“HOW COULD TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP APPROACHES BE USED TO EXPLAIN RECRUITMENT AND RECOGNITION OF COMMERCIAL BANK STAFF IN BARBADOS, FROM 1997 TO PRESENT?”

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Abstract

Top-down and bottom-up approaches for trade union organising have become popular debates in industrial relations and critical considerations for unions hoping for a renewed status. This study investigated recruitment and recognition of white-collar workers in commercial banks in Barbados during the period 1997 to present in terms of centralised/top-down and workplace/bottom-up union approaches. Case study design was used to examine this phenomenon in five commercial banks by conducting 32 face-to-face interviews with shop stewards, union officials and bank managers involved in the recruitment and recognition processes. Five focus groups were held with shop stewards and documents and archival information were also used.

This thesis shows that the Barbados Workers’ Union had initially used a top-down approach to gain recognition in the commercial banks but was initially unsuccessful; however, organisational contexts such as restructuring/reorganising, mergers/acquisitions and a lack of grievance resolution resulted in employee grievances. These grievances included job security, pay equity, and a need for grievance resolution procedure and employee voice which were used by the rank-and-file activists in their bottom-up mobilisation. Evidence from the study showed that the top-down approach was supported by the bottom-up approach once the grievances were framed by activists at the workplace.

The findings have shown that when management’s actions create conditions conducive to mobilisation and grievances result which are common to most staff, mobilisation is likely once rank-and-file activists are willing to agitate for unionisation. Further, that once this bottom-up approach supports the top-down approach in a multidimensional way that top-down and bottom-up could contribute to successful recruitment and recognition campaigns. Evidence from this research suggests that rank-and-file mobilisation should be considered along with top-down strategies to increase the chance of recognition. The study contributes to research on top-down and bottom-up approaches and particularly to understanding the workplace dimensions for mobilisation.
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I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Vilna Alleyne, who passed away in 2001, but who instilled in me, daily, as a child, the words of a Trinidadian Calypsonian, The Mighty Sparrow, “Children go to school and learn well, without an education in your head later on in life you will catch real hell...”
# List of Contents

Chapter 1 – Introduction and Background ................................................................. 1

1.1 Introduction ................................................................................................. 1

1.2 Background ................................................................................................ 4

1.3 Research Question ....................................................................................... 7

1.4 Research Contribution and Justification ....................................................... 8

1.5 Research Design and Methodology .............................................................. 10

1.6 Context, Framework for Trade Union Recruitment and Recognition in Barbados, Gaps in Literature and Current Debate ................................................................. 11

   Context ........................................................................................................... 11

   Framework for Trade Union Recruitment and Recognition in Barbados ........ 12

   Current Debate and Gaps in the Literature ...................................................... 13

1.7 Outline of Thesis .......................................................................................... 14

1.8 Conclusion ................................................................................................... 15

Chapter 2 – “Leading from Above and Below” .................................................. 17

2.1 Introduction ................................................................................................... 17

2.2 Foundational Writings on White-Collar Unionisation ................................... 22

2.3 Classical and Current Writings on Bureaucracy and Democracy in Trade Unions ........................................................................................................... 27

2.4 Revitalization and Renewal of Trade Unions ............................................... 31

2.5 Trade Union Recruitment and Recognition ............................................... 36

   Legal and Political Context for Trade Union Recognition ............................ 37

   Recruitment Campaigns and Employer Resistance ........................................ 41

   Organising and Servicing ............................................................................... 44

   Union Tactics ................................................................................................. 49
Partnership and Organising .................................................................................................................. 51

2.6 Workplace Mobilisation .................................................................................................................. 55

Subjective Factor .................................................................................................................................... 56

Objective Factors ...................................................................................................................................... 60

2.7 Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................... 62

Chapter 3 – Research Methodology .................................................................................................... 65

3.1 Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 65

3.2 Justification for using Qualitative Research ..................................................................................... 66

3.3 Rationale for Case Study Design ...................................................................................................... 67

3.4 Validity and Reliability in Case Studies ............................................................................................ 70

3.5 Different Research Approaches ....................................................................................................... 72

3.6 Methods, Stages and Conduct of the Data Collection ......................................................................... 73

Interview Procedure and Questions ...................................................................................................... 74

Focus Groups .......................................................................................................................................... 76

Documents and Archival Records .......................................................................................................... 78

Thematic Analysis, Transcribing and Coding ....................................................................................... 82

3.7 Ethical Considerations ....................................................................................................................... 83

Researcher Status ..................................................................................................................................... 84

Gaining Access to Information ............................................................................................................... 84

The Nature of Industrial Relations ........................................................................................................ 85

Sample Selection ...................................................................................................................................... 86

Confidentiality and Anonymity ................................................................................................................ 86

Maintaining Objectivity .......................................................................................................................... 87

3.8 Selection and Profile of Cases ........................................................................................................... 87

3.9 Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................... 91
Chapter 4 – ‘BWU Unionising From Above’ ................................................................. 93

4.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................. 93

4.2 National Context for Trade Union Recruitment and Recognition in Barbados ......................................................................................................................... 94

   Trade Union Recruitment and Process for Recognition ........................................... 96

4.3 BWU’s Strategies, Approaches and Tactics for Unionising White-Collar Workers in the Commercial Banks in Barbados ................................................................. 97

   BWU’s Internal Strategies and Changes ................................................................. 104

4.4 Decision Making Between Top-Down Union Officials and Bottom-Up Rank-and-File Members ........................................................................................................ 110

4.5 Roles and Relations of Union Officials and Workplace Activists ....................... 116

   Guidance ................................................................................................................... 121

4.6 External Strategies ............................................................................................... 123

   State and Company Partnership Agreements ....................................................... 124

   Community Organising ......................................................................................... 132

   International Relations ......................................................................................... 140

4.7 Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 144

Chapter 5 – ‘Mobilising From Below’ ........................................................................ 147

5.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................. 147

5.2 Organisational Contexts Conducive to Mobilisation ......................................... 148

5.3 Factors Propelling Mobilisation from Below ...................................................... 156

   5.3.1 Job Security ..................................................................................................... 156

   5.3.2 Pay and Benefits .......................................................................................... 172

   5.3.3 Need for Employee Voice ........................................................................... 178

5.4 Rank-and-File Activists Propelling Mobilisation ................................................ 182
5.5 The Nature of the Mobilisation Process .................................................. 186
  5.5.1 Fear, Anxiety and Conflict in the Mobilisation Process ...................... 187
  5.5.2 Anti-Union Tactics ............................................................................. 188
5.6 Conclusion ............................................................................................... 192
Chapter 6 - Conclusion ................................................................................ 195
  6.1 Introduction ............................................................................................. 195
  6.2 Summary of Findings .............................................................................. 195
  6.3 General Implications for Theory and Practice ....................................... 205
  6.4 Contributions to Research ...................................................................... 206
  6.5 Study Limitations ................................................................................... 207
  6.6 Suggestions for Future Research ............................................................ 208
  6.7 Final Conclusions ................................................................................... 208
Appendix 1- Table 1. Commercial Banks Unionised from 1997-Present ............ 210
Appendix 2 - Consent Form Used to Obtain Permission to Interview ............... 211
Appendix 3 - Schedule of Interviews ............................................................. 212
Appendix 4 - Questions Used in In-depth Interviews with Workplace Activists,... 214
  Union Officials, Bank Managers and Focus Groups ..................................... 214
Appendix 4B - Questions for Union Officials of the BWU .............................. 216
Appendix 4C - Questions Used in Interviews with Bank Managers .................. 218
Appendix 4D - Questions Used in Focus Groups ........................................... 219
Bibliography ..................................................................................................... 220
List of Figures

Figure 1 ......................................................................................................................... 107
Figure 2 ......................................................................................................................... 129
Figure 3 ......................................................................................................................... 130
Figure 4 ......................................................................................................................... 130
Figure 5 ......................................................................................................................... 133
Figure 6 ......................................................................................................................... 134
Figure 7 ......................................................................................................................... 134
Figure 8 ......................................................................................................................... 137
Figure 9 ......................................................................................................................... 137
Figure 10 ....................................................................................................................... 138
Figure 11 ....................................................................................................................... 138
Figure 12 ....................................................................................................................... 139
Figure 13 ....................................................................................................................... 139
Figure 14 ....................................................................................................................... 140
Figure 15 ....................................................................................................................... 141
Figure 16 ....................................................................................................................... 143
Chapter 1 – Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

Trade union status and power has declined world-wide and as a result, unions are trying to find ways to renew and revitalise by using a number of strategies and approaches (Heery et al 2003; Fiorito 2004; Turner 2005). Among these approaches, top-down and bottom-up unionisation are widely debated as trade union choices in reversing their decline in the current global era (Foerster 2001; Milkman 2006). Top-down approaches are centralised and originate from union headquarters and union organisations, while the bottom-up approaches are driven by rank-and-file activity from the workplace. This distinction is important for unions in examining their strategies for unionisation and the different ways in which these approaches contribute to successful campaigns (Milkman 2006).

This thesis investigates how top-down and bottom-up approaches could be used to explain recruitment and recognition of white-collar workers by the Barbados Workers’ Union (BWU) in the commercial banking sector in Barbados from 1997 to present. Both top-down and bottom-up approaches have proponents who defend each of these positions as the best for trade unions to turn around their declining positions; however, there are also some writers who say a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches is necessary for unionisation (Milkman 2006; Hickey et al 2010). As unions re-assess their approaches to unionisation, this has brought into question the relationship between central union strategy and workplace rank-and-file action. Union organising campaigns necessarily involve some combination of these two elements, but it is nevertheless possible to characterise particular approaches as either top-down,
that is, originated and directed according to the priorities of the wider union, or ‘bottom-up’, that is, the workplace, as expressed by their rank-and-file activists. This thesis is an attempt to differentiate between these two tendencies and to suggest how each contributes to the context of an organising campaign. A critical part of the debate is about the decision-making from top-down and bottom-up and how this translates into bureaucracy or democracy in trade union activities up to the point of recognition.

Unions have been characterised as bureaucratic organisations in which decision making tends to be top-down (Michels 1915; Voss and Sherman 2000; Voss 2010). Within top-down and bottom-up approaches there is power distribution amongst the head office union leaders and rank-and-file leaders in unionisation (Clawson 2003). It is not the intention of this study to test the extent of bureaucracy since this study only examines relations prior to recognition, however, the decision making in the top-down and bottom-up approaches during recruitment for recognition will be examined. The current drive for bottom-up mobilisation in renewal and revitalisation is seen as a way of increasing democracy at the workplace level and reducing top-down bureaucracy (Gall 2003).

The decline of trade unions in strength and status created the need for revitalization and renewal with particular focus on choice of strategies (Clawson & Clawson 1999; Heery et al 2003; Fiorito 2004; Turner 2005). The concept of revitalization originated in the United States of America (USA) while the concept of renewal had its origin in the United Kingdom (UK). Both the revitalization and renewal concepts have proposed strategies with elements of both top-down and bottom-up approaches (Hurd et al 2003). The combinations of some of these strategies are debatable and this study
will focus on the elements of top-down and bottom-up approaches and the context in which they are used in recruitment and recognition campaigns. Trade unions have also turned their attention to the unionisation of white-collar workers as a growing workforce (Salamon 1992) and an opportunity for increased membership.

With the increase of white-collar work in the early 1990s (Mc Brier and Wilson 2004), unionisation of these workers became the focus of trade unions, especially because of the decline in the manufacturing sector (Salamon 1992). This phenomenon started in the 1940s in the USA, UK and other industrialised countries. The early unionisation of white-collar workers was characterised by their perceived status and the challenges they presented for trade unions to unionise (Strauss 1954; Bain 1970; Bain and Price 1983). The challenge included white-collar workers not wanting to associate with unions, which they felt were beneath them (Strauss 1954), and also for fear of missing out on promotion to managerial ranks (Ibid 1954; Blum et al 1971). In the intervening years of the late 1970s to the 2000s the focus on white-collar unionisation continued to examine how white-collar work had become routine and the ‘deskilling process’ became part of the debates (Braverman 1974; Crompton and Jones 1984). The examination of white-collar workers and reasons for their joining trade unions provides the foundational discussion about white-collar unionisation, however, the discussion has moved on to examine their mobilisation for unionisation as a result of an unsecured globalized era characterised by downsizing and restructuring (Mc Brier and Wilson 2004).

In Barbados, white-collar unionisation gained momentum in the early 1990s, some fifty years after it had increased in the UK, USA and other industrialized countries.
The issues of class and routine jobs were not the main issues for white-collar workers by the 1990s; instead, job insecurity as a result of globalisation was a main factor during mobilisation for trade union recruitment and recognition. How the BWU engaged in recruitment and gained recognition from a top-down centralised position and bottom-up workplace action is central to this thesis in understanding these processes in the commercial banking sector in Barbados from 1997 to present.

Recruitment and recognition of trade unions are critical and connected processes for unions to renew their status (Gall 2003). In the era of union decline, anti-union legislation and employer resistance have been the major obstacles to trade union recruitment and recognition (Gall 2003; Kelly and Willman 2004). Research on recruitment campaigns from top-down and bottom-up have found that the initial approach from either top or bottom could result in gaining recognition, however, there is need for collaboration between top-down and bottom-up during union campaigns (Milkman 2006; Hickey et al 2010).

1.2 Background

The BWU was strategising to recruit and gain recognition of white-collar staff in the commercial banking sector from around 1995, which was a period in most industrialized countries when unions were facing harsh circumstances resulting in decline in membership numbers (Turner 2005). Following the early dismantling of the American unions, the swinging of the pendulum by Margaret Thatcher in Britain and the anti-labour laws in Australia and New Zealand, the 1980s and early 1990s ushered in a new era and set the tone for the decline in union membership worldwide (Troy 1990; Waddington and Whitson 1997; Jarley et al 2002; Heery et al 2003).
Globalisation added another dimension to the challenges which trade unions faced, though some commentators have argued that it has also brought opportunities for the trade unions to organise those who have been disadvantaged (Blyton et al 1999a, 2001; Dolvik and Waddington 2002; Murray et al 2010). Work and employment have also changed as a consequence of globalisation and restructuring/reorganisation, merger/acquisitions are now regular strategies in global organisations, resulting in new contractual arrangements for workers (Blyton et al 1999a; Gallin 2001). This global change to work arrangements was a part of the experience of some white-collar workers in Barbados, where organisational conditions created uncertainty and resulted in mobilisation for trade union representation. Trade unions worldwide have faced globalisation amidst hostile employers and obstructionist legal policies from governments of countries keen to attract global capital and this has resulted in insecure employment for workers worldwide (Heery and Salmon 2000; Heery et al 2003; Rubery et al 2005).

Grievances became evident at the time of restructuring/reorganising, mergers/acquisitions in the commercial banking sector in Barbados. Subsequently, all but one of the island’s commercial banks gained trade union recognition. The BWU had both announced its intent to recruit white-collar workers in the financial sector and started its top-down attempt at recruitment even before mergers and acquisitions of the banks. In answering this research question, this study will examine these top-down approaches by the BWU and the bottom-up approaches from the workplace to recruit and gain recognition in the commercial banks in Barbados.
The BWU organised six of the seven commercial banks in Barbados and, to date, continues a top-down union campaign to organise the only non-unionised commercial bank, the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC). After the organisation of the first commercial bank in 1997 there were a number of recognition claims in the banking sector. This study explores how the mobilisation process occurred and the extent of the involvement of rank-and-file activists in the bottom-up process. In addition, it determines whether the employees had grievances which were taken to the union that may have initiated mobilisation. Leadership from union headquarters will be examined to determine the role of the union officials in the mobilisation process, and how they interfaced with the rank-and-file at the workplace.

Trade union organisation in Barbados is significantly different from that of Britain, where multiple unions compete to organise the same company. In Barbados, usually only one union will approach an organisation so that the inter-union competition described by Heery et al (2003) does not occur. The BWU represents the majority of workers outside of the public service in Barbados, including the commercial banks. While union membership has been in decline in Britain according to March and Cox (1992), as well as other countries, the trade union movement in Barbados was gaining momentum up until 1997 (Barbados Workers’ Union 58th Annual Report 1999). However, from the late 1990s there was a decrease in membership and the BWU recognised the need to have a strategy for increased membership (Barbados Workers’ Union 59th Annual Report 1999).

The decline in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors in Barbados created a need for the BWU to look elsewhere for membership, which started their focus on organising
white-collar workers, particularly in the commercial banks. Several recognition claims for unionisation resulted in industrial disputes, with some ending in strike action during the 1990s to 2000s. This was particularly evident in the commercial banking sector where five of the island’s seven commercial banks became unionised during the period 1997 to 2003; the dates of unionisation and change in ownership are highlighted at appendix 1, table 1.

1.3 Research Question

The major question in this study is, “How could top-down and bottom-up approaches be used to explain recruitment and recognition of commercial bank staff in Barbados during the period 1997 to present?” Clearly this is not a question amenable to either/or solutions. A union’s top-down approach, for example, in the absence of a willingness of employees to join the union is unlikely to be productive. Rather, it is the nature of this top-down approach and the way in which it either was formulated from, or was supported by, bottom-up workplace demands that is the focus of this study.

The first objective of the research is to determine what were the top-down approaches used by the BWU during the recruitment and recognition of the commercial banks in Barbados. In this regard, the following subsidiary questions had to be answered:

- How the union’s top-down approaches could be used to explain recruitment and recognition.
- What was the role of the union officials in the recruitment and recognition processes?
- What decisions were made at union headquarters?
- How was the decision making shared with the rank-and-file leaders?
• To what extent was the BWU engaged in the Organising Model (OM)?

• What was the impact of the specific approaches of the BWU on recruitment and recognition of the commercial banking sector?

Secondly, the research is investigating the bottom-up approaches which were used during recruitment and recognition. Also, part of this second objective is to determine to what extent rank-and-file activists were involved in the decision making process and to examine their roles in mobilisation. Mobilisation theory was used to examine the dimensions of the bottom-up approach and the following subsidiary questions were explored:

• How were the rank-and-file activists involved in the decision making process?

• What role did the rank-and-file activists play in the campaign?

• What support and advice did they receive from officials at union headquarters?

• What management actions may have created conditions conducive to mobilisation at the workplace?

• Did employees have specific grievances that were taken to the union that subsequently caused recruitment and recognition?

• Was the top-down approach supported by bottom-up approach?

• What was the nature of the recruitment and recognition campaigns?

1.4 Research Contribution and Justification

This research contributes to the studies on top-down and bottom-up approaches conducted by Milkman (2006) and Hickey et al (2010) which argue that both top-down and bottom-up approaches are necessary for unionisation. It also examines how these top-down and bottom-up approaches explain unionisation of white-collar workers in
Barbados and adds to the literature in terms of a specific context. Further, it provides a more detailed understanding of a bottom-up approach to mobilisation, which has three dimensions that work together to propel mobilisation. These dimensions include the employer’s action which results in conditions conducive to mobilisation, grievances of the employees and the rank-and-file activists to lead the mobilisation. This takes Kelly’s (1998) mobilisation theory a bit further to examine the interconnection between these dimensions and what happens as the process moves from one dimension to the next. Mobilisation theory is very helpful in examining workplace activity and the transition of individual to collective organisation; however, it does not sufficiently address the linkage between the three dimensions and how the process moves from one stage to the next. This thesis will address this gap in the literature by examining the link between these three dimensions in bottom-up mobilisation. It also provides an explanation of the roles of the union leaders and workplace activists during recruitment and recognition and how bureaucratic or democratic the decision making process was up to the point of recognition. The examination of rank-and-file activism as part of the discussion on the OM in the Barbadian context will also add to the studies conducted in other countries on the topic.

There is a dearth of research in the area of industrial relations generally in Barbados and few books or articles have been written on this topic. Little research has been conducted on the recruitment and recognition of white-collar workers in Barbados and the explanation for this phenomenon. Having worked for twenty five years in the field of industrial relations and human resources management, both in the public and the private sectors, and having witnessed several unionising campaigns has resulted in an interest to further investigate and research union recognition in the banking sector. The
findings of this research will provide a basis for case studies for students and research fellows interested in the following areas: the mechanism of top-down and bottom-up unionisation approaches, the examination of organisational justice, and the implications of organisational conditions for collective organising.

Top-down and bottom-up approaches used during recruitment and recognition have been studied in a number of countries but they have never been studied in Barbados to determine if the same theories can be applied in this context. The country-specific experience with trade union revitalization and renewal was highlighted in the literature (Gall 1998; Sano and Williamson 2008) as deficient and this study will provide a better understanding of the dimensions and dynamics at work in the Barbadian context. This study is novel since the topic was examined in a new culture, setting, place and era to identify the theory or theories which could be used to explain recruitment and recognition in this case. The timing of the phenomenon in Barbados presents a unique opportunity for study which will add to the research conducted in other countries.

1.5 Research Design and Methodology

The research design chosen for this study was case study, and five cases of commercial banks, of a total of seven, in Barbados were chosen. Six of these banks were unionised by the BWU and one remains the only non-unionised commercial bank in Barbados, the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC). One of the six which were unionised by the BWU was not chosen for this research since it was previously unionised as a government savings bank and was then part of the public service which was unionised by the National Public Workers’ Union. The research will provide some commentary on the only non-unionised bank, RBC, and the top-down attempt by the BWU to unionise this bank.
The case study approach was chosen and triangulation was engaged in the collection of data using in-depth face-to-face interviews, focus groups and document and archival methods. The method used to analyse and explain the data was thematic analysis and ethical considerations were identified and addressed, and are highlighted in detail in chapter three. The context of this study is within a marginalised environment for the labour movement; however, the framework for unionisation in Barbados is different from that of the UK and USA.

1.6 Context, Framework for Trade Union Recruitment and Recognition in Barbados, Current Debate and Gaps in Literature

Context

Trade union power has declined in many industrialised countries over the past few decades and globalisation, change in work and anti-union policy frameworks have favoured privatisation strategies and capital (Rose 1993; Gallie 1996; Stirling 2010). This change has resulted in some difficult times for trade unions with parent organising bodies such as the American Federation of Labour and Congress of Industrial Organisations (AFL-CIO) and the Australian Council of Trade Unions helping by formulating strategies and tactics for the revival of the trade union movement (Cooper 2001). The OM, a model that emphasises bottom-up rank-and-file mobilisation, is one of the main strategies put forward as an addition and alternative to the Servicing Model (SM) (Cooper 2001) to help trade unions back on the path to revival. The partnership approach is also suggested as an option for labour-management cooperation given labour’s weakened position (Haynes and Allen 2001), although this position has been criticised by advocates of the bottom-up approach (Kelly 2004; Tailby et al 2004; Cassel and Lee 2009). The Social Movement Unionism (SMU), another bottom-up
approach, has been used by unions especially in the USA to increase union power. Trade unions have used approaches within different industrial relations contexts, some governed by laws; however, in Barbados there is no legal route for recruitment and recognition since the system is totally voluntary.

**Framework for Trade Union Recruitment and Recognition in Barbados**

Although the trade union movement in Barbados faces the same challenging global economic environment, the industrial relations framework is without the harsh local legal context for recruitment and recognition. Recognition of commercial banks started in 1997 with the unionisation of Bank A, which was also the first commercial bank to be established on the island, as seen at appendix 1. The first strike in the commercial banking sector was also in this bank, which was followed by subsequent industrial action over the period of unionisation in this and other banks. Campaigning has continued in this sector and is on-going to date, with the BWU using a top-down approach in trying to unionise the only non-unionised bank on the island.

The BWU was the first trade union to be registered in Barbados on 4 October, 1941 (Mark 1966) and has the highest union membership on the island of 25,000 members (Fashoyin 2001). More than sixty years since its formation, the BWU continues to dominate the landscape of industrial relations in Barbados. Its membership spans both blue-collar and white-collar workers, although its emphasis from the 1990s has been to unionise white-collar workers. Its role as a social institution is well established in the community and as a partner with government and the private sector in the social partnership arrangements. Its mission is, “To be an excellent trade union provider of labour market services in Barbados and the Caribbean and to improve the quality of life
to all Barbadians through participatory representation” (BWU 60th Annual Report 2001).

**Current Debate and Gaps in the Literature**

The current debates about trade unions are focused on how they renew and revitalise themselves and top-down and bottom-up approaches are a part of these debates in terms of strategic choices (Cunningham and James 2010). The discussion in the literature regarding the top-down and bottom-up approaches (Milkman 2006; Hickey et al 2010) has not focused specifically on white-collar workers but refers to all categories of workers. This study will close the gap in relation to the unionisation of white-collar workers in the Barbadian context by examining these top-down and bottom-up approaches.

The ‘Organising Model’ (OM) is central to the debate in the literature and puts more responsibility on rank-and-file activists for organising at the workplace (Fiorito 2004). This model has been promoted as part of the approach which unions should be engaged in to improve their situation (Cooper 2001) and in increasing democracy at the workplace. An examination of mobilisation theory by Kelly (1998) helps with the explanation of workplace mobilisation; however, there is room to develop this theory to show the interconnections between the conditions for mobilisation, the grievances and the need for rank-and-file activists to lead mobilisation. This theory about mobilisation is also presented in a slightly different way by Darlington (2002), who recognised that grievances were important for mobilisation and also the rank-and-file activists who lead the mobilisation. This thesis examines these dimensions of workplace mobilisation so as to contribute to further development of mobilisation theory proposed by Kelly (1998).
1.7 Outline of Thesis

This study examines the top-down and bottom-up approaches used in five cases of recruitment and recognition by the BWU in the commercial banking sector in Barbados and provide some commentary on the only non-unionised bank, RBC. It examines recruitment only to the point of recognition and makes no reference to the type of unionisation, or the extent of bureaucracy or democracy after recognition. Chapter one has outlined the research problem and presented a background in terms of the Barbadian context for recruitment and recognition. In chapter two there is a discussion on the foundational writings of white-collar unionisation and bureaucracy and democracy in trade unions in relation to the classical and contemporary literature. Revitalization and renewal approaches are then discussed in terms of the top-down and bottom-up choices they present for trade unions.

The recruitment and recognition processes are examined along with the legal and political context for trade unions, employer resistance and recruitment campaigns. Organising and servicing, partnership and organising are compared and discussed in terms of their top and bottom elements. Workplace mobilisation and the role of workplace activists in mobilisation are discussed using Kelly’s (1998) mobilisation theory and studies about workplace mobilisation from Darlington (2002, 2010). The methodological approach is presented in chapter three and uses a case study design with triangulation of data collection methods, including face-to-face interviews, focus groups and document and archival records. Ethical considerations and the approaches used to avoid breaches in ethical research standards are also outlined in chapter three. Chapter four discusses top-down approaches by the BWU to recruitment and recognition of white-collar workers in the banking sector in Barbados, while chapter five presents the
bottom-up mobilisation by the rank-and-file activists at the five commercial banks. In conclusion, the study discusses the main findings and general implications for theory and practice, contributions to research, study limitations and suggestions for future research.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter sought to set out the background and context for the research question, “How could top-down and bottom-up approaches be used to explain recruitment and recognition of commercial bank staff in Barbados during the period 1997 to present?”. It has also located the question within the debates about the attempts worldwide by trade unions for renewal and revitalization to increase membership, power and influence through various approaches and strategies, including top-down and bottom-up choices. Bureaucracy and democracy are significant in these top-down and bottom-up approaches and are examined to the point of recruitment and recognition in this study. The chapter highlighted the significance of global influence on organisations to restructure, reorganise and engage in mergers and acquisitions as well as the opportunity this presents for trade unions to represent white-collar workers.

Justification for the study includes its contribution to the discussion about the need for both top-down and bottom-up approaches for successful trade union recruitment and recognition campaigns and further analysis of the dimensions of workplace mobilisation and the link between these dimensions. Recruitment and recognition in Barbados is characterised by voluntarism and is therefore different from that of the UK and USA where there is some legal protection for unions. The brief discussion provided in this chapter on the unionisation of white-collar workers in the five commercial banks in
Barbados by the BWU from 1997 gave some indication of the phenomenon and how it has moved on to focus on job security and economic reasons for mobilisation. Chapter two reviews the current literature to highlight and discuss the writings from the main contributors on issues critical to the research question, and in particular, top-down and bottom-up approaches as part of revitalization and renewal in light of recruitment and recognition campaigns.
Chapter 2 - “Leading from Above and Below”

2.1 Introduction

This thesis attempts to understand top-down centralised and bottom-up decentralised approaches in trade union recruitment and recognition. The main focus is how these top-down and bottom-up approaches work separately and combined in organising campaigns. The study is situated within the broader context of the arguments for strategies of trade union renewal and revitalization in which unions search for ways to reverse their decline. It is possible to distinguish three broad approaches in the academic literature. First there are those who see renewal being driven by membership activism, as part of a bottom-up process (Moody 1997; Kelly 1998; Early 2004; Tait 2005; Cohen 2006a). Second, there are those who advocate a more pivotal role for central leadership in directing union priorities as part of a top-down process (Willman 2001; Lerner 2003). A third perspective has been proposed by a number of writers (Bronfenbrenner and Hickey 2004; Milkman 2006; Bach and Givan 2008; Hickey et al 2010) who have suggested that both top-down and bottom-up approaches are necessary.

Exploring these debates is important to this study in understanding what processes and events take place from the top-down and bottom-up during trade union recruitment and recognition. It is also critical in examining how the roles and responsibilities of leadership from union headquarters differ from those at the workplace and the support given by one to the other in recruitment and recognition campaigns. Understanding how unions have recruited and gained recognition of workers within the context of these top-down and bottom-up approaches is useful in answering this research question.
The attempt to organise white-collar workers, particularly in a sector with no history of unionisation presents particular challenges for unions. Although this challenge is, in some ways, specific to time and place, it also has some parallels to unions’ experience elsewhere. Section 2.3 examines the academic literature on white-collar work and discusses why the changing nature of white-collar employment has implications for unions. While early literature has focused on the growth of white-collar workers (Bain 1970) and their perception of class and status (Strauss 1954; Lockwood 1958; Prandy et al 1983), the current debate tends to focus on their insecurity in an era of globalisation and the opportunity and challenge that this presents for unionisation (Heery and Salmon 2000).

Unions are large and complex organisations. While they rely on their members’ “willingness to act” (Offe and Wiesenthal 1985), they also require an ability to prioritise action. For the Webbs (1920:8) this was a matter “the exigencies of their welfare with the employers”. In other words, bureaucracy developed for a purpose. On the other hand, the interest of a bureaucratised organisation may not be the same as the interests of its members. For this reason, Michels’s (1915) concept of ‘iron law of oligarchy’ has been influential in writing about the dynamics of union organisation and democracy. The current literature on bureaucracy and democracy in trade unions includes that of Voss (2010), Lucio (2011), Darlington and Upchurch (2012) and Hyman (2012), which helps with a review of the classical literature in light of renewal and revitalization for trade unions.

The question of the extent to which the union leaders hold or relinquish power to workplace leaders during recruitment and recognition could be examined within the
theories on bureaucracy and democracy in trade unions. Clawson (2003) is of the view that union leaders are in favour of the top-down approach and are uncomfortable with any opposition to their power from the top. Moody (1997) has argued for bottom-up mobilisation since it allows workplace leaders some democracy outside of the centralised union headquarters during recruitment and recognition campaigns. This new emphasis on workplace mobilisation could be used to challenge Michels’ “Iron Law” of oligarchy in the sense that workplace activists do have some control and influence over their fellow rank-and-file colleagues during recruitment and recognition campaigns. In these campaigns the legal and political contexts are also critical for recognition and a challenge for trade unions in most industrialised countries.

The years of the Thatcher government in Britain saw several industrial laws established which reduced the power of trade unions to recruit and gain recognition. More recently legislation was intended to facilitate recognition; however, evidence has shown that unions still use the voluntary approach for many reasons, and recruitment and recognition remains a challenge for unions, especially in light of resistant employers (Gall 2003). Similarly, in the USA the voluntary approach has been used in preference to the legal route to recognition (Milkman 2006). The legal and political contexts for trade union recruitment and recognition are discussed in this chapter with reference to the UK and USA and how trade unions have made strategic choices. Top-down and bottom-up approaches for trade unions to renew and revitalise are highlighted in the options for trade unions such as the OM, the SM, partnership and the SMU.

The OM has been introduced as a model for trade union organising which focuses on rank-and-file activity at the workplace (Fiorito 2004). SM on the other hand is the
traditional approach of servicing union members by full-time union officials (Ibid 2004). These two approaches have been reviewed by trade unions in terms of the options they present and are discussed in this thesis with regard to the top-down and bottom-up perspectives. Partnership, another option for trade unions is a collaborative approach that allows cooperation between unions and employers (Haynes and Allen 2001). This approach is also examined and compared with organising. The SMU is a bottom-up grassroots approach to organising that is democratic and is managed to a large extent by the rank-and-file (Moody 1997). An examination of revitalisation and renewal strategies such as organising, servicing, partnership and SMU help in the explanation of top-down and bottom-up approaches by exploring the strategic options available to trade unions (Heery et al 2003; Frege and Kelly 2004; Turner 2005; Hickey et al 2010). In these options the extent of militancy or collaboration varies and Kelly’s mobilisation theory is useful in examining the workplace dimensions.

The level of militancy at the workplace level depends on rank-and-file activists and Kelly’s mobilisation theory helps in understanding how individual grievances become collective through the actions as workplace activists. The explanation of what happens at the workplace and how management actions create conditions which result in grievances which are propelled by rank-and-file is important in understanding workplace mobilisation. There is a renewed focus on the workplace level (Fairbrother 1994b), referred to as the place where workers, their union and management discuss and debate various issues (Hyman 1975a; Armstrong et al 1981; Gospel and Palmer 1993) and union activity at the workplace is presented as critical for union recovery (Moody 1997; Cohen 2006). Conditions at the workplace are critical for the beginnings of rank-and-file mobilisation.
Conditions for mobilisation are necessary (Martin 1999; Voss and Sherman 2000), however, conditions in organisations are not the only factors to influence mobilisation since recognition campaigns will be successful where unions strategise at the right time and employees are interested in being unionised (Bronfenbrenner 2003). Although conditions provide the impetus for mobilisation, it is argued that rank-and-file activists as leaders at the workplace are needed to frame issues and propel the mobilisation (Darlington 2002).

The research question asked, “How could top-down and bottom-up approaches be used to explain recruitment and recognition of commercial bank staff in Barbados during the period 1997 to present?” Chapter one presented the background to this study. This chapter will first highlight the foundational writings on white-collar unionisation and union bureaucracy and democracy and make connections with the current literature. There is an examination of trade union revitalization and renewal and the top-down and bottom-up approaches outlined for trade unions. The legal and voluntary routes for trade union recruitment and recognition and the political context are discussed by examining some notable campaign cases.

The political context for recruitment and recognition and employer resistance are presented along with the implications for trade union top-down involvement in terms of influencing the external context. OM, SM and partnership are also compared and contrasted to provide some conclusions on the elements of top-down and bottom-up approaches used during recruitment and recognition campaigns. The SMU is outlined as another bottom-up option for trade unions while the final section explores militancy at the workplace by highlighting the roles of the workplace activists and how these differ
from the union officials at head office. The dimensions of workplace mobilisation will also be examined using Kelly’s mobilisation theory as a base for the discussion.

2.2 Foundational Writings on White-Collar Unionisation

The early discussions about white-collar unionisation were formulated from both a sociological perspective about class (Lockwood 1958; Prandy et al 1983) and an industrial relations perspective about job regulation (Bain 1970). Before this Webb and Webb (1920) wrote about the “black-coated proletariat” and Mills (1951) presented a number of aspects on white collar workers including that of status, identity, and issues about change in white-collar work. This section will examine these early theories on white-collar unionisation, the intervening years which discussed deskilling of white-collar work, and highlight how these discussions have moved on to examine the current concern of white-collar workers about their economic conditions (Schiavone 2007) and job security (Mc Brier and Wilson 2004).

The definition of white-collar work is mainly related to the use of mental rather than physical ability (Bain and Price 1972; Salamon 1992) and many studies have attempted to categorise these workers who are typically seen as office workers and other professionals. By the 1960s white-collar unionisation had increased by 26 per cent (Prandy et al 1983). The growth in white-collar workers was examined by Bain (1970), and it has grown more than the blue-collar category between 1911 and 1981 (Adams 1973; Salamon 1992; Mc Brier and Wilson 2004). White-collar unionisation has presented new challenges and opportunities for trade unions to recruit and recognise in the early years and these challenges included their identity with class and status which they felt was above that of blue collar workers (Prandy et al 1983). In the banking sector
these workers started to feel disenchanted about gaining advancement through their employers and sought organisation through unions (Robinson 1969). This collective association also took the form of staff associations, where white-collar workers were themselves the union (Ibid 1969).

There is some difference in the literature about the class issue of white-collar workers, with Strauss (1954) arguing that part of the difficulty for white-collar workers to join unions was that white-collar workers were of the belief that they were “middle class”, and joining the union was seen as reducing their status (Blum et al 1971; Prandy et al 1983). There was also the feeling that if they joined the union it would reduce their chance of being promoted to management ranks (Blum et al 1971). On the other hand, Kleingartner (1968) also argued that white-collar workers became distant from employers because of the introduction of middle supervisory groups which distanced them from management, and resulted in their wanting to join the union. The argument here is different, since this distance resulted in white-collar workers seeking representation through the union for improvement in their contractual arrangements to keep their “middle class status” (Ibid 1968).

White-collar workers were labelled “the new working class” by Mills (1951) and Prandy et al (1983), which was similar to the label “Blackcoated Worker” used by Lockwood (1958). These labels signify the “middle class” with “certain common characteristics” (Mills 1951), one of the most important of which was “class consciousness”, critical to white-collar workers in the early years of white-collar unionisation. Allen (1971), however, predicted the erosion of the social factor over time between white-collar and blue-collar workers and pointed out that eventually the
consciousness between these two categories of workers would be more united because of economic pressures of mechanism in a globalized market. Mc Brier and Wilson (2004) also made the point that since the beginning of the 1990s the issues that caused mobilisation among white-collar and blue-collar workers were economic; therefore, similar reasons caused both white-collar and blue-collar workers to organise.

The approach to unionising white-collar workers was highlighted for special treatment in unions which also represented blue-collar workers, according to March and Pedler (1979). In early unionisation of white-collar workers unions had to use different strategies for attracting white-collar workers as opposed to blue-collar, in order to appeal to their notion of status (Blum et al. 1971). White-collar workers had become disappointed in their belief that they were of a higher status since white-collar jobs became routine, leading to the label of white-collar workers as the “cheerful robots” (Mills 1951). Today, however, white-collar workers seek union representation regarding their economic situation (Cohen and Moody 1998) and the concern about their class is of less significance for mobilisation.

Union recognition, employment concentration and government action were identified as factors which have influenced white-collar union growth in Britain (Bain 1970), although a critique of this work by Adams (1975) indicated that labour shortage was also a factor. It could be argued that these three factors are also necessary for promoting blue-collar unionisation. In the early years of robots, unions felt that this new technology would have resulted in widespread job loss and job insecurity and as a result promote white-collar unionisation (Blum et al 1971), however, this did not materialise.
The recognition of white-collar workers became more frequent since white-collar work had increased (Salamon 1992).

Unionising of white-collar workers made sense as a strategy, since the traditional blue-collar industries were declining (Kleingartner 1968). The increase in white-collar employees was noted by Blum et al (1971) to be potentially the same number for unionisation as blue-collar workers. During the 1980s and 1990s there was an increase in white-collar unionisation and with the increase in redundancies white-collar workers took example from blue collar workers and the gains they had achieved through collective representation (Salamon 1992). Since the discussion about the class of white-collar workers, the intervening years have focused on the ‘de-skilling’ of white-collar work, mainly articulated by Braverman (1974). Braverman’s theory argues that white-collars workers have been disappointed because they have less autonomy as a result of managements’ approaches.

The 1990’s were characterised by the fall in mobility and level of work for white-collar workers and in some ways white-collar workers had become just as precarious as their blue-collar counterparts (Farber 1996; Smith and Rubin 1997; Fraser 2001). The reason for unionisation of white-collar workers has moved on from class and status to examine their insecurity and economic situation. This unionisation takes place in revitalization and renewal attempts from different levels, including a centralized top-down or bottom-up approach. There is no evidence of research that examines top-down and bottom-up mechanisms which are specific to unionisation of white-collar workers since the examination has been about the top-down and bottom-up approaches of both white-collar and blue-collar workers. The literature has examined notable cases in studies by

The discussion about class, however, is beginning to gain new currency in the literature with Gall and Fiorito (2011) asking for an examination of class and organising. Simms (2012) argues that the class debate has been missing from the discussions on renewal and as a result the debate is not examining renewal in a holistic way. Simms’ (2012) perspective is that class should be discussed as a condition and consciousness of all workers. This erosion of status of white-collar workers was predicted by Allen (1971) who felt that there would be a blurring of the class divide between white and blue-collar workers.

The significance of the classical literature on the current unionisation of white-collar workers shows that unions must have a collective grievance with which workers identify. In the case of early white-collar unionisation, losing status was the grievance that caused mobilisation. Currently, job security and economics are the collective grievances and Cohen and Moody (1998) have argued that even where workers are conscious of their class, economic conditions would cause them to mobilise. It is ironic that job security was predicted by unions as a mobilising factor for early white-collar unionisation, in the years of the introduction of robots; however, that did not materialise (Blum et al 1971). Unionisation from top-down and bottom-up can also be examined in the discussions about bureaucracy and democracy, which will explore the implications for decisions and roles of union officials and rank-and-file during recruitment and recognition from these two perspectives.
2.3 Classical and Current Writings on Bureaucracy and Democracy in Trade Unions

The main argument in the classical literature about bureaucracy and democracy in trade unions is that power and decision making in the control of head office union leaders result in a distance between these union leaders and their rank-and-file members (Michels 1915; Mills 1948). This distance between union leaders and their members is at the heart of Michels (1915) theory about the “iron law of oligarchy” which argues that union leaders make their own decisions not necessarily supported by their rank-and-file. Michels’ theory further argues that unions eventually become bureaucratic even if they initially are democratic, in other words bureaucracy is inevitable. This foundational significance is still useful for this thesis since the top-down or bottom-up approaches and centralised or decentralised approaches could be examined to determine the level of democracy in recruitment and recognition. In the case of bottom-up approaches to unionisation, it could be argued that rank-and-file leaders do have some democracy in terms of organising at workplace level. An examination of this perspective could be looked at in the grass roots movement for mobilisation (Moody 2007).

The levels of bureaucracy in trade unions also relate to rank-and-file activists becoming bureaucrats among their rank-and-file members as a result of them reporting to head office union officials without the input of their colleagues in the workplace (Mills 1948). In this way oligarchy could also develop between and rank-and-file leaders and their colleagues at the workplace and Cohen (2006a) refers to distance between rank-and-file and their colleagues as inevitable in the sense that the rank-and-file activist today could become bureaucratic over time. Webb and Webb (1894, 1920) had a similar view to that of Michels’, where there was a distance in the perspectives of union leaders
and rank-and-file members. Mills (1948) referred to this phenomenon by indicating that union leaders were becoming distant from their members by going along with what he called the “main drift” and being influenced by the “sophisticated right” that got their power through the mass media.

An aspect of this bureaucratic theory is that organisations developed into oligarchies as their size increased and powerful positions resulted in officers distancing from the rank-and-file and moving away from democracy, according to Michels (1915). The length of time organisations take to develop oligarchies is part of Michels’ argument; however, there is a limitation for this thesis to examine oligarchy since it has to be examined over an extended period of time. There will be an examination in this study of the nature of the decision making process between top-down leaders and rank-and-file activists for the period of recruitment and up to the point of recognition.

Michels’s theory has been critiqued by Hyman (1971) who felt that democracy was a choice and if unions wanted to be democratic they could do so by adjusting their processes. Another perspective on union democracy explored by Lipset et al (1956) found that rank-and-file members could also become selfish and have demands which are not in the interest of the organisation and others. Other writings have referred to rank-and-file members being less moderate than union leaders (Parnes 1956) and in some cases, union leaders have appealed to the reasonableness of the rank-and-file in their demands and not the other way around. Clawson (2003), however, is of the view that “vibrant internal democracy” is essential to avoid bureaucratic unions. A recent examination of bureaucracy in trade unions by Darlington and Upchurch (2012) examined the position of “Hyman’s 1970s/1980s analysis”, which dismissed the
bureaucracy and rank-and-file divide. Hyman discounted the dichotomy of bureaucracy and rank-and-file which in his view did not pay attention to the reality of trade unions, although Hyman (1979b) did make the point that bureaucracy existed at every level of the union structures. Darlington and Upchurch (2012) reinforced the necessity to examine the relation of shop stewards and union officials regarding bureaucracy in trade unions. What this is highlighting is the difference in how the binary perspective of bureaucracy and rank-and-file is viewed among writers. It is critical to examine these two positions in this thesis to learn about the roles and level of decision making in recruitment and recognition.

Current literature has connected with the theory of “the iron law of oligarchy” in terms of the bureaucratisation of workplace unions (Darlington and Upchurch 2012) and the divergence of the aims of union leaders and the rank-and-file have been noted by Fairbrother (2000a, 2000b). Although there is evidence that activists are the best source of mobilisation (Kelly 1998; Darlington 2009), according to Cohen (2006) unions still tend to fall into the “bureaucratic trap”. The recognition of the critical role of workplace activists is supported by other writers in favour of democracy at the workplace level to the extent that the top-down approach will not sufficiently impact mobilisation (Clawson 2003).

The bureaucracy and rank-and-file divide is important in understanding how union officials and rank-and-file are able to collaborate sufficiently to result in recruitment and recognition. It is reasonable to think that the “iron law” of oligarchy could exist although union leaders also try to work with the demands of rank-and-file members. How the process of decision making takes place within the union between union
leaders, rank-and-file leaders and their colleagues could determine the level of bureaucracy or democracy of the particular union. For example, the case of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) studied by Levi et al (2009) offered a different perspective to Michels’ account of democracy and concluded that there were different types of democracy which resulted from, “…the industrial context, political ideology and constitutional makeup of the organisation” (Levi et al 2009: 222).

Recent literature has questioned the examination of democracy in terms of how it is defined (Levi et al 2009; Voss 2010). Voss (2010) has suggested that the concept of union democracy should be examined in a broader context than the accumulation of power by union leaders and indicated that Michels’ theory could be challenged in light of the current findings about revitalization and the emphasis on the grassroots movement from below. The argument about democracy in union renewal, according to Voss (2010), is that central top-down union strategy and direction has been key to unionisation and not purely dependent on democracy of rank-and-file activists. There is an argument that democracy could harness power between the union and fellow colleagues and is important for workplace mobilisation (Moody 2007), although this perspective is not supported by Voss and Sherman (2000) and Lerner (2003) since they believe it ignores the top leadership aspect from where strategy flows.

The discussion on democracy has raised questions about types of democracy and the extent of this democracy between different levels in union organisation so that there could be top and bottom bureaucracy as highlighted by Hyman (1979b). The discussion also indicates that top-down bureaucracy refers to union officials in terms of how they
relate to rank-and-file leaders, while union bureaucracy at the workplace relates to the relationship between rank-and-file leaders and their colleagues.

Those supporting the top-down approach maintain that there is need for the direction from top (Voss and Sherman 2000; Lerner 2003) while those supporting the bottom-up approach believe that labour is unlikely to renew and revitalize unless there is mobilisation from the bottom-up using rank-and-file (Clawson 2003; Moody 1997) and increasing the democracy at the grassroots level. Other studies, however, have found that both top-down and bottom-up approaches working together are necessary to achieve successful campaigns (Milkman 2006; Hickey et al 2010). Revitalization and renewal are concepts which propose strategies for trade unions and choices in terms of top-down and bottom-up approaches.

2.4 Revitalization and Renewal of Trade Unions

This section on trade union revitalization and renewal will discuss the top-down and bottom-up approaches proposed for trade unions. It is important for this study to examine the options proposed for trade unions to reverse their decline. The terms ‘revitalization’ and ‘renewal’ are constantly repeated in the literature which articulates changes necessary for labour movements’ revival (Hickey et al 2010). These concepts present ways in which trade unions can examine processes, approaches and strategies to reverse the decline in their power and influence. The term ‘renewal’ originated in Britain and has been used by writers such as Fairbrother and Yates (2003), while ‘revitalization’ originated in the American literature and has been discussed by Hurd et al (2003) and Turner (2003,2005) among others.
Revitalization and renewal are currently used interchangeably in some of the literature. Fiorito (2004), for example, uses both terms in the same definition as, “…efforts to innovate and adapt to changing environments…and union efforts to revitalise or ‘renew’ themselves” (Fiorito 2004: 22). There are several writings in which the meanings of both concepts are blurred and Turner (2005) has examined revitalization on a number of levels and asked for the definition to be clearly stated and standardised so it could be viewed in a similar way by academics. This section will first discuss revitalization and then renewal in terms of their meanings and application.

One definition of revitalization is that it is about the various ways unions could reverse elements of decline (Frege and Kelly 2003). Revitalization has also been presented by Frege and Kelly (2004) as having four dimensions for unions to engage which include: membership, institutional, economic and political. The usefulness of these aspects according to Frege and Kelly (2004) is that unions could focus on one or more of these dimensions in attempts at revitalization. The context specific nature of revitalization and the extent to which unions engage in one dimension as opposed others is emphasized as a choice for trade unions (Ibid 2004). These writers have pointed out that revitalization is not the same in every national context, a point also emphasised by Turner (2005). In attempts to revitalize some aspects of trade union activity have been highlighted for attention and include, “… membership loss, declining mobilizing effectiveness in terms of collective bargaining coverage…declining mobilizing capacity (because of the restrictive legislation in the case of Britain)…” (Frege and Kelly 2003: 8). Baccaro et al (2003) see revitalization in a broader sense than increasing membership numbers through recruitment, and more about a philosophy of improving the image of the labour movement. This broad scope for revitalization also includes revitalization for unions not
only on a national level but also as a global movement. However, it can be argued that increasing membership activism must be critical and practical for trade unions since this is one reason for their decline in power and influence.

Frege and Kelly (2004) identify six broad categories of union strategies which are combinations of top-down and bottom-up approaches in recruitment and recognition and include: organising; organisational restructuring; coalition building; partnerships with employers; political action and international links. However, there are also inherent tensions, since top-down and bottom-up approaches tend to imply different assumptions about union organisation and democracy. In the USA and the UK, an emphasis on workplace organisation and activism has been central to some as attempts at union revitalization, (Baccaro et al 2003). At the same time, attempts to put in place an organising model have relied on the role of skilled, professional organisers. This is a tendency that has been criticised on the grounds that activists would be more effective organisers, but it is worth noting that such professionalism of workplace campaigning can also be practical in the context of a highly directive top-down polarization of activity.

Emerging from the debate on revitalization is the issue of the level of application of the strategies proposed. This was part of the treatment by Cunningham and James (2010) that highlighted the analysis of these strategies in terms of the workplace or a higher level. These two levels are a critical part of this thesis in understanding not only the strategies from top and tactics from the workplace but also the actors and their roles from these two perspectives. The level of leadership which headquarters would provide as opposed to the workplace activists is a different experience for the members and this
special relationship will be discussed in more detail in the section on workplace mobilisation. Renewal literature has also presented similar approaches and strategies for unions to reverse their decline.

Hickey et al (2010) referred to renewal as a process, while it was also referred to in other ways, including “strategies” by Fiorito (2004: 23) and De Turberville (2007: 374). Fiorito (2004) and Heery (2003) have also pointed out that the meaning of renewal has been applied in different ways. The renewal literature has focused mostly on member activism and its significance for unions to recover in light of the harsh conditions which contributed to the decline in unionisation (Hickey et al 2010). Conditions for unions’ operations have changed in a number of ways and the renewal concept proposes several ways for unions to address these changes and turn around their declining situation. Five renewal processes were identified in this regard, which included “…recruiting and extending the membership base…” which have become critical for union renewal (Fairbrother et al 2007: 34). The point was made that renewal does not only refer to organising but there are also other trade union activities such as transformation networks, coalition building, political action and labour-management and partnership which are used in renewal efforts (Hickey et al 2010).

These processes of renewal are similar to those identified for revitalization for unions to reverse their decline. Much of the discussion on renewal has focused on where it would come from, whether from the top-down or bottom-up. The argument for renewal from top-down is advocated by Heery (2003) and Lerner (2003) while main advocates for renewal from below-up are Tait (2005) and Fairbrother (1989). The central theme of Fairbrother’s renewal thesis focuses on renewal coming from the workplace level.
Although this single focus was also supported by McBride (2004), who spoke about the importance of workplace activities, it was criticised for being too narrow in scope by Gall (1998). Hickey et al (2010) also indicate that while member activism is critical for renewal there is also need for top-down leadership.

Renewal in terms of “managerial renewal” originates at union headquarters and is dependent on the leadership from the top (Heery 2005). There is an argument that the choice of leadership could be instrumental in influencing workplace unionism (Fosh 1993), while the importance of “membership participation” was crucial for renewal (Hickey et al 2010: 53). Leadership at the workplace is a necessary element in “formulating approaches” and “articulating concerns of the membership” (Fairbrother et al 2007: 48). This is particularly critical at the stage of recruiting for recognition and Cohen (2006) has noted that rank-and-file activists were needed to influence their colleagues. The renewal discussion has been about members and union officials (Gall 2003; Hickey et al 2010) but also outcomes from various strategies, highlighted as a measure of renewal (Hickey 2010). A wider focus was proposed as part of the renewal which includes renewal of the internal union processes and the external context for unionisation (Gall 1998).

Both the ‘revitalization’ and ‘renewal’ literature have outlined a number of top-down and bottom-up ways for trade unions to turn around their declining position. However, the revitalization approach promises a much more long term solution with a broader scope embracing various elements of the unionising context (Turner 2005) and reaching beyond national boundaries. Renewal also identifies a number of processes, strategies, approaches and activities which unions could use to address change to their internal and
external context, and involve top-down and bottom-up union activities. The extent of renewal and revitalization depends on unions’ ability to recruit members for recognition. Recruitment and recognition processes can be examined in light of top-down and bottom-up union activities and are a major part of this study.

2.5 Trade Union Recruitment and Recognition

A campaign for trade union recruitment is described as a process resulting from a change in workers’ views of the employee/employer relationship (Knox and McKinlay 2003). Recognition is instrumental for trade unions to signal their representational status for workers, and is defined as, “…both the key institutional mechanism and set of organizational rights by which unions establish their presence and value to workers” (Gall 2003: 6). In some countries it could also be “procedural”, which is limited to attending to grievances, or “negotiating” in which the union has bilateral input in terms and conditions of employees in the particular organisation (Salamon 1992). March and Pedler (1979) pointed out that the recognition process is a fundamental shift in relations for the employer and the employee, moving from an individual to a collective arrangement.

Recognition has fallen in most industrialized countries and it is recognised that to gain membership will depend on both recruitment and recognition (Gall 2003). Both processes are linked and described as having a symbiotic relationship or as, “…a “means” and an “end” which should run alongside each other and are self-reinforcing” (Gall 2003: 18). To achieve recognition requires a recruitment campaign, yet to engage in comprehensive recruitment, especially with resistant employers, requires recognition (Bain and Price 1983; Dickens and Bain 1986). The management of these two
processes has become critical for trade unions in an era which has seen a decline in recognition claims (Gall 2003) and legal contexts which have been primarily opposed to union recognition (Nash 2006).

The recent evidence of union campaigns and recognition has shown mixed results from top-down and bottom-up approaches. In most successful campaigns it was significant that there was a point of convergence between the top-down and bottom-up strategies and tactics that resulted in successful bids for recognition (Lopez 2004; Milkman 2006). There are several aspects related to union recognition and recruitment which will be discussed, including the legal and political context for trade union representation and employer resistance. Union organising will be discussed as a bottom-up approach and compared with partnership and servicing as top-down choices. The SMU is also discussed as a bottom-up approach to organising.

**Legal and Political Context for Trade Union Recognition**

Legislation is a central issue for trade union recognition either as support for, or an inhibition of, the process. The context for trade union recognition in Britain changed from one where the government provided a supportive industrial relations environment in the 1970s to one which was characterised by anti-labour laws in the 1980s (Salamon 1992). The “declining mobilizing capacity” was mentioned by Frege and Kelly (2003) as a reason for unions to revitalise in Britain because of the harsh legal context. Legislation for trade union recognition was first introduced in Britain in 1971 and while it provided an alternative for trade unions to gain recognition it was seen as a last resort to the voluntary system (Salamon 1992). Even after the introduction of the Employment Relations Act (ERA) 1999 the voluntary route to recognition was
encouraged by the government in Britain and for trade unions was less costly and a shorter route than the legal option (Perrett 2007). In Britain the ERA 1999 was the first substantial legal support for trade unions to gain recognition and reverse de-recognition against resistant employers since the 1970s (Gall 2003; Perrett 2007).

The ERA 1999 has been viewed with mixed feelings in terms of the actual benefits to trade unions (Wood et al 2002; Gall 2003). Baccaro et al (2003) has reported that the ERA 1999 has resulted in positive growth for recognition, while on the other hand Perrett (2007) has indicated that there has been a decline in the number of new recognitions since 2001. Some drawbacks with the ERA 1999 include the specified size of the organisation to which the act is applicable and the absentee votes which are counted as “no” votes. Unions received some support and backing of the law against resistant employers and the Act has also given the unions a goal to aim for in the voluntary route of more than 50% of signed up members (Gall 2007). The ERA 1999 provides for trade unions to apply for statutory union recognition where there is 10% of the intended bargaining unit and 40% of all those intended to vote. This legislation has not been viewed in some quarters as helping unions with recognition but as allowing employers to use tactics to avoid unionisation (Logan 2001). It is still hoped that the enactment of the ERA 1999 and the rigorous attempt by trade unions to engage in union organising should slow the decline in recognition claims (Gall 2007).

Policy and employment law has determined to a large extent how innovative trade unions could be in the current era of decline (Foley 2003). Although the law is critical to union recognition it could be argued that in the declining years unions have depended more on organising, rank-and-file mobilisation and the social movement unionism
(Sweeney 1996a). Gall (2010) also indicated that although unions have gained Statutory Union Recognition Provisions (SURP) they have not mirrored these with success in recognition claims. Gaining supportive union recognition provisions is viewed as, “reform from above” rather than a “revolution from below” (Gall 2010: 20). The legal route to recognition in the USA similarly to that of the UK has not totally supported trade union recognition.

In the USA the legal route to recognition is through the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). The National Labour Relations Board (NLRB) procedures are seen as “counter-productive” since they allow employer anti-unionism to deny union recognition (Gall 2010). In notable campaigns in the USA, such as the “Justice for Janitors” and the garment workers, employees were not eligible to vote in the National Labour Relations Board (NLRB) elections. Other aspects of the law were useful in the “Justice for Janitors” campaign in which the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) filed a claim for discrimination against rank-and-file activists (Milkman 2006). Unions have also gained recognition by going through other means than the NLRA and have launched community programmes so that they gain support for employee voice from public awareness (Yates 2009). Employee voice is a choice workers make in terms of direct consultation with employers or indirectly through the union for representation.

Voice could be based on employees themselves, which is categorised as ‘direct’, or voice could be an ‘indirect’ form, which is when a union or collective representative speaks on behalf of the employee (Wilkinson et al 2004; Budd et al 2010). Voice is also part of the definition of democracy as “…the influence which the ordinary member
has over union policy...” (Harcourt and Wood 2006). Employee voice could harmonise the work environment or cause disruption and these two positions can be linked to the concepts of partnership, which is harmonising, or organising, which is militant.

Workplace representation through employee voice has various meanings in the literature. A definition of employee voice is, “any type of mechanism, structure or practice, which provides an employee with an opportunity to express an opinion or participate in decision-making within the organisation” (Lavelle et al 2010: 395). The concept of employee voice has re-emerged in the recent literature (Budd et al 2010), but was made popular by Freeman and Medoff (1984). Employee voice presented by Hirchman’s 1970 framework of exit-voice-loyalty states that employees who are dissatisfied would choose to leave or stay in an organisation and that those who stay would complain or try to get improvement (Berntson et al 2010). The point is made that although employee voice is an old concept, it is fitting to be applied to the current global work conditions (Berntson et al 2010: 216). Voice through for trade union recognition and representation is also outlined in the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions.

Most industrialised countries have ratified ILO Convention 87 on the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise and Convention 98 with provisions for the Right to Organise and for Collective Bargaining and Trade Union Recognition. This has provided a supportive environment for trade unions in recruitment and recognition. Although these conventions are not law and are not enforced, leaving the use of suasion and public opinion to influence resistant employers. British trade unions have turned their attention to recruitment and organising during the declining periods,
similar to their counterparts in the USA, New Zealand and Australia (Heery et al 2001). During recruitment campaigns employer resistance is a challenge for unions to manage and especially for activists at the workplace engaged in mobilisation (Gall 2003).

**Recruitment Campaigns and Employer Resistance**

Top-down and bottom-up approaches to recruitment and recognition are documented in cases such as the “Justice for Janitors”, “Drywallers”, “Guess” and “Port truckers” (Lopez 2004; Milkman 2006). These campaigns started from different perspectives in terms of top-down and bottom-up approaches; however, the integration of top-down and bottom-up approaches has made the difference in successful recognition. Evidence has shown that success did not necessarily result from a particular start approach; however, where there was success there was also some consolidation of top and bottom approaches (Bronfenbrenner and Juravich 1998). Milkman (2006) and Hickey et al (2010) have also investigated top-down and bottom-up approaches and found both were critical for successful campaigns. The experience of union officials to guide rank-and-file activists in union campaigns has been identified as a need during mobilisation (Sharpe 2004; Martin 2007). The current debate about democracy in trade unions could be assessed in these top-down and bottom-up approaches and some argue that democracy will flourish where unions use activists to mobilise and not paid organisers (Moody 2007).

The issue of the use of external recruiters in organising the American labour movement has also brought to the fore the discussion about democracy at the workplace. While the use of outside organisers has been credited for successful campaigns (Milkman and Wong 2001; Voss and Sherman 2000) it has been called into question in terms of
stymieing workplace democracy (Clawson 2003; Early 2004; Moody 2007). There is also criticism from Early (1996) for using outside paid organisers since the claim is that it does not sufficiently involve rank-and-file members and reduces the potential for democracy to develop at the workplace. Criticism has also been levelled at top union leaders for advocating and pushing organising through the top-down approach (Clawson 2003) since the thinking is that this reduces democracy. The question of building democracy in unions is questioned by Lerner (2003) who calls this single focus “psuedodemocracy” and does not agree that democracy should only come from rank-and-file.

Research conducted by Bronfenbrenner and Juravich (1998) which analysed 165 campaigns found that union strategy was key to success, however, they did add that it was in conjunction with, “…an aggressive grassroots rank-and-file strategy” (Bronfenbrenner et al 1998: 20). In two unsuccessful campaigns, the Guess campaign, which was started as a top-down approach, and the Truckers campaign, which was initiated as a bottom-up approach, there was evidence that support was needed from both top and bottom. In these two campaigns the research has shown that they were not sufficiently supported from the bottom-up in the case of “Guess” and the top-down in the case of the “Truckers” campaign (Milkman 2006).

Cohen (2006a) argued that there was little support from the top in the case of recruitment campaigns of electronic companies, of which IBM was included. However, Gall (2003) highlighted that there was a lack of rank-and-file activists since the employees did not think it was advantageous to join the union. The critical role of rank-and-file activists was outlined in the case of IBM as making the difference in the
organising campaign (Cohen 2006). Other campaigns highlighted the necessity to coordinate the top-down and bottom-up approaches and included the “Rosemont Nursing Home” campaign examined by Lopez (2004). In this campaign the need for grassroots rank-and-file to persuade their fellow colleagues about the benefits of unionisation was critical (Lopez 2004). The first attempt in this case to organise was not successful and lessons learnt included the need for involvement of the rank-and-file members in articulating the issues which were incorporated in the second campaign (Ibid 2004). Employer resistance is also part of the dynamics which trade unions encounter during recruitment and recognition.

Employer resistance to trade union organising could vary from subtle tactics, such as remarks to employees, to dismissal for trade union association (Gall 2004b). Organisations have used anti-union tactics or what are called “substitutionist tactics”, which include offers to staff to address grievances (Gall 2005: 54). Employer offensive can threaten union recruitment and this could affect activists to the point where the employer’s actions retard union activity (Clawson 2003). This resistance by employers during campaigns is one of the reasons for suggesting the use of experienced union officials to give advice to the activists at the workplace (Sharpe 2004; Martin 2007; Hickey et al 2010).

Some experiences of rank-and-file members in dealing with employer resistance are highlighted as obstacles of the unionisation process by management (Weiler 1983; Freeman 1985; Bronfenbrenner 1994; Hurd and Uehlein 1994). The approach used by management of discouraging union members is to create doubts about the benefits they could accrue from unionisation (Cohen and Hurd 1998). Union responses to employer
resistance could be examined more specifically in terms of tactics during organising and servicing. Organising and servicing are two approaches which unions have been examining in light of renewing their status.

Organising and Servicing

Organising is identified as one of the strategies in both the revitalization and renewal concepts for unions to improve their declining situation (Bronfenbrenner and Juravich 1998; Cooper 2001). Servicing is the traditional approach of union officials attending to the needs of union members. In the new era of union decline the Organising Model (OM) is widely advocated for trade unions to engage to reverse their decline (Fiorito 2004). The main discussion about organising is how it should happen, whether from top-down or bottom-up, with some advocates arguing for the top-down or centralised approach (Willman 2001) and others for the bottom-up approach by rank-and-file (Early 2004). A comparison of OM and SM and partnership and organising helps in the understanding of their bottom-up and top-down elements.

One definition of organising is, “...the attempt to build collective organisation amongst workers and to depend on that organisation as the primary resource for advancing member interest” (Heery 2002: 28). The OM is defined as, “…union orientations that engage members and stimulate activity and develop their confidence…” (Carter 2006). Another perspective of organising is that it is “elastic” and has two different meanings, that is, an attempt to retain and recruit members and also unionism that is member driven (Fairbrother and Yates 2003: 58). Generally, the OM approach is about workplace activists mobilising the workplace and taking workers’ issues to management without necessarily relying on union officials (Fiorito 2004). The OM approach has
implications for the extent of democracy which could result from rank-and-file taking on more responsibility and making decisions at the workplace (Moody 2007). This increase in democracy for rank-and-file activists in using the OM approach could also result in the development of small oligarchies as highlighted by Michels (1915).

The main difference between SM and OM is the shift in emphasis in SM from above to activities which are membership driven at the workplace (Carter 2006; Fairbrother et al 2007). These two orientations highlight the focus of the top-down, leadership-based approach in SM as opposed to the bottom-up membership involvement in terms of OM. The American unions first conceptualised the term ‘Organising Model’ in the 1990s to describe the way unions engage union members by encouraging them to deal with issues in the workplace and putting emphasis on bottom-up activism (Carter 2006; Gall 2007). OM is used in the literature as the new way of thinking about organising, that is, driven by workplace activists (Fiorito 2004), although there are others who do not see this as a successful approach without the input of strong leadership from the top, or ‘managerial unionism’ (Voss 2010). The direction of organising has implications for the key players in organising, such as the trade union officials and the workplace activists in terms of their roles and how they interact with each other (Fiorito 2004).

Three distinct characteristics were used to answer the question of what organising is: rank-and-file activity through leadership; that it is different from servicing and it is an entirely different approach to unionism for all the involved parties (Burchielli and Bartram 2009). These writers also answered the question of, “why organise?” by saying it could reverse the decline in membership numbers and also could guard against the employers’ agenda of opposition to workers (Burchielli and Bartram 2009). The point
was made that organising was being treated differently, for example, in the USA and the UK, and the indication is that the UK trade unions see organising as, “a set of practices and tactics rather than a wider political initiative” (Simms and Holgate 2010: 158).

Simms and Holgate (2010) can be criticised for their position on unions’ stance on organising as “practices and tactics”, since in the context of globalisation unions are taking a pragmatic approach to gaining members. In the renewal and revitalization era unions have been searching for ways to reverse their decline (Heery 2005) and therefore the practices and tactics engaged in organising are primarily geared to increase membership numbers (Fairbrother and Yates 2003). While organising is essentially a bottom-up approach it could be used top-down to build community alliances (Simms and Holgate 2010). Building alliances with the community is helpful at the time of recruitment and also follows the recommendation of Burchielli and Bartram (2009).

Some writers claim that there have been no major changes from the original organising formula, and this was summed up as, “…an organizing campaign [(worker anger worker hope and vision) – fear of the boss + victory or defeat] …” (Luebke and Luff 2003: 421). While this equation has remained the same over the years, attention is drawn to the context of organising which has become more prone to anti-union laws in most countries. In further examination of how unions organise these questions were asked: “Did they stand on a workbench…”, “Did they quietly visit workers in small groups or individually?”, “What did the ‘organizing’ connote…” (Luebke and Luff 2003: 422). The concept here of organisers visiting the workplace is not in keeping with the OM, which outlines workplace organising by workplace activists taking greater
responsibility, including organising after members have signed up, managing and planning campaigns as highlighted by Heery et al (2000a) and Bartram et al (2008).

The change in roles and the challenge this presents to organisers have been highlighted by Peetz et al (2007). The role of organisers and rank-and-file activists discussed by Burchielli and Bartram (2009) not only recognised the changed role but also the change in the relationships between union officials as organisers and shop stewards as organisers at the workplace. Where union officials previously dealt with grievances for signed up members the role of the rank-and-file activist is extended beyond recruitment to assist in grievance handling. The union officials are also now called on to do more organising to increase membership (Cooper 2001). However, these changed roles have not been embraced by all workplace activists, who see some of the new roles as those of union officials, especially where they have not been trained (Lopez 2004). This has meant changes for trade unions in training, structuring and resource allocation (De Turberville 2004).

The compatibility and exclusivity of OM and SM has been debated in two camps in the literature, with Carter (2000) on one hand and Waddington and Kerr (2000) on the other and discussed by De Turberville (2004). Carter (2000) has presented a position which sees OM and SM as two completely different models, while Waddington and Kerr (2000) see these two models as dependent on each other. OM is described as “…union orientations that engage members and stimulate activity and develop their confidence…” (Carter 2006: 416). The point is made that the way organising is practiced will depend on the context of application (Ibid 2006) and that it should not be attempted in isolation to all the other changes needed by trade unions, such as internal
restructuring, which would be necessary to make ‘organising’ a successful strategy (Cooper 2001). The OM presents both advantages and disadvantages for trade unions.

The advantages identified for using the OM are in two main areas: first, that it has allowed full time officers to be ‘freed up’ of time and secondly, it facilitated decentralised communication (De Turberville 2007). The decentralisation of communication also supports democracy at the workplace and the reduction of bureaucracy. Several disadvantages of the OM, such as the time required of the union delegates to organise at the workplace in light of their full time jobs and the expectation of the members for attention from union officials and not workplace activists have been highlighted (De Turberville 2004).

In the OM approach, it could be said that the workplace activists are engaged in both organising and servicing, if they also take care of the members’ grievances after they have signed up. Although OM was conceptualized on the idea that it would free up union officials to do more in the field, it was also noted that it was time consuming and costly in terms of the need for constant training of activists (Bronfenbrenner et al 1998; De Turberville 2004). There is also the concern that the number of activists per member would have to increase to ensure a reasonable level of service to union members (De Turberville 2004). Union officials who have been servicing members have found it difficult to shift to organising since OM has changed the status quo of full time officers who are accustomed to the service approach and therefore require unions to take a different approach (Dolvik and Waddington 2004). This highlights the resource allocation between top-down and bottom-up activities and the changed roles of
organisers at the headquarters and the workplace level. Another strategic option which is available to trade unions is the Social Movement Unionism (SMU).

SMU is a form of bottom-up mobilising that goes beyond the workplace to communities and other outside groups for support and was significant in the labour movement in the USA (Schiavone 2007). Rank-and-file participation is critical in SMU for promoting militancy (Moody 1997; Voss and Sherman 2000) and democracy at the workplace is also increased as rank-and-file involvement and militancy increases (Moody 1997). SMU takes organising to communities and globally so that the economic demands are extended to other rank-and-file activists (Ibid 1997). In Moody’s presentation of the SMU there is an argument for rank-and-file to be critical in leading mobilisation which should result in increased new membership for unions. However, Moody’s account of the SMU has been criticised for not acknowledging the important role played by professional organisers. The tactics used by unions to organise both at the workplace and externally have become more sophisticated and creative over time and are discussed here from a top-down and bottom-up perspective.

**Union Tactics**

Union tactics are the specifics of union strategies. The difference between tactic and strategy is that tactical approaches are the “particular initiatives” of a strategy (Turner 2005: 387). Most tactics discussed in the literature are similar; however, recent tactics have included more sophisticated top-down public relations messages against companies by trade unions. Common tactics used by trade unions in organising include T-shirts, button days, rallies and mass grievances (Bronfrenbrenner 2003). The thinking is that these bring awareness to the community and put pressure on employers who have
an anti-union stance, as well as presenting the union as a unified force to workers (Bronfenbrenner 2003). Other tactics include house calls, solidarity days, public relations campaigns and mobilising by rank-and-file activists (Burchielli and Bartram 2009).

Some tactics are organised by union headquarters while others are organised at the workplace. Unions have been adopting certain tactics to counteract hostile employers and these include showing up at shareholder meetings and other confrontational approaches (Brown and Chang 2004). Also documented are attempts to put pressure on companies’ financial dealings and proposing different representatives for board meetings, as well as intervening in board meetings by submissions (Brown and Chang 2004). Gaining public sympathy is also a tactic which is used during labour unrest (Ibid 2004). The literature is extensive on trade union strategies and tactics necessary for revitalization and renewal; however, there are some gaps in the literature in terms of specific examination of the context for different countries (Sano and Williamson 2008; Cunningham and James 2010).

This section has examined organising, OM and SM. There is an argument that permeates the literature for organising from below as the way for unions to renew (Fairbrother 1996; Clawson 2003; Early 2004), although there are arguments that this will not be successful without top-down direction (Willman 2001; Lerner 2003). In the OM, organising from below is critical since it is viewed as being synonymous with rank-and-file mobilisation necessary for the increase in membership and workplace democracy (Fairbrother and Yates 2003; Moody 2007). The change in the role of the rank-and-file activists to include servicing is a new distribution of roles for top-down
and bottom-up leaders. Partnership and organising are two strategies highlighted for the renewal and revitalization of unions; however, these are not always seen as complementary when used together.

**Partnership and Organising**

Partnership, according to Heery (2002), does not have a precise definition. However, one way of thinking about it is that it, “…constitutes a loose label for an approach to union-management cooperation…” (Danford et al 2005: 594). Partnership agreements are formed at different levels, and include state, sectoral and company level (Heery 2002). The need for cooperation with employers was one of the main reasons to encourage company partnerships in light of the new global era for trade unions (Haynes and Allen 2001; Smith 2006). The partnership arrangement has implications for the top and bottom actors in trade union activities because where companies are unionised partnership tend to be led by trade union leaders from the top.

Critics of the partnership arrangement believe it is in direct conflict with organising and that it promotes management’s agenda over that of the employee’s (Frege and Kelly 2004; Kelly 2004; Tailby et al 2004; Cassell and Lee 2009). There is also the belief that the partnership approach could further weaken unions’ ability to effectively represent workers (Kelly 1996; Taylor and Ramsay 1998; Terry 2003). These critics believe that partnership promotes, for example, flexibility and work load which would be of interest to the employer while the employee would be more interested in job security (Badigannavar and Kelly 2011). This has contributed to the conflict identified in the use of partnership and organising simultaneously which has resulted in these terms being described as “puzzles and contradictions” (Heery et al 2003: 93).
According to Badigannavar and Kelly (2011), partnership may not encourage potential members to join the union, while members may not be committed to the union under partnership arrangements. Hurd et al (2003) maintained that partnership was concentrated at the level of union and company officials without much input from rank-and-file. The main orientation identified for the partnership approach is that it is consultative in nature and not dependent on negotiations (Terry 2003). Issues of training and development and job security are usually issues found in company partnership agreements while the focus of the state agreements is on the external labour market (Heery 2002). The consultative process in the partnership arrangements could be linked to a “shared agenda”, proposed by Wilkinson et al (2004), and a way for employees to, among other things, present their grievances to management. Benefits accruing to management in the partnership arrangement include efficiency in the workplace and a means of direct communication with staff. For employees, other benefits include greater employee participation and involvement of the union in company issues which affect the workplace (Ackers et al 2004; Dietz 2004).

Both partnership and organising are encouraged by umbrella bodies; for example, the Partnership Institute was formed to promote partnership and similarly the Organising Academy to promote organising in the UK (Fiorito 2004). This raises some questions in terms of the leadership levels in the process between shop stewards and union officials, since workplace representatives would have less authority where the union officials take the lead in discussions with management (Terry 2003). In the partnership arrangements these levels of representation, union officials and rank-and-file activists, are competing for, “...democracy, control and leadership” (Ibid 2003: 495). This
emphasises the tension between top-down and bottom-up actors in terms of their roles and democracy and bureaucracy in unionisation.

Partnership agreements in unionised companies tend to formalise top-down union authority and exclude workplace activists’ ability to influence decisions at the workplace (Kelly 1998; McBride 2004). The workplace influence is needed in the bottom-up approach, so issues are contested by rank-and-file and escalated, allowing issues “...to be framed in ways that facilitate the creation of a shared sense of injustice...” (Badigannavar and Kelly 2011: 9). A similar view is that organising and partnership are seen as workplace strategies, with organising having focus on bottom-up “membership activity” and partnership being “mutually-based” between union and employer in a top-down approach (Cunningham and James 2010: 37).

The tension between a consultative approach and a confrontational approach is explained as inevitable in democratic systems and a balanced position is proposed, which embraces both conflict and accommodation (Hyman 1996b). A combined approach of partnership and organising was also suggested in a way that allows them to be used, “...sequentially through some kind of representation cycle...” (Heery 2002: 32). That is, that one approach could come before the other. The point is that in recruitment for recognition, partnership would not necessarily add members; however, Gall (2003) believed that partnership could be used in multi-union situations to engage in labour-management relations to gain recognition.

There is a suggestion that various approaches working together should provide a better chance of revitalization (Cunningham and James 2010). This may not be straight-
forward and there are mixed feelings about the compatibility of these approaches when used together (Heery et al 2003). For example, it was argued that on one hand the organising strategy is inherent of conflict and on the other, the partnership strategy is a harmonising approach working in conjunction with management (Ibid 2003). Another suggestion for harmony was to engage different strategies given the particular situation (Fiorito 2003), however, it was also suggested that the partnership strategy was not complementary to unions renewing their situation but rather had a negative impact (Frege and Kelly 2004).

Partnership and organising could be used in a balance to avoid negating any one against the other (Cunningham and James 2010). It could be argued that in the case of recruitment for recognition the partnership approach would not be successful in gaining members for trade union recognition, except in a multi-union context. The point made by Cunningham and James (2010), therefore, may not be practical in this sense. The possibility of interdependence between the various strategies was highlighted by Frege and Kelly (2004), and the idea that the usage of a particular strategy should take into consideration the situation in which it is being applied. Heery et al (2003b) noted that British trade unions were using partnership and organising pragmatically and not in an ideological sense. Organising was identified for its significance to trade union membership and worker collectivism (Burchielli and Bartram 2009), while partnership was suggested by Haynes and Allen (2001) as a collaborative approach for trade unions to treat with employers. The literature has indicated that most of the recent partnership agreements in the UK were with established companies in the process of reorganising (Heery 2002).
The experiences with partnership arrangements are the subject of mixed commentary. Although some partnership agreements do have provisions for job security and other stipulations for managing labour rationalization (Heery 2002), these agreements are in small numbers and according to Heery et al (2003) many employers prefer to communicate directly with their employees. Organising unlike partnership is dependent on workplace mobilisation and workplace activists in the bottom-up approach to unionisation.

2.6 Workplace Mobilisation

It is useful to understand the dynamics of workplace mobilisation in this study and Kelly’s (1998) mobilisation theory is very useful in doing so. Kelly’s theory identified three dimensions of workplace mobilisation, which include employer’s action or conditions for mobilisation, employee grievances and the rank-and-file activists willing to lead the mobilisation. Darlington (2002) has also discussed aspects of workplace mobilisation and identifies key elements as ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ factors as important in the process. The objective factors are the grievances at the workplace while the subjective factor is the rank-and-file activists who frame the issues for mobilisation. The connection between these aspects is examined here and highlights the importance of the linkage for mobilisation.

Mobilisation is defined as, “...the process by which a group acquires collective control over the resources needed for action” (Tilly 1978: 7). The terms ‘workplace activist’ and ‘workplace representative’ also refer to, “…shop stewards, convenors, branch secretaries, health and safety reps...” (Darlington 2010: 127). The AFL-CIO steward manual outlines the role of the shop steward as, “...communicator, advocate, organizer,
problem solver, mediator and counsellor…” (AFL-CIO in Chang 2005: 50). This role of the workplace activist is considered important for trade union mobilisation in terms of shaping the issues at the workplace level. The term “shadow shop stewards” (Cohen 2006) is used for rank-and-file leaders who represent their colleagues during the mobilisation process and who usually become shop stewards once the union is recognised (Gall 2003).

The rank-and-file activists is defined as the “subjective” factor by Darlington (2002), while the conditions which caused mobilisation are referred to as “objective” factors (Darlington 2002: 98). The “subjective” factor, or the rank-and-file activists, is necessary to propel mobilisation while the objective factors are the collective grievances which are used to create the environment for mobilisation (Darlington 2002: 98). The argument is that the objective factors alone are not sufficient to cause mobilisation since there is need for the “subjective factor”, the activists at the workplace who would present issues for their colleagues and in this way are the workplace leaders (Darlington 2002: 98).

**Subjective Factor**

One of the main roles of rank-and-file activists is to promote consciousness among their colleagues of the injustices handed out by management (Kelly 1998; Darlington 2002, 2009). The importance of shop stewards or rank-and-file activists on the shop floor in terms of them mobilising injustice into union action against employers (Kelly 1998; Darlington 2002) emphasises the bottom-up approach, which is argued here as a crucial part of the unionisation process. In a bottom-up approach to organising it could be argued that the mobilising factors would be owned by the rank-and-file activists.
whereas a top-down attempt to mobilisation must find support at the workplace to generate mobilisation. These workplace activists lead the collective voice through which employee issues of injustice are framed at the workplace (Kelly 1998). Mobilisation theory from the perspective of Kelly (1998) argues that conditions would fuel “collective feelings” of injustice in light of the grievances they cause and the possibility that industrial action could result (Kelly 1998). One of the contributions of mobilisation theory is that it highlights “…conditions under which collective organisation might be expected to develop…” (Martin 1999: 1208). The explanation is that employee grievances are usually the result of the actions of management and these cause feelings of injustice among workers (Kelly 1998).

Martin (1999) has critiqued Kelly’s theory of mobilisation by questioning the meaning of what was described as injustice. The basis of the critique is that there is no clear indication of whether or not injustices should be attributed to the employer. However, there are organisational contexts which are created by management and can be attributed to management acts. In many cases it is the employer who has the monopoly on the management decisions in organisations and from where strategic and operational decisions originate. Kelly’s mobilisation theory suggests that employees blame employers but they must also believe that the employer will not resolve their issues so that the union becomes an avenue for resolution (Kelly 1998). Shop stewards or activists are key in workplace mobilisation.

The dependence on shop stewards and their power faded with the decline in union status in the 1980s (Gall 2005b; Mcllroy and Daniels 2009). However, with the focus on organising as a strategy and organising from below, in particular, the role of the rank-
and-file activists is once more important (Darlington 2002, 2009d). The renewed focus for shop stewards is part of the OM focus where their roles have expanded at the workplace and it was noted that, “They remain the backbone of the union movement” (Darlington 2010: 130). Stirling (2005) mentioned three important factors for workplace trade unionism, one of which was the leadership role of workplace activists and the lead they take in mobilisation. The relationship workplace activists have with their colleagues at the workplace allows them to interpret and present their colleagues’ perspectives on workplace issues of injustice (Buttigieg et al 2008). Gall (2003) also sees this as a trust issue resulting from the presence of the activists in the workplace being familiar with the issues of their colleagues.

An important element of workplace mobilisation is the concept of ‘a small number of activists’ who lead the mobilisation (Kelly 1998) or the subjective factor to which Darlington referred. This supports the theory that with the popularity of OM, the rank-and-file activists are again being considered an important source of “harnessing” trade union power in the workplace (Darlington 2010) and are described as the “cornerstone” in terms of organising at the workplace level (Bartram et al 2008: 26). The involvement of ‘shadow shop stewards’ with their colleagues during union organising and renewal was described as, “…their closeness to and shared experience with the members…” (Darlington 2010: 126).

In this “closeness and shared experience” Darlington (2010) and Cohen (2006a, 2006b) highlighted the different emotions and experiences of the “shadow shop stewards” and their colleagues at the workplace. Darlington (2002) also spoke about the relationship between “steward leadership” and “membership sentiments” and the idea that the
discourse and shared experience between these two elements ensures sustained collective organisation. This organisation was also mentioned by Clawson (2003) as being critical for trade union renewal. The organising formula presented by Luebke and Luff (2003) at section 2.5 of this study took into account these experiences during mobilisation and includes fear, anxiety and the anti-union tactics of management (Bronfenbrenner et al 1998).

The role of the workplace representative or rank-and-file activist is important in making that distinction between their role and that of the union official or the role of the top-down union official as opposed to the bottom-up activist. The activist’s function is an important one since an intimate relationship with their rank-and-file colleagues is also critical for the beginnings of what is highlighted as a move from individual grievances to “collective interest” (Kelly 1998: 29). Collective interest is orchestrated by leadership at the workplace level as pointed out by Fosh (1993), who spoke about the leadership style which could improve and increase workplace unionism. This leadership at the workplace level propels union organisation, especially since this is where the experiences of workplace conditions could act as mobilising factors (Heery 2005).

Certain conditions in organisations are necessary to provide the impetus for mobilisation around employee grievances and were presented by Kelly (1998; Martin 1999), among others. These conditions are characteristic of the globalised era in which reorganisation/restructuring and mergers and acquisitions tend to be the norm. The globalised environment was described as one that would be insecure for workers due to competitive markets and the impact on labour cost (Roukis 2005). In some companies
there is also the lack of a means for grievance resolution, which has implications for providing conditions for mobilisation and ‘new prospects’ for trade unions (Kelly 1998; Heery and Salmon 2000). These conditions are critical creating a mobilising environment and result in objective factors which are used by activists in framing discontent.

Kelly’s (1998) mobilisation theory, however, did not draw strong links in the workplace dimensions of conditions necessary for mobilisation, the grievances and the rank-and-file activists. The theory does highlight these as critical elements but there is no indication of the lack of success with mobilisation if any one of these dimensions is missing. Can we assume that once there are conditions conducive to mobilisation that grievances will be apparent? If these grievances are apparent can we then assume that rank-and-file activists will emerge to lead mobilisation for unionisation? Darlington (2002) also highlighted the need for objective factors in mobilising.

**Objective Factors**

The objective factors identified in the classical literature for white-collar unionisation were class and status. The objective factor or grievance of white-collar workers in the early days was their fear of losing their class and status as middle-class. However, the factors which have affected white-collar workers since the 1990s were related to job security and economic conditions. The definition of job insecurity selected for this study is: “…insecurity as general awareness of economic trends, company-level job insecurity, individual-level job security, and anticipation of job loss” (Mohr 2000 in Reisel 2007 et al: 107). The argument about the impact on job security by globalisation highlights the difficulty for trade unions to unionise because of the precarious and
temporary nature of work (Hartley 1995; Sparrow 2000), however, it also argues for the opportunities for trade unions to protect workers and provides “new representative opportunity” (Heery and Salmon 2000: 10). Job security becomes an issue more often in organisations facing conditions of, “…reorganisation in terms of downsizing, outsourcing and privatization” (Hellgren and Chirumbolo 2003: 273).

In light of globalisation and its impact on job security, Heery and Salmon (2000) presented some propositions in their examination of the ‘insecurity thesis’, which discussed the ways in which the employment relationship and contract has changed. The point was made that employees who previously felt secure are feeling less secure, including middle managers, among others (Heery and Salmon 2000). One of the ways employees respond is to seek employee voice through trade union representation and this representation allows employees to feel more comfortable when dealing with job security (Dekker and Schaufeli 1995; Hellgren and Chirumbolo 2003).

Most of the literature links job insecurity to the precarious nature of work and employment and is discussed in light of the global changes to work (Rubery and Grimshaw 2003; Bernston et al 2010). Sverke and Goslinga (2003) discussed insecurity among employees as a result of organisational changes in structure and redundancy. This argument is supported by Bernston et al (2010), who reiterated that where downsizing and restructuring are present there would likely be feelings of job insecurity. The literature speaks about temporary arrangements as part of this work insecurity and it also makes reference to workers accepting situations, albeit permanent, that are more insecure (Auer 2006). There are many writings on the change in the
employment relationship and there is a prediction that job insecurity will be a part of the future conditions for workers (Roukis 2005).

2.7 Conclusion

The literature review discussed the top-down and bottom-up approaches which are choices available for trade unions during recruitment and recognition. The foundational writings about white-collar unionisation highlighted the discussion about class and status of white-collar workers in the formative years of unionisation and how this has moved on to focus on job security and their economic situation as reasons for unionisation. From the foregoing discussion we could say that the classical and current literature has shown that there is need for factors common for workers to mobilise for unionisation. Recent literature, however, is again showing an interest in class and unions, although the focus in the current literature is on the class consciousness of all workers (Simms 2012). How rank-and-file activists and union leaders interact in union activities was considered in the discussion about bureaucracy and democracy.

Bureaucracy and democracy in trade unions were examined in light of the classical literature and their implications in renewal and revitalization for the top-down and bottom-up decision making, roles and responsibilities of top union officials and activists. We can glean from this discussion that the classical literature on bureaucracy and democracy, while still relevant, could be viewed differently in light of the current literature about the implications for some democracy at the workplace level in the OM. In the OM the responsibilities of the rank-and-file activist tends to allow more democracy in interaction with their colleagues.
In examining trade union strategies of organising, servicing and partnership it can be concluded that trade unions are presented with options which have elements of both top-down and bottom-up approaches and the choices made could depend on their context. These strategies and the roles for the union leaders and the rank-and-file were highlighted in terms of how they could be in coordination or conflict. It is apparent that the dependence of recognition and recruitment processes on each other is a balance for trade unions and also depends on the legal framework, the extent of employer resistance and the ability of unions to organise.

The legal framework for recruitment and recognition has given the unions an alternative to the voluntary route for recognition, however, based on the literature it could be said that the legal route to recognition has not always facilitated trade unions and the voluntary option has been used in many cases both in the UK and the USA. Unions, nevertheless, have lobbied governments for supportive provisions as part of the top-down activity of the unions to aid the recruitment and recognition processes.

A number of things can be gleaned from the discussion about the OM and the comparison with the traditional SM, a top-down approach in terms of the roles of rank-and-file and union officials. The traditional roles have changed and rank-and-file activists have more responsibility for mobilising the workplace, which in some ways allows more democracy. The new extended role for the rank-and-file taking charge of mobilisation at the shop floor level and their special relationship with their rank-and-file colleagues is a critical aspect of the mobilisation process. The subjective factor is essential in this role for influencing mobilisation, while the objective factors are the
grievances and highlight how the focus has changed from class and status to job security and economics for white-collar workers.

The literature has provided insights into bottom-up and top-down approaches to unionisation. Attempting to find a model for union resurgence is usually on the basis of certain assumptions about worker collectivism (Clawson 2003). Some broad differentiation can be made between analyses which see a much greater role for central union leadership in instigating and directing the process (Voss and Sherman 2000; Willman 2001) and those that help in the understanding of workplace leadership (Fairbrother 1996; Kelly 1998; Darlington 2002; Early 2004). In exploring the explanation of these perspectives the methodology has been chosen to examine five cases of unionisation.

The design chosen to explore the unionisation in this research was a case study approach, examining five cases for the collection of data to answer this question. This approach allowed the triangulation of methods to explore and verify data collected from different sources. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with shop stewards, union officials and bank managers. Focus groups were held with shop stewards and documents and archival materials were used to answer the question, “How could top and bottom union approaches explain recruitment and recognition of commercial bank staff in Barbados during the period 1997 to present?” This methodological approach is presented in the next chapter.
Chapter 3 – Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The choices made by a researcher about how research will be designed and conducted are usually informed by a number of factors which include the researcher’s perspectives and the research question to be answered. The previous chapter examined the literature and highlighted the theories on top-down and bottom-up approaches used in trade union recruitment and recognition. The methodology selected for this study was chosen to best answer the research question, “How could top-down and bottom-up approaches be used to explain recruitment and recognition of commercial bank staff in Barbados from 1997 to present?”.

This chapter on methodology outlines how this research was conducted and explains the reasons why the approaches and methods presented were used. First, the chapter makes a case for the use of qualitative research using the case study design along with triangulation of data collection methods to increase validity. It makes an argument for the choice of approach and methods used and this will be balanced with a discussion about the different approaches and methods which were not used and the reasons why they were not selected. Secondly, the methods and stages of data collection, which included in-depth interviews, focus groups and documents and archival information, are discussed along with an examination of the thematic approach used to analyse the data. Thirdly, it presents an argument for the selection of cases and a profile of these cases. Finally, ethical considerations are outlined along with the action taken to reduce or eliminate any potential risk to ethical standards.
3.2 Justification for using Qualitative Research

Most of the literature speaks about the history of qualitative research struggling for recognition in the field of rigorous scientific research, which is usually associated with quantitative research methods. According to this writer, “For many years, proposal writers had to discuss the characteristics of qualitative research and convince faculty and audiences as to their legitimacy” (Creswell 2009: 173). Quantitative design, on the other hand, has had less of a challenge being accepted as a reliable approach to research.

The focus of the question in this research is about how the top-down and bottom-up union approaches worked during recruitment and recognition and not about any quantitative aspects. This research will only use a qualitative approach with a case study design and triangulation of the data collection methods. While quantitative research could boast of its ability to generalise to the wider population, this is more of a challenge for qualitative research, which requires multiple sources of information in order to increase validity and reliability. Denscombe (2007) has pointed out that qualitative research has been criticised for being too subjective, difficult to replicate and has problems with generalisation and transparency. The ability of quantitative research to quantify results makes it more acceptable as scientific research than the qualitative approach (Berg 2009).

The use of a qualitative approach is in keeping with the epistemological stance of the researcher of this study, that is, to obtain the information directly from participants involved in the recruitment and recognition process. An ontological approach is taken in this study that says there are different realities and there is a commitment to report on those different realities as they become evident during data collection and analysis.
(Creswell et al 2007). Criticisms about qualitative research have been extended to case study research, which is also not traditionally considered as a legitimate research strategy (Berg 2009). However, case studies continue to be used to conduct qualitative research, especially by industrial relations researchers (Whitfield and Strauss 1998).

3.3 Rationale for Case Study Design

A case study is defined as, “…a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in-depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals” (Stake 1995 in Creswell 2009: 13). It is also seen as, “…an in-depth study of the particular, where the researcher seeks to increase his or her understanding of the phenomena studied” (Johansson 2002: 2 in Ruddin 2006: 798). It was highlighted by Bryman (2004) that case study design is the design of choice for many sociological studies. The idea of examining “contextual conditions” is one reason for using the case study design (Yin 2003). Kitay and Callus (1998) also pointed out that case studies are appropriate for use in industrial relations research because they allow flexibility in terms of the number of sources which could be used in the analysis.

Discussions about the case study approach have been very controversial. Yin (2009) has given a warning about using case studies and indicated how challenging this approach could be. However, the advice given is that the researcher must as far as possible strive for validity at all stages of the research and this includes a disclosure of how the research was conducted (Yin 2003). The point was made that each research approach has its advantages and disadvantages and also strengths and weaknesses (Denscombe 2007). The discussion about the lack of ability to generalise has been one
of the main criticisms of the case study design and one to be considered in the design stage to improve reliability (Yin 2003).

Generalisation is defined as, “…generalizability to describe applicability of findings beyond the research sample…” (Ayres et al 2003: 871). This concept has been the focus of numerous discussions led by Lincoln and Guba (1985), Guba and Lincoln (1994), Robert Stake (1994, 1995) and Robert Yin (2009). Stake (1980) has argued for generalisation, which he calls “naturalistic generalizations”, and claims that it provides knowledge to the user, however, the user must have tacit knowledge of the case situation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) have discussed generalisation as a “working hypothesis” and claim, “If there is a ‘true’ generalization it is that there is no generalization” (Ibid 1985: 124).

Yin (2009) made a distinction between “statistical generalization” and “analytical generalization” and advised that case study researchers should strive for analytical generalisation. He described statistical generalisation as, “…an inference...made about a population...on the basis of empirical data collected about a sample from that universe” (Yin 2009: 38). In analytical generalisation, however, “…a previously developed theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the case study” (Ibid 2009: 38). There is an argument by some that it is necessary to generalise to a wider population, while there is also another school of thought which believes that it is not the business of the researcher to generalise but for the user to do so (Stake 1995).
The perspective Stake (1995) presented has brought another dimension to the utility of the case study findings by putting responsibility on the reader for generalisation and not the researcher. This argument was explained this way: “…case studies need not make any claims about generalizibility of their findings, what is crucial is the use others make of them; that they feed into processes of ‘naturalistic generalization’” (Stake 1982 in Ruddin 2006: 804). Naturalistic generalisation is defined as, “…conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life’s affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves” (Stake 1995: 85). An important point made about the approach researchers take with case studies was that they should provide details about how they conducted the case study and highlight any particularly important aspects (Ruddin 2006).

One of the advantages of case studies is that the approach allows the researcher to deal with “subtleties and intricacies of complex situations” as well as “processes and relationships” (Denscombe 2007: 38). In the process of trade union recruitment and recognition several relationships are being examined, such as the relationship between union officials and shop stewards, shop stewards and their colleagues and shop stewards and management. Case study was considered to be the appropriate approach to use in answering the research question for this study since in the cases of the unionisation of commercial banks there were processes and relationships to be considered. Denscombe (2007: 47) pointed to several conditions for which the case study approach is best suited, two of which include a “naturally occurring situation” and a “social phenomenon”. The case study approach allows the research of the relationships between the parties even outside of the boundaries of the unit (Whitfield and Strauss 1998).
Increasingly, the case study approach has been accepted as an approach to conducting social science research and having the credibility for generalisation of the findings once certain conditions are met by the researcher (Seale 1999). While Meyer (2001) points out that there are strengths and weaknesses of using case studies, the strengths can be utilized and certain conditions can be met to reduce the weaknesses. According to Meyer (2001), the strength allows a change in the design and collection methods. The weakness is part of an on-going debate about the validity and reliability of qualitative research. However, the value of case studies has been noted for, “…the universality and importance of experiential understanding…” (Gomm et al 2000: 24). Validity and reliability are critical to all research and will be examined next.

3.4 Validity and Reliability in Case Studies

Validity and reliability are critical in any research study. Boeije (2010) made the point that quality is important in qualitative and quantitative research and is related to reliability and validity. Yin (2009) has highlighted four key areas which are used to judge the quality of research designs, and include construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. The tactics which could be used to enhance the quality of these criteria in relation to construct validity include the researcher using multiple sources of evidence, the establishment of a chain of evidence and having the case study reviewed by the informants (Yin 2009). This advice was taken into consideration in applying triangulation in the data collection for this research.

Similarly, the advice on how to achieve internal validity, by pattern matching, explanation building and investigation into rival explanations, were all part of the approach in this research. To gain external validity the use of replication logic in
multiple-case studies was used as far as possible. Dooley (2002) has argued that the more interviews conducted, the more external validity is guaranteed. Thirty two in-depth interviews were conducted and five focus groups were held in this study. Interviews were conducted with the shop stewards of each bank and then a focus group with shop stewards from each bank. Union officials and bank managers involved in the recruitment and recognition process were also interviewed.

Reliability is determined by the quality of documentation of the research process and the extent to which it could be replicated (Dooley 2002). The question of whether qualitative research could be replicated to produce the same results is a debate in the literature, with writers taking different positions on the extent of replication. One position presented by Meyer (2001) is that there is an expectation for differences in case studies which are repeated by different researchers. However, emphasis on documenting the process and procedure was highlighted as critical for qualitative research to be seen as reliable since, “The curious public deserve to know how the qualitative researcher prepares him or herself for the endeavour” (Kirk and Miller 1986: 311).

Based on the discussion so far it is clear that once certain approaches are used and documented, the case study method as a design would be more readily accepted in terms of reliability. The case study design has the ability to embrace several approaches to collecting data, both qualitative and quantitative, and because of this has been labelled “a jack-of-all-trades and a master of none” (Herling et al 2000 in Dooley 2002: 338). To conclude the argument for using the case study design for this research, there is no right or wrong method, however, there are some methods which will be better for
answering the particular question (Zelditch 1970 in Whitfield and Strauss 1998). There are alternative research approaches which were examined but not used in this study.

3.5 Different Research Approaches

Surveys, experiments, histories and economic research are all research approaches available to carry out social inquiry. In terms of qualitative approaches other than the case study approach, narrative research, grounded theory, phenomenology and participatory action research could also be used. However, there are advantages and disadvantages with every approach and some prescriptions about methods and the type of research for which they are best suited.

Creswell et al (2007) have presented an outline of the types of research questions and the suitability of research designs. The suggestion is that narrative research is more suitable as a research design for, “questions about individuals and how they unfold over time” (Ibid 2007: 239). Grounded theory has been highlighted as the better approach for, “…questions about experiences over time or changes that have phases…” (Ibid 2007: 239). Phenomenological research was the recommended approach to discover “…what is at the essence that all persons experience about a phenomenon” (Ibid 2007: 239). The participatory action research was most suitable for, “…questions about how changes occur in a community” (Ibid 2007). In this recommendation Creswell et al (2007) indicated that the case study design was best for questions which were about, “…developing an in-depth understanding about how different cases provide insight into an issue…” (Ibid 2007: 239).
The alternative approaches to the case study design, however, are not alternatives which would allow the best fit in answering this research question. The research question being answered is about the recruitment and recognition process in five cases of unionisation. The approaches outlined above would not allow investigation into the data in the way that the case study approach would, given the epistemological and ontological stance of the researcher (Flyvbjerg 2001). The methods proposed for collection of data are presented in the section below.

3.6 Methods, Stages and Conduct of the Data Collection

The triangulation approach will be used in collecting data for this study. Triangulation is: “…the examination of a social phenomenon from different angles…triangulation entails the use of more than one method or source of data in a research endeavour” (Bryman 2008 in Boeije 2010: 176). It has also been described as, “…the use of multiple sources of data or ‘views’, with the aim of bringing many perspectives to bear on the question” (Richards 2005: 21). The decision about which methods should be used to conduct the research is another critical decision which is contingent upon the question to be answered.

The question in this case called for an understanding of processes and the relations among union officials and rank-and-file leaders within those processes. It required an approach that allowed the exploration of the process of unionisation and an examination of the involvement, experience, feelings, and perceptions of those individuals key to the processes of recruitment and recognition. A mixture of data collection methods was used in triangulation as a support for the case study design. Yin (2003) recommended six types of methods for collection of data: documents, archival records, interviews,
direct observations, participant observations, and physical artefacts. In this research, three types of methods were used to verify information from different sources: in-depth interviews, focus groups and documents and archival information.

*Interview Procedure and Questions*

The interview is commonly used as a data collection method, especially in qualitative research. It is defined as, “…a form of conversation in which one person - the interviewer - restricts oneself to posing questions...to one or more others - the participants…” (Maso 1987: 63). The interview process as a qualitative approach has a number of epistemological and ethical issues which occur at all stages of the research that need consideration and these are discussed in this section and also below with ethical considerations.

Thirty two in-depth interviews were conducted for this research in various locations depending on what was convenient for the interviewees. Some were conducted at the interviewee’s home while some were conducted at the researcher’s home or office and the headquarters of the BWU. This was appropriate since the location was always chosen if it was quiet and allowed an uninterrupted period of at least one hour and a half. Interviewees were briefed on the research question and the aims of the research and a consent form was signed by the participants, a copy of which can be seen at appendix 2. They were also told why they were chosen as part of the sample to answer the questions and about the safe keeping of information which was collected.

Interviewees were further informed that the completed transcripts and the results of the research would be shared with them on completion of the research. A tape recorder was
used during these interviews and participants were asked for their permission to record the sessions. The security of the tape recorder and the notes from the interviews was explained to the participants. This tape recorder was kept in a safe place and was accessible only by the researcher. Permission was asked for and granted to take notes and this was done to record body language or other signals which could not be captured on tape. The sample for these interviews was purpose driven.

Purposeful sampling was used to select persons for the interviews as well as the focus groups. The interviewees for this research fell into three categories. The first category of interviewees consisted of shop stewards who were engaged at the time in the recruitment and recognition process. A minimum of five were used in each case: the chief shop steward and the deputy shop steward were interviewed along with at least three other shop stewards. The code for these interviews ended with “INT” and the interview schedule can be seen at appendix 3, table 3A and the questions used in the interviews at appendix 4A. This list of shop stewards was readily available and obtained from the files at the BWU. Those who no longer worked at the bank were contacted either through the BWU or fellow shop stewards.

The second group consisted of the union officials who worked on the recruitment and recognition of the banks. The code for these interviews starts with “UN” and the schedule and questions can be seen at appendix 3, table 3C and appendix 4B, respectively. The interviewees in this group were selected by purposeful sampling and their names were obtained from the files of the BWU. The Deputy General Secretary of the BWU with responsibility for the financial sector and his main assistant were interviewed using in-depth interviews to determine the union’s top-down strategy in
unionising the commercial bank staff and their leadership role during the recruitment and recognition process. Questions were used to probe top-down and bottom-up decision making about union activities and union officials were also questioned about the extent to which the OM model, partnership and servicing were used.

The third group consisted of the management representatives working in the banks at the time of the recognition process, ideally in the human resource departments. One management representative from each bank was interviewed and the schedule of interviews can be seen at appendix 3, table 3B, ending with the code “MINT”. The questions asked of the management representatives can be seen at appendix 4C. In-depth interviews were also conducted with bank officials to obtain their views on the changes in the employment relationship and how, in their view, grievances moved from individual to collective. Additionally, focus group sessions were conducted with shop stewards in groups representing each bank and the schedule of interviews can be seen at appendix 3, table 3D. These focus group sessions have an ending code of “FC” and the questions used can be seen at appendix 4D.

**Focus Groups**

Focus group sessions were held with shop stewards from each unionised bank chosen as a case in this research and these followed the completion of individual interviews with shop stewards from each bank. A focus group interview is defined as an interview, “...centred on a specific topic (‘focus’) and facilitated and co-ordinated by a moderator or facilitator - which seeks to generate preliminary qualitative data, by capitalising on the interaction that occurs within the group setting” (Sim 1998: 346). The focus group session was used to further explore the themes that arose during the individual
interviews to verify whether there was group consensus on the issues and to record any different positions.

The interview questions for all those interviewed were based on the focus of the research question. In the case of the rank-and-file activists, the focus was to determine the reasons for the mobilisation and how the individual grievances became collective grievances. It also probed for answers on what were the bottom-up approaches and how these were owned by the rank-and-file activists and the extent of direction from above. The nature of the recruitment and recognition process in terms of experiences of the rank-and-file leaders and their colleagues was also interrogated. Additionally, how the relations worked between the rank-and-file and union officials in the decision making process was also examined.

In terms of the union officials the questions examined their top-down role in the recruitment and recognition process. How the decision making occurred between union head office and the workplace rank-and-file was also explored. The questions also probed how decisions were made about union activities from a top-down and bottom-up perspective. Another query here was to find out about the approach used during the social partnership arrangements and the impact on bank/union partnership arrangements. The union was also asked about the organising model and the extent to which they engaged in the various aspects of the OM.

The questions for the focus groups were designed to verify and probe further the feedback from the individual interviews with shop stewards. The questions in these sessions revisited the questions which were asked in the individual interviews for
verification from a group perspective. In the case of the managers who worked in the banks, questions were asked to determine if they knew the reasons for trade union recruitment and why individual grievances had moved to collective grievances. The questions also asked about their response to the recruitment campaign.

**Documents and Archival Records**

The decisions about which documents and archival information were examined in this study were guided by the interest in information on the processes of recruitment and recognition in the commercial banks in Barbados. There are concerns about using documentary sources such as photographs in terms of authenticity and credibility (Denscombe 2007). The authenticity of documents refers to whether or not it is real while the credibility refers to purpose, meaning who was responsible for its production and the time of its production (Ibid 2007). Documents and archival material were gathered from two main sources for this study: the national newspapers and documents such as files and annual reports at the BWU’s headquarters. Other sources included the Labour Department and the Barbados Employers’ Confederation. The period of the recruitment and recognition campaigns informed the decision in terms of which information was examined in all sources.

The information which was useful included minutes of meetings between the BWU and the various banks during the meetings leading up to the recognition. There was also information in these documents where the union outlined its top-down approach to unionising the banks. While there is a caution about the use of minutes of meetings from the point of view of editing (Denscombe 2007), most of the information was supported by information from the newspapers and the interviews. Documents and
records were obtained from the BWU regarding membership numbers, specifically those employed in the commercial banks. The minutes of meetings were examined to obtain information about the grievances which fuelled recruitment and recognition.

The Labour Department is responsible for conciliation in the industrial relations system in Barbados and produces an annual report which was used to obtain information on industrial action during the period under review. Another source of document and archival information was the Barbados Employers’ Confederation, (BEC) which is the union of employers. The information collected from this source included information on union activity and the state protocols. In addition, there are three major newspapers in Barbados, ‘The Daily Nation’, ‘The Advocate’ and ‘The Business Authority’, which provided material in terms of the events with regard to industrial action and mergers and acquisitions. The documents and records search answered subsidiary questions about dates, history and information about various aspects of the research. Photographs were also used as part of the documentary evidence.

Photographs from the annual reports of the BWU were used in chapter four. The use of photographs, in particular, requires special attention and explanation because of the debate in the literature and the concerns about using them as data (Denscombe 2007). Two of the main concerns with using visual images are authenticity and copyright (Denscombe 2007). Becker (2004) pointed to the lack of a methodological framework for using photographs; however, Pauwels (2010) has conceptualized a framework to examine visual methods. In this framework photographs are categorized as “found materials” or “researcher-generated visuals” (Rose 2007; Pauwels 2010). “Found
images” are not necessarily prepared for the researcher while the latter are developed by the researcher or the researched.

In using photographs it is recommended that the user of the research be guided in terms of the visual to determine the objective of the images in relation to the research (Pauwels 2010). For the researcher the photographs should help to address the research question (Pauwels 2010). The point was made that, “…the image contains evidence of things with a clarity that words could never hope to match” (Denscombe 2007: 305). Photographs in social research were first made popular by Harper (2002) who spoke about “photo-elicitation” as research interviews with an embedded photograph. The purpose of embedding photographs was explained as a way of presenting different perspectives which could not be achieved through written or oral means (Bolton et al 2001).

The critics of the use of photographs along with text see them as “decorative” (Ball and Smith 1992), causing others to believe this attitude may be a deterrent for those who wish to use photographs in research (Emmison & Smith 2000). Photographs are used in research for three main reasons, “…information, affect, and reflection” (Rose 2007: 238). There is a strong argument that photographs can convey at a glance what would be difficult to convey in writing (Rose 2007). The other argument for using photographs is that they could provide context for the written word (Rose 2007; Pauwels 2010). The uses of photographs have been categorized as either “supporting” or “supplemental”: the supporting category includes photo-elicitation while the supplemental is in addition to the researcher’s written words (Rose 2007).
Photographs were used in this thesis in chapter four primarily to show the involvement of the union at the top-down level in terms of its partnership with government and the private sector and also the community involvement with union groups. In analysing these pictures on the signing of the state protocols there was an examination of the cooperation between the BWU, the private sector and the government during the signing of the state partnership documents. Showing the cooperation among the key players in the political context for industrial relations is the intent of sharing this image. The pictures were seen as images which were circulated by the union to show their collaboration with government and the private sector. It is possible that the users of this research may take or bring other perspectives to the images since photographs could result in a viewer taking a second look or even trying to determine what is not included in the photograph (Grimshaw 2001; Pink 2001). As highlighted by Gold (2004), photographs can be used as “tools” to improve research projects. The signing of the state protocol is a top-down activity which had implications for companies and the union to follow the template at company level, which did materialise with partnerships in two banks. The pictures also depicted the union’s role from a top-down level in terms of influence on all groups in the community. “May Day” celebrations are significant for the union and are part of its community driven activities, and these images were also used to convey the community interaction with the BWU.

There were also some photographs on the youth programmes and activities which were coordinated by the BWU. These were analysed as a part of the historical data of the BWU that show the interaction with the community, especially the various youth groups. The photograph of the BWU representative at the ILO was put into the thesis as proof of the BWU’s critical role at the ILO and to highlight the extent of its
international ties. Although there is an indication of how the researcher analysed these pictures, it is possible that other interpretations could be made by users of the research because of various signals which may be gleaned from the photographs (Strangleman 2008). This approach to combining text and photographs was used in the work of Barndt (1997) where “…there was an acknowledgement of the arbitrariness of photographic meanings” (Pink 2007). There were other photographs in the annual reports; however, those chosen were related to the discussion in the thesis. The basis for analysis, transcribing and coding of the research was done using thematic analysis.

**Thematic Analysis, Transcribing and Coding**

After preliminary data analysis, thematic analysis was used to organise the data. Thematic analysis is defined as, “a process of data reduction” (Grbich 2007: 31). According to Boyatzis (1998), “Thematic analysis enables scholars, observers, or practitioners to use a wide variety of types of information in a systematic manner that increases their accuracy or sensitivity in understanding and interpreting observations about people, events, situations, and organisations” (Boyatzis 1998: 5). Coding was used to sort the data and is a method that allows a relation of the data to ideas (Boyatzis 1998).

The interviews and focus group sessions were transcribed from the tape recordings into digital format. These interviews were then coded using open coding. Simons (2009) discussed open coding is a way of dividing the data in such a way that they are examined in units. This writer described data collected as fragments which have to be divided and then pieced together and coded. The reassembling of the data according to the codes is undertaken to find explanations and answers to the research question.
Richards (2005) spoke about three types of coding, which include descriptive coding, topic coding and analytical coding. Topic and analytical coding were used in this research to sort and analyse the data from the interviews and focus groups.

The coding and analysis of findings was completed in stages during this research. Two to three shop stewards were interviewed from each bank in the first set of interviews and then there was an interlude to code and analyse that first set of data. Boeije (2010) suggested that working forwards and backwards with the data between collection, analysis and sampling allows an, “explorative capacity of the research” (Boeije 2010: 120). Another point which reinforced this approach was that the researcher could determine more from the data by starting the analysis at an early stage both in terms of verification and exploration (Boeije 2010). The ethical considerations are also part of the design and methodology of a research study to ensure that any considerations were carefully planned for prior to the fieldwork.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Several ethical issues were considered and solutions were found in order to conduct this research within the ethical guidelines of the University of Leicester’s Research Code of Conduct. The fundamentals followed in doing this research included:

- “...respect the rights and dignity of those who are participating in the research project;
- avoid any harm to the participants arising from their involvement in the research;
- operate with honesty and integrity” (Denscombe 2007: 141).
The main areas of ethical considerations in this study were: the researcher status; gaining access to information; the nature of industrial relations; sample selection; confidentiality and anonymity; maintaining objectivity. These were addressed very early in the research study and are discussed below.

\textit{Researcher Status}

As a former Human Resource Manager for one of the five commercial banks it was necessary to explain the reason for conducting the research so that it was not viewed with suspicion by those interviewed. This suspicion was possible from any of the key informants in the research, which included shop stewards, bank managers and the union officials. To address these issues, participants from the commercial banks chosen for the case study were reassured of honest reporting of the findings according to the responses during the interviews and focus groups. From the start, participants were told that the research was part of the requirements for an academic qualification and the aim of the research question was clearly explained. Another issue for consideration was gaining access to information for research purposes.

\textit{Gaining Access to Information}

It was recognised that gaining access had to be addressed from early. This was necessary to obtain a sense of how the research was viewed by potential interviewees. The sample of shop stewards was not contacted through the bank, since some no longer worked with the bank and had to be contacted using information from the BWU. Similarly, some of the bank managers to be interviewed were contacted outside of the banks since they no longer worked with these banks. A formal letter was written to the
BWU and the approval to research their files was granted. Permission was also granted by the BWU to use photographs from their annual reports.

Similarly, the commercial banks were contacted and informed about the research; however, it was the view of a management representative which was required and not physical entry to the bank for research purposes. The novelty of the study meant that several discussions about the reason and importance of the research took place at an early stage to sensitise parties to the research. The union welcomed the idea, which made it easy to present it to the shop stewards without suspicion. This suspicion was possible from all parties: the bank managers, union officials and union rank-and-file leaders. Little or no research of this type has been conducted in Barbados and therefore the reason for conducting the research had to be highlighted and assurances were given at the beginning that all findings were going to be reported as they were received.

The Nature of Industrial Relations

The nature of industrial relations will always involve opposing parties attempting to resolve industrial issues. In this process of industrial relations conflict is inevitable and the researcher could add to this conflict if the relationship is not managed. The researcher’s role as a negotiator for management, albeit not for any of the commercial banks, could be seen in a different light if there were disputes arising in the banking sector. The timing of collection of data had to be clear of any disputes to allow for cooperation needed to carry out the research. Discussions were started early with the gatekeepers and this helped in understanding the basis for the research. The reason for being chosen to participate in the study was another ethical issue to anticipate and manage.
Sample Selection

The reason for being chosen to participate in the research was explained to participants so there was no suspicion over the reason for their being selected. The importance of shop stewards in the banking sector, bank managers or union officials to the research was explained. They were told that they were critical in explaining the mobilisation process and their roles in that process during the recruitment and recognition. They were assured that they were free to answer the questions as they honestly saw the unionisation process at the time.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed to all participants while seeking their consent. Since the author was the only person to collect data and there were no third party agents this eliminated the possibility of a second person with knowledge of the participants’ identity. In addition, to ensure anonymity, the author was the only person able to match names with responses. The main approach was to use pseudonyms for participants. The other plan for confidentiality and anonymity was to separate identification of the participants from the participants’ answers. Identification numbers were assigned as codes of reference for interviewees and passwords were used for the protection of data files.

There are ethical considerations throughout the interview process and it is suggested that these are planned for from the start to completion of the study (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). The consent of the interviewee was one of the issues which was addressed through obtaining the interviewees’ consent to conduct the interview and a form was used to obtain permission for the interview. The physical location of the
interview was another consideration: locations were chosen according to their physical comfort and quiet so the atmosphere was as relaxing as possible. There was also the issue of whether the interviewee should have input in how their interview should be interpreted and to address this, the transcribed interview was shared with each interviewee for verification. The focus group sessions also provided a balance to the individual interviews and steps have been taken to ensure objectivity in conducting these interviews and all aspects of the research.

**Maintaining Objectivity**

To maintain objectivity of respondents to interviews and focus groups they were encouraged to respond honestly and reassured that they were in no way obliged to give any particular response. The reason for the research was outlined with emphasis on the fact that it was part of the requirements for a doctoral programme. Since industrial relations are activities inherent of conflict, it was prudent to ensure that all parties were aware of the others’ commitment or permission to collect data. A commitment was made to share the findings in a presentation with respondents. This was a commitment given in advance so that respondents felt more comfortable knowing they would have an opportunity to know what was written about the data.

**3.8 Selection and Profile of Cases**

Where multiple cases represent a case study strategy, the decision about the selection of cases is also a decision that has to be justified, giving reasons for the number and type of cases chosen. The literature on case study design highlights this as a difficult decision and ultimately a matter of the strategy of the researcher (Stake 1995). The idea
of using several cases would be in a situation where a common variable is being examined across cases and in this study the common variable is unionisation. The advice given for the selection of cases is that it is justifiable to select cases which are typical of the phenomenon being studied (Yin 2009). However, Stake (1995) makes the point that an unusual case could highlight what may not be evident in the typical case. Yin (2009) makes the argument for multiple case studies by saying, “Having two cases can begin to blunt such criticism and scepticism. Having more than two cases will produce an even stronger effect” (Yin 2009: 62). Dooley (2002) has indicated that when multiple cases are used the researcher should analyse each on its own merit and then any cross analysis could take place between cases. This was the approach used in analysing the cases of unionisation in the commercial banks in this study. There are themes which were common across cases; however, each case will be highlighted in terms of its unique features and the nature of the recruitment and recognition processes.

There are currently six commercial banks in Barbados which are unionised. Five of these cases were chosen on the basis of unionisation by the BWU during the period in question, 1997 to present. One commercial bank, which is also unionised, was not chosen since it was previously a government savings bank, part of public service and was unionised by the union that represented all government workers, The National Union of Public Workers. It was subsequently unionised by the BWU. The five commercial banks chosen were all unionised by the BWU and were never previously unionised.

The commercial bank cases in this study will be referred to by the letters A, B, C, D and E, to avoid confusion because of name change during the period of study and not for the
purpose of anonymity. However, when using documents and quotes from interviews or focus groups the names of the banks will be presented as they were quoted or presented in these documents. Reference will be made to the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) but no letter will be used to make reference to this bank since it was not one of the sample cases. Comments will, however, be made about the current attempt by the BWU to unionise this bank.

**Bank A**

Bank A was the first commercial bank to operate in Barbados in 1837 and is part of Barbados’s colonial history. The following was said of Bank A’s head office: “…one of the largest banks of its time, its history is linked with the Colonial Bank, which began operating in the West Indies in 1837” (Monteith 2008: 1). English in origin and unionised in England, this bank had a well-established network of approximately seven branches at the time of unionisation in Barbados. There were also branches across the Caribbean region and it employed approximately four hundred staff in Barbados at the time of unionisation. It was the first commercial bank to be unionised in 1997 in Barbados, though its branches in other Caribbean islands such as St. Lucia and Antigua were already unionised. Bank A merged with a Canadian bank, Bank B, in 2002 to become First Caribbean International Bank.

**Bank B**

Bank B was Canadian in origin. This bank came to Barbados around 1920 and changed owners when it merged with Bank A in 2002. At the time of unionisation this bank had six branches on the island and a staff of about two hundred. Bank B had its headquarters first on Broad Street in the capital of Barbados, before moving to the outskirts of the
city in Warrens, St. Michael. According to the union officials and shop stewards, several previous attempts to the 2002 unionisation were made to unionise this bank. However, it became unionised in 2002 after the merger with Bank A.

Bank C
Bank C changed owners on a number of occasions. It was first an American bank which was then bought by a local branch of a Caribbean company and when this bank was unionised it was operating four branches. This bank changed owners again in 2004 when it was bought by a Trinidadian Bank, RBTT, and then in 2008 this bank was acquired by a Canadian Bank, the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), which is not unionised but is the new owner. At the time of unionisation Bank C employed approximately one hundred and twenty staff.

Bank D
Bank D has always been a Canadian owned bank. It is the only unionised commercial bank on the island to date that has not been acquired, sold or merged with another bank. It also has a wide Caribbean network, with unionised branches in the other Caribbean islands. Bank D first came to Barbados in 1956 and at the time of unionisation this bank had eight branches and approximately two hundred and seventy employees. After a long process of recruitment lasting around three years it became unionised in 2001. According to the union officials, this bank had the most difficult mobilisation and unionisation process.
Bank E

A local bank, Bank E was first established in 1992. In 2003 it was acquired by a Bermudian bank and was also unionised in 2003. The main branch is also located in the capital Bridgetown, with three other branches on the island. It employed about one hundred and thirty employees at the time of unionisation.

3.9 Conclusion

The steps taken to research this question were detailed in this chapter with regard to design, collection, analysis and presentation of data. From the discussion on case study design, taking into consideration the advantages and disadvantages, this research approach is appropriate for this study. Interviewing, focus groups and document and archival data, including photographs, were discussed in terms of their suitability for the research question. Issues of generalisation, validity and reliability were explored in light of their significance for research but in particular for qualitative research and case study design. How the data were collected in each of these methods was outlined in detail in terms of timing, logistics and the decisions about the samples in each case.

Ethical considerations were discussed along with the approaches taken to mitigate any perceived risks of inappropriate ethical standards. The cases of bank recruitment and recognition were profiled to give some background to their establishment, ownership, staff complement and date of union recognition. The next chapter will start the discussion on the findings of the top-down strategies of the BWU during the period of recruitment and recognition of the commercial banks. This will examine the strategies the BWU used from a top-down approach and the relations between top-down union
officials and bottom-up rank-and-file members during the recruitment and recognition process.
Chapter 4 – ‘BWU Unionising From Above’

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of the top-down approaches of the BWU during recruitment and recognition of white-collar workers in the commercial banks in Barbados from 1997 to present. The aim of this chapter is to examine the context for recruitment and recognition in Barbados and investigate how the union officials made decisions during these processes and the extent to which they shared the decision making with the rank-and-file at the workplace. The roles of the top-down union officials will be examined to determine how they engaged in organising, the OM and partnership. The top-down influence of the BWU on the external environment for recruitment and recognition is also highlighted along with internal organisational changes.

First, a brief section outlines the national context in Barbados for trade union recruitment and recognition. Secondly, there is an examination of the BWU’s strategies, tactics and approaches to organising white-collar workers in the banking sector. The internal strategies of the union, such as, reorganising, staff recruitment, staff assessment, training and union image, will also be examined. There is an interrogation of the decision making process between top-down union officials and bottom-up activists and their roles during unionisation. The external strategies will also be explored to determine how the BWU influenced the external context for unionisation.

The findings presented in this section are the result of interviews, focus groups and document and archival information. The research question asked: “How could top-down
and bottom-up approaches be used to explain recruitment and recognition of commercial bank staff in Barbados, from 1997 to present?”. The previous chapter presented a case study design which was chosen so that the research question could be investigated using a variety of methods to allow verification of information collected. The literature review examined the foundational writings about white-collar workers and discussed the opportunity and challenge they presented to trade unions to unionise. Bureaucracy and democracy in trade unions were examined with special attention to the roles and decision making from top-down and bottom-up levels in the recruitment and recognition processes.

Revitalization and renewal were explored and the union strategies of partnership, organising and servicing were examined so the case of unionisation in Barbados could be compared with the experiences in the USA and UK. These experiences will be compared in this chapter to determine how the case of unionisation in Barbados conformed to or departed from that reported in the literature. A brief note on the context for trade union recruitment and recognition in Barbados is presented to highlight the voluntarism of the industrial relations landscape.

4.2 National Context for Trade Union Recruitment and Recognition in Barbados

The industrial relations context in Barbados is not characterised by laws as the systems in the USA and UK. The few Acts in Barbados governing industrial relations include the Labour Department Act and the Trade Union Act. Barbados has operated with a system that is totally voluntaristic, similar to the system in the UK before several laws were passed. Most industrial relations matters in Barbados depend on ‘custom and
practice’ and that includes trade union recruitment and recognition. This is unlike the UK where, for example, Gall (2010) spoke about unions lobbying for legal provisions which supported trade union recognition and employers becoming more aggressive against trade union organisation with the passing of legislation.

In Barbados the employers have been in favour of legislation governing recognition, however, the BWU has opposed any legislation of the recognition process which remains a totally voluntary process to date. The opposition of the BWU to the legislation of this process is highlighted in this quote from the General Secretary of the BWU to foreign companies asking for a legislative process: “We need foreign investment, but we cannot sell our souls to attract foreign investment. The right to free assembly is a constitutional right of the Barbadian people. The foreign investor coming here is informed that this is the rule of the game as we play it here” (Fashoyin 2001: 17).

In this voluntary process the resolution of any disputes pertaining to recognition in Barbados is done through conciliation at the Labour Department. The Labour Department Act gives authority to the Chief Labour Officer (CLO) to conciliate in such disputes in a process that can go to the Prime Minister and ultimately to arbitration as the final stage. In the final analysis there is no law that forces an employer to recognise unions in Barbados. The Trade Union Act allows trade unions the right to operate and have members, “one or more of its purposes being restraint of trade” (Chapter 361, Labour Legislation of Barbados). International labour standards also influence the conduct of industrial relations and the government of Barbados has ratified ILO Convention 87, the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise
Convention 1948, and Convention 98, the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention 1949, among others. These conventions support the voluntary system and are often referred to by the union in appeals to resistant employers, especially at the time of recognition claims. The process for claim of recognition follows a procedure which is outlined by the CLO, although the CLO’s recommendation is not binding in law.

**Trade Union Recruitment and Process for Recognition**

Trade union recruitment in Barbados is not a claim to representation unless recognition is granted by the employer. Employees are free to join unions, however, there are no representational or negotiating rights unless the union is recognised by the employer. Unions could ask employers to grant recognition on the basis of having 50% plus one or they could go to the Labour Department to go through the process for claim of recognition. On receipt of a claim for recognition the Labour Department then contacts the employer requesting that they provide the list of employees in the categories in which the union is seeking recognition. When this is received by the Labour Department, the union is notified and a meeting is arranged so the totalling of the union’s list can be cross referenced with the employer’s list. Sometimes recognition disputes reach the stage of industrial action before the Labour Department can conduct the survey, as was the case with one of the commercial banks, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (Bank B), where there was a ‘sick out’ in 2000.

When a survey is to be conducted, the CLO and an assistant, or at least two officers, meet at the union’s headquarters and all members and union officials are requested to leave the room to allow absolute privacy. The union’s list is then checked and purged
of any anomalies or inconsistencies, such as signatures included after the date of the claim for recognition. Any inconsistencies or unusual findings are noted for study, query or explanation by either party, if thought necessary. A record is made and both parties are informed as to the numbers in the findings. The CLO would indicate at the end of the survey whether or not recognition is recommended, based on a “50% plus one” formula. Although the CLO recommends recognition and workers have the right to join a union there is no law, unlike the USA and the UK stipulating that companies grant trade union recognition. This process for recognition was followed in each of the cases of unionisation in the commercial banking sector which were unionised by the BWU and in the current attempt to organise the last non-unionised bank.

4.3 BWU’s Strategies, Approaches and Tactics for Unionising White-Collar Workers in the Commercial Banks in Barbados

In the early 1990s the BWU started recruitment of the white-collar workforce, especially commercial bank workers. Evidence has shown that the BWU was intent on unionising the banking sector, according to this comment: “A position paper was put to the union’s executive mapping out the sector as one that could supplement growth. We had severe losses in the garment, manufacturing, sugar industries and the docks” (UN: 01: INT). The table at 4.1 shows the decline in membership over the years 1991 to 1993.
Table 4.1 Source: A graph from the Barbados Workers’ Union 58th Annual Report, pp. 27 shows new member intake for ten years. The decline in new membership started in 1998 for the BWU.

Unionisation in Barbados was beginning to resemble the unionisation period in the UK and USA in the late 1970s where unions were targeting white-collar workers as the key workforce for growth in membership. The issue for white-collar unionisation then was different from the issues for white-collar workers organising in the 1990s in Barbados. When the BWU’s senior official responsible for the campaigns in the banks was asked why the BWU targeted the banking sector he replied:

“When I was appointed Director of Organisation in 1992, the Union had lost about 4000 members because of structural adjustments and the white-collar workforce, in particular the financial sector, was an appealing prospect for representation. I also came from a middle-class clerical background with some experience as the founder/Secretary of the
Prior to the mobilisation in each of the banks the BWU had approached these banks about unionisation. In an interview with the Deputy General Secretary, he revealed that when he discussed the plan of approaching the banking sector to mobilise them, his colleagues did not think they could unionise the banks because several attempts had already been made and had failed. However, it was felt that manufacturing was part of what he called the “sunset sector” and that there had to be a new sector for unionisation, the service sector, especially the financial sector, which he called the “sunrise sector”. He added: “When I took up the portfolio for organising…I decided to take a different approach to working with the banking sector” (UN: 01: INT).

The Deputy General Secretary also said that part of that strategy included other aspects of the BWU looking internally and preparing to have the in-house competencies to ensure that the union was equipped to handle the service sector, in particular the commercial banks. There was evidence from activists at the banks that the union had tried on numerous occasions, before the employees started mobilisation, as this interviewee indicated: “The union had approached the bank staff on many occasions before we went to the union. We were not interested at that time so it died down. However, this time we needed help with what was going on” (A: 01: INT).

Another comment which was similar was from a focus group: “The BWU was talking to employees long before we actually went to the union…nobody was looking at the union at that time everything was alright” (B: 03: FC). Yet another interviewee from
another bank said this: “The first suggestion of representation came from the union itself. An officer of the BWU approached one of our colleagues at the Big B [supermarket] branch of the bank. He was attempting to recruit new members to the BWU” (E: 04: INT).

The BWU was trying to unionise the banks even before the start of the mergers and acquisitions in the late 1980s. From the interviews above it is clear that workers were not interested before the wave of mergers and acquisitions which started in the early 1990s. When the BWU was asked about how it started its top-down strategy to organise the banks, this was the reply:

“We placed union-oriented persons in strategic areas; organised public relations campaigns to build the union brand/image with posters and flyers distributed at the bank premises to emphasise the union’s capacity. We utilized past union employees as organisers and gave bank members positions in the campaigning and afterwards on the negotiating team once we gained recognition” (UN: 01: INT).

The BWU used past union employees to help with the organising, however, the rank-and-file activists did not consider this as outside help, as this interviewee commented: “We got help from employees who used to work with the union. They knew the ropes and were able to give us pointers” (B: 01: INT). In another interview there was acknowledgement of help which was not necessarily from the union officials but from staff who previously worked with the union. In a focus group the question was asked about how the activists felt about outside help with the campaigns and this was the
response: “We were glad to get extra help, since we did not know everything at the start. We considered the help as union help and not outsiders” (D: 05: FC). In the UK and USA the practice of using outside hired organisers was part of the recruitment campaigns (Milkman 2006) and was frowned on by Clawson (2003), Early (2004) and Moody (2007), who were of the view that it reduced democracy of the workplace activists.

The second organising officer felt that white-collar workers in Barbados were changing their approach to the union and becoming more open about unionisation by the mid-1990s, and this was said:

“By 1995/1996 the white-collar workers in Barbados were crying out for representation and it was an opportunity to expand the union’s base membership. The union approached all the banks in the first instance but the union was subsequently contacted by bank employees when they had issues and needed help. Networking was crucial in the banking sector because it is a very close society, and everybody knew someone who worked in another bank” (UN: 02: INT).

Gall (2004a) made the point that recognition to a large extent after 1997 in Britain was a result of employees approaching unions. There is evidence to suggest that white-collar workers in Barbados became interested in unionisation around the time numerous mergers and acquisitions were occurring in the banking sector. The beginning of white-collar unionisation in Britain and the USA resulted because white-collar workers
wanted to regain the status they were losing as a result of distance from top management (Kleingarten 1968).

The public relations before, during and after industrial action in the banks was also helping with the awareness of unionisation of white-collar workers in the commercial banks. The Deputy General Secretary said this: “The news about banks being organised was getting into the press, especially when there was any type of industrial action” (UN: 01: INT). One bank manager interviewed said this about the unionisation in her bank, “They wanted to be unionised like the other banks; they probably felt they had to be in with what was going on” (C: 01: MINT). Two banks had already been unionised and this bank was the third to be unionised. The BWU 61st Annual Report of 2002 stated: “During the period under review the Council continued its efforts at organising and consolidating in the Banking and Finance Sector…The executive council wishes to report that a financial council was established in February 2002” (BWU 61st Annual Report 2002: 16-17).

The Deputy General Secretary did give some indication of this by saying: “The Barbados Workers’ Union definitely had a strategy to organise the banking sector …After the first bank became unionised that made it easier to try to unionise the others” (UN: 01: INT). Within the BWU, all officers did not have the vision of unionising the banks and the Deputy General Secretary said this, “There was some talk in the BWU that it was difficult to unionise the banks and that if it was tried it would fail again. But this could not be a failure; the organising had to be in the financial sector” (UN: 01: INT).
The BWU started its campaign to unionise white-collar workers by the distribution of brochures advertising the union and its offerings and at the banks’ premises. The strategy of targeting these white-collar workers also included the internal changes which the BWU had to make. As far as the BWU is concerned, tactics and strategies were blurred but all were attempts at being influential with the aim of securing membership numbers and recognition. Union tactics for the BWU resembled, to a large extent, the tactics discussed in the literature such as handing out of leaflets on the premises of organisations and the use of public persuasion (Brown and Chang 2004). The BWU 67th Annual Report made a public announcement about the only non-unionised bank by saying, “Royal Bank of Canada is the only commercial bank which has not been organised by the Barbados Workers’ Union, but a campaign towards achieving unionisation of the bank has started” (BWU 67th Annual Report 2008: 20).

The initial attempts to unionise RBC started in the early 1990s and this top-down approach has intensified more recently because of its merger with Bank C in 2008. Although the RBC has experienced a merger, the BWU has indicated that there are not enough staff members interested in unionisation at this time. In 2009 a leaflet was handed out at the premises of RBC in which various shop stewards of the unionised banks explained why others workers should join the union. The leaflet was prepared specially for public relations at RBC and came from the financial council members. The BWU also restructured and reorganised internally as part of its internal strategy to unionise white-collar workers, an action which Cooper (2001) had emphasised as critical for trade unions’ renewal.
**BWU’s Internal Strategies and Changes**

Up to the early 1900s the BWU had primarily represented blue collar workers. The shift in focus to white-collar workers required some internal changes to the BWU’s staffing and structure. The human resources changes which were implemented by the BWU included changes to the recruitment strategy, succession planning, training and image in terms of the dress code for the Deputy General Secretary and those assigned to unionisation in the banking sector. The approach to recruiting was changed and the BWU felt it necessary to recruit staff members who were qualified university graduates to organise and interact with staff in the banking sector. The following is an extract from the interview with the Deputy General Secretary which highlights these internal changes to the human resource strategy of the BWU to strategise for the banking sector:

“We started hiring new staff who were qualified at tertiary level to train in different areas but who had the skills to deal with the level of staff in the service sector, so that our approach to recruitment had to change...The banking sector had sophisticated systems for pay and other HR matters and we had to be able to understand these systems in order to negotiate and bargain for staff...” (UN: 01: INT).

The Deputy General Secretary also indicated that they had not previously assessed staff; however, they started assessing staff in terms of their suitability for organising versus negotiating. He believed that these two areas required different skills. In terms of organising, he indicated that they needed skills of “following through” with a campaign until the BWU gained recognition. He also said that they needed to build the skills of their organisers. In terms of structuring for organising, an organising committee was
proposed to concentrate on the organising arm of the BWU, in addition to the industrial relations department.

In a draft document received from the BWU the roles of those in the organising department and the organising committee were detailed. Among others, some of the roles of the organising department were “expansion of membership”, “image of the union” and “marketing”. The roles of the organising committee included “mobilising support”, “planning” and “link with executive council”. In a BWU organising document some questions were asked to set the stage for the work and terms of engagement of the BWU’s Organising Committee. Some of these questions included:

- “What is the main role of the organising committee within the BWU?”
- “How can the organising department and the organising committee of the BWU help each other?”
- “How do we now recruit members to serve on the committee? Is the present method working?”
- “What skill sets (if any) are required to be a committee member?”
- “What is the role of the committee members?”

A draft handbook which was a project of the organising committee, while incomplete, sets out reasons for organising. It states, “To answer the question, why organise? One must try to outline the benefits which might be gained from such an exercise” (BWU Draft Document - Handbook on Organising). Of significant note is the mention of: “The involvement of rank-and-file members so they can be a force to be reckoned with...To provide a voice for the workers so that they can be seen as equal to
management and employers…the provision of better wages and salaries, to promote job security” (BWU Draft Document - Handbook on Organising). There is a section in this handbook which guides organisers on how to recruit members. It outlines the way to recruit members as follows: “In your everyday conversation with individuals, target new entrants in the workplace, schools and colleges…” (BWU Draft Document - Handbook on Organising).

This handbook states that organisers should, “seek further assistance from headquarters and comrades when necessary”. This makes a link with workplace tactics and headquarters strategy in terms of guidance from union officials. The guidance given in the BWU handbook was an indication of the new approach to organising and the OM, which puts more responsibility on the rank-and-file activists in the workplace. The emphasis on organising at the workplace was significant to the BWU’s organising strategy and to facilitate this, a financial council was set up in 2001, when only one bank was unionised. The members of the banking council can be seen in figure 1 on page 107.

The recognition of a different type of approach for unionising white-collar workers was outlined in the Annual Report of 1999-2000 as follows:

“The organising committee continues to monitor the environment for organising members into the Union. As the economy shifts towards the provision of services…it is clear that membership in the manufacturing and agricultural areas will be under threat. The services sector will
present different kinds of challenges in organising and negotiations”

Figure 1

The challenges of unionising white-collar workers were mentioned in the classical literature, and highlighted class as an issue (Lockwood 1958; Blackburn and Prandy 1965). In Barbados, working in a bank is considered a high status job and banks are considered elite workplaces where a more formal dress code prevails. On the other hand the BWU was seen as the representative union for blue-collar workers from the manufacturing and agricultural organisations up until the early 1990s. With this shift in representation to the service sector the BWU had to make adjustments to its image.

The way the BWU was seen by some white-collar workers was borne out by a shop steward during an interview who said that a senior bank manager in Bank A wanted to know if they were joining a “cane cutters’ club”. The BWU was the union which
represented the agricultural workers in the sugar industry. This was how some white-collar workers saw the BWU and this way of thinking was frowned on by the General Secretary, who, after three banks had joined the union, said as follows, “…no class divide, none of the old standoffish thing. Managers and maids are united” (Daily Nation, 21 March, 2002).

The class issue which was raised in Bank A was not widespread in the other banks and this could be explained because in Bank A there were senior managers who were also joining the union, whereas in the other banks the unionisation was only up to supervisory level. Although the unionisation of the bank workers, in general, was not about class, in Bank A there were still some sentiments about class in the unionisation of white-collar workers. This is significant because the BWU did make some changes to allow successful interaction with the banking sector, as stated here:

“As the Deputy General Secretary responsible for the financial sector I decided to approach the financial sector but we had to prepare and present ourselves in a different way in order to interact with the level of staff and systems in the commercial bank. Before then I never dressed in a tie but in terms of targeting the financial sector I decided that a tie was appropriate so that I would fit in” (UN: 01: INT).

This new approach included several changes to the internal structure and processes within the BWU. Renewal and revitalization literature speaks about the need for unions to reorganise themselves internally to be able to make use of the opportunity to represent workers in the global era (Gall 1998; Heery and Salmon 2000; Frege and
Kelly 2003). The BWU continued its concentration on the organising and structuring internally for organising and the following quotation from the Annual Report of September 2005 - August 2006 is testimony to this:

“During the period under review the Organizing Committee recognised the need to adopt a strategic approach to planning for the processes of organising and negotiating in the short and medium term. Internally, the professional staff now have a number of recruits, and a number of veterans working together to progress the interests of our members and the entire work force of our country” (BWU 65th Annual Report 2006: 43).

The committee also provided training for new recruits in organising and they were told to network with other organisers. This training was to be continued in a series for organisers (BWU 54th Annual Report 1994-1995). The BWU’s organising committee and organising department lent support to the rank-and-file activists in the workplace. In the case of the banks, while the rank-and-file leaders mostly planned in the workplace, they did get some guidance from the organisers at headquarters. It was, however, left to the rank-and-file activists to determine how to execute for success in numbers at the workplace.

The BWU’s Annual Report of 1997 stated that the organising committee was:

“…concentrating its organising campaigns into the following areas, (1) Banking, Insurance, and Financial sectors, (2) The Informatics area and
(3) The Commercial sector…At the same time the Committee recommended that internal organising should be intensified…The Committee recognised the success so far achieved in organising Barclays Bank and proposed the intensification of organising efforts in the sector” (BWU Annual Report 1997: 46-47).

The Deputy General Secretary spoke about how he approached his responsibility for organising and about his research on what was going on in international countries as far as organising was concerned and said: “I started to study the American writer Kate Bronfenbrenner who wrote about the American experience with organising. I looked at what she said about that system and I then tried to implement a lot of these suggestions and strategies for improving organising” (UN: 01: INT). There was evidence that the BWU adopted some of the organising approaches suggested in the literature.

4.4 Decision Making Between Top-Down Union Officials and Bottom-Up Rank-and-File Members

The way decisions were made in the period of recruitment was interrogated with both the union officials and the workplace activists during interviews. To some extent the decisions made at the top was a result of the rules governing the decision making in the BWU. These rules related to, for example, the sanctioning of strikes and the official communication with the Labour Department and the employer about recognition. During the interviews with both the union officials and the activists it was clear that strategic issues like decisions about industrial action and contact with the Labour Department or the employer for recognition were directed by the top union officials. There were rules and guidelines set down that had to be followed, as described here by
one of the union officials: “As a stickler for the rules, industrial action has to be backed by the workforce and sanctioned by the executive council for me to pursue it. If I had to resort to industrial action I took the lead” (UN: 01: INT). The other union official interviewed explained: “There is a process leading up to a sanctioned strike and when considered by the union, has to be approved by the executive council. At the point where a sanctioned strike is considered, most employees are highly frustrated and are very supportive of the action” (UN: 02: INT).

There was some formality at the top in terms of the protocol for decisions. The approach was highlighted in this comment: “Once the Executive Council approves the plans for the campaign, the union officials with the required attributes were groomed. The rank-and-file were involved only after committees with potential leaders were established and group meetings were held with signed-on members” (UN: 01: INT). Another union official also said this:

“Initially decisions were made between the organising officer and the industrial relations director once the plans had been vetted by the executive council. Rank-and-file came in immediately after the organiser made contact with only a small group of ‘trusted persons’ who kept the project close to their chest until we were ready to launch the campaign” (UN: 02: INT).

From the last two quotes, it was clear that the both top union officials and activists were operating within the rules set down by the governance of the BWU. The executive council clearly played a critical role in vetting major decisions and so it was not a matter
of union officials having a bureaucratic style but working according to the bureaucratic rules of the BWU. Clawson (2003) and others have noted the bureaucratic nature of union officials, however, in this case it is more a situation of union officials following the rules set down by the BWU’s governance. The activists were asked about how this decision sharing was viewed and this was one comment: “Decisions to act were voted on at union level with support from union headquarters. It was often a shared effort. There were instances where we gave way to the leaders’ experience and knowledge when major decisions were to be made” (D: 03: INT).

It was clear that the rank-and-file trusted the union officials in helping them to reach decisions which were echoed by a number of activists. The decision to go to the Labour Department or the employer to ask for recognition was also a decision that was taken by the union officials. The results of the interviews suggested that the rank-and-file members gave some indication of the count in terms of signed-up members and based on that information the union headquarters decided when it was time to contact the Labour Department to request recognition.

From the perspective of the union officials the following was said about the decisions to go to the Labour Department to request recognition: “This is always a stage in the process where the leader of the organising campaign usually makes that final decision. The Director of Organising/Industrial Relations is usually the appointed leader to do so” (UN: 01: INT). The second officer from union headquarters made the following comment: “Activists made decisions about recruitment, communication, building solidarity and the union decided on leadership, planning, implementation and strategies” (UN:01:INT).
However, the interviews provided information which indicated that the activists at the workplace were able to come up with suggestions and plans which they shared with union headquarters to obtain guidance on how these might work. It was evident that the union officials had explained the boundaries to the activists so they were clear on the type of decisions which they could make and those which had to come from union headquarters, as this interviewee indicated: “We were allowed to decide on what we wanted to achieve and the methods we proposed to use. But these were always discussed with our union officials who ensured they were acceptable and appropriate” (A: 02: NT). Yet another interviewee spoke about how ideas were dealt with between union headquarters and the activists and said:

“Union headquarters shared ideas with us and requested feedback. The rank-and-file activists operated in a similar manner. The BWU proceeded with ideas which the activists accepted and were comfortable with. If the activists felt the BWU was better equipped to make a decision based on their experience and professionalism, we communicated that to them” (E: 02: FC).

The activists did have some autonomy for certain decisions in the workplace and as the following interviews indicated had more to do with the day-to-day managing of the mobilisation process, as explained here:

“We determined who we wanted in the initial leadership team. These were persons with the strength of purpose to meet the rigours of the engagement. Persons who could, or would, command the respect of their
peers and be able to actively and constructively contribute to the planning and decision making process. We determined who the next level of ‘lieutenants’ would be, as with the leadership team, but less visible in some cases. We did not always want the bank to know who our key people were until it was absolutely necessary. We decided our communication strategy for our colleagues and initially employed a method of ‘each one tells one’. We spread the information to the lieutenants either verbally or in print. It was then shared out to the general membership” (B: 02: INT).

This was reinforced by the following comment confirming the autonomy of the activists at the workplace for select activities: “Decisions to do with some things at the workplace like who we approached to join the union was decided by us, but the bigger decisions like those about industrial action were left to the union” (C: 01: FC). Similarly, the following response outlined how activists viewed decision making: “The decisions were made between the union and the committee members who then had the responsibility to update their co-workers at their respective branches on what decisions were made and the reasoning behind those decisions” (D: 05:FC).

The authority for certain types of decisions was clearly spelt out by union officials for the rank-and-file and there was some level of dependency on the union officials as activists asked their opinion on ideas. The BWU shared the decision making with the activists leading up to any industrial action: although the union took the lead, the union only proceeded with a strike if the rank-and-file agreed to the action. As this interviewee revealed:
“The union operates on a democratic basis, whereby important decisions around agreements had to be ratified by the general membership before any agreement was communicated and agreed. Plans around strategy usually were made between the leadership team and the BWU team” (C: 03: INT).

The literature review discussed the theory and perspectives of a number of writers about union activities and decision making, with one dominant view that decision making becomes bureaucratic and creates distance between top union officials and workplace activists (Michels 1915; Clawson 2003). In this case study, the interviews revealed a scenario where the activists in all the banks understood that certain decisions had to be finally made by top union officials. This could be interpreted as their knowing that a certain level of bureaucracy existed from the start of the campaigns and an understanding of the level of democracy which they had at the workplace level. Most interviewees and focus groups indicated that even with those decisions which had to be made, finally, at the top, the rank-and-file had given some input and in some cases voted on the way the decision should be made.

Workplace activists decided on the team to be used at the workplace to mobilise and target colleagues for sign-up and particularly in starting the campaign. In the OM, rank-and-file had more responsibility at the workplace (Carter 2006; Fairbrother et al 2007) and in this study the responsibilities were outlined at the beginning of the process. This was seen in this case in terms of the choice of a “small trusted group”, how they strategised for mobilisation in departments and ideas about who they approached for signing-up. The concept of a ‘small group’ was discussed by Kelly (1998) where it is
usually a small group that takes charge of the mobilisation. The roles of the union officials and the rank-and-file activists were also interrogated to determine what differences, if any, existed.

4.5 Roles and Relations of Union Officials and Workplace Activists

The union officials were clear about their role in the mobilisation process, with one official remarking that they had: “The lead role in organising the mass of workers, getting them to join” (UN: 02: INT). Similarly the lead officer said: “The role of the union officials was to provide leadership, strategy and tactics. The union headquarters was also responsible for implementation and planning of programmes and advocacy” (UN: 01: INT).

When one of the union officials was asked about his views on servicing, he said: “Recruitment and recognition are the gateway to representation. Representation is the major avenue for servicing the members through, voice, meeting material needs, and helping with workplace justice, providing engagement and participation in decision making and providing a safety net” (UN: 01: INT). Servicing in the context of unionisation in Barbados could only take place after recognition since the unions in Barbados do not have representational rights based on a percentage of signed up members, as is the case in the UK.

The union officials were asked about whether they gave autonomy to the activists at the workplace and this was the response: “We gave the activists controlled autonomy about certain areas. The agreement is between the union and the company. The union is represented by paid staff officers” (UN: 01: INT). Along with this question the union
was asked about how they supported mobilisation at the workplace level and this was said: “I believe we created a national image which encouraged some support. We worked hard at the public relations outside that helped with the persuading of the management. I tried to adapt to suit our constituents in a case of unionisation” (UN: 01: INT). Another comment from the second officer indicated that the autonomy of rank-and-file activists was limited to: “Before recognition, to get as many persons within the identified bargaining unit signed up” (UN: 02: INT).

The roles set out for activists at the workplace level in the OM model were parallel in this recruitment and recognition campaign to those outlined in the literature. They did have some clear roles at the workplace level as explained by this union official: “The role of the activists was to approach prospective members, communicate the union’s message, organise meetings at union headquarters and mobilise around issues” (UN: 01: INT). The activists had some autonomy to present ideas based on what they felt could work in their organisation, as explained in the following interview excerpt:

“During mobilisation the tactics utilised were a blend of our company knowledge and the BWU’s experience. We were encouraged to take the tried and true methods of mobilisation and integrate them with our knowledge of the employee base and the company policies. Our role in the process was to be informers; to inform the union of issues in the workplace and to discuss with our colleagues” (D: 02: INT).

There is acknowledgement here by the activists recognising the experience of the union officials. This usefulness of the experience of union officials was highlighted in the
literature by Sharpe (2004), Martin (2007) and Hickey et al (2010). The case was made by these writers that the top union officials were critical in terms of their experience and knowledge in campaigns, especially with resistant employers. The roles of the activists at the workplace were different from those of the union officials and were described as roles which resulted in them interfacing with their colleagues in a number of ways and operating as a conduit for communication to and from the top officials. The statements presented in the following interview excerpt are evidence of this:

“The activists played a leadership role in the process. They met with union officials to discuss strategies and the protocol for the way forward towards obtaining recognition. They helped in planning the implementation of strategies and co-ordinated meetings with staff, researched information for proposals to be submitted for the collective agreement. They were fully involved in the process” (B: 04: INT).

The role for the activists was also one of communicator between union head office officials and their colleagues in the workplace. As this interviewee said:

“My role as an activist was to voice opinions around general policies and grievances, review policies and communication from the bank and comment on same with the union officials. I made valuable input to the union and assisted with the issues which the union used to agitate with the company. I also assisted with getting management to recognise the union as a representative of staff” (E: 03: INT).
The Deputy General secretary also spoke about the main roles of the activists as: “Making sure applying members signed cards, collecting dues and passing information to and from the union” (UN: 01: INT).

The framing of issues was discussed in the literature in the mobilisation theory by Kelly (1998). The role of the activists at the workplace in this case was to identify grievances in the workplace which they could get their colleagues to identify with, and then use these issues to rally for mobilisation, as this quote outlines:

“As part of the group representing the managers’ concerns there was a lot of need for recruitment. At Barclays there was very open communication between staff, and managers were very aware of mutual interest. There was already a bargaining unit in place with the BWU for the non-managerial staff, so there was no need for mobilisation at that level but there was need among the managers” (A: 01: INT).

The interviews with the activists highlighted how they understood their roles as workplace leaders and putting forward the issues of their colleagues. As this quote also reveals:

“My role can be described as a crucial role. Our bank had seven branches and about five other support units. A meeting was held amongst the originating group which included three persons and myself, where we chose a person in each of the branches and units who we thought showed
leadership skills, to roll out our plans with their co-workers in order to see what numbers we had” (A: 02: INT).

The activists were also able to measure what was going on at the workplace and kept the momentum going in terms of the mobilisation and the following was said by this interviewee:

“We were continually trying to gauge the feelings of employees around the initiative as well as sharing what we thought were the advantages of mobilisation. We did not believe it should degenerate into an ‘us versus them’ standoff, but it did. During the entire saga we kept trying to impress on our fellow employees, whether they joined the movement or not, that all of us worked for the same employer and that the continued success of the organisation was still our paramount concern. We did not see a merger scenario where there was the possibility of un-attended employee dissatisfaction being good for the company. All interests had to have a voice and be protected” (B: 03: INT).

This quote highlights the role of the activists as the ones to support their colleagues in terms of understanding how they felt about the grievances. Darlington (2010) spoke about the ‘closeness and shared’ experiences of activists and their colleagues and this was clear in all the interviews in terms of their roles at the workplace, as the following quote illustrates:
“I spoke to staff around issues they were having with the organisation and their perception of the merger and how it was negatively affecting them. Our advantage was that there were general grievances among the staff around policies, pay and other benefits and there was consensus that staff from Barclays was compensated at a higher rate partly because they were in a union” (B: 02: INT).

In interviews with the shop stewards they spoke about how they used certain tactics to organise the staff in their units or branches so that the management was not aware of what was going on. Banks which subsequently unionised did get some help from the BWU in terms of the strategies which were employed in the first bank that was unionised. The activists received guidance from union headquarters on a number of matters.

Guidance

The union gave guidance to the process of mobilisation at the workplace as needed by the workplace activists but also at intervals in meetings and in terms of suggestions which were sent up for vetting from the activists. When union officials were asked about the guidance they provided to the workplace activists this was their feedback:

“…the guidance was critical and pervasive, selling collectivism to young people and particularly females is challenging in light of the pervasive individualism. Teaching skills, political organising skills were essential” (UN: 01: INT). The assisting union officer said this: “There was no limit to the guidance given but what was very important was for them to understand that organising was not to be done on company time” (UN: 02: INT).
In giving guidance what was evident was that the guidance was ensuring the activists knew what they should concentrate on. The activists also gave their account of guidance which they received from the top union officials by saying: “We received guidance on how to recruit members; how to use issues to motivate persons to join the movement; what were the requirements for obtaining recognition; the possible outcomes; and provided information for comparison with other banks” (D: 05: INT). The BWU gave support to the activists in training in various areas of industrial relations of the recruitment process, as was explained here:

“The BWU assisted in various ways. They provided premises for us to meet. They provided officers to give us guidance on the way forward and provided information on other collective agreements. They assisted in the recruitment process and gave training in the whole collective bargaining process and made us feel welcome to the organisation” (B: 01: INT).

This was confirmed by another interviewer, who said the following:

“The team from the BWU led by Robert Morris stuck with us every step of the way. In the early days we passed all ideas through them first to ensure we were still within our rights and that we were not contravening any rules of engagement. This mentorship role continued right into First Caribbean [bank], but by this stage the leadership team formed in the divisions felt confident enough that we were making the most of our decisions and strategy” (B: 03: FC).
The team effort was recognised by the activists. The interviews with the activists indicated a level of trust which they had for top union officials whom they depended on because of the experience of the union leaders with unionisation issues. It was evident that workplace issues were initiated by the activists; however, the boundaries were clear about what could be done and that the company rules had to be adhered to. Whether this would be considered bureaucratic is questionable. The BWU also used several external strategies to facilitate the recruitment and recognition of workers.

4.6 External Strategies

The BWU used a number of external top-down strategies to influence the unionising environment and partnership arrangements which were used in two merged banks. In many ways the BWU’s involvement in social and political activities corresponds with Turner’s (2005) point about “transforming” the social and political framework in which trade unions operate and also corresponds with the views of Fletcher and Hurd (1998) and Hurd (1998), who made reference to the importance of an “organising culture”.

The BWU’s political involvement has occurred at a number of levels and its long history of political involvement at party level and the involvement of its General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary, individually, in political activities has given the BWU input in the politics of Barbados. There is a strong political connection in the Barbadian industrial relations context and although the BWU is connected to one party, it has managed to maintain good relations with the other local political party, especially since there are no fundamental differences in the ideology of political parties in terms of the labour policies and laws in Barbados. This has also positioned the BWU to
influence government’s decisions on proposed labour legislation and economic decisions regarding labour.

The BWU annual report of 1997 noted that the union was strongly opposed to downsizing and the General Secretary of the BWU has commented on the job security protocol in Barbados as useful for countries in the region and even internationally (BWU 56th Annual Report 1997). The BWU is also structured to participate in political issues in Barbados through its political action committee, which is involved in most of the major political decisions. This political action committee, like most other committees, reports annually on its activities in the BWU annual reports. In 2008 it reported that: “The committee spent considerable time examining the proposed bill to amend the Trade Union Act…The Executive Council had rejected the document on the grounds that it was seeking to replace the voluntaristic system with a legal one…” (BWU 67th Annual Report 2008: 38). The protocol agreements between the government, labour and the private sector also represent an area in which the BWU has managed to influence the context for industrial relations.

**State and Company Partnership Agreements**

In Barbados several state protocol agreements have been signed between the BWU, government and the private sector over the last ten years. The first company partnership with two merged banks was signed in 2005. The state partnership agreements have brought a level of stability to the socio-economic and labour environment in Barbados and set the template for cooperation between the union and employers. When one union interviewee was asked why the BWU used the partnership arrangement with two banks, he said this:
“The partnership model was borrowed from experiences in Britain and Africa. I was in contact with United Network International (UNI) and the British branch of UNI with the Barclays/CIBC merger/buy-out and they advised that we use a partnership approach. I put it to the leadership of the two banks, Barclays and CIBC, and they agreed, so in that sense it was a joint decision” (UN: 01: INT).

This lead taken by the union headquarters on the partnership is evidence that this approach was led from above. When the BWU approached the banks about the partnership agreement the banks had already recognised the BWU, although there was evidence from interviews that activists in the two banks were also involved in working out the details of the partnership agreement. The signing of the first partnership agreement at the workplace level was in 2005 with two of the merged commercial banks that became First Caribbean International Bank, seen at figure 2 on page 129.

Although the literature review on revitalizing strategies highlighted the argument about the “puzzles and contradictions”, as termed by Heery et al (2003: 93), the BWU has engaged both strategies. To date, according to the Deputy General Secretary of the BWU:

“…the partnership agreement has not conflicted with the organising approach, since the partnership agreement documents how the bank deals with certain issues, including redundancies and pensions. The partnership agreement was not used as part of the recruitment or recognition. It was used subsequent to recognition to document the
procedure to be used with matters such as job security, pension and redundancies” (UN: 01: INT).

The opposing nature of organising and partnership was discussed by Badigannavar and Kelly (2011), who saw partnership as “shared interest” and organising as “contested interest”. In the case of the BWU it managed to engage its shared interest alongside its contested interest. In some ways it can be argued that it has used the ‘shared agenda’ to facilitate the ‘contested agenda’ since the state partnership agreement informed the private sector agreement with the two merged banks and it strengthened the BWU’s bargaining position for job security in these banks. The BWU’s position was further strengthened by its joining the other unions in other Caribbean islands in this partnership agreement with First Caribbean International Bank. This gave the BWU not only local but regional strength and signalled to other banks that it was the model to emulate. The BWU has also suggested that the recent merger between Bank C and RBC should follow a similar approach to this partnership, as the following quotation illustrates:

“It is expected that, as in the case of the harmonisation effort between Barclays Bank and the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, the opportunity will be provided by the principals to have trade unions, staff associations and workers’ representatives meet under the aegis of the companies to discuss and agree on the way forward” (BWU Annual Report 2008: 20).
Terry (2003) has argued for government legislative support for partnership agreements, however, like the collective agreements, partnership agreements are not binding by law in Barbados. In the case of partnership in Barbados a sequential approach discussed by Heery (2002) was used in engaging partnership and organising in combination, however, with a prescribed sequence. Examination of the protocol agreements by an ILO representative led to the conclusion that these are critical to the foundation and framework of industrial relations in Barbados (Fashoyin 2001). The signing of these agreements is usually part of the May Day celebrations and is significant for the BWU’s strategy to show a united force to the country on that significant day. The signing always involves the Prime Minister, the head of the Private Sector and the General Secretary of the BWU. Photographs of the signing of two of these protocols, one on May Day 2000 and the other on May Day 2005, can be seen in figures 3 and 4 on page 130.

The first protocol agreement with government was signed in 1993 and the last to date was the fifth protocol agreement signed and extended in 2009. The first protocol agreement covers the period 1993-1995 and specifically addressed economic stabilization and collective bargaining. The second protocol agreed to conditions for forging partnerships on wage restraints and productivity and was agreed in 1995-1997. The third concentrated on building a sustainable social and economic partnership and covered 1998-2000. The highlight of the May Day celebration in 2002 was the signing of Protocol Four (BWU Annual Report 2002).

Protocol Five of the Social Partnership agreements, which was signed for 2005-2007, outlines the particulars covered in the earlier protocols from 1993-1995. The agreement
subscribes to a number of principles in its preamble, which include ILO Convention 87, concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise; Convention 98, concerning the Application of the Principles of the Right to Organise and to Bargain Collectively; and Convention 144 on Tripartite Consultation. The agreement also continues to highlight the form of industrial relations in Barbados, as is quoted here:

“Believing that voluntarism, as conceptual and applied to industrial relations in Barbados and particularly through those conventions and practices which have been carefully developed over the years, remains critical to the success of any continued endeavours…” (Protocol Five of Social Partnership 2005-2007: 2).

The protocol arrangements have influenced employers’ decisions and encouraged consultations on a number of labour issues. One of the advantages of partnership arrangement is its influence on how government and companies manage job security, which was highlighted in the literature as one of the features of most partnership arrangements (Heery 2002). For example, there was consultation with the chairman of the two merged banks A and B in terms of jobs and job security even before there was a partnership arrangement. Additionally, a leaflet from the BWU to workers highlights the ‘Protocol on Job Security’, saying: “The protocol on Job Security contains the following major features which are designed to ‘protect’ the job of workers who come under the umbrella of the agreement”. The agreement is that, “every effort will be made to ensure job security for workers in the various plants to the agreement” (BWU
Leaflet). It goes on to explain the various stages of consultation which should happen between the union and the employer before decisions are made for redundancy.

![Image](image_url)

**Figure 2**

Source: Barbados Workers’ Union 64th Annual Report, 2005. Comrade Dale Hunte, Industrial Relations Officer, Barbados Workers’ Union, signs the first partnership principle agreement. Looking on are (L-R): Comrade Carlos Moore, Secretary of the BWU Division, First Caribbean International Bank and Mr. Peter Hall, Chief Administrative Officer, First Caribbean International Bank.
Figure 3
Source: Barbados Workers’ Union 59th Annual Report, 2000. The signing of Protocol Four by the leaders of the Social Partnerships was done on the grounds of Government Headquarters, on the morning of May 1, in the full view of the public. In picture (from r to l) are: General Secretary Senator LeRoy Trotman, Prime Minister Rt., Hon. Owen Arthur, Mr. Allan Fields of the Private Sector and Senator Glynne Murray. Looking on is the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Civil Service, Mr. Cyril Clarke.

Figure 4
Source: Barbados Workers’ Union 64th Annual Report, 2005. The three Leaders of the Social Partnership pictured after the signing of Protocol Five, on May Day. In picture (from 1 to r) are: CTUSAB President Sir Roy Trotman, Prime Minister Owen Arthur and Head of the Private Sector Association, Chris De Caires.
The protocol on job security was also significant in the case of the bank merger between Bank A and B where the BWU emphasised the approach to job security in the national protocol and indicated that it should be followed. The social partnership was instrumental in highlighting issues in the merger discussions and a letter was sent by the Chairman of Bank A and B to the Chairman of the Sub-Committee, Social Partnership regarding the Human Resources Policies for the merged bank, which said:

“Barclays Bank and the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce propose to merge their operations to create First Caribbean International Bank…Over the past few months we have been developing human resources policies for the new company and in keeping with the principles of the Social Partnership and wish to inform you as we continue to develop these policies in consultation with our staff and the respective trade unions…affected by this proposed merger.” (Extract from a letter of 23 January, 2002, sent by the Chairman of First Caribbean International Bank to the Chairman of the Sub-Committee of the Social Partnership)

This letter also summarised some of the issues, among others, as follows:

- Transfer of all staff to First Caribbean with a recognition of previous continuous employment
- Base Pay to be harmonised
- A new performance-based pay
- A new share ownership
The recognition by the two banks of the state protocol agreement gave direction to this first enterprise partnership. Although there is a discussion about tension in the literature between partnership and organising, these two approaches have worked in the case of the BWU. Partnership agreements were discussed in the literature as one of the revitalization strategies and advocates such as Haynes and Allen (2001) highlighted the benefits to the unions of allowing a collaborative approach with employers in this globalised era. The critics have highlighted its conflict with the organising approach and its hindrance to union renewal (Kelly 1996; Frege and Kelly 2004). The approach used by the BWU in combining partnership agreements and organising seems to follow the advice given by Fletcher and Hurd (2001) which indicated that the key was to find the right blend of the approaches.

Partnership as a renewal approach has been used by the BWU, especially with state agreements. This state partnership has set the example of cooperative relations and has influenced the industrial relations landscape in Barbados. At company level there is a partnership arrangement with two merged banks which were formed in the commercial banking sector after these banks were recognised. In the literature, partnership was supported by some advocates and criticised by others. However, in the case of the BWU the partnership agreement has not taken away from the efforts to organise in the banking sector since it came after the organising drive. The BWU has also used public relations strategies in the community to gain moral support for unionising.

**Community Organising**

The BWU was also engaged in a range of social activities in the community. It embedded itself in the community in terms of various cultural activities: its social
involvement spans social institutions such as schools, youth groups, the retired and the church. The BWU pays particular attention to the youth and has a strategy of sharing information about the trade union movement with them from very early. Its profile in the community included its outreach programmes for children in primary and secondary schools. This approach is a strategy of the BWU to be seen as a “united front” to all. The BWU’s ‘Youth Arm’ targets schools and children’s homes and there is a yearly school outreach programme of activities. Three examples of this can be seen in figure 5 on page 133 and figures 6 and 7 on page 134.

Figure 5
Figure 6

Figure 7

In one of the BWU information leaflets there is a section entitled, ‘Join a committee’: these committees include the youth committee, gender equality committee, political action committee, retired members’ committee and the organising committee. This
committee approach supports the strategic objective of the BWU in terms of the activities and involvement of the BWU in the community and is evidence of external strategies. The idea is to involve the very young and according to their draft ‘Handbook on Organising’, “Have programmes and visits to these areas so that when pupils enter the workforce they are already sensitised to the union” (BWU Draft Document - Handbook on Organising). The BWU considers itself a social partner and consults on a range of issues through the sub-committees of the Social Partners. The following quote gives an idea of the issues: “...support for the manufacturing and agricultural industries...government land use policy...The Sub-committee also received a delegation from the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce and Barclays Bank PLC to be briefed on the proposed merger of the two banks” (BWU 61st Annual Report 2002: 26-27).

As part of the community awareness the BWU uses rallies as an important part of its strategy to organise externally. While the literature considers rallies as union tactics and not strategies (Bronfenbrenner 1998), the BWU sees its May Day rally as strategic and this event is used to sign major agreements such as the protocol agreements and to show solidarity with the government, the private sector and various groups in the community. The May Day rallies are central to the union’s social and cultural activities and the union describes these as, “… the principal mode by which the organisation was able to interface with the public on May Day...” (BWU 59th Annual Report 2000: 13).

May Day is used to showcase the BWU’s involvement with the community and several cultural activities are partnered with organisations and other social groups. For example, the BWU has partnered with the merged bank A and B in the ‘BWU’s Barclays Bank May Day 2002 Quiz Tournament’ for schools in which the Ministry of
Education and a number of retired teachers were used to plan and execute the programme. A quiz in session can be seen at figure 8, on page 137. Bank D became unionised in 2001 and by 2003 there was an annual partnership in the form of a calypso competition for which the BWU receives sponsorship from Bank D yearly; a scene from a show in 2003 can be seen in figure 9 on page 137. The partnership spirit has also involved the BWU and a number of other private sector organisations with floats for May Day, seen in figures 10, 11 on page 138 and figure 12 on page 139. In relation to this activity the union has indicated that in addition to its cultural impact it is of significance because, “...it propelled the Barbados Workers’ Union back to the centre of May Day and all that it means to the workers’ movement” (BWU 59th Annual Report 2000: 14).

May Day is also used to host a children’s party yearly for various children’s homes, one of which can be seen at figure 13 on page 139. Similarly, the retirees are also treated to various activities and the BWU says that, “In an effort to re-connect with its past members and meet their families, the Executive Council has been organising the retirees’ picnic for twelve years now” (BWU 62nd Annual Report 2003: 24). Solidarity on May Day is especially important and the BWU showcases its power base, such as the Barbados Port Authority workers, seen in a march on May Day, 2006 in figure 14 on page 140. The workers at the Port Authority are considered a strategic militant unit for the BWU, and are usually used for support in times of industrial action with other companies.
Figure 8

Figure 9
Figure 10

Figure 11

Figure 12

Figure 13
The above discussion is important in showing the level and span of involvement of the BWU in social and cultural activities among various ages and groups in the community. This ‘embeddedness’ has given the BWU the moral support and sympathy from the public during its strikes or other forms of work stoppages, especially for trade union recognition. The BWU has also developed its international links through affiliation with international union organisations.

**International Relations**

In terms of international links and coalitions, the BWU has aligned itself with several regional and international union organisations. Its international links are well established and the BWU has received visits from international trade union leaders, such as John Sweeney in 2000, seen below in figure 15.
Figure 15
Source: Barbados Workers’ Union 58th Annual Report, 1999. BWU General Secretary, Comrade LeRoy Trotman greets AFL-CIO President Brother John Sweeney at Solidarity House in July. At left is Bro. Stan Gacek of the AFL-CIO.

The BWU has links with the Inter-American Regional Organization of Workers of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ORIT), the American Federation of Labour/Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) and the Canadian Labour of Congress (CLC). The ILO has influenced the industrial relations in Barbados through conventions which facilitate recruitment and recognition in trade unions. However, it must be noted that these are conventions and not law. Although individuals have a right to join trade unions and for collective bargaining in Barbados there is no law that makes it an offence for an employer to refuse to recognise or engage in collective bargaining with a union, even if it had the required numbers for recognition. In the context of the Barbadian industrial relations these ILO conventions are readily cited by the BWU, and in 1999 the BWU’s General Secretary said the following about the ILO: “The ILO has sought to heighten the degree of social dialogue taking place, and has sought to encourage a greater level of discussion on the appreciation of standards in the region” (BWU Annual Report 1999: 31). The General Secretary of the BWU also represents

141
the Caribbean Congress of Trade Unions at the ILO and can be seen in figure 16 on page 143, at an ILO session.

The BWU has managed to influence the industrial relations context by its involvement with government, the private sector, and international labour organisations and this has benefited the BWU since it has allowed recognition and collective bargaining compliance without laws to enforce them. The external strategies of the BWU are a critical part of the union setting the context for unionisation. Hyman (1975a) highlighted the need for unions to influence the “external agencies” which unions have to interface with, including the state and employers. Some of these external strategies were of a wider focus than the commercial banking sector; however, they provided the context for facilitating the unionisation process in the late 1990s to present. For example, the BWU’s political influence allowed it to be involved in discussions with the Central Bank of Barbados regarding bank mergers. The partnership agreement strengthened its position as a partner with employers which emulated the national partnership arrangement and its regional links allowed a partnership agreement between the two merged banks which formed First Caribbean International Bank.
From the evidence provided in this section it can be seen that the BWU has organised its external context and attempted to influence specific institutions relevant to unionisation. The BWU has integrated itself as part of the social, political and cultural fabric of the Barbadian society. It also has a network and has built relations in the region and internationally. In many ways the BWU has achieved what Burchielli and Bartram (2009) describe as organising at ‘various levels’. This is all part of the BWU’s strategy to sensitise its external context in terms of its influence, image, popularity and acceptance to be seen as an organisation that is integrally embedded in the society and part of the dialogue on national issues. The General Secretary of the BWU explained the vision for the union:

“Barbados is intent on becoming a first world country by the end of the first quarter of the twenty-first century. This can be achieved if the
institutions of our country develop a collaborative, cooperative, integrative, holistic approach to national development. The Barbados Workers’ Union is mindful of this and so has been prepared to assume a leadership role in adopting the paradigm shifts necessary in taking the required first step” (BWU 62nd Annual Report 2003: 2).

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the top-down approach used by the BWU to recruit and recognise white-collar workers in the banking sector. From the foregoing discussion it is evident that the approach the BWU took in recruiting white-collar workers in the banking sector started long before the activists approached the BWU with their grievances at the time of bank mergers and acquisitions. The BWU had started its top-down strategy mainly through public relations and advertising the benefits of being union members. It was also clear from the findings that the BWU influenced the social and political environment and made organisational changes internally to prepare for recruitment and recognition of white-collar workers.

The findings in this chapter show that during the recruitment and recognition campaigns the decision making between the top-down union officials and the activists at the workplace were clearly worked out and understood in terms of the boundaries of democracy for the rank-and-file activists. Both union officials and activists were clear on what decisions they could make and the process was democratic in the sense that even where decisions had to be finally made by the union officials, activists at the workplace did have some input and in most cases voted with their colleagues on these matters at the workplace. There was no evidence of bureaucratic distance between the
union officials and the rank-and-file activists, although this study only provided evidence up to the point of recognition.

Based on the findings it is apparent that the BWU did engage in discussion regarding legislation and political and social activities which were all part of its strategy to facilitate organising at company level. The partnership arrangements with government set the tone for the treatment of issues such as job security and labour rationalisation and acted as templates for partnership arrangements with the private sector, including two merged commercial banks. The BWU also undertook some internal restructuring aimed at strategising to organise white-collar workers in the commercial banking sector.

In terms of its public relations role, union headquarters sent out flyers and media announcements that kept the campaign to organise commercial banks alive in the public domain, and is part of what this study calls ‘leading from above’. Guidance was also given to the rank-and-file leaders and some experiences shared with them by other shop stewards who had already unionised. The leadership from above continues with attempts to organise RBC, the only non-unionised commercial bank in Barbados. It must be noted that there was no case of unionisation in any of these banks that was strictly the result of top-down union strategy: however, when the mobilisation at the workplace started the union officials did give direction and guidance from headquarters.

Although the strategy and tactics used by the BWU were all discussed in the literature, the combination of these is specific to the BWU and the Barbadian context contributes to country specificity in terms of top-down approaches to unionising.
The top-down drive by the BWU continues in the banking sector in Barbados, since RBC has acquired Bank C, which is unionised. The Deputy General Secretary of the BWU has said that, “The staff are not ready to be unionised at RBC”. The BWU also reported that it had tried to unionise RBC on previous occasions but had not been successful. Based on the literature and findings from this study, the condition of a merger should create an environment that is conducive to mobilising. Taken together, the evidence bears out the point that even with a union strategy and the right conditions, employees must feel they have a grievance to mobilise. Workplace activists are needed to bring the bottom-up demands to the union and the willingness to articulate grievances in a collective drive. Chapter five discusses the bottom-up approach to unionisation from the workplace level in the five commercial banks.
Chapter 5 – ‘Mobilising From Below’

5.1 Introduction

Chapter five discusses and presents an analysis of the grievances which propelled the mobilisation of the white-collar workers in the banks and were identified in the interviews with the shop stewards, bank managers and union officials. Focus groups with shop stewards and relevant documents and archival information were also used to collect data and the findings are discussed here. The evidence in this chapter highlights the argument about the need for the bottom-up approach to support the top-down attempt at unionisation. The previous chapter discussed the unionisation from above, the context for recruitment and recognition and the decision making and roles of the BWU’s officials and activists at the workplace. The organisational context which provided the impetus for unionisation, such as restructuring/reorganisation, mergers/acquisitions and the lack of grievance procedure mechanism were also explored.

The themes which emerged from the data collected were identified using thematic analysis. Those themes which were common to all banks are first presented; however, where the context or circumstances were different this will be highlighted. Employee grievances or the objective factors which were identified include job security, pay equity, and employee voice and grievance resolution mechanism. The examination of the organisational context and environment at the time of mobilisation was significant in all of the case studies to understand how they resulted in employee demands which were framed by the activists (the subjective factor) and taken to the union. The conditions of restructuring/reorganising, acquisition/merger in three of the commercial
banks and a lack of a grievance resolution mechanism in two of the banks were identified as the context which resulted in the employee grievances which were used by the rank-and-file to mobilise. Although the BWU had approached the banks on a number of occasions previously these initial attempts were not successful, however, the demands taken to the BWU by the activists did initiate the mobilisation. These organisational contexts will now be discussed.

5.2 Organisational Contexts Conducive to Mobilisation

The organisational context of restructuring/reorganising was associated with Bank A, while mergers and acquisitions were associated with three banks: Banks A, B and E. In Banks C and D the organisational context conducive to mobilisation was a result of a lack of grievance procedure mechanism. Although Bank C went through a merger this was not the organisational context which created employee demands; instead, it was the lack of a grievance procedure mechanism. The mergers and acquisitions in banks were conditions constantly in the news in Barbados and this section highlights some evidence of the environment that existed at the time.

The media in Barbados kept the public aware of the mergers in the banking sector, as illustrated by the following quote taken from a newspaper article entitled, “Bank Mergers only Beginning”, which stated:

“Last month Barclays and CIBC shocked the public of Barbados, Canada and the United States when they disclosed that they were discussing a plan to combine their Caribbean operations. Barclays is one of the world’s oldest international financial institutions and CIBC, Canada’s
third largest bank by assets, also said that they would create a new bank, First Caribbean International Bank” (Daily Nation, 9 August, 2001).

The staff in Bank A had heard about this sale and as a result had concerns about job security. The BWU acknowledged the new reality of mergers and restructuring by saying the following:

“All over the world communities have to come face to face with how best to deal with the current phase of restructuring which is being referred to as Globalisation. The trade union movement is a major stakeholder...in some instances, their response has been to resort to a series of demonstrations and work stoppages…” (BWU 60th Annual Report 2001: 2).

By this statement the BWU was signalling how it was going to respond to such developments in Barbados. In the case of the banking sector in Barbados there were work stoppages in banks where there was reorganisation, mergers and acquisitions. These work stoppages brought attention to mobilisation in the banking sector, and were part of the BWU’s public relations strategy. In the local newspaper the Daily Nation of 4 November, 2003, there was an article which said:

“One of the foremost considerations that the Caribbean has to grapple with is that we are part of the changing global financial environment and therefore international trends catch up with us sooner rather than
later...mergers and bank consolidations were on the cards for several years...” (Daily Nation, 4 November, 2003).

This point about reorganising and restructuring creating opportunities for the union was highlighted by Dolvik and Waddington (2002). The conditions created within organisations by these mergers gave the BWU what Heery and Salmon (2000: 10) called a “representative opportunity”. The opportunity did not exist for the BWU in the banking sector in Barbados before these conditions were present, although the union had tried unionising some years earlier. More stories appeared in the media such as, “Speculation over merger of Banks”, which said:

“Speculation remains high on whether Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) is indeed looking to use its Barbados-based subsidiary, First Caribbean International Bank (FCIB), to take over or merge with Trinidadian RBTT Financial Holdings...A decade ago, banks such as Caribbean Commercial Bank, the Mutual Bank, Barclays and CIBC were household names. Since 2002 a spate of mergers and acquisitions has seen these names disappear in favour of FCIB, Butterfield Bank and RBTT – from seven banks to six, and now there may be five” (Daily Nation, 28 May, 2007).

This article highlighted the landscape that had become the norm for commercial banks from the late 1990s and this change has continued to present, with a recent merger of Bank C and RBC in 2008. The changes in ownership in these banks can be seen at appendix 1, table 1.
The issue of restructuring/reorganising reported in Bank A was the first sign of changes in the employment status. The following was said in the focus group with Bank A: “It was evident that things had changed in the bank and we were not being treated the same way. The bank started its restructuring programme and said it was doing this for the better of the staff” (A: 04: FC). During the interviews and focus group sessions the restructuring was reported as the first step which signalled to employees that things had changed. The bank had indicated that the purpose of this restructuring/reorganising was to make things better for the staff. However, the interviews indicated that staff found that this restructuring/reorganising was taking away their autonomy and making it difficult to get promotional opportunities. This interviewee described how staff felt:

“Everything was changing. There was a re-grading and restructuring exercise, which resulted in jobs ending up in a lower category of pay than the pay people were receiving. People were not comfortable with what was happening. They were taking away more and more” (A: 03: INT).

The change mentioned by the activists in Bank A is in keeping with the definition used for explaining trade union recruitment as a change in workers’ views about the employment relationship (Knox and McKinlay 2003). The rumours about the sale and the reality of changes in the terms of employment created some anxiety for staff. As one activist explained, “We started to meet and talk about what was happening and how this restructuring was affecting people. This was not a nice time in the bank and some of us started looking at what we were going to do, which included getting the union to help” (A: 05: INT).
At the same time staff in these banks said they had heard rumours of the sale of Bank A and that the bank was leaving the Caribbean. They felt that the bank was being restructured to prepare for sale. This was said in an interview and later confirmed in the focus group meeting with an activist from Bank A: “The bank was doing a reorganising exercise which they claimed was going to be better for us but it took away autonomy and jobs ended up at a lower scale. All this was taking place while there were rumours about the bank being sold” (A: 01: INT).

The point was made that globalisation has caused a change in jobs in such a way that jobs have become more temporary and while some permanent jobs remained, they had become less secure (Auer 2006). Staff in Bank A had permanent jobs, for the most part, but were beginning to feel some insecurity with these changes. This perception of the staff in Bank A was confirmed by a management representative who spoke about the results of the reorganising exercise and said, “The bank embarked on a restructuring and reorganising exercise. Jobs were reclassified and some came out at a lower level” (A: 01: MINT).

This situation in Bank A created a sense of insecurity and while Bank A became unionised in 1997 it had implications for unionisation at Bank B since these two banks merged in 2002. This pending merger of Bank B with Bank A also created a sense of insecurity for the staff at Bank B since they were not sure of their jobs. Both Banks A and B were previously approached about unionisation by the BWU but it never materialized in the previous attempts. This was said in the focus group for Bank A:
“We had been asked about joining the union some time before. Staff did not take the union seriously at the time. I guess we were not worried about anything then. Things were different and we realised we could not depend on management to understand what was happening so we decided to join the union” (A: 04: FC).

The Deputy General Secretary said he knew the conditions in Bank A were ‘ripe’ for unionisation at the time when the employees came to them. Further, he said, they too were hearing rumours about a sale. A story appeared in the news entitled, “New Bank sign of the times” which stated, “There is obvious concern for the future of employees” and it also referred to the situation to which the Deputy General Secretary responded: “...all Barbadians should by now be able to appreciate the decision of Government to promote Barbados as the premier location for services and understand it would have certain consequences” (Daily Nation, 27 July, 2001).

The Deputy General Secretary emphasised that, “In such situations the union, as the worker’s representative, has relevance to this process” (Ibid 2001). The relevance referred to here was that the BWU was signalling to the staff in Bank B that they could be a ‘voice’ for them. Bank A workers had already joined the BWU in 1997. From the interviews it was revealed that the BWU had already approached Bank B, however, it was when the merger was announced, according to the interviews, that the mobilisation started. In the interview with a manager from Bank B it was noted that, “Once the union unionised Barclays they were more aggressive in going after CIBC” (B: 01: MINT). The unionisation of Bank A gave some momentum to the mobilisation in Bank
B. The activists in Bank B were able to obtain advice and information from the Bank A activists in terms of how they dealt with the campaign.

In Bank E the organisational context which created uncertainty was also the result of the rumours of a sale of the bank. The participants in this bank said that customers were coming into the bank and telling them that they had heard the bank was for sale. They tried to find out from management but received no “straight answers”. This uncertainty about what was happening, especially with their jobs, caused them to feel insecure and they decided to take action. At the focus group session this was confirmed as the start of the mobilisation in Bank E:

“There was talk every day in the bank about what was going to happen to the bank. It made staff feel uncomfortable because the customers kept telling us about the sale which they were hearing about. Some of us were discussing it among ourselves and trying to determine how we would approach it” (E: 02: FC).

The action they decided on was explained this way:

“We chose about six strong individuals to do the campaigning for the union and we used the line that the bank was going to be sold and we were not sure what was going to happen. Among us we planned for who we would involve as the main team and how we were going to get others to join. We used the sale of the bank to convince our colleagues that we should join the union” (E: 04: INT).
The idea of using a reason to encourage colleagues to join the union is an example of the rank-and-file strategising and using “crisis” as a mobilising factor resulting from conditions which were conducive to unionisation. In terms of Banks C and D the condition was a lack of grievance resolution mechanism. In Banks C and D interviewees spoke about wanting a third party to represent their interest. One comment from a Bank D interviewee was, “We needed a third party to take grievances to, other than management. We needed a system so that issues could be dealt with fairly” (D: 02: INT).

Empirical research on conditions significant to mobilisation is well articulated (Kelly 1998; Martin 1999; Voss and Sherman 2000). The idea that the right atmosphere must be present for mobilisation was highlighted by Burchielli and Bartram (2009), who felt that mobilisation, is helped by certain conditions. Under certain conditions crisis issues as articulated by Voss and Sherman (2000) are used, as was seen in these cases to propel mobilisation. The use of crisis issues was evident in four of these cases where the activists used the mergers and acquisitions and the resulting job insecurity to emphasise the need for mobilisation. Conditions conducive to organising were examined in chapter two in terms of reorganising and restructuring, discussed by Bernston et al (2010), Naswall and Sverke (2010) and Sverke and Goslinga (2003), as an organisational context that creates job insecurity. These writers recognised these global phenomena which have become part of the conditions of work and employment. The organisational context outlined in this section provided the conditions for the start of mobilisation in these banks. Conditions conducive to mobilisation result in grievances or “objective” factors, while the “subjective” factor is the rank-and-file with the willingness to frame and propel these grievances to mobilisation (Darlington 2002).
5.3 Factors Propelling Mobilisation from Below

The research question for this study was “How could top-down and bottom-up approaches be used to explain recruitment and recognition of commercial bank staff in Barbados, from 1997 to present?”. This section will examine both the objective factors and the subjective factor, or the rank-and-file activists who propelled the mobilisation. Objective factors common across the banks will be presented in one section; however, those which are significantly different will be highlighted and presented separately.

The first theme to be presented in this section is job security. This was evident in Banks A, B, C and E. It is significant to note that Bank D is the only commercial bank which did not go through a merger or acquisition and the study found no evidence of job insecurity as a mobilising factor in Bank D. In Bank A and Bank B the related issue of benefits security will also be discussed and is associated with pay, which was highlighted in the case of Banks A, B, C and E. Employee voice was also identified as a critical issue for employees in all of the case studies, since the staff wanted voice to express their concerns. This discussion will start by examining how job security was used as a factor in the mobilisation.

5.3.1 Job Security

The demand for job security was driven by the anxiety of the staff in four of these banks. Job security was certain in the banking sector in Barbados before the mergers/acquisitions, reorganising/restructuring started in the 1990s and has always been a priority for the BWU. In all of its promises to its members job security has been featured prominently; for example, in a leaflet distributed to the non-unionised bank, RBC, the leaflet had its number one demand listed as, “job security”.
In a letter circulated by the BWU to RBC staff it stated, “When two institutions are merged it is not unusual for cost-cutting measures to threaten: 1) your jobs, 2) conditions you enjoy, 3) benefits you receive…” Job security was identified as a major theme in the cases of Banks A, B, C and E. In three of the cases it was connected to, or resulted from, the issue of merger/acquisition, restructuring/reorganising where there was uncertainty about jobs. In Bank C, job security was an issue which resulted from a lack of grievance resolution procedure to allow for fair hearings of dismissals and grievances.

The media did their part to inform the public about the happenings in these banks. A preamble fitting to set the stage for the discussion on job security, especially in connection to mergers and acquisition, was this article, “Bank Mergers may put Bajans on the Breadline” (Daily Nation, 8 September, 1995). The article went on to report, “The last time two large New York commercial banks merged scores of West Indians lost their jobs.” This was the beginning of uncertainty as far as jobs were concerned in the banking sector in Barbados. The first bank to become unionised was Bank A and the discussion around the reason for mobilisation was explained in the following way in the BWU 56th Annual Report in 1997: “…through their unionisation Barclays workers have been able to share a new found solidarity, brought about by their effort to deal with the insidious threats of demotion and/or termination which were hanging over their heads” (BWU 56th Annual Report 1997: 30-31).

Another article in the Daily Nation, 23 August, 2002 headlined “Who’s Really in Charge” said:
“Those members of our more highly qualified workforce are experiencing a high level of insecurity and stress as the big companies seek to become more profitable by joining and buying out other companies. The insecurity has become so critical that managers and senior staff in Barbados who never gave the Barbados Workers’ Union a second thought in all their years in the banking industry, rushed to join after the CIBC/Barclays merger”.

The article also asked some questions of government, such as: “How is it that government is not laying down the law for the conglomerates when it comes to the job security of workers?” The issue of job security in the banks was in the press and discussed so the public was aware of what was happening. This was part of the BWU’s public relations top-down strategy.

The files of minutes of a meeting held in July 1997 between the BWU and Barclays Bank showed that there were concerns about, “shedding of jobs and changed jobs”. In a letter to the Barbados Director of Bank A, the General Secretary of the BWU wrote, “We wish you to be advised that job security, income security…is at the centre of the collective bargaining system.” In the interviews with Bank A shop stewards, the comment by one of them summed up the feeling about the status of job security: “From the early nineties there was some talk about the sale of Barclays Bank. As this talk continued staff got uncomfortable and we felt we needed to do something about it. Benefits were being reduced and we felt we needed to protect ourselves” (A: 01: INT).
Another concern was that there was talk about Bank A leaving the Caribbean, which was expressed by one of the interviewees this way: “There was a re-grading and restructuring exercise which resulted in jobs ending up in lower categories and at the same time there was talk about the sale of Barclays and the bank leaving the Caribbean” (A: 02: INT). Another comment from the focus group offered similar comments: “Barclays was leaving the Caribbean region and we were not sure what was happening to the bank. There were rumours about it being sold but we were not sure. The bank started doing things which were not the usual so it was obvious that something was up” (A: 04: FC).

The sale of the bank and the idea that the bank was leaving the Caribbean were compounding the issue of job insecurity, as expressed by this rank-and-file activist: “Staff had a lot of uncertainty about the bank’s presence in the Caribbean” (A: 03: INT). A discussion about the rumoured numbers to go home formed the basis of daily conversation in the bank. It reached a point where the staff went to work every day waiting to hear what was the new number and as one interviewee explained, “Barclays started to reduce benefits; not only that, we were uncertain about jobs, we felt we had to do something about it. Every day there was a different number that was to go home, today it could be 200 and tomorrow it could be 300. But there was this constant thing about how many had to go” (A: 03: INT). It was revealed that discussions about a reduced number went on every day causing unease among staff in Bank A. Another comment which showed concern by staff about the number to go home was:

“They were trying to convince us that they were going to keep all the staff but we did not believe them. Why would you buy two banks and
try to keep all the staff? That just did not make any sense. Yet we were hearing rumours about staff cuts. You have two buildings on Broad Street and you are going to keep both! Staff did not believe them” (A: 03: INT).

These comments showed the lack of trust staff had about communication from management. The issue about having a voice through the BWU became critical since staff wanted a third party through which to filter the information they were receiving. Staff felt they needed a third party who had their interests at heart and who they could believe.

This erosion of the psychological contract was affecting the employment relationship of staff and Bank A employers, and was highlighted in this quote: “A lot of changes were happening at Barclays, people were concerned about their jobs, benefits were being eroded bit by bit and the bank was for sale” (A: 02: INT). This was further reinforced by this shop steward, “…there was the reorganisation of the bank, with employees seeing a change not necessarily for the better…” (A: 01: INT).

This change in permanent jobs was highlighted by Hartley (1995) and Sparrow (2000), who spoke about the change in work not only affecting temporary workers but also those who were permanent. The staff of Bank A, up until this point, were not accustomed to any major changes in their jobs and conditions. The Daily Nation article dated 23 August, 2002, spoke about managers who were seeking representation from the BWU, which was not the norm before the acquisitions and mergers. A change in
how workers view their relationship with employers was described by Knox and McKinlay (2003) as a reason for trade union recruitment.

The fear and anxiety about job security was taken to another stage when packages were offered to staff of Bank A since this confirmed the talk about reduction of staff as articulated here: “There was a lot of talk about the sale of the Bank. Then there came the offer of packages to staff” (A: 01: INT). The offer of packages added another dimension to the feelings of insecurity since staff were suspicious about the amount offered for severance. They did not think it right that it should be based on government rates, which were normally lower than the private sector. This caused staff to have a concern about pay, which is another employee grievance to be discussed below. The mistrust of management by staff continued in Bank A with these severance packages and again the staff felt they needed the union to represent their interests and to get better packages.

Staff in Bank A felt job security was paramount since they were hearing about job losses and they felt that the bank was preparing itself for sale. In an interview with the Deputy General Secretary of the BWU, he also said: “The Barclays Bank was behaving like a company that was preparing itself for sale even before it was announced” (UN: 01: INT). There was further concern by the Deputy General Secretary about job losses at Bank A and this was revealed in a letter from the Deputy General Secretary of the BWU to the executive of the CIBC bank, on 2 November, 2001. It stated:

“We understand that Barclays Bank will be closing its operations in the Caribbean, giving rise to the issue of severance. We are not convinced
that there is a situation of continuance. We will argue the case further but we are still not satisfied how Bank Plc. branches of Barclays could be amalgamated into a Holdings Company of CIBC Bank.”

This issue of job security was raised again at a meeting on 25 July, 2002, between the BWU and Bank A and one of the reported minutes said: “In the Barclays agreement, there is a clause which addresses normal redundancies. It is hoped that the bank would be making every effort to retain staff as job security is paramount.” Mr. Morris, Deputy General Secretary of the BWU also stressed that there were concerns that management and supervisory levels would be dramatically reduced and the union was prepared to take any action to protect these jobs.

Up to this point, Bank B was not unionised. However, this tension between Bank A and Bank B regarding job security in terms of preferential treatment started the issue of job security in Bank B. Quoting from the bank’s ‘Integration Programme’ to staff, under the heading, ‘Enabling Work Groups - HR transition’, it stated, “Plans and Implements the transfer of Barclays’ employees to CIBC entities from Day 1” and goes on to highlight questions from staff. The staff responded with these questions, “What does the statement mean? If two entities have equal share, why is there a one-way flow?”, “Do we take it that the jobs at CIBC are secure while those at Barclays are on the line?” Tension was beginning to affect both banks in terms of the competing interest for jobs and job security. The BWU now had an opportunity to also represent Bank B employees.
The *Daily Nation* carried an article “Sickout closes five Barclays Branches”, on 5 October, 2001. It stated, “More than 300 workers stayed off the job yesterday, causing Barclays to redirect customers to Broad Street, the lone branch that opened for business.” It claimed that: “The clerical workers accused the bank of attempting to frustrate their efforts, and also charged Barclays with breaching the collective agreement by hiring 16 temporary cashiers and advertising jobs on the Internet”. The article went on to highlight another major concern to be, “…since the announcement of …merger last July, nothing had been done about their employment future”.

The issue of job and benefits security in Bank A was the main issue leading to mobilisation of the staff to join the union. During the focus group with rank-and-file activists these sentiments were echoed and the group spoke about benefits security, enhanced severance packages and pensions being second to job security. The issue of job security continued when Bank A merged with Bank B. One of the activists in Bank B explained: “Management was not prepared to say what was going on and whether or not CIBC was for sale. Although we tried to find out, we were not getting the answers to what was really going on” (B: 02: INT).

The focus group session similarly reported the absence of any information from the top, as this quote illustrates: “All attempts to get information on what was going on in the bank were not resulting in any firm position. Staff were really feeling uneasy about the situation” (B: 03: FC). The interviews and the focus groups revealed that job security became a real issue because all attempts to get information from management failed and staff had no clarification on the real status. They were not certain, according to them,
“…who was buying who?” (B: 02: INT). In other words, they were unsure of which bank would have the authority in terms of structuring and jobs.

In the first “Update” document on the merger of 7 August 2001, from the files of the BWU on the merger between Bank A and Bank B, there were questions which were posed by staff to management concerning job security which included the following:

- “In relation to pension will the staff who are vested have an option…?”
- “Why is it necessary to seek work permits for some 74 persons from Canada and UK?”
- “Staff who join the integration team must apply for jobs in the new structure, will this job be held only if the applicant is successful?”
- “What happens if the individual is not successful?”
- “What happens to one’s years of service?”
- “Will those years be carried forward or do we start from day one in the new entity?”

When news broke of the merger between Bank A and Bank B, this started the mobilisation of the staff in Bank B towards unionisation. On 8 November, 2001 a letter was written ‘To all employees’, from the Chairman of the merged bank, stating:

“The merging of our workforce is the initial step on our path to a combined integrated organisation…You have told us that job security is a major concern, and we want to assure you that we are committed in our approach to continuing your employment wherever possible, as we
combine our workforces into First Caribbean International Bank. We are also committed to ensuring that all employees, from both originating organisations and across all locations are treated fairly and equitably”.

In this statement there was an attempt to address the fear of job security by addressing both sets of employees. While Bank A was already unionised, this did not satisfy the staff at Bank B and when asked about the main reasons for joining the union, some of the sentiments of those interviewed included, “…Sheer fear of loss of jobs, displacement and those close to retirement feared losing their benefits” (B: 04: INT). Another interviewee clearly stated, “The pending merger caused the mobilisation” (B: 02: INT). This statement about the merger causing the unionisation was supported by the management interviewee who said, “It was the merger that drove the unionisation. From the time the merger was announced the union started a more aggressive drive for unionisation” (B: 01: MINT). Yet another comment which explained why the staff changed their minds about the union was:

“The staff in CIBC was not interested in the union even when Barclays joined. Then came the merger and we were not sure how it was going to work with two big banks. The bank did not give any information, we were not sure why they were hiding the truth from us and this started to change things and how we felt about the union” (B: 03: FC).

The main reason for the staff in Bank B joining the union was job insecurity which was similar to Bank A, except in this case there was a merger and not a sale. This caused staff in both entities to compare terms and conditions between the two companies.
Although Bank B had the major stake in the merger, the staff still felt disadvantaged, as this quote implies: “We were a younger set of employees than those at Barclays and job security was important to us, a lot of us would not have pensions if we had to go home” (B: 02: INT).

As far as the employees of Bank B were concerned they were not getting enough information about what was happening with the merger. This complaint was similar to Bank A where there was a feeling that management was not telling all they knew and if they were, the staff did not trust them. Expressed this way:

“There was a lot of uncertainty in terms of jobs when the merger was announced. People were not sure about what was going on and you really could not get any answers to a lot of questions. The communication was quite vague so we decided to get together so that we would be one body” (B: 03: INT).

Fear for jobs played a major role in the mobilisation of staff in Bank B to unionise. Here this interviewee articulates this fear: “There was uncertainty in terms of jobs and benefits” (B: 05: INT). The lack of clarity in communication about the status of the merger caused the ‘getting together’ of staff and the beginning of mobilisation. The staff had a common cause and felt a need to do something about it. Although the BWU had approached them before, this is what was said:

“The bank had been approached by the union years before this unionisation and from time to time [since], but it never materialized.
However, on this occasion we received a note from the chairman saying ‘it was business as usual’ and to ‘ignore the rumours’. We then felt positive at the time that the merger was going to take place so we started to galvanise the process” (B: 02: INT).

The getting together was part of the mobilisation and the employees in Bank B were now ready to unionise. Bronfenbrenner (2003) spoke about the need for employees to be “ready to unionise” as critical to unionisation. The fact that the union had previously approached this bank reinforces the point that the union did have a top-down strategy; however, having only a top-down approach did not result in unionisation initially.

There were complaints during the focus group session that the communication staff was receiving from Bank B was vague, and they could not find out what was the true status of the merger. Meanwhile there was an article in the Daily Nation about the ‘sick out’ at the CIBC bank which resulted from the delay in the company recognising the BWU. The article read: “This has not gone down well with staff that canvassed for support of the sick-out on Thursday” (Daily Nation, 9 March, 2002). This ‘sick out’ took place in the same week when the two banks were meeting to determine: “…the kind of severance payments to be received, conditions for pension and acquisition of shares…” (Daily Nation, 9 March, 2002). A comment from the focus group session indicated the following: “It appeared the bank was delaying the recognition of the union. We wanted to show them that we were serious so we went around to all the branches and got support for a sick out so they had no doubt about us joining the union” (B: 03: FC).
This action by the staff showed that their choice was for ‘indirect voice’ through the BWU over the direct voice with the employer. In a response merger document from the bank of 2 June, 2003, titled “Announcing the First Caribbean Redeployment Programme” the following was said: “Creating First Caribbean will involve restructuring our business, with changes to both what we do, and how we do it. As a result some jobs will change, some new jobs will be created and some jobs will no longer be needed” (Merger document, 2 June, 2003). The bank was signalling the way it was going to handle the staffing issue. This came after both Banks A and B were unionised. The message about jobs before unionisation was not specific in terms of job loss. This message, however, indicated the possibility of job losses among all the staff. At Bank E there was also an issue with job security resulting from the rumour about the sale of the bank.

Bank E was a Barbadian-owned bank at the time when it was acquired by a Bermudian bank in 2003. During interviews and focus groups with shop stewards they revealed that they initially heard about the sale of the bank from customers. They said there was constant talk about the sale of the bank which caused them to be worried. Although the union had approached them before about mobilisation they felt it was in their interest this time to join since they were worried about jobs. The shop stewards spoke about staff being afraid of losing their jobs more so than being afraid of management during mobilisation. One activist explained how staff felt: “People were very concerned about their jobs. Most people wanted to make sure they kept their jobs but if they did not, they wanted the best severance package they could get” (E: O4: INT).
As far as staff were concerned they believed the bank was going to be sold and therefore they wanted representation, put bluntly in this quote: “The bank was to be sold and staff wanted representation to secure jobs” (E: 03: INT). The concern about job security in Bank E was confirmed by the management interviewee who said, “The uncertainty about the bank’s future caused the staff to join the union. The staff felt unity was strength” (E: 01: MINT). This concern about jobs in Bank E was similar to that in Banks A and B where a sale and a merger took place. Also similar here is that management claimed that they did not know what was going on and did not have much information about what was happening in terms of the sale of the bank. This interviewee explained how they felt, “There was a lot of talk about the sale of the bank. Management claimed they did not know anything about it. People started getting worried about their jobs” (E: 02: INT).

The focus group session also highlighted the same sentiments: “The big fear in the bank was jobs. Staff was very afraid of losing their jobs. We were getting information from customers and people outside the bank and not from the management” (E: 02: FC). In the interview with the management representative this was said, “The bank did not do enough in terms of communicating the status of the sale of the bank to staff” (E: 01: MINT). The mobilising group in Bank E used the sale of the bank as their public relations message, to which the following quote speaks: “Mutual [Bank] was going to sell the bank and that clinched the whole thing. People wanted representation to secure their jobs” (E: 03: INT).

Bank C had a different issue relating to job security. Their issue was not one associated with a merger/acquisition or sale but what the staff saw as management’s unilateral
dismissal of staff without using ‘due process’. They felt this created a sense of insecurity since according to them, “…it was happening too often” (C: 01: INT). The bank was for sale and they said they were pleased at the prospect of a new owner since they felt things could only get better. Bank C had experienced a number of mergers and this can be seen at appendix 1, table 1. The main issue at this bank was the lack of grievance resolution mechanism and one activist spoke to this and said: “There was no one to complain to. It was left up to management to do whatever and you had no one to complain to. Managers managed by fear of dismissals” (C: 01: INT).

The sense of not being given a fair hearing and having to accept the decisions of management was driving the need for a third party and a grievance resolution procedure, as this quote highlights: “People were dismissed too often and no one knew why, it was management’s way or the highway” (C: 02: INT). As another interviewee put it: “Management decided on all the issues. It was a matter of if you were liked by management then you would be favoured. If not there was no one to hear your case” (C: 01: FC).

The staff in Bank C wanted a third party to take their grievances to since they did not feel comfortable going to management alone, as this quote revealed: “Grievances were not dealt with; staff wanted some security when they had to go to management on issues” (C: 03: INT). The issue of fairness was also part of the issue in Bank C. There was a feeling that they were not being dealt with fairly, as this quote reveals: “We had to get the union to get a fair deal” (C: 04: INT).
The discussion above highlights the uncertainty as part of the globalized era because of changing terms and conditions which have formed part of employment contracts (Hellgren and Chirumblo 2003). Due to global competition, organisations have made changes to labour and as a result employees now face more uncertainty, or what has been seen as working environments with constant change (Bernston et al 2010: 215). Freeman and Medoff (1984) and Davis-Blake et al (2003) have indicated that because of the changes and the uncertainty in organisations, staff respond in a number of ways, including, “exit, voice, loyalty or neglect”. In the case of the staff in the commercial banks in Barbados they chose to stay and have ‘indirect voice’ though the BWU.

These feelings of job insecurity have also been linked to opportunities for trade unions to organise under these conditions of downsizing and restructuring (Blyton et al 1999a, 2001; Dolvik and Waddington 2002). White-collar workers mobilising for unionisation in current times have been concerned about job security and economic conditions and not class and status, which were highlighted in early white-collar unionisation (Lockwood 1958). In the case of Banks A, B and E job security was an employee demand taken to the union resulting from the unstable conditions of restructuring/reorganisation, mergers and acquisitions. In the case of Bank C the issue of job security was the result of the lack of any grievance resolution mechanism for dealing with employee grievances and specifically for this case, a fair disciplinary procedure to hear cases.

The point has also been made generally that employees who previously felt secure are feeling less secure and these included middle managers, among others (Heery and Salmon 2000), and this situation is predicted to continue in the future (Roukis 2005).
this scenario Heery and Salmon (2000) spoke about trade unions having ‘new prospects’. The BWU did have a new prospect under these conditions to unionise the banking sector in Barbados. Pay was also an employee demand that was identified during the interviews with the shop stewards.

5.3.2 Pay and Benefits

Pay was an employee demand that was identified in four banks: Banks A, B, C and E. This demand was used as an issue for activists to rally and mobilise. In Bank A it was a case of employees complaining about the erosion of benefits they already had, while in Bank B it became an issue with the merger of Bank A where it was felt that the salaries at Bank A were higher. The case of Banks C and E was one of not having standard policies to allocate pay and staff felt pay rates were allocated in a biased way.

In the case of Bank A, employees made a case for keeping the benefits that they had, especially pension and severance, since they believed there was an attempt to reduce these to government rates. One interviewee said this, “The bank was of the opinion that they could pay people government severance rates. Staff had a problem with the attempt to reduce benefits” (A: 01: INT). However, in both banks the staff wanted the best packages in case they had to be severed. Bank B had another issue of being paid less for the same jobs that existed in Bank A.

In Bank A the employees felt that management was going to reduce their monetary benefits, especially pensions and severance. Once the reality of the merger with Bank B was imminent, employees in Bank A started to agitate for provisions that would provide the best take home pension and severance package in case they were severed. One of
the Bank A shop stewards made these comments: “We found that terms and conditions were being eroded. They came to us and offered severance packages; we felt we needed to talk to the union about this” (A: 01: INT).

In the focus group session with Bank A this comment was made: “The bank finally came with the offer of severance packages which was part of reducing the staffing numbers. The staff did not trust the bank in the offers they were making and again we went to the union for help with getting the best for staff” (A: 04: FC). The BWU was very quick to seize the opportunity to tell the management of Bank A about remuneration in the case of severance and they said this: “The Union would like to revisit the current levels of remuneration regarding the voluntary separation package in light of the possible merger” (UN: 01: INT). The BWU had promised job security, however, failing this, they were ensuring that if there were separations that it would be at the best severance rates they could get for staff.

The union was, therefore, preparing for the next step if jobs were to be lost. On receipt of an eight page letter which detailed new terms and conditions of employment, there was concern about severance payments. The *Daily Nation*, 13 November, 2001 carried a story on Bank A titled, “Strike Threat”. The article outlined the reason for this threat as, “Disaffection with the eight-page letter which detailed terms and conditions of work for the merged Bank”, and went on to say that Bank A “…has about 375 employees and reports state that the 300 who are unionised are prepared to take industrial action.” It also indicated that the employees of Bank A said that with the merger they should be given the option of taking a severance package and quoted striking employees saying, “We really think Barclays is trying to avoid honouring its severance obligations” (*Daily
Nation, 13 November, 2001). This quote clearly indicated a level of mistrust about this issue and the reason why the staff felt they needed the union to articulate their position.

Staff in Bank B were beginning to feel insecure and as discussed in the section on job security they immediately started to galvanise the staff to mobilisation. Staff at Bank B also discovered that the staff at Bank A were getting significantly higher salaries. They claimed that they never knew this and never realised that such a wide gap had existed between the two banks in terms of pay for the same job. It is worth noting that by this time Bank A had been unionised for four years. This view was expressed by a Bank B interviewee: “The reason staff felt they should join the union was because they found out that there was a great disparity in the salaries and benefits of the Barclays and CIBC staff. Barclays staff were getting much more than CIBC and the two banks were merging, so why should the CIBC staff work for less” (B: 05: INT).

The feeling of inequity was compounded for Bank B staff when they had to sit and train Bank A staff that were being paid more for the same job and one shop steward from Bank B expressed his feelings in this quote:

“Barclays had special pensions and their salaries were higher. You would be sitting down next to somebody, doing the same job, as equals, but they would be getting twice the amount of pay. The bank was saying it was going to take months to harmonise the salaries” (B: 03: INT).

Although the bank promised an adjustment to harmonise the salaries, staff felt the projected time was too long. Bank B staff were also aware that the BWU had
negotiated for an increase in salaries for Bank A since being unionised and this widened the gap even further.

The sentiments were strong that the merger had caused a wide gap in salaries between the two banks and the staff in Bank B were not willing to wait a long time for the adjustment: “With the salaries and benefits Barclays had, there was a big disparity between Barclays and CIBC. What seemed unfair was the length of time the bank wanted to take to adjust the gap. Barclays also had fantastic pensions which we did not have” (B: 05: INT). They also recognised the BWU’s input in increasing the pay for Bank A by this comment: “The benefits Barclays were getting [were good] and the union had gone in and negotiated more for them. You could see what the union had negotiated for them since they joined and this made the gap wider” (B: 01: INT). Another interviewee was of a similar view and said this, “The union showed us what they got for the staff at Barclays and this was proof that we could get help from the union with our situation” (B: 03: FC). This, along with the job security issue, was taken up with the union since the staff at Bank B felt that this was a major issue which the union could help them resolve.

The other issue which the Bank B staff communicated was that they did not have as many years of service as Bank A staff and, therefore, their severance pay would have been less. Those close to retirement were worried about the quantum of pension payment they would be taking home and this meant that staff of all ages and length of service had concerns which amounted to the payment they were going to receive if they were severed or took early retirement. This interviewee expressed it this way: “Those close to retirement felt they might have to go home with small pension payments. So all
around, people were willing to sign up because of the fear of losing their jobs and benefits” (B: 03: INT). Widespread feelings of injustice were felt among staff and this became fertile ground for mobilisation. All staff had concerns of some kind regarding benefits in light of the uncertain conditions in Bank B.

While the employee demand for pay equity was external in the sense that it was between two merging banks, in Bank C it was internal. Employees were complaining that some workers were getting a higher rate of pay than those who were there before. There were also complaints that staff would come into the organisation to do the same job as the person training them and get the same pay or higher, as the following quote illustrates, “There was no system of assigning salaries. Someone just coming in could get the same salary as someone who was already there and doing the same job” (C: 05: INT). The idea of favouritism was also highlighted when this was said: “People were paid according to who they knew when they joined the organisation. Salaries were not dealt with in a consistent manner” (C: 03: INT). Interviewees also spoke about management favouring some staff, as said here: “If you were someone’s pet, management, then you would easily get promoted and get more money” (C: 02: INT).

In Bank C this inequity was the result of the difference in pay of staff hired to do the same job, as explained by this activist: “It was a matter of equity. Imagine that they brought in staff to do jobs and they were getting more money than other people who were already there in the same job” (C: 05: INT). Another interviewee noted that, “There was no fair approach to dealing with pay and this was the case with both existing and new staff. Staff were brought in and paid more than staff already in the jobs” (C: 01: FC). In the interviews and subsequently the focus groups it was revealed
that this was a case of inequity which they felt resulted from the lack of transparency in terms of hiring and firing procedures. The following was said: “In terms of salaries, people were being treated unfairly. People wanted equity across the board. You could not see how salaries were dealt with” (C: 01: INT). Another comment was: “Salary was a problem. The salaries were out of proportion. Two people doing the same job could get a different pay” (C: 04: INT).

There was a similar situation with pay equity in Bank E. In this case Bank E interviewees also felt there was a need for a grievance procedure, so that issues could go through a process where there was a third party involved. They felt the lack of transparent procedures governing these issues of pay, promotion and dismissal allowed management to do whatever they pleased. Evidence of this is highlighted by this comment: “Staff were dissatisfied with pay. There was a job evaluation exercise and when it was completed only some people, who were favoured, got increases. There were no discussions or meetings to say how some people got more than others” (E: 03: INT).

The complaints from the interviewees were about favouritism depending on who knew who, in terms of assigning pay. Staff felt the union could help to bring a fair approach to dealing with salaries. The comments generally were similar to this:

“One person would come in the bank and get paid one salary depending on who brought them in and the next day somebody coming for the same job could get a different salary. There were too many anomalies with respect to salaries. It was open to who knew who” (E: 02: INT).
Issues of injustice were presented as part of Kelly’s mobilisation theory where certain feelings of injustice are caused by management’s actions. The focus group session with the shop stewards in each of the four banks revealed that these feelings of injustice became feelings of the collective agency in each of the banks with this grievance. The issue of pay equity can also take a number of angles in terms of external and internal inequity. In Bank A it was a question of protecting and retaining what was already earned as a benefit, therefore, this was equity, in the sense of being equal, to what was already earned and expected. In the case of Bank B it was equity between the pay in Bank B and Bank A, which was comparison between two merging banks. This interviewee said, “The union showed the staff what they could get compared to if they were trying to get increases on their own from management” (B: 05: INT).

In the case of Banks C and E there was internal equity and comparison of pay, especially between new and existing staff. Employees in the case of Banks C and E felt that there were no pay procedures that were transparent and that pay was administered without a system, causing anomalies, as pointed out by the interviewees. This feeling of organisational injustice discussed in the demand for job security and pay equity will be continued in the discussion on employee voice, which staff wanted through the BWU to express the concerns of their contested agendas.

5.3.3 Need for Employee Voice

The need for employee voice through union representation was a demand of all the cases in this study. In three of the banks where there was a sale, merger and acquisition, staff were hearing from customers about the change and they felt they were not getting enough information from management, as was expressed here: “We decided that the
best thing to do was to go to the union since we were not sure what was going on. The best thing was to get the union to speak on our behalf" (A: 01: INT). This was one of the main reasons why the Bank A staff decided to go to the union, so that the union could pressure management for answers.

This type of employee voice through the trade union was defined as the ‘indirect voice’ according to Wilkinson et al (2004), however, this voice could also be ‘direct’. The interviews and focus groups with all the banks revealed that the employees wanted the ‘indirect voice’ through the BWU. During the mergers and acquisitions that took place in three of the banks, employees wanted to know what was happening, as expressed by this interviewee from Bank E: “Questions were asked about the sale and management said they did not know anything about any sale. We heard on the streets that the bank was for sale and we decided to go to the union for representation so we could find out what was going on” (E: 03: INT). This was similar to the cases of Banks A and B.

The sentiments of a Bank E interviewee about joining the union were, “I would say it was to have a voice. There were a number of things happening where a voice was needed. If you were aggressive maybe you could get your point across but most people were afraid to confront management” (E: 02: INT). The indirect voice needed here was also a means of protection, where employees could put their issues on the table with the protection from the union. The need for voice was to address job security in four of the banks, to ensure pay equity in three banks, and in two banks to have a grievance resolution mechanism. This comment from a shop steward in Bank D highlighted the need for another entity to assist: “We needed a third party, the union. We could not rely on management to look at the issues and deal with them fairly” (D: 01: INT). The
management representative for Bank D indicated that the employees of Bank D, “Joined the union because there was a push by the BWU to unionise them” (D: 02: MINT), although it was said that the union had tried on more than one occasion previously to unionise them. The indirect voice is what the bank employees were demanding to have through the BWU. The following is an extract from an interview with an activist in Bank C with regard to voice: “The staff wanted a voice, somebody other than management to look at the issues and determine a fair way of dealing with the issues of hiring and firing” (C: 02: INT).

The staff in the five banks saw the BWU as the interface with management. They needed some way of asking questions and getting their message across, as was expressed by this interviewee about the merger in Bank B: “The merger had everybody fearful and everybody wanted to join the union for help in dealing with management” (B: 03: INT). The staff in these banks wanted, “…an avenue to bring ‘contested issues’ to the table…” (Budd et al 2010: 305). These employees stayed and did not exit. According to Hirchman’s exit-voice-loyalty theory, employees who are dissatisfied could exit the organisation, however, in the case of these bank workers they decided to stay and present their ‘contested’ agenda (Wilkinson et al 2004) through the BWU as their voice.

The feeling among the bank staff in Barbados was that their queries were not being answered in the case of mergers and acquisitions and in the other two banks there was a feeling that they did not get a fair chance in terms of queries, grievances or disciplinary matters. There is an argument that trade unions are best for expressing workers’ voice about concerns and interests through voice (William et al 2006 in Lavelle et al 2010).
The BWU has always emphasised voice, as the Deputy General Secretary says here: “I have always sold voice to workers. You must be able to speak” (UN: 01: INT). The BWU handed out a letter in its campaign at RBC which was advertising voice by saying, “If you have a voice in the workplace you can speak on your own behalf. Joining a union gives you a voice”. When asked about reasons for staff joining the union, the BWU’s industrial relations officer responsible for organising the banks said:

“The employees in the banks needed a voice. During the mergers and acquisitions staff wanted to know what was going on. They needed a voice to find out about their status and to be able to ask questions of management. Even in banks where there were no mergers or acquisitions employees needed to get their issues across to management” (UN: 02: INT).

As he summed it up, “In most of the banks the employees needed a voice” (UN: 02: INT). The voice of the union in most cases does include the grievance resolution mechanism which the staff were agitating for in the case of Banks C and D. In each collective agreement where the BWU is the recognised union there is usually a grievance resolution and a disciplinary procedure. This need for voice started with the rank-and-file activists who initiated the bottom-up mobilisation process as small teams in each of the banks. This rank-and-file mobilisation and the role of the rank-and-file activists will be discussed next in terms of the activities and experiences in the unionisation process.
5.4 Rank-and-File Activists Propelling Mobilisation

There were reports from all the banks that the BWU had approached them to join the union on previous occasions. However, in none of the cases were these previous attempts successful. In the interview with the Deputy General Secretary he also indicated that the union had tried with the banks before but was not successful on the first or even after several attempts. In each of the mobilisation cases there were organisational conditions which resulted in objective factors used by rank-and-file for unionisation. As a result of this, in each case there were groups of employees, rank-and-file activists (or the ‘subjective factor’) which started the mobilisation by meeting in small groups to discuss concerns of staff and to strategise the way forward. The need for leadership at the workplace by activists to influence their colleagues was mentioned in the literature by Fosh (1993), Lopez (2004) and Moody (2007).

One activist from Bank E explained, “We mobilised ourselves. Staff were all geared up to go and we went around and got the numbers. We got some hints from the union officials” (E: 03: INT). This was mentioned by Stirling (2005) who spoke about the “role of workplace activists as leaders” (Stirling 2005: 51). A similar sentiment was proposed about small groups by Kelly (1998) and Gall (2003: 235) who spoke about “activists of different types”. The main purpose of the activists is to promote militancy in the campaign, as highlighted by many writers, including Voss and Sherman (2000). In this study, small groups of workers or activists within each of the banks brought this ‘subjective’ factor to bear by galvanising sufficient support for the mobilisation that followed from within the rank-and-file community.
In the discussion on job security, for example, many of the interview excerpts highlighted the insecurity in the different banks due to the reorganisation in Bank A. This led to this statement, “…we needed to protect ourselves” (A: 01: INT). In Bank B a similar statement sums this up: “…we decided to get together so that we would be one body” (B: 03: INT). In Bank C, “…staff wanted a voice, somebody other than management” (C: 02: INT). In Bank D this was said: “We needed a third party to bring a balance” (D: 01: INT). In Bank E the sentiment which highlights the galvanising was that, “…people wanted representation to secure jobs” (E: 03: INT). In each of these statements there is evidence of the need for some party other than management to protect, to give representation and security. The rank-and-file activists were framing the “contested” issues (Kelly 1998) and using them to propel the mobilisation.

In Bank A, the sentiment from the focus group was, “We found that terms and conditions were being eroded bit by bit, more and more taken away, we were not sure when it would stop…” (A: 04: FC). In each of the banks the activists used the objective factors to gain momentum for the mobilisation. In Bank B where there was comparison with Bank A salaries, this statement was popular in the focus group and influenced employees in the mobilising drive: “…there was a great disparity in the salaries and benefits between Barclays and CIBC…” (B: 03: FC). In the case of Bank C, internal equity drove the process, as evidenced by this comment: “…people wanted equity across the board” (C: 01: FC). Similarly in Bank E, the internal comparison of pay caused this response by the activist interviewed: “Things were all over the place, and there were too many anomalies…” (E: 02: FC).
The second organising officer from the union was asked about headquarters involvement in the mobilisation and he confirmed what was said by the shop stewards, explaining:

“The employees in the banking sector were at a higher intellectual level than those in manufacturing or agriculture so most of the strategies at the workplace were devised by the bank employees. The union held meetings every now and then, or as requested by the employees, but the employees did a lot of the strategising themselves. We laid out the boundaries and insisted that they understood they were employees first and foremost” (UN: 02: INT).

This seems to mirror the suggestion that Aronowitz (1998) made about workers organising themselves and not necessarily waiting for union officials. Also, the point was made by Darlington (2002) that workers engage in workplace mobilisation and are not just “passive recipients”. The strategising at the workplace included the creative strategies, the assignment of individuals who could mobilise specific departments and selection of activists who were strong enough individuals to mobilise without fear. There were also reports of networking among shop stewards of other banks, as said here: “We made contact through the union with shop stewards from the two banks that were already unionised so they could give us some ideas about how they went about their campaign” (C: 03: INT).

In the campaign with Bank E the following was said: “We got information from the shop stewards in the other banks that were already in the union. That helped us in
planning for our own campaign” (E: 04: INT). There was an example of rank-and-file activists devising a way to collect union dues without alerting management, as is explained here: “We set up a bank account to collect the union dues but it was in one person’s name so that management could not tell who had joined the union. The money would be collected and then passed to the union by one person” (E: 03: INT). This was the idea of these rank-and-file activists and had nothing to do with direction from union headquarters and is therefore an example of workplace tactics used.

The BWU did help with the setting up of the financial council, which was comprised of shop stewards from the banking sector who met on occasion to network and exchange experiences. The shop stewards of Bank D found that their experience with mobilising was more difficult when compared with the experiences of Bank A and Bank C, which were already unionised. The shop stewards of the banks which were already unionised did help those in the process of unionising and in two of the banks rank-and-file activists came from unionised banks and had previous experience with mobilising for recognition of the BWU. This concept of sharing experiences among the rank-and-file in the workplace context was noted to be useful because of the relationship between the activists and their rank-and-file colleagues and the exchange between them about the workplace issues (Darlington 2010).

The unionisation process at Bank A was not long and drawn out since this bank was already accustomed to trade unions in England and other Caribbean islands. It was, however, the first commercial bank to be unionised in Barbados and this did surprise some of the community inside and outside the bank. In an interview with one of the shop stewards the interviewee recalled a senior female staff member saying, “So the
staff are joining a cane cutters’ club.” This was how some of the staff saw the movement which first started with the staff below the management level and then extended in a second wave of mobilisation to include the management category. In addition to the propelling of the mobilisation the nature of this process was also important in terms of the experiences of the rank-and-file members.

5.5 The Nature of the Mobilisation Process

There were several critical elements of the mobilisation process which will be discussed that had implications for the rank-and-file activism. The unionisation process was unique in some banks but similar in others. The rank-and-file leaders were the ones on the ground dealing with the day to day issues which the staff were facing, which included fear, anxiety and conflict. The anxiety, fear and conflict experienced by rank-and-file, especially those who lead mobilisation processes, is well documented. The leading mobilising teams discussed how some staff wanted to sign up but were afraid that management would find out. Some of these experiences have been highlighted as obstacles to the unionisation process (Weiler 1983; Freeman 1985; Bronfenbrenner 1994; Hurd and Uehlein 1994).

There were anti-union tactics, especially in Banks B and D, and to a lesser extent Banks A, C and E. The issues of fear, anxiety and conflict in the process and anti-union tactics will be discussed below to answer part of the second objective of this study, which was to determine the extent to which rank-and-file activists were engaged in rank-and-file unionism and in this regard to examine the nature of the unionisation process. Part of this was discussed in the last section; however, this section will discuss how the relations were affected by the process of unionisation.
5.5.1 Fear, Anxiety and Conflict in the Mobilisation Process

In all the cases examined in this study some element of fear was experienced by those mobilising at the workplace. While Bank A, for example, did not report anti-union tactics or open resistance to the mobilisation process, there was still fear and there was a report by the chief activist in Bank A, whose recollection was: “This guy approached my desk and his hand started shaking so bad as he tried to take the union form from his pocket that I told him to go and come back another time” (A: 05: INT). Also in Bank A there were subtle comments from managers who were not in favour of the unionisation and questioning of staff who were suspected of joining the union.

In Bank D interviews revealed the fear staff felt was part of the reason for the long mobilisation process. Explained this way: “Staff was afraid of management and did not want to be seen associating with those who they suspected were the ring leaders. People were afraid supervisors would find out they were joining the union” (D: 04: INT). Another interviewee said: “Staff was thinking about what they would lose in terms of promotion and some had mortgages to pay and children to support in university. They did not want to get into trouble with management” (D: 03: INT). These examples of fear and conflict in the process highlight the ‘closeness and shared experience’ which the rank-and-file activists had by interacting with their colleagues, which would not be the experience of the union officials as discussed by Darlington (2010). The fear experienced by employees during mobilisation questions the freedom and right to join trade unions given by ILO Conventions 87 and 98, since employees were fearful and anxious during the process of exercising this right and freedom.
In Bank A the activists felt that while management did not openly scare the employees, some people were fearful of management finding out about their joining the union. In Bank B the activists spoke about going to union meetings and being afraid of the media taking pictures of them, in case they ended up in the newspaper. They said people were hesitant to sit in the front seats at the union headquarters, which is indicated by this quote: “I was afraid like others of sitting in the front row during the union meetings. I did not want my picture to end up in the newspaper for management to see” (B: 03: INT). This interviewee went on to say she did not want to be marked by management as a “union person”.

Bank D was the extreme of all the cases. Constant conflict was reported because of the lack of trust among the rank-and-file and it was said that, “Everything went back to management” (D: 01: INT). There was also a feeling by the activists in Bank D that staff seemed not to be interested in their own rights. In this case of mobilisation there was a lot of fear reported and this was because people felt they had too much to lose in terms of promotion and they had financial responsibilities such as mortgages and support for children in university. One interviewee said this, “Staff were thinking that they would lose out on promotional opportunities…They did not want to rock the boat” (D: 03: INT). There were also reports of union-busting tactics in some banks.

5.5.2 Anti-Union Tactics

Anti-union tactics were reported to some extent in all the banks, however, more so in Banks B and D. In the case of Bank A, the report was about the main activist being seated in a strategic way so that the supervisor could see him at all times. This was reported about a seating arrangement designed to reduce communication between an
activist and co-workers: “They gave me a job in the back office away from most of the staff and my desk was placed where the supervisor could see me and everybody coming to me” (A: 05: INT). This was the lead activist in Bank A speaking and he felt management was subtly trying to limit his ability to communicate union business with his workmates. Generally, the report was that the process in Bank A was not difficult and in the words of one interviewee, “Management just wanted the process over so we could get on with work. They did not really try to stop it” (A: 01: INT). This may also be due to the fact that Bank A was already unionised for some time in England and in the Caribbean, in Antigua and other countries.

Bank B’s activists reported anti-union tactics which included the head office in Canada sending down messages immediately after union meetings. As reported here by an interviewee: “Every time we had a union meeting before you could get back to your desk there was an e-mail which was speaking about what the bank was going to do for employees. Usually it was obvious that someone told them what was said in the meeting” (B: 03: INT). Bank B, unlike Bank A, was not unionised in Canada and unionisation was going to be a new experience for the CIBC Bank. There was not an open style of union-busting tactics, but it was noticed by staff. In terms of Bank C there were reports of questioning by the management about whether there was a move to organise and one case where it was believed that one person was promoted out of the ranks being mobilised. The process was reported to be very quick in Bank C, and that most of the staff, which included supervisors, signed up quickly and without fear. Although most of the interviewees said the process in Bank C was “top secret”, the following was said by an interviewee: “Management got the news from somewhere that
the staff were talking to the union and they tried to find out from a few people and we suspect that they promoted one person as a result of that” (C: 02: INT).

In Bank D, however, the interviews revealed a very long and difficult process filled with conflict. The Deputy General Secretary said the following about the unionisation process in Bank D: “This one was a difficult one. It went on for a very long time”. Bank C started mobilisation after Bank D had started but became unionised before Bank D. This mobilisation process in Bank D was reported as one in which there was low trust since the activists believed that the mobilising tactics were being relayed back to management and they were constantly being undermined. This quote describes the situation: “There were persons who were always taking everything back to management. Every time we met management knew everything. The situation was bad” (D: 01: INT). Any gathering away from work stations in Bank D was met with suspicion by management that staff were strategising for the union, which the following comment bears out: “Once any more than one staff member was at the water cooler that was met with suspicion by management as to the discussion that was taking place among employees” (D: 05: FC).

There were also reports of management promoting staff out of the proposed bargaining unit so as to reduce the numbers of potential members for unionisation. The shop stewards believed other subtle hints about job security from supervisory staff were attempts to discourage persons from joining the union. For example, there were comments from supervisors and according to this interviewee, “You have to remember you have a mortgage to pay” (D: 03: INT). This approach of discouraging union
members was described as a way of discouraging those employees who were not sure about unionisation by highlighting the risk involved (Bronfenbrenner et al 1998).

The second union officer who helped with this organisation said this about Bank D: “The profile of the employees in Scotia Bank was that they were mature employees with mortgages to pay so they were reluctant to get involved with the union” (UN: 02: INT). It must be noted that the same profile of mature staff existed in Bank A at the time of unionisation. At the focus group meeting it was revealed that colleagues were signed up one by one when they had an individual grievance, as said here: “We signed up members when they had an issue with their supervisor. That was how we got our members” (D: 01: INT). Kelly’s (1998) mobilisation theory argues that “collective interest” will result in “collective organisation and action” (Kelly 1998: 29). In the case of Bank D it took a longer time getting to the collective state because there were individual grievances which eventually were framed in a collective way. Kelly’s theory points to the need for commonality in purpose among employees in reaching the collective state for mobilisation.

There were a few differences in the case studies which should be reported. For example, job security was not an issue in Bank D. When the interviewees were asked if they were experiencing feelings of job insecurity that would have led them to mobilise they made it clear that job security was not an issue, as this comment highlights: “We did not feel insecure about our jobs but we had a problem with how management dealt with the issues since there were no set procedures for dealing with grievances” (D: 04: INT). This could be explained by the fact there was no acquisition, sale, merger or any one crisis issue common to most staff. Bank D is the only commercial bank to date that has
not changed ownership through acquisition, merger, or sale. Also, during the time of mobilisation this bank did not go through any restructuring or organising. The length of time to unionise Bank D and the nature of the process was also significantly different from the other cases.

5.6 Conclusion

The discussions in this chapter have examined the workplace mobilisation of white-collar workers in the five commercial banks. The findings show that objective factors which were evident after conditions of mergers and acquisitions and the subjective factor, the activists, were critical for collective action and unionisation. The objective factors which included job security, pay equity, need for employee voice and a grievance resolution procedure, were used by the rank-and-file activists to propel the mobilisation in these banks. The findings have shown that along with the conditions conducive to mobilisation both the objective and subjective factors were critical in the process.

The evidence of how the objective and subjective factors worked together in these cases supports Kelly’s mobilisation theory about conditions which are conducive to mobilisation and the transition of individual grievances to a collective state by workplace activists who frame the issues. It shows that once there are conditions conducive to mobilisation and grievances which are identified by workplace activists that mobilisation is likely. The findings also revealed a closeness of the activists to their rank-and-file colleagues, mentioned by Darlington (2010), which was unique to them and not the same with the union officials.
This chapter indicates that there must be an objective factor or factors that cause workers to mobilise. In the early white collar unionisation it was class, however, in this study job security was the main objective factor which caused mobilisation in four of the banks. The issue of ‘voice’ was relevant in all the cases and the staff wanted the BWU to represent them as their indirect voice. This representation was for similar reasons in some cases, though some were different.

From preliminary reports to date there have been no grievances presented to the union from RBC staff. The leaflet given to the staff of RBC by the BWU shortly after the merger with Bank C highlighted comments of the shop stewards in the other unionised banks about the positives of unionisation with the BWU. It also spoke about what the BWU demanded and included: job security, enhanced terms and conditions, improved compensation and benefits, among others. Reports are that when these leaflets were distributed at RBC, management immediately called a meeting with the staff to find out if they had any grievances and how they could be addressed. Yet the union is adamant that a campaign is on-going, and the Deputy General Secretary said this in an interview: “We will continue to campaign at Royal Bank and wait for the right opportunity” (UN: 01: INT).

Taken together the evidence from this chapter has highlighted the need for the rank-and-file activists to support the top-down approach to mobilise. Although conditions were present which were conducive to mobilisation, this only started after activists identified and framed the objective factors at the workplace. The objective factors evident in these cases were about job security and economics, unlike in the early unionisation of white-collar workers where the main objective factor was class. Chapter six presents the
conclusion of this study with a summary of the findings and implications for theory and practice. It discusses the contributions to research, outlines the limitations of the study and presents suggestions for future research.
Chapter 6 - Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This thesis has examined how top-down and bottom-up approaches can explain recruitment and recognition of white-collar workers in the commercial banking sector in Barbados from 1997 to present. It makes a contribution to the debates about top-down and bottom-up approaches and in particular a more in-depth understanding of the theory of workplace mobilisation. Based on the findings it is apparent that the BWU targeted white-collar workers in the banking sector for recruitment and recognition from the late 1980s, however, this initial top-down approach was not successful until there were workplace dimensions working together to result in bottom-up mobilisation. Conditions of mergers and acquisitions in the banking sector resulted in grievances which included job security, pay equity, lack of grievance procedure and need for voice. Subsequently, white-collar workers in the commercial banks approached the BWU for representation and this bottom-up mobilisation then supported the top-down attempt by the BWU to mobilise. In this chapter a summary will be presented of the main findings of the research, and implications for theory and practice. The contribution of this study to existing research, limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

6.2 Summary of Findings

The main findings of this study presented in this section are as follows:
i. The top-down approach by the BWU did not result in mobilisation by itself, instead when the bottom-up approach supported the top-down approach this resulted in successful recruitment and recognition campaigns;

ii. Conditions resulting from management’s action and conducive to mobilisation were present in all the banks, including the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), which is still not unionised;

iii. Roles of the BWU officials were mainly to provide guidance and decision making using the governance of the BWU, which was bureaucratic in terms of rules relating to specific decisions;

iv. The BWU engaged in the OM during recruitment and recognition;

v. There was a strong link between the three dimensions of workplace mobilisation in all the banks that became unionised, which included the presence of conditions resulting from management’s actions, the identification of grievances or the objective factors and rank-and-file activists or the subjective factor, willing to mobilise;

vi. Partnership and Organising worked together in the context of the BWU organising in the banking sector.

These points will be discussed in greater detail below:

i. **The top-down approach by the BWU did not result in mobilisation by itself, instead when the bottom-up approach supported the top-down this resulted in successful recruitment and recognition campaigns**

The BWU had approached the white-collar workers in each of the commercial banks included in this research on a number of occasions before they became
unionised. The BWU used public relations messages to announce its intention to unionise the white-collar workers in the banks and led from above by influencing the social and political context for recruitment and recognition in Barbados. When the activists in each bank took their grievances to the union it was apparent that this bottom-up approach worked with the top-down approach to start the mobilisation for unionisation. Hickey et al (2010) spoke about the need for both top-down and bottom-up approaches to result in mobilisation. Willman (2001) and Lerner (2003) argued for unionisation from above while Voss (2010) highlighted the central top-down direction as key for unionisation and not just a dependency on rank-and-file activists.

However, this research has shown that the top-down approach did not by itself result in mobilisation without the bottom-up approach for support. Clawson (2003) has argued that the top-down approach is not sufficient to impact mobilisation and this was evident in all the cases in this research where the top-down approach did not start the mobilisation without the bottom-up request for representation. The results of the research also confirm this position and those of Early (2004) and Cohen (2006), that activists are more effective for workplace mobilisation. Having only a top-down or a bottom-up approach is not supported by the studies of Lopez (2004), Milkman (2006) and Hickey et al (2010), which found that both top-down and bottom-up approaches were critical for successful union campaigns and this is supported by the findings in this research.

Along with public relations messages the BWU’s top-down union campaign distributed flyers at the banks’ premises as a means of indicating their intention
to unionise. The research also indicated that the BWU influenced the external social, legal and political context in a top-down approach to facilitate recruitment and recognition in Barbados. Unlike similar cases in the UK, the BWU did not seek support for statutory regulations as highlighted by Gall (2010), instead the BWU lobbied against any attempt by government to introduce statutory recognition. Its objection to legalising the recognition process was presented by its Executive Council (BWU Annual Report 2008). To date this process remains a voluntary one in Barbados. Influencing political institutions was highlighted in the literature by Heery et al (2003), Frege and Kelly (2004) and Turner (2005) as part the revitalization of trade unions. The involvement of the BWU with various community groups was also part of the BWU’s top-down approach to creating a supportive environment for recruitment and recognition campaigns.

**ii. Conditions conducive to mobilisation were present in all the banks, including RBC which is still not unionised;**

The BWU tried to mobilise the commercial banks on several occasions without success. However, organisational conditions of restructuring/reorganising, mergers and acquisitions and lack of grievance resolution procedures subsequently provided conditions conducive to mobilisation. Conditions conducive to mobilisation were articulated by Kelly’s mobilisation theory as action on the part of management that results in employee grievances. This supports Kelly’s theory that conditions at the workplace must be seen by workers to be sufficiently common and unjust to result in identification of grievances and for rank-and-file activists to frame the issues for mobilisation.
These grievances were used in each case to start the bottom-up mobilisation. In the case of the RBC where there is an on-going top-down approach by the BWU and a merger, there still have been no bottom-up mobilisation efforts to date and no evidence of workplace activists contacting the BWU. The dependence articulated by Kelly (1998) and Darlington (2002) on the rank-and-file activist to frame workplace issues is lacking in the RBC case.

Martin (1999) also highlighted conditions conducive to mobilisation, although this study has shown that conditions conducive to mobilisation only present the opportunity for grievances to be identified and do not result in mobilisation unless these grievances are identified and articulated by activists. The RBC case also shows that even where there is a top-down attempt to unionise and a condition conducive to mobilisation there is need for grievances to be identified and rank-and-file activists to propel these for mobilisation.

The workplace dimensions, although articulated by both Kelly (1998) and Darlington (2002), were not presented in the literature in a way that showed the interconnection between these three bottom-up dimensions as necessary for workplace mobilisation to result. These three bottom-up dimensions include conditions conducive to mobilisation, grievances and the rank-and-file activists to mobilise. This study contributes to understanding these dimensions and how one depends on the other. For example, in the case of Bank D the mobilisation process was lengthy and this could be explained by the length of time rank-and-file activists took to articulate grievances which were sufficiently common to all staff to mobilise. Also of note is the RBC case where there is a condition which
is conducive to mobilisation (a merger) but there are no grievances or rank-and-file activists. In all the other cases the conditions conducive to mobilisation resulted in grievances which were then framed by the activists. In the case of early white-collar unionisation there were conditions which threatened the class and status of white-collar workers (Prandy et al 1983), and these became the grievances used by those workers for mobilisation.

iii. Roles of the BWU officials were mainly to provide guidance and decision making using the governance of the BWU, which was bureaucratic in terms of rules relating to specific decisions

The evidence in this study has shown that the extent of bureaucracy and democracy during recruitment and recognition was a result of what was allowed given the rules of the BWU. In their roles as union officials assisting with recruitment and recognition there were rules which had to be followed and certain decisions which were laid down by the governance of the BWU. For example, the BWU determined the right time to take the cases of unionisation to the Labour Department for recognition. Additionally, the decision about industrial action and when to go public at the workplace about union recruitment was highlighted up front as part of the decision making of the BWU’s head office.

BWU officials making critical decisions is what Voss (2010) refers to as central top-down direction being key in union strategy, and not just a dependence on activists at the workplace. However, union officials had to depend on feedback from workplace activists with regard to whether the total number of signed up
members was sufficient to meet the required ‘50% plus one’ quota, and input through rank-and-file activists from their colleagues regarding industrial action.

There was a level of collaboration between the rank-and-file activists and the head office union officials in determining the right time to approach the Labour Department for recognition. The union head office had to depend on the workplace knowledge of the activist to determine the level of support for recognition before the final decision to approach the bank or the Labour Department. This approach demonstrates links in the top-down and bottom-up approach and between the two levels of leadership, headquarters and workplace, as well as the difference in roles of the union officials and the workplace activists. It is recommended that in strategising for a recognition claim, leadership from union headquarters work with leadership at the workplace who would have intimate knowledge of the mobilisation process. This helped in determining the right time to approach the employer and the Labour Department for recognition.

Decisions about when to take industrial action was another aspect which ultimately was decided at union headquarters, though the rank-and-file had input and voting rights on the decision before it was finally decided on at headquarters. The union officials made it clear that this ultimately was their final decision; however, the rank-and-file activists and their colleagues had to agree and be fully supportive of any industrial action before a final decision.
iv. The BWU engaged in the OM during recruitment and recognition

The BWU was engaged in the OM during the recruitment process of the banks and the roles of the union officials and rank-and-file activists reflected this. The rank-and-file activists did most of the organising at the workplace and were responsible for bringing the mobilisation to a state of readiness in terms of numbers for unionisation, that is, making sure they had the required ‘50% plus one’ for recognition. The roles discussed in the OM literature for activists were similar to those exhibited in these cases, for example, recruiting, planning and organising at the workplace (Heery et al 2000; Fiorito 2004). Rank-and-file activists highlighted the main issues of injustice to the union in each case and were vital to starting the mobilisation, a phenomenon highlighted in the literature by Kelly (1998) and Darlington (2002). They also did the public relations at the workplace in light of the grievances identified in the cases and this was highlighted by Fairbrother et al (2007), who spoke about the role of rank-and-file activists framing the grievances of their colleagues as critical for workplace mobilisation. These activists mobilised by forming strategic teams to help with the support for unionisation. These actions are interpreted as rank-and-file activists taking a leadership role at the workplace for mobilisation.

v. There was a strong link between the three dimensions of workplace mobilisation in all the banks that became unionised, which included the presence of conditions resulting from management’s action and conducive to mobilisation, the identification of grievances or the objective factors and rank-and-file activists or the subjective factor, willing to mobilise;
Based on the findings of this research, job security was a key objective factor which was used to propel mobilisation of the white-collar workers in four of the banks. The other objective factors of significance in this study included pay equity, need for employee voice and lack of grievance resolution mechanism. In the early unionisation of white-collar workers the key objective factors were class and status (Lockwood 1958; Prandy et al 1983). In the non-unionised bank RBC, no issues of injustice have been framed into objective factors and no request for representation has been made to the BWU, although there was a merger, a condition that was conducive to mobilisation in the other banks.

Together, the evidence from the five cases, along with what can be gleaned from the top-down attempt to mobilise RBC, to date, suggest that having a top-down union strategy alone does not propel mobilisation at the workplace or secure recognition; however, success is likely when the bottom-up approach supports the top-down approach. Mobilisation from the bottom-up is activated when all three dimensions are working together: the conditions conducive to mobilisation, the objective factors or grievances and the subjective factor or activists willing to “frame” the grievances for mobilisation (Kelly 1998; Darlington 2002).

vi. Partnership and Organising worked together in the context of BWU organising in the banking sector in Barbados

Company partnership was used by the BWU as a strategy after the banks were unionised. Although Heery et al (2003) spoke about the conflict in using organising and partnership the BWU had a partnership agreement with two
banks after gaining recognition. The partnership agreement only referred to key aspects of the collective agreement, which included pensions, job security and redundancy pay. It could be concluded that since in these cases partnership was used as a strategy after recognition, the level of conflict in using both strategies would have been reduced. The partnership agreements were used by the union to reinforce issues which were negotiated in the first collective agreements. The experience with partnership in this study was different from that highlighted by Badigannavar and Kelly (2011) in the literature regarding the negative impact of partnership on potential members of the union and the conflict of using both organising and partnership. Heery (2002) spoke about the benefit of using a sequential approach to organising and partnership which the BWU seems to have adopted by gaining recognition before attempting the partnership.

Taking all evidence together it is clear that a multidimensional approach resulted in successful organising of the commercial banks in Barbados. To return to the question of how top-down and bottom-up approaches explain recruitment and recognition, evidence has shown in the cases researched that both approaches explain different dimensions of the campaigns. While the top-down approach by the BWU was instrumental in bringing awareness and influencing the social, political and legal context, the support from the bottom-up approach helped in mobilisation at the workplace. The top-down campaign currently underway to unionise the only non-unionised bank, RBC, was the same approach used initially by the BWU in the other five banks in this study.

The bottom-up approach was determined by three dimensions: the conditions at the workplace, the grievances or objective factors, and the rank-and-file activist willing to
mobilise, or the subjective factor. Objective factors were used by the rank-and-file activists in each case to propel mobilisation and unionisation. Together these dimensions resulted in the bottom-up mobilisation in a multidimensional way. The argument that both top-down and bottom-up approaches are necessary to support mobilisation is evident in the present union campaign to organise RBC, where there was a merger, a condition conducive to mobilisation; however, the objective and subjective factors have not emerged, to date, to support mobilisation.

6.3 General Implications for Theory and Practice

The findings outlined above have some implications for theory and practice in a number of areas, such as:

- **Consideration of Employee Demands at the Workplace**
  The evidence from this research indicates that the trade union movement has to take into consideration the conditions at the targeted workplace to determine employee grievances and the likelihood of workplace activists being willing to mobilise the campaign. For the trade union movement, mobilising campaigns have to be supported by a bottom-up approach at the workplace to be successful. The findings have shown that union strategy should incorporate employee demands and the workplace tactics in a holistic approach to unionisation campaigns.

- **Potential for a Unionisation Model**
  There is potential for the formulation of a model that incorporates top-down and bottom-up approaches in organising campaigns. However, it has to be flexible
to allow for specific contexts, taking into consideration the political, legal, social and cultural aspects for unionisation.

- **Management’s Awareness of their Organisational Context**

  From management’s perspective the study has shown that there is need for awareness of the state of their organisational context during conditions of merger/acquisitions, restructuring and reorganising and avenues for grievance resolution. This could be facilitated by giving timely information and seeking feedback through town hall meetings and employee surveys. For management, the study shows that during mergers and acquisitions the approach to communication must be timely and accurate so that workers know their status within the organisation. Where there are any of the above conditions it is likely that grievances could be framed for mobilisation. Where communication is absent then the likelihood of workers seeking representation through unionisation may be imminent. The evidence also shows that organisations need to pay attention to the perception of employees about organisational injustice resulting from management decisions. The implementation or adherence to grievance procedures could help this process.

### 6.4 Contributions to Research

This research contributes to the theories on how trade union top-down and bottom-up approaches could work together for successful unionisation, particularly the examination of the link between the three dimensions of workplace mobilisation. This contributes to a further understanding of this aspect of Kelly’s mobilisation theory. It also contributes to theories on how top-down and bottom-up theories are treated within
a particular context, in this case Barbados, and add to the literature about organising and
the OM.

In the bottom-up approach there were three dimensions which were critical and worked
together with the top-down approach to result in mobilisation. The conditions conducive
to mobilisation, or the objective factors, and the subjective factor were all necessary to
cause bottom-up mobilisation. Although Kelly (1998) did highlight the importance of
these in workplace mobilisation there was not enough emphasis on the link between
these three dimensions. This thesis contributes to the literature in terms of its findings
about the interconnection between these three dimensions to result in workplace or
bottom-up mobilisation. The RBC case supports the importance of having a link
between these dimensions, which was also observed in the other cases.

6.5 Study Limitations

One limitation of this study is that the context specific findings in this research are
related to Barbados, though these findings do fill a country specific gap in the literature.
This makes the findings limited to Barbados and not readily transferable unless the
legal, political, historical, union and social conditions of the country being considered
are very similar to Barbados. While the question looked at unionisation of the
commercial banks, the case of RBC was not treated with the same rigour of
investigation as the other cases. This bank is not yet unionised and there were no shop
stewards who could be used as a sample in a similar way to the other cases. The
preliminary information provided on RBC, however, strengthens the argument of the
need for the three workplace dimensions to result in the bottom-up mobilisation.
One other limitation of this study was that there was no examination of bureaucracy or democracy after the point of recognition, therefore this study could not say whether the BWU was bureaucratic in its relations with the rank-and-file members after this point. These two aspects were only examined in the decision making process up to the point of recognition.

6.6 Suggestions for Future Research

Further research could be conducted on the link between the headquarters union strategy and the shop floor mobilisation, or top-down and bottom-up approaches, to establish how and at what point the two strategies should merge or diverge. Another area for further research is the leadership role of the rank-and-file activists versus the union officials during mobilisation.

6.7 Final Conclusions

The study shows that a one dimensional approach to unionising workers is not likely to be a successful strategy. What would be more strategic for trade union renewal in terms of membership numbers is an approach that embraces top-down and bottom-up union approaches. The top-down strategy, along with the three workplace dimensions, particularly the workplace activists in transforming demands to a collective state, helped in the explanation of recruitment and recognition in these banks. In this multidimensional way, the BWU would be better positioned to organise and increase its membership numbers. The study has shown that both top-down and bottom-up dimensions explain the unionisation, in different ways, in all five cases. The current unionisation drive to unionise RBC, to date, shows that although the top-down strategy
is in place and the condition of the merger exists, there is need for “objective” factors and the “subjective” factor to galvanise mobilisation at the workplace in support of the top-down union strategy.

The point was made that, “…the methods used in any given organising campaign depend on a whole host of factors and no strategy or prefabricated set of strategies…success of any particular organising strategy will depend on the union, the employer and the workers being organised” (Hickey et al 2010: 75). The top-down strategy to unionise RBC continues; however, the findings in this study show that there is need for the bottom-up approach to support this top-down attempt to result in mobilisation for recruitment and recognition at RBC.
### Appendix 1

**Table 1: Commercial Banks Unionised from 1997 - Present**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Banks</th>
<th>Date of Establishment</th>
<th>Nationality Present Owner</th>
<th>Nationality Previous Owner</th>
<th>Date of merger/sale /acquisition</th>
<th>Date of Unionisation</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bank A</td>
<td>1837</td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Merged with Bank B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank B</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Merged with Bank A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank D</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Never sold Never merged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 2 - Consent Form Used to Obtain Permission to Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSENT FORM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NAME OF RESEARCHER:</strong> JASMINE IANTHI BABB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **HOME ADDRESS:** 89 GRAEME HALL PARK  
CHRIST CHURCH  
BARBADOS |
| **CONTACT NUMBERS:** 246-437-0408 (h) 246-234-1657(C) |
| **WORK ADDRESS:** UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES  
OPEN CAMPUS  
CAVE HILL  
BARBADOS |

### AIM OF RESEARCH:
This research aims to find out about the top and bottom approaches used during recruitment and recognition of the commercial banks in Barbados from 1997 to present.

### PURPOSE OF RESEARCH:
Partial requirement for a Doctoral qualification.

### PARTICIPANT’S CONTRIBUTION:
It is expected that participants will be interviewed individually about various aspects of the recruitment and recognition processes. All participants will be able to verify the transcribed interviews.

### THE RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:
The consent form is not a contract; therefore, a participant can withdraw at anytime.

### CONFIDENTIALITY
The information collected will be kept secure by being password protected.

Signature of Participant:
Date:

Signature of Researcher:
Date:
Appendix 3 - Schedule of Interviews

### TABLE 3A: SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEWS WITH SHOP STEWARDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Bank</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09.06.28</td>
<td>1hr.30mins</td>
<td>Interviewee’s home</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A:01:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.08.07</td>
<td>1hr</td>
<td>Researcher’s home</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C:01:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.08.08</td>
<td>1hr.06mins</td>
<td>Researcher’s home</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C:02:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.09.09</td>
<td>1hr.10mins</td>
<td>Office of Researcher</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A:02:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.09.14</td>
<td>1hr.30mins</td>
<td>Interviewee’s home</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A:03:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.01.02</td>
<td>1hr. 30mins</td>
<td>Interviewee’s home</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D:01:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.01.13</td>
<td>1hr.10mins</td>
<td>Researcher’s home</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C:03:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.01.13</td>
<td>1hr.04 mins</td>
<td>Researcher’s home</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C:04:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.01.15</td>
<td>1hr</td>
<td>Researcher’s home</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C:05:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.01.16</td>
<td>1hr. 10 mins</td>
<td>Interviewee’s home</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D:02:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.01.21</td>
<td>1hr.15mins</td>
<td>Interviewee’s home</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E:01:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.01.23</td>
<td>1hr.05 mins</td>
<td>Interviewee’s home</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D:03:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.01.24</td>
<td>1hr.12 mins</td>
<td>Interviewees home</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E:02:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.01.28</td>
<td>1hr.15 mins</td>
<td>Researcher’s home</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D:04:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.01.29</td>
<td>1hr</td>
<td>Researcher’s home</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B:01:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.01.29</td>
<td>1hr.10mins</td>
<td>Researcher’s home</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B:02:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.01.31</td>
<td>1hr.12 mins</td>
<td>Researcher’s home</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E:03:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.01.30</td>
<td>1hr 10 mins</td>
<td>Researcher’s home</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B:03:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.01.30</td>
<td>1hr 05 mins</td>
<td>Interviewee’s home</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B:04:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.02.06</td>
<td>1 hr10mins</td>
<td>Interviewee’s home</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E:04:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.02.20</td>
<td>1hr 10 mins</td>
<td>Researcher home</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E:05:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.03.06</td>
<td>1hr 12mins</td>
<td>Interviewee’s home</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A:04:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.03.07</td>
<td>1hr 15</td>
<td>Researcher’s home</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A:05:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.03.17</td>
<td>1hr</td>
<td>Interviewee’s office</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B:05:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.03.19</td>
<td>1hr</td>
<td>Researcher’s home</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D:05:INT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 3B: SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEWS WITH BANK MANAGERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Bank</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26. 09.06.29</td>
<td>1hr</td>
<td>Interviewee’s home</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C:01:MINT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. 09.09.03</td>
<td>1hr</td>
<td>Interviewee’s office</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A:01:MINT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. 09.11.13</td>
<td>1hr.10</td>
<td>Interviewee’s office</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B:01:MINT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. 10.01.02</td>
<td>1hr.12mins</td>
<td>Researcher’s home</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D:02:MINT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. 10.01.08</td>
<td>1hr.10 mins</td>
<td>Interviewee’s home</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E:01:MINT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 3C: SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEWS WITH UNION OFFICIALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Bank</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31. 09.12.02</td>
<td>2hrs</td>
<td>Union Headquarters</td>
<td>UN</td>
<td>UN:01:INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. 10.01.05</td>
<td>2hrs</td>
<td>Interviewee’s workplace</td>
<td>UN</td>
<td>UN:02:INT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 3D: SCHEDULE OF FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Bank</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33. 03.03.10</td>
<td>3hrs</td>
<td>Researcher’s home</td>
<td>Bank C</td>
<td>C:01:FC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. 10.04.10</td>
<td>3.5 hrs</td>
<td>Researcher’s home</td>
<td>Bank E</td>
<td>E:02:FC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. 24.04.10</td>
<td>4hrs</td>
<td>Researcher’s home</td>
<td>Bank B</td>
<td>B:03:FC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. 08.05.10</td>
<td>3.5hrs</td>
<td>Researcher’s home</td>
<td>Bank A</td>
<td>A:04:FC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. 05.06.10</td>
<td>3.5hrs</td>
<td>Researcher’s home</td>
<td>Bank D</td>
<td>D:05:FC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4 - Questions Used in In-depth Interviews with Workplace Activists,  
Union Officials, Bank Managers and Focus Groups

Appendix- 4A. Questions used in interviews with Workplace Activists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What were the issues at the time of mobilisation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many staff members were affected by these issues?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When and how did you first have contact with the BWU?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did the mobilisation start in your bank?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what way did you get guidance from the BWU?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What level of control did you have over the day-to-day tactics you used in the workplace to mobilise?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How was the decision making shared between union headquarters and rank-and-file activists?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were plans approved for action in the workplace or at union headquarters or was there a mix?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What type of decisions did you make at the workplace level?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What issue/issues did you use to propel mobilisation at the workplace?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were the relations like between you and your colleagues?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you include your fellow colleagues in the decision making?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What guidance and direction did you get from the union leaders?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What help; if any did you get from other activists in banks that were already unionised?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was management's reaction to the unionisation drive?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was their reaction to the recruitment drive?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you determine which grievances should be pursued collectively?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did the union leadership influence the mobilisation process?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who decided on industrial action? What type of industrial action did you engage in?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What level of control did you have over the decisions you made at the workplace?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who decided when it was time to go to the bank and or the labour department for recognition?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4B - Questions for Union Officials of the BWU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why did you target the banking sector for recruitment and recognition?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were the tactics and strategies used in unionising the banking sector?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did the union plan initially for the organising campaign in the banks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How were your decisions made? At what point did they involve rank-and-file activists?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were the grievances brought to the union which caused mobilisation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was the dissatisfaction communicated by the bank workers who wanted to join the BWU?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What role would you say you played in helping the activists to plan for mobilisation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which decisions would you say were made by the union activists and which were made by the union?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What role did the activists play in the mobilisation drive at the workplace?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was the extent of your guidance and direction?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How was the decision made for industrial action and what was your involvement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did your leadership encourage mobilisation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What strategy is being used to unionise the last bank?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the nature of this union drive and how does it compare to the previous campaigns in the other commercial banks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When and who made the decision to go to the company and the labour department to make the claim for recognition?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond the context of the banks, what approaches did you use to facilitate organising at the banks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was the nature of the campaigns in the different banks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you decide on industrial action? Who made the decision, the BWU or members?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Probe) - Did you have full support for industrial action?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What autonomy did you give to the activists at the workplace?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which activities did activists have authority to make decisions on?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you engage in the Organising Model? If so, what aspects?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is servicing to be done only by union officials or also rank-and-file?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the partnership approach used by the BWU? What role did the union play in this from the top-down? Was there input from bottom up? To what extent?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 4C - Questions Used in Interviews with Bank Managers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How did management find out about the mobilisation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When you became aware of the mobilisation drive, how did the management respond?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you believe was the issue/issues which caused the mobilisation at your bank?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think had changed in the bank that resulted in the employees wanting representation from the BWU?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you describe the relations between staff and management in the bank at the time of this mobilisation drive?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did management communicate with the employees regarding the merger/ sale/ acquisition?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you decide what to communicate and when?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who brought the claim for recognition to the bank’s management?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did the bank respond to the claim for recognition?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you think the union was interested in recruiting bank workers?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Appendix 4D - Questions Used in Focus Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When was the first time you had contact with the BWU?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why did you go to the BWU for representation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What grievances did you take to the BWU?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why were these grievances taken to the BWU?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were the issue/ issues that were propelling unionisation at the workplace?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were the grievances individual or collective?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What role did the workplace activists play in the mobilisation process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent did you rely on union headquarters to plan and make decisions about the mobilisation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What concerns did your colleagues have about the mobilisation process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you go about getting your colleagues to sign up for union membership?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What activities did you have control over during the mobilisation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you make decisions about industrial action? If yes, how did you plan for it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you make decisions at the workplace level? How much did you consult with your colleagues before the final decision?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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