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To What Extent Does the Ideological Construct of Collectivism Continue to Govern the British Trade Union and Labour Movement?

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Abstract
This project addresses the issue of declining collectivism within the British labour movement. This paper will argue that recent changes in the structures of capitalism – such as flexible labour markets, belligerent state relations and private sector expansion – have successfully individualised the functionality of the labour movement. As a result of these developments the ability for trade unions to develop a collectivist social identity has been hindered, leading them to apply increasingly individualised strategies. Similarly, due to these changes, the British Labour Party has altered its traditional collectivist position leading to an erosion of the party-union relationship. Data has been drawn from secondary research accompanied by qualitative interviews to assess participants' understanding of an ideological shift. It is concluded that trade unions will need to apply the dimensions of collectivism to a supply side environment by devolving democratic procedures and increasing democratic participation to modernise their activity.

Keywords: Collectivism, Individualism, Neoliberalism, Trade Union, Labour Movement, Labour Party, Ideology.

Introduction

The Industrial Revolution marked an abrupt change in the advancement of capitalism. It began to highlight underlying contradictions that developed within the system, namely, the formation of an industrial working-class. The expansion of various factories allowed workers to organise into trade unions where they could present their interests collectively (Kelly, 1988; Swain, 2012). The most exceptional case of labour organisation occurred in Britain where by the late nineteenth century they had successfully achieved legal status (Hobsbawm, 1994; p. 121). Though the trade union movement never developed a cohesive ideology *per se* (Allen, 1956), it was governed by the overarching constructs of collectivism and social justice. Coinciding with political recognition, trade unions sought representation within the parliamentary system. They were first accommodated by the long standing Conservative and Liberal parties who had harnessed the vote of a newly expanded working-class electorate (Laybourn, 2000). The Taff Vale Case (1900 – 1901) proved a turning point and altered this relationship. After a House of Lords ruling made trade unions liable for legal damages during a strike, calls for independent labour representation in parliament gained urgency (Adelman, 1996; p. 32). These concerns were harnessed by the Labour Representation Committee – which would go on to become the modern day Labour Party – who promised to work with the trade unions to reverse the judgement. By 1903 the Labour Representation Committee had more than doubled its membership as a result of trade union affiliation (Laybourn, 2000).

In the years that followed, the relationship between the Labour Party and the trade unions developed into what Minkin (1991) referred to as the contentious alliance. In his extensive study he held that the party and the trade unions maintained a close relationship whilst recognising their separate spheres. This relationship has oscillated over time but ultimately they remain connected in a common struggle: the labour movement (ibid). Recent analytical research on the relationships development has emerged to challenge Minkin's view. Shaw (2008) holds that whilst the party-union relationship remains, it has lost its character and exists purely as a strategic alliance.

This has not been the only area of contention within the Labour Party and trade unions. The opposing ideas of collectivism and individualism have posed a challenge to each institution. Within the Labour Party, the individualist socialism proclaimed by Philip Snowden no doubt came into conflict with the collectivism of the trade unions (Laybourn, 2000). Likewise, the changes in modern capitalism have had an impact on trade union collectivism. Individual union members increasingly find themselves in a world characterised by competition, freedom from others, self-fulfilment and consumerism – this undoubtedly impacting upon their activity (Nafstad & Blakar & Carlquist & Phelps & Rand-Hendriksen, 2007).

Throughout this research the term labour movement will refer to the Labour Party, its affiliated unions and the Trades Union Congress. Though it is acknowledged that a wide range of opinions and ideologies encompass the movement (ranging from Syndicalism to Communism) and that not all trade unions are affiliated to these institutions, it will remain so for the purposes of this project.

This research is a qualitative assessment of the changing dynamics of relationships and ideologies within the British labour movement. Data will be drawn from semi-standardised interviews with a range of shop stewards, taking specific interest in how the participants understand the ideological shifts within the movement. By qualitative assessment we are referring to a form of data collection that occurs within the social science discipline. Generally this form of data collection is characterised by participant observation (Okely, 1994; p.18). The paper will also draw upon historical periods to highlight developments within the movement.

The rationale for this research has grown out of personal interest, observations and developments within the labour movement over recent years. Despite emerging from an international crisis of capitalism - which has led to increased levels of inequality (Piketty, 2014) - the movement has failed to improve its societal position.

The way the papers title will be assessed is by putting forward a hypothesis and testing it against a set of research questions. The research questions will be asked throughout the paper before answering the hypothesis in the conclusion. What is being hypothesised is that *due to the changes in modern capitalism, the labour movement has moved away from its collectivist tendencies to a more individualist framework*. The research questions that will be asked to enable this hypothesis to be tested are: how has collectivism been historically constructed within British trade unionism? How has this collectivism influenced the direction and policies of the British Labour Party? And has there been a significant shift from collectivism to individualism and what are causes of this transformation?

The remaining body of this work will answer these questions within the following sections. The first three sections will analyse debates and definitions that arise from secondary research. These sections will also formulate an understanding of key terms and identify historical periods. The final sections will cover the practical methodology, research limitations and examine the qualitative data before providing the paper with its conclusions.

Collectivism and the British Labour Movement
The term collectivism is generally used to describe an element of social behaviour. Various conceptions of collectivism have resulted from extensive cross-cultural academic study, however, there are some basic features associated with collectivism which applies to the workings and functionality of the labour movement (Rhee & Uleman & Lee, 1996).

A collectivist attitude prioritises the interests of the community as morally superior to that of any individual (Greenleaf, 1983; pp. 20 – 21). People are integrated into strong, cohesive *in-groups* which protect them in return for unquestioning loyalty (Kim & Triandis & Kagitçibasi & Choi & Yoon, 1994). By in-group we are referring to a group where normalities, goals and values shape the behaviour of its members. Generally an in-group is shaped in part by an *out-group* as this allows the *in-group* to identify its members – in the case of trade unions this would be co-workers against their employers (Rhee & Uleman & Lee, 1996). This creates an order of social life in which the common good overrules individual caprice and promotes cooperation between different members of the group (Greenleaf, 1983; pp. 20 – 21; Peetz, 2001). It further stresses the importance of achieving security for all in equal conditions of

security of at least a minimum or basic kind – often referred to as *social justice* (Greenleaf, 1983; p. 20).

The work by Peetz (2001) breaks collectivism down into three core dimensions which apply to the functionality of the labour movement. The first he refers to as the *attributional dimension*; this is where common grievances amongst individuals lead them to seek collectivist resolutions. The second is the *attitudinal dimension*; this refers to the extent that identities, values and beliefs strengthen or weaken collective orientations of the group. This dimension can include an individual's cooperative values, group social identity and belief in collective efficiency. The final dimension is the *coordinated dimension*; this is effectively the way the group runs. This could be through, either, existing networks between members, the existence of mobilisers or the existence of democratic coordination versus autocratic coordination.

One key aspect of collectivism within the trade union movement is the use of mobilisation to forge a group's social identity. This is what recent social scientists have referred to as *mobilisation theory* (Cregan & Bartram & Stanton, 2009; Kelly, 1998; Martin, 1999; McBride & Lucio, 2011). In order for trade unions to achieve their goals, the social movement must build up strength by acquiring control of resources needed for action. In the case of unions, they need to build up labour resources in order to achieve their collective goals. They gain these by mobilising members which can take the form of disputes between the employers alongside fellow workers. The struggle then transforms into a collective consciousness which creates loyalty and activism to the union who offers them protection in return. This also allows the union to develop its collective group identification.

The rise of collectivism within trade unionism developed around the period of 1889 through to the 1900s; accompanying the emergence of what historians commonly describe as New Unionism (Laybourn, 1992; Raw, 2009; pp. 155 – 156; Webb & Webb & Peddie, 1907; pp. 476 - 477). Established research shows how collectivism was previously constructed within the trade union movement. Indeed, one of the most striking aspects of New Unionism was its attempts to unite all workers regardless of skill, a feature that was relatively uncommon amongst the old craft unions (Hinton, 1983; p. 29). This period also saw the emergence of collective resolutions being passed through the Trades Union Congress. This is the central body of the trade union movement, formed in 1868, representing their collective voice nationally (Laybourn, 1992).

Emerging from these developments was one of the leading characteristics of trade union collectivism and possibly their most important function: the use of *collective bargaining*. Coined by the Fabian Socialists and labour historians Sydney and Beatrice Webb in the late nineteenth century, the term refers to negotiations between the employer and employees in concert (Hutt, 2007; pp. 21 - 22). In *The History of Trade Unionism* they describe it as:

"New conditions of working . . . embodied in a collective agreement, by which every important . . . firm and every important . . . workman finds himself practically bound. Any grievances at particular works are now dealt with, first by district conference, and eventually by joint conference between the employers and employed,

representing the whole trade throughout the kingdom. . ." (Webb & Webb & Peddie, 1907; p. xx).

The development of collective bargaining within trade unionism highlights the historical ideological tradition that has governed the labour movement. No longer were negotiations to be based on individual grounds (or *individual bargaining*) between master and worker, but collectively through conferences, discussions (ibid), participation and delegatory democracy – all of which eventually bled into the functionality of the Labour Party (Minkin, 1991; p. 291).

The recent work by sociologist Craig Calhoun (2012) provides us with a deeper insight into the character of the labour movement. In Calhoun's analysis of eighteenth and nineteenth century industrial and political radical social movements, he argues that they were not the result of direct class conflicts but encompassed both left and right ideologies. Whilst notions of class and labour were present in these movements they tended to arise from surprisingly conservative roots with both proletarian and bourgeoisie activists. He further articulates the diverse opinions of the British radical movements, with some radicals becoming reformists due to the gains industrialised capitalism offered as a result of their struggles – this being a precursor to modern trade unionism. It was due to these developments that its protagonists lacked the philosophical determination to deduce its programmes from first principles (ibid, p. 31). Calhoun (2012; p. 309) further argues that there is a race between social movements and capital to structure relations amongst people, achieve social integration and organise the world to which the former is constantly running behind. Whilst social movements have proved effective at organising on local levels, capital has integrated on a larger international scale.

Similarly, despite the collectivist tendencies of the movement, Ralph Miliband (1973; p. 142) argues that the history of British trade unionism has been plagued with internal divisions. Generally these divisions have been based on functional differences between militant and moderate unions, as well as contentions between the membership and leadership of individual unions. The diverse interests of labour has further aided to the movements lack of ideological clarity (ibid).

In terms of parliamentary politics, by 1914 most of the trade unions began to identify with the Labour Party (Adelman, 1996). Further established research shows how collectivism was constructed within the Labour Party and created a shared relationship between the two institutions. The party's coherent commitment to collectivism was not laid out until its 1918 constitution, specifically its controversial Clause IV:

"To secure for the worker by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry and service" (Coates, 1995; p. 1).

The development of this new constitution gave the movement an intellectual justification and an ideology which it was previously lacking – that of democratic socialism. Internally Clause IV was the unifying statement that bound the varying

socialist groups and trade unions together. The ambiguity of Labour's aims allowed it to reach out to disaffected Liberals in an attempt to construct a national party (Adelman, 1996; p. 51). In this cause party leader Arthur Henderson was prepared to widen its ranks significantly; in a conversation with C. P. Scott, Henderson had remarked that previously "the Labour Party had been too short of brains" (Winter, 1974; p. 261). The decision to create Constituency Labour Parties would therefore bring an influx of non-trade unionists into the ranks - namely middle-class intellectuals. This would allow the party to become the political and intellectual wing of the movement whilst the trade unions maintained the practical and industrial. The principle of common ownership reflected the labour movement's collectivist aspirations and inherent ideology resulting from political circumstances. In the years that proceeded, the party and the Trades Union Congress would develop an increasingly intimate relationship that resulted in the National Council of Labour. Here the trade unions could directly influence policies allowing the party to adopt ideas of central government planning and provision of welfare (Pelling & Reid, 1996). Union finances and manpower would also ensure that its political wing would remain afloat, subsidising the parliamentary machine (McKibbin, 1974). The culmination of this would occur under the Atlee government of 1945 which would go on to define the era of *progressive liberalism* (see Neoliberalism, Individualism and the Labour Movement).

This analysis, however, has been an area of contention for some revisionist historians who have downplayed the relevance of Clause IV's collectivist commitment. Commentators such as Fielding (2003; pp. 62 - 63) have argued that it had a limited impact on the ideology of the movement. Leaders such as Ramsay MacDonald displayed an unwillingness to intervene in the economy for fear of distorting capitalisms natural development. It was due to Britain's experience of state control throughout the Second World War that intervention was perceived as a practical solution to maintain capitalisms natural progression – therefore Clause IV could be considered irrelevant to the movement's ideology (ibid).

Neoliberalism, Individualism and the Labour Movement
The term neoliberalism is arguably a contentious term which will be used throughout this research. Though it has received widespread recognition throughout the twenty-first century, its definition can be ambiguous (McCarthy & Prudham, 2004). Neoliberalism in this project will refer to the economic and governmental changes in modern capitalism that emerged in the 1970s. Central to its characteristics has been the restoration of power and revenues in favour of a capital over labour (Duménil & Lévy, 2004; pp. 1 – 2) – this can be highlighted by rising levels of income inequality (Piketty, 2014; pp. 25 - 26). This stands in opposition to the early post-war period – referred to as progressive liberalism – which was characterised by the collective politics of nationalisation, citizenship rights, welfare states, progressive taxation and Keynesian economics (Brockman, 2013; Harvey, 2005; Krieger, 2002; Leitner & Sheppard & Sziarto & Maringanti, 2007; Marshall, 1950; McCarthy & Prudham, 2004; Roche, 1992; p. 69; Slowey, 2008; p. 11).

In T. H. Marshall's (1950; p. 41) lauded analysis of social citizenship and welfare, he argued that the twentieth century had been characterised by the struggle of citizens. Whether that struggle is defending rights against tyrannical governments or the extension of civil rights, citizenship referred to what society collectively

acknowledges as legitimate *social rights* (Marshall, 1950; Roche, 1992). More recent work by Roche (1992) has identified wider changes in citizenship since Marshall's work was published. Roche contends that where progressive liberalism placed an overemphasis on citizens' rights, neoliberalism has focused on *social duties* rooted in individual responsibility.

Economically, neoliberalism is defined by the belief that private companies, private individuals and unhindered markets are the best way to stimulate growth and provide social welfare (Brockman, 2013; Harvey, 2008; Peck & Tickell, 2007; Roche, 1992). This position has led to the adoption of *supply side* economic polices throughout the west and Europe to rejuvenate capitalism from the profit making crisis that occurred under Keynesianism (Leitner & Sheppard & Sziarto & Maringanti, 2007; p. 3; Harvey, 2010). Since this alteration in capitalism, political actors have taken advantage of restructuring production, trade and decentralising or dismantling national institutions (Slowey, 2008; p. xii).

Britain's experience of this neoliberal phase is generally characterised by the premiership of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party in the 1980s (Palumbo, 2004). Her philosophy of "rolling back the state" – believing that state intervention should be kept to a minimum, leaving major decisions to be determined by the market (Harvey, 2005; Roche, 1992) – marked a radical departure from progressive liberalism and came into conflict with the collectivism of the labour movement.

The work by John Kelly (2012) in his analysis of Willy Brown's theories of *piecemeal bargaining* has also provided an insight into the period's alterations in industrial relations. Piecemeal bargaining, coined by Brown, referred to the changing industrial relations that had occurred during the 1970s. This saw the emergence of informal workplace bargaining at a local level between management and the unions in the shadow of industry-wide collective agreements. Brown claimed that first-line supervisors were under extreme pressure to maximise production and were therefore more susceptible to informal agreements and a closer relationship with the unions. The years since the mid-1980s have seen an alteration in these relationships. The undermining of collective bargaining power from companies – altering traditional relationships in favour of methods such as job evaluations and annual appraisals – has successfully individualised workplace relations and increased workplace competition. Continuing into the 1990s, collective bargaining negotiations had been drastically reduced to little more than consultations (ibid).

Recent analytical research on labour relations has emerged to claim a decline of collectivism in the labour movement as a result of these changes. Machin (2000) highlights the rapid "de-unionization" of the British labour market from 1979 onwards, with 53 per cent of workers unionised in 1979 compared with 28 per cent in 1999. Due to this reduction in union density, Pollert (2005) holds that individual workers have become increasingly dependent on the statutory regulation of individual employment rights. The fragmentation of union density has also proved to be a problem, with more workers covered by collective bargaining agreements in the public sector than the expanded private sector (Pollert, 2005; Machin, 2000).

Despite these claims there has been some discussion to counter this argument. In Deery and Walsh's (1999) comparative study of white-collar workers and their

collectivist tendencies, they concluded that there has been no shift in attitudes of collectivism despite new individualistic industrial relations. In the research carried they found that collectivist attitudes are only shaped in part by work environment. Where unions were perceived as effective in improving wages and conditions employee's displayed stronger collectivist attitudes. More recently, work by McBride and Lucio (2011) states that the term has become more flexible. Within their study they note that the memories of individuals have become an important feature in the development of a collectivist character. The importance of recalling past occupational experiences, local community pasts, the legacy of workplace exploitation and the history of racial and gender exclusion creates a shared set of values and positions. This means that collectivism has not declined but can emerge from diverse experiences within the workplace and external social dimensions. Traditional forms of union collectivism have been viewed as damaging to these external social dimensions which has affected worker identification with trade unionism (McBride & Lucio, 2011; Tomlinson & Stuart & Lucio, 2013). They conclude that the trade unions need to act as a supportive structure to draw these social dimensions together in order to mobilise them beyond social-coping mechanisms (McBride & Lucio, 2011).

The impact of neoliberalism profoundly affected the Labour Party and when it was to remerge as a party of government it would look drastically different from previous years. Evidence of the party's ideological shift is best symbolised by the revision of Clause IV. Labour leader Tony Blair had argued that the party needed to make itself relevant to changing expectations if it was to ever return to office. The removal of the original Clause IV marked a rapid departure from the collectivist aims of nationalisation, allowing the party to embrace an individualised market economy. This would grant him the opportunity to rebrand the Labour Party to the electorate as New Labour throughout his leadership (Mullard & Swaray, 2008). Similarly, the party's structures were radically altered between 1983 and 1992, with internal democracy moving away from collectivist delegatory democracy to a one member one vote system – this allowing the party to gradually drift away from the unions (Seyd, 1999).

The significance of the party's alteration of Clause IV has been debated by revisionist historians. Fielding (2003), for example, argues that Clause IV was an irrelevant statement which held little sway on the ideology of the movement. This would mean that Labour had not altered its political aims. The changing of Clause IV was merely a shock tactic to direct public attention and to present the party as a credible contender for government. It could be further argued that New Labour emerged out of a revisionist tradition within the party that developed in the 1950s. Members such as Anthony Crosland (2006; pp. 44 - 45) argued that the case for nationalisation and a collectivist society was no longer relevant. In his view, the party's experience of public ownership had faced the same problems as private corporations and did little to improve the status of the worker (ibid; p. 44). It would therefore be the role of future Labour governments to focus on eradicating social inequalities and improving personal freedom (ibid; p. 401). These ideas were no doubt influential on New Labour thinkers and this is highlighted by their commitment to education and equality of opportunity whilst in office (ibid; pp. ix – x).

Concluding the review of established research the ideological tradition of the labour movement has been identified. Collectivism was a construct which played a dominant role within the policies of the Labour Party and the industrial functionality of the trade union movement. This is best highlighted by the development of collective bargaining and the creation of Clause IV despite some analysts, such as Fielding, challenging its relevance. This collectivism was further aided by the progressive liberal period which was characterised by closer relations between trade unions, businesses and the state.

The literature has also highlighted a lack of clarity within the ideology of the movement. From its earliest development it transcended both left and right ideologies encompassing both proletarian and bourgeoisie activists. Internal ideological divisions within the movement have further aided this ambiguity resulting in a lack of ideological cohesion.

Throughout the neoliberal period the ideological tradition of the movement was faced with significant challenges. Neoliberalism's adherence to individualism and capital restoration put the future of the labour movement into question. It would therefore need to adapt to this new environment in order to maintain its relevance. This would mean it would have to modify its inherent ideology of collectivism as a response to an individualist environment. As a result of hostile relations between businesses, the state and trade unions most commentators have declared a decline of collectivism in the movement – this is best highlighted by falling membership numbers. As a result of these developments employees have become dependent on individual employment rights resulting in an individualised work environment. Whilst some have observed decline others have concluded that the term has become more dynamic and shifted to a different sphere of consciousness.

The review also highlights the party-union relationship. The trade unions had remained dependant on the party to provide it with its intellectual justifications; likewise, the party had been dependent on the unions for financial means and manpower. The growing distance between the party and the unions means that the movement's industrial wing has failed to find its modern intellectual justification and struggled to adapt to this new de-industrialised environment. This can be highlighted by New Labour's ten years in office whilst union membership continued to decline.

The dominant literature suggests that the movement has adapted its ideological tradition of collectivism to a more individualistic framework as a response changes in capitalism. There are, however, dissenting voices which suggest that collectivism has been transformed not superseded. The next section will provide a qualitative assessment to examine participants understanding of an ideological shift and assess whether it has occurred in practise. This independent research will be used to test whether the dominant or dissenting positions identified in the literature are correct.

Practical Methodology and Limitations
This section will now provide an overview to the practical methodology of the project. It will also cover limitations to the research before assessing the collected data. The qualitative information will help to identify how collectivism was previously constructed in practise, whether there has been an ideological shift in response to

neoliberalism and if this has affected the party-union relationship as other research suggests.

The data for this project was collected through the use of semi-standardised interviews. Participants were asked a set of standardised qualitative questions – asking a range of single questions to present the findings in a quantifiable form – in order to maintain a theme for the discussions. Participants were then allowed to elaborate their answers for qualitative purposes (Harrison, 2001; pp. 91 – 92).

The sample was collected through the method of *snowballing*. The research began with a set of informants who acted as seeds to guide me through a network of interviewees (Bernard, 2011; pp. 147 – 149). The intention was to find ten participants varying in age, gender and occupation currently or previously active within the labour movement. The aim of this was to assess participants' understanding of an ideological shift if one has occurred and test the positions of the literature. It was hoped that a gender split would be achieved due to the recent focus on gender politics in trade union revitalisation research (Ledwith, 2012; Mrozowicki & Trawinska, 2013).

Trade unions and the Labour Party fall into the category of elite institutions. This is referring to a group of people who have access to a specific level of information that the public at large will have little knowledge of. The project therefore had to adopt the method of *elite interviewing* as participants had access to this information (ibid).

Practical elements to this methodology were also taken into consideration. Studies have shown that using environments that are familiar to the interviewee – whether an office space or home – achieves far more open, reliable and confident answers (Harrison, 2001). Whilst conducting the interviews environments were taken into consideration to achieve the most open answers for the project. Interviews took place in homes, offices and coffee houses to achieve this. Further practical elements included the use of voice recording equipment to keep an account of everything that was said as opposed to taking notes. Notes can prove to be a distraction and the aim of qualitative research is to observe the interviewee. Recording the interview also allowed the conversation to be more open, relaxed and informal (ibid).

Once the data was collected it was analysed by transcribing the interviews and identifying key themes that arose from the discussions – a *thematic analysis*. These key themes were then organised into tables in order to compare responses and locate patterns arising from the field work (LeCompte, 2000).

The project adhered to the ethical guidelines as set out by the University of Huddersfield. Participants were asked for informed consent before taking part in the study. They were further made aware of their contribution and what to expect before the interview took place. Participants were also made aware that their input to the project was entirely voluntary and written consent was received before conducting the interview. Contributors' anonymity was safeguarded through the use of pseudonyms, their answers were treated with complete confidentiality and at the end of each interview the participant was debriefed with a further explanation of the study.

It should be acknowledged that a range of limitations faced the study. One of the more obvious limitations was the use of snowball sampling accompanied by the aims of achieving a gender split. As it was unknown who would be interviewed or who would be seeded it was unclear as to whether this could be achieved. Despite the original aim of a gender split the sample is mostly male dominated with six male participants and four female participants. Despite this limitation, the sample has varied in occupation and age with the oldest participant active in 1974 and the youngest in 2010. The unions represented in this sample include General Municipal Boilermakers, the Public and Commercial Services union, the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians, Unison, Unite and the Union of Shop Distribution and Allied Workers.

Regional limitations have also arisen from the snowball sampling as most participants only knew others in the same area or industry. As a result this has limited the study to the north of England. This is a limitation as different regions may have different experiences; however, it will provide an insight into regional developments.

A further limitation is the issue of the time-frame contemporary interviews can cover. It was impossible to interview someone who was active in nineteenth century trade unionism. As a result participants were limited to discussing recent developments in the labour movement. This proves a limitation as the qualitative research could only go so far back. With the decline of letter writing and diary entries, however, this limitation has provided the project with an insight into recent developments.

Qualitative research and elite interviewing can also be an inferior source of data collection. Where elite interviewing provided contacts with specific information, participants could prove to be unreliable. This is mostly down to inaccurate information resulting from memory lapses or the limitations of reflection. Alternatively participants could be unreliable for ulterior reasons such as they have an "axe to grind" with certain individuals or even the union. Similarly as an interviewer there is always the risk of losing objectivity which could affect the final research (Harrison, 2001). These are important factors which were taken into consideration during the process.

Data Analysis
This section will now provide an analysis of the field work. Here the main themes arising from the interviews will be discussed to inform the conclusion.

One of the first and most reoccurring themes that emerged from the interviews was the concept of a cultural change. The majority of participants recollected various narratives which represented a collectivist period of trade unionism and counteracted it with a more recent, individualistic workplace experience. This was best put forward by Steward 1 (2013):

"[People now] are not bothered about the fella who gets the sack, whereas before you were. Even if you didn't like him! You could have worked with him for twenty years and hated him, but if you didn't think what [management] did was right you'd say 'sack him and we're walking.' It made them think again."

Similar recollections were put forward by both male and female participants. Steward 8 (2014) discussed how members "expect a certain level of service for their money" and unions now "have to provide a balance between collective and individual issues." This suggests that there has been a cultural change in the workplace to individualism and unions have had to respond to it. It also suggests that the construct of collectivism is still present and has not been superseded.

Further associated with this cultural shift was the issue of industrial decline. Nearly every participant sighted the issue of industrial decline as the reason for reduced union density and increased individualist attitudes. This implies that unions have struggled to adapt to the supply side economic landscape which has resulted in a reduction of collectivism. It further backs up ideas of previous sections that unions have proved unsuccessful organising in the expanded private sector. The issue of industrial decline was also partnered with the emergence of hostile relations between the state and the unions. Margaret Thatcher's belligerent attitude towards trade unionism in the 1980s has been cited as the cause of individualised attitudes in the workplace.

Despite this being the dominant outcome of the research, some participants held an alternative view. When recalling recent recruitment experiences they tended to argue that workplace campaigns and active representatives were effective at improving union identification. There was also an opinion that unions had previously been "quite destructive" (Steward 4, 2013) over the way they represented members, paying particular attention to the frequent strike action associated with the previous period. One participant also highlighted trade union's failure to act as an effective mobiliser in the present work environment. It was put forward that "corporate speak" (Steward 3, 2013) allows employees to identify the company as a collective as opposed to the union. This would mean that ideas of collectivism have not been superseded but current management strategies are effective at mobilising collective identification.

The awareness of a cultural shift from collectivism to individualism highlights an understanding of the concepts that have already been discussed. Where the progressive liberal period was seen as a cooperative period, the present challenges of neoliberalism have seen workplace and state relations individualised. This has forced trade unions to react and individualise some of their activities. Despite participants sighting a decline of collectivism there is still evidence to suggest collectivist attitudes remain present within the movement and the workplace.

Another theme that arose from the interviews was the concept of changing managerial relations. Generally relations between management and trade unions are seen as being more hostile now than previously. Many participants recalled closer working relationships with managers and that previously unions were seen as part of the company. Overtime this has gradually changed as was best highlighted by Steward 5 (2014) recalling experiences in the early 1990s:

"The [original] manager left and was replaced by a new management team. The whole idea was that they wanted to improve what they did but also change the culture . . . The company became quite forceful in undercutting the union. They

began to target individual employees over pay rises as opposed to negotiating with the union."

Similarly, the majority of participants also sighted employers increased need for labour market flexibility and fragmentation as the reason for individualised workplace relationships. The increasing numbers of temporary contacts, part-time workers, 'zero hour' contacts and high staff turnover have damaged efforts to create a social identity. As collectivism relies on the social interactions between members to identify the in-group, these changes in employment have successfully alienated people from identifying the union as a collective – a key feature of the attitudinal dimension. Many interviewees also stated that this was the main reason why unions are seen as "more of an insurance scheme" (Steward 1, 2013; Steward 3, 2013; Steward 5, 2014) and despite an increased push on individual benefits they have proved mostly ineffective.

Participants' recollections of eroding industrial relationships and the undermining of collective bargaining agreements further represents an awareness of an ideological shift. As has already been outlined, the undermining of union bargaining agreements has proved successful at individualising employee relations. Increased labour market flexibility and fragmentation has further proved to be a problem for trade union collectivism and has undermined attempts to mobilise members. Participants also sighted closer industrial relations throughout the progressive liberal period which supports the literature.

Another prevailing theme that emerged from the research was the issue of ideology. Each participant displayed a different interpretation of union collectivism and highlighted a failure to deduce the movement's programmes from first principles. This was best put forward by Steward 2 (2013) recalling experiences in the 1970s:

"I remember a bloke, Brumwell, he ended up in charge of the union nationally, he said to me: 'It's easy getting people on strike. It's getting 'em back. I could go out there and wind these blokes up, get them all out on strike now . . . It's getting 'em back'. . . We went on strike because one lad had [been] sacked, or wouldn't do something, and he went and got another job while we were out on strike. He left and we were still out on strike because of him and he wasn't there anymore! Of course once you've gone on strike people think: 'well this sick pay's not very good we want this sorting out, we'll get this sorted and this sorted,' so in the end you had a big list of demands. All of them we wanted sorting out before we got back, yet the original problem was this bloke's job who'd left anyway!"

This narrative in particular highlights the diverse interests of labour in the workplace as was previously highlighted. It also indicates a lack of cohesion over the aims of collective action and how members held a stronger social identification with the unions leading to mobilisation that could be induced by rhetoric.

Similarly, interviewees highlighted tensions within inter-union relationships particularly between the leadership and individual members. The need for union leaders to expand their organisations to stay afloat left some participants feeling distanced from the union: "We can boast that Unite is the biggest union in the country, but how does that help our members?" (Steward 10, 2014).

The final theme emerging from the interviews was the growing distance between the unions and the Labour Party. Where at one point the party and the unions were seen to have a shared political purpose, most participants now felt that the relationship was precarious. Nearly every interviewee put this down to unions being portrayed as a "toxic label" (Steward 7, 2014) in the media and the egotism of former leader Tony Blair. Despite this being the dominant view, the majority of participants still felt that unions needed to remain in the party due the lack of an alternative. Whilst some interviewees discussed the possibilities of a "Trade Union Party" (Steward 3, 2013; Steward 6, 2014) the majority wished to try and improve the party-union relationship with one person stating "things will have to get a lot worse" (Steward 4, 2013). This implies that the relationship still exists but their shared political purpose has eroded.

Data Conclusions
From the sample above we can clearly see participants' practical understanding of an ideological shift. As a result of changing industrial relations, flexible labour markets, private sector expansion, and hostile relations with the state, unions have altered their positions from collective institutions to servicing individual cases. We can also see that previously members held a stronger identification with the unions leading to effective mobilisation. Recent changes in business structures have, however, hindered the union's ability to engage with the dimensions of collectivism. Whilst the majority of the sample identified declining union identification, some participants highlighted new management techniques as being an effective mobiliser – this means ideas of collectivism are still present in the workplace. The concept of balancing collective and individual issues further suggests the construct of collectivism has not superseded but continues to remain present in the movement.

The sample has also highlighted the diverse interests of labour which was previously drawn upon in the literature. This is highlighted by some of the sample feeling detached from the leadership and a previous lack of cohesion over collective action.

Participants' understanding of the party-union relationship also backs up arguments highlighted in previous sections. Since New Labour, relations between the party and the unions have eroded the shared political purpose that was outlined by Minkin (1991). Despite this distancing participants are still seeking to maintain and repair this relationship in light of no alternative. This would imply that there is still some sense of unity coming from one side of the relationship, however, the relationship remains precarious.

Conclusions
Throughout the research we have identified how collectivism has been historically constructed within British trade unionism. It was constructed through its practical functionality such as collective bargaining, delegatory democracy and an ability to engage with the dimensions of collectivism. The political climate throughout the progressive liberal era gave the institutions an ability to practise these functionalities and led to cooperative relations between businesses, trade unions and the state.

Whilst collectivist principles were dominant, the diverse interests of labour left the trade union movement lacking a clear ideology. The creation of the Labour Party and Clause IV provided the trade unions with a unifying statement and a shared political purpose. Throughout its early development they worked together on policies and the

party remained subsidised by union funds. In recent years however this shared political purpose has slowly eroded. Due to the party adapting its ideology to a new political environment the two institutions have grown apart. Though the relationship remains it does so in a diluted form.

Due to the changes in modern capitalism and neoliberalism's adherence to free markets and individualised industrial relations, the labour movement's collective mechanisms have been hindered. As a result, unions have responded by becoming servicing institutions as opposed to effective collective groupings. This is due to the trade unions individualising some of their activities and the Labour Party focusing on the enhancement of individual rights.

The labour movement is a product of capitalist society and therefore it cannot have an existence that is separate to it. This means the movement *has* moved away from its collectivist tendencies to a more individualist framework as a response to changes in capitalism. This research also identifies that collective ideas have *not* superseded but have been transformed within the movement and the workplace; putting it at odds with the dominant position of established literature. This means that despite the movements shift to an individualist framework there are still collective ideas within the workplace that could be used for mobilisation.

As trade unions are functioning in an environment that is particularly hostile to their existence the remedy to this situation remains purely political. In order to reach out to new members a new approach to constructing the attitudinal dimension of collective functionality is needed. This will mean creating collective identities in a supply side context. By placing the member at the centre of decision making, devolving democratic approaches and increasing democratic participation a new form of social identity can be created for mobilisation. This new approach to collective identification could prove useful at building relationships within a fragmented workforce. Traditional forms of collectivism have been deemed as damaging on other collective identities. This supply side approach will allow unions to operate as an umbrella organisation without harming identities such as gender and race. If we can collectively improve the positioning of trade unions in society it will help to ameliorate workers' rights, employment security and declining wages that have prevailed in this current phase of capitalism.

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