

**Professional and Technical Workers, Associations and
Unions: Will Labor Markets Induce Institutional
Convergence?**

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Rapid technological advances in communications and information processing are creating intense pressure in labor markets for professional and technical occupations. Employers face increased incentives to monitor job content while workers experience heightened anxiety about potential obsolescence. These technological influences are being reinforced by changes in the political economy as greater reliance is being placed on unrestrained market forces. In a recent article aptly titled “How the Economy Came to Resemble the Model,” Alan Blinder argues that labor is now viewed as “just a commodity” as evidenced in part by the rapid growth of contingent employment and by reduced job security for white collar workers (Blinder, 2000).

In the context of these changes, there is widespread evidence that professional and technical workers are losing their revered control over job content along with the ability to exercise discretion (see for example Hackman, 1998). And yet, employment continues to grow rapidly in relevant occupations. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that jobs for professional specialties will increase by 27 percent from 1998 to 2008, while those for technicians will expand by 22 percent; these are the fastest anticipated growth rates among the major occupational groups (U.S. Department of Labor, 2000: 2-5).

Established institutions that serve the interests of white collar workers find themselves at a critical juncture. On the one hand they can foresee the potential to expand membership and influence. On the other hand, they confront the reality of reconfigured labor markets. Growth (and indeed survival) is contingent upon being able to adapt to the changing needs and interests of professional and technical workers. The combination of technological advances and alterations in the functioning of white collar markets suggests strategic reconceptualization and institutional transformation.

The research reported in this paper looks at professional associations and white collar unions, with particular attention to their roles in the private sector. Interviews with membership

directors and a review of the services offered by selected professional associations reveal examples of unprecedented initiatives in response to the labor market concerns of members. Analysis of survey responses of white collar workers following organizing campaigns demonstrates that union success depends in part on the ability to appeal to the professional concerns of potential members. The implication of the separate lines of inquiry is that there is potential for professional associations and unions to converge and in the process construct new labor market institutions.

The research indicates that, although they remain reluctant to intervene in the workplace, some professional associations are giving heed to pressure from members and are in the process of redefining their role, explicitly in relation to the labor market. If unions of white collar workers hope to thrive, they will need to display comparable flexibility and find new ways to address the non-workplace professional concerns of their potential members.

I. Professional Association Services and Limitations

There is a substantial body of sociological research about professions. That literature confirms a central role for professional associations in establishing, maintaining and enhancing professional identity (Ritzer and Walczak, 1986). Professional associations set educational criteria for membership, adopt codes of ethics for practitioners, and engage in political activity to secure licensing and continuing education requirements in order to protect members from less qualified competitors. Because of this central role in professionalization of the occupation, it follows that those in the profession will value membership in successful associations.

The prototypical professions are medical doctors, lawyers, professors and scientists. Groups with lower educational requirements and prestige are referred to as “marginal professions” - e.g., pharmacists, chiropractors, funeral directors and engineers. Then come the “female semi-professions” with comparable educational attainment but lower pay and prestige

than the male dominated marginal professions - e.g., librarians, registered nurses, social workers and school teachers. Finally there are “paraprofessionals” and technical workers who serve as assistants to professionals or perform work at their request (Ritzer and Walczak, 1986). In general, the higher status professions have stronger associations, the lower status professions weaker associations.

In order to explore how professional associations compare to unions, the author has selected twenty for study. They represent a range of professional and technical occupations from chemist to dental assistant. Each of the twenty offers members some type of direct services related to the labor market in addition to performing typical association functions. Information has been gathered on all of these organizations, and in-depth personal interviews have been conducted with the membership directors of eight of them. In addition, summary data has been obtained from the American Society of Association Executives which confirm that the information gathered on these professional associations fits the pattern for comparable individual membership organizations (American Society of Association Executives, 2000).

The defining characteristic of professional associations is that they are knowledge based. The following excerpt from the American Association of Physician Assistants’ (AAPA) statement of mission and strategic directions is representative:

Identify and enhance the base of knowledge of PAs by determining the need for information, developing that information, and disseminating information in the areas of clinical medicine, practice management, health care systems, and professional issues (American Academy of Physician Assistants, 1999: 10).

As is clear from this statement, the self defined primary role of the professional association is to be an information source for members of the profession. To a large extent this is accomplished through newsletters and technical publications. The New York State Psychological Association (NYSPA), for example, helps its members “Keep Informed” by publishing four different newsletters covering national issues in psychology (bimonthly),

legislative initiatives (monthly), managed care and insurance (quarterly), and risk management in psychological practice; in addition, NYSPA publishes an annual peer reviewed technical journal (New York State Psychological Association, 2000: 3). In a similar vein, the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists maintains a computer database for its members “containing over 250,000 bibliographic citations and abstracts from International Pharmaceutical Abstracts” (American Society of Health-Systems Pharmacists, 2000).

Professional associations also attend to the professional development needs of their members, offering substantive programs and often continuing education credits. The American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT), for example, offers several dozen home study courses and videotapes on topics such as “Pharmacology for R.T.’s,” “Computed Tomography and Magnetic Resonance Angiography,” and “Spiral-Helical CT” (American Society of Radiologic Technologists, 1999). In addition the ASRT offers directed readings courses, and educational lectures and workshops at twice annual national conferences. All of these programs carry continuing education credits, which are required to maintain national certification as a radiologic technologist (American Society of Radiologic Technologists, 2000). Consistent with their educational mission, professional associations also maintain relationships with educational institutions that offer degrees in the field, and sponsor student chapters at many of these institutions.

In addition to their role in information and education, these associations actively promote the professions they represent. Almost all adopt a code of ethics and set minimum standards for entry into the profession. Some associations participate in certification directly, and all maintain working relationships with agencies established to confer certification or licenses to those in practice. In this regard, professional associations monitor relevant legislation at the federal and

state levels, and promote regulations that protect their members right to practice and that uphold quality standards.

The governance of professional associations is democratic, with elected officers who serve in a volunteer capacity without compensation. The administrative work of the organization is performed by paid staff (typically not from the profession), usually under the direction of an executive who reports to the elected officers. In addition to geographic chapters and student chapters, most associations also have interest groupings which often sponsor their own publications and educational programs. Annual national conferences are the norm, offering professional development programs and continuing education courses to encourage attendance.

Most associations offer consumer services such as credit cards, home mortgages, financial advice, and travel bookings and discounts. These services are provided by vendors, and apparently are of only secondary interest to most members. However, associations such as the AAPA and the NYSPA whose members are in private practice or healthcare report that malpractice liability insurance is a very popular benefit.

Many associations are in the process of expanding the labor market services offered, particularly those related to job search; employment listings in association newspapers and on web sites (National Association of Social Workers), salary profiles of members in specific geographic areas and sub specialties (AAPA), and career counseling services (the American Institute of Chemical Engineers) are all common. Some engineering associations are in the process of setting up a portable pension plan in response to increased turnover and labor market mobility (Feehan, 1999).

Based on internal surveys, membership directors have a strong sense of why members of relevant professions join associations, and the reasons are consistent. To give three examples, Jonathon Esslinger (1999) of the American Society of Civil Engineers mentions “maintaining

technical competence, furthering careers, and networking;” Beth Ledford (2000) of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) points to “information on trends and developments, scholarly journals, and access to liability insurance”; Diana McCauley (1999) of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers (AIChE) cites “networking, technical publications, and career services.”

Because membership is voluntary and must be renewed each year, professional associations are particularly attentive to the educational and labor market needs of their members. They also have developed sophisticated data bases to track individuals active in the profession whether or not they are current members. Most of the recruitment and retention initiatives are conducted as marketing projects with mass mailings and telephone solicitations. These activities are supplemented by outreach to students (often through faculty who are members of the association) and by some one-on-one recruiting at the local chapter level. In the associations where interviews were conducted membership ranges from 10 percent to 70 percent of estimated current employment in the occupation with seven of the eight above 30 percent; membership retention rates typically are on the order of 80-90 percent annually.

The diligence of professional associations contributes to an ever expanding array of educational, information and labor market services. Nonetheless, and member preferences notwithstanding, association staff are reluctant to interfere in the workplace or in any way encroach upon employer authority. Sharon Hantman (1999) of the Institute for Transportation Engineers explains, “The employer is likely to be a member, and in fact may encourage the engineers he/she employees to join.” Thomas Loughlin (1999) of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers suggests that it is not appropriate to get involved in the employer/employee interface, “Because we are an individual membership organization, and we work closely with corporations.” Doug McDonough (2000) of the American Dental Assistants

Association notes: “We have to be careful...because dentists are very protective. They don’t want dental assistants to assert themselves... They fear that mandatory licensing and certification will lead to higher pay.”

A few associations such as the American Chemical Society (2000) do publish “Professional Employment Guidelines” which amount to standards of employer conduct. The Institute for Electrical and Electronics Engineering recently attempted to open a dialogue with employers by publishing “IEEE USA Guidelines for Professional Employment: a Framework for Communication.” But these efforts are merely suggestive and have no enforcement mechanism. And even at this, they create problems that most associations would rather avoid. Elizabeth Feehan (1999) of the AIChE recalls: “About ten years ago we adopted guidelines for employment. Some employers were fine, but others said ‘get out of my box.’ We have to be careful not to get our members crosswise with our companies.”

Most professional associations are content to focus on what they do best and serve the professional interests of their individual members. They are reluctant to interfere in the workplace, and for the most part eschew union like activity. A few associations such as the NASW with large numbers of members who are represented by unions in the public sector actually endorse union representation, although they do not provide collective bargaining services themselves. And with the American Medical Association’s new efforts to pursue unionization, some professional associations in health care are reconsidering historic opposition to unions. The AAPA, for example, recently surveyed members about experience with and attitudes towards unions (American Association of Physicians Assistants, 2000).

By in large, unions and professional associations continue to operate in different realms. Unions focus on relations with the employer, while professional associations cater to individual needs while fostering collegial relationships. Professionals are drawn to associations because of

information, professional development and networking. They are often drawn to unions because of trouble on the job. As Tina Hovekamp aptly contrasts in an article about librarians, professional associations bring people together outside of work around common knowledge and expertise, while unions bring people together within the workplace based on distinctions in power (Hovekamp, 1997, 242).

II. Professional and Technical Workers' Attitudes towards Employee Organizations

White collar workers who choose to unionize do so to address workplace issues. In this context, unions representing professional workers do not differ substantially from other unions – they bargain contracts that set wages, benefits and work rules and that provide for workplace jurisprudence through grievance and arbitration systems. In short, these unions focus on the relationship between the worker and the employer on the job.

With expansion of employment in professional and technical occupations in recent years unions now display great interest in organizing these workers. This effort by-in-large attempts to spread unionization as it exists, with scant attention to institutional change that might make unions more attractive. Thus unions are experimenting with different organizing strategies and tactics, and are refining their communications to potential members in an effort to attract their support.

Research on union organizing also has focused on strategy and tactics (Bronfenbrenner and Juravich, 1998), and those studies that have explicitly addressed white collar organizing often have been limited to specific cases (Hurd, 1993; Hoerr, 1997). Although some research has incorporated labor market factors to help explain white collar workers' decisions to unionize (Maranto and Fiorito, 1987; Hurd and MacElwain, 1988), only limited attention has been afforded to the relationship between organizing outcomes and white collar workers' attitudes towards their jobs, towards their professions, and towards unions and alternative institutional

arrangements (see Comstock and Fox, 1994, for a summary of union initiated opinion surveys related to organizing).

A survey of professional and technical workers conducted under the auspices of Cornell University and co-sponsored by the AFL-CIO Department for Professional Employees and a consortium of national unions offers relevant evidence (Hurd, 1998).¹ Responses to the survey reveal a complex pattern of attitudes, and some clues about what strikes a chord with white collar workers who are contemplating unionization. The idea behind the research was to interview workers who had actually experienced the influences of union and management in the context of a contested organizing campaign. Because the interview responses are grounded in experience, they are more reliable than answers to hypothetical questions typically posed in opinion surveys.

Seven groups of workers were selected for the project; six are discrete units ranging in size from several hundred to several thousand, and include registered nurses, office professionals, technical workers in manufacturing, customer service professionals and librarians. The eighth group combines several smaller units of musicians – some from symphonies, some from theater and some from the recording industry. There is a balance of close union wins, close union losses, and pullbacks due to insufficient support. The scientifically designed survey drew random samples from each group, and introductory letters were followed with telephone interviews. The response rate was extraordinarily high, with completed interviews for 72.8% of those contacted. One thousand three hundred and seventy six professional and technical workers answered 95 questions about their jobs, working conditions, their employers, union organizing and employee organizations.

¹ The participating unions assisted with case selection, provided phone and mailing lists, and had input into survey design. In return they received summary data and an analytical report. Final authority over survey content and full control over detailed data was retained by the author and Cornell University.

Although the questions were broad ranging, the original purpose of the survey was to investigate attitudes directly relevant to union organizing. In the course of exploring the data it became clear that there were patterns in the responses related not only to unionization but also to other organizational forms. One question on the core survey instrument that was used for five of the seven samples asked each respondent to select his/her preferred type of employee organization from the following alternatives:²

- Union
- Non-union workplace association
- Employee involvement committee
- Professional association
- Not interested in any employee organization.

Table 1 pools responses to this question, and reports the relative preferences of interviewees among the different types of organization along with responses to other questions directly relevant to unionization. The “vote yes” column reflects the percentage of each subgroup who would vote in favor of unionization in a hypothetical union representation election on the day of the telephone interview. The next three columns are based on each respondent’s self reported stance during the actual union organizing campaign. Those who publicly endorsed the union are classified as “pro-union,” those who remained neutral are classified as “fence” (even if they secretly supported the union), and those who opposed the union (either secretly or publicly) are classified as “anti-union,”

² This question was intentionally omitted from the survey for one sample, and worded differently for another as will be described below.

Table 1
Organizational Preferences
and Union Attitudes
 (percents)

Preferred Employee Organization	Share of total interviewees	Vote yes¹	Pro-union²	Fence³	Anti-union⁴
Union	36.5	95.1	71.4	25.4	3.2
Professional association	30.7	49.6	28.6	56.3	15.1
Non-union workplace association	9.2	42.3	14.1	67.6	18.3
Management sponsored employee involvement committee	11.9	22.8	10.9	60.9	28.3
No organization	11.7	19.6	9.8	56.9	33.3

¹Would vote for a union in a hypothetical representation election.

²Publicly supported union during organizing campaign.

³Secretly supported union or remained neutral during organizing campaign.

⁴Secretly or publicly opposed union during organizing campaign.

Substantially more interviewees select union or professional association than the other types of employee organization.³ It is noteworthy in this context that only a little more than one-tenth express preference for employee involvement committees. Furthermore, the pattern of negative attitudes towards unionization reflected are almost identical for those selecting employee involvement and those selecting no organization. Of more direct relevance to this study is the fact that those whose first choice is professional association simultaneously display a relatively high level of interest in unionization. One half would vote yes in a hypothetical representation election, and nearly one-third were pro-union during an actual organizing campaign. This is surprising in that, as described above, workers drawn to professional associations are particularly interested in professional development, information and networking.

³ The address and phone lists provided by the unions were more accurate for union supporters. This was anticipated and steps were taken to minimize sampling bias. Nonetheless, the degree of union support indicated in this table may be somewhat overstated.

Unions, on the other hand, attract support from those concerned about relations with the employer.

The interest in unionization among those who prefer professional associations suggests that the two types of organization are viewed as compatible by some workers. Detailed investigation of the raw data reveals patterns similar to those obvious in Table 1, further reinforcing this implication. The research reported in this paper was stimulated by questions that follow naturally. For example, might unions be more attractive to key fence sitters if they adopt some of the practices of professional associations? Could professional associations do more to address the workplace concerns of their most dedicated members? In an effort to understand the attitudinal dynamics at work, a series of tests were performed to compare professional and technical workers whose first organizational choice is a union to those whose first preference is a professional association.

A. Methodology

In order to concentrate analytical attention on attitudes towards professional associations vis-à-vis unions, 521 interviews were selected.⁴ Responses to all 95 survey questions were subjected to scrutiny employing Logistic Discrimination, Classification Trees, and Neural Net Analysis.⁵ The dependent variable in each case is binary with professional association = 1 and union = 0. Results of the tests are consistent across methodologies. This report is based fundamentally on two Logistic Regressions presented in Tables 3 and 4. Independent variables were selected using a manual stepwise method whereby each variable or group of closely related variables was examined in relation to the dependent variable. An iterative approach ultimately

⁴ Omitted were 203 interviews for the sample that did not pose the option of organizational type, 387 interviews for the sample that posed the question in an alternative format and 265 interviews for those who selected an option other than union or professional association.

⁵ Statistical manipulations were performed skillfully by Cornell University graduate students Ryan Hammond and Terrance Savitsky in cooperation with statistics professor John Bunge and the author. A complete copy of their December 1999 report is available on request.

produced the equation reported in Table 3 based on the objective of achieving highest coefficient significance, highest psuedo R^2 and lowest covariate collinearity. The equation reported in Table 4 was reached using a similar approach but omitting general attitudinal variables regarding union effectiveness (this was done to allow for full consideration of variables related to work and employee organizations generally). The overall approach was inductive; rather than entering the research with strong a priori hypotheses, this style of investigation allows the data in effect to reveal inherent patterns. Variable definitions are presented in Table 2.

Interpretation of coefficients for independent variables in the two equations is straight forward. A positive coefficient indicates that the attitudes captured by the variable are associated with those who prefer professional associations. A negative coefficient indicates that the attitudes captured by the variable are associated with those who prefer unions. All coefficients reported in the two tables are significant at the 95% level of confidence or higher. In order to direct attention to the substance of the implications of the results, Equation I (Table 3) and Equation II (Table 4) will be discussed simultaneously. The equation(s) in which a variable is significant is indicated below by a “(I)” and/or a “(II)” as appropriate.

B. Professional Associations vs. Unions – Analytical Results

Those professional and technical workers who select professional association as their preferred type of organization report higher levels of job satisfaction (II) than their counterparts who select union. When asked to identify the most important work related issue, supporters of professional associations are more likely to mention ability to exercise professional judgement (I and II), while supporters of unions are more likely to point to procedures for fair treatment (II). Group activities that are more likely to attract participation from those in the professional association subset are professional development events outside of working hours (I and II). By

contrast, the group activities of greater relative appeal to those in the union subset are protests to encourage management to change policies (I and II).

Those attracted to professional associations join employee organizations to gain access to information (II). Those attracted to unions join employee organizations to enhance job security (I and II). When asked for key reasons not to join an employee organization, loss of individual freedom (I and II) is cited more frequently by respondents interested in professional associations than by those interested in unions. The reason some co-workers did not support the recent union organizing campaign, from the perspective of those who prefer professional associations, is that the union caused increased tension (I); from the perspective of those who prefer unions, the explanation is management opposition to the campaign (I).⁶

⁶ Additionally, supporters of unions identify fear of management retaliation as an explanation; though not included in Equations I and II, the coefficient for this variable was significant at the 90% level of confidence in more complete iterations of the model.

Table 2
Variable Definitions

Dependent Variable	Specification	Description
Professional association	Binary: 1 = professional association 0 = union	Preference for a professional association or a union.
Independent Variables:		
Work and Organizations:		
Job satisfaction	Binary: 2 = very or somewhat satisfied 1 = not satisfied	Degree of satisfaction with job.
Professional judgement	Binary: 2 = especially important 1 = not especially important	Relative importance of ability to exercise professional judgement in the workplace (among six work related issues).
Procedures for fairness	Binary: 2 = especially important 1 = not important	Relative importance of procedures to assure fair treatment in the workplace (among six work related issues).
Professional development	Binary: 2 = yes 1 = no	Willingness to participate in professional development activities outside of working hours.
Protest	Binary: 2 = yes 1 = no	Willingness to participate in group protests to encourage management to change policies.
Job security	Binary: 2 = key 1 = not key	A key reason to join an employee organization is to improve job security.
Information	Binary: 2 = key 1 = not key	A key reason to join an employee organization is to gain access to information.
Loss of freedom	Binary: 2 = key 1 = not key	A key reason <u>not</u> to join an employee organization is loss of individual freedom.
Management opposition	Binary: 2 = very important 1 = not very important	Co-workers chose not to support unionization because management was opposed.
Union tension	Binary: 2 = very important 1 = not very important	Co-workers chose not to support unionization because the union caused increased tension.
Opinions of union effectiveness:		
Wages/benefits	Binary: 2 = better wages and benefits 1 = no difference or worse	Professional workers represented by a union have better wages and benefits.
Fair treatment	Binary: 2 = treated more fairly 1 = no difference or less fairly	Professional workers represented by a union are treated more fairly.
Increase security	Binary: 2 = have a more secure job 1 = no difference or less secure	Professional workers represented by a union have more secure jobs.
Better overall	Binary: 2 = better off overall 1 = no difference or worse off	Professional workers represented by a union are better off overall.
Increase tension	Binary: 2 = feel more tension at work 1 = no difference or less tension	Professional workers represented by a union feel more tension at work.

Table 3
Preference for a Professional Association
vis a vis a Union
Equation I

<u>Independent Variables</u>	<u>Coefficient</u> <u>(std. error)</u>	<u>Logistic regression</u> <u>Z Statistic</u> <u>(significance)¹</u>
Work and Organizations:		
Professional judgement	.529 (.209)	2.532 (*)
Professional development	.418 (.154)	2.708 (**)
Protest	-.843 (.227)	-3.715 (***)
Job security	-.478 (.203)	-2.355 (*)
Loss of freedom	.348 (.141)	2.471 (*)
Management opposition	-.756 (.336)	-2.254 (*)
Union tension	.705 (.334)	2.107 (*)
Opinions of union effectiveness:		
Wages/benefits	-.388 (.125)	-3.095 (**)
Fair treatment	-.333 (.109)	-3.047 (**)
Increase security	-.456 (.108)	-4.222 (***)
Better overall	-.295 (.107)	-2.754 (**)
Increase tension	.199 (.091)	2.186 (*)
Sample Identifiers:		
Musicians	-.645 (.325)	-1.986 (*)
Registered nurses	.715 (.284)	2.518 (*)

No. of observations = 521 Chi² = 250.87 (***) Log likelihood = 233.7 Pseudo R² = .349

¹Levels of significance: * = .95, ** = .99, *** = .999

Table 4
Preference for a Professional Association
vis a vis a Union
Equation II

<u>Independent Variables</u>	<u>Coefficient</u> <u>(std. error)</u>	<u>Logistic regression</u> <u>Z Statistic</u> <u>(significance)¹</u>
Work and Organizations:		
Job satisfaction	.301 (.143)	2.106 (*)
Professional judgement	.481 (.174)	2.765 (**)
Procedures for fairness	-.392 (.194)	-2.018 (*)
Professional development	.333 (.146)	2.284 (*)
Protest	-1.219 (.208)	-5.871 (***)
Job security	-.963 (.222)	-4.340 (***)
Information	.946 (.307)	3.087 (**)
Loss of freedom	.219 (.112)	1.962 (*)
Sample Identifier:		
Musicians	-1.188 (.281)	-4.222 (***)

No. of observations = 521 Chi² = 144.33 (***) Log likelihood = 286.2 Pseudo R² = .201

¹Levels of significance: * = .95, ** = .99, *** = .999

Advocates for professional associations are relatively skeptical of union effectiveness, convinced only that workers like themselves who are represented by unions experience more tension at work (I). Advocates for unions, however, believe that unionized professional and technical workers have better wages and benefits (I), fairer treatment on the job (I), enhanced job security (I), and are better off overall (I).

Slightly different results from classification tree analysis actually reinforce the message from the logistic equations. With classification trees the data essentially sort by successively dividing based on the variable which best distinguishes between (in this case) professional association and union. So, for example, in one tree the data first divides based on attitudes about overall union effectiveness, and next divides based on willingness to participate in a protest. Three variables not significant in the logistic regressions do prove helpful in constructing classification trees. Supporters of professional associations can be identified by the following attitudes: employee organizations should have a cooperative relationship with management, a key reason not to join an employee organization is that it might create conflict at work, and the effect of top management's actions is positive. Supporters of unions can be identified by contrasting attitudes: employee organizations should be aggressive and stand up to management, and the effect of top management's actions is negative.

In sum, workers who view professional associations as preferable to other organizational forms seem to think of themselves as individual professionals. They are relatively more satisfied with their work, interested in exercising discretion on the job, and attracted to professional development opportunities to enhance their own skills. They are concerned that unions might create conflict or at least increase tension and thus have a negative influence on the work environment. Those who view unions as preferable to other organizational forms seem to blame the employer for work related problems. They are more concerned about fair treatment and job

security and more willing to confront the employer in an effort to address their concerns. Not surprisingly, they give unions high marks for instrumentality.

C. Common Interest in Access to Decision Making

While significant differences between professional association advocates and union supporters are important to recognize, it would be misleading to ignore similarities. The two groups are essentially identical in ranking voice as the most important reason to join an employee organization. Similarly, across the board support is expressed for meetings with management to discuss policies; 92.9% of professional association devotees and 88.3% of union advocates approve. Agreement regarding the desirability of influencing decisions at work may in fact explain why many supporters of professional associations end up voting for union representation even though they have certain misgivings.

In spite of the generally more positive views expressed towards management by those who prefer professional associations, variables reflecting attitudes towards employee involvement programs are neither significant in the logistic regressions nor evident in the classification trees. In fact both groups express modest optimism about employer sponsored participation programs, with 46.6% of professional association advocates and 40.6% of union proponents agreeing that these programs effectively address the career concerns of professional and technical workers. The two groups also concur (professional association 87.6%, union 92.3%) that in order to function effectively employee involvement programs must provide participants access to independent professional advice on questions related to both workplace governance and terms and conditions of employment.

D. An Alternative Perspective on Employee Organizations

For one of the units included in the survey (which will be identified as Sample F) the question regarding preferred type of employee organization was posed differently. Rather than

selecting their first choice, respondents from Sample F gave either a positive or negative reaction to each alternative. Because a discrete choice of organizational preference was not requested, responses from this sample could not be included in the statistical analysis just described. However, the alternative framing does provide additional information from a slightly different perspective.

Most of the questions posted to those in Sample F were identical to those asked of other survey participants and the overall response patterns are consistent. Table 5 compares answers for a few key questions regarding management, unions and employee involvement programs to demonstrate the similarity. As is apparent in the results presented here, the overall responses from Sample F tend to be both a little less supportive of management and a little more skeptical of unions than responses from other survey participants. Nonetheless, this group is a little more positive towards cooperation and employee involvement. Now turn to Table 6 which summarizes attitudes of those in Sample F towards types of employee organization.

Table 5
Comparative Attitudes
(percents)

	Sample F	All Other Samples
Positive aspects of unions outweigh negative	47.8	62.3
Unionized professional and technical workers are better off overall	60.2	62.2
Would vote in favor of union representation in a hypothetical election	64.4	59.9
Employee involvement programs effectively address career concerns of professional and technical workers	47.8	44.5
Employee organizations should cooperate with management	87.2	80.2
The effect of top management's actions is positive	39.3	42.7

Table 6
Attitudes Towards Types of Employee Organization
Sample F
(percents)

Percent of sample F positive	Type of employee organization	For each type of organization, percent who are also positive towards each other type:			
		Union	Professional Association	Non-union Association	Employee Involvement
57.4	Union	—	84.2	40.1	57.7
80.9	Professional association	59.7	—	56.2	71.2
54.8	Non-union workplace association	42.0	83.0	—	83.0
69.0	Management sponsored employee involvement committee	47.9	83.5	65.9	—

As can be seen in the left hand column of Table 6, each type of organization is rated positively by a majority of those in Sample F. The highest rating goes to Professional Association at 80.9% favorable. The right hand side of the table essentially reports overlap in positive assessments of different types of employee organization. Thus the bottom row reveals that 47.9% of those who rate employee involvement committees positively also view unions positively, while 83.5% of those positively inclined towards employee involvement are also positive towards professional associations.

Of more direct relevance to this paper, the message is similar to that of Table 1: a majority of those drawn to professional associations (59.7%) also have positive views towards unions. At least for Sample F, the reverse seems to be even stronger with 84.2% of those who endorse unions also giving professional associations a favorable rating. Once again there is evidence that unions and professional associations may have potential for increased compatibility. But what is it that could provide a link between two sometimes very different organizational forms? The next section suggests a potential answer.

E. Centrality of Information Services

For the five samples that comprise the core of the data set being analyzed here, a series of questions was included regarding potential direct services that might be offered by an employee organization. The original objective of these questions was to determine whether some pre-union form might be a viable alternative for those workers not ready to vote for full union representation. Thus the questions were only posed to those who selected an organizational type other than union, i.e. professional association, non-union workplace association, or employee involvement committee. Table 7 reports responses for those selecting professional association, since that is the organizational type of most immediate relevance here.

Responses to this set of questions are directly applicable to the issue at hand. Survey participants who identify professional association as their organization of choice appear to be interested in a broad range of services and benefits. Over 80% react positively to four different types of legal service; response to consumer benefits is also positive, though a bit lower than to legal services. And, as might be expected given the character of professional associations, interest in information services is very high, exceeding 80% for each of four options. In fact, considering all three categories together the specific option garnering strongest support is a perfect fit for professional associations, information about professional conferences and continuing education opportunities at 97.5% positive. More surprising is the second most popular specific service, legal advice if disciplined or discharged with 92.9% positive; this is the kind of service more typically identified with a union rather than a professional association.

When asked which group of services holds the greatest appeal, the overwhelming choice is information services selected by 59.2% of respondents. This is particularly intriguing because this set of services includes not only information regarding professional development opportunities, but also a workplace specific newsletter and computer bulletin board, and a hotline

for advice on job related problems. Professional associations do not typically offer these latter services because they potentially intrude with the relationship between employer and employee. And while local unions often have some type of newsletter, the emphasis is usually on union business rather than more broad reaching workplace information. Union involvement in job related problems is normally restricted to management actions covered by the grievance procedure. It seems that the interest in information expressed in the survey extends beyond the type usually associated with either professional associations or unions.

Table 7
Desired Services of Workers who Prefer Professional Associations

Legal Services:	<u>Percent</u>
Consultation on employment issues	84.9
Advice if disciplined or discharged	92.9
Questions of discrimination	83.6
Family and Medical Leave Act options	80.3
Consumer Benefits:	
Credit card	59.2
Mortgage plan	69.3
Personal legal service	78.2
Personal loans	74.8
Dental/eye/prescription discounts	82.4
Savings and investment plan	87.0
Information services:	
Newsletter about workplace written by co-workers	80.3
Computer bulletin board – workplace specific	80.7
Information about professional conferences, continuing education	97.5
Hotline for advice on job related problems	84.0
Which group of services/benefits interests you most?	
Legal services	16.4
Consumer benefits	24.4
Information services	59.2
Influence on interest in joining employee organization:	
More likely to join if services offered	87.0
Would be the deciding factor	42.0

The importance of these attitudes is underscored by responses to the final two questions in this set. For 87.0% of respondents, interest in joining an employee organization would be enhanced if the type of services specified were offered; potentially more important, 42.0% indicate that this would be the deciding factor in joining an employee organization. These results are all the more telling because the pattern of responses for those selecting non-union workplace association and employee involvement committee is nearly identical to that reported here, although the share that indicate that the availability of these services would be the deciding factor in joining an organization is lower at 27.5%.

There are clear lessons here for unions and professional associations. For unions, an information intensive approach to organizing that address professional issues as well as workplace developments has the potential to attract support from workers whose first choice might be another organizational form. For professional associations, potential members might be as interested in information about workplace developments as they are in information about the profession. Both types of organization could benefit by adapting the techniques of the other while expanding the range of information services offered.

III. The Potential for Convergence

The process of deprofessionalization begins with external attacks on the professional status of an occupation. This usually occurs when the profession's monopoly over knowledge is questioned or when outside entities exercise increased control over the work being performed. In either case, the result is that professionals experience noticeable reductions in authority and work autonomy (Ritzer and Walczak, 1986). The developments described in the opening section of this paper are consistent with those associated with deprofessionalization.

With evidence of lower job security and reduced ability to exercise independent judgement across a broad range of professional and technical occupations, it seems likely that the

opportunities for some type of institutional response should be unusually strong. The increased frustration and inevitable threat to job satisfaction can be expected to enhance interest in collective action particularly if the objective is to exercise voice and recapture control over the work. The changing environment should create opportunities for unions willing to take on some of the functions of professional associations, and for professional associations willing to more directly address the workplace concerns of members. In this context, there is also increased potential for alliances between unions and professional associations.

Professional associations, with an emphasis on networking, information and continuing education clearly understand the occupational needs of their members. However, professional associations are reluctant to address the type of workplace problems associated with deprofessionalization. Unions, with an emphasis on representational services and collective bargaining, clearly understand their members' desire for voice on the job. But, unions cling to confrontational methods eschewed by many professional and technical workers, and do not place priority on the professional development of members and potential members.

Professional associations could benefit from union expertise at addressing problems between employers and employees. Unions could benefit from professional association expertise at providing information and educational services, and at bridging the gap between members of the profession who are managers and those who are not.

Although some professional associations in healthcare are clearly interested in the option of union representation, the path they will follow is largely uncharted. And the increased attention to labor market services from engineering associations is still far removed from the institution of collective bargaining. What is the next step? The effort to bridge the gap between professionalism and unionism has led to some interesting alliances. For example, the Office and Professional Employees International Union has set up a division of "guilds" that has reached

affiliation agreements with a number of small professional associations including organizations of podiatrists, chiropractors, appraisers, helicopter pilots, biofeedback health professionals, and fashion models. Similarly, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) has formed an alliance with the New York State Psychological Association. Although the character of these relationships is still being molded, AFT president Sandra Feldman offers an ambitious rationale:

Union affiliation will help [psychologists] get back their professional autonomy so they are once more free to act according to the standards of their profession... Professionals, who care about the service they provide and whose first concern is the well being of the people they serve... want to maximize their ability to exercise their professionalism. They can't do it alone. That's where unions come in (Feldman, 2000).

If unions can accomplish what Feldman suggests, more alliances with professional associations are certain to follow. Protecting professional autonomy is no easy task. Where unions have achieved collective bargaining status for units of professional and technical workers, the challenge will be to develop innovative relationships with employers. Where formal union representation has not been established (as is the case for most members of the NYSPA) unions will need to rely on political influence and alternative institutional arrangements.

The message from the research reported here is that professional and technical workers are highly interested in career development and education, but they are also concerned about what happens on the job. They want information about their profession, but also about their employer and their workplace. They are attracted to organizations that serve as advocates, but they also seek a forum to speak out themselves and the ability to control the content of their work.

There is a natural tension between the growth in professional and technical employment and the deprofessionalization of the work. In this tension there is an opportunity for unions and professional associations to find a common ground. Where these organizations form alliances and reach affiliation agreements there will be the potential to mold new labor market institutions

capable of addressing the multi-faceted needs of the expanding professional and technical workforce.

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