at ease and attempt to establish a connection. Reflecting on interviews with organisers, union officers, and managers, I brought up my previous care work experience for what was possibly more defensive reasons, for instance to prove that I had some knowledge of the sector. At some level I wanted the reaction which a UNISON officer gave me: 'it's good that you're writing from a place of personal knowledge then' (officer, 6). But, because experience of being 'immersed' in the field of study might mean that researchers are shackled to their *pre-understanding* (Coghlan et al, 2001: 676), I did not go into detail when referencing past experiences in interviews. I also tended not to say that I had experience in the sector at the outset – I wanted the workers to describe their job without any expectation that I would already know what it entailed.

While telling workers that I had been a care worker and a support worker provided a means of building commonality, the difference in positioning between researcher and research participant remained. My experience in the industry does not negate the socio-material fact that, within the context of this research, I am a university-endorsed researcher. As Ahmed (2000: 63) writes, to assume that there is commonality between the researcher and their subject is to 'presuppose the possibility of overcoming the relations of force and authorisation that are already implicated in the ethnographic desire to document the lives of strangers.' Even without the divide implicit within the dynamic of researcher/researched I knew that a proportion of the interviewees would regard me as different to them. My Southern-English accent carries connotations of being middle-class – something made clear to me during the eighteen months I spent as a care worker in West Yorkshire prior to research. This reflexivity is an important part of the epistemological moment of dialectics. The remaining dialectical moments – inquiry, intellectual reconstruction, exposition, and praxis – will be explored in Section 3.3.

3.2 Methods

This study uses a comparative case study method, comparing 'cases' of three union organisations: GMB, UNISON and IWW. The strategies of these three case study unions are analysed in the context of social care. As reflected upon in Section 3.1, I was motivated to write the thesis because of my own employment in the sector. This experience exposed me to a variety of relevant features of this work: the low levels of unionisation, the impact of funding decisions on private care provision, and the role of workers' and managers' moral politics regarding resistance and unionisation. While working in the sector, I also gained insight into the variety of unions attempting to organise workers – with sometimes conflicting approaches. Utilising a case study method which focusses on the unions allows the thesis to fully unpack and compare the strategies of unions. The sample of workers and managers is differentiated by organisation (home care company, residential home, and support providers) but the organisations themselves are not positioned as case studies. Differentiating between the organisations illuminates the context and effects of union strategies and demonstrates the external constraints and workplace structures which shape unions' efforts to organise workers.

The use of case studies goes against the assessment of union organising in relation to 'quantitative recruitment goals' (Hurd, 2004: 15) and the examination of workers' perspectives

using quantitative measures (Waddington and Kerr, 2009; 2015). These surveys provide valuable insight into broad structural changes – Waddington (2015) for example, carried out surveys with union officials from 14 unions, across 12 different countries. While interviews have less breadth, going beyond the use of surveys can provide space for the voices of those *being organised* and build a deeper understanding of the motivations of workers and organisers. In addition, surveys tend to focus on a particular 'group' (for example union members or union organisers), whereas the qualitative approach of this research enables inclusion of non-members, members, and organisers – from both mainstream and grassroots forms of unionism.

This qualitative case study approach has been criticised for violating principles of positivism, whereby findings should be replicable and generalisable. Given that this thesis rejects positivism, as noted in Section 3.1, replicability is not viewed as a measurement of the success of the research. Research encounters cannot be replicated partly because 'history is not a laboratory experiment' (Burawoy, 1998: 11) and partly because the results are dependent on the position of the researcher. Further, the criticism that case studies are less valuable because they are not generalisable fails to acknowledge the depth of case study research, a depth that necessitates sacrificing the breadth of the research (Hammersley 2013: 11). This thesis does not approach case studies as generalisable data which are representative of similar organisations but does argue that there is a generalisability to the *theory* used in the research. Gillham (2000: 12) writes:

> Theories […] may be the most generalizable aspect of case study research, i.e. the actual data that you find may be specific to a particular school, or factory, or family, or individual, but your theory (rooted in what you find) may be useable by other people; or generalizable in understanding how other schools, factories, families or individuals work.

The use and development of theory therefore adds rigour to the research (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006) and contributes to the rigour of situatedness and accountability described in Section 3.1. The *ideas* presented throughout the thesis are relevant to broader research on unionism and activism and have a theoretical generalisability. Through this combination of theory and empirics, the research contributes empirical understanding of organising and contributes to the theoretical framework examined in Chapter 2.

The research was conducted in the UK. While social care in the UK has been subject to 'market fragmentation' and 'market penetration' (Hudson, 2018), as detailed in Section 2.1.5, there has

been an unequal trajectory towards privatisation throughout the UK nations. This thesis focusses on England, where the social care sector differs to that of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. A UKHCA report from 2012 noted that in England, 81% of home care funded by local authorities is provided by companies from the independent sector (UKHCA, 2012: 9). In contrast, 27% of publicly funded home care in Scotland is provided by the independent sector, along with 68% in Wales and 58% in Northern Ireland (ibid.). A UNISON national organiser emphasised this variation in provision: 'maybe Scotland and Wales still have that sizeable in-house staff [employed by the local authority], but yeah, a lot of councils in England won't have any' (officer, 5).

Allocation of funding to social care also differs throughout England, and the north – the geographical area within which my data collection took place – has been particularly impacted by austerity measures. A 2019 TUC report highlights the North West and the North East as the areas most impacted by a decline in local authority spending. In this decline, 'poorer communities have been hit harder' (TUC, 2019). The potential for local authorities to utilise an additional council tax precept to fund social care is contingent on existing tax rates within the region. This has resulted in a disparity between the ability of regions to fund social care through taxes and the social care needs. A report by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) comments that

> The tax base is not deep enough in most local areas to deliver significant increases in funding […] one in five councils have seen their relative ability to raise local tax revenues fall, whilst their relative need for adult social care increased (Quilter-Pinney and Hochlaf, 2019: 14).

As Butler (2019) notes: 'deprived northern urban areas have been traditionally more reliant on government grants than more affluent councils because their relative poverty means they are less able raise cash though local taxation to pay for higher social needs.' The local authorities which have faced funding cuts, and which cannot draw upon taxes to ameliorate these cuts, have reacted by outsourcing care provision. Researching social care in the north of England therefore provides insight into the conflicts between complex employment relationships in the sector.

As union strategies adapt to the changing employment relations in sectors where they organise, an additional consideration in the thesis is the regional variation between union strategies. A national officer from UNISON commented:

> We're like a federal structure. [Regions] do have autonomy to sort of deal with their own priorities, like North West region for instance has decided that they want to make organising in social care a big area for them, more so than any other regions and they had the freedom to do it (officer, 5).

Alongside selection of the research site, the research process also involved selecting unions to analyse as case studies, selecting companies to approach, and selecting interviewees. UNISON and GMB were chosen to allow comparison of UNISON's background in public sector unionism with GMB's experience in the private sector. These are also the most prominent unions organising in the care sector. Unite also has union membership among workers in social care, yet it is a smaller proportion – a Trades Union Council officer commented that members in the sector are 'split mostly between GMB and UNISON, with maybe a handful in Unite, maybe' (officer, 16). After attempts to contact Unite organisers were unsuccessful, I decided to focus on GMB and UNISON and also conducted interviews with a TUC officer and a local Trades Union Council officer to broaden the perspective from the mainstream movement.

The selection of IWW potentially requires more justification as membership levels in the union are low. One IWW organiser commented, 'the number of people who are members of the IWW is tiny, they're a tiny, tiny force' (organiser, 53). Another IWW organiser said: 'we're sort of topping two, two and a half thousand members. On the other hand, I know UNISON branches and Unite branches that are a thousand, fifteen hundred strong in their own right, out of the 1.3 million [overall members]' (organiser, 10). However, as noted in the previous section, this case study approach is not aiming at replicability and generalisability. Commenting on his case study of GMB and Unite Community, Heyes (2009: 193) writes, '[n]either of the two case studies examined in this article can be thought of as representative: on the contrary, they have been investigated because they represent two of the most well-developed examples of trade union engagement with migrant workers.' Similarly, the inclusion of IWW in this research relates not to their representativeness, but to the importance of their position in the development of the organising model: the research considers the confrontations between ideology and practicalities of organising, and IWW members and organisers are well placed to provide insight into these confrontations.

The remainder of this section turns from the selection of the case studies to the selection of interviewees and the research process. I interviewed three GMB organisers from the same region in their office (two of the organisers were interviewed at the same time, in conversation), and one national GMB officer. I made contact with IWW members at their national organising summit and at a 'day school' about IWW organising strategies (these events were not observed in a formal sense but formed part of my background research). Additional IWW organisers were accessed either via 'cold emailing' branches or through contacts given by organisers. Two UNISON national officers were interviewed in the UNISON head office, followed by three local organisers in three different cities.

Table 1 describes the role, union organisation, participant reference and gender of these interviewees, and distinguishes between 'officers' and 'organisers' when referring to union employees. The organisers from GMB and UNISON had regional positions and the officers had national positions. My decision to differentiate IWW organisers from IWW members might be considered contentious, given the union's maxim: 'every member an organiser'. Here, 'IWW organiser' refers to individuals who carried out organising work for the union and were *not* employed in the social care sector (along with one IWW officer – a role which I explore in Chapter 6). 'IWW member' refers to workers who *were* employed in the sector, some of which carried out organising activities for IWW, while others did not.

I have included gender in the below tables as gender will be referred to throughout the thesis in relation to caring labour and to union participation. I have not included race or ethnicity – as noted in Section 2.2.4, the interviewees did not reflect the racial diversity of the UK population, the population of the North of England, or of the care sector. A 2013 Cavendish report found that 29% of workers in the sector were of a Black or minority ethnic background (2013: 15). This lack of racial diversity in the research could have been due to the method of 'snowballing' which I used in the research process. I relied upon networks between workers and between union activists to find interviewees, which results in an element of exclusion. This reliance on inter-relationships and social cohesiveness is a drawback of snowball sampling (Atkinson and Flint, 2001). The consequences of this reliance can be expressed using the terminology of the organising model: in snowballing, the recruitment of interviewees often occurs in a 'like-recruits-like' manner.

The tables also omit the category of age. Previous studies have emphasised the importance of age to union membership, and the difficult but necessary challenge of organising young workers (Hodder and Kretsos, 2015). This thesis makes some general points about interviewees' age groups (referring to students, for example) but age was not included as a category on the consent forms. This was partly because I wanted to request the minimum amount of information from interviewees. As discussed later in this section, I interviewed care workers during their breaks or during work time: given the consequent time constraints, I prioritised obtaining informed consent and then entering into discussion rather than collecting data.

Table 1. Union interviewees

Role	Organisation	Participant reference	Gender
Organiser	GMB	1	F
Organiser	GMB	2	M
Organiser	GMB	3	F
Officer	GMB	4	F
Officer	UNISON	5	M
Officer	UNISON	6	M
Organiser	UNISON	7	M
Organiser	UNISON	8	F
Organiser	UNISON	9	M
Organiser	IWW	10	M
Organiser	IWW	11	M
Officer	IWW	12	M
Organiser	IWW	13	M
Organiser	IWW	14	M
Organiser	IWW	15	F
Officer	Local TU Council	16	M
Officer	TUC	17	M

The home care company and the residential home were selected with the assistance of a GMB regional organiser. Both companies had recognition agreements with GMB. The home care company was an independent provider of home care, the manager of which was also the employer (I refer to him throughout as 'manager' given his direct involvement in the company). The residential home was part of a chain of homes throughout the UK, and the manager (who was not the overall employer) had an interim position at the company. The funding arrangements and recognition agreements at these companies will be explored in depth in Chapter 6.

I began by contacting the managers of these companies. The manager of the home care company – who commented that 'my politics are left-wing and I believe in unions' (manager, 31) – was enthusiastic about the project. Interviews with staff were then facilitated by an employee who had just started managing the company's 'hub'; a building which was used to provide information on social care for the community and as a space for care workers to meet between shifts. I refer to this employee as the 'hub manager', although her position in the company was somewhat nebulous. Over a period of six months during 2018 and 2019, I made five trips to the company. Interviews with office workers were carried out in the office and interviews with care workers were carried out in the hub. I used this building in part because of workplace politics: at one point, building work was carried out at the hub and I was told that 'we've got workmen here at the moment […] who are married to our office staff who the carers might want to speak out about […] very complicated!' (hub manager, 30). Therefore, I took the decision to pause the fieldwork until the hub was available again.

Table 2. Home care company interviewees

Position	Membership status	Participant reference	Gender
Care worker	-	18	F
Care worker	-	19	F
Care worker	-	20	F
Care worker	-	21	M
Care worker	-	22	F
Care worker	-	23	F
Care worker	-	24	F
Office worker	-	25	F
Office worker	-	26	F
Office worker	-	27	F
Office worker	-	28	F
Office worker	-	29	F
Hub manager	-	30	F
Manager	RCN	31	M

Access to the residential company was negotiated first through the company-wide HR manager and then through the home manager. Visits were carried out at the home four times in the space of six months. The home manager agreed that the company would take part in the research, but then left the company shortly after I had made contact. I renegotiated access with the interim manager and was then permitted to conduct interviews with employees over the space of two days, in the manager's office. This enabled a confidential conversation as the manager was

working as a nurse in the home at the time of the interviews. Alongside the interim home manager and the company's regional HR director, I interviewed workers who had a variety of roles – domestic workers, care assistants, kitchen assistants, a laundry worker, an activities coordinator, and an office administrator. However, as will be explored in Section 4.2, duties in the home were not strictly designated to certain roles (with the exception of the small number of nursing staff who I did not interview), for example kitchen assistants would help the care assistants, and vice versa.

Table 3. Residential home interviewees

Position	Membership status	Participant reference	Gender
Activities coordinator	GMB	32	F
Domestic worker	UNISON	33	F
Care assistant	-	34	F
Care assistant	-	35	M
Kitchen assistant	-	36	F
Laundry worker	-	37	M
Care assistant	-	38	F
Care assistant	-	39	F
Care assistant	-	40	F
Care assistant	-	41	F
Care assistant	-	42	F
Domestic assistant	-	43	F
Care assistant	-	44	F
Care assistant	-	45	F
Office administrator	-	46	F
HR manager	-	47	F
Interim manager	RCN	48	F

Because of the large number of non-members interviewed at the residential home and the home care company – apparent in Table 2 and Table 3 – the research focus of this thesis expanded to focus more on why workers were *not* in a union. As Mason (2002: 21) notes, research questions are 'complex and multi-faceted, and [...] likely to change over time.'

The majority of the union members interviewed were support workers. The differences between support work and care work are disputed and the terms are sometimes used synonymously. But 'care work' largely applies to home care (also referred to as domiciliary care) and work in residential homes, while 'support work' tends to involve promoting independence of care recipients rather than providing physical labour. The terms can also imply

a difference in status, with support work considered by workers to be higher in the hierarchy of care jobs, in large part because it involves less bodily, 'dirty' labour. As noted by one of the support workers interviewed, this can lead employers to advertise jobs as support work which might in practice be care work.[11] Section 4.2 explores some of the differences in support work and care work further and discusses the gendering of the roles.

One IWW organiser who I met at the day school was a support worker employed at a not-for-profit company assisting adults with learning disabilities, autism, and mental health needs to live independently and access their communities. This organiser provided contact details for other IWW members working at the same company. Interviews were carried out with workers in cafés, which were suggested by the interviewees themselves. Because it was immediately apparent that the relationship between union members and management was antagonistic, I did not make any contact with managers. Using managers as gatekeepers could have jeopardised the access to the IWW members who were the focus of the research. I interviewed three support workers who were still working at the company, and four former workers from the company.

I interviewed four UNISON members, approached from two points of access, employed at a company which provided a day service for adults with mild learning disabilities and a residential service for adults with more severe learning disabilities. A member who worked at the company (who I knew personally) provided contact details of colleagues in the union. The second point of access was a local UNISON organiser who discussed attempts to gain recognition at the same company and went on to recommend workplace representatives to interview. I had initially planned to access the company through management, but after learning of the difficulties UNISON had been having with management there, I decided not to approach management. I felt that managers would not be interested in research on unionisation given the dispute, and that management involvement might make union members uncomfortable about taking part in interviews.

Because of the low levels of membership in both the home care company and the residential care company, I also used the regional GMB mailing list to target members who worked in

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[11] Providing further insight into this view, when I attempted to find any references to the distinction between care work and support work I instead found an online advertisement for a job which stated: 'Are you tired of agencies promising you support work however only give [sic] you care work? We have support work for you!' (https://www.totaljobs.com/job/support-worker/24-7-professional-health-job88707036?v=1595356837285

social care. An organiser sent out information about the research. Despite receiving several replies to this email, I was only able to successfully meet with one member. This member is listed on Table 4 as a GMB member, but he had also been an IWW member – IWW members in the sector are often also members of UNISON or GMB, a practice referred to as 'dual-carding'. This dual-carding demonstrates that, although the above description of the research process implies that each company (and each interview) provided insight into a particular union, the reality was more complex. Instead, interviewees' experiences provided cross-union insight and membership was varied. For example, while the residential company had a recognition agreement with GMB, at least one employee was a member of UNISON. Further, union organisers discussed their perspectives on other unions and referred to inter-union collaborations and conflicts.

Table 4. Support workers interviewed

Position	Membership status	Participant reference	
Support worker	UNISON	49	M
Support worker	UNISON	50	M
Support worker	UNISON	51	F
Support worker	UNISON	52	F
Support worker	IWW	53	M
Support worker	IWW	54	M
Support worker	IWW	55	M
Former support worker	IWW	56	F
Former support worker	IWW	57	M
Former support worker	IWW	58	M
Former support worker	IWW	59	M
Support worker	GMB	60	M

The obstacles to accessing workers which I encountered during the research process provided an understanding into topics analysed in the findings chapters. The change in management at the residential home indicates the high levels of staff turnover of the sector, and the difficulty in arranging meetings to fit with workers' timetables demonstrates the work responsibilities of interviewees – as explored in Chapter 5 in relation to activism. Negotiating access also provided insight into the trade unions as organisations. Organisers and officers from GMB and UNISON were sometimes contacted through secretaries, providing an understanding of their time responsibilities and, arguably, of the bureaucratic structures of the unions. In contrast

IWW organisers were contacted through using an informal snowballing method, usually via text. Attempts to contact organisers from IWW through email were generally unsuccessful: an IWW organiser acknowledged that responding to emails is not always a priority of the union, 'there's quite a bit of discussion about email being a dead means of communication […] I know that I don't read as many as I should' (organiser, 13). A member, discussing the process of getting a workplace representative from the union, commented: 'you have to email [the local branch], and then somebody will get back to you, in three to five years [laughs]' (support worker, 54). My own experiences as a researcher therefore reflected some of the experiences of IWW members.

The interviews were semi-structured 'conversations with a purpose' (Burgess, 1984: 102). I began the interviews with workers by asking how long they had worked at the company, what their role involved, and whether they had worked for other companies previously. These questions often led workers to talk about their grievances. Other topics covered were: who workers would go to if they had problems at work; interaction between frontline workers[12], office staff, and managers; connections with care recipients; and the role of the funding system. The second section of the interview covered trade unions. The length of this section varied depending on interviewees' knowledge of, or strength of opinion on, trade unions. I asked both members and non-members about their experiences with organisers and about their understanding of unionism. Interviews with members then focussed on their experiences as a member, as well as why they had chosen that union, whether they had used union representation or been in other unions, and what their view was of the purpose of unions.

Interviews with union officers and organisers started by asking how long they had worked for the union, what their role was, and whether they had worked for any other unions. The conversation then focussed on: experiences of organising; what members *want* from the union and what the grievances of workers tend to be; current campaigns; regional variations and the internal structure of the union; relationships between unions and the council; relationships with other unions; private equity ownership; differences between organising and servicing; relationships with employers and recognition agreements; and any other sector-specific issues. Questions regarding experiences of organising covered tactics used, differences between

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[12] I use the term 'frontline workers' to refer collectively to care workers, support workers, and the various kitchen, laundry, and cleaning roles at the residential home (i.e., not office staff or management).

organising in domiciliary, residential and support work, access issues, and experiences with employers. The extent to which these topics were covered varied according to which union the officers and organisers were involved in. For example, IWW organisers were open to discussing politics and ideology within the union, yet because the officers' work was not (formally) divided by sector, not all interviewees had extensive experience of issues around social care.

The length of the interviews was, on average, 60 minutes. The longest interviews were 90 minutes, and a few interviews with workers at the residential home and the care company – who were being interviewed while at work or between shifts – were as short as 10 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded, with the exception of interviews with three workers who declined to be audio recorded. In these cases, I made handwritten notes of the interview conversation instead. I then transcribed all the audio recorded interviews verbatim.

3.3 Analysis

The analysis of transcription documents was carried out with the acknowledgement that 'reifying transcripts as standing for the event itself' can be misleading (Lapadat, 2000: 217). For example, physical gestures of interviewees are not captured in audio recording and therefore this data is excluded, as 'much of the emotional context of the interview as well as nonverbal communication are not captured' (Poland, 291). An interview with a worker at the residential home provided an instance of this emotion, as the interviewee cried while discussing bullying by colleagues. The transcript – 'talk to people at least nicely, or like they are human, and not just doormats […], it's actually getting me upset, sorry' (activities coordinator, 32) – conveys some, but by no means all, of this affective intensity.

Analysis was carried out thematically, a method which involves a 'search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon' (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006: 82). This approach is consistent with the qualitative methodology of the thesis – other techniques like content analysis would involve choosing categories after an initial inspection of the document, with the aim to transform the research into quantitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis involved a combination of inductive and deductive analysis, described by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006: 91) as: 'a process of thematic coding

that involves a balance of deductive coding (derived from the philosophical framework) and inductive coding (themes emerging from interviewee's discussions).'

This thesis is organised deductively in two senses. Firstly, the themes of the chapters have been derived, deductively, from the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Three important aspects of the organising model were identified: mobilising, activism and participation, and the relation of unions to recognition agreements and campaigns. The chapters are structured according to these aspects in an 'outwards' direction. As described in Section 1.4, the chapters begin with the individual motivations and experiences of workers, then move to the actions of unions and organisers, and lastly consider how unions relate to employers, investors, local authorities, and the state. Secondly, the thesis has a Marxist theoretical framework, providing a structure through which to analyse unions, work, class, value, labour, consciousness, resistance, and the stages of capital.

The inductive coding of the data to search for emergent patterns was carried out using the coding software NVivo. Using NVivo, I ordered the interviews with workers and union employees into the categories of the UNISON, GMB, IWW, and non-members. The NVivo function of 'nodes' was utilised to collect references to specific themes and subthemes which extend across the findings chapters and across the research questions of the thesis. The relation between nodes and between the deductive and inductive aspects of the research is illustrated by Table 5.

Table 5. Method of analysis

Themes - deductive	1st order nodes	2nd order nodes - inductive
Mobilising	Pay and employment	Pay Contracts Unpaid work
	Care labour, working conditions, and gender	Harassment/bullying Emotional manipulation Devaluation
	Mobilising from injustice	Apathy Attribution of blame Love of the job
	Collectivism and strikes	Lone working Individualist attitudes Collectivism with care recipients
Activism	Union resources	Organising and recruitment Union targets Unpaid organisers
	Building activism	Overworked members Turnover Retribution from management
	Service expectations	Union dues Recruitment and services Culture of capitalism
	Politics of activism	Empowerment and overwork Class and salting Gender
Recognition and campaigns	Types of recognition agreements	Statutory recognition Voluntary recognition Recognition as a 'tool'
	Workplace divide	Partnerships Antagonisms with management Inter-union disputes
	Funding structures	For-profit/not for profit Financialisation Limits to bargaining
	Campaigning outside the workplace	Funding campaigns Relationship with party politics Social campaigns

This combination of inductive and deductive analysis reflects the dialectical method of the thesis. It is the approach taken by Marx in the volumes of *Capital:* Banaji (1979: 15) refers to *Capital*'s underlying conception of the 'reciprocity of fact and theory, or of induction and deduction, or of reason and experience.' Referring again to Ollman's (2003, 2008) six moments of the dialectical method, this combination of deductive and inductive analysis is the moment of 'inquiry'. It is a process of moving from patterns, emergent in the literature explored in the subsections of Section 2.1, to categories, which is carried out in the thesis' finding chapters.

The fourth dialectical moment turns from the movement of parts back to the whole. This process of 'intellectual reconstruction' develops in this thesis' final chapter. The thesis itself embodies the fifth dialectical moment of exposition; it conveys the findings to an audience. Exposition 'takes account of how others think as well as what they know' (Ollman, 2008: 11). As this thesis is for an academic audience it undoubtedly includes some assumptions about what literature or research the audience will be aware of. It also likely assumes an interest in unions as an important aspect of society, although – as noted in Section 3.1 – I do not assume that the audience possesses knowledge of caring labour. To clarify findings the thesis includes discussion sections in each chapter – precursors of the more in-depth final discussion chapter. The discussion chapter also includes a section on the pragmatic implications of the research findings to suggest the 'praxis' aspect of dialectics (Section 7.5).

3.4 Ethics

There were a number of ethical concerns to take into account when carrying out this research. The first consideration was whether interviewees had provided informed consent to take part in the research. The ethical guidelines from the Social Research Association (SRA, 2003: 29) refer to informed consent as 'in essence, an expression of belief in the need for truthful and respectful exchanges between social researchers and human subjects.' This informed consent goes beyond initial signing of consent forms and is a 'processual and negotiated agreement before and during fieldwork' (Truscott, 2004: 24). Ethical decisions have to be continually reconsidered and responsive to changes in circumstances, and when circumstances change, consent is 'subject to renegotiation' (BSA, 2017: 5). Because most of the interviewees were approached as individuals rather than through an organisation, I repeatedly had to renegotiate access and explain my research.

Research interviewees completed consent forms and were also provided with information sheets which offered slightly differing information depending on whether the individual was a worker or a union employee. They were written with acknowledgment that too much detail may overwhelm interviewees or be incomprehensible, and too little can be misleading (SRA, 2003). In addition, too much information could prejudice the outcome of the research (Dench et al, 2004). If interviewees perceived the research to be about how collectives are formed, for example, they might have unintentionally exaggerated relationships with colleagues. The most important aspects of the consent process were therefore communicating and negotiating the following: the purpose and expected consequences of the research, the uses and storage of the data, the potential benefits or disadvantages of participation, and the anonymity and confidentiality of interviewees.

The identities of interviewees have been protected by anonymising material used in the thesis including using pseudonyms and removing identifying detail. The companies referred to throughout the research have also been anonymised, again with any identifying information removed for reasons related to research ethics. The union organisations, in contrast, *have* been identified (although individuals have not). Unions do not tend to have the same suspicions of research as private, for-profit organisations (Terry, 2002: 2). Union organisations are also identifiable though the material discussed in the thesis and given the specificity of the data: the Ethical Care Charter is a campaign explicitly connected to UNISON; the history of IWW cannot be attributed to any other union.

There are further ethical concerns specific to the empirical study of health and social care environments. Researchers need to take into account that there might be vulnerable individuals within the environment who could be unintentionally affected by the research. Although I aimed to avoid this possibility by only carrying out interviews in staff areas, these physical borders were frequently permeable. At the home care company interviews were conducted both in offices and in the company's 'hub.' As the latter was utilised by both staff and care recipients, I spoke at length to one care recipient about the care they received who, I had been informed by staff, had mild learning disabilities. Similarly, in the second organisation there were some informal or casual interactions with residents present in communal areas, as I was given a tour of the care home (no notes were taken of these interactions). In addition, the manager's office where I carried out interviews appeared to have an open-door policy for workers and care home residents. Interviews were paused when residents would enter the room.

The topics broached in the interviews introduced additional ethical considerations. When talking about unionisation, employees may have felt uncomfortable implicating themselves in activity that management might disapprove of. However, this was not an issue that arose during the research process, as workers appeared comfortable discussing unions and discussing disputes with managers. In the instance of the supported living facilities where workers were UNISON members and IWW members, the decision not to interview managers at the companies could have helped put these members at ease. I began the discussion of unions and resistance with non-members by talking 'around' the topic, to ascertain what topics they would be comfortable discussing. Interviews focussed on issues such as grievances, the relationship between frontline workers office staff and managers, and then – dependant on how workers discussed these topics – I would ask more explicitly about their opinion on unions. The key topics of contention during interviews with union organisers and officers were firstly, inter-union relationships, and secondly, instances where union officers would question strategies and tactics of their employer. In these instances I avoided 'doggedly pursuing a particular issue' (Mason, 2002: 72) if interviewees showed signs of feeling uncomfortable.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the research process of the thesis. Section 3.1 established the research philosophy, contextualising dialectical materialism within ontological and epistemological approaches in organisational research. The methodological framework of dialectical materialism provides insight into the oppositional tensions throughout the findings, highlights the *potential* within those oppositions, and understands structure and agency within the material context of capitalism. The epistemology of the research emphasises that knowledge is not a search for an objective truth, but instead involves analysis of the continual processes that lead to change. The turn away from objective, positivist truth, also requires researcher *reflexivity*, an approach utilised throughout the thesis. To use these aspects of dialectical materialism as 'a flexible tool of analysis' (Sherman, 1976: 58) as opposed to as a dogma, this chapter has outlined Ollman's (2003, 2008) moments of the dialectical method and related the research process of the thesis to these moments.

Section 3.2 described the use of a case study approach in the thesis and the associated rejection of generalisability and replicability as research aims. The section then examined the choice of

research site – the sector, the region, and the individual companies – and the selection of GMB, UNISON and IWW as case studies. The thesis approaches social care as an industry in 'crisis', with a distinctive labour process, distinctive employment relationships, and different funding levels throughout areas of England and the rest of the UK. The section then described the choice of unions, along with the selection of research interviewees and the process of gaining access to trade unions, business organisations, and individuals. Section 3.3 discussed the analysis of findings – a process of moving between inductive and deductive levels of analysis, consistent with the dialectical methodological framework. Section 3.4 considered ethical issues associated with the research at the level of individual interviewees and of organisations. The following three chapters present the findings of the thesis: the analysis moves from the motivations of care workers, to the activism of members and the actions of union organisers, and lastly to the unions' use of (or ambition towards) partnerships and campaigns.

4. Divergent forms of injustice and collectivism

This chapter focuses on the mobilisation aspect of the organising model of trade unionism, using interviews with members, non-members, union organisers and union officers. As noted in the literature review, this thesis distinguishes mobilisation – the motivations that lead workers to organise – from organising, carried out by union officers or by union members themselves. Drawing upon Kelly's (1998) widely utilised mobilisation framework, this chapter explores injustice and collectivism as determinants of union membership (the influence of leaders on mobilising will be examined in Chapter 5). Section 4.1 considers the pay and employment practices in the social care sector: wage levels, unpaid labour, leave, and contracts. Section 4.2 turns to the working conditions in social care. It examines what caring labour consists of, the role that emotion plays, the extent of bullying and harassment experienced by interviewees, and the gendered cultural undervaluing of care work. Section 4.3 relates the economic and social concerns of workers to mobilisation, evaluating whether injustice leads workers to mobilise and unpacking what interviewees consider 'injustice' to be in the context of social care. Section 4.4 explores the impact of working structures on collectivism in the sector, examines the differing forms of collectivism, and refers to findings on class identity. Last, Section 4.5 presents conclusions to the chapter and identifies which areas will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

4.1 Grievances about pay and employment terms

This section examines the experiences of workers in the sector related to wages, payment for travel time (in home care provision), payment for sleep-in shifts (in support work), sick pay, and contract types. Studies have highlighted widespread use of statutory minimum wage[13] in the sector (Rubery and Urwin, 2011; Rubery et al., 2013). The extent of low pay was apparent throughout interviews, strengthening this body of literature. Workers often described their dissatisfaction with pay by comparing their wages with that of other workers. Care assistants at the residential home commented: 'to be fair I think the pay's not really that good for the work you do, like you could be stacking shelves and you're on like £9 an hour' (care assistant,

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[13] The thesis uses minimum wage to refer to the National Living Wage (NLW). The NLW is a term introduced by the Conservative government in 2016. The NLW is still, in effect, a statutory minimum wage (and should not be confused with the 'Real' Living Wage, discussed in Section 6.4). Most of the interviewees used the term minimum wage rather than NLW.

40); 'if you think about it, somebody in a shop gets just as much, if not more money than us (care assistant, 38). Evidencing this view, a care worker at the home care company commented, 'I was actually paid more for standing behind a till for 8 hours than the job that I do now' (care worker, 24). The manager acknowledged: 'we've not got many carers that are prepared to do it for minimum wage, when they can have an easier job working in a supermarket' (manager, 31).

Pay for support work appeared similarly low. A care assistant at the residential home commented: 'most of the support worker jobs and carer jobs that I've looked for [are] basically the same, apart from like mental health jobs […] Just basically minimum wage. Rubbish that they like to give us' (care assistant, 32). Support workers interviewed – who provided support primarily for individuals with learning disabilities, as opposed to mental health issues – emphasised their low pay. An IWW member commented that 'there are some who've been with [this company] for 15, 20 years… still grinding away for minimum wage' (support worker, 55). I asked another IWW member at the same company whether support workers were on different pay scales in their company:

> I think they're paying minimum wage, no one gets more than that […] it's always a minimum wage job, and I've always been on minimum wage. And most people who work in the job, they make that work for them by […] just being extremely frugal and essentially living a semi-poverty life (organiser, 53).

A second support worker, and member of GMB, commented:

> I've never been paid above more than the minimum wage working in [support provision], never once in my life […] You can talk to people at work that will all say that we're not paid enough. You could say that people are always saying that, but I think it's a bit different when you're on the absolute bare minimum doing a job like that, I think it's really difficult (support worker, 60).

The UNISON members providing support work at a day centre said that their wage was above the statutory minimum wage, yet by an increasingly insignificant amount:

> They think that they're better employers than they are. [But] every year now the minimum wage is creeping closer to what the wage here is, and one of their big things before was they'd say, 'we pay more than other social care providers cos we have the best staff', and they still do a little bit, but it's getting closer and closer (organiser, 50).

Low wages were therefore one way that employers extracted – or perhaps more accurately, sought to extract – profit from the labour of the workers interviewed. Further increasing the potential to make profit, some of the labour carried out by workers interviewed went unpaid or was paid below the statutory minimum wage. Care workers at the home care company argued that they were not paid a sufficient amount for travel between the calls to the houses of care recipients. This relates to the continuing reliance of the home care model on short calls (entailing short shifts for carers). Local authorities 'overload' care providers with care packages which specify a number of tasks to be carried out within a short time limit. This can mean that a large number of calls are carried out in quick succession (a practice referred to as 'loading up' calls), or that care workers have long gaps between the calls.

Care workers said that when calls are scheduled in quick succession, they are unable to make calls on time. One care worker said: 'when you give me 15 minutes leeway either side of the call time, I'm still not getting there on time because you've not given me enough travel time to get there' (care worker, 24). The prevalence of unpaid travel time in the sector has been highlighted by Moore et al. (2017: 6), who argue that 'use of non-standard contracts can allow employers to redefine elements of the working day as 'non-productive' time.' While the home care workers I interviewed were given pay for travel time, the system for measuring this time between calls appeared opaque to workers, who disputed its reliability. One care worker commented: 'none of us carers know [how it's measured], you could ask […] every carer that walks through the door and you'd get the same answer' (care worker, 24). When I relayed the manager's claim that travel time was estimated using Google Maps, the care worker responded: 'well even Google Maps is wrong.'

When care provision was planned by managers with gaps between shifts, i.e. calls were not 'loaded up', then care workers faced spending a large proportion of their day waiting to work. Workers would not get paid between calls, but the gaps were not long enough for workers to go home:

> When you've got gaps you don't get paid for it and during the week I can have like half an hour, forty minutes, and sometimes if it's a weekend you can have two hours. You can have like an hour in the morning, and then you do a couple of calls and then you've got like an hour, an hour and a half in the afternoon, and yeah it gets a little bit… cos there's nowhere to go really (care worker, 23).

The result of the gaps between calls was that payment did not align with the number of hours which workers felt as though they had worked:

> I started at quarter past 9 this morning and I'm finishing at 5 past 9 tonight. It's not twelve hours, it's all broken up […] I'm calculating in my head thinking I should have quite a good wage this month, and then it comes and I'm like 'oh no… I worked a lot, but technically didn't' (care worker, 21).

Another worker calculated: 'I'll be out like, 10, 11, hours a day and I'll only be paid for like 7 or something like that. It's not right' (care worker, 20). The findings therefore not only demonstrate the prevalence of minimum wage contracts in the sector, they indicate the complexity of wage provision for home care workers, with the amount of time spent 'at work' disputable.

A dispute over what is considered work was also apparent in interviews with support workers. Support workers referred to the contested issue of 'sleep-in' (or sleepover) shifts in the sector. Sleep-in shifts were differentiated by interviewees from 'waking nights': the latter refers to a shift where a worker is expected to be awake to assist with needs of care recipients, and the former refers to shifts where the worker could sleep but has to be available if needed. Sleep-in shifts were paid significantly less than minimum wage and were avoided by workers:

> I refused to do sleep-in anymore because [when I did them] they were paying them at £28 a night, which, looking into the law at the time I decided I was just being ripped off, I just said 'I'm not doing them until you pay me properly' […] our argument has always been that if you're at work and you can't leave, and if you were to leave there would be disciplinary consequences, then you should be paid for that, you should be paid at least minimum wage (support worker, 53).

The categorisation of night shifts as sleep-ins as opposed to waking nights could lead to overwork among support workers as the shifts were not technically classed as work, even though the 'sleeping' was frequently broken up if the worker was called on to respond to the needs of care recipients:

> I used to work from half seven in the morning straight through to 11 o'clock at night, and then chances were I wouldn't sleep because [the care recipient] would be up, so I'd be up all the way through the night and then, because it was classed as a sleep, I was still by law able to work the next day. So, I'd end up having two days awake straight (support worker, 54).

As they were employed at a day centre, the support workers who were UNISON members did not engage in sleep-in shifts. Yet – just as sleep-in shifts and non-payment for travel time have the effect that workers are paid less than minimum wage – the company kept wage levels low by relying on voluntary work. Some examples of these voluntary activities were weekly games nights for care recipients, weekly visits to a gallery, and occasional art exhibitions. A support worker at the company commented: 'there's a big reliance on members of staff volunteering their time outside of work for stuff, for the art projects, for different stuff that they use to make the brand of [the company] stronger' (support worker, 50). Another worker at the company described the substantial effort put in by workers involved in these art projects:

> The guy who [organises] the art gallery, he turns up to work like an hour early every Monday cos he runs art sessions all day, so he can set everything up and get ready, and he was like, 'yeah I stopped putting it on the timesheet, I just wasn't getting paid for it.' But he didn't stop doing it, he stopped asking for the money (support worker, 52).

The worker went on to describe the company's reliance not just on the voluntary labour of *paid* staff, but on volunteers – some of whom the worker believed had learning disabilities themselves. The managing director of the company had told workers to 'respect volunteers' at the company:

> Support worker, 52: It's just like the hypocrisy, because she [the managing director] doesn't talk to us, you know, it's just this guilt trip about 'oh and so and so works in the kitchen and does anyone know the name of these people,' and it's just a virtue signal. Like, 'ah I know the name of the woman who cleans my office, I'm a saint.' It's like, yeah but you treat us all like shit, and should there be as many people with learning disabilities working as voluntary cleaners anyway?
>
> Interviewer: Is that what's going on?
>
> Support worker, 52: I think so, it seems to be, I don't know but there seem to be a lot of people doing shit jobs on a voluntary basis and a lot of them seem to have learning disabilities.
>
> Interviewer: And is that the clients helping out?
>
> Support worker, 52: No, volunteers. There's a tiny bit of cross over, so some volunteers use the service, do some sessions, but generally they're just volunteers. So, I don't know what the deal is there, maybe I'm wrong, maybe they're being paid a handsome sum. There just seems to be something rubbing me up the wrong way, but then I don't like voluntary work really, if there's jobs that need doing, they need to be paid.

Alongside highlighting debate over what counts as paid work – whether in relation to travel time, sleep in shifts, or voluntary work – workers brought up concerns around contracts. Workers considered the provision of sick pay and holiday pay at their companies to be inadequate. A worker at the residential home commented: 'you don't get sick pay, well if you had a day off you wouldn't get paid, if you went off sick, statutory sick pay is nothing is it, doesn't pay the bills' (kitchen assistant, 36). Workers at the home care company echoed this concern. One worker recalled that after injuring her back while pushing a wheelchair at work, the company 'still wanted me to come out, and when I said I can't they moaned at me' (care worker, 20), and a second worker connected sick pay to issues around bullying and favouritism: 'it's a touchy subject because we feel like only certain people are allowed to ring in sick' (care worker, 19).

Office workers at the home care company detailed the process that workers go through in order to receive sick pay. An office worker stressed that workers would be called into the office for a 'return to work' interview and was explicit in describing the motivation behind these interviews:

> Officer worker, 26: We do return to work interviews if people are off sick.
>
> Interviewer: So, is that off sick for a long period then?
>
> Officer worker, 26: Even if they're off for a day.
>
> Interviewer: Oh really?
>
> Officer worker, 26: Yeah we make them come into the office […] It deters people from having a day off here and having a day off there […] I've never worked 7 in the morning till 10 at night, or weekends, [but care workers] do say 'oh I don't feel good today I'm not going.' And it's hard work when you've got rotas to cover.

The office worker appeared to acknowledge that care workers work long hours primarily not as evidence that it would be difficult to work those hours if sick (or that it might make someone sick) but to demonstrate that a care worker taking a day off leaves a significant number of shifts without cover. This perspective demonstrates the variety of divisions in the workplace of home care. Responding to a pressure to fill shifts – otherwise care packages will be returned to the local authority and the company will lose business – office workers then place pressure on frontline workers.

Like the care workers interviewed, the support workers emphasised absence of sick pay. A former support worker had left his job because: 'I need to have, you know, paid holidays, and sickness. It's a bit worrying if you're doing that support work and you're ill and you don't get paid, I can't afford that' (support worker, 53). Changes to sick pay had resulted in a six-month dispute at one of the disability support providers, with the support of UNISON. Three support workers had been mistakenly given a new contract. After the workers had signed the contract it was replaced with another contract with significantly worse conditions. One of the workers stated: 'it was basically just unpaid sick leave, and then half […] so you never got full paid sick leave' (support worker, 51). The changes in contract acted as the impetus to mobilise but proceeded a range of other issue in the workplace around the use of bank staff contracts. The UNISON member commented that 'people were really, really, really angry, just [about] how they treated us […] and the fact that the bank staff weren't even classed as staff really […] I think it just brought everything up' (support worker, 51). This dispute became one of the factors which lead to the campaign for union recognition at the company, detailed in Chapter 6.

Further to concern over wages and sick pay, workers highlighted the use of zero-hour contracts in the social care sector. The policy at the home care company was that new employees would remain on a zero-hour contract for a probation period of three months. However, an employee who had worked at the company for 18 months said, 'I'm still technically on a zero hours contract [...] I'm never short of hours, but it would be nice to have some sort of security' (care worker, 21). A conversation with another worker revealed the same situation:

> Care worker, 21: I haven't even got a contract yet.
>
> Interviewer: But you've been working here for how many months?
>
> Care worker, 21: I know, for what, nearly 10 months or something? Yep, no – still haven't got a contract.

At the residential company workers were employed on contracts with regular hours. One interviewee cited the contract as the reason she had chosen residential care over domestic care, as 'you can't have somewhere to rent on a zero-hours contract' (care assistant, 38). The day centre used a mixture of guaranteed hours and zero-hours contracts. It had a pool of 'bank' workers on zero-hour contracts, a strategy frequently used in the sector, as employers argue that their company needs to quickly respond to the shifting needs of care recipients.

Similarly, the company where the IWW members worked used a mixture of contract types. The workers interviewed had guaranteed hours, but the company appeared to be increasing the usage of zero-hour contracts. One of the support workers who had left the company commented 'I know I wasn't on a zero-hours contract, but people were telling me that new people that were being recruited were working to zero-hours contracts at our company' (former support worker, 57). This was verified by a support worker still working at the company: 'certainly in my company that's been a deliberate strategy of hiring students on zero-hours contracts' (support worker, 53). Support workers on permanent contracts referred to an uncertainty about when they would work: 'I don't know what I'm going to be doing that following week, so it just completely takes over your life' (former support worker, 57). Both contracts specifying regular hours and zero-hour contracts therefore presented levels of uncertainty for workers, as workers with regular hours still did not know *when* they would be required to work.

As indicated in the support workers view that work 'completely takes over your life', the varying strategies in the sector used to extract profit – low wages, unpaid work, and insecure contracts – had an alienating effect on workers. A worker at the home care company said:

> This weekend I've got 19 calls tomorrow, I've got 18 calls on Sunday [the manager and office staff] don't realise at the end of the day when I go home I've got nothing… and I don't mean this awfully, but I've got nothing left to give. I get home on an evening, my partner wants to speak to me, he wants to know about my day, and I just… I don't have anything, cos I'm out from 7 o'clock in morning till 10 o'clock at night, talking, cheering people up, giving everyone my time and my energy (care worker, 24).

Workers also described an economic compulsion to stay in work, aligning them with Marx's category of working-class (supporting previous findings on class tendencies in home care workers [Bolton and Wibberley, 2014]). Given that the theoretical understanding of class that informs this study is a '"bare bones" definition of class as a social process of surplus labor appropriation and distribution' (Gibson-Graham, 2006: 52), then individuals who labour out of financial necessity, and do not have property or savings to rely upon, are positioned as working class. While in some instances, staying in work could be attributed to loyalty to the care recipients – 'the joy that you see in the clients' eyes when they're doing things that they love doing […] I think it's the reason that I stayed so long' (former support worker, 57) – for other workers, staying employed was clearly connected to economic necessity:

Yeah, you're working for minimum wage and stuff, but at least you've got a job. There's plenty of people out there who haven't got nowt. You've only got to look at them poor souls 'round [the city centre]. I don't know if they're all homeless, but I look at myself and think at least I'm not there (laundry worker, 37).

When asked about the different pay scales at their company, a worker responded, 'unfortunately we're at the bottom. I've always been at the bottom [laughs]. The rest of my life I'll be at the bottom. I tried to work my way up, but then I got kicked back down' (domestic assistant, 43). The home care company manager commented 'our services tend to be mainly to working class and middle-class white people, and our workforce kind of reflects that' (manager, 31).

This section has drawn upon interview data to illustrate workers' grievances regarding the economic characteristics of employment in social care. Low pay and lack of sick pay or holiday pay was a recurrent theme in interviews. Companies used a myriad of additional ways to minimise spending on wages, including insufficient payment for travel time, underpayment for sleep-in shifts, and the use of voluntary work. While not all workers were on precarious contracts, their usage was common. These findings demonstrate the extent of exploitation within the sector: low pay and the tactic of minimising paid work are an extraction of absolute surplus value. The labour of workers was also situated within a highly competitive environment. As noted by a worker commented: 'all these companies compete for the contracts from the council, usually by saying they can do [the work] for less money' (support worker, 53). The low wages and poor employment practices in the companies will be contextualised within these wider, competitive, funding structures in Chapter 6.

4.2 Labour, workplace practices, and devaluation of care

This section explores how workers perceived their labour, examines instances of management inaction around care provision, describes experiences of bullying and sexual harassment in the sector, and discusses connections between the gender composition of the workforce and the devaluation of care work. Beginning with workers' descriptions of their labour, the findings demonstrated that care and support work is defined by the needs of care recipients. Workers defined their work as 'owt that they need' (care worker, 20). This often involved encouraging independence among care recipients. A worker at the residential home described her job as

> Care of people basically, so we go in, help people dress that need it, perform personal care, and then encourage, where possible – so it's not just about going in and being like, 'I'll do it for you', it's about encouraging them as well to be independent as they can – you assist, with food, everything basically. Everything that you do at home, but here instead, basically (care assistant, 34).

While paid caring labour might have a different purpose under capitalism than unpaid housework – the former has the potential to produce capital, the latter *re*produces labour – this statement that care work involves 'everything that you do at home' demonstrates the similarities in activities. Further, as noted in Chapter 3, the workers interviewed at the residential home had a variety of roles in the company but frequently took on each other's tasks. Some, like the care assistants, were more obviously related to care, yet the kitchen staff, domiciliary (cleaning) staff, and laundry worker described engaging in caring labour too.

The distinction between the work carried out by support workers and the labour of care workers was blurred. One support worker commented that 'we are not care workers, we are in the same industry, but […] my work is in some ways maybe a little bit more like a social worker in a way', yet noted that workers are often 'hoodwinked' into employment as support work, believing it to be something which it, often, is not (support worker, 53). Interviews with support workers indicated that the aspects of dirty labour associated with care work are often present in support work. The support worker went on to describe his role as including personal care and housework:

> I'm a support worker for people with learning disabilities, so that means I take people out in the community, mostly outreach, I'm acting in a social role, helping people get social contact, access the community in ways that they would struggle to do if they were on their own, you know, because of their disability. I also help people in their own homes, doing day to day kind of, well, personal care or maintenance of the home, paying bills, all that kind of thing, arranging doctor's appointments. Basically, just helping people with their lives who would struggle otherwise (support worker, 53).

Workers described promoting independence as an important aspect of support provision. Another support worker commented 'well I'm a support worker […] I just help the learning disabled lead the life that they want to live. That's it, that's my job in a nutshell' (support worker, 54), and a former support worker referred to the job as 'taking clients out to various day centres and things […] taking them out bowling, pub lunches, things like that, activities that they wanted to do, just basically… whatever they wanted' (former support worker, 57).

Even though the duties workers were describing were sometimes complex, required skills, and were clearly valuable to care recipients, the way that workers talked about their work suggested that they had internalised the cultural devaluation of care. The repeated use of 'basically', and the use of phrases such as 'I don't know' when describing activities suggested a level of embarrassment or reticence. This feeling was apparent in the laundry worker's comment: 'I'm in charge of the laundry, it's my job to basically try and keep this building as organised as possible, with not only the residents, but the clothes, shoes, coats, etc […] I don't know what else you expect me to tell you' (laundry worker, 37). Workers might not have discussed their job in this way *outside* of an interview context – interviewees might find interviews inherently embarrassing – but it was also true that union officers and organisers did not downplay their own responsibilities in the same way. Some workers also explicitly acknowledged that their low wages were connected to the perception that the work is unskilled. A support worker commented: 'the truth is you're replaceable, that's why they pay you pennies' (support worker, 60).

Reiterating previous research findings, these descriptions of caring labour demonstrate a combination of material and immaterial work (Bolton and Wibberley, 2014), Workers did not, however, describe needing to 'induce' feelings (Hochschild, 1983: 7) in their work. A genuine emotional reaction to the job, and genuine emotional connections with care recipients, was more prevalent. For example, the emotional fallout of the deaths of care recipients was a recurrent theme in interviews with frontline workers:

> Somebody comes in [to the residential home], you get to know them, and they're just loving every single activity, and you get on so well with them, and I come in, my next shift, 'where are they?' 'They're gone.' It's really sad… my mum said I need to find a normal job [laughs]. Where people are not disabled, or dying… It does affect my private life, I would say. Definitely. [It] just makes me more emotional, and more aware of… yeah, how short life is (activities co-ordinator, 32).

At the home care company, a care worker recalled attending the funeral of a care recipient: 'it were [sic] really weird 'cos the only people you could hear in the church crying their eyes out was us lot. And we should have been like trying to keep it together for the family and we couldn't' (care worker, 19). This quote demonstrates a need to suppress emotional responses to the job (Hochschild, 1983: 7), but managers, office workers, and care workers acknowledged that suppressing emotions entirely was an impossibility. An office worker emphasised that

'obviously there's boundaries, professional boundaries, but there's no boundary on your heart […] no matter how much you try, you can't rule your heart or your head' (officer worker, 27).

In general, the emotional aspect of the job was not in itself viewed by workers as a source of dissatisfaction. Instead, dissatisfaction was directed towards the way that managers used the emotional reactions of workers. A care worker recalled office staff pressuring her to work after she had trapped a nerve in her back: 'they made me come out, they wanted me to come out and do calls […] They still wanted me to come out, and when I said I can't they moaned at me. It's not right, it's 'cos them office staff don't wanna do it' (care worker, 20). The manager at the home care company referred to this practice as emotional blackmail:

> There's a lot of emotional blackmail and emotional pressure on carers to do their calls and not be sick or ill and there's a lot of pressure on people emotionally not to be upset when they see people that are very ill or people die that they've cared for […] On the one hand we really care for our carers, but at the same time we're emotionally blackmailing them to get to the calls because we need somebody to do it, 'cos there's no slack in the system (manager, 31).

An IWW organiser argued that this emotional blackmail is prevalent throughout the sector:

> One thing in care work that does set it apart from other areas is the emotional blackmail […] There's a huge amount of unpaid overtime done. Because people are blackmailed into 'John isn't gonna get his care if you don't go, a carer hasn't turned up so he won't get lunch if you don't go' […] They use emotional blackmail and say 'oh, Grace hasn't come in to work today so can you just go and do John's dinner and then pop round to Mrs Smith. Oh, I'm sure you can do that by 3 o'clock, you'll be able to just squeeze that in won't you.' And the answer is usually no, so you don't finish till 4 o'clock, but then you don't get paid for that extra hour (organiser, 10).

Senior-level staff might, therefore, have been reticent to actively suppress workers' emotional responses because it was precisely this emotion which enabled them to manipulate the altruism of workers.

Another aspect of the job described by workers was the behavioural issues of care recipients. Workers did not view these behavioural issues negatively – at least in retrospect:

> '[The residents] are lovely. Can turn nasty as well [shows marks on arm]. That were her nails. It were [sic] all down here, but that's all healed, it's just that' (care assistant, 39).

'It's like, yeah I've been stabbed, I've got a scar on my arm, got stabbed with a pen [laughs], but it's like part of the job, in a weird way' (support worker, 54).

Frontline workers' discontent around violence in the job related instead to inadequate responses from managers: 'it's difficult to support someone or care for someone, it's not their fault, but then we've not got the support. It makes your job ten times harder' (care assistant, 34). Workers were unhappy with the lack of support from management in general. A home care worker found that if he reported problems related to care they were not followed up by management. For example, the procedure of signing a MAR (Medicine Administration Record) chart was not being followed for a particular tablet: 'I'm reporting it constantly, and nothing's being done' (care worker, 21). A former support worker commented that it was impossible to report concerns around welfare of care recipients because management and office staff could not be reached. He argued that office staff deliberately refused to talk to frontline staff:

> What you don't expect is the complete lack of support from the office, the management team […] You just gave up phoning the office 'cos they were either gonna fob you off or won't answer, or they'd say they were in a meeting. Everyone was always in a meeting, but you'd go to the office and it'd be incredibly peaceful, quiet, people always taking about what they're gonna have for their lunch, you know. It's jaw dropping, really (former support worker, 57).

At the home care company, frontline workers were taking on administrative responsibilities to counteract inaction from office staff. A care worker at the company decided to write her rota in her free time because of the failure of office staff to complete rotas, commenting: 'I'm just sick of it being a mess all the time, so I thought, well I'll plan it all out and then I'll send it to [the office]' (care worker, 20).

Alongside expressing annoyance at the inaction of management and office workers, workers referred to bullying from senior level staff. Care workers at the home care avoided going to the office and avoided the calls of office staff: 'I wouldn't ring the office 'cos they just don't talk to you right, like crap' (care worker, 20). Similarly, the hub manager at the company commented: 'I've never in my life worked with people like [the office staff] are. They do treat the staff like shit. They speak to them like shit' (hub manager, 30). At the residential home a worker cried while talking about being bullied by colleagues and managers, and referred to other workers crying too: 'I would love this job if the environment was different, if people were nicer, as in staff […] I just had a conversation with one of the girls this morning, and

yeah, she sometimes goes home and cries' (care home activities coordinator, 32). A worker at the same company referred to preferential treatment from management towards staff who had worked in the home for a longer period of time, whilst being 'kind of bullies to the staff that were new' (care assistant, 35).

Further evidencing poor working conditions, UNISON members referred to an instance of sexual harassment at the charity where they worked which had resulted in a management 'cover up.' One support worker commented: 'we've had some sexual harassment stuff going on at work recently, which has been managed absolutely appallingly by the organisation, absolutely appallingly' (support worker, 51), and another support worker described how the harassment had been dealt with:

> They completely backed the person who was accused even though there was another witness to it, they took the witness' statement as being the opposite of what he was saying to show uncertainty over it. They then put out this memo […] in everyone's pigeonholes that was like, 'there's been a number of vicious rumours spreading, if you hear any don't take part in this' (support worker, 50).

In a second example of sexual harassment at the company, a support worker had approached her immediate manager with mental health concerns and the immediate manager had then started sending inappropriate text messages. The result was that: 'from going and saying about her mental health […] she's on a zero-hour contract now' (support worker, 50). Another worker at the company commented 'they basically have been able to get rid of her contract and just give her bank hours, but they're not giving her bank hours, because bank hours are a choice' (support worker, 51). In this instance, zero-hour contracts acted as a punishment mechanism, demonstrating the interplay between employment terms and working conditions.

Zero-hour contracts could also become a tool for bullying. The GMB officer described the withholding of hours as a managerial tactic:

> There was this one particular manager, […] she would just say to a carer who couldn't come into work, 'oh you're not working next week, if you can't come in on Sunday don't bother coming in for the rest of the week.' And she'd try until somebody actually phoned me, and was like 'is this fair', no of course it's not […] That again is very much a tactic, and it's surprising actually how much carers will allow managers to get away with. Which is bizarre when you think about it. But they will literally have their hours cut in half, even though their contract will say, down for 40 hours, I've seen staff be cut to 20 for a number of weeks (officer, 4).

Workers also connected permanent contracts with respect and appreciation. A home care worker employed on a zero-hour contract commented, 'it would be nice to have some sort of security […] And the appreciation as well, do you know what I mean, like "you've done a really good job, we'd like to offer you this contract"' (care worker, 21). Reflecting the way that precarious contracts indicated a lack of respect, anger around pay related to workers' feeling that they were not treated with respect. A home care worker complained about pay over the Christmas period, and then viewed the lack of bonuses as evidence that managers do not appreciate them:

> Christmas time everyone's wages were rubbish, didn't get much, you didn't get any bonus or owt […] We don't even get a staff party, or a Christmas card or owt [laughs]. We only get them off clients that we go to (care worker 20).

A union organiser argued that 'if you feel you're not treated with dignity, that's a big motivator, but pay cuts, hits the dignity question […] so non-payment of travel time, is about pay, but is really about dignity as well' (organiser, 9). The problems faced by workers in the sector were therefore interrelated, and were so widespread that it could be difficult for unions to address them all:

> We were focussing on travel time, what I came across quite a lot was workers saying, "well that's the least of my concerns, I'm more concerned about not getting the equipment I need, being bullied by one of the supervisors, not being able to take leave" […] You just sit there and there's like so many issues […] just simple things like they didn't have a contract, they weren't getting regular pay slips and the pay was often late, and you're like '*what?!*' Right down to the basics (organiser, 8).

Interviewees also connected the various injustices in the sector to gender. As noted in Chapter 2, the workforce is predominantly female (Rubery and Urwin, 2011), and this gender composition was reflected in the research I carried out. An office worker at the home company summarised that 'in care […] your workforce is 99% women', a disparity which she associated with the desires of care recipients: '[care recipients] stipulate what they want, and most men want a female' (office worker, 25). The gender composition in the workforce was also apparent in the frequent use of the word 'girls' to describe frontline staff: 'you see horrendous things, and you've just got to put the girls through it' (office worker, 27). The office worker went on to describe the local lineages of women working in the care sector in the area: 'people that I've taken on that I've known their mums, I've known their sisters, yeah, I have in all fairness, a

fantastic group of girls.'

The support workers were, in contrast, mostly male. However, they often emphasised that the devaluation of their work relates to the gender connotations of caring labour. When a support worker commented on the disrespect shown towards workers in social care, I asked, 'What would you connect that with, the disrespect?' and the worker responded:

> It's partly related to that kind of work being traditionally seen as women's work, for example, maybe that's an aspect. There's sexism there maybe, that it's just kind of caring stuff so it's not, it's not a vital industry. It's just a kind of, a need that should be taken care of, with as little money spent on it as possible (support worker, 51).

Female union employees talked more about gender issues in the sector than their male counterparts. An officer from GMB commented:

> We talk about value in social care, the carers have to value themselves. And I genuinely think that's because we're women, and women will always look after everybody else before they look after themselves. We naturally do that, I always make sure my son, my family, are better than I am. And I think women tend to do that more. And we need to say to the carers: you are the most important person (officer, 4).

A UNISON organiser took a more critical perspective of such essentialism and argued that the view that 'women tend to be more caring […] just feeds into those gender stereotypes doesn't it' (organiser, 8).

This section began by exploring what care labour consists of; the emotional connections that workers have with their job suggest that the emphasis on 'emotional acting' in literature is less appropriate in this context. Importantly though, managers' awareness of this emotional connection results in instances of emotional blackmail. Aspects of the job which might appear difficult to cope with – such as instances of violence from care recipients – were judged by workers in relation to levels of management support, not as an inherently negative part of the work. The section then examined bullying in the sector, sexual harassment, the gendered undervaluing of social care, and the lack of dignity which workers associated with precarious contracts. These features of work in the sector – in combination with the working conditions described in Section 4.1 – support a narrative that the workers would be easily mobilised into unionisation. Yet union membership levels at the residential company and the home care company were almost non-existent (despite the recognition agreements at both companies,

explored in Chapter 6). Section 4.3 reflects upon the difference in attitudes between members and non-members, to examine why injustice does not translate into mobilisation and to explore the varying views on 'injustice' in the sector.

4.3 The disconnect between injustice and union mobilisation

Section 4.1 and Section 4.2 explored the extent of discontent among union members and non-members and detailed the parity in experiences between workers. Drawing upon – and testing – the mobilisation framework, this section considers apathy and absence of blame as potential obstacles to mobilisation by distinguishing between members and non-members views. Further, the section examines how the views of members and non-members provide different perspectives on 'injustice'. As explored in Section 2.1.1, Kelly (1998: 27) refers to worker dissatisfaction as 'necessary' but not 'sufficient' for collective mobilisation. If workers do not view any change as possible, then the likelihood of mobilisation decreases. This apathetic perspective on the workplace was apparent among the non-members interviewed. Comments expressing discontent with the characteristics of the work in the sector, as outlined in the above two sections, were frequently followed by a view that nothing *could* improve:

> I can see where everyone's coming from about […] stressful job, crap pay, and ow'ut [all the] rest of stuff they come out with. [But] what do you do? It's a job: either come here and do it and go home, like I do, or find somewhere else to work, it's as simple as that […] Whether I like it or not, I've got to still come here and do my job, best as I can and put up w'it, to get paid at the end of the month so as I can carry on paying my bills, keep a roof over my head, pay for my holiday, etc. It's a no brainer, it's common sense (laundry worker, 37).

An aspect of this apathy came from workers' awareness that working conditions were similar in other care companies. The above worker was of the view that 'if people come into care it's pointless them leaving to go into another [care company] and think that it's gonna be any better' (laundry worker, 37), and a care assistant at the same company argued:

> Most of the support worker jobs and carer jobs that I've looked for is [sic] basically the same […] Just from my experiences, I feel like you can say things over and over again but they don't get changed unless […] the people that you're asking and complaining to and telling, want to change (care assistant, 34).

The perception that all companies are alike created a view among workers that there is an established, immutable 'way' that care is done. As predicted by Kelly's framework, this

perspective became a seemingly insurmountable obstacle to organising. An IWW member described how apathetic attitudes among workers made it difficult to translate complaints into unionisation:

> Former support worker, 59: [Other workers] had a lot of grumbles about their job so they were happy to talk about problems with it, and we were quite close in that this is a difficult job and we don't get paid enough for it, so people were happy to grumble.
>
> Interviewer: So, with people complaining about their jobs, could you then say, 'this is a way we could solve it, with the union?'
>
> Former support worker, 59: That felt harder, because you ended up coming up against the cynicism about the possibility of change.

The IWW member argued that this cynicism also related to the view that trade unions were unable to instigate improvements at companies: 'sometimes you'd have [people saying], 'what's the point, nothing's going to change, I'm not going to put my energy into it.' There's a bit of scepticism about us getting anything out of it' (IWW member, 59). The absence of a belief in unionism as a way to improve working conditions therefore coincided with, and embedded, the apathy among workers. The IWW member commented that within this dynamic management was viewed as the only agent of change: 'people knew what they wanted to be different, but the conversation rarely got onto how you might do that, make that change. I think people just hoped for somehow management to decide to do it differently (IWW member, 59).

From the perception of non-members, it was managers – not individual workers and not collective workers through unions – who had the most agency, yet this agency remained constrained. The non-members were particularly reticent to view managers as *agentic* in relation to the existence of poor working conditions at the companies. Rather than emphasising managers' hierarchical position and ability to exert control over the labour process, their opinion of management frequently focussed on the personality of individuals. At the home care company, care workers were largely positive about their manager and the hub manager, with both appearing to have nurturing roles at the company. A care worker commented on the hub manager: 'we all love her, she looks after us' (care worker, 23). Another care worker described the paternalistic approach of the manager: 'we can sit [in the hub] where it's dry, where it's warm. And [the manager] knows that we're safe, and not wandering the streets trying to find somewhere to go while we've got gaps in-between calls' (care worker, 24).

This positive view of the manager was shared by office staff and frontline workers alike. One of the office staff commented: 'he's crackers, isn't he? […] But he's so nice isn't he, and knowledgeable, he's funny. He's a good boss' (office worker, 28). This view was echoed by a care worker: 'he's got a positive attitude about everything I think, he is a good boss, I must admit, he is a good boss' (care worker, 23). Another care worker commented, 'he's lovely, and he's really good, like even if you just grab him for ten minutes you always feel better for speaking to him' (care worker, 19). A conversation between a care worker and the hub manager suggested that that the personality of the manager played an important role in placating frontline workers:

> Hub manager, 30: I think you all know that […] the margins are really tight, so [the manager] pays everyone as much as he can possibly pay them […] because he is nice [laughs].

> Care worker, 22: He is, no he is, he is a really, really lovely man, and without [him] I don't think a lot of us would still be here.

In an instance where management of the home care company *was* blamed, the blame remained abstract. A care worker said: 'I feel like I'm slagging them off but I'm not really, it's just it's their own fault really. I'm just saying how this company seems to be run at the moment' (care worker, 21). A worker at the residential home similarly used unspecific language when discussing the 'bad atmosphere' at his workplace. The worker connected this atmosphere to 'managers up and down, I don't know, all these daft rules and regulations we kept having chucked at us from big wigs up top' (laundry worker, 37). The rules and regulations were blamed on a centralised body at the company and on the local authority, and were related to quality of care not employment practices. Another worker at the residential home did not hold the generic 'companies' responsible for working conditions but did view them as culpable for poor quality of service. The worker positioned workers as caring and the managers and companies as uncaring:

> It's just always the companies, always the companies, and the managers, that just come in and they're like… ugh, and it's like, 'well listen to yourself.' Realise what the values are of care, we're not running some big corporate business, we're looking after people's lives, they come in, we look after them, and they die. You know what I mean. Have a bit of emotion. Just lacking emotion (care assistant, 34).

Whereas workers at the home care company and the residential home blamed bullying only on the individuals involved – mainly the office workers – the support workers who were union

members emphasised that management were responsible for allowing bullying to go unchecked. Bullying was therefore not seen as the fault of individuals but as a hierarchical aspect of their organisations. UNISON members cited discrimination as an aspect of bullying, and argued that discrimination pervaded the company because it was not dealt with by management:

> I think there is a bit of a bad culture around sexual harassment stuff, you know, there was the old training manager used to make masses of like, sexist comments, and just like, every kind of form of discrimination […] anything that's a culture like that, management are keen not to take it on, because it's more established members of staff (support worker, 50).

IWW members emphasised that bullying could become a tool for managers to control the workforce. A member recalled an instance where a member of staff appeared to have been hired by management to quell resistance among workers: 'we're talking real bullying behaviour, and I did, I nearly walked. It was only when I realised, hang on, that's why they've employed him […] to make specific people's lives miserable, so that they up and leave' (support worker, 55). Union members also blamed management for low pay. IWW members were most explicit in this regard: 'this is a private company; they can pay us what they choose to pay us. [Other workers] don't want to blame the manager, they don't want to blame the boss do they' (support worker, 55). The worker went on to highlight the workplace divisions, which his colleagues had not acknowledged: 'there's absolutely a feeling of us and them, the office […] you can see it written in red pen, it's this term, "the management, the office" […] they're alien to us' (support worker, 55).

In addition to a different propensity among members and non-members to blame management, the findings indicate that members and non-members held differing perspectives over what counts as injustice. While non-members viewed social issues of bullying as unjust, they often explained away the economic concerns described in Section 4.1. The provision of care and support was prioritised over wages. A worker at the home care company commented: '[work] is tiring, it's draining, but like I say, it's rewarding and that's why I do it. It's definitely not for the pay I'll tell you that' (care worker, 24). Another worker commented, 'it's a rewarding job, you don't get good enough pay for it, which obviously everyone knows about, but you don't do it for that, I don't, anyway' (care worker, 19). An office worker at the same company argued:

You just do it, it's just something you do. Because at the end of the day, if you was [sic] in it for the money, you wouldn't be doing the job. If you love it, then you do it and at the end of the day it's not how I feel, it's the customers that need, the vulnerable, need covering (office worker, 27).

However, workers' ambition to describe the integrity involved in caring labour could also have indicated a defensiveness against any potential criticism (from myself, or from society more generally) that they were in care for the 'wrong' reasons. This defensiveness sometimes lapsed during the interview process. At the home care company, a care worker shifted from the perspective that 'you don't do it for the money' towards an acknowledgment that pay is an important aspect of the work – although perhaps with my encouragement:

Care worker, 19: The money is terrible [laughs]. But you don't do it for the money - well I mean, this is the thing isn't it, it's a massive separation between when you work in care, you kind of have to, well don't have to, but you kind of do compromise that.

Interviewer: Yeah, people say they don't do it for the money…

Care worker, 19: This is the thing, I mean they're liars, they're just lying. I mean you've got to have money to work, and it's just unfortunate that those two things coexist within the same category really, because it is a terribly paid profession. You don't go into care wanting to make money.[14]

Some workers situated their perspective between this tension between caring and working. A residential worker commented:

It's not about the pay because that's not why I'm in this job, I'm in this job because I do love what I do, but I mean, I think we should be on a higher pay because like, we're looking after other people, do you know what I mean? (care assistant, 40).

The ambition to enter into care *for the love of it* – or the societal pressure to act as if that was the motivating reason behind caring labour – negatively affected mobilisation. Firstly, workers' experience of unjust treatment as employees was tempered by a feeling that they are privileged to carry out caring labour. As one worker commented, 'care is amazing, obviously, it's care' (care assistant, 34). Secondly, workers prioritised putting energy into providing a quality service over improving employment: 'when you see how motivated people are, in like, the kind

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[14] Workers choosing employment in social care for non-financial reasons can still be working class in the sense discussed in Section 4.1: these workers were still compelled to sell their labour, but within that structure made choices about which forms of work aligned with their values.

of service that they deliver […] the conditions and stuff are just abandoned' (support worker, 50). Third, the motivation to care increased apathy surrounding employment conditions. A UNISON organiser commented that workers 'want to be in this caring role, and they've just accepted that that comes with really crap terms and conditions and pay basically' (organiser, 8). A national officer at UNISON associated the altruistic approach to work with employment in charities in the sector: 'there's this idea that you're working for a charity and therefore doing good work, therefore you shouldn't expect proper employment rights and decent pay because you're doing it out of love for what you are doing' (officer, 6). Reiterating this view, two former support workers emphasised that their colleagues not only differentiated care from other jobs, they did not categorise it as a job. As such, they accepted poor conditions:

> Former support worker, 58: It wasn't a job for a lot of them. Even though it was a shitty job that they really hated in many ways, or shitty paid job they hated, they also didn't see it as a job.

> Former support worker, 59: Yeah, I think it was just life for a lot of them.

Union members' willingness to discuss wages alongside the value experienced when carrying out caring labour was notable – care was, for them, a job:

> A lot of us are in this work because we care about our clients, you know. I mean, at the same time a lot of us just want a job, right (support worker, 53).

> My pay cheque is the most important thing. Yes, I enjoy elements of my job, and I want to do it as well as I can, but I'm not doing it because I enjoy it, I'm doing it to earn a living […] I'm perfectly happy to say it out loud […] doesn't mean I can't be good at it, doesn't mean I can't feel strongly about the work I do for my clients, but it is a job, I get paid for it, it's my living (support worker, 55).

The support worker argued that the contrasting view of his colleagues curbed workplace resistance:

> People like me, for whom it is a job, we get held back by the ones who are saying 'oh I don't mind working for 16 hours straight with no break, I don't mind working 30 hours overtime this week, I had nothing better to do anyway.' And so people tend to have an assumption that all support workers are just good-natured souls who are doing it for the love. Not a job, for which there should be more training, for which we should be higher paid, for which we should have the same damn rights as people working in an office or on a building site, or whatever else (support worker, 55).

It is therefore important to emphasise the ways that workers view the varying forms of discontent. Kelly (1998: 27) argues that moving from dissatisfaction to injustice is a precondition for moving from injustice to mobilisation but, in the social care industry, a hierarchy of dissatisfactions can develop. Dissatisfaction surrounding employment and pay does not always reach the level of outrage that would render it 'injustice.' A UNISON organiser considered this the 'biggest challenge' in organising: workers argue that '"we should be doing it out of the goodness of our hearts rather than for a big pay packet" […] and it's just like, "yeah but a living wage, at least"' (organiser, 8).

Section 4.3 has focussed on factors that influence the likelihood of mobilisation. The findings suggest that the intersecting obstacles of apathy and a hesitancy to blame managers play an important role in whether workers mobilise. As will be explored in Chapter 6, the complexity of the funding systems in social care creates uncertainty over who should be blamed for injustice. Furthermore, the view of non-members that their work is carried out altruistically and not 'for the money' can mean that perceived injustices associated with wages and working conditions are not prioritised. This finding demonstrates the interplay of the struggle between the dominant narratives of care as integral (and feminised) and between injustice around fair pay narratives. The perception that they are irreconcilable narratives acts as a significant obstacle preventing mobilisation. Section 4.4 will explore how different forms of injustice can lead to lead to variations in collectivism – in which union solidarities are discounted.

4.4 Varieties of collectivism and perceptions of unions

Kelly (1998: 30) refers to collectivism as a process of social identification which differentiates an 'in-group' (for example workers) from an 'out-group' (for example employers). While service sector work, and caring labour specifically, has been associated with increased levels of collectivism relative to more industrial sectors (Korczynski, 2003; Bolton, 2005), home care has an isolating labour process (Rubery and Urwin, 2011; Bolton and Wibberley, 2014; Murphy et al., 2014,). The interviews with home care workers provided insight into this isolating aspect of their work: 'especially when you're a driver, cos you're out and about in the sticks you don't see any walkers [care workers without cars] about up there, you can start to feel a bit isolated' (care worker, 19). 'Double-ups' – care visits requiring two workers – could

alleviate this isolation: 'it's nice to be on a double-up call even if you're in there 10, 15 minutes. It's still that little bit of social interaction with someone else which you don't normally get'.[15]

Conversations with home care workers suggested that this double-up working structure could increase the level of collectivism between the workers. Interviewees described working closely with one another: 'as we've started working a lot together, we can work every day with each other, or every other day, we've become quite good friends' (care worker, 23). Another care worker commented: 'a lot of my friends work in this area, so I feel more confident' (care worker, 22). These connections between care workers did not extend to feelings of collectivism with office workers, in part because of the bullying described in Section 4.2. Workers went to the office infrequently: 'I've not been there in about 8 months because the only reason that I used to go there was to pick up gloves or aprons or anything like that' (care worker, 19). The instances of bullying from office staff then seemed to strengthen solidarities between frontline workers: 'sometimes it's quicker just to bypass the office and sort it out between ourselves, 'cos we're all good friends, we all get along' (care worker, 19). This was emphasised by another care worker: 'it's like a little family […] we all get on really, really well […] we're all here to work together as a team (care worker, 24).

The provision of a 'hub' in the home care company also alleviated the isolation of the care workers. This company was exceptional in this regard. One worker commented: 'it's nice to have this. And then you see a lot of the other carers coming in as well […] I don't think many places would have something like this' (care worker, 19). The building was used for socialising by staff – 'we come into the hub more [than the office], we come in and have brews if we're on breaks and stuff, have a chat' (care worker, 23) – and provided space to air grievances: 'we come down here and have a moan […] didn't have that before' (care worker, 24).

The labour process at the residential home appeared conducive to collectivism among workers. References to bullying at the company at the residential home, described in Section 4.2, were accompanied by positive descriptions of the relationships between workers. One care worker noted that since the change in management, 'the staff morale's gone up, everyone just seems to enjoy coming to work here. Everyone gets along really well, so that makes it better to work' (care assistant, 35). As noted in Section 4.3, workers at the company frequently took on tasks

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[15] This is, of course, excluding social interactions with care recipients.

which were outside the remit of their role. A worker employed in the kitchen provided insight into the dependence between workers: 'you depend on each other a lot. And you've got to, I mean carers depend on us when there's been accidents and things, we depend on carers' (domestic worker, 33).

Given the structure of the work – with all employees in the same physical space – the existence of friendships and interdependence might be more expected than in home care. However, it is necessary to situate the 'solidity' of having a workplace within the transiency of the whole sector, given the high turnover of staff. A worker at the residential home commented that 'you get friends with people and then they go, and I just find it a bit sad because some of the people I've become friends with and then they've left and I hardly see owt of them' (laundry worker, 37). A second worker at the residential home said: 'I've never worked at a place before where staff turnover was as high as here. Even now, at least six, seven people I know want to leave' (activities coordinator, 32). Workers at the home care company also highlighted a high turnover:

> There's been a rather large staff turnover and I've only been here 9 months, 8, 9 months, people have come and gone, I think at least five people, actually six cos [another care worker] is leaving, so it's like, 'there goes another one' (care worker, 21).

Support workers emphasised a prevalence of lone working at their company and avoided the company office. One IWW member commented: 'I keep myself to myself, and [management] know that I'm good at my job, so they just kind of leave me alone' (support worker, 54). Another member echoed this attitude: 'I mostly bite my lip and get on with it. I could, if I wanted, be in much more contact with the office than I am, but I sort of choose to just try and steer clear for the most part' (support worker, 55). Workers related this reluctance to visit the office to its inaccessibility for care recipients. A former support worker commented that 'it was always a shit building because it's really bad accessibility' (former support worker, 56), and a worker still at the company questioned, 'what disabled company doesn't have like, a lift in the building?' (support worker, 54).

This lack of accessibility meant that support workers were even less likely to visit the office as they would not go during work hours (while taking care recipients out in the community). As such, workers would only interact with a small number of individuals from the company: 'it was literally us, in the same small flat, I didn't even go to the office […] I worked with five

other people, so I literally only saw those people' (former support worker, 59:); 'you were part of a big organisation, but your world was quite small, and you didn't really have connections to other people' (former support worker, 58). While this isolation was viewed as an obstacle to mobilisation, it was not considered to be an obstacle put there for that purpose:

> I don't think the company are, or were, smart enough to have designed their company in such a way that it fragmented the workforce to prevent unionisation. I think that would be giving them too much credit. I think it's just the nature of that thing (former support worker, 59).

The UNISON members employed in the day centre had a workplace which was more conducive to collectivism. In particular, workers highlighted the company's café as a space where close relationships between members of staff would develop: 'the café is great, it's such a hub, it's so nice. If you get to work early you can just go to the café for a coffee, and it's just really friendly' (support worker, 52). Unlike the hub used by home care workers, however, this space could not be used to air grievances because managers and care recipients also used it.

The findings discussed thus far in this section suggest an uneven presence of collectivism among members and non-members; union members did not have a noticeably more collectivist attitude towards fellow workers. In order to investigate how collectivism differed among members and non-members, it is important to unpack the differences between *forms* of collectivism. Some non-members combined a collectivist attitude to the labour process with an individualism that contrasted with union membership. A worker commented: 'I've never seen the point [in union membership], I've never been interested. Like I say, I'll fight my own battles, I don't need to pay somebody £8 a month to come and do it for me' (laundry worker, 37). An office worker at the home care company was of a similar view: 'I'm not interested in the union. That's me. I come to work, and I can't see why I would need the union […] If my complaint was against another member of staff, I think I could handle that myself' (office worker, 26).

The friendships and interdependences between non-members suggested solidarities built around the needs of care recipients (rather than *worker* solidarity). This position was summarised by a worker at the residential home, who argued that what made the 'enjoyable job unenjoyable' was that 'some people are only out for themselves, in a job where everybody

should be working together, and care about these guys, like, more than themselves' (care assistant, 34). Union organisers argued that this view posed an obstacle to organising:

> Care workers are very protective of each other and their residents. When you get care workers, they will do everything they can, they will advocate for the residents, and they will make sure they're looked after. But they will look after the residents more than they look after themselves (officer, 4).

This narrative impacted mobilisation not only because it side-lined working conditions, but because unionism was frequently viewed as incompatible with caring about care recipients: 'I suppose trade unions [...] are about making things better for you, aren't they, whereas care work is about what you do for other people. So, I don't know if that potentially is a hurdle' (organiser, 1). Interviews with workers confirm that this perceived contradiction, between caring about the work and seeking improvements to employment through conflict, does present a significant hurdle to unionising. An IWW member commented on struggles over working conditions:

> I think we are somewhat handicapped by the good-natured souls who do it for the love of it. Because if we were to all speak up, and say, 'actually we want the same rights as everybody else', it would be a bit more powerful [...] The ones who do it for the love [...] would feel a certain amount of guilt fighting for their rights, you know (support worker, 55).

Organisers emphasised that workers in the sector – even 'lefties' – did not acknowledge workplace divisions between managers or employers and workers:

> It's almost like the lefties working in care are worse [...] 'Cos they're like, they really care, it's not just a pay cheque [...] they really give a shit about their clients, the people they're looking after [...] As much as you want to like [those workers] – and I understand where they're coming from – you can't just give your boss a free pass like that. Which is ultimately what they're doing, just giving their boss a free pass for treating them like crap (organiser, 11).

IWW members referred to a closeness between non-members and individuals receiving support which extended to managers:

> [The workplace] was a bit like a family. So what you had was two kind of senior people who had been supporting the person we had for ages. They knew him really well. They were also quite close friends with their manager, in that weird way where they kind of,

like it's hard not to talk about it in very crude class terms, they kind of sided with her over us, even though she was clearly management (former support worker, 59).

A GMB organiser also highlighted the prevalence of workers in the sector 'siding' with management and giving management 'a free pass' in terms of pay and working conditions. The organiser commented that

> When somebody's delivering a service, they're delivering a service for that person that they're caring for, so I think there's a greater detachment from the organisation that's utilising their labour and exploiting them, you know, it's more removed. So, I think that's a real hurdle for us' (organiser, 1).

Emphasising that workers are having their labour *exploited* – essentially, focussing on developing a class consciousness – presented an organising strategy. The organiser continued: 'if you go into a factory, there's an automatic connection in terms of industrial organisation and workers' power. But there seems to be a real gap in that understanding for care workers […] it's that culture we've got to change.' The organiser viewed this culture as different to that of other sectors:

> I think perhaps if you're working in manufacturing or retail, where your work is sort of generating a profit for somebody, even though that does happen obviously in private social care, to a lesser extent, it's thought 'I'm part of this, I'm part of generating this, you know, profit, and therefore I have an entitlement to a proportion of that, and if somebody up there is determining that I've got a proportion less than I think I deserve, then it's right for me to stand up and fight for it' (organiser, 1).

This absence of feelings of exploitation relates not only to nature of the labour, but to the complex business structures used in the sector, which will be explored in Chapter 6.

The disconnect between forms of collectivism at work was most apparent when the issue of strikes arose – an issue which interviewees generally brought up themselves. At the home care company, a member of the office staff said:

> You couldn't be in care, have a heart, and want to strike and leave somebody in their house on their own […] People have a respect and responsibility to customers that they wouldn't strike, because it would be them that are affected rather than us getting what we wanted, it would be them, the customers that suffered (office worker, 27).

A care worker at the same company argued that managers could manipulate this tension between caring about the care recipients and wanting to go on strike:

> We couldn't [strike] because we care too much about the people we're looking after, and we wouldn't want them to suffer, and this is what I mean. I feel like they've kind of got you by the neck a little, and that's a really difficult position to be in as an adult working with adults, you feel a bit taken advantage of, and yeah, it's strange. It's very strange. You feel trapped almost, yeah. It's not great [laughs] (care worker, 21).

This feeling was also brought up in an interview with a support worker, who commented: 'what would happen if we went on strike? Who would provide their care while we were away? And we are sort of, we're trapped because of that' (support worker, 55). Organisers argued that this perspective overlooks the minimal role that strikes play amongst the tactics used by unions. A UNISON organiser estimated that '90% of union members haven't been on strike, and it's incredibly hard to do it, these days. And I think in UNISON, we certainly try to explain that most of our issues are resolved through negotiation' (organiser, 7). Another UNISON organiser observed: 'people always bring miners' strike into it don't they. They think: trade union, miners' strike, Thatcher. They think unions holding us to ransom' (organiser, 8). The organiser highlighted the negative impact that this view of unionism has on mobilising:

> We'll go and drop some [union literature] off somewhere, they'll be like 'oh I'm not in a union', We're like 'oh why not'? 'I'll never go out on strike.' And you're like, well it's a bargaining tool! Withdrawing labour, that's it. […] Just the threat of strike, is sometimes enough to get managers to the table, to negotiate. So, you can never take it off the table, but yeah. People are just like 'well I'll never go on strike', and you're like, 'well there you go. Prepare to be exploited' (organiser, 8).

Two former support workers reflected on whether the *threat* of withdrawing labour could exist in the care sector, given that managers would be aware of workers' aversion towards strikes:

> Former support worker, 59: I think one of the issues was, in people's heads, was like 'well with a union, what's the threat that you have that can kind of change things?' Potentially withdrawing labour right? No one I worked with would have done that.

> Former support worker, 60: Yeah, same.

> Former support worker, 59: Because if they did, they would have felt so responsible because the person who we were supporting, I literally don't know what would have happened.

Former support worker, 60: I think that's an issue in healthcare in general. They won't withdraw their labour because they care about what's gonna happen when they do.

Former support worker, 59: So once you've lost that potential thing, you're kind of limited. Even if it's just the threat of that.

Union members and organisers argued that to 'look after themselves' care workers need to recognise that responsibility for care provision did not lie solely with them. This was how one union member justified strikes:

Well I'm sorry, but it's within my rights to [strike]. And I may care what happens to them while I'm on strike, but it's not my problem what happens to them while I'm on strike. Does that make sense? I may care about it, but that doesn't make it my problem or my fault if I were to strike. Then the fact that they would be left alone to fend for themselves would be lamentable, but also necessary. And it might frankly just kick the government's arse into realising a few problems (support worker, 55).

An IWW organiser reiterated that it was important to tell workers that 'the burden of responsibility is not on you, as a minimum wage person […] if anything happens there's somebody else above you that has to fill that role, so don't feel guilty' (organiser, 10). He argued that when workers begin to 'change their mentality' then strikes might seem less impossible – and that, failing an acceptance of strikes, 'there are a lot of actions short of strike action', such as work-to-rule initiatives. Further, he stressed that care providers frequently rely on staff from care agencies; they could draw upon these agency workers should a strike take place.

While strikes present an example whereby improving working conditions and providing care appeared contradictory to some workers, there were a small number of instances where concerns over quality of care seemed to add to the incentive to mobilise. A UNISON member noted that in the dispute over contracts at their company, 'when it comes to sick leave […] we work with people who are really quite fragile, profound multiple disabilities, in wheelchairs, a cold can kill, basically […] We all were really emotive because it went beyond our contract' (support worker, 51). A union officer described this connection between care conditions and working conditions, but emphasised that it was important for care workers to value *themselves*: 'you need to make sure that the carers realise that they cannot look after the residents if they can't look after themselves. And it's changing that mentality, they have to look after themselves. And that's really difficult' (officer, 4).

The findigns presented in this section highlight the diverse forms of collectivism among care workers, beginning with the workplace structures in the sector. The findings suggest that absence or presence of a generic collectivism between frontline workers does not correlate with a divide between members and non-members. Furthermore, forms of collectivism and community emergent from the labour process were in some instances viewed by workers as opposite to unionism. Collective attitudes towards the work could coincide with a view of workplace resistance as selfish irresponsibility, and unions were often regarded by non-members as bodies that had the potential to disrupt the provision of care. In terms of the usefulness of the mobilisation framework, there is therefore an important distinction between a non-specific collectivism and collectivism as workers – the variety of solidarities in the workplace relate to mobilisation differently (Atzeni, 2009). Union organisers and officers stressed the need to highlight that workers are exploited, even if their primary concern is care recipients and even if they view their economic conditions as determined by funding levels as opposed to by a desire of employers (and in some instances shareholders) to make money.

4.5 Discussion and conclusion

Chapter 4 has explored the experiences of care workers and examined the difficulty in translating grievances into collective union action. The chapter began by examining the characteristics of work in the social care sector and forms of grievance. Section 4.1 described low pay, unpaid labour, precarious contracts and a lack of sick pay and holiday pay, and Section 4.2 described the nature of caring labour, instances of emotional blackmail, bullying, and sexual harassment in the sector. The connections between economic and social devaluation were apparent in interviews: 'it's just treated as the pits in terms of the respect it's given by society, the pay it's given' (support worker, 53).

Section 4.3 brought the mobilisation framework into the analysis. Corresponding with Kelly's view of mobilisation, the findings suggested that apathy and uncertainty over who is responsible for conditions in the workplace acted as obstacles to mobilisation; there was a divide between non-members who did not attribute blame to their management, and members who did. This finding indicates the interplay between structure and agency in the sector, in that non-members regarded management as the only body able to effect change, whilst 'giving their boss a free pass' (organiser, 11) in terms of workplace concerns. This also demonstrates that the complex funding arrangements in the sector benefit the management of companies by

obscuring their responsibility. A dynamic develops whereby managers receive praise, but not blame. Furthermore, workers did not view themselves – as individuals, or as a unionised collective – to be agentic. As such, it is important for unions to demonstrate the *value* of unionism; Chapter 5 examines how this can mean resorting to 'service' unionism (impacting participation), and Chapter 6 explores how constraints on bargaining negatively affect workers' view of the usefulness of unionism.

Section 4.3 also explored how the specific form of caring labour affects whether workers mobilise. The process of moving from discontent to injustice appeared difficult, as non-members 'explained away' economic concerns rather than viewing these concerns as evidence of workplace injustice. Section 4.4 highlighted that, although the attitudes of union members did not appear more collective than non-members, their perception of solidarity emphasised a divide between workers and management while non-members expressed a collectivism which prioritised quality of care. Different workplace identities develop: 'I think there are two kinds of support worker […] I think there are the ones who do it purely for the love […] and then there's the other type, like me, for whom it's a job' (support worker, 55). The workers who work 'for the love', often viewed fighting for workplace justice as something which would harm care recipients. Narratives whereby care is altruistic therefore conflict with fair pay narratives. Unions can succumb to this view by emphasising that wages are important *because of* the improvements to quality of care that they will generate – the danger of this strategy is that in practice, working conditions can be side-lined (see Chapter 6).

This chapter has also highlighted weaknesses of the mobilisation framework – and the organising model more broadly – by suggesting that there is a significant disconnect between injustice, collectivism, and the mobilisation of workers into unions. The findings indicate a need for more specific conceptualisations of injustice and collectivism. Going 'back to the contradictions created by the structural nature of the capitalist labour process' (Atzeni, 2009: 5) faces additional social obstacles in care, with a heightened likelihood that 'injustice' becomes subjective and moralistic (Cohen, 2011). Exploitation in caring labour can be (to use Marx's term) 'mystified' by society's positioning of the worker as a caring individual. This thesis cannot establish a *causal* relationship between union membership and politicised resistance to the narrative that care is not done 'for the money'. The findings do, however, suggest a correlation between these factors. An additional aspect of the mobilisation framework not yet considered is the role of leaders: Chapter 5 explores how unions aim to encourage

workplace leaders by promoting activism among union members. The analysis turns from the experiences and perspectives of non-members and members to consider the strategies of union organisers, and workers' reactions to these strategies.

5. Obstacles to activism

This chapter examines how the approaches of GMB, UNISON and IWW differ in their emphasis on activism. Section 5.1 examines the resources put towards recruitment in social care, the pressures on organisers to revert to service unionism when campaigning, and IWW's reliance on unpaid activism. The unions' neglect of social care is explored both as a gendered issue, and as indicative of mainstream unions' reliance on meeting quantitative recruitment targets. Section 5.2 turns to the difficulties associated with transforming members into activists, which include the high turnover of workers in the sector, the high workload placed on workers, and a fear of being 'seen' to participate. Section 5.3 explores the persistent perception among workers that unions are service providers and considers how this view impacts the likelihood of member engagement. The analysis examines commitment levels – also examining perspectives of non-members – and provides insight into the instrumentalist, social, and covenantal relationships between members and unions (Etzioni, 1975; Snape and Redman, 2004; Tripti and Ginni, 2015). Section 5.4 focusses on the class and gender exclusivity that unpaid activism can lead to, and the ideological conflict experienced by union organisers fighting for wage improvements while relying on unwaged activists. The final section offers some conclusions and notes the areas of discussion which will be expanded upon in Chapter 7.

5.1 Recruitment, resource allocation, and organisational targets

Organisers and officers from GMB and UNISON argued that the unions devote a comparatively low amount of resources towards recruitment in the social care sector. UNISON organisers highlighted the neglect of social care in comparison to the NHS and local authorities – a neglect which is arguably predictable given the union's public sector background. The organisers and officers linked this neglect to societal attitudes towards social care – 'people get upset about privatising the NHS whereas they're a bit ambivalent about privatisation of care' (UNISON officer, 5) – but emphasised that UNISON could do more to ensure that organising in social care was a priority for the union. One officer commented:

> If you look at our conferences […] if you look at the motions on the agenda there you'll find loads of NHS motions, and very few on social care, which is disappointing […] That might just mirror sort of society, where the NHS is always on the front pages, and social care's way back, if it gets any coverage at all, which is unfortunate. So it may be that non-health branches [of UNISON] are more prepared to put a motion through about

health cuts, whereas when it comes to social care… 'cos it's always seen as the poor relation, it's a horrible position where it's kind of accepted that quality of provision has always been poor, or the way the workforce is treated there has always been poor. I really hope it isn't that, but that might be part of it (officer, 6).

This view of social care as the 'poor relation' of the NHS was echoed by a support worker, who argued that unions are not always as active in drawing attention to privatisation in the sector:

If you look at the privatisation of the NHS, you don't even have to look for that, you can find it on union websites as the front banner kind of thing. I think if people were more aware that unions cater for care staff in particular, I think that would make more people join (support worker, 60).

While UNISON organisers and officers were critical of UNISON's approach to the social care sector, a GMB organiser viewed UNISON as 'heads and shoulders above us, in terms of the resource that they put into the care sector' (organiser, 1). The organiser commented that in GMB's efforts to organise in social care, the sector is not only overshadowed by the NHS but also by the more traditionally 'industrial' sectors as well, where GMB is most familiar organising:

I think GMB's negligent in that it doesn't give the resource that it needs. We have three national targets in terms of recruitment and organisation, NHS, schools, and ASDA. And we have an organising team, so in this region there's 15 officers who look after […] just over 60,000 members. There's a team, about 4 officers that recruit and are supposed to work with us to help organise our workplaces, but their targets are NHS, schools and ASDA. And allegedly, I have one of my colleagues to support in the care sector, but it's not a priority for the union because it's not sexy, because it's a lot of hard work to generate membership, and then you're fighting to keep them, you know (organiser, 1).

A UNISON officer cited the broad spread of GMB membership across industries as a reason why the union might side-line care: 'I've talked to an officer from GMB who finds it difficult to raise the profile of social care within GMB, because it's got such a broad focus with other industries, it can fall by the wayside' (organiser, 6). According to the GMB organiser who decried GMB's resource allocation, the gender composition of the sector – and the negative associations with feminine labour – played an additional role in the union's neglect of the care workforce:

It's not seen as a sector is it? It's not seen as an industrial workforce and I think that again comes down to, I don't know, our sexist society. Care is an extension of what women do largely, so they're not deemed to be an industrial force, and I think consequently the unions neglect this group of workers (organiser, 1)

The devaluation of caring labour therefore impacts upon employment practices and pay in the sector, as explored in Chapter 4, *and* affects whether unions prioritise organising in social care. A GMB officer argued that there is a specificity of organising in the care industry which the union is not used to:

Social care, it's a different animal […] and one of the HR guys that I used to work [with] he was telling me 'I'm coming to work in the company you're dealing with' […] I said 'well social care is a completely different beast all together, you need to learn that, and you need to understand how different it is.' And after the first six months he said, 'do you know what, you were so right'. It's so similar in some ways, but then so completely different in others, just the way the care workers will come to you and talk to you about different things than what you'd expect. It's very different to what other workers will do (officer, 4).

The resource allocation of the union then becomes dependent on whether recruitment is successful: a GMB organiser commented that 'care in the past has been a national target, but then because it wasn't delivering… and it's like, you're not recruiting enough people' (organiser, 1). A circularity develops whereby difficulties in recruiting care workers further pull union resources away from the sector. Another GMB organiser highlighted the importance of numbers to the GMB when evaluating the success and failure of organising initiatives:

We've done really, really well the last couple of years. We've done really well, and figures have done really, really well, and I've noticed in the last three months they've tailed off. And I'm not prepared to let that last any longer than three months, so we need to do something about it […] because I'm not prepared to last any longer than three months of deteriorating figures (organiser, 3).

This emphasis on union targets in the region reflected the national policy of the union, which has consistently emphasised recruitment goals. In 2006, for example, a GMB@Work report proposed 'adoption of Regional targets with collective performance measurements.' A 2012 General Secretary report emphasised that 'national targets are fundamental to our GMB@Work culture', (GMB, 2012) and the 2019 General Secretary report noted that in the north of England, 'the Region organises around National Targets Strategy along with local initiatives'

(GMB, 2019: 45). As noted by the GMB organiser quoted above, the report describes the national targets as schools, the NHS, and the supermarket ASDA.

UNISON organisers also commented on GMB's recruitment targets. One UNISON organiser viewed GMB as an over-emphatic recruiter because 'GMB's national strategy is informed very much by the fact that they have to grow to survive' (organiser, 7). The TUC officer echoed this perspective, commenting that: '[GMB] tend to be a lot more aggressive than UNISON. I think they see the traditional kind of membership shrinking, cos […] they used to organise shipyards, they worked on the roads, stuff like that, general workers' (officer, 17). Comments from UNISON demonstrated that this 'aggressive' approach could increase hostilities between UNISON and GMB. While acknowledging that he was 'biased', a UNISON organiser noted: 'from what I'm aware there are instances where GMB are looking to recruit and they come in and do things that undermine our activities in some instances' (organiser, 7).

Another UNISON organiser referred to GMB as 'super recruiters' but argued that when GMB prioritised recruitment without the ability to put further resources towards the sector, members became dissatisfied: 'they oversold on the promise, they recruited on the promise, couldn't deliver, and they kind of leave sterile ground behind. I joined you, "you promised everything, nothing happened, I'm cynical now." That's a really big danger' (organiser, 9). This ground became 'sterile' as other unions would struggle to organise in the wake of member discontent with GMB. UNISON organisers viewed their own union as less driven by targets, 'I know in GMB a lot of their organising stuff, 'cos they'll have recruitment targets that they have to hit, and we're opposed to that' (organiser, 8). However, the same organiser referred to 'management pressures […] the pressures on to keep membership up' within UNISON, suggesting that even without formalised targets, union organisers are affected by an organisational culture which prioritises recruitment.

IWW organisers were notably less concerned about recruitment than organisers in mainstream unions and did not experience pressures from their organisation to recruit. One IWW organiser viewed membership as an almost negligible aspect of organising, commenting that 'I don't particularly recruit,' and arguing that their approach set them apart from other unions:

> I think the bigger unions are more interested in members: 'members first, join first.'
> Whereas as far as I'm concerned, the approach of IWW is: 'if you join, great, if you

don't, no worries.' Your signature on a piece of paper and your direct debit is not the most important thing, it'd be nice to have, but you having a decent working life is far more important' (organiser, 14).

Reiterating this apparent disinterest in membership levels, the IWW administrator commented: 'we want people to join the union, but [we] just say, "look, we're not trying to take your money, we're not trying to get you to join our left sect because we want to be big and powerful"' (officer, 12). This approach to unionism – with an emphasis on promoting a 'decent working life', and not prioritising being a 'big and powerful' organisation – suggests that IWW has very different norms concerning recruitment to the mainstream unions. Yet the disinterest in recruitment and membership targets also related to an awareness among IWW organisers that the union's resources were strictly circumscribed: 'we're a small union with limited resources, there's only me as [this branch's] acting rep, I can only do what I can do' (organiser, 14). Like the UNISON organiser who was concerned about 'sterile' organising ground, the IWW organiser commented:

> Big mainstream unions promise all sorts of things, and then they don't deliver […] I would be worried giving people false hope. I'd rather people join because they've found us useful […] I wouldn't want to promise "join our union, we'll represent you all the way" (organiser, 14).

In addition, the decision not to explicitly prioritise recruitment was in itself a kind of recruitment strategy. An IWW officer argued that non-members could find recruitment off-putting if they perceived it to be primarily a means of building the union:

> I think thing that puts people off unions sometimes is that – entirely correct – sense that they have on one level, which is that a union is an organisation in itself that wants to grow […] and the union growing is maybe prioritised. Not prioritised, but has a precedence over their actual problems (officer, 12).

IWW's approach to recruitment also differed from mainstream unions in that the organisers were all unpaid. Whereas the organising model is generally interpreted as a model of unionism which expands the number of unpaid activists but also retains paid officers (Gall and Fiorito, 2011), IWW is the exception in this research as it has historically opposed paid roles. Interviews with IWW organisers suggested that this model was being questioned within the union: 'we're seeing the limitations of what we can do, solely relying on volunteer members' (organiser, 13). Organisers brought up their personal transition from a rejection of waged work in the union to a view which was more accepting of paid positions:

I remember when I first joined, I was like, 'of course we don't need paid organisers we're all gonna pitch in it's gonna be great, 'cos we're anarchists man, fuck you!' But then, a couple of years later it was like, no. If we don't have someone who's committed to doing this, we're not going to be able to grow, and if we don't have someone being paid to like, do the organising, we're going to stagnate, and I kind of feel like that's what's happened (organiser, 15).

When I first got involved it was the sort of thing that we'd said, that almost *everybody* said, 'no way, never going to happen, [paying organisers] goes against everything that we believe in'. And over time, and now I'd say maybe it's like a 50:50 split in the organisation […] It's a real divisive issue in the IWW (organiser, 11).

This increasing acceptance of paid positions was related to the progress of other grassroots unions and activist groups who did have paid organisers: 'ACORN[16] and the IWGB[17] […] they've managed to do more than us, and partly that is because they have people that can work full time on it (organiser, 13); 'what's wrong with the IWW right now, is that there isn't paid organisers, all you have to do is look at the success of the IWGB and UVW'[18] (organiser, 11); 'if you compare us to the IWGB they fucking *went for it*, they were like "you know what we're going to pay full timers"' (organiser, 15). Organisers emphasised that the use of a small number of paid organisers in other grassroots unions such as IWGB and UVW suggests that radical unionism and minimal employment structures can coexist, both practically and ideologically. An IWW organiser commented, 'I don't think it necessarily follows that if you pay someone to work like, two days a week to do organising that that like turns you into a mini Unite, or like a mini GMB' (organiser, 13). The organiser went on to describe the features that separate IWW from mainstream unions:

I think you can still have a model which uses paid organisers, and like, looks to gain recognition agreements and still have a grassroots and member led approach […] but is a general union and an industrial union […] Those are still like, still selling points, distinguishing features, and I think you can still have like higher levels of, you know, internal democracy and direct democracy in that organisation (organiser, 13).

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[16] ACORN is a community union which primarily focuses on renters' rights. It has branches in the UK and worldwide.
[17] IWGB refers to the International Workers of Great Britain. It is a split-off union from the IWW which organises workers in London, with a focus on low-paid migrant workers.
[18] UVW – United Voices of the World – is a split-off from IWGB (or 'sister union' of IWGB), with a similar organising emphasis on low-paid migrant workers in London.

The union was paying two administrative officers to carry out part-time financial and communication work for the union – one of whom I interviewed. The paid administrator described his first reaction to the proposed paid role:

> I think I was a bit more idealistic when I was 25 or whatever […] I was like, 'I don't think it needs to be a paid role, I think if a group of people, in a really anarchist-y way, take it on as a group rather than one person take it on as a role, then I think that's like, everything we wanted because we don't have to pay for it.' I was like really keen to self-exploit, I was like, 'I wanna do loads of free work!' (officer, 12).

The administrator went on to argue that the decision to pay administrative union work but not organising work felt arbitrary: 'there's nothing substantively different, in terms of, whether it tires you out and whether it means you can't do other work, between like, administration, organising' (officer, 12). The administrator emphasised that 'in some ways organising is just like, harder because you have to interact with people' (officer, 12). The undervaluing of work requiring social, relational and emotional skills which has negatively affected working conditions in social care therefore also appeared present in the way that IWW organised work within the union.

Section 5.1 has explored how GMB and UNISON allocate resources towards recruitment in social care. The findings highlight unions' neglect of the sector relative to other areas of work, such as the NHS, or – for the GMB – industrial sectors. Among GMB and UNISON organisers there was an awareness that organising could not be reduced to recruitment, yet organisers experienced a simultaneous pressure from management of both unions to maintain membership. For IWW organisers, in contrast, recruitment was not connected with any management imperative and interviewees were largely ambivalent about membership levels. Resource allocation at IWW differed, with the union relying on unpaid organisers – a strategy which the union organisers appeared to be turning against. Section 5.4 of this chapter will return to this reliance on unpaid activists to consider how it can also limit who is involved in organising.

5.2 Explaining low participation among union members

Although organisers from all of the unions were constrained by recruitment targets and resource allocation, all three groups consistently expressed a desire to build a movement based

on activism. A UNISON organiser commented: 'we are reliant on our network of stewards and activists' (organiser, 8); an IWW organiser argued, 'the IWW doesn't want to be a service union, it wants everybody to be an activist' (organiser, 10). The GMB officer argued that the specifics of the social care sector meant workplace activism was particularly important:

> When you get a good rep, they're golden, like they're fantastic, and they organise and do everything. [The reps have] just got the understanding, the empathy, and I think that makes a difference when you're organising. Within care, you have to have some empathy and understanding of what care means, and what working in care is. Because we've had some experience before where officers have gone into homes and not had any care background whatsoever, perhaps worked in manufacturing, and they don't get the same results. Because you know, you've got to have that idea about what care is, how difficult it is (officer, 4).

Organising in the sector requires an understanding, for example, of the perceived separation between care and other forms of labour – the frequently held view among care workers that their job is 'not like other work' (see Chapter 4). The 'like recruits like' aspect of the organising model (Blyton and Turnbull, 2004: 131) therefore becomes particularly important in a context of care provision.

Organisers described different methods of recruiting activists. GMB organisers stressed that gaining access to workplaces was essential for instigating activism. The GMB officer commented: 'it was about going back into the [care] home and speaking to them regularly, and them having the confidence in you, as the officer, when you're going in and that, there's that two-way dialogue' (officer, 4). UNISON organisers highlighted the importance of networks to building activism. A UNISON organiser referred to 'getting engagement with the workers […] meeting them, meeting them on their terms, finding people who want to be leaders, they get their mates, [and] they meet together' (organiser, 9). A second UNISON organiser commented:

> I like getting a member that signs up and then goes 'give me more leaflets, I know so and so'. 'Cos they want to go and get everyone else to join. That's brilliant. So that's the aim […] We'd just go months without recruiting anyone, but just engaging and trying to build those relationships, build that intelligence on the ground, and that information that we'd then feed in that might help somebody else recruit in their area (organiser, 8).

This effort to gain 'intelligence' was highlighted in a comment from a UNISON member, who recalled asking an organiser how UNISON recruits: 'I was asking how do you do it [and I was

told] "oh you just get one contact, and then sort of grow it from there" […] it sounds like being a spy or something, in a good way' (support worker, 52). UNISON organisers also discussed social media and online messaging. One organiser commented that the messaging service WhatsApp, 'for us is fantastic' (organiser, 9). This was not a faultless approach, as another UNISON organiser warned:

> [WhatsApp] causes contention because who do you roll it out to? You've got managers who are in UNISON [but] if the managers are in the WhatsApp groups, even if they're members, the core members who are […] the people lower on the rung as it were, are they gonna feel free to speak on this group?' (organiser, 7).

Workers might not feel free to discuss grievances or hold others responsible for employment conditions in a context like a messaging service because opinions can be attributed to specific workers and have an element of permanency. Even if messages are deleted, individuals can take incriminating screenshots of group discussions – which can be shared beyond the members of the group.

While organisers viewed activism as integral, they also described low activist numbers. An organiser from GMB commented to their colleague during an interview: 'we don't really have reps anywhere do we, in care, it's really difficult' (organiser, 3). Another GMB organiser working in the same region offered a marginally more positive estimate:

> I think we've probably got about two and a half thousand care members […] in this region and I reckon we've probably got, one, two, three [reps]. I've got three reps, there's probably about five reps across the region, and probably about one of them, only about one of them is active […] We do really struggle for reps (organiser 1).

The shortage of active members was also noted by UNISON organisers – 'the number of stewards is dwindling […] they get accredited, but they… there's not enough of them, there's not enough of a strong network of them' (organiser, 7) – and by IWW members and organisers: 'this is something that I keep coming across, no one wants to be an activist, no one wants to be an organiser' (support worker, 53).

Organisers explained the low levels of activism in a number of ways. A recurrent theme in interviews was the difficulty of recruiting workers, then turning members into activists in a sector with high staff turnover. As an GMB organiser argued, 'our membership is very buoyant

isn't it, because obviously people move from one [workplace] to another, to another' (organiser, 2). The manager of the home care company viewed part of the reason for low membership levels at his company as workers' belief that they 'might not be in the job for long' (manager, 31). A UNISON organiser commented on the difficulty of recruiting workers within this context:

> Quite a few [workers] would end up just thinking, 'sod this, I'll get a job in the supermarket', or, get a job as cleaners, and just leave the care sector completely, and we'd be like, 'have we caused that?' A little bit of education, and it's like, crap, we just highlighted how terrible the sector is [laughs]. It just starts all over again. So yeah, that's the biggest frustration, I think. It takes a long time […] building that trust, and that relationship, that awareness then of how the union can benefit the sector […] and then they just leave. Start again (organiser, 8).

And another UNISON organiser highlighted the difficulty of finding workplace leaders:

> If you try and organise you need to identify leaders in a workplace. But if the very nature of the sector means that those leaders are probably gonna have the initiative to go somewhere better, then you're not gonna [have leaders]. Even if you find a leader, it might [only] be a few months before they've got another job elsewhere (organiser, 7).

The same organiser noted that this 'movement from jobs' often manifested in transitions from social care to healthcare: 'when we were chatting with members, they realised how crap it was in the private sector, so they'd end up getting jobs in the NHS.' Providing an example of this transition, a worker at the residential home told me: 'I am actually leaving soon, in fact tomorrow's my last shift. I'm going to work for the NHS' (domestic worker, 33). Workers who *do* join the union often do not remain members long enough to become activists. A UNISON national officer recalled attending a social care seminar – organised by UNISON – where 'we didn't just talk about recruiting people, we also talked about keeping members […] because that's one of the biggest problems.' The officer noted that 'in the last five years we've always done pretty well on recruiting members but keeping them has been much harder' (officer, 6).

This tendency of workers to leave for other companies when working conditions are bad, further demonstrates the difficulty of relying on 'injustice' (to use Kelly's language) as a basis for mobilisation. Injustice can instead lead to quitting employment, an outcome which can be interpreted using Hirschmann's (1970) model of Exit, Voice, and Loyalty. Hirschmann theorises workers' responses to dissatisfaction in the workplace as 'exit' (leave the employment

relationship) or 'voice' (attempt to change the relationship); responses which are mediated by loyalty to the company. In the context of social care, quitting appeared common and appeared to be mediated not by loyalty to companies, but by loyalty to the care recipients. One IWW member argued that quitting is not *just* common, however; managers purposefully create a high turnover among the workforce as a strategy to prevent resistance and mobilisation (to discourage a 'voice' outcome of dissatisfaction):

> I do think people, if they know they're gonna get respected, will stick around for a bit at least. But I think it seemed to be that this was part of the [management's] strategy. If you get [a] high turnover then you don't get that sort of time for people to work out what's actually going wrong with the company […] you haven't got enough time for people to actually mount that challenge (former support worker, 57).

A further barrier to building activism noted by organisers and workers was the potential for workers to be persecuted by their employer for union participation. Section 4.2 explored the widespread bullying in the sector – in some instances instigated by managerial staff. This bullying also manifested in anti-union behaviour. An IWW member commented that '[management] know who to promote, the people that are on their side. You're either on their side, or you know, you're out. And I do feel that I was pushed out, which is not a nice experience' (former support worker, 57). The member went on to describe management's treatment of the member who had recruited him: 'I think they've treated [him] appallingly, because he's tried to do what he's allowed to do, which is tell people, inform people that they have a voice, […] there are people they can go to' (former support worker, 57). The member referred to in this quote described his own experience:

> Management were bullying people. I remember I was actually taken into the office by this particular bulldog of a manager who, you know, he actually told me I was under investigation for union activity at work […] Basically a kind of union buster guy (support worker, 53).

For workplace activists, the reality of organising is therefore very different to the practice of paid organising; their position in the workplace hierarchy lends a degree of risk to any organising activity. An IWW organiser commented: 'I think asking someone point blank to organise their workplace is quite a big ask, and I think a lot of people go, "I'll probably get fired"' (organiser, 13). This was the experience of another IWW organiser: 'organising for the IWW, I've lost, how many jobs now? I lost three different jobs to being an IWW rep, organiser […], two of which were when I was working for other trade unions' (organiser, 11).

Persecution of workplace activists dissuaded other workers from union participation by adding to (or creating) a concern that trade unionism was inherently risky. A former support worker commented on the lack of unionisation among other workers at his organisation: 'these are good people, hard-working people, who have been treated really badly, but they would rather be treated really badly than risk being associated with a union, [because] they might lose their job' (former support worker, 57). The member went on to describe the view frequently held by workers, and justified by these instances of anti-union bullying at his previous company, that union activity involves risk:

> People sort of agree with it up to a point, then when you actually need them to go further, they don't want to put their head above the parapet. And I can understand it, totally. You know, you could have a single parent who's got to, you know think about their kids, think about that, this is their only job, this is their only income […] they can't take risks like that. Or they see it as a risk, so there's a big problem there, I think (former support worker, 57).

Non-members at the home care company reflected this view. The hub manager commented: 'I always kind of got it into my head that being a member of a union was a bad thing [laughs]' (hub manager, 30), and a care worker responded that 'it's like you're a rebel' (care worker, 24). Organisers were aware of the challenge this perception of unions causes for organising. A UNISON officer commented: 'there is the big fear factor issue to overcome to get people to be willing to put their head above the parapet' (officer, 5) and an IWW organiser observed that 'there's certainly a lot of people scared that they might lose their jobs' (organiser, 10).

This fear also related to the use of zero-hour contracts in the sector. As discussed in Chapter 4, zero-hour contracts can mean that if workers decline shifts, management can substantially decrease or completely stop their working hours. In the same way, denying workers shifts can become a form of retribution for union activity. A UNISON officer commented:

> One of the big problems in social care is the fact that so many of the people working in it are kind of, their employers have got them over a barrel. If they're on a zero-hours contract, if they kick off too much about something, they've no idea if they're going to get any work the next week. So, it's almost, maybe it's incumbent upon local UNISON branches to raise it on their behalf, so that individuals aren't targeted (officer, 6).

Other structural factors can increase the insecurity of workers and therefore decrease the likelihood of union participation. The same UNISON officer went on to describe how migrant workers in the sector can be more vulnerable to the actions of management:

> [A colleague] organised some big focus groups […] Some of the testimony that came out of that was really powerful, particularly from our migrant worker members who were, subject to all the normal exploitation, normal in inverted commas, that the other care workers got. But then because they were migrants it was even worse. They would have their immigration status [and] they would feel it was threatened. Whether it really was or not, […] some employers knew they had an extra thing to use against them (officer, 6).

Alongside high turnover and the fear of retribution, workers and organisers also presented the time demands of union activism as an obstacle to organising in the sector, particularly given the already substantial demands placed on the time and energy of workers. Two former support workers commented on their experiences of overwork in the sector: 'after those 24 hours at work, with having gone home for four, you'd be so knackered, not wanting to do other things. That was about the drudgery. I think it's generally there in organising low paid work' (former support worker, 58). The second interviewee emphasised the impact of long hours on organising:

> The shifts are long, people are just so tired, and like you're working often double shifts, especially if you finish on a late, start on an early, ridiculous situations where you were back home for three hours in between […] I don't know where I could have had a meeting with my time because there was literally no point apart from within the hours of 11pm and 7am when everyone apart from the person on the nightshift was not at work. At least two of them would be at work (former support worker, 59).

The opportunity for workers to meet other workers, discuss workplace injustices, establish solidarities and build workplace activism was therefore limited. Further to time constraints, workers emphasised the energy requirements of care as a factor which deterred them from activism. A care worker argued:

> Obviously we're on the front line every single day and we see the residents, and we have it drove into us about person-centred care and consent, not forcing people to do stuff, but we are told to force people to do things. And it kinda makes it difficult. Then you're like, well why should I give you my energy to fight for things when… It kind of sounds a bit selfish, but it's like, 'what can I do?' That's just my personal experience (care assistant, 34).

A support worker viewed this as a frequently held perspective at his company, and regarded it as a significant obstacle to organising:

> Most people at work, they just wanna come in, they wanna do their job and they wanna go home. Which is fair enough. If I tried to convince some friends at work who are in the union to stay after work to chat about, you know, what we should do to organise people they wouldn't wanna do it, to be fair (support worker, 60).

Organisers and officers acknowledged that for workers, it is difficult to find the time and the energy to participate in union activism. A GMB organiser argued that 'even if we get access, even if we get members, then you're trying to get activists in the care sector, it just doesn't work. Because […] they do 60 hours a week. They haven't got time for anything else' (organiser, 3). Another organiser from GMB commented: 'I get that it is difficult in that environment, particularly if you're working 12-hour shifts. Doing work of that nature you're gonna be absolutely exhausted.' (organiser, 1). Organisers also understood why union activism might not be a priority for workers. A UNISON organiser said that 'they've got other commitments in their life. Is the union up there as a priority? (organiser, 8); and a second UNISON organiser commented that 'sometimes you just feel like, "why should we expect people to give up all their time? Why should we expect members to have to turn up to all these meetings when they've got enough on?"' (organiser, 7). The officer from IWW had a similar perspective: 'can you imagine working in a warehouse or something, and you'd be like, "you think I'm gonna do like, any *free* work at any organisation after that? Are you fucking kidding me?"' (officer, 12).

Organisers, officers, and members emphasised that union meetings and training – 'active' participation (Gall and Fiorito, 2012) – were particularly time consuming, resulting in low levels of participation. An IWW member argued that 'getting people in the same place at the same time, is very, very difficult […] You'll have a meeting and you go there, and you think, "oh is it just us?"' (former support worker, 57). Another IWW member argued that their own willingness to undertake training was obstructed by work responsibilities:

> [An IWW organiser] has told me on a number of occasions, 'oh there's a course coming up in this element of self-representation' or whatever. Every single time I've had a shift interrupt it. So as much as I may have wanted to go and learn, I just can't. And again, I think that's something that support workers deal with perhaps more than many other professions, because we work round the clock (support worker, 55).

An IWW organiser described the frustrations of carrying out training to a limited number of workers: 'our Organising 101 training is fucking amazing, but I remember delivering it to – even when we were super active – a room of five people all of whom were activists anyway, because it took like six weeks at the weekend to do' (organiser, 15). UNISON and GMB officers provided similar experiences of poorly attended training:

> When people do come forward and express an interest in becoming a rep, we have real difficulty then in moving that on. So, I've got two women at the moment who both come forward, were making the right noises in terms of wanting to be representatives, you know, wanting to get more involved in the union. And I've done their initial support training and then I can't get them on to the more formal training with other new reps […] This is a constant problem that you'll have people come forward and say that they're interested but then to get them to undertake their training is a nightmare (organiser, 1).

The organiser described her attempt to train one of these representatives:

> I've turned up to start her training on a number of occasions and she's not been at work, and she's not told me, after we've fought tooth and nail to get her these days and it's just… it's the same whenever we've got a new rep. I don't know, perhaps we're a bit overzealous. If somebody's making the right noises then we jump all over them and perhaps we smother them and they feel that they can't say no, but really their heart and soul's not in it (organiser, 1).

Time constraints and the fear of being 'seen' to participate provide insight into why workers do not engage in forms of participation such as carrying out union organising in the workplace and attending meetings. But these factors do not necessarily explain low levels of participation in activities such as voting, signing petitions, and responding to emails. These forms of 'passive' participation appeared as difficult for organisers to encourage as the *active* participation involved in union organising. An IWW organiser said that members not only 'don't turn up for meetings' they also 'don't respond to emails' (organiser, 14).[19] A GMB organiser reflected on the difficulty of getting members to sign a petition form for recognition in a residential home: 'being honest, even the membership didn't fill in the form […] I mean it was a simple, fill this in, put it in a free post envelope and send it back' (organiser, 2).

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[19] This low level of passive participation among IWW members is also apparent in their elections of union officers. In an email to members, IWW noted that turnout in the 2019 online voting was 12%. This is, however, higher than turnout for GMB's General Secretary election in 2019, which was 8.5%. See: https://www.gmb.org.uk/sites/default/files/L2380_2_GMB_ReportofVoting_GS&T_151119.pdf

This section has offered evidence of the obstacles to implementing activism, beginning with the difficulty of organising in a workforce which is constantly in flux. Workers quitting their job rather than resisting injustice in their workplace acts as a major impediment to building activism. Continuing the evaluation of the mobilising framework in Chapter 4, this suggests that moving from injustice, to leaders, to an active workforce, is difficult. Counteracting tendencies in the organising model are also evident when promoting activism: unions seek to assist workers who are overworked, using an activist-based model which workers are too overworked to participate in. In addition, the benefits of having activists based in the workplace coincides with the reality that workers who engage in activism are in a more vulnerable position than external organisers. While the obstacles of high staff turnover, fear of management retribution, and work responsibilities combine to create low levels of participation in the structures of the union, questions remain over why *passive* participation is not more widespread. This is considered in the following section, which explores workers' perceptions of the purpose of unions.

5.3 The effects of service expectations on activism

This section examines the ongoing persistence of service unionism and aspects of consumer unionism, and unpacks whether low levels of activism relate to low commitment levels, as is generally argued (see Section 2.1.2). The inclusion of non-members here provides insight into what *potential* members want from a union and what they expect it to be; in interviews with these non-members it became apparent that when workers know what a trade union is, they view it as a form of support. I asked workers what they thought a union could do for them and the most frequently mentioned topic was assistance in disciplinary meetings:

> Well I would hope if anything ever did happen, touch wood, that I could ring [the union] and say, 'look this has happened and I really need your help, is there anyone I can speak to', or whatever, and they'd be going 'right, yeah'. They'd either ring me back or arrange a meeting, so at least I know I've got someone that's there to help me personally […] And if I have to go to these meetings and anything, they're there with me (care worker, 23).

> Just support really in work disputes I'd say, from […] a contractual dispute to a disciplinary, I don't know, just any sort of kind of problem I suppose (care worker, 21).

> Are unions where somebody goes to if they've got a problem or something? (care assistant, 40).

Responses from workers about the purpose of unions also demonstrated the ingrained prioritisation of quality of care over quality of employment among workers, as explored in Chapter 4. One care worker emphasised that unions could help with whistleblowing:

> Sometimes it felt like we'd report stuff and because it's so much going on in the office nothing would come of it. And we had this with a couple of clients. It were [sic] like a safeguarding issue we were getting a bit worried about, so in that sort of sense I think it would have been good – when nothing's happening or you're not getting listened to – to just go to a union and see if… well, they can point you in the right direction to people you need to speak to (care worker, 19).

Non-members viewed unions as similar to bodies offering employment advice, like Acas: 'all I know is [unions] are quite helpful when you need the help, if you've got questions to ask it's nice to have them there. I think the only external body I do know about is Acas, employment-related things' (domestic assistant, 43).

Non-members imagined that their role in a union would be passive; there was no notion that workers might have agency within a union structure. One care worker – who appeared to view GMB's role in the company as new, which it was not – commented, '[we will] probably get pay rises and stuff won't we, stuff like that, if the pay's not right, and just problems sorted out, yeah it should be good, hopefully' (care worker, 20). Another care worker at the same company made a similar comment, 'I've only really heard [about GMB] when it's come on a letter telling us about the pay increase and then a possible pay rise again at Christmas, so hopefully we will get that' (care worker, 24). These quotes indicate the scale of the challenge in moving from the idea that you can 'hopefully' 'get' something when a union has a recognition agreement with a company, to a notion that you can *collectively* achieve something with the assistance of the union.

Some union members also viewed the union as a service. The worker at the residential home who was a member of UNISON commented: 'I joined the union just for that "just in case." I'd rather be safe than sorry' (domestic assistant, 33). The support workers who were members of UNISON were involved in the activism necessary to organise their workplace yet retained an element of service unionism in their perception that unions act primarily to represent workers. A worker who had been involved in the dispute over contracts at the company described the supportive function of the union in the dispute:

> We got UNISON involved […] because they were able to sit with us, which is helpful in itself. Just having someone else to sit there and be able to kind of, word things better when you're a bit stressed, or just be able to tell you when to shut up if you need to, just having that presence does really help […] it is just the fact that they've got your back, if you need them, type thing (support worker, 51)

This quote demonstrates the difficulty of demarcating between service unionism and organising unionism: the worker wanted the union to 'have her back' so was in a sense using it as a service but was also willing to undertake action herself. Another support worker at the company described attempting to recruit workers using language of support, as opposed to participation and activism:

> I say [to workers] 'you've got people backing you up.' I'd be more likely to use language like that rather than like, 'you are in a vulnerable position in this work' […] just the idea of us having support at work, yeah that's the main thing I say. At the moment we're just not considered, so we need to have a bigger say in how our workplace is run.

The support worker interviewed who was a GMB member commented on low membership levels in companies where he had worked, then noted that when workers *were* members it was because the union could provide support: 'there's a lot of people out there, they might not be that political really, but they always join the union because they know they've got that support at work, I think that's a massive factor to people' (support worker, 60). The element of support was also emphasised by IWW members – despite the unions' intention to create a union where every member is an activist. An IWW member reiterated the widely held perspective of members of mainstream unions: 'I'm kind of, not into [the union]. I see it as a tool to help me' (support worker, 54). This was apparent in the experiences of IWW organisers:

> [IWW] are trying to move away from that service model, but I think the problem is most of the time when people get involved in trade unions that's what they expect, and that's been what they've expected of the IWW. [Members] want a service, they want you to be there to defend them. No matter the fact that you're a volunteer (support worker, 53).

There was no evidence that union work carried out by activists inspired workers to become activists themselves. In some instances, this could have been because members were not aware of IWW's reliance on volunteers, as when a member described a dispute process at their company: 'I was sort of expecting a legal representative to come and take notes, and work out our grievances, but actually the fact that it was done by proxy through [a workplace activist]

worked just as well. In many ways he was our union rep' (support worker, 55). The worker did not recognise that this fellow worker was the union rep in all ways – the union had no recourse to other forms of legal representation. At another point in the interview, the member commented: 'I've never met anyone who actually *works* for the IWW' (support worker, 55). The voluntary structure of the union was therefore not necessarily obvious to members.

Reflecting this view, a UNISON organiser commented that 'a potential member [is] not interested in the movement, [they say] "I just wanna know what I'm gonna get out of it" [laughs]' (organiser, 8). Organisers and officers noted that this perspective was connected to the way that unions are represented to workers. As detailed in the previous sections of this chapter, individual organisers were keen to build activism in the workplace yet the drive to recruit could mean acquiescing to the rhetoric of service unionism. A UNISON organiser commented that 'you sometimes feel like you're, you know, insurance salesmen' (organiser, 7). Another UNISON organiser argued that the literature produced by UNISON is suggestive of service unionism, and more specifically, consumer unionism:

> It's like, 'UNISON cover', and it's like, 'cover yourself, insure yourself […] pays to be in a union' and all that […] We do say that, […] '[get] cover, pays to be in a union] and all that. But I started this job because we're promoting a movement, not a service. There's quite a few of us that do tend to push against that. But as employees of the union, we do feel under pressure to say that it is a service that we're providing. I mean there's a service there, yeah, but it's a movement (organiser, 8).

The provision of additional non-union services, such as deals on gyms and insurance was a more divisive issue for union organisers, officers, and members than the 'service' of union representation. An IWW organiser commented:

> Mainstream unions […] sell membership because it offers all sorts of discounts and stuff […] That's the thing that draws people in. Because they've got the power, the size, the money to be able to work out those agreements. There's no way IWW could do that, or would want to. We're not selling insurance; we're not selling a dental plan. We can't offer you a discount (organiser, 14).

The Trades Union Council officer viewed these additional services as a distraction, arguing that 'some unions have succumbed to, "oh, you get cheaper car insurance" […] people need to be honest, and say "well, the reason why people join unions is if they get in trouble at work, that's when you need them"' (officer, 16). Echoing this perspective, a UNISON member

commented that when carrying out recruitment drives, additional services did not appear to act as incentives for non-members:

> It's hard to imagine if [non-members] want some particular aspect […] the thing of – which I really don't care about at all – the discounts it gives, life insurance or whatever, like it's really boring. I've not even looked at the catalogue of things that you get and stuff, but that's something you always hear stressed […] Never once has someone said to me like, 'pet insurance, I want a way to get a better deal, that's why I'm gonna join UNISON' (support worker, 50).

But, as highlighted by the TUC officer, workers do expect to receive something for union membership: 'you ask people to join, they say "how much is it?". A tenner. "What do I get for that?" First question they ask you: "what do you get for that?"' (officer, 17). A UNISON officer argued that because of this expectation, 'consumerist' services could be useful – especially when there was no live issue to organise around:

> You're using things like our member benefits, accident and injury cover, discounts at shops, all that sort of stuff, because you know that people are not convinced by the idea that they need to be in a union. So you're having to find other ways to say there are lots of benefits, 'you've got that cover, but if you make use of some of these additional benefits then you might recoup the cost of your membership' (organiser, 7).

In this sense, services can be a 'draw', an aspect of union activities which attracts workers. A UNISON national officer argued that services are also an important way to retain members after recruitment:

> One of the biggest things we've used in our recent recruitment drives has been around our kind of services and stuff like that, whether it's kind of legal services, and things, or whether it's welfare. And that may be of particular use for people on very low salaries in social care, if it's like, assistance with school uniforms for new parents, things like that. We offer those types of things as well (officer, 6).

The officer referred to hostility towards non-union services as a failure to understand what is important to members:

> It's easy for people in Whitehall area to be a bit scornful of that type of thing […] That assumes that people have these lofty high ideals when they join a union […] All the focus group work we've done shows that actually they don't […] They see a union as a kind of backstop, a kind of last resort, and if they can get some kind of services as a result of being in a union, then all the better. So like, we have a holiday club which provides cheaper holidays, there's funeral cover, things like that. And actually that stuff seems to be really, really popular. Which we shouldn't be surprised by really, because

> if you're paying some money into something, hopefully the vast majority of people aren't ever going to need to use the union in disputes or personal victimisation or anything, whereas if they know that they're gonna get something back in terms of good offers on this that and the other… So it provides a sort of challenge for us across the whole of the union, but actually perhaps in social care it's even more acute, if that's a way of us actually winding people in, and getting them to stay (organiser, 6).

The officer viewed the challenge as more acute in social care because of the low wages in the sector – union dues represent a more significant portion of their wage. This argument was reiterated by the TUC officer: '£14 out of my wage, I'm not going to lose sleep over that, but £14 out of a care worker's wage…' (officer, 17). Workers' views corroborated this significance. A support worker commented that his co-workers were not members because 'people kind of think that "I'm going to be paying £15 and I'm good at my job so I'm never gonna have owt happen to me"' (support worker, 60). The manager of the home care company gave his perspective on why his employees were not union members: 'a lot of it is people are that skint, right, they don't want to pay £7 a month' (manager, 31). He cited as evidence for this the inability of a member of staff to pay into the company's pension scheme, 'and her pension contribution was £4.70 or £4.80 pence a month […] less than £5 and she was shitting herself.' When I said to office workers at the home care company that I thought it was strange that membership was so low given the existence of the recognition agreement, one worker responded:

> I don't think it's strange though because it costs you money and you can ring Acas for free. And you can actually get a representative from Acas if you really want, if you've got a case. And they'll come with you and not charge you, won't they (office worker, 25).

While the cost of union dues is an obstacle to membership – justifying service unionism's aim to provide 'value for money' – the findings also suggest that disinterest remains a significant factor in why workers are not members. A representative from UNISON recalled trying to recruit 'one guy who I thought was a dead cert' as he had faced various disciplinaries and had signed pledge cards calling for UNISON to be recognised. The union would therefore have provided value for money. Still, the worker argued that the cost was too much; the UNISON member argued that this was because he did not prioritise union membership in relation to other costs:

I was like 'oh have you filled in that [membership] form?' and he said, 'no, because it costs too much money.' And I was like, oh, this is someone who, the need for actually having backing, and legal representation is more acute in him than in most other people, and he was still just like, 'it's too much money.' […] I think that's a big thing. 'We're already low paid, we don't want to either spend the subs, or bring any trouble on ourselves', and I think a lot of people do buy into that […] It's like a couple of pints, equivalent of, but I bet if I'd said that to this guy, '*come on*, it's a couple of pints', he'd have been like, 'yeah, I'll take the pints' (support worker, 52).

In the same way that low levels of activism could be caused by a combination of overwork and an attitude of disinterest towards activism (see Section 5.2), non-membership relates both to the cost of dues and to the perception among workers that this cost is dispensable. Union dues also provided a convenient post-hoc justification for workers for non-membership. Two workers at the home care company did not realise that being in a union involved paying membership dues, but then retrospectively attributed their non-membership to this cost:

Hub manager, 30: So, I'm so ignorant. What does it involve being a member of a union, do you have to pay something?

Interviewer: Yeah, it often depends how much you earn…

Hub manager, 30: Oh right. So that's why nobody will be a member of the union!

Care worker, 22: That's why we're not! [laughs]

Hub manager, 30: I don't mean that in a bad way, [but] why would you be a member of a union if you had to give up some of your pay that's already not enough?

These findings indicate both that paying dues is a substantial cost and, at the same time, that workers might simply not care about joining unions. The extent to which union services can improve the appeal of unions to workers seemed limited. What did become apparent in interviews with workers was that union dues do inhibit *activism* by embedding the transactional attitude of workers towards the union. I asked a union member at the residential home how they would feel about the opportunity to learn to represent themselves in disciplinary situations, rather than be represented by the union:

Ultimately that's what you're paying them for. So, it's alright I suppose with the odd thing of 'well just try telling them this', but when it comes down to it, you need someone that knows. Knows all the legal babble and all the… being able to read between the lines. So yeah, in that case I'd probably be like, 'do you know what, no, that's what I pay you for, you need to come out and do it' (domestic worker, 33).

This attitude of '[t]hat's why I pay dues' (Fletcher and Hurd, 1998: 442) was similarly apparent among IWW members – even though IWW dues are on average less than half of that of mainstream unions. Another IWW member reflected: 'I may as well stay on [as a member], and if anything ever does happen if I need their help, then I'm a paid-up member, so at least I've got it in the bank for when something does happen' (support worker, 55).

While actions of unions – such as including additional services in membership and resorting to 'insurance' rhetoric when recruiting – could encourage or legitimise workers' transactional approach to unionism, workers' attitudes are also influenced by the cultural context of consumer capitalism. IWW members and organisers were particularly quick to view union transactionalism as symptomatic of a broader market-exchange mentality. An IWW member argued:

> I think it kind of feeds into this mindset again, doesn't it? 'I'm paying for a service in case I have a bad experience and I need back up', rather than, 'I'm paying into a fund which is gonna help lots of people, and the success of the union at work is entirely based on how much I get involved in the union.' I think you can understand why unions market themselves in a way which is like, 'pay us your money, we'll give you this'. Because our whole economic system is set up to make people think in that way [laughs] (former support worker, 56).

Another member suggested that '[members] are very resistant to actually becoming activists themselves, and that's just a cultural situation […] unions are services, they're insurance, and that's how they're seen I think by most people these days' (support worker, 53). A UNISON organiser claimed that attributing responsibility for low membership levels to 'culture' rather than the actions of unions was, however, somewhat fatalistic:

> People do see [the union] as a service, because people see everything as a service now. And people like me, who now work for a union, can always be cynical and say, 'oh you know, it's the influence of Thatcher, it's the influence of individualism, and you pay for a service, I've paid my money, I just want my service when I need it, I don't want all this, I don't want to have to come to all these meetings' (organiser, 7).

Section 5.3 has examined how workers' perception of unions impacts their propensity to become engaged union activists. Findings indicate that non-members and members alike frequently viewed unions as service providers, generally in terms of assistance, representation, and workplace support as opposed to non-work related 'consumer' services. This perception

relates, in part, to unions' use of language related to service unionism (connected to the imperative to recruit described in Section 5.1). The findings also suggest that additional consumer services can be important to members because of the cost of union dues: as noted by a UNISON officer, dismissing the role of add-on services can be 'a bit scornful', replacing the material needs of union members with 'lofty ideals'. The officer's perspective highlights the usefulness of managerial consumer unionism to attract potential members. While the various services promoted by unions were evidently important strategies, the accompanying understanding among workers of an exchange relationship between members and the union negatively impacted participation levels. The potential to combine activism and services therefore appeared limited. The ability of unions to discard associations with union services was also limited: even when union dues were relatively low and organisers were unpaid, as in IWW's model of unionism, members perceived it as an exchange relationship and were frequently passive.

5.4 Empowerment, class, and gender

This section considers organisers' and officers' views on what happens when activism *is* present among union members. It explores the ambition of proponents of organising to empower workers (Jiang and Korczynski, 2016), and examines class- and gender-based exclusion in activism. The organisers from mainstream unions referred to 'empowerment' less than organisers from IWW. One GMB organiser referred to an ambition to 'empower' workers (organiser, 1), and a UNISON organiser said that 'you have to empower – I don't really like the word but I use it – you have to empower the base' (organiser, 9). While the UNISON organiser appeared reticent to use the term empowerment given that it is more political than some of the words using in relation to organising, for IWW organisers, rhetoric of empowerment was a politically toned down way to describe the differences between IWW's ambitions and those of other unions:

> I think the aims of the IWW are certainly purer […] Most of the IWW members who've been recruited in workplaces would not be signing up to, socialist revolution, you know, that's not what they're aiming for at all […] I think it's purer, and more grassroots, more focussed on actually trying to organise, and empower people as well (support worker, 53).

The IWW member went on note that it is, however, difficult to empower members who 'expect' a service model of unionism. Another IWW member commented that he understands IWW's aim to empower members is, but that he

> Can also understand why people get worried […] I've been to a few meetings, informal chats really, and people have been interested [in the union] and they've come to these chats but then they've not really gone any further. And [IWW organisers have] basically said, 'what we can do is we can march on the management, and once we're in the office, we can make demands and everything.' And I know what people are thinking; they're thinking 'yeah but surely someone, a receptionist, will call the police' (former support worker, 57).

The aspects of activism which lead to feelings of empowerment might correlate with the aspects of activism which are the most militant. Workers in social care appeared less likely to participate in militant activism – given the precarity of their contracts and their fear that strikes could harm care recipients (see Section 4.4) – and could therefore be less likely to be empowered by union membership.

Union organisers' and members' rhetoric of union militancy was also gendered, aligning with a historical association between unionism and masculinity (Cunnison and Stageman 1993) which would seem to exclude feminised labour. The support worker interviewed who was a member of GMB and had been involved in IWW made the comment: 'if I went on strike, […] it's not just another day off. If you're a union man you go out at six in the morning waiting outside in the freezing cold sometimes with a placard on your shoulder' (support worker, 60). The politics of empowerment has gendered connotations even outside of a union context: Riger (1993: 279) writes that empowerment entails 'a preference for traditionally masculine concepts of mastery, power, and control over traditionally feminine concerns of communion and cooperation.' The masculine individualism of empowerment is difficult to reconcile with the feminised, cooperative labour of caring for others, and the individualist politics of empowerment also sits uneasily with the collectivist politics of the organising model (even though proponents of organising seem to view empowerment as a political ideal). Perspectives of workers involved in IWW demonstrated that in practice, empowerment can individualise union action. The administrative officer working for the union said: 'you are empowering workers as like, the goal, *a* goal, and that's really cool […] on the other hand it is like… some people aren't equipped to do that necessarily, and it puts them under a lot of pressure' (officer, 12).

This pressure on individuals also related to the small number of IWW activists. As noted in the previous two sections, the experiences of IWW organisers reflected those of mainstream organisers in their struggle to build workplace activism. But unlike mainstream unions, IWW did not have a reserve bank of paid employees to fall back on. The combination of only having volunteers and not having many volunteers created an overreliance on those who *are* active: 'the person organising [at the company] was so good, and so active, and he was pushing it so hard, absolute fucking legend, but he did that all on his own, and that's really shit' (organiser, 15). Involvement in other union responsibilities external to workplace organising, such as organising committee, were viewed as particularly arduous:

> Just as somebody gets an idea of what the area is and what the job really would entail, they realise it's too big on an unpaid basis and back up. And then we're going to be back to some other enthusiastic person stepping in and reinventing the wheel, of finding out how big the job is and getting into it and doing something and then stepping down (organiser, 10).

The overextension of activists created a dynamic where they were overworked rather than empowered, which then negatively impacted their ability to carry out organising. An IWW organiser argued: 'you can't have an area organiser such as myself […] and expect them to do anything of a decent job over those hundreds of square miles' (organiser, 10). Another IWW organiser commented that 'obviously the strength of the trade union movement is volunteers […] but asking people to do a full-time role like that in their free time? It just means everyone's gonna do a bit of a bad job' (organiser, 11). The effect of this pressure placed on members was apparent in the way that IWW deals with case work:

> The model that the IWW [has], how you handle case work is actually really similar [to] how mainstream trade unions do it. Which is that you've got a regional organiser – what most other organisations call a regional secretary or a regional officer – and essentially your role is [that] you're the back stop to case work. Reps should be doing stuff first, branches should be doing stuff first, but if they can't do it or if they're unable for whatever reason, it then gets passed up the chain and then the regional organiser picks it up (organiser, 11).

Given the precarious sectors that the union tends to organise within, case work often involved small companies without an HR department and without much of an understanding of employment regulations. An IWW member commented:

The repping [case work] I've done has mainly been through correspondence and emails with people […] Some of it is really small companies that don't understand UK employment law, and when you say like, 'this worker's legally entitled to a grievance' they respond like, 'I'm never going to change my mind so I'm not gonna have this meeting with you.' You're like, 'I wouldn't put that in writing, but that's your prerogative' [laughs] (organiser, 13).

When case work was more complex however, the requirements placed on regional organisers for IWW could be extensive. One of the regional organisers interviewed recalled:

We had a member […] who was facing a disciplinary last year […] that took out huge chunks of my time over three months, two and three evenings a week sometimes. My partner would come into the office and go, 'you've been on the phone for an hour, are you coming off the phone' […] and I thought, you just can't be doing that. You've got to pay people (organiser, 10).

The IWW administrator commented that 'I've done a little bit of case work-based stuff, but yeah it is scary' (officer, 12). Navigating the legal systems had been a 'disaster':

We got these court documents through saying you have to respond by x y z date. I didn't read it properly, and then there was another time where I didn't send the form back in time or something, and I felt like such an idiot for doing that. It damaged my confidence, 'cos you feel like, if it was just for me […] I'd be like, 'whatever, I tried'. When you're doing it for someone else and you mess it up [though] it's like, 'oh my god.' You just feel horrible (administration officer, 12).

The personal impact of carrying out case work was also evident in an interview with an IWW organiser. They recalled: 'I was quite involved in [case work] for a care worker, but then that was hideously complicated, and we ended up going to an employment tribunal and losing. It was really sad' (organiser, 15). The case work had been for a care worker who had been working as a carer for a family member, and the person withholding wages was another family member. The IWW organiser commented that the union branch took on the case

Without necessarily thinking through that we might not have the capacity to deal with case work that's this complex […] We were so excited about the fact that we were getting involved with like, a BME woman, and branching out from the usual activist-y scene, that we were like 'yeah, we'll jump on it' (organiser, 15).

Carrying out casework for the care worker had brought the tensions between grassroots activism and the skills involved in legal work into light:

It was a real uphill struggle I think getting money to get legal support. And that tussle between like, we're a tiny union, can we afford to pay for solicitors and stuff? And then there was this whole debate of 'oh no we can just do it ourselves!' And actually, had we have got solicitors, we had a deal with a firm but never really drew on them. So, I think that was like tension between being super grassroots and DIY and then getting to that point where either we grow and professionalise in some aspects, and keep the DIY aspects in others, or not (organiser, 15).

The personal impact of carrying out case work and the knowledge of legal systems that can be required was not fully conveyed to members in training. The IWW administrator highlighted a need to 'get across to people in training [that] it's difficult, sometimes things might go painfully wrong, but you have to just not be bothered about that, because you tried' (officer, 12). There were also instances where reps appeared *not* to have tried, which were damaging to members' perception of the union. An IWW member commented:

Some of the reps are useless, I will say that. There was a guy […] he's not working there anymore,[20] I took him in paperwork, took him absolutely everything, proof of my shifts, took in statements, and then didn't hear anything for a while, and suddenly, he's just disappeared with the paperwork […] Other people, I can't fault, it was just that one guy […] He just kind of disappeared. Didn't pass my case onto anybody else or anything like that, and 'cos of that I've lost all my evidence, and there was no chance of me getting a senior position back (support worker, 54).

This experience then had an impact on the worker's view of their own ability to carry out case work, having seen somebody else fail: 'why would I do something that I know that I'm not gonna be fully invested in, because I'm just gonna end up being another [rep like that] to somebody, do you know what I mean?' (support worker, 54). The experience of this member added weight to the opinion of a GMB officer that 'there's nothing worse actually than getting the wrong person to become a rep' (officer, 4).

As shown in Section 5.2, organisers and officers from GMB and UNISON knew that expecting already overworked members to carry out activism created pressure on workers. A UNISON organiser described why union activism could be 'a lot' for workers – regardless of whether they are overworked in their job – given the level of knowledge and experience it can require:

Why do we expect [members] to give up all this time to go to quite difficult case meetings, representation meetings where someone might be going through stress?

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[20] The member used the terminology of 'not working there' but the IWW representative would have been a volunteer.

Someone might have mental health issues and you're having to – without any mental health training – having to support them through a job revaluation, or a sickness absence monitoring where their job is on the line. It's a lot, you know. I've been in a lot, as a steward I was in a lot of meetings where actually this person could get the sack now, and I'd play a role in whether or not they will. It's a lot of pressure to put on someone who's just volunteering and has done one week's training (organiser, 7).

Activism appeared more feasible for workers with flexible work, those who were self-employed, and for students. IWW activism also appeared to be dominated by 'middle-class' activists: 'from the IWW locally and maybe nationally, it's actually very middle-class […] there have been a number of branch meetings that I've been in where over half of the attendees have PhDs. Which for a union meeting, is quite strange' (support worker, 53). An IWW organiser expressed the same view: 'the majority of us [in IWW] are effectively like middle-class white people' (organiser, 15). This 'academic' and/or middle-class nature of IWW was viewed by the Trades Union Council officer as one of the union's downfalls. He pointed to a disconnect between activists and the workers who they were aiming to organise when organising goes unpaid:

A fairly basic principle for the labour movement is, or should be, that people need to earn to live, to survive, and if you're suggesting organisers are exempt from that, [then] you're creating a situation [where] the only people who can be full time unpaid organisers are from the upper middle-classes, people with trust funds behind them. Which is not a line we would want to advocate I think (officer, 16).

Interviewees involved in IWW acknowledged this potential for organisers to be disengaged from those being organised. One member compared the roots of the IWW with the current day composition of the union, referring to one of the founding members of the IWW, Bill Haywood, and anarchist and union activist Emma Goldman:

Big Bill Haywood and all those tough guys, Emma Goldman, […] were people from like, really authentically struggling working class communities, weren't they? It wasn't that kind of university-based. I don't think they'd have trusted any of us if we were transported back in time: they'd be, 'who the fuck are these guys?' [laughs] (support worker, 53).

An IWW organiser commented that IWW was middle class because it was 'not recruiting from outside our lefty activist circles […] If we want to build that kind of recruitment then we need time and the resources behind it and we just don't have it' (organiser, 15). When organising did move beyond 'lefty' activists, it could become condescending, since the distance – cultural,

social or economic – between the organisers and the people being organised, remained. An IWW organiser described a manifestation of this 'who the fuck are these guys?' response in the efforts to 'salt' organisations, a term which refers to gaining employment with the intention to organise at a company. The organiser recalled an IWW member who, after graduating from a postgraduate course

> Got a job at a door factory to do like, salting, and was trying to organise people into the IWW there. He had mixed success getting people to join, being like, a super posh white middle-class man rocking up at a door factory (organiser, 15).

The organiser said that this class-based 'culture clash' between the salting member and the workers 'being salted' extended to new recruits' interactions with the IWW branch:

> I wonder how much of [the difficulty] comes from class privilege, right, to have like, the social and like, yeah class privilege to be able to be like 'oh I'm going to choose to do a job so I can organise', as opposed to 'I'm doing a job out of necessity, and because of where I stand, I organise' […] We recruited members through Greggs [the bakery] and through the door factory, but then they fell off quite quickly, and didn't become active members. And I think a lot of that was because the branch culture was a very like, middle-class lefty politico culture. And I feel like perhaps that sort of approach of people with huge amounts of privilege going in specifically to organise actually maybe like, highlighted the thing of 'I am choosing to work in a shit job', as opposed to 'these are the material conditions' (organiser, 15).

Furthermore, IWW activists often appeared upwardly mobile. An organiser commented on organisers leaving the branch: 'everyone's moved on, one of our members in one of the last meetings I went to put it best, she said "everyone's got real jobs now"' (organiser, 11).

The challenge of active union participation becoming dominated by middle-class workers was not unique to the IWW. A rep from UNISON, referring to attempts to hold a meeting between unionised support workers from both UNISON and GMB, argued that 'the difficulty in setting up meetings with different unions is that so far it is mainly middle-class men' (support worker, 49). Multiple other quotes emphasised that gender was a factor in workers' propensity to undertake union activism (Gall and Fiorito, 2012). An IWW organiser argued that the unpaid care responsibilities of women negatively affected their ability to engage in activism:

> In that schedule of juggling picking up kids from school, doing housework, doing 35 hours a week, doing two sleepover shifts, and making your husband's sandwiches […] there are a huge number of women who just think, "my husband would starve if I didn't

put the sandwiches in the fridge [laughs]. And an apple on top!" And they're not going to become an activist, they just won't (organiser, 10).

The impact of family life on activism was apparent in an interview with two office workers at the home care company. When discussing if there had been workplace representatives at the company, one office worker recalled a care worker who 'took [a pack from GMB about becoming a union rep] home to read and decided "no chance". She brought it back in […] she had kids, teenage kids. It was alright when they were a bit little, but not when they got older. She needed to be there for homework and things' (office worker, 25). A UNISON organiser said that he had been able to undertake activism as a union steward because 'I don't have kids, I had the time to do it and I enjoyed it' (organiser, 7).

IWW organisers also referred to issues of gender inequality within the structure of IWW which could deter women from joining. The only female IWW organiser I interviewed commented: 'when we were most active, the like, non-men didn't number very high […] Male voices dominated. It was an issue, it was very "bro"[21] in lots of ways' (organiser 15). This organiser, and other IWW interviewees, highlighted the provision of creches and childcare at IWW conferences as an example of the union's inclusivity: '[we] booked hotel rooms, we weren't telling people they had to sleep on fucking sofas at people's houses, we'd organised childcare' (organiser, 11), and 'free childcare, things like that, I mean that's just the first step really, but yeah people need to be able to participate' (officer, 12). However, the female IWW organiser had arranged this childcare:

> I remember getting into a massive huff at our organising summit a couple of years ago, when, somehow, I ended up organising the childcare, the catering, and the accommodation. And I was like, 'fuck you guys, I'm one of the only women involved in organising this and I've been dicked with [i.e. unfairly left with] the women's jobs' (organiser, 15).

This organiser commented that her experience mirrored that of another woman involved in IWW, who had been equalities officer at the union for three years in a row 'effectively […] because no one else ran. And in the end, she was like "fuck you guys, I don't want to be the equalities and inclusion officer [just] because I'm the only woman who regularly turns up"' (organiser, 15). The experiences of these women demonstrate that inclusion predicated on the

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[21] 'Bro' referring to a masculine, fraternal and/or sexist culture.

identity of an individual – in this instance, women carrying out 'feminine' work for the union – is not inclusive and contains gender stereotyping assumptions.

Multiple interviewees also brought up IWW's gender dynamics as a factor that contributed to the breakdown of the local branch: 'we had over 100 members for a while, had regular meetings, then just, you know how stuff goes. Stuff happens. There were internal issues around gender politics that alienated some people and became harder and harder' (former support worker, 59). According to the woman involved in IWW who had experienced these internal issues, the union did not have resources or organisational structure to improve its gender politics. The organiser described the issues:

> We had an accountability process that was really, really badly handled by the branch […] I think we definitely have problems with the way – when I say 'we' I mean the left as a whole – deal with sexual violence, and how we deal with issues around that. And I think often not only do we not have the skills to be able to deal with it well […] in many ways it's a capacity thing but I think this probably exists across the left, where we are sort of prefiguring a better gender politics, but because we don't have the structures of a post-revolutionary gender utopia, [we] end up in a situation where people are excluded and ostracised from communities […] We don't have the capacity to be able to give people the support that they need (organiser, 15).

IWW organisers viewed paying organisers as a means of improving such supportive capacity. Further, they argued that paying organisers could improve the gender composition of activism and extend the pool of activist beyond middle-class members. The organiser involved in establishing the paid administrative position viewed the process as a 'stepping-stone' towards payment for organising and towards redressing an ideological betrayal within the union: 'a trade union that thinks it can have a workforce that it doesn't pay, is a bit betraying its own principles I think' (organiser, 10).

GMB and UNISON organisers also discussed politics of gender and race within their employer organisations. A GMB organiser said: 'I have real frustrations with GMB, and with the leadership of the GMB and the fact that its male dominated, you know, middle aged, white men' (organiser 1). A UNISON organiser emphasised that her employer pressured workers to work overtime, supporting the argument that unions can be 'greedy organizations that place enormous pressures on those involved in both lay and paid roles' (Kirton and Healy, 2013: 68). This pressure negatively impacted women: 'you've got to be the first one there in the morning, and the last one to leave at night […] It's that mentality in the workplace, and that culture that

disadvantages especially women, people with caring responsibilities' (organiser, 8). The issue of overwork in the union also impacts disabled employees: '[I] talked about sickness and stuff [preventing workers carrying out unpaid work], how does that impact on our disabled members?' (organiser, 8). Decreasing the strain on union organisers would require a rejection of this overwork culture but – given the democratic structure of the union – policies improving gender equality could need a mandate from members. The UNISON organiser argued that

> The direction of the union comes from our NEC, that comes from our activist base. If they're traditionally, of a certain… trying to say this in a diplomatic way, of a certain age and, yeah, just stereotypically men that sit in a pub, ranting, then those activists need challenging as well. Whose duty is it to challenge them? That comes down to the training that's provided within not just the union but the TUC in general (organiser, 8).

This section has demonstrated some of the dilemmas faced in an activist model of unionism. Low participation levels concentrate activism among a small number of individuals, some of whom struggle with the often-substantial duties involved, which limit the potential of organising to empower workers. Drawing on findings, I have suggested that individualist notions of empowerment might be difficult to reconcile with the feminised collectivism of social care. The section has also considered who is *left out* of activism: IWW interviewees wanted to expand the union beyond 'effectively like middle-class white people' but acknowledged that reliance on volunteers created exclusion. IWW organisers saw paid organising roles as a means of countering this exclusion, as well as potentially reducing excessive pressures placed on unpaid organisers. This exclusion was not, however, limited to IWW as it was also referenced by GMB and UNISON organisers. As such, the solution which IWW organisers referred to – creating paid positions – had not had the effect of eliminating a dominance of middle-class, white, male, activists.

5.5 Discussion and conclusion

This chapter has described the limits of participatory activism under the organising model. Section 5.1 began by demonstrating how embedded the devaluation of social care is, even within the structures of trade unions. Organisers from GMB and UNISON faced internal pressures to maintain recruitment levels: analysis of the organising model therefore needs to take into account the organisational structures of trade unions. Unions need to consider the interaction between the structures of the union – as a bureaucratic and hierarchical organisation

– and the agency of individual organisers within these structures. Responses from IWW members and organisers who did not face the same pressure to recruit, however, suggest that an over-reliance on unpaid activism can negatively affect the sustainability of unionism. The view that 'ultimately [organising] is work for us' (officer, 12) and as such should be paid, and the simultaneous rejection of capitalist models of work creates contradictions which reflect debates on commodification of care. Union activists' understanding of activism as 'purer' when it is untainted by wages mirrors the perception that unwaged care is more altruistic – precisely the perception which, this thesis has argued, contributes to the devaluation of care.

Section 5.2 turned to the obstacles to implementing and sustaining member activism, focussing on 'active' participation. The findings suggest that organisers from all three unions maintained an ambition to build a workplace movement and engage activists. However, various factors curbed activism among members. Firstly, the high turnover of workers presents an obstacle both to recruitment and to activism. Secondly, the low pay, long hours and unpaid labour described in Chapter 4 can conflict with the requirements of union activism. Third, organisers emphasised that workers do not want to be 'seen' to participate in unionism, particularly when they are on zero-hour contracts. Section 5.3 focussed on workers' perception of the union as an additional factor which curbs activism. Union organisers emphasising participation come up against the persistence of the 'servicing' view of unionism among workers, with unions understood as providing workplace, 'rainy-day' assistance. The section went on to discuss the debates within unions over whether services remain important; from interviews with workers, the answer would appear to be a resounding 'yes', but the influence of a service rhetoric on participation levels cannot be ignored. Unions advertising add-on services, a reticence among workers to represent themselves, the cost of union dues, and the prevalence of exchange relationships under capitalism, all shape workers' attitude towards unions. In turn, workers' attitudes shape unions: 'you've recruited a member at the end of the day, but then you do walk away thinking "that member just wants a service, and what does that offer to the movement in general"' (organiser, 8).

Section 5.4 presented findings related to empowerment, class, and gender. Realising the empowering rhetoric of the organising model becomes difficult when the realities of low paid work are taken into account. Further, this chapter has questioned whether the individualist and masculine politics of empowerment 'fits' with the collectivist notions of the organising model. IWW organisers and members were concerned that unpaid activism can result in an exclusive

form of unionism. Using Gramsci's distinction between 'traditional' and 'organic' intellectuals (1971) referred to in Section 2.2.3 of the literature review, IWW activists were 'traditional' intellectuals in that they did not always share the class conditions of workers they were organising. Salting, in particular, differed as entering into employment was a choice: '"I am choosing to work in a shit job", as opposed to "these are the material conditions"' (organiser, 15). The culture and work structures of the union also embedded gender inequalities at all three of the unions. These tensions around paid and unpaid labour, union organisers and union structures, will be discussed further in Chapter 7. Before that, Chapter 6 moves on from activism and union services to examine strategies of bargaining and campaigns.

6. Recognition agreements and funding campaigns

Chapter 6 explores how unions interact with employers and local authorities. Section 6.1 contrasts how unions approach recognition agreements by comparing attempts by UNISON organisers and workers to obtain recognition via the statutory route, with GMB's use of voluntary recognition agreements at the home care company and at the residential care company. The section evaluates the success of these approaches both in terms of improvements to employment conditions and in relation to 'building the union.' Section 6.2 explores the relationship between recognition agreements and partnership unionism and discusses inter-union disputes. Section 6.3 considers the different business models operating in the social care sector and explores how funding constraints affect the outcomes of workplace bargaining. The section considers the role of the 'unfair price narrative' (Burns et al., 2016) and the processes of financialisation on unionism in the sector. Section 6.4 examines how unions aim to circumvent difficulties with bargaining through campaigns focussed on funding, for example UNISON's Ethical Care Charter (UNISON, 2012; Moore, 2017). It explores the role of party-political relationships in GMB and UNISON's unionism and IWW's rejection of such alliances in favour of direct-action campaigns. Section 6.5 draws together and discusses the findings of the chapter.

6.1 Voluntary and statutory recognition agreements

Literature suggests that, under the organising model, recognition agreements occur as a result of organising (Heery, 2002; Wills, 2003; Gall; 2010). Recognition agreements are a means to an end rather than an objective (Blyton and Turnbull, 1998). This perception was held by IWW organisers and members, who argued that recognition agreements might not be the primary ambition of organising but were still a useful tool. An organiser noted that the positive attitude towards recognition agreements in the UK IWW contrasted with the perspective of the US IWW, which was said to hold 'a very clear anti-recognition position.'[22] The organiser said:

> For me, [recognition agreements are] an angle which you could use to bend the employer's arm behind their back a little bit […] 'cos you get a lot of legal rights once

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[22] The organiser noted that at one point IWW in the US specified an anti-recognition stance in their rules. This appears to have been relaxed (see for example: https://organizing.work/2018/11/the-iww-campaign-at-ttx-part-i/).

you're a recognised trade union. That gives you a lot of strength that you wouldn't have otherwise, so you know, we always were aiming at getting [recognition agreements] where it was useful (organiser, 11).

Members and organisers involved in IWW suggested that the absence of recognition agreements among companies with IWW members was not because the union ideologically opposed them, but because of low membership. An organiser commented:

Three or four years ago there was more an anarchist mentality against it, on the lines that it's some corporate sell out type thing. I think that now it is more that we don't have the density of membership that you need in order to go for these recognition agreements (organiser, 13)

While accepting the usefulness of recognition agreements, IWW organisers differentiated IWW's perspective on recognition agreements from that of mainstream unions: 'with TUC trade unions it is usually the main focus […] whereas for the IWW it's just a tool in an arsenal really' (organiser, 11). This organiser criticised the lack of on-the-ground organising that was said to result from recognition agreements achieved by TUC-affiliated unions. He argued:

They get their recognition agreement, and then it's like, 'excellent, job done, we can wash our hands of this organisation now 'cos we're recognised there, we don't need to think about that one anymore, right, next organisation, let's go somewhere else next.' And when that happens obviously there's no one out there building up membership or anything like that (organiser, 11)

The perspectives of UNISON officers and organisers on recognition agreements differed. One officer highlighted the difficulty of gaining recognition agreements in social care: 'we don't have a lot of recognition […] I don't think it's that surprising cos it is a sector renowned for poor employment practices' (officer, 5). A regional organiser provided a more positive view – 'after four years we are winning, winning, winning' – and viewed these wins as achieved through membership: 'do you want me to say about how we achieved those recognition agreements? […] Generally, it's getting engagement with the workers' (organiser, 9). This process of organising *for* recognition (Heery, 2002; Gall, 2010) was apparent in the campaign for recognition carried out by the support workers who were UNISON members. The workers had initially attempted voluntary recognition and an organiser had approached management, with the assumption that they would react positively towards negotiations. The organiser commented that the management's perspective on the union shifted due to member discontent.

This discontent was related to three workers in the organisation going through grievance procedures over changes to their contracts (described in Section 4.1):

> I approached the management and said it'd be good to get a recognition agreement, and I thought they were gonna be on side with it, and they paid lip service at first […] I'm trying to negotiate a recognition agreement, and they were very unhappy with how robustly our members were getting […] represented. And they said that for that reason, they didn't want to recognise us, because basically they realised that our job was to represent members as best as we could, and then they realised that if they signed a recognition agreement they might have to put up with more people like me and my case worker colleague coming in and saying 'you shouldn't be doing this' (organiser, 7).

A UNISON member at the company referred to the increase in membership that had happened after management refused to recognise UNISON:

> Support worker, 50: Management could have just said yes […] I mean in a way it's probably been useful at making people have conversations about why you should be in a union and what you can get out of it, that's why it seems a bit self-defeating for management, 'cos [UNISON] have got a large part, nearly 50% of the workplace […] All the talk about the purpose of unions, all the talk about the kind of problems in communication in the way management work, [we were] airing those grievances really.
>
> Interviewer: I guess even though it's frustrating to have to work towards this, if you got a voluntary agreement like a year ago, you might…
>
> Support worker, 50: Have fewer members, yeah yeah yeah.

This view (albeit 'encouraged' through my interjection) suggests that campaigning for statutory recognition can be an effective way to increase membership. Increasing membership after recognition appeared to be more difficult. A UNISON organiser argued that 'the whole reason to get recognition is to get access across the board to recruit', then noted that 'there are care employers who will happily recognise UNISON, or unions, but it's interesting that sometimes even when they do we still struggle to recruit' (organiser, 7). This struggle was evident in interviews with GMB officers. In contrast to the UNISON organisers, GMB organisers viewed recognition agreements as primarily negotiated with *management* rather than grown through membership (contra the organising model):

> Organiser, 2: Recognition agreements are usually national, and our top people talk to their top people, sat at a boardroom table. My opinion is that they're not built up from the grassroots, you know, it's not about us organising our members in such a way that…
>
> Organiser, 3: It's very rare isn't it.

A GMB organiser noted that one company 'gave us recognition and we have very little in the way of membership', and remarked of another company: 'to be honest I've been working with the employer, I've had very little involvement with the people on the ground' (organiser, 1). In some instances, the process of achieving voluntary recognition was instigated by employers rather than by the GMB. A GMB organiser commented: 'some of these home care companies recently, they've approached us' (organiser, 3). The home care company researched for this thesis provides an example of this. The manager had approached the union himself and appeared to have then encouraged workers to join the union. The presence of this recognition agreement, and the union-friendly attitude of management, had not helped GMB to increase membership at the company. Membership levels at the company were lower at the time of the research than they had been early on in the establishment of the recognition agreement:

> We used to have about 30 members, we're probably down to about ten now, people leaving [the company]. And every induction that we do, we do a little piece about why it's good to join, it's only seven quid a month or something like that, it's worth every penny. There's forms for people to take away and fill in, we do all the arrangements, pay directly out of their wage or whatever. So, we take all the pain away, make it as easy as possible, but still people aren't interested (manager, 31).

An office worker at the company described the enthusiasm of the manager, and provided an example of disinterest amongst the company towards the union:

> [The manager] always says, 'you need to this and you need to do that', but he wants to get staff to join it, he does! He tells them, you need to join! [laughs] So it's on us really. He's all for it, but we just… not really [laughs] (office worker, 29).

Another office worker at the company also reiterated that the manager encouraged workers to join, but described membership levels as even lower than the 10 workers estimated by the manager:

> I have a crib sheet that I go and talk to [workers] about when they're being inducted, about sickness, travel time, their ID badge, contracts, training, shadowing, and it says 'if you want to be a member of the GMB then tell us, that's the recognised union for us, we'll get you a form and you can send it free post.' In the company, we've got two weeklies and two monthlies [categories referring to how often workers are paid]. That's all we've got in the GMB. Out of 110 (office worker, 25).

Despite assertions from office workers and the manager that workers were given information about GMB, frontline workers appeared largely unaware of the existence or purpose of the union. When I asked workers if they knew about of the recognition agreement with GMB, responses included:

> Care worker, 21: I did not.
>
> Care worker, 19: No, I don't know anything about that.
>
> Care worker 22: I don't know. I don't know if I'm aware of it to be fair.
>
> Care worker, 20: Er, I think I've heard of [GMB], but I don't really know much about them […] We haven't been told about that apart from today [laughs].
>
> Care worker, 24: Are [GMB] the governing bodies?

Only one care worker was aware of the recognition agreement. They said: 'we were given a leaflet when we were doing training, but I just forgot to pick it up and take it. But I know there is a union, I just hadn't thought about it' (care worker, 23). Making workers aware of the union on one occasion, amidst a deluge of other information regarding training and induction into the company, clearly did not have any significant impact on membership.

Workers' lack of awareness of the union suggests that recognition agreements do not by themselves serve as organising tools. For a recognition agreement to result in membership increases then regular visits from organisers would be necessary – something which did not appear to have happened at the home care company. One of the office workers blamed GMB for low membership in the company: 'they don't come here and do speeches to us or anything, […] they don't come here and do presentations, so we don't know what they're selling' (office worker, 26). A GMB organiser argued that the lack of membership at the company was because the manager was a 'decent employer […] people feel supported by him, so they don't feel that they need this sort of extra layer of protection and support' (organiser, 1). As discussed in Chapter 4, workers at the company *did* have positive view of the manager, but the dissatisfaction with pay, contracts, and bullying suggested that workers would also be receptive to extra support.

Another GMB organiser argued that recruitment at the company had been difficult not because of the lack of enthusiasm from the manager, but because the office staff – who had said that GMB do not carry out visits – thwarted attempts by GMB to recruit. The organiser said:

> It didn't always work, recruitment, because some of his more junior managers insisted on sitting in on them all. And the staff were very reluctant to speak to me because they were there. I don't think [the manager] is the problem, I think it's the more junior managers. Now if they weren't there I think they'd all have joined up (organiser, 3).

The divisions between frontline staff and office staff at the company detailed in Chapter 4 supported this view – as did the hub manager telling me not to carry out interviews with care workers in the company office because they would feel uncomfortable being interviewed near office staff.

The difficulty of recruiting using a recognition agreement was also apparent at the residential home. A voluntary recognition agreement had transferred via TUPE to the home when a large care provider, which had an agreement with GMB, had collapsed. The residential homes which the provider had run were bought up by a variety companies, including the company researched for this thesis. Unlike at the home care company, management at the residential home held no enthusiasm for the recognition agreement. The office administrator expressed uncertainty over what the TUPE transfer of the recognition agreement entailed and annoyance over its existence: 'we can't not have them come in or something, I don't know […] obviously 'cos we agreed with them when we was [under previous ownership], it's got to stay. I don't understand it' (office administrator, 46). I asked the interim manager whether the agreement with GMB was inherited from the previous company, and she replied: 'to be absolutely certain Grace, I've no idea' (manager, 48). The manager, who was herself a member of RCN, appeared to have a tolerant approach to the recognition agreement:

> I wouldn't have any objection to them, obviously, visiting. It's not a problem, not a problem at all […] I'm sure if they have been in the building [the office administrator] would have been aware of that and said, 'yes it's not a problem', on my behalf […] I wouldn't have, as I say, no objection to that (manager, 48).

The welcoming attitude of the residential home manager towards unions might not have been reflected in practice. A GMB organiser commented:

I'm guessing that [you were told] we have a brilliant relationship with [the company]? That isn't replicated in the homes. [The home] is awful, we never see anybody. Never see anybody. Can get in, [but] they shove me in the cellar, next to the laundry, never see anybody. Never see anybody. So, I don't have access to people. I have access, but not to people (organiser, 3).

Whether organisers are given access to workers – and whether workers are told about visits from organisers – it became clear that workers at the residential home had little to no awareness of GMB (echoing the lack of awareness of workers in the home care company). This was apparent in the following exchanges:

Interviewer: I was wondering if anyone's come in from GMB and talked to you at all?

Care assistant, 35: No, I don't know anything about that.

Interviewer: Have you seen anyone from the union come in?

Care assistant, 34: I don't think so, no. No idea. Just completely never heard of it.

Interviewer: Do you know much about what GMB do?

Care assistant 42: No not really. What is it? Do you know what it is?

At both companies where GMB had a recognition agreement then, using a top-down approach seemed largely ineffective as a strategy to organise in the workplace. GMB organisers' experiences of bottom-up campaigning for statutory recognition were primarily related to *retaining* recognition. In some instances, these agreements ended due to the intractable position of management: 'usually [they end] informally, [management] will just kind of say, "we're not gonna talk to you […] we're not interested now, we never have been"'(organiser, 2). It was then difficult to hold on to recognition because of the low levels of support from workers. One organiser claimed that 'because the members aren't realising the ill effects of losing recognition, they're not fighting to retain that recognition' (organiser, 2). New members at the company, unaware of previous gains made through recognition agreements, were said to dismiss recognition since 'you don't miss what you never had' (organiser, 2). The GMB organiser viewed the process of regaining recognition through statutory procedures, if the recognition agreement was lost, as difficult because of inaction from members:

We then have to rely on the strength of our numbers of membership to be able to combat that through the statutory, CAC [Central Arbitration Committee] route […] Being honest, even the membership didn't fill in the form. And it was a simple, "I agree that

we should be recognised" […] fill this in, put it in a free post envelope and send it back […], unless you can convince your members of the point in doing that, then you're not gonna win a ballot that the CAC would carry out (organiser, 2).

Frequent changes in company ownership in the care sector added to the challenge of using recognition agreements as a tool to increase membership. GMB organisers argued that this could make 'good' relationships with employers less useful, referring here to two large care providers in the sector:

> Organiser, 3: [Provider 1] are fairly anti-union I think, but [provider 2] bought those [care homes]. So, we got in, and we talked to our members and people were recruited and joined…
>
> Organiser, 2: We got really excited.
>
> Organiser, 3: And then [provider 2] went, 'actually we're gonna sell these on.' So, within six months it's gone from [provider 1] to [provider 2] to another company.

Chapter 5 emphasised the high turnover of workers in the sector, and the negative impact of this turnover on the ability of union organisers to retain members and build activism. Similarly, the high turnover of company *ownership* represents a challenge if organising is affected by the varying position taken by employers towards unions.

This section has illustrated procedures and perspectives relating to recognition agreements with employers. The approach of IWW organisers represented the view of organising as a 'tool', rather than an end goal. Support workers' pursuit of a statutory recognition agreement with UNISON revealed insights into organising for recognition through increasing membership: the employer's refusal to recognise UNISON was offset by the gains made through recruiting to achieve statutory recognition. This supported the organising narrative that members are essential to union growth. In contrast, GMB organisers stressed achieving support from managers in order to gain voluntary recognition, and viewed statutory recognition as an unfeasible tactic given low membership and low engagement. At both the home care company and the residential home, the top-down negotiated agreements appeared to be an ineffective way to increase membership.

6.2 Weak partnerships and inter-union disputes

This section examines the extent to which the recognition agreements described by interviewees were partnerships: first, to understand how organising and partnership approaches relate, and second to explore the political implications of utilising partnership approaches alongside organising. It then goes on to consider the role of partnership style agreements in inter-union disputes. As noted in Chapter 2, the TUC pragmatically combined the organising model with partnership in the 1990s. Interviews with the TUC officer and the Trades Union Council representative highlight the continuing reliance of the TUC on partnerships. From the perspective of the Trades Union Council representative, this reliance demonstrated the politically moderate nature of the TUC: that 'the national TUC again and again come up with these really vague, misguided, very sort of liberal partnership model type strategies […] for me they're almost a lost cause' (officer, 16). This 'liberal partnership model' was apparent in the perspective of the TUC officer:

> You've got to wear two hats. Yes, you've got to make sure that your members are treated fairly, and their interests are enhanced, and you get pay rises and stuff, conditions. But you've also got to have one eye on what the business is doing because if you wreck the business, we're all out of work. So, having that relationship with the employer is as essential as having it with your members […] And sometimes the members look at the union and think, 'they're all in bed with the management', you know. But they're not […] You have to take that overall view that there might be a bit of pain, but it's better for the company and therefore better for the union […] If things deteriorate, you can be as nasty as you need to be, but always start off on a good footing. Build a relationship with [employers], say 'if you've got a problem we'll try and help' (officer, 17).

As TUC affiliated unions, GMB and UNISON utilised this 'two hats' approach to varying extents. A UNISON organiser noted that 'maybe recognition could in certain circumstances have the air of the union being too pally with the organisation', but suggested that 'once recognition is explained, most [members] are in favour of it' (organiser, 7). This apparent pragmatism in relation to partnerships had its limits. A UNISON organiser cautioned that recognition agreements can deviate away from an intention to defend workers:

> I mean UNISON does have elements […] where recognition's more long run, and it kind of goes a bit astray, and people really value their relationship with the managers more than they value their relationship with the members, because they think they get things if they have a really good relationship with managers (organiser, 9).

The organiser associated this manager-friendly approach with other UNISON regions. He referred to the attitude of organisers in those regions as: 'keep your heads down, do partnership deals with employers, don't really challenge employers, be very nice, and they might be able to let you through the front door occasionally' (organiser, 9).

The support workers who were UNISON members had initially viewed recognition as a means of creating a balanced relationship between staff and management, as more of a partnership. A member commented that gaining recognition would mean, 'just having some kind of two-way process of communication which isn't often there', even if '[management] might not listen' (support worker, 50). By refusing to voluntarily recognise the union, as detailed in the above section, the management caused 'resentment and stuff […]. What does that say for the relationship between the union and management, which could have been a lot easier?' (support worker, 50). Another member argued that management could have put procedures in place to give workers more of a voice, but that in doing so they would have undermined organising efforts:

> It would seem very [typical of the company] to set up a monthly committee, staff welfare committee or something, and if they did that it would be really effective. I think they would like to undercut union organising loads. I think a lot of people would be like, 'what's the point, they listen to us.' 'Cos already I think there's quite a lot of good feeling […] I think they could have pushed that even more by doing something like that, but they just haven't and now it's too late (support worker, 50).

The union members at the company had not, therefore, been averse to a partnership-style recognition agreement; suggesting support for the UNISON organiser's observation that 'once recognition is explained, most [members] are in favour of it' (organiser, 7). But they acknowledged that taking a more militant approach had likely been more effective in recruiting members than a partnership approach.

A GMB officer also commented that workers were generally amenable to partnership arrangements:

> I genuinely think most members will understand there has to be a relationship or a dialogue between management and the unions and the workers. That sometimes will be good and sometimes will be bad. That's just the nature of the beast, isn't it? […] Just trying to have a conversation to get things done, you know (officer, 4).

The officer argued that the most productive approach in the sector would be to use sectoral bargaining agreements, whereby 'the unions would be recognised as somebody who works with employers […] we have [sectoral bargaining] in health, we have it in local government, we have partnership working, we sit down, we talk, we negotiate.' This partnership working would, she argued, legitimise the unions.

Like UNISON organisers and officers, the GMB officer also suggested though that partnerships (with individual employers) had to be utilised with caution. The officer noted the importance of educating union activists about the potential for employers to manipulate partnerships:

> One of the things we do show in training the reps is to recognise when you've been played by management. And we go through a whole, literally a whole training session of things that can happen to you as a rep, how things can go wrong and how managers can manipulate (officer, 4).

GMB organisers also noted that some employers viewed the union as something which they could use for their own advantage, rather than as an organisation which defends workers. One organiser said that employers sometimes approach recognition agreements as a means for them to gain political influence, with the union carrying out lobbying on their behalf: 'I don't think it's all of a sudden all these people thinking "ooh we need to look for trade union recognition!" I don't think it's that, I think there's a political need on their part' (GMB organiser, 3). The manager at the home care company – who *had* thought he needed to 'look for' trade union recognition – was motivated to work alongside the union for a variety of reasons unrelated to improving working conditions and pay levels. The manager highlighted the potential for union partnership to improve care quality: 'one of the reasons for partnering up with the GMB union was around can we deliver quality care, can we look after our carers as well as our customers, and can we do things a bit differently?' (manager, 31). The union's interests were, the manager argued, aligned with the success of the business:

> The union were kind of saying 'well we're not going to pressure you into giving a pay rise because it doesn't look like you can afford to give a pay rise, and we'd rather have people in a job than, you know, you give a pay rise and you go bust in six months' time'. Then everybody's out of work (manager, 31).

According to the manager, the union could legitimise an absence of a pay rise: 'I wanted the union involved in [pay negotiations], so that carers had an understanding that I weren't paying them National Minimum Wage 'cos I'm riding about in a Rolls Royce' (manager, 31). The manager also considered GMB to be a form of 'professional support' for workers against claims from care recipients or their families and against company disciplinaries. Perhaps surprisingly he viewed himself as the main threat to workers, commenting:

> I wanted the protection for carers. That worst case scenario that they found themselves in a disciplinary hearing, that they had professional support. So that we didn't take advantage of their predicament or situation that they were in […] As an employer I could have sacked and dismissed many, many people very, very easily. Didn't seem fair (manager, 31).

Voluntary agreements can therefore be driven by interests which are not directly related to improving extant working conditions: for the home care manager, these interests included quality of care, justifying existing employment practices, and preventing his own future actions which might be detrimental to workers.

While GMB officers and organisers appeared to approach partnerships with caution, their use of top-down recognition agreements suggests that partnerships were an important aspect of their organising strategies. Further, UNISON organisers argued that GMB uncritically enter into overly friendly relationships with employers:

> Do you want me to tell my truth? [GMB] do sweetheart deals, too often they do sweetheart deals.[23] I'm sure there's some good organisers in the GMB, and I have come across some […] but often they're about sweetheart deals (organiser, 9).

The criticism centred around GMB's low membership levels in companies where they have recognition agreements. The UNISON organiser referred to 'a big provider which GMB got recognition with, minimal density, but recognition' (organiser, 9). Another UNISON organiser argued: 'I don't know of any cases where UNISON have got recognition with a company where we haven't got any members' and commented that gaining recognition without membership was 'suspicious' (organiser, 7).

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[23] The pejorative phrase 'sweetheart deal' refers to relationships between unions and employers which benefit both parties without benefiting workers.

UNISON organisers also suggested that GMB worked alongside employers to ensure quality of care – precisely what the manager of the home care company had hoped for. A UNISON organiser argued:

> I think some unions do tend to blur the boundaries […] They tend to be in their pockets. We had a care company where GMB had bought lots of equipment for the company! Like defibrillators, and things like that, that had the GMB logo over everything. So, we had our members saying, 'well why aren't UNISON doing that?' And we were saying, 'because that's the company's responsibility to provide that equipment, it's not ours' (organiser, 8).

But this cooperative approach of helping to improve care quality was not entirely dismissed by UNISON employees. A national officer referred to instances of 'enlightened employers' who 'genuinely value having union recognition amongst their workforce […] because we do offer things like training courses that they can't afford to deliver' (officer, 6).

Another strategy used by GMB, and associated with partnerships, was to negotiate recognition with companies using members who have a more senior role within the company as 'connections.' A GMB organiser referred to a care provider where

> The Chief Exec is a member of ours. She's been in the union a long time and we've had a very good relationship with her […] And we've got a recognition on the basis of us knowing her, because at the point of recognition I think we only represented about three members. We had her, we had a chief operations officer, and the lead rep on their employee council (organiser, 1).

The Trades Union Council officer commented on this organising approach: 'we came across […] various employment sites [in retail and hospitality] where the unions have recognition but most of the members were managers and supervisors […] You're obviously in very dicey territory' (officer, 16). IWW organisers and members argued that unionism should avoid this 'dicey territory' by focussing on lower level staff: 'Don't let managers join, simple as that. There's a conflict of interest there (support worker, 53). The member referred to IWW's loosely followed rule of 'anyone who can hire and fire is not allowed to be a member' as a factor which demonstrates the distance between IWW's model of unionism and a partnership approach: 'this is for ground level staff, this isn't for management, and this isn't a partnership.'

A UNISON organiser similarly emphasised the conflict of interest in the workplace, which partnerships can neglect to acknowledge:

> It's a bit like *Animal Farm*; I don't think [organisers] realise how dangerous it is sometimes. They're quite nice people, they're not horrible people by any means, and they're sitting with managers at the table and it's like suddenly they're Napoleon[24] – you know the story of *Animal Farm*? […] You can't see the difference […] I said to people, 'whatever you do, don't sit with the managers.' Actually, they're quite nice managers, but you don't sit with them (organiser, 9).

A GMB officer provided a very literal example of workers not being able to 'see the difference' between managers and union organisers at one care provider:

> I remember walking into a home. I had my GMB white shirt on with the GMB logo on there, black trousers, and I went up to a manager and thought 'Christ we look the same.' She had a [company] top on, with an orange scarf, white top, orange scarf, black trousers. I went, 'note to self' […] People think of it logically and go 'oh you must be together', and then what's the point? What's the point of being in the union because it's just the company anyway? […] So, you've got to be very aware, so when I speak to members, I make it very clear that [the company] pinched our colours. GMB's been that colour for years (officer, 4).

The voluntary recognition agreement between the home care manager and GMB demonstrated the impact of workers' viewing the union as 'just the company.' The manager's enthusiasm about the union – 'he tells them, "you need to join!"' (office worker, 29) – meant that workers did not view it as something which was for *them*:

> I don't think I am a member. Do I have to become a member, or…? […] Generally, if you have any problems it'd probably go through management, then the union, or whatever. But I'm not sure how it works, 'cos I'm not a member. […] I wouldn't sign up to it and not know anything about it, so. I could probably ask [the manager] about it actually, about the union and just see what it requires, and then sign up to it if I can (care worker, 22).

The sometimes-accusatory tone used by organisers to describe other unions' partnership strategies demonstrates that partnerships can generate inter-union tension. This tension was apparent in the challenges to the CAC over recognition agreements suggestive of partnerships,

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[24] In Orwell's allegory of Stalinism, farm animals – led by a pig called Napoleon – engage in a rebellion against the farmers. By the end of the novel the pigs have become indistinguishable from the men that the resistance had been waged against: 'the creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which' (1956: 139).

which frustrate organising efforts of other unions. The TUC officer commented: '[UNISON] come to me, "they're pinching our members", and GMB will come to me, "they're stopping us getting recognition"' (officer, 17). A UNISON organiser provided an instance of this conflict: 'GMB have just got recognition in Wakefield […] They had like 14 members with the council, so why did the council then give recognition? We're saying it's a violation of the agreement. They shouldn't have got that' (organiser, 8).

According to one IWW organiser, IWW had been a victim of this process. The union had been organising in workplaces where managers had chosen to enter into recognition agreements with a more partnership-appropriate trade union:

> In a warehouse in the Midlands […] IWW applied for a recognition agreement and then the company found a TUC union that had no members there to have a recognition agreement with instead which is, you know, a pretty scummy move (organiser, 13)

The TUC officer also referred to this practice. The officer commented that '[IWW] tried to set up a branch [in a café] and the woman who was a manager called me in, said "will you come and talk to [the workers] 'cos I'm not recognising the wobblies"'[25] (officer, 17). The mainstream union which was given recognition at the workplace was viewed by the manager as offering a more palatable solution to the conflicts regarding pay than that offered by the IWW. The bottom-up organising initiatives which IWW engaged in were undercut, highlighting the ways that militant unionism can be superseded if a more 'moderate' union seeks voluntary recognition with the employer (Blyton and Turnbull, 2004: 163).

Section 6.2 has suggested that cooperation between the union and managers sometimes corresponds to a weak form of partnership, even when the recognition agreement is not named as such. From the perspective of UNISON organisers, and from the perspective of the home care manager, the strategies employed by GMB align more with partnership unionism than with an organising model. Individual GMB organisers and officers acknowledged that employers sometimes enter into recognition agreements to improve the business as opposed to improve working conditions. While these individual organisers and officers expressed distrust of partnerships, the overall strategy of GMB seems geared towards that form of unionism. This section has also explored the disputes between unions caused by the various approaches to

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[25] 'Wobblies' refers to the IWW.

partnership. Notably, IWW's lack of legitimacy in the eyes of management positions them on the back foot.

6.3 Funding structures, market competition, and bargaining constraints

While this thesis does not aim to establish whether workers in the sector experience poor employment conditions and low pay *because* the employers face financial constraints, it does examine how funding levels and employment conditions impact organising strategies. The effects of funding levels on organising will be explored in this section. As noted in the thesis' introduction and in Section 2.1.5 of the literature review, private companies in the social care sector generally remain reliant on local authorities for funding. At the home care company, care recipients were on 'spot contracts' where the local authority allocates a certain number of hours of care to each care recipient individually (a care package). The care recipients who were privately funded were 'perhaps 10%, a small amount' (manager, 31) of the total number of care recipients. The small number of self-funded 'private' care recipients at the company frequently transferred to spot contracts: they 'end up spending the money that they've got in their savings and then become local authority funded, 'cos they're skint now' (manager, 31).

The manager believed that the quality of care suffered due to the predominance of spot contracts and short visits: 'the way that the sector's designed […] we're selling 15 minute and 30 minute timed care visits to people, and to be able to provide the level of quality and the level of personalisation is extremely difficult' (manager, 31). He argued that this funding structure also meant that any increase to pay was impossible, and suggested that GMB had agreed as much:

> When I looked at it, it weren't really financially feasible or sustainable, so I met with the GMB and we were having a conversation around what we could afford pay-wise […] The union were kind of saying 'well, we're not going to pressure you into giving a pay rise because it doesn't look like you can afford to give a pay rise, and we'd rather have people in a job than, you know, you give a pay rise and you go bust in six months' time' (manager, 31).

The GMB organiser involved in the recognition agreement at the home care company indicated some support for this claim, commenting: 'I've got the battle over travel time and pay […] but I think it all still comes down to the same thing, that the hourly rate [from the local authority]

is just way off where it should be' (organiser, 1). But a worker at the company argued that her employer paid less than care providers in the same area who received the same rate from the local authority: 'I did a bit of research and we are the lowest paid care company around here' (care worker, 24). This worker seemed to be basing this estimation on the fact that she was paid the same as younger employees at the company, meaning that her pay was lower than workers of her age and experience level employed by other companies (a topic which will be explored in Section 6.4).

The majority of the care recipients at the residential home were also publicly funded. Care provision was initiated through social services, NHS continuing healthcare funding (CHC) and NHS funded nursing care (FNC). The company prioritised increasing the levels of privately funded residents who, unlike in the home care company, appeared able to pay substantially more than the publicly funded residents. The regional HR manager commented: 'obviously we're looking at getting the highest [number of self-funded residents] from across the business, the fees are what keep us going, so we're looking to that across the board in every home' (HR staff, 47). The care home was part of a group of refurbished homes, and this group of homes was a subsidiary of another company which had only privately funded residents. The manager said there was 'not a vast amount of difference between the two,' but that the refurbished homes were separated from the company's main operation as 'we didn't want them linking [because the other group of homes] are kind of top end, luxury' (manager, 48). The company was financed through a Real Estate Investment Trust with profit paid to investors,[26] unlike the home care company.

A GMB organiser said that bargaining at the residential company was difficult: 'we do consult with them […] but they don't give us, I don't even wanna use the word generous? They don't give us any decent pay' (organiser, 2). Another organiser interjected sarcastically: 'penny above, penny above! They're a penny above, they're not a minimum wage employer!' (organiser, 3). The company defined whether they were poor payers by comparing pay at their company with pay at other companies. Pay was therefore established not through bargaining but through market competition: if a worker had left to work at a different company for a higher wage, then management would consider increasing wages at their company. From the

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[26] The company's private equity backing was not referenced in interviews, but this information is publicly available on the internet (I have not cited a direct source in order to retain the company's anonymity).

perspective of the residential home manager, any increase above the statutory minimum wage served the purpose of distinguishing the company from other employers:

> I think [pay] is pretty set […] as part of the discussions that our company has with the GMB every year, I think obviously they talk about pay, but ultimately, you know we are a private company and we don't pay anybody minimum wage kind of thing, so we are, you know a good employer in terms of salaries. We obviously check with other people in terms of the care sector and the care providers, you know, we're not poor payers kind of thing (HR manager, 47).

Referring at first specifically to the 'penny above' the statutory minimum wage at the residential home, the GMB organisers went on to argue against GMB's moderate approach to bargaining more broadly:

> Organiser, 3: The problem is, in the past, and I don't wanna sound like I'm criticising what our union have done, [but] we've put our hands up and we've recommended [small pay increases]! What?!
>
> Organiser, 2: It's time that we have to start a culture of rejecting crap pay deals, where historically, our union has had a culture of saying, 'just accept it, it's the best we're gonna get, let's not have a fight, let's do better next year', and change needs to come…
>
> Organiser, 3: But have we chosen the right time to have that fight? I don't know.
>
> Organiser, 2: In my opinion there's never a good time is there. […] You've just got to say, 'now is the time'.

The organisers feared that recommending token pay increases, or no increase at all, could make the union appear ineffectual and negatively impact membership. One of the organisers commented: 'because we're getting so few gains within the care sector, you can see [workers] thinking 'why should I even bother with joining one because what can you do for me? If the best that we can ever negotiate is minimum wage, why should I bother?' (organiser, 3). Providing evidence of this happening, a non-member at the residential home criticised the union's inability to raise wages at the company, referring – like the organisers – to the 'penny above' statutory minimum wage pay increase. But even when workers thought that the union *could* increase wages, the potential to benefit from the presence of a union and 'freeload' could deter them from actually joining the union. Another worker at the company commented that '[the union] fight the corner for the people what's in the union – like for the wage rise and all the rest of it – and we all get it anyway, so what's the point [of joining]?' (laundry worker, 37).

Financialisation – which could have been a factor in these challenges to bargaining at the residential home, given the financial structure of the company – was cited by organisers and officers from GMB and UNISON as an obstacle to organising in the sector. They argued that private equity added to confusion over who is responsible for low pay:

> [Private equity] is just an extra step removed isn't it really? There's no transparency whatsoever. At least with a bog-standard basic company, you should be able to see those profits in black and white. Whereas when they're kind of leveraged up to the hilt with private equity, you're never quite sure (officer, 6).

A UNISON organiser argued that 'there is a point about a reality, [care provider] could have afforded [to pay] the real living wage[27], for instance, but they decided to tax export their profit and to service a 10% debt' (organiser, 9). A GMB officer argued that some companies are financially struggling, while others are 'doing quite well thank you very much' (officer, 4). The officer provided as an example a company which 'made a loss of 6.5 million in 2018 but […] paid an estimated 40 million in rent to offshore companies of the group.' She went on to discuss the difficulty of bargaining within this context: 'our members are being paid statutory minimum holidays, and trying to get them anything more than that you just get thrown back, "funding's an issue, funding's an issue," well is funding really an issue when you're doing payments like that?' Another company which was backed by private equity had 'basically said "there's no point negotiating with us, we've got nothing to give, we're gonna pay statutory minimum [wage], but other than that you're not gonna get anything."' Yet GMB's approach to this financialisation is inconsistent, as examined in Section 6.4.

Effective collective bargaining becomes both more difficult and more necessary when firms are financialised; a growing body of research has shown that the financialisation of care providers negatively impacts job quality (Horton, 2017). Workers and organisers emphasised, however, that not-for-profit companies also utilise poor employment practices. The support workers interviewed for this study were employed by charities. At the company where IWW members were working, the care recipients were (as with the care recipients at the home care company and the residential home) a mixture of local authority funded and privately funded individuals. One of the workers said:

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[27] The wage calculated by the Living Wage Foundation is higher than the so-called National Living Wage (i.e. statutory minimum wage), and takes into account how much workers require 'to get by', see: https://www.livingwage.org.uk/what-real-living-wage

> In terms of referrals and how clients start with the company, a lot of it is through the council […] You do also get private individuals who can pay. Wealthier individuals, often who have children that they wanna have care for, will approach the company and work out contracts (support worker, 53).

The local authority remained the primary, and most essential, customer for the company. Losing contracts from the local authority could therefore have a significant impact on the company. The instigating factor in this loss of business appeared to be CQC inspections:

> [The company has] predominantly council contracts, and you know, [they] can be blocked from taking on council contracts. For example, my company has been in trouble with the CQC a number of times […] The running of the company generally, all of that was piss poor. All of that was 'need for improvement.' So there was a point when we were actually blocked from taking on any more services from the council […] but I think that ban's been lifted now (support worker, 53).

Notably, bans of this type are dependent on poor quality of care, not poor-quality working conditions. The support worker went on to stress that the company's charitable status did not prevent extreme pay disparity among workers:

> They're often run with a business mentality still, and they often have highly paid CEOs and upper management, and there's a real tension between the needs of the workforce and the need of […] the charity itself, but also upper management and their own. You know in my company, for example, its ostensibly not for profit, but the CEO's apparently on 100k, his wife's on 100k. The senior manager is on a similar amount. And so, clearly there are some people in that company profiting (support worker, 53).

The support worker noted that support workers were not made aware of manager's wages but, in this instance, a colleague 'who was working in the office actually saw the paperwork for the management's salaries and told us how much they were earning' (support worker, 53).

The company where the UNISON members worked was divided into a residential service and a day centre which each appeared to have different funding arrangements. The company was a foundation with a charity status, and received a mixture of public funding, charitable donations, grants, and loans. Day centre users were either funded privately or through local authority care packages. A support worker employed in the day centre commented on the company's ambition to grow by using new activities to attract new customers:

> Loosely my department is supposed to be kind of, catering for adults with the highest capacity, and those whose funding is being put right back to like, doing exciting, crazy things so that they'll spend their tiny amount of personal payment on our services (support worker, 52).

Given that a proportion of these adults would be dependent on the local authority fee payment for their care package, it would be difficult for the company to increase spending on additional services unless funding from the local authority increased. The support worker went on: [The company] is getting bigger, but whether it will continue to... I mean it's a very, very big if […] people's personal payments are like, snatched.' Again, company growth (or survival) was dependent on the funding capacity of local authorities – in this instance, because the company was seeking to encourage care recipients to spend their local-authority allocated personal payments on services provided by the company. The tension between increasing consumption of care and decreasing state spending on care became apparent.

Organisers took a dim view of charities providing care services. A UNISON organiser commented: 'I find [charities] more difficult. They're more pious, they're more "we're right and we're doing it from the goodness of our hearts, and we really have to cut workers' pay, cos we're a charity, don't have the infinite means"' (organiser, 9). An officer at UNISON noted that 'the worst kind of employment problems we've had in the past […] have been in the charitable sector', and an IWW organiser argued that 'charities seem to think you're working for a charity so it doesn't matter if you do half an hour extra in a day' (organiser, 14). The tensions between union organisers and charities had been brought into focus by actions by the charity Mencap. UNISON had initially won an employment tribunal case against Mencap in 2017 over night shifts being paid less than the statutory minimum wage (as described in Section 4.1). Mencap appealed, seeking to avoid both future increases and 'backpay', and were successful.[28] An IWW organiser argued:

> The thing with Mencap is it has got millions and it could have paid the backpay. Mencap would not have vanished, it would have made a big hole in their reserves as a charity. But it just shows how hard-nosed these charities are. When it comes to paying, they're as ruthless as any big business. They were still happy to be paying £30 for a sleepover shift. And despite the fact that they are a charity they didn't sort of think, 'our workers shouldn't be on minimum wage' […] Clement Attlee, wasn't it, that said 'charity is a cold, grey, loveless thing'? [laughs] (organiser, 10).

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[28] At the time of writing, this decision has been appealed by UNISON and will be heard in the Supreme Court.

When situating employers' approaches within the market competition of the care sector, organisers and officers acknowledged that providers are not always able to make a profit. In this instance, the care contracts are handed back to the local authorities. The contracts are then either given to providers which *are* able to make a profit – through wage exploitation or through a more adapt navigation of business costs – or to companies which are not concerned with profits. (Discussing the latter, a GMB organiser referred to 'philanthropists' [organiser, 1] running home care companies as a rare occurrence.) The practice of handing back contracts was commonplace: a UNISON officer noted that 'something like a third of local authorities have had at least one provider hand contracts back in the last year or something […] they can't make any money out of it, so they're just not bothering' (officer, 6).

The privatisation of social care is not total, and some services remain provided directly by local authorities (in England 6% of residential care and 11% of home care provision are publicly provided [Hudson, 2016]). Workers from both the charities analysed here expressed disparate views of the quality of care provided directly by the council. A UNISON member from the day centre commented that her company was 'explicitly compared to council run services in the induction, and everything that you're taught at the start is about how it's just so much different. It's like a new model of care almost, it's really quite grandiose' (support worker, 52). From this perspective, charities are superior – at least according to the management – to in-house council services. Yet an IWW member from the supported living service viewed council-provided care as high-quality care. He said that council employees, in this instance working at a day centre, disparaged private-provided care:

> The council staff, because we're private sector, they look down on us. So we're trying to do the best for the client, because their family sends them to the day centre and pays for us to provide one to one support, but the council staff whose job it is to run the day centre, can just make our lives bloody difficult […] I would go as far as to say, the worst part of my job, right now. The council do not like us at all (support worker, 55).

As this research did not involve anyone employed directly by a local authority, insight into working conditions resulting from that funding arrangement is limited. Union organisers suggested, however, that a rose-tinted view of publicly provided services in the sector is misleading. A UNISON officer commented:

> Sometimes it's quite counterintuitive really […]. You'd generally think that most local authorities would be better at this type of thing but then sometimes we'll have

nightmare councils as well. So, it's not always as cut-and-dry as we might like to think, it doesn't quite fit into our easy narrative, public good, private bad, it's not always quite as simple as that (officer, 6).

This argument demonstrates that the exploitation of 'unproductive' labour can be just as ruthless as the exploitation of productive labour (Harvey, 2017). Conversation between two GMB organisers echoed this view:

> Organiser 2: Even the in-house services that the council run, they're trying to cut it further to the bone. [The local authority want] to pay by the hour, taking away any travel time, and they're also saying that if a client knocks [dies], if they don't need [care], then you don't get paid […]. If somebody say, has to go into hospital so they don't need care, you then don't get paid.
>
> Organiser, 3: But of course, that's what you would get if you were employed by a private home care operator. The council aren't doing anything worse. I mean we would say morally it's wrong...
>
> Organiser, 2: No, no, no, but the council are slipping down to the standards of the private sector.

This section has explored the variety of funding structures in the social care sector and emphasised that the local authority is an integral customer for social care companies. In the home care company income was almost entirely reliant on the funding levels of the local authority; collective bargaining was tightly circumscribed, arguably with the support of GMB. At the residential home, funding was in part publicly provided (through local authorities) but management were making a concerted effort to move towards privately funded residents to improve the company's financial prospects. Again, the prospect for GMB to bargain at the company appeared minimal. The section went on to describe the funding arrangements in the two not-for-profits where the support workers were employed. Testimony from workers and organisers suggested that charities and local authorities were not necessarily *better* employers or easier employers to bargain with, as their approaches were still shaped by market pressures.

6.4 Funding campaigns and political campaigns

Alongside bargaining in the workplace, unions also pursued a variety of campaigning strategies. The use of campaigns is most apparent in UNISON's approach. One organiser said: 'UNISON is a campaigning union, and that's our primary focus […] when the cuts started hitting [UNISON was] a campaigning union against austerity' (organiser, 8). A UNISON

officer argued that since UNISON had started prioritising campaigns 'there's like a bit more of a voice to the problems [care workers] are experiencing. It's managed to get a bit more of a media profile, a bit more of a profile in parliament' (officer, 5). The officer argued that these campaigns were more high profile because they had emphasised the needs of care recipients: 'we've really tried to emphasise the impact it has on people receiving care, rather than making it purely about how the workforce are treated.' A UNISON organiser referred to care quality and working conditions as a 'magic' combination in terms of the potential for organising in the sector: 'when you get that magic bit, which is, it's about the staff issues, the workers' issues, *and* it's about the public interest, the care issue, you're very difficult to stop' (organiser, 9).

UNISON's Ethical Care Charter (2012) has sought to make precisely this 'magic' connection between home care provision and employment conditions.[29] Whether the charter could be *enforced* within companies was often dependent on which issues were covered by legal regulation. One organiser commented that 'it's relatively easy to sign a piece of paper' (organiser, 9) but ensuring that companies abide by the charter was more difficult. For example, the charter calls for providers to adopt the 'Real' Living Wage as opposed to the statutory minimum wage:

> If we're gonna challenge around non-payment of travel time and the sleep ins, we have to demonstrate that they're getting below National Minimum Wage, that's the only kind of legal challenge we have, not the [real] living wage […] In Leeds we could challenge the council and say 'well this is part of the Ethical Care Charter, the Residential Care Charter', but in terms of a legal challenge, we don't have that (organiser, 8).

A UNISON officer discussed the difficulty of ensuring that providers adopt the payment for travel time – another requirement of the Ethical Care Charter:

> We just did an FOI request about travel time. We asked councils 'do you make it a contractual condition that your outsourced home care providers pay home care workers for their travel time?' And I think a small majority – actually most of them – said they didn't, but even those who said we do make it a contractual condition, [they] don't really do any checks. So, they'll write it into a contract, but once they've given [the contract] to somebody, there's no check. They're not asking those care workers, 'are you being paid properly?', or they're not checking the pay slips. So that is a massive problem: out of sight out of mind. Councils' abilities to monitor outsourced companies are probably reduced by staff cuts, as well (organiser, 5).

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[29] UNISON's Residential Care Charter follows the same trajectory but is currently less widely accepted by local authorities and was rarely raised by the organisers and officers interviewed.

The impact of any campaigns levelled at funding are therefore limited by the ability of local authorities, which have themselves been subject to austerity measures. It is also difficult for local authorities to revoke care contracts if, after monitoring, they found that the company did not follow the charter. A UNISON organiser commented that local authorities 'should' take this more combative approach, but they 'have been beholden to the providers […] there's a shortage of providers, so [local authorities] haven't always looked very carefully at what providers do' (organiser, 9). As a result of local authorities' inability or reluctance, UNISON had to take on that responsibility of monitoring providers: '[we're] following up through those employers that have adopted it' (organiser, 7).

Notably, the charter does not focus on building the *union,* for example, it does not encourage workers to become union members or urge employers to recognise UNISON. The only mention of unions in the charter is in relation to monitoring service quality: local authorities signing the charter will 'work with providers and trade unions to agree how service quality will be monitored and compliance with the Charter assured' (2012: 7). Moore's evaluation of the charter (2017: 2) further indicates that it is distanced from unionisation: Moore does not explore union membership, recognition agreements, or collective bargaining but focuses on how 'working conditions are intrinsically bound up with the quality of care.' Drawing on my interviews with organisers and officers, the charter did not appear to be an 'organising' campaign, in that it did not focus on membership gains. Union organisers noted that some local authorities signed up to the charter do encourage employers to give the union access to the workplace: 'we had a list of all [the local authority's] contracted home care services and as part of that deal we could get access to their workers' (organiser, 8). But this organiser went on to argue that utilising this access, even when the local authority has encouraged it, 'wasn't always straightforward. A lot of the organisations just pay lip service and then just give you the run-around' (organiser, 8).

The exclusion of language related to unionism from the charter suggested that UNISON was aiming for widespread political appeal. But an officer argued that the because the charter was authored by UNISON, it already had a limited appeal: 'the fact that it's got UNISON's name attached to it [means that] a lot of Tory councils would just probably point-blank refuse to give it the time of day' (officer, 5). This was borne out by the fact that the charter was almost exclusively popular only among Labour authorities: 'I think 95%, maybe more, have been

Labour run councils so […] it's been where the councils have been more sympathetic anyway' (officer, 5). Similarly, a UNISON organiser referred to a region where they had talked to councillors as a 'principally a Labour voting region' (organiser, 9), with a Labour-run local authority. This tendency aligned with UNISON's general approach of working alongside the Labour Party. A UNISON officer commented: 'I do a lot of work with politicians, particularly the Labour Party but not exclusively, to kind of advance UNISON's position' (officer, 6); another officer said, 'naturally we've got more of a chance to engage with a Labour government' (officer, 7).

GMB organisers expressed frustration with GMB's attempts to campaign in social care. One organiser recalled the union's neglect of previous campaigns in the sector:

> There are so many campaigns that we've been close to launching that haven't happened. Last year we had this 'we care at Christmas' campaign where the union did a series of videos with members in their workplaces to talk about what their jobs involved […] They were really good but the union put them out after the 22nd of December and none of us were at work so we couldn't then push and push and push across social media and in the press because we weren't here […] and it's a missed opportunity. […] This year […] we were going to do a survey across the membership asking them what their jobs involve […] but that hasn't happened, and it's like, for God's sake, we've had a year to start gathering the data about what people do and then sort of launch a real campaign to show the general public this is what care work involves, and we can't even do that? (organiser, 1).

This organiser also described GMB's past reticence to engage in more political campaigning. Campaigns had become more of a focus since Labour left government in 2010:

> In the last 8 years since Labour lost, it's sort of kicked us up the arse a bit and we're having to work more in the political field. But I think even if we had a Labour government tomorrow, I can't see stopping [work in the political field], it feels right. There's a real connection between supporting our members in the workplace and sort of having dialogues with their employers and linking that with the political structures. I think they're part and parcel, and it should have always been that. Perhaps we took our foot off the pedal when there was a Labour government and let that naively let that fall to the wayside, because then we've had to rebuild the political relationships (organiser, 1).

GMB organisers stressed the importance of political campaigning regardless of the party politics in part because Labour-run local authorities also engaged in poor employment practices. In the area where the home care company was operating, for example, the authority had begun paying for care packages with the assumption that a proportion of the workforce

would be aged under 25 years and – according to minimum wage legislation – could therefore be paid less than older workers. GMB organisers criticised the local authority:

> They were saying to the home care provider, 'this is how much we're gonna give you.' And [the care provider] said 'well we can't afford it on that.' [The local authority said] 'no, we've structured in that you're gonna employ so many people under 25, you're not gonna be a great employer, you're gonna give them the under-25 rate, that's what we've structured into it.' These are all Labour councillors […] aren't they? They should be better than that. We would expect them to be better than that, wouldn't we? (organiser, 3)

Another organiser stressed that the local authority had incorrectly estimated that 20% of care providers' employees would be under the age of 25, and questioned the intention behind this estimation:

> In domiciliary care, the norm for those employed in the sector under the age of 25 is about 11%, if I'm remembering correctly [but] the commissioning process in this particular authority […] encourages the providers to employ at least 20% of their workforce under the age of 25. And this isn't about giving opportunities to young people, this is about getting away with paying them less […] it's blatant exploitation, and this is a Labour controlled authority (organiser, 1).

Despite a general positivity towards campaigns, GMB and UNISON organisers and officers also noted that campaigns for increased funding would not necessarily benefit the workforce. In part this is because of the 'hands off' commissioning approach of local authorities, which allows unequal pay structures in companies and allows companies to siphon money to private equity firms. A UNISON officer noted that the outcome of additional funding secured through campaigns could benefit private equity firms and not workers: 'it's not enough to just flood the system with money, you have to reform it as well, otherwise the money's just gonna bleed out into private equity profits and elsewhere rather than benefiting service users and staff' (officer, 6). Reiterating the inadequacies of funding campaigns, an IWW organiser commented: 'local authorities give them these big cheques for all the care work, they do not give a crap about how much money a manager says they earn. They really just… they don't care' (organiser, 11).

Even when outlining the potential of campaigns, GMB and UNISON officers and organisers still reiterated the importance of workplace organising. A UNISON organiser commented that the Ethical Care Charter might have been adopted 'faster' in a particular local authority had there been more of an organised workforce in the region:

[The local authority] are being a bit slow on actually adopting the meat of [the charter]. If we had an organised regional [or] a city organisation of care workers from across employers, we could organise them and get petitions going, get marches going outside of the town hall. We might be able to push from the ground up, as opposed to UNISON doing what it does do well, which is going in with national and regional officers and negotiating these charters […] It should be organising on the ground, motivating people to form a protest movement for change, and *then* lobbying whoever you need to lobby to improve funding, or terms and conditions. So, it's a very strange thing where UNISON is almost better at the political stuff at the moment than it is – in some respects – than organising grassroots movements (organiser, 7).

Another UNISON organiser similarly discussed this approach of 'organising on the ground […] *then* lobbying.' The organiser argued that campaigns should only be prioritised after workplace organising has taken place:

You have to move members first, you have to win the ground war […] that's the language – [then] you look a bit at the 'air war', that's the public interest bit, what's the press releases, what's the social media, what's the appeal to other people outside of winning the argument within workers (organiser, 9).

A GMB organiser reflected this view, when highlighting the limits of GMB's own care charter (GMB, 2017). The charter is similar to that of UNISON but has not been built upon in the same way: 'I just think it's all sort of aspirational isn't it and it's sort of tokenistic, unless you're sort of actually organising on the ground to meaningfully contest what's happening' (organiser, 1).

The organiser went on to argue that protesting financialisation was impossible without a member mandate: 'without a well organised workforce […] something as sophisticated as taking on the private equity companies, it's just a million miles removed from where we are.' GMB has made criticisms of financialisation in the past – a 2016 report condemns the financial structures of Southern Cross, which led to the company's failure (GMB, 2016: 2) – yet in practice their actions are less critical. GMB's ambition to maintain good relationships with employers, described in the above sections of this chapter, plays out in financialised companies too: the union has recognition agreements with financialised providers Four Seasons and HC One (the former agreement includes UNISON), and has not publicly challenged their approach (Burns et al., 2016). HC One refers to the recognition agreement as a 'partnership' and has a joint initiative with GMB called 'Careforce' calling for increases to funding in social care.

Union organisers and officers did not refer to any active campaigns at the level of *reforming* social care, for example through nationalisation or increased regulation of employment conditions. A UNISON officer argued that the care crisis could, however, compel government reform, leading to nationalisation:

> There's an awful lot of care providers who are sort of teetering on the brink […] if that kind of doomsday position did happen, I don't know, there'd have to be some kind of emergency nationalisation or something […] otherwise you're going to have elderly and vulnerable people just dying on the streets (officer, 6).

Organisers' and officers' criticisms of the privatisation of the social care industry did not explicitly entail a promotion of nationalisation of social care. An exception was one of the IWW organisers, who argued that 'every care home in the country would go bust if it wasn't for the local authority funding 75% [or] 80% of their residents, and this is where the big argument comes on for a nationalisation of all the care homes' (organiser, 10) The organiser used the company where the IWW members worked as an example – reiterating the view of support workers at the company that the three individuals in the management team earn £100,000:

> The first £300,000 a year that goes into that company goes into three people's pocket […] If private companies have really only got one customer and that is the local authority that pays 75% to 95% of all their income, that local authority could simply take over that home and not have to pay the care home owner £100,000 and his wife £100,000 and the guy who invested the money originally £100,000. It would save us £300,000, which we could just spend on paying the care workers we've got a decent wage (organiser, 10).

While arguing for the nationalisation of the social care sector, the organiser also joked about wage inequality in the public sector: 'you've already got a Chief Executive of [the local] City Council who's on £300,000 [laughs]' (officer, 12). The argument of union officers and organisers that working conditions in the sector do not 'quite fit into our easy narrative [of] public good, private bad' (officer, 6) demonstrated that a turn to public provision might not lead to improvements for workers. But interview responses emphasised the need to unpack *why* public provision might not always be 'good' in the context of social care. A UNISON organiser detailed that prior to privatisation, public provision had its funding reduced, as governments set public industries 'up to fail, then you say they're failing, and then you say, "this is the new model", and then of course, history shows almost always – I suppose there must be some

exceptions – but they fail even worse' (organiser, 9). If direct provision of social care by local authorities is seen to be poor, then it acts as justification for privatisation.

IWW's approach to campaigns focussed more on inter-workplace solidarity than that of UNISON and GMB, and on highlighting the multiple oppressions which people might face beyond exploitation. For example, union organisers referred to an instance where local case work for a transgender woman had resulted in a collective campaign against transphobia and referred to the union's involvement in anti-fascist action. Two IWW members discussed their branch's approach to campaigning when they had been involved:

> Former support worker, 58: It was solidarity unionism, to go on the [fast food restaurant] picket, or picket the wine bar, the cinema, where other members were…
>
> Former support worker, 59: Yeah and do anti-fascist stuff. A kind of union militancy – and that benefit that comes from being a smaller independent union – but not in *our* workplace. It was almost secondary that we had people who were active members who all happened to be in the same workplace and the same union but weren't really that able to do stuff in that workplace.
>
> Former support worker, 58: We probably did more active stuff, more successfully, in other people's workplaces, which is a sort of strange thing about the IWW compared with the bigger, sort of mainstream unions.

IWW organisers were less interested in party politics or any kind of campaigns levelled at local authorities. The IWW administrative officer referred to IWW's politics as: 'not parliamentary politics, but [an] appeal to people's politics, moral politics, bosses and workers' (officer, 12). While expressing personal support for the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, the officer argued that engaging in debates over politics was, in comparison to workplace organising, somewhat pointless:

> There was loads of people [writing articles] on the anarchist left who were like 'you jokers, Corbyn's just another boss.' And it's like, 'well yeah, [but] how long have you spent writing that article, half an hour? Why didn't you do something useful in that time, like build fucking solidarity in the workplace or something?' (officer, 12).

IWW's lack of affiliation with any particular party politics is explicit in their constitution, which states: 'the I.W.W. refuses all alliances, direct and indirect, with existing political parties or anti-political sects' and '[n]o member of the Industrial Workers of the World shall be an

officer of a trade or craft union or political party.'[30] The absence of any political manoeuvring can be related to a desire to avoid factionalism, a rejection of party political power, and IWW's relative disinterest in the growth of the organisation. In the same way that the union was less interested in recruitment, their strategy did not involve gaining legitimacy – both in terms of legitimacy with employers and in terms of political legitimacy. While IWW's ambition to confront broader structures of capitalism could be viewed as a move outside of the workplace, the IWW members and organisers interviewed argued that this ambition remains rooted in workplace politics. The idealism of IWW was, they argued, far less than the idealism of other groups on the political left:

> The likes of the Anarchist Federation and some of those broader sort of political organisations [focus on] "revolution", and complete change of the status quo, and all this stuff. It's kind of pie in the sky sort of stuff. There's an IWW cartoon I think that has all these socialists and anarchists and what have you, like pointing at the stars, books in hand, and then you've got this IWW worker pointing to the factory and shouting 'organise!' (support worker, 53).[31]

Section 6.4 has examined the responses of unions towards the convoluted funding structures in care. The section explored UNISON's ambition to influence local authorities using the Ethical Care Charter. The findings suggested limits to the effectiveness of this approach – both in terms of improving working conditions and in terms of growing the union. The section then described GMB organisers' perception that the union neglects campaigns. GMB and UNISON organisers and officers referred to relationships with the Labour Party: political relationships such as this are importantly not necessarily an aspect of organising unionism. Heery (2015: 555) refers to an 'explicit rejection by supporters of organising of other methods of union revitalisation which do not rest on building internal power resources' in the UK, including a 'rejection of party politics.' Whilst organisers and officers from GMB and UNISON highlighted the usefulness of campaigns, they argued that campaigns only become effective *if* the workforce is mobilised. The section also considered the campaigns utilised by IWW. The findings highlight IWW's

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[30] See https://libcom.org/library/appendix-2-constitution-industrial-workers-world, and https://archive.iww.org/PDF/Official/DelegateManual.pdf p.6. It is unclear whether this rule is regulated in any way.

[31] For a depiction of this cartoon, see: https://libcom.org/library/business-unionism-vs-revolutionary-unionism. The comments on this article demonstrate that IWW's focus on concrete struggles as opposed to post-capitalist thinking can be divisive – '[t]he IWW dude reminds me more of my boss telling me to get back to work more than anything […] if there was that nice of a sky out, I wouldn't want to go back into the factory either.'

focus on solidarity between workplaces (a 'one big union' approach) and the emphasis on political – but not party political – actions.

6.5 Discussion and conclusion

This chapter has considered how organising relates to recognition agreements, partnerships, bargaining, and campaigns. Section 6.1 explored ways that organising strategies have been combined with recognition agreements. IWW organisers were cautiously pragmatic about recognition agreements. UNISON members detailed the strategy of building membership to pursue the route of statutory recognition, and GMB organisers referred to voluntary recognition agreements established through negotiations with employers. Interviews at the home care company and the residential company suggested, however, that the potential to organise following the conclusion of these agreements was limited. Testimony from managers, organisers, and workers provided differing accounts as to whether recruitment was limited because of the actions of company management – or office staff – or because of GMB's failure to visit workplaces.

Section 6.2 discussed how recognition agreements relate to the notion of workplace partnerships. The manager of the home care company provided an instance of a 'unified' view of interests, arguing that 'partnering up' with GMB was a way to collaboratively ensure that the company did not go bankrupt. The level of trust between the employer and the GMB appeared, from both parties, to be high. This was in contrast to the style of the recognition agreement at the residential home which involved low levels of trust, with GMB organisers sceptical of the attitude of senior level staff at the home towards unions. While the level of trust, the attitude towards mutual gains, and the reciprocity of these relationships differed, the motivation behind using top-down recognition agreements was consistent. GMB organisers presented the practice as an inevitability because of the disinterest of union membership and the difficulties of recruiting members. They held the view that the desire for a recognition agreement was almost non-existent among union members, and as such voluntary recognition was the necessary route. Yet UNISON organisers, looking at the same sector and the same passivity of workers, did not seem to view top-down organising as the only option. They described bottom-up organising as a more effective strategy. The use of partnerships does, therefore, involve some element of tactical choice on behalf of unions. It is a choice which can negatively impact other unions: interview responses suggest that if one union is perceived to

be amenable to partnerships, i.e. less antagonistic, then it can lead to inter-union disputes. The use of voluntary agreements to undermine IWW organising provides a pertinent illustration of this.

Section 6.3 examined the role of funding in the social care sector and the impact of funding constraints on union bargaining. The local authority was the primary source of funding for the companies examined in this thesis. The manager of the home care described the constraints on pay due to funding and commented that GMB had advised against pay increases at the company. He acknowledged the fatalism in blaming funding levels:

> People should be in a union, and people should get paid a fair rate for the work that they do, and we rip [workers] off on a daily basis and then hide and pretend that it isn't happening, or we blame the local authority and the local authority blames central government. But still nobody does anything (manager, 31).

At the residential home the company was trying to escape their reliance on public funding by appealing to private paying customers and receiving private equity funding. GMB organisers described the impossibility of bargaining with the company management. They expressed frustration that even when wage improvements are non-existent or minimal, GMB's national strategic focus on retaining relationships with employers leads them to accept the narrative that funding in the sector is insufficient. The section then explored funding arrangements at the two charities where support workers were employed. Workers at these companies emphasised that working for a not-for-profit company does not lessen exploitation in the workplace; union organisers argued that organising in a charity context is not easier than organising in a for-profit company. Last, the section described workers and organisers' opinion that local authority-provided care is, like not-for-profit care, not necessarily superior in terms of working conditions.

Section 6.4 explored campaigning strategies used by the unions. UNISON officers and organisers highlighted how UNISON aims to recognise the role of funding in the sector by targeting campaigns like the Ethical Care Charter towards local authorities. The charter was limited in its effectiveness – local authorities did not follow up on whether the providers they contract to abided by its tenets. In addition, while providers are reliant on the local authorities for funding, local authorities are also 'beholden to the providers' (organiser, 9); they drive competition but rely on providers' willingness to accept contracts. GMB organisers argued that

GMB was less adept at campaigns than UNISON. They argued that the union 'took its foot off the pedal' (organiser, 1) in terms of political relationships and highlighted the importance of critiquing working practices in Labour-run local authorities. GMB, UNISON, and IWW organisers emphasised the need to go beyond calls for additional funding and highlighted the importance of – unspecific – broader sectoral reforms. Further, all three unions argued that workplace organising remains essential. For IWW organisers, this workplace organising included establishing solidarity between workplaces and campaigning against multiple forms of oppression experienced by workers.

7. Discussions and conclusions

This thesis began with three research questions: how has the organising model been applied in social care; what are the difficulties associated with its application; and in what sense is organising political? By addressing these questions, this thesis contributes to understanding of the role of organising in union strategies, the politics of these strategies, the nature of the sector-specific organising in social care, and the interactions between models of unionism. The findings present challenges to orthodoxy surrounding organising within the trade union movement. First, the assumed connection between injustice and mobilisation has been found to be tenuous. Second, a reliance on activism renders union organising strategies fragile and, in some instances, exclusive. Third, combining campaigns and recognition agreements with recruitment can bring up tensions and contradictions which unions often appear unable or unwilling to resolve. These obstacles are, the thesis has shown, shaped by broader employment dynamics. Underfunding and privatisation in the sector affects an individualising of responsibility towards frontline workers, who then do not act on workplace injustices. Overworked and low-paid workers are, understandably, looking for assistance as opposed to seeking to become activists. The tension between government ambitions to reduce spending alongside the profit motive of (sometimes financialised) private companies obscures accountability for poor working conditions and low pay. Adversarial union strategies are faced with the difficulty of identifying the 'enemy'; at times, unions collaborate with one enemy against another. These empirical findings have been understood using a Marxist analysis of political economy. Unionism, care, and capital have been situated within this political economy, with the thesis emphasising that exploitation, value, and the dynamics of the circulation of capital are crucial to understanding unionism and care provision.

Chapter 7 categorises these contributions into empirical contributions, theoretical contributions, and practical contributions (although these categories intersect and overlap). The analysis returns to the literature examined in Chapter 2 to demonstrate how and where this thesis supports, extends, or counters existing research. Section 7.1 relates the findings of the thesis to the research questions. Section 7.2 examines the empirical contributions made by the findings to understanding of the organising model. Section 7.3 analyses theoretical contributions, and Section 7.4 outlines the implications of the findings for the practices of

unions. Section 7.5 considers how future research could expand upon the findings and Section 7.6 offers comments to conclude the thesis.

7.1 Returning to the research questions

The literature review carried out in Chapter 2 demonstrated the importance of an investigation, evaluation, and critique of the organising model. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 each focussed on a different aspect of the organising model and related these aspects to the research questions. The trajectory proceeded outwards: beginning with the mobilisation of workers, then expanding the research to focus on activists and the actions of unions to encourage activism, then expanding the research further to ask how unions within the social care sector interact with employers and local authorities. These analysis chapters provide the following insights into the research questions:

1. *How have unions utilised an organising approach in social care?*

The findings in Chapter 5 show that union organisers have encouraged member participation in the structures of the union. However, organisers from UNISON and GMB experienced a tension between their desire to recruit activists and imperatives from their respective unions to increase recruitment levels. Within GMB in particular, organising was largely driven by nationally set targets. Chapter 6 demonstrated how unions had combined organising with recognition agreements. GMB used a top-down organising approach, building relationships with employers and aiming to organise after the agreement was in place. UNISON organisers emphasised the importance of bottom-up organising, although their approach might not be indicative of UNISON's national approach, as the Northern region was viewed by UNISON officers as more 'militant' than other regions of UNISON. Although IWW is a union associated with militant tactics, IWW organisers also understood recognition agreements to be a potentially useful 'tool' for organising. However, it was a tool which was largely unavailable to them; low membership levels meant recognition agreements could not be achieved using statutory procedures, and the union's aversion to partnerships (alongside the actions of more moderate unions) inhibited voluntary recognition agreements.

Chapter 6 also explored how unions use campaigns and examined how these campaigns

connect to the organising model. Organisers argued that the 'blame game' in social care – wherein employers view local authorities as responsible for employment conditions – negatively impacts the bargaining ability of unions in the sector. Reflecting their familiarity with the public sector, UNISON has aimed to target local authorities. GMB has sought to strengthen partnerships and has occasionally used partnerships as a basis for campaigns aimed at national government (such as the 'Careforce' initiative with care provider HC One). IWW's campaigns were not targeted towards local authorities or government but instead focussed on social injustices. IWW does not aim to alter national policy, but rather to support vulnerable individuals through inter-workplace solidarity.

2. *What are the obstacles to organising in social care?*

All three findings chapters described significant obstacles faced when implementing the organising model. Chapter 4 demonstrated that union mobilisation is deterred by a specific form of collectivism between employees premised on their shared capacity for caring, rather than their shared status as workers. When workplace injustices *were* identified, they were not attributed to the actions of managers but to unchangeable 'realities' of the sector and thus were not seen as sufficient cause for mobilisation. Chapter 5 described difficulties relating to building member participation, including tensions between member recruitment and organising, overwork and high turnover of workers, workers' fear of retribution from employers, and their view of the union as a service provider. Chapter 5 also explored obstacles that might occur when activism *is* present: findings related to IWW highlighted difficulties associated with sustaining activist-based organising which arose, in part, because of the small number of activists.

The findings in Chapter 6 revealed the challenges of combining organising approaches with forms of partnership. Interviews carried out at the home care company and the residential home demonstrated the difficulty of establishing an active membership after a recognition agreement is in place. Workers either viewed the union as an organisation that met primarily with management or were unaware of its existence. This lack of awareness suggested a level of complacency on the behalf of GMB as organisers did not regularly visit the companies, but it also provided insight into the difficulty of accessing workers (even in companies with recognition agreements). The chapter described the various forms of business structure that unions within the sector sought to navigate. While bargaining after obtaining a recognition

agreement was curtailed by a lack of funding from local authorities, organisers noted that campaigns for improvements to funding did not necessarily benefit workers. The recommendations of UNISON's Ethical Care Charter could not be imposed because the reliance of local authorities on service providers meant that they were reticent to regulate those providers; GMB organisers argued that campaigns for funding could merely improve profits for private equity firms; IWW organisers highlighted the unequal wage distribution as inherent within the employment relationship.

3. In what ways is organising in social care political?

The thesis has considered the politics of different organising strategies, with 'politics' approached as the analysis of power structures under capitalism. Chapter 4 considered the positioning of mobilisation theory as the Marxist foundation of the organising model. The chapter tested the concepts of injustice and collectivism, as utilised by Kelly's influential mobilisation framework. The findings highlighted shortcomings of the framework, suggesting that these concepts are too subjective to explain unionism: in social care, they are not always connected to the labour process and exploitation, and can instead relate to injustice concerning the quality of care and collectivism between workers and care recipients. Chapter 4 explored how these forms of injustice and collectivism are understood by workers as separate to unionism and, as such, how they do not necessarily lead to mobilisation.

Chapter 5 explored the political implications of combining servicing and organising unionism and examined the organising model's politics of empowerment. This research finds that services – whether support services provided by the union in disputes or commercial services – can be particularly important for low paid members and potential members. However, services also strengthen the transactional relationship between members and the union, and embed membership passivity and members' expectation that they will receive value for money. Chapter 5 also critiqued the organising model by emphasising that empowerment is often an individualist concept: comments from IWW organisers demonstrated that the line between empowerment of individual activists and reliance upon (and overwork of) these activists is thin. Further, as workers in low paid positions and those with family responsibilities can find union participation difficult, empowerment can be limited to those with free time. IWW organisers and members (and organisers and officers commenting on IWW) noted that a reliance on activists creates a middle-class exclusivity. IWW organisers made an effort to move

away from this base but felt a political discomfort when doing so. Importantly, tactics like salting workplaces do not achieve a 'like recruits like' model of activism when there is a class distance between the activists and the workers. As one IWW organiser commented, activists have the 'class privilege to be able to be like "oh I'm going to choose to do a job so I can organise", as opposed to 'I'm doing a job out of necessity, and because of where I stand, I organise"' (organiser, 15).

Chapter 6 explored how unions approach the employment relationship when organising in social care. The analysis suggested ways in which forms of recognition agreement position the union on the side of the employer, whilst having a limited impact on recruitment. At the home care company in particular, union membership was viewed as something the *manager* wanted. The findings also question the assumption in the literature (Holgate, 2010; Simms, 2011; Hyman, 2016) that campaigns are a more radical aspect of unionism. Political campaigns to increase funding may ultimately increase the bank balances of company owners or private equity firms – without any impact on working conditions or pay. In this respect, campaigns become aligned with partnerships, again indicating that organising can entail a moderate politics. IWW organisers and members described the union's ambition to take a broader perspective on the politics of capitalism, but emphasised that this perspective remains rooted in workplace struggles. The sections below explore in depth these headline answers to the three research questions.

7.2 The organising model

This thesis provides substantial critique of the implementation of organising strategies. It has also emphasised that the potential of organising strategies to be implemented in a more effective way is limited, both by the nature of employment relationships in the social care sector and by the conflicting politics behind organising initiatives. The first empirical contribution of the thesis relates to the mobilisation of workers. Chapter 4 suggested that only certain *types* of injustice and forms of collectivism connect to organic mobilisation. The second empirical contribution is an analysis of union activism. National recruitment targets, unengaged members, the potential instability of activism, and workers' perception that the union is a 'service', all mitigate union participation. The third contribution is the examination of how unions interact with employers and local authorities. The varied funding structures in the social

care sector have meant that targeting employers can be ineffective, which has led unions to pursue campaigns outside of the workplace. Below, these empirical contributions are examined and interrogated.

7.2.1 Injustice, collectivism, and mobilisation

Section 2.1.1 of the literature review chapter explored the role of mobilisation in the organising model; as an 'important tool' within organising (Holgate, 2018: 4), as a return to the 'activist roots' of trade unionism (Dixon and Fiorito, 2009: 173), and as a framework which 'allows us to analyse the processes' whereby workers form a unionised collective' (Kelly, 1998: 1). Chapter 4 of this thesis examined these processes to understand why, and when, workers unionise in the care sector. Kelly (1998) argues that recognition of injustice is the first antecedent of mobilisation. This stage was fulfilled at the companies analysed; workers referred to multiple injustices, reinforcing existing literature that describe the sector as characterised by low pay and deteriorating working conditions (Rubery et al, 2013). Workers also emphasised that not all of their labour was paid (especially sleep-ins and travel time), and that they were not always treated with 'dignity' by managers and office staff. Workers and organisers highlighted the gendered aspect to poor employment conditions: 'sexist comments' (support worker, 50) in the workplace, sexual harassment, and a devaluation of care 'related to [care] work being traditionally seen as women's work' (organiser, 53).

So, there are no shortage of injustices identified by workers. However, at the home care company and the residential home, injustices had not led to unionisation or even acts of informal resistance (aside from quitting [Hirschmann, 1970]). Instead, non-members were largely apathetic, a response which Kelly (1998) argues plays a significant role in curbing mobilisation. Non-members did not regard their manager as the reason for perceived injustice: negative associations with managers focussed on their personal attributes rather than their role in structural issues such as low pay. Where non-members reflected on hierarchies within the workplace, the object of criticism tended to be office workers (whose qualitatively different role gave them particular forms of power in the workplace to control the allocation of paid working hours) or staff who had been employed at the company for a longer period of time. In contrast, union members were critical of specific organisational issues relating to office workers *and* blamed managers, both for their working conditions and for permitting and

contributing to workplace bullying.

Alongside exploring apathy surrounding injustice, Chapter 4 suggested that *types* of injustice relate to union mobilisation in different ways. While instances of bullying, harassment, and ineffective office staff were strongly criticised, feelings of injustice regarding low wages were diminished or explained away by non-members. Economic concerns were also accompanied by comments relating to the altruism which can motivate workers in the sector: iterations of the phrase 'it's not about the pay because that's not why I'm in this job' (care assistant, 40) were repeated by many non-members. The narrative positing care and money as opposites (Folbre, 2001; Fraser, 2016) was ingrained in workers' views of their jobs. Interviews with workers and with union organisers emphasised that the view that care work is not about money is gendered. As a GMB organiser expressed it, 'care is [seen as] an extension of what women do largely' (organiser, 1).

This research found some evidence of altruistic care becoming a motivation to mobilise – supporting Baines' (2016: 130) observation that 'dissenting conversations turned into union mobilization when workers developed extensive narratives and justifications for their disenchantment with management.' A UNISON member noted the inclusion of an 'industry' manager at the company: 'she's just industry [...] I don't think she fully understands the connections that are built in care work' (support worker, 51). However, interview responses indicated that philanthropic emotion largely counteracted union mobilisation, as unionisation was perceived to be detrimental to quality of care. Consistent with analysis from Folbre (2001), quotes from workers illustrated their position as a 'prisoner of love': 'you feel trapped almost' (care worker, 21), and 'we are sort of, we're trapped' (support worker, 55). Drawing on this finding, this thesis suggests that the perception that emotions act as a power that can be harnessed for mobilisation (Baines, 2011; Jasper, 2011; Hyman, 2016), particularly in social care (Baines, 2011), needs to be more closely interrogated. Union members' willingness to highlight the importance of pay suggests that acknowledging *economic* injustices, rather than acknowledging injustice more broadly, is an integral antecedent of mobilisation.

In addition to describing different forms of injustice, Chapter 4 also highlighted the formation of different types of collectivism among workers. Non-members described a high degree of interdependence and noted strong relationships between employees, yet this collectivism was built around the wellbeing of care recipients. This perspective was illustrated by the following

quote from a care worker: 'some people are only out for themselves, in a job where everybody should be working together, and care about these guys [care recipients], like, more than themselves' (care assistant, 34). While Bolton (2005) and Korczynski (2003) have argued that these forms of collectivism which emphasise customers are compatible with resistance, responses from non-members suggested otherwise. Unions were frequently viewed by workers as bodies which exist solely to engage in strike activity, and thus as antithetical to the particular collectivism built in the workplace. Non-members viewed strikes as conflicting with the 'caring' aspect of their work: 'you couldn't be in care, have a heart, and want to strike' (office worker, 27).

Unlike non-members, union members and union organisers – particularly from IWW – emphasised that the company is ultimately responsible for the wellbeing of care recipients. Some members and organisers also argued that if unions position customer service as a mobilising issue, then it can make company management appear less culpable for their own failings. An insidious shift in responsibility towards the individual worker occurs, even though those workers may not have the power to instigate real change (Ungerson, 2005; Folbre 2006: 8). Unions seeking to encourage mobilisation were faced with 'framing' (Jiang and Korczynski, 2016) collectivism in a way that cohered with unionism. In some respects, this framing diverged from collectivism. A GMB officer – in direct contrast to the argument from the care assistant quoted in the previous paragraph that workers should care about care recipients more than they care about themselves – argued 'the carers have to value themselves […] women will always look after everybody else before they look after themselves' (officer, 4).

The diversity of injustices and forms of collectivism indicates that the mobilisation framework is too broad-brush: the explanatory potential of the framework could perhaps be improved using more specific conceptions of injustice and collectivism. Section 2.1.1 noted that Kelly's (1998: 64) mobilisation framework draws upon a Marxist analysis of 'exploitation and domination within capitalist economies', but critics of his theory have suggested that it presents an 'idealist invocation of "injustice"' (Cohen, 2011: 374) (an argument which Section 7.3.1 will return to). This thesis has illustrated that some of the forms of injustice – related to the wellbeing of care recipients – are viewed by non-members as incongruent with unionism. The recognition of injustices did not always, therefore, act as an antecedent to mobilisation. Similarly, the findings of this thesis suggest that not all forms of collectivism lead to

mobilisation. It remains important for unions to emphasise 'workplace solidarity created by the capitalist labour process' (Atzeni, 2009: 3) and to highlight that 'the capitalist mode of production work is never an individual process despite worker experiences to the contrary' (Martínez Lucio and Stewart, 1997: 53). Current theorisations of organising neglect this aspect of workplace dynamics when they approach perceived individual injustices as the primary predictor of unionism.

7.2.2 Activism and service unionism

Activism is an essential aspect of the organising model. Yet, as described in the literature of Section 2.1.2, most members are inactive and service unionism remains persistent among organising unions. The findings of this thesis show compatibility in the perspectives of individual organisers in terms of intention: organisers from all three unions prioritised 'movement building.' However, their intentions were limited by the unions' organisational aims. The view of IWW organisers that mainstream unions place an emphasis on recruitment over activism was, in part, supported by findings. UNISON and GMB organisers emphasised the difficulty of raising the profile of social care within the union and increasing the resources put towards recruiting in the sector. The organisers and officers saw this neglect in part as the unions' prioritisation of the NHS over the social care sector – a prioritisation also apparent in media reporting and in government policies. GMB organisers also connected the side-lining of social care within GMB to the union's emphasis on recruitment targets. GMB's organising initiatives in social care were dismissed in favour of pursuing the easier to recruit sectors, indicating that a focus on 'quantitative recruitment goals' (Hurd, 2004: 15) overshadows other aspects of organising, such as encouraging member participation.

UNISON organisers highlighted and criticised GMB's prioritisation of recruitment. Yet recruitment also appeared to be a dominant feature of UNISON's organising approach, notable in organisers' recourse to a 'service unionism' rhetorical strategy in order to encourage workers to join. The contrast between the views of individual organisers and the unions' organisational goals reflects Heery and Simms' (2008) finding that beliefs of individual organisers are not always reflected in broader union strategy. The agency of individual union workers is shaped by organisational imperatives. Organisers tend to moderate their behaviour *as organisers* to fit with their employers' expectations, and they can experience workplace stress in doing so. A

UNISON officer noted 'management pressures' (organiser, 8) to recruit, corresponding with Carter's (2000: 131) perspective that an 'emphasis on recruitment' could make union officers view organising initiatives as 'a disciplinary mechanism to control their work rate.' This finding also supports Looker's (2019: 529) argument that in UNISON, '[r]ather than becom[ing] a long-term strategy for union renewal, organising has been distorted to the short-term objective of achieving nationally set recruitment targets.' The necessity to recruit as opposed to engage workers in activism is therefore one of the factors limiting the organising model. Overcoming this limitation seems unattainable given that achieving union renewal *requires* recruitment and unions cannot, at least in the short term, financially afford a more substantial shift away from recruitment towards fostering activism.

Another limiting factor to the organising model is the low number of members willing to become activists. The findings of this thesis align with Nissen's view that 'the numbers of volunteers are way too small, even in the best cases' (1998: 149). This lack of active members was highlighted by organisers from all three unions: 'no one wants to be an activist, no one wants to be an organiser' (support worker/IWW organiser, 53); 'we do really struggle for reps (GMB organiser 1); 'a potential member […] they're not interested in the movement' (UNISON organiser, 8). Organisers connected this low propensity for activism with a variety of factors. First, the high turnover in the sector meant that workers would start training to become workplace representatives only to leave their job without completing it. Second, workers were reluctant to 'put their head above the parapet' (former support worker, 57); the prevalence of precarious contracts in the sector meant that workers could easily be informally fired for union activity if the company decided to no longer give them hours to work. These characteristics of turnover and precarious contracts are often inherent to low paid work, and so represent a significant obstacle for organising unions to work around.

Further limiting the likelihood that workers become activists, members did not always appear 'committed' to the union in a way that resulted in activism. Gauging by Etzioni's (1975) continuum of commitment attitudes – negative, neutral, and positive – the union members interviewed indicated either neutral or positive attitudes. The positive attitudes were largely expressed by the support workers who were members of UNISON – the members who were at the time of the fieldwork engaged in organising their workplace and seeking to establish a recognition agreement. The small number of workers who were, or had previously been, members of a union at the home care company and the residential home had a more neutral

attitude. They had barely engaged with their union at all, so had no opinion of its effectiveness. The IWW members expressed a mixture of attitudes; those who were highly involved were aware of the unions' shortcomings, whilst defending it. As argued in Chapter 5, IWW's reliance on unpaid workers had an evident impact on the union's ability to do case work, affecting both the organisers who struggled with the workload and the workers who were reliant on the union. One member commented that 'some of the reps are useless, I will say that' (support worker, 54). This 'negative' attitude was accompanied by a transactional, lack of commitment towards unionism: 'I'm kind of, not into [the union]. I see it as a tool to help me' (support worker, 54). There can therefore be a disconnect between organisers' ambitions towards activism and the union members' perception of the purpose of unions, which negatively affects organising efforts.

This thesis has also examined the attitudes of non-members towards unions. These workers regarded trade unions as primarily existing to assist members as individuals with disputes and disciplinary meetings. That workers look to unions for assistance is unsurprising given the widespread poor employment practices in the sector. To refer back to Kelly's mobilisation framework though, injustices had led not to a view of unions as a collective movement – and a desire to join and become an activist – but rather to a view of unions as a source of help. As one non-member said, 'all I know is [unions] are quite helpful when you need the help' (domestic assistant, 43). This perception of unions as a service arose in part due to the actions of unions, for example the pressure to recruit and emphasise the services provided by the unions. Some organisers stressed that the requirement for members to pay union dues immediately establishes a transactional dynamic. It would be difficult for unions to alter this dynamic by decreasing union dues (although that could increase membership) as it appeared unrelated to how much union members pay. Some IWW members, who paid significantly lower union dues than members of mainstream unions, still perceived the union as a service. Organisers also associated the transactional view of unions with a prevalence of transactional relationships under capitalism: a substantial obstacle to overcome through organising strategies.

The findings of this thesis also indicate that activism can become an exclusive activity. Workers argued that work commitments (and the subsequent squeeze on leisure time and family life) curbed their capacity to participate in the union. Union organisers were reluctant to push for member involvement in light of these extensive time commitments. Both workers

and union organisers recognised a gendered component to the pressure of non-work commitments. The pressure for women to look after children – or as an IWW organiser expressed it, a heteronormative pressure to look after husbands – was emphasised by interviewees. An office worker at the home care company described a care worker who had considered becoming a workplace representative for the union, but decided against it as 'she had kids, teenage kids, it was alright when they were a bit little but not when they got older, she needed to be there for homework and things' (office worker, 25). In this way, activism took on gender exclusivity – alongside a class exclusivity. IWW's organisers feared that activism was becoming dominated by those with time to spare, and the officer from the Trades Union Council argued that IWW's reliance on activism was 'creating a situation [where] the only people who can be full time unpaid organisers are from the upper middle-classes' (officer, 16).

The low levels of activism can therefore cause the organising model to effectively descend into vanguardism (Fairbrother, 2005). Fairbrother argues that mobilisation focusses too heavily on the paucity of leaders without considering the barriers to participation; my thesis finds the largest of these barriers to be overwork, gendered responsibilities, and precarious contracts. Alongside considering barriers, the thesis has examined the difficulty of moving away from vanguard unionism. Moving 'outside […] lefty activist circles' (organiser, 15) in recruitment strategies was simultaneously viewed by IWW organisers as imperative, and as an uncomfortably condescending breach of the 'like recruits like' (Heery, 1998: 352) organising maxim. Further, the findings of Chapter 5 suggest that low numbers of activists mean that the organising model is less able to lead to 'psychological empowerment and the development of labour consciousness' (Jiang and Korcznynski 2016: 833) on any large scale. Evidence of empowerment among activists was also accompanied by a sense of burn-out: an IWW organiser referred to a drawn-out campaign in the food sector as 'the best, but also simultaneously most exhausting two years of my life' (organiser, 11).

It is important to note that union involvement has not historically been constrained by overwork. The class and gender factors related to the constraints on activism (and family responsibilities or fear of management retribution) were not insurmountable obstacles at the height of union activism. To reiterate a quote from an IWW member: 'Big Bill Haywood and all those tough guys, Emma Goldman, […] these were people from like, really authentically struggling working-class communities, weren't they? (support worker, 53). Perhaps broader trends of capitalism towards globalisation and individualist ideologies make these obstacles

more prominent. In addition, (while this research has been driven by a methodological agenda which prioritises the 'voice' of interviewees) it would be naive not to acknowledge that workers responding to my questions about participation might have been reticent to admit that they, candidly, did not care enough about trade unionism to become activists.

7.2.3 Recognition agreements and campaigns

This thesis has also suggested that organising strategies regarding recognition agreements and campaigns are negatively affected by the complexity of employment relationships in social care. Union officers and organisers emphasised the importance of recognition agreements as an aspect of organising. This supports Martínez Lucio and Stuart's (2009: 27) claim that 'within Britain organising has been almost entirely linked to recognition campaigns', and Heery's (2002: 27) view that the 'ultimate objective of organising, in most cases, is the establishment or strengthening of a conventional recognition agreement.' Yet recognition agreements were approached differently by the three unions. For UNISON organisers and members, building membership acted to 'pressure reluctant employers into conceding union recognition' (Heery, 2002: 28). This application of organising is consistent with Wills' (2003: 133) view of an organising model where 'workplace union activists […] recruit their colleagues and build up support from within.' The campaign for recognition among support workers had built membership levels *because of* the failure of the attempt to reach voluntary agreement. The process of organising and 'airing those grievances' had led to 'resentment' (support worker, 50), which acted to increase membership levels. This finding demonstrates that injustice can be significant for organising, but importantly – as detailed in Chapter 4 – this injustice must be attributable to management. Funding arrangements in the sector mean that injustice often remains unattributed.

GMB organisers had a different approach to negotiating recognition agreements to UNISON, referring to workplace organising as 'very rare' (organiser, 3) and instead aiming to establish agreements through meeting with managers. This led to situations where GMB would have recognition in a company where they had 'very little in the way of membership' (organiser, 1). Their use of recognition agreements drew upon practices and values associated with partnership unionism. At the home care company, this was apparent not only through the way that the agreements were negotiated but also through the mutual trust and the recognition of

reciprocal goals. The level of partnership was relatively high (or strong), in comparison to the relationship between employer and union at GMB. At both companies though, the *effects* of the partnership were weak; gains were not apparent for either employer or the union. While the top-down strategy used by GMB reflected the view of Milkman and Voss (2004: 7) that the successful transformation of unions is 'typically […] orchestrated from the top, contrary to the rather romantic view that only the rank and file can be the fount of democratic change', their pragmatic approach had little impact. Even in the case of the home care company, where the manager had aimed to make membership 'as easy as possible' (manager, 31), the workers remained largely unaware of the existence of GMB. At least in the social care sector, the reliance of the organising model on recognition agreements is therefore misguided when they are implemented top-down.

The findings explored in Chapter 6 also suggested that partnership practices can lead to confusion among workers over the purpose of unions. Previous studies have highlighted a disconnect between organising and partnership approaches to unionism as they represent different approaches to the employment relationship: '[o]n the one hand, the union is saying that the employer is capricious and uncaring and, on the other, that the workers can have common interests with the employer' (Gall, 2010: 39). The negative impact of this confusion was apparent in the interview responses of workers. At the home care company where the manager 'tells [care workers], "you need to join!"' (office worker, 29), a care worker asked me, 'do I have to become a member?' (care worker, 22). The fear that service unionism hinders worker-led organising becomes irrelevant if workers view unionism as something pushed upon them by management. Union employees were aware of this ambiguity. As explored in Chapter 6, one UNISON organiser compared GMB officers with the animals of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, and a GMB officer expressed fear that organisers would be mistaken for management, partly because of similarity in uniform colours and professional presentation. While good relationships with employers might be important for access to workers and bargaining gains, these relationships can mean that workers view union membership as just another authoritative workplace requirement.

In addition, approaching recognition agreements as partnerships can lead to inter-union disputes. First, at the level of the TUC: the TUC officer interviewed argued that 'having that relationship with the employer, is as essential as having it with your members' (officer, 17), yet the organiser from the Trades Union Council referred to the TUC's 'liberal partnership

model' as 'vague' and 'misguided' (officer, 16). A similar conflict was played out in the relationship between GMB and UNISON. UNISON organisers were heavily critical of GMB's approach to organising, as evident in the reference of one UNISON organiser to GMB's use of 'sweetheart deals' to achieve legitimacy. However, elements of partnership were also apparent in UNISON's approach: a national officer at UNISON referred to the union's financial contributions towards staff training at a company, and a regional organiser critically summarised the national strategy of UNISON as: 'do partnership deals with employers, don't really challenge employers' (organiser, 9).

Illustrating how competition between unions can limit union strategies, radical unions can become a casualty of partnership approaches. While IWW members and organisers were not averse to recognition agreements, viewing them as a 'tool in an arsenal' (organiser, 11), low membership levels inhibited the ability of the union to negotiate recognition agreements. This was then exacerbated by the undermining strategies of TUC unions. IWW organisers, and the TUC officer, referred to an instance where a manager entered into a voluntary recognition agreement with a company in order to prevent workers from gaining statutory recognition with IWW. IWW's tentative approach to recognition agreements means that their efforts to organise from the bottom up in a workplace can be undone if the employer chooses to instead offer voluntary recognition to a 'moderate' rival union (Blyton and Turnbull, 2004: 163).

Unions' approaches to the dynamic introduced by private providers' reliance on public funding in the sector varied, and reflected their differing attitudes towards recognition agreements and partnerships. GMB organisers argued that GMB's emphasis on good employer relations had led the union to readily accept excuses from managers blaming poor pay on under-funding. Organisers expressed unease over this moderate approach: 'historically our union has had a culture of saying, "just accept it, it's the best we're gonna get, let's not have a fight, let's do better next year"' (organiser, 2). UNISON had reacted to the inability to bargain over pay by targeting local authorities, using their Ethical Care Charter – targeting domiciliary care – and their Residential Care Charter, focussed on residential care provision. UNISON officers and organisers highlighted the difficulty of ensuring that these campaigns resulted in concrete benefits. A UNISON organiser noted that enacting the recommendations of the Ethical Care Charter was a challenge because local authorities 'have been beholden to the providers', (organiser, 9) rather than the other way around.

The campaigning aspect of the organising model has another limitation in that campaign wins regarding funding do not necessarily translate into benefits for *workers*. These wins can instead further strengthen the partnership relationship between unions and employers. The fear that this would happen was apparent in responses from interviewees; after expressing frustration that GMB was not as adept at campaigning as UNISON, a GMB organiser commented: 'it's sort of contradictory 'cos we're standing with the employer to get more funding, but then we push for more funding, and there's no guarantee that it's gonna be proportionately directed towards our members' (organiser, 1). The opacity and complexity of funding arrangements in the sector means that organisers sometimes struggle to distinguish between companies which can and cannot afford pay increases. This finding supports the view of Burns et al. (2016) that the 'unfair price narrative', which blames state budget-cutting for employment conditions, can be misleading when applied to financialised companies. Financialisation obscures the cause of low pay whilst parasitically consuming government funding. One organiser noted, however, that campaigns against private equity were 'a million miles removed' from the union's current focus (organiser, 1). Demonstrating the contradictions of organising strategies, GMB has partnerships with financialised companies HC One and Four Seasons.

7.3 Theoretical contributions

This thesis has argued for the continued relevance of Marxism to the analysis of contemporary workplaces. The following sections outline how Marxist concepts have been applied in the thesis. The first section describes the relevance of a value theory of labour to analysis of caring labour and highlights the importance of understanding the role of 'emotional blackmail' when utilising emotional labour theory. The section goes on to argue that the concepts of productive and unproductive work and class consciousness provide insight into the experiences and perspectives of contemporary workers. The second section discusses the ways that workers and organisers conceptualise trade unions. This thesis has found that identity and direction of unions is co-determined by union organisations and workers; and union strategies are both structurally constrained and demonstrate an element of agency. The section highlights a shift in union approaches towards spheres of capitalism other than production, but points to the views of individual organisers and officers that these strategies are ineffective without a simultaneous focus on the workplace. Last, the section explores the view among union members, organisers and officers that – in practice – unions regulate rather than oppose

capitalism and that unions struggle to prefigure a post-capitalist system of societal organisation.

7.3.1 Care, value, and consciousness

Workers described their jobs as a range of physical labour and the 'immaterial' labour of producing affects and encouraging care recipients' independence. The findings indicated that the concerns of union members and non-members (when they were about their own wellbeing) were not specific to these emotional and affective aspects of their labour; they instead remained related to labour-time. The findings illustrate that the labour of care workers was exploited to accumulate *absolute* surplus value through a lengthening of the working day. As described in Chapter 4, home care workers recounted that longer working hours were an everyday consequence of how care packages are commissioned and scheduled as multiple short visits: 'there are some of us who work like dogs, you know, we work twelve-hour shifts, five, six, sometimes seven days a week' (care worker, 21); not all of which were paid – 'I'll be out like, 10, 11, hours a day and I'll only be paid for like 7 or something like thing like that' (care worker, 20). Sleep-in shifts carried out by support workers similarly led to long hours for low pay, and one of the charities appeared to utilise voluntary work.

Workers' attempts to limit the exploitation of their labour output were frustrated by the companies. Turning down shifts, as a worker on a zero-hour contract, could mean that the worker would not be allocated future shifts. Similarly, workers reported that attempts to take sick-days were often met with a flat refusal. For example, a home care worker told office staff that she had a damaged nerve in her back and 'they made me come out, they wanted me to come out and do calls' (care worker, 20). The conceptual usefulness of emotional labour and affective labour become apparent in this context; care workers referred to management manipulation of emotional connections as a means of ensuring that they did not turn down work. The manager of the home care company confirmed this strategy: 'we're emotionally blackmailing them to get to the calls because we need somebody to do it' (manager, 31). Whereas literature has shown that workers in the sector self-exploit (Baines and Daly, 2015; Baines, 2016), this thesis suggests that this overwork might better be understood as an extension of regular exploitation. As a UNISON officer expressed it: 'guilt tripping is used to exploit them' (officer, 5).

While the labour of workers was used to accumulate absolute surplus value – that is, value accumulated by extending the working day – the potential for an extraction of *relative* surplus value is limited in the context of social care. Technological changes do occur in the sector and can impact working conditions; Hayes and Moore (2017), for example, have highlighted the intensification of the care labour process enabled by electronic monitoring in the sector. The use of Google Maps to estimate how long home care workers *should* spend travelling between calls, a practice used at the home care company researched in this thesis, suggests an element of this intensification. Yet in general, employers exploit workers by extending working hours and keeping wages low, as opposed to seeking to innovate the processes by which care is carried out.[32] While the emotional aspect of care provision is often cited as a moral reason for why caring labour is less compatible with the logic of capital accumulation (Skeggs, 2017), the hands-on, physical, and time-laborious aspects of the work present a more fundamental answer as to why care might be difficult to commodify.

This research also found that the actions of managers of care providers were shaped by market competition; by the imperative for capitalists to increase their market share and enable the 'perpetual accumulation' (Harvey, 2017: 26) which the survival of capitalism relies upon. The HR manager of the residential care home described increasing wages only if other companies appear to be doing so, with the effect that workers are less likely to work for the company: 'in homes where you're really struggling to recruit […] you'll find out that there's a new home opening down the road, so [we] need to do a bit of research and see what's happening in terms of their rates of pay' (HR manager, 47). The structure of the social care sector necessitates selling care provision cheaper than other care providers – 'it's been a huge race to the bottom' (manager, 31). Surplus value extracted from care workers' labour is thus realised in the competitive market of care provision; local authorities drive competition between private care providers, relying upon the ability of private providers to minimise labour costs. While state policies – and funding decisions of local authorities – can contribute to low wages, the state does not directly benefit economically from this profit extraction as the companies are private.

Pressure to decrease the price of workers' labour therefore comes from a variety of directions:

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[32] The automation of caring tasks demonstrates that innovation is taking place (see, for example, this 2018 'Skills for Care' report: https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Documents/Topics/Digital-working/Robotics-and-AI-in-social-care-Final-report.pdf) but this innovation is not being carried out at the level of individual care providers.

a state desire to save money, which translates into central government underfunding of local authorities and subsequent constraint on the fees which local authorities can set, private providers' desire to increase profit, and – in some instances – generation of profit and its extraction carried out by private equity firms. Carrying out labour which is 'unproductive in a contingent sense' (Savran and Tovak, 1999: 139), workers experience both *normal* exploitation of productive labour and the 'vicious' exploitation of unproductive labour (Harvey, 2017: 88). This intensity of exploitation in the sector demonstrates the continuing relevance of Marx's connection between labour and value. The value created in the provision of care remains connected to labour time. This finding supports Thompson's view (2005) that Hardt and Negri, in conceptualising affective labour, erroneously disregard labour time. Thompson (ibid.: 85) contends that Hardt and Negri's view is 'belied by a substantial body of research that identifies a rising tide of labour intensification associated with new forms of work organisation and management.' Thompson includes emotional labour within these forms of work, an aspect which this thesis has built upon by identifying the rising tide of labour intensification in the labour of care provision.

Alongside describing work intensification, workers' accounts suggested feelings of alienation: 'at the end of the day when I go home I've got nothing… and I don't mean this awfully, but I've got nothing left to give' (care worker, 24). This alienated the worker from their family – 'I get home on an evening, my partner wants to speak to me, he wants to know about my day, and I just… I don't have anything' – and it was a feeling connected to the exploitation of her labour time ''cos I'm out from 7 o'clock in morning till 10 o'clock at night, talking, cheering people up, giving everyone my time and my energy.' As Marx (2010: 306) writes, 'our labourer comes out of the process of production other than he [sic] entered.' In the context of social care, the emotional aspect of the labour aggravated the alienation – emotional labour creates 'a more profound form of alienation than even Marx imagined' (Brook, 2009: 15) – but it remained rooted in labour time.

The alienation of workers from *each other* was also apparent in interviews with workers in the absence of class collectivism. The literature review of this thesis referred to theorists' predictions and findings supporting a connection between class consciousness and care (Jones, 2001), or at least, between collectivism and emotional labour (Korczynski, 2003). Jones (2001: 287) writes that 'a relationship between workers and clients or customers can serve as a direct resource in class conscious action.' In contrast, this thesis found that affective attachments can

conflict with demands related to wage struggles; workers felt that economic demands were contradictory to the emotional connections generated through the process of caring labour. An IWW organiser described this attitude: 'they really give a shit about their clients, the people they're looking after […] you can't just give your boss a free pass like that' (organiser, 11). The transition to class consciousness from a collectivism based on interdependent work systems and collective responsibility towards care recipients therefore seemed unlikely as the 'worker' aspect of collectivism was absent. As Simms argues, class collectivism is a solidarity 'between workers *because they are workers*' (2012: 113, italics in original).

Ironically in the case of care work, this solidarity could require a more self-serving attitude: 'the carers have to value themselves […] we need to say to the carers, "you are the most important person"' (officer, 4). It also requires an emphasis on economic concerns, generally viewed as a 'conservative' aspect of unionism (Hobsbawm, 1978). To acknowledge that caring labour can be work, and to call for economic wage improvements, therefore becomes a more radical act within the political context of care than it might be in other sectors. Calling for wage increases in the industry means opposing the harmful narrative that caring labour is inherent, gendered, and philanthropic, and as such, that caring labour necessitates an acceptance of low wages and a willingness to carry out unpaid labour.

By emphasising the importance of economic consciousness in the sector, I echo Cohen's (1987: 45, 46) argument that 'there is no rigid dividing line between workers' economic conflicts and some high level of 'political' struggle [...] 'parochial' struggles have their own dynamic which can begin profoundly to challenge the social order.' In a broader sense, I also question the association between emotional and affective labour and resistance towards capitalism. Skeggs (2014: 16) views 'moments of connection, of enchantment, of affective force that propel us to ethical generosity' as moments which 'enable us momentarily to resist capitals' logic' (2014: 16). From Marx's perspective these references to love and ethical generosity would act as an impediment to revolutionary organising. Marx viewed moralistic terms, for example, with suspicion.[33] When writing an 'Address to the Working Classes', he commented 'I was […] obliged to insert two sentences about "DUTY" and "RIGHT", and ditto about "TRUTH,

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[33] Marx favoured emancipatory politics over structures of ethics or morals, which he regarded as ruling class rhetoric. Marx's contemporary Karl Vorländer is quoted as having said: 'the moment anyone started to talk to Marx about morality, he would roar with laughter' (Lukes, 1986: 26).

MORALITY AND JUSTICE" […] but these are so placed that they can do no harm' (Marx, 2010: 18). This thesis has suggested some of the ways that morals and ethics can indeed 'do harm' to economic, class struggles.

7.3.2 Conceptualising unions

Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis contribute towards contemporary conceptualisations of trade unionism. First, the findings provide insight into the dialectical relationship between unions and union members: organisers' actions and unions' presentation (i.e. as service providers or collectivist organisations) shape workers' attitude towards unions and, in turn, workers' attitudes and expectations shape unions. As noted in Section 2.2.3 of the literature review, unions are organisations which are impacted by the will of their members, such that 'the strength and the will of the workers who compose it, impress upon it a direction' (Gramsci, 1977: 386). The findings in Chapter 5 on low participation of members suggest that, while the workers *can* influence through democratic structures, they often did not. But members unavoidably still influence the aims of unions even without participation in democratic structures, as unions seek to be reactive to members' desires in order to increase or retain membership levels.

Workers' views of what unions *are* were highly divergent and sometimes contradictory. Unions were variously understood by non-members as bodies engaging only in strikes, as a service, and, to a lesser extent, as an aspect of company management. Non-members associated union membership with a militant identity – 'it's like you're a rebel' (care worker, 24) – and as superfluous service when 'you can ring Acas for free' (office worker, 25). Union membership subscriptions were considered too expensive by some workers, while others were unaware that there was a cost to joining. These disparate views could indicate that unions do not successfully convey what they are to members, or do not successfully combat a broader, negative, understanding of unionism in the public imagination (for example formed through media representation). The disparate views could also suggest that workers were *justifying* an aversion towards unions, as a response to the immediate context of being questioned about unions by a university researcher. In Section 3.1 I discussed this thesis' rejection of objective knowledge: as Holloway (2002: 98) writes, 'categories of thought are understood as expressions not as objectified social relations but of the struggle to objectify them.' Workers'

descriptions of unions could have been shaped by a desire to rationalise why they were not union members, i.e., unionism provides a service, which they do not need, or unions only take strike action, which they disagree with.

The influence of members (and prospective members) was apparent in the unions' approach to servicing and partnership. A UNISON officer drew on focus group work to suggest that members saw unions as a 'backstop […] and if they can get some kind of services as a result of being in a union, then all the better' (officer, 6). This expectation of members then impacted organising strategy – 'as employees of the union, we do feel under pressure to say that it is a service that we're providing' (organiser, 8). While a large proportion of workers I interviewed considered unions to be a service, they emphasised grievance related services as opposed to additional, more consumerist, services. As one UNISON member said: 'never once has someone said to me, "pet insurance, I want a way to get a better deal, that's why I'm gonna join UNISON", and yet that's something you always hear stressed by the union' (support worker, 50). Recourse to consumerist servicing or to partnership strategies is, importantly, also a pragmatic choice made by unions rather than only a reaction to what workers appear to want. The argument made by GMB organisers that partnerships were necessary because of the apathy of workers could be a selective interpretation of workers' views, or could have been an effect of the low level of ground level organising carried out by the union in the sector. Workers at the home care company and the residential home were willing to find out about unions but were unaware of the recognition agreement with GMB.

In addition, unions' adoption of partnership strategies entailed an ideological stance on capitalism: the stance suggests that workers are primarily *reliant* on businesses as opposed to primarily *exploited* by businesses (in an immediate sense, they are of course both reliant and exploited). This position was put forward by the TUC officer: 'if you wreck the business, we're all out of work' (officer, 17). It demonstrates the view of unions as regulators of capitalism (Webb and Webb, 1894) and suggests that without unions, capitalism would be much more rampant in its exploitation of workers. A UNISON organiser provided a yet more deterministic description of unions, arguing that rather than regulating capitalism, unions enable the survival of capitalist work systems by ensuring that workers can reproduce their labour power. The organiser contended that 'capitalism would have destroyed its own golden goose, workers, because they would have been exterminated virtually but for unions in a funny way […] the workers – through making unions – produced conditions in which they could survive'

(organiser, 9). In contrast, organisers and members from IWW referred to unions as bodies which resist capitalism, going beyond the perspectives of Gorz (1989) and Holloway (2010). However, this view was held somewhat tongue-in-cheek (or at least, with an acknowledgement of the difficulty of the task at hand).

This thesis also contributes conceptualisation of unions in relation to the different spheres of the circulation of capital. The use of union campaigns focused on government, financialisation, and the needs of care recipients could be viewed as representative of the turn towards injustices outside of the sphere of production, suggested by theorists (Holgate, 2015). Martínez Lucio (2011: 48), in a discussion of Hyman's work, refers to the 'outside' of the politics of work: 'the question is how we see this "outside", how we understand the different links and roles that union activists and leaders play in them, and how they piece these spheres together within their strategies to influence their agendas and their identities.' This thesis identifies some of the tensions that occur when union strategies piece together the different spheres of capitalism. Organisers emphasised that linking the needs of care recipients with working conditions was an important aspect of unionising the sector ('you need to make sure that the carers realise that they cannot look after the residents if they can't look after themselves' [organiser, 1]). But in many instances, a fear that union interventions would obstruct the delivery of care to people for whom it is essential was an impediment to mobilisation. Supposedly radical political ideals – for example, that care should not be commodified – can in this context act to dampen economic resistance.

Unions' campaigns about the funding of care also led to tensions between agendas and identities within the unions, which can be related to the piecing together of different moments of capital accumulation. Organisers from all three unions were afraid that campaigns could result in a 'contradictory' (organiser, 1) situation whereby unions assist employers and not workers. Political campaigns like the Ethical Care Charter resulted in relationships with care providers who 'just give you the run-around' (organiser, 6). Building new solidarities around financialisation (Grady and Simms, 2019) – another aspect of the sphere of distribution – was difficult for unions in the sector. First, funding processes (to what extent companies are reliant on local authorities and/or private equity firms) are often not apparent to workers. A GMB officer commented: 'most care staff will have no clue about the funding and how that, how many private funded beds in comparison to local authority beds makes a difference to how much a company gets' (officer 4). This was borne out in interview responses from workers. An

organiser from GMB noted that 'we struggle in taking a lead to help people see the links between [employment conditions and funding] and the private equity stuff is just, a further complication which I think is too far removed' (organiser, 4). Second, GMB took a contradictory approach by criticising financialisation while forming partnerships with companies which siphon funding to private equity firms. The partnership with Four Seasons also, notably, involved UNISON.

The turn towards political struggles outside of production can in some cases act to weaken, moderate, or muddle union agendas. This reflects the argument made by Fine and Harris (1976: 112), who suggest that class struggle can become detrimentally submerged into political struggle: the working class is '(mis)led into weakening its position of strength in economic struggle for a position of uncritical subordination in political struggle.' To avoid the potential subordination of workplace struggles to political struggles, Cohen proposes retaining a focus on the experiences of workers:

> A perspective which starts with the 'necessary condition', and reality, of rank-and-file resistance reverses the argument so often used by theorists of union renewal – that workers must be seized by radical ideas, by a 'vision' of social movement unionism, before they can take meaningful action (2006: 209)

But there remains debate over how unions are positioned within the sphere of production and what rank-and-file union resistance means in this context. Section 2.2.3 explored debates over the purpose of unions, as bodies which struggle over the price of labour rather than against labour (Holloway, 2010). This tension between abolishing wages and fighting for wage improvements was evident in IWW's deliberation over whether to pay activists. The desire to compensate workers for their labour conflicted with the perception of some IWW members that paid work is inherently alienating and capitalistic. The perspective of these workers echoes debates over the commodification of care, as well as the paradox of caring labour whereby 'the only way to preserve the true value of this work is not to pay for it' (Folbre, 1995: 87). However, through my analysis of union agendas and approaches in the care sector, it becomes apparent that there is a notable difference in these perspectives. IWW activists aim to work outside of wage structures as a rejection of capitalism, while arguments against commodifying care accept waged work but question its expansion into new areas of life. It is important to distinguish between these perspectives, as researchers have approached the rejection of care commodification as against the logic of capital more generally (Skeggs, 2014) and as indicative

of class consciousness (Jones, 2001). This thesis suggests that opposing the commodification of caring labour somewhat arbitrarily accepts that commodification is, in other instances, acceptable.

The tension over paid and unpaid organising among IWW members identified through this research also brings to the surface an ontological dilemma for trade unions that usually remains implicit or unquestioned; whether unions should *already be* the type of organisation that (ideologically more radical) unionists envision for society. Alternatively, whether unions should accept that they exist within structures of capitalism in the name of achieving realistic goals, and in doing so adopt practices, language, and agendas which work effectively within capitalism. An organiser commented:

> IWW wants to abolish wage slavery [laughs], a great concept, not seeing how it's going to work in Western civilisation. And other unions are going, 'nice idea, we could all have everything we needed and be provided for and not need to actually be paid wages. But in the meantime, until we get to that, I'll just fight for better wages' (organiser, 10).

This debate over whether unions – and any organisations critical of, or in opposition to, capitalism – anticipate or embody a future politics has been discussed by theorists. Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman (2019: 107) argue that unionism needs to change themselves and become 'patently democratic' to prefigure an alternative to capitalism. This view suggests a dialectical approach to unions: it entails finding 'a new world through critique of the critique of the old' (Marx, 1967: 212). But understanding unions as working towards a 'different and better society and economy' (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2019: 107) also suggests that there is a coherent vision of what unions are prefiguring. Questioning the perspective of Gumbrell-McCorkmick and Hyman, this section has argued that it is difficult to find a consistent view among organisers or members concerning the concept of unions. The uncertain and contradictory views of non-members over what unions represent – a militant organisation which forces workers to strike, a service providing employment advice and gym discounts, an organisation which your employer pressures you into joining – conforms with a general conceptual confusion within the labour movement over the purpose of unions. Gumbrell-McCorkmick and Hyman suggest a utopian approach to unionism alongside acknowledging that unions are on the defensive. The perspectives of the IWW organisers and members indicate that utopian prefiguring has, however, been a casualty of this defensive positioning of the trade union movement.

7.4 Practical contributions

While the agency of unions is constrained by external structures (Hyman, 2007; Martínez Lucio and Stuart, 2009), it does not disappear entirely. To paraphrase Marx, unions 'make their own history, but they do not make it as they please.' This thesis has demonstrated the constraints on unions – societal perceptions, disinterested workers, inactive members, restrictive bargaining contexts, and a funding 'blame game' – yet it views these constraints as also shaped by choices that unions make in enacting organising strategies. The suggestion that unions play a role in their own decline is not an indictment; it implies that unions could work to achieve more positive outcomes, both for workers and in terms of union renewal. The interviewees participating in this research – organisers, officers, members, non-members and managers – provide an array of voices to amplify the difficulties associated with contemporary strategies, and the attempts by unions to overcome these difficulties. Drawing on these findings, this section suggests constructive actions for unions who are using organising strategies in the sector and provides arguments which advance the expansive literature on methods of union renewal.

In terms of mobilising workers, the findings of Chapter 4 suggest that trade unions need to simultaneously recognise what is *different* about the social care sector in comparison to industrial sectors and emphasise what is the same. Organisers stressed that making the connections between service quality and working conditions is paramount, a strategy which has been utilised successfully by campaigns in the US for organising home care (Cobble and Merrill, 2009). It goes some way to combatting the media discourse of unionism as selfish, although the extent to which customer-orientated campaigns can shift the perception of unions appears limited. In 2015 the striking junior doctors emphasised the wellbeing of patients; an article in The Times argued, '[j]unior doctors invoke patient safety, but this strike is all about money' (Dawson, 2015). Similarly, rail workers' striking strikes against Southern rail and Northern rail argued that 'this strike is all about safety' (BBC, 2017); the Telegraph (2017) ran an editorial titled: '[t]he Southern train strike has absolutely nothing to do with safety'. This rhetoric has increased during the spread of Covid-19. Writing in The Telegraph, Epstein (2020) responded to teachers' fears about health and safety in the workplace for students and staff

with an article titled: '[w]e must face down these selfish whingers who want to keep schools shut.'

Unions that centre campaigns around consumers therefore face an uphill battle. In addition, if campaigns are focussed on consumers (in this instance, care recipients), then unions need to emphasise that responsibility for quality of service does not lie with individual workers. The weight of this responsibility inhibits mobilisation and enables managers to emotionally manipulate workers. As noted in section 7.2.1, there is an element of individualism required – 'we need to say to the carers, *you* are the most important person' (officer, 4) – but it is essential that unions do not create a divide between care recipients and workers. First, care recipients are not responsible for working conditions in the same way that workers are not, and second, doing so would deter workers from joining. A UNISON member recalled that when he was a member of Unite, 'the thing of a union being for your own protection was like really, really stressed […] it was almost like it was there to protect you against the service users or something […] there's something uncomfortable about that I think' (support worker, 50).

It is necessary then for unions to acknowledge the varieties of collectivism and injustice in the workplace without reiterating a narrative that workers are single-handedly responsible for care recipients, and without emphasising the 'protection' of workers *against* care recipients. It is also imperative that unions understand and address the problems within their own organisations. In Chapter 4, this research considered issues of gender discrimination in the social care industry: if unions were more adept at dealing with issues related to gender within their own structures they might be more adept at organising in a workforce largely composed of women. IWW organisers referred to 'internal issues around gender politics that alienated some people' (former support worker, 59), a GMB organiser stressed her 'real frustrations with GMB, the leadership of the GMB and the fact that its male dominated' (organiser, 1), and a UNISON organiser commented that overwork culture in the union 'disadvantages especially women, people with caring responsibilities' (organiser, 8).

Before mobilising workers, union organisers face the difficulty of *accessing* workers. Even in companies with union recognition agreements, this was seldom easy. An organiser recruiting members at the residential home commented: '[I] can get in, [but] they shove me in the cellar […] I have access, but not to people' (organiser, 3). But at the home care company, where the relationship between the union and management was good, union organisers were not

accessing workers. Non-members at the company did not appear opposed to unionism but were instead largely unaware of the purpose, or purposes, of the union and its role at the company; the workers did not know 'what [GMB] were selling' (office worker, 26). As argued by Waddington and Whitson (1997), and Healy and Kirton (2013), the main obstacle to union revival is that workers are 'not asked' to join a union. Organisers need to regularly visit companies to talk to workers, particularly given the high turnover of staff in social care. This potentially requires a reorientation of union resources, since union organisers are themselves overworked.

Organisers also referred to more innovative workarounds to increase opportunity to access workers in the sector. Using supermarket cafés and pubs as common meeting areas to talk to workers appeared to be an effective strategy to recruit members and organise union-related actions. I suggest though that there could be an opportunity for unions to improve their public presence and their approachability by expanding on the types of spaces and places where union organisers engage with workers, or optimising the spaces which unions already possess. When carrying out this research, I found that union buildings of GMB and UNISON tended to be corporate and formal, with imposing access procedures such as pressing a buzzer before being allowed entry into the building, signing in at a reception desk, and sitting in a waiting room until the person you are meeting with can collect you. Union offices are often located far from the centres of cities – one of the local GMB offices moved from the city centre to an industrial estate during the fieldwork period, which was difficult to access using public transport. The main reason workers went to union offices appeared to be for training courses. Reconceptualising union buildings as community spaces as opposed to bureaucratic and transactional buildings would underline that unions are a collective endeavour. For example, unions could learn from the provision of a community hub at the home care company – 'where it's dry, where it's warm' (care worker, 24) and where the hub manager 'looks after us' (care worker, 23) (as per the organising model, they would be 'looking after' each other as opposed to being looked after).

Further, as explored in Chapter 5, organisers referred to the use of social media and messaging sites as a means of organising inaccessible workers, which might nullify the need for a material building to meet workers. Increasingly, workers belong to groups on Facebook and/or WhatsApp, sometimes initiated by their employers and sometimes by workers themselves. While Facebook groups (or Facebook 'Pages' which workers 'Like') provide a means of easily

accessing workers organically, organisers did not approach social media uncritically. A UNISON organiser commented that the organisers had entered into discussion with workers on groups set up by care workers, but 'some stuff would just descend' into competition between unions. For example, 'somebody started slagging off UNISON, and we were trying to defend it, and it just went into this whole spiral' (organiser, 8). The use of WhatsApp groups led to debate among organisers over who should be in the groups – '[WhatsApp] causes contention because who do you roll it out to?' (organiser, 7). Encouraging all union members in an organisation to join a WhatsApp group could discourage low paid union members from discussing workplace issues, given the presence of managerial union members. In this way, uncertainty over who unions are for – and competition between unions – is brought to light by the use of social media and messaging sites. In renouncing their label as 'dinosaurs' in a digital age (Frangi et al., 2020), unions will need to confront these internal dilemmas.

According to the organising model, unions' efforts to mobilise, access, and recruit workers should be followed by efforts to encourage activism among members. This thesis has suggested some of the reasons for low levels of activism among union members in the social care sector: workers not having time to participate, high turnover in the sector, and workers' view of unionism as a service. The time-consuming nature of activism (which discourages time-poor workers from participating) could be alleviated if unions push for facility time from employers: 'you can recruit, and then there's the training, but then are they gonna be released from work to do the training?' (organiser 8). The care worker at the home company who 'took [a pack from GMB about becoming a union rep] home to read and decided "no chance"' (office worker, 23) might have felt differently had facility time been an option. The positive attitude of the manager towards unions at this company suggests that facility time could have been an aspect of the recognition agreement. Unions need to make an effort to ensure that this provision is available and – importantly – to ensure that workers are aware of it.

Workers' view that unions ought to provide a worthwhile service could be inevitable if unions are to remain organisations funded by membership dues. Further, the harsh material realities of the job create conditions where a transaction-based view of unionism becomes understandable. But rather than emphasising the service purpose of unions and risk reinforcing this perception, unions could go further to present the organisation as a collective *of* workers, as opposed to primarily a service *for* workers. This approach would require a break from approaches that tend to pressure union employees to convince workers to join by promoting

services. This pressure is exacerbated by setting union employees membership targets to reach (which appeared particularly prevalent at GMB). Targets not only increase workplace pressure on individual union employees, they lead to the neglect of supposedly more 'unorganisable' sectors, such as social care. A GMB organiser commented that 'care in the past has been a national target, but then […] it wasn't delivering' (organiser, 1). A further consequence of choosing organisable areas as targets is that GMB ends up organising where other unions are already active (UNISON organisers and an IWW organiser who was employed by NEU decried GMB's move to focus on schools, for example).

Other organisers regarded GMB's approach as contentious as it focussed on organising sectors from the top down through building relationships with managers. Low levels of membership at the home care company and the residential home suggested that this strategy was not particularly effective, neither in terms of membership nor in terms of bargaining outcomes. If recognition agreements are to be considered an ambition of organising, or even a tool, then it is important to consider the ways in which they can deliver more substantial gains for workers. The limits of recognition agreements were highlighted by one UNISON member, who – while emphasising the importance of workers having a 'voice' in the workplace – went on: 'recognition is only to be consulted! It's nothing is it? It's very, very little that you're getting after a lot of work for lots of people' (support worker, 50). Recognition agreements need to involve bargaining which is constructive (as opposed to symbolic), need to ensure provision of facility time for members, and need to involve access to workers. Without these concessions from employers, agreements are likely to deliver few benefits for trade unions and their members, and could instead only make the purpose of unions confusingly broad to workers.

Organisers and care provider managers viewed bargaining outcomes of recognition agreements as constrained by the meagre funding levels available to provider companies in the sector. Yet attempts by unions to reorient campaigns towards the funding of social care were not considered to be entirely successful: there is no *legal* accountability process to ensure that workers benefit from these campaigns. UNISON's Ethical Care Charter acts as recommendations. Some local authorities encourage officers to implement the policies of the charters in commissioning practices, while other local authorities are less rigorous. The absence of regulation of working conditions in the sector beyond paying care providers – and beyond the focus on service quality of the CQC – means that changes to funding alone are insufficient. Unions organising in the care sector need to recognise that targeting funding bodies, or

campaigning against the pressure on wages from financialisation, does not always improve workplace pay and conditions. Companies without private equity backing and with adequate funding levels can still extract profit by keeping wage payments low and intensifying the labour process. The business model of all providers (whether not-for-profit, privatised, public, or financialised) is to adjust staff costs in order to maintain profit margins.

I also suggest that a reliance on unpaid organisers can inadvertently create an unsustainable model of organising. Notably, the local branch for the majority of the IWW members and organisers interviewed for this study has closed since the research began, apparently because of low levels of activism. There is an issue of who is left out of activism when union voluntary structures are dominated by 'middle-class white people' (organiser, 15). If unpaid organising is the logical conclusion of the organising model (de Turberville, 2007) then this issue will need to be confronted by unions. Creating hierarchical employment structures within unions can, however, lead to the workplace pressures expressed by organisers from UNISON and GMB interviewed in this study. Within this dualism between 'the organising benefits of grassroots self-mobilisation versus the stymieing bureaucracy of centralised union concerns' (Martínez Lucio and Stuart, 2009: 26), unions could learn from each other. As an IWW organiser commented: 'if members of other unions and people in positions of power in other unions are [thinking] "oh we should nick some of [IWW's] ideas", I think that's perfect' (organiser, 11).

Organisers' willingness to let other unions 'nick' their ideas suggests that IWW does not enter into inter-union competition in the same way as mainstream unions. UNISON organisers referred to the strategies and effects of inter-union competition: 'poaching' of members, 'aggressive' (organiser, 8) recruitment, and 'overly pally' (organiser, 7) negotiation of recognition agreements. Because of this competition, there are risks to abandoning service unionism and partnership strategies. If one union adopts an organising model which rejects 'insurance' unionism, then potential members might choose a union which does, for example, include gym membership. If unions take a more militant approach to the divide between workers and employers, then employers might seek to work alongside the more moderate unions – a trajectory which IWW organisers were familiar with. It is therefore important to emphasise how different unions' interpretations of the organising model contradict each other: militant iterations of the organising model can only be successful if *all* unions take a militant approach. In this sense, the UK labour movement has locked itself in a cage of its own making

– albeit situated within a context of a fragmented workforce and a system of industrial relations which heavily regulates unions.

7.5 Reflections, limitations, and future research

This section reflects upon the research process and the findings of the thesis, examining the limitations of both, and identifying areas where there is potential for additional research. At the start of this study, I had intended to use a more 'ethnographic' approach. Initial plans to be an observer-participant and continue to work in social care whilst researching the sector were, however, abandoned. This was in part because of practicalities (of working as a care worker alongside PhD study) and in part because of ethical and ideological concerns taking an observer-participant approach can create (for example, carrying out covert research would have been particularly inadvisable as social care requires working with vulnerable individuals). As the research aims developed, I felt that participatory research would not contribute meaningfully to thesis' primary aim to analyse organising, although it might have contributed more if the focus had been on the labour process. In retrospect, I am now of the view that I would never have been able to fully close the distance in positioning if I had carried out participatory research. I would likely have experienced the political discomfort which IWW organisers referred to in relation to 'salting' workplaces, as workers would have been aware that I was not doing the job 'out of necessity' (organiser, 15). For example, the divide inherent in the relation between researcher and research participant was made explicit in the following comment voiced by a worker at the residential home: 'I don't suppose any job's perfect really, apart from yours, just sitting here asking me questions, I mean *come on*, really? [laughs]' (laundry worker, 37).

In transitioning from ethnographic research to using interviews as a research method, I initially wanted to carry out non-participatory observation at the same time. Yet the process of firstly, obtaining access to organisations, and secondly, finding interviewees had been difficult and drawn out because of the characteristics of the sector; in particular, the high turnover of staff – including managers – the overwork of staff, and the difficulty of locating home care workers and support workers. Negotiating observation on top of that (either of meetings at social care companies or meetings between trade union employees) appeared unachievable. As argued by Buchanan et al. (1988: 54):

> In the conflict between the desirable and the possible the possible always wins. So whatever carefully constructed views the researcher has of the nature of social science research, of the process of theory development, of data collection methods, or of the status of different types of data, those views are constantly compromised by the practical realities, opportunities and constraints presented by organizational research.

The 'snowballing' method used to find interviewees also had an effect on the research focus of the study: the non-members outnumbered the members, meaning that the failures of the organising model (i.e., workers' views on why they are not union members) became a more dominant part of the analysis. Perhaps because of the snowballing method, the interviewees that I had access to and that self-selected to take part in the research, did not reflect the diversity of the social care workforce, as noted in Section 3.2. The workers and union organisers interviewed were predominantly white British workers, with the exception of one worker from Ghana and one worker from Hungary at the residential home. As such, this study has only considered intersections of class and gender. Future research would, I think, benefit from focussing on the experiences of workers from minority ethnic backgrounds and exploring the views and participation of migrant care workers in trade union organising.

There is also a need for future research to directly contrast organising strategies in social care with organising efforts in more 'industrial' sectors to better understand the role of class and class consciousness in contemporary workplaces. As explored in Section 7.4, organisers from GMB emphasised that the sectors require different tactics: 'if you go into a factory, there's sort of like an automatic connection in terms of industrial organisation, and workers' power, but there seems to be a real gap in that sort of understanding for care workers' (organiser, 1). Comparison of organising strategies across industries would provide rich insight into contemporary labour relations, and into the historical challenges faced by unions. Research could also consider organising strategies in countries with a higher rate of care worker union organisation drawing international comparison with the UK, a comparison of nations in the UK, or a comparison of different regions in England, to broaden understanding of the application of the organising model.

Further research could apply the theoretical approach developed in this research to different sectors. The thesis has argued for the enduring relevance of Marxist concepts of value, labour and spheres of capital when analysing labour relations and resistance, concepts which analyses of emotional and affective labour frequently turn against. This theoretical approach could be

used to interrogate the causes of poor working conditions elsewhere, for example: is the labour productive or unproductive, and how do these forms of exploitation interact? In addition, research could use the theoretical framing of the circulation of capital – examining the ways that the sphere of production impacts spheres of exchange and distribution – to focus on the impact of poor working conditions on care recipients. This framework provides a means of analysing caring labour using Marxism whilst recognising that employment conditions are related to quality of care.

This thesis has also developed ideas of dialectical materialism applied to care. This philosophical and methodological approach has been useful for the analysis in a number of ways. First, dialectical materialism has provided a means of understanding the functions of capitalism. Ollman and Smith (2008: 4) write that dialectics 'helps us see and investigate the capitalist relations and processes, of which we ourselves are part, as they have unfolded, are now unfolding, and have yet to unfold.' As examined in Section 2.2 and Section 3.1, the foundations of a Marxist theoretical framework are built on concepts of dialectical 'becoming.' The commodity, value, and labour contain dialectical contradictions; labour and capital form a totalising dialectic, within which labour holds an additional dialectic – between the present and the future.

This dialectical method, combining theoretical concepts and empirical findings, emphasising interactions between structure and agency, and unpacking contradictions, was utilised throughout the thesis. Each of the findings chapters has emphasised tensions and contradictions. I have used dialectical materialism, in this sense, as a tool to explore the dilemmas faced by trade unions. The findings of Chapter 4 emphasised the perceived contradictions between capital and care and the tensions between worker collectivism and 'carer' collectivism. Chapter 5 focussed on the contradictions within union strategies and identities: the impact on union participation when the union is both a service and a movement, and IWW's simultaneous rejection of the wage system and rejection of unpaid labour. Chapter 6 emphasised tensions between funding structures, between productive and unproductive work, and examined how unions approach the conflict between capital and labour in the workplace in their approach to partnerships and organising. The future of the organising model in social care relies upon unions forming strategies dialectically *out of* these contradictions.

Reflecting upon Ollman's final dialectical moment of 'praxis', the fieldwork itself has, I think, had a practical effect. Non-members noted that interviews had led them to consider the role of unions: 'I'm going to start talking to everyone about this union, because I think it would be a great idea specifically around us getting our points across' (care worker, 21). Similarly, the interviews sometimes became a space for organisers to develop ideas. This happened in the joint interview with GMB organisers, which evolved into a conversation between the organisers about future plans:

> Organiser 3: What we need to do is we need to have this care meeting, we need to think of a proper strategy, you and me need to go in with a clear plan, so that we don't get side-tracked by the others, we need a clear plan, we can have a proper campaign up and running, and we kickstart it that week in all your [residential] homes.
>
> Organiser 2: Yeah, good.

While I do not know whether this campaign came to fruition, or whether non-members went on to discuss unions with their fellow workers, I would hope that these *building the union* actions did occur.

7.6 Concluding comments

This thesis has examined difficulties concerning the organising model and contrasted the approaches of IWW, GMB, and UNISON. It has utilised Marxist theory to situate these findings within their economic context and to question how organising relates to power structures. Overall, the thesis strengthens the findings that application of the organising model has been 'uneven' (Heery, 2000), that the politics of the model is 'ambiguous and broad' (Gall and Fiorito, 2011: 234), and that organising has 'failed to transform practice or reverse decline' (McIlroy, 2011: 97). The thesis also, though, provides a stronger critique of organising strategies than these analyses. It illustrates an absence of unionism and an absence of resistance in working conditions where mobilisation might be expected to occur, i.e. in a context where injustices are prevalent. It also questions the extent to which workers in low-paid sectors are willing or able to become activists. Lastly, it asks whether broader campaigns can be effective in a context where responsibility for working conditions is ambiguous.

At the start of the research process, the tenets of the organising model seemed largely analogous

to caring labour in the emphasis placed on collective responsibility. However, the two have felt increasingly disparate throughout the research process. I did not find support for more hopeful analyses of resistance in the sector – such as resistance built upon the power of affect (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 2004) or emotion (Skeggs, 2014) against capitalism – or evidence of community campaigns (Wills, 2001; Holgate, 2015; Hyman, 2016). Instead, I found that the labour of care and the organisation of that labour created a dynamic whereby workers viewed resistance as self-interest, and self-interest was strongly criticised: 'some people are only out for themselves, in a job where everybody should be working together, and care about these guys [care recipients], like, more than themselves' (care assistant, 34). Organisers, officers, and members argued against a persistent socio-cultural gendered narrative that care is altruism not 'work'. They contended that this narrative has the effect that workers end up 'just giving their boss a free pass' (organiser, 11) and emphasised that 'the carers have to value themselves' (officer, 4) in order to enact change.

The thesis also found that the moral or ethical notion of injustice, presented by Kelly then widely adopted throughout research into industrial relations, is too broad to explain or predict mobilisation. A specific injustice related to wages remained an antecedent of mobilisation, indicating the importance of an arguably banal economic consciousness (as opposed to political consciousness) to union mobilising. In another 'parochially economistic' (Cohen, 1987: 45) analysis, this research has emphasised the importance of the workplace as the centre of trade union activity. The findings suggest that an organising model which prioritises campaigns or recognition agreements without a workplace mandate is largely ineffective, both in terms of improvements to working conditions and in terms of union resurgence. My perspective therefore reiterates Cohen's argument (2006: 218) that counterposing an 'idealistic' notion of social justice against 'the existing reality of "self-interested" workplace struggles' is misleading: 'such "self-interest" contains within it the core of struggle against much broader issues of injustice and inequity.'

By emphasising the importance of the workplace and of economic struggles as opposed to campaigns over distribution of capital (i.e., public funding and financialisation), I argue that class relations remain an integral aspect of union strategies. But this thesis has also found that there is an uneasy relationship between the organising model and class. For example, the aversion of non-members towards unionism often related to union dues, and union services remained important to justify this payment to workers in low-paid employment. It would be

remiss to deny the importance of services to union members in favour of 'lofty high ideals' (organiser, 6) about the purpose of unions. The subsequent transactional relationship established between members and union employees did, however, appear to negatively impact activism – along with overwork, a fear of retribution against union members, and gendered responsibilities. Union organisers were keenly aware that overworked union members on precarious contracts would be uninterested in taking on additional unpaid work for their union and acknowledged that organising comes to be dominated by a 'middle-class lefty politico culture' (organiser, 15).

While the overall argument of the thesis points to ways that wider employment relations in the sector *constrain* union strategies, the findings also indicate failings within union organisations. An inconsistent adoption of organising strategies was apparent, alongside internal disputes over the direction of the unions. Comments from organisers emphasised the desire to grow a labour movement yet the unions' structures did not always reflect or enable this ambition. GMB and UNISON organisers referred to a pressure to meet recruitment targets and promote services; GMB organisers questioned the usefulness of GMB's strategy of prioritising top-down organising; UNISON organisers questioned whether campaigns targeting local authorities were effective. This distance between organisers' perspectives on organising and union direction suggests a lack of democracy within union structures. But the uneven application of organising also relates to the fact that unions are, like other organisations under capitalism, in competition. Adopting organising too stridently could deter potential members who want a service and could lead employers to form partnerships with a rival union. IWW organisers noted that voluntary recognition agreements can create a regression towards conservative unionism. However, IWW's own turn away from service unionism was fragile, with some members wanting a service and organisers citing the importance of paid union officers.

In making criticisms of trade unions and of the potential of organising strategies, I echo the view of an IWW organiser criticising IWW: 'I feel like I'm being very critical of an organisation that I'm very in love with' (organiser, 15). It is certainly true that not all workers were unwilling to be organised. There were workers who (if asked) would become union members, and there were members who (if asked) would become activists. I asked a GMB member: 'do you think if a GMB organiser said that they would help you organise your company, and help you try to recruit people, do you think that you would want to be involved in something like that?' The member responded: 'oh mate, I'd be out there with a red flag'

(support worker, 60). Effective organising would require union organisers and officers not only challenging organisational constraints, but also navigating complex employment relationships and political dynamics. And seemingly, a strong, coherent, union structure would still be required to build activism – somebody to hand out the red flags.

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