# Declaration

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

## Certificate of readiness to be included in library

# Acknowledgements

The PhD journey is said to be a solitary one.  My experience was quite the opposite.  My PhD journey was blessed with many connections along the way.  This journey would not have occurred without these many connections.  My wife, Linda, to whom this Thesis is dedicated, is the leader of the pack.  Without her, this journey would never have been started.  First, I thank Linda.

I consider myself a lifelong learner.  To travel the road of lifelong learning requires the support, encouragement and advocacy of many.  Making the decision to apply to a PhD program and take on this incredible journey required the sage counsel, advice and encouragement of many.  My Master's research director, Professor Richard Freeman was instrumental.  His words to me that, "this is work that must be done," I shall never forget.  His letter of recommendation, along with Professor Meg Whiston and Associate Professor Michael Heeley's, served as confirmation that this journey was possible and I needed to take it.  Friends, neighbors and professional colleagues also made their case for me to pursue this incredible trek.  Most especially, fellow airline pilots, for whom I hold both admiration and respect.  These people have maintained an eye on me, stayed in touch, and provided ongoing support and motivation to pursue this journey of learning.

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This journey was pursued to understand the "being" of a unique and interesting group of licensed professionals, commercial airline pilots.  The generosity of each one of the

contributors to this research, while they shall forever remain anonymous, will always be forefront in my gratitude. The commitment they made to this research, the meaningfulness of their contributions to the research questions and the phenomenon under study exceeded my every expectation. To every one of you I offer my eternal thanks.

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To each and every one of you I acknowledge your contributions on my journey of lifelong learning.

# Dedication

To my loving wife, Captain Linda S. Bedker, United States Public Health Service (USPHS). An incredible Mom, Registered Nurse, leader, daughter and sister.  She does all of these with grace, dignity and unique acumen.  Her excellence is a model for us all, and has proven to be a beacon for me to try to follow.  She was the encouragement, guiding force and leading advocate in my quest for lifelong learning and pursuing my PhD.

To my children, Bentley and Molly.  My love for each of you is eternal.

# Abstract

This research introduces unionized expert labor to professional identity research with a focus on understanding the professional identity of commercial airline pilots in the United States. The research explores professional identity by directing its attention to two opposing views of identity literature. Whether professional identity is stable and enduring or whether it is socially constructed and malleable. This debate is explored through three lenses of investigation: how professional identity is experienced and defined for commercial airline pilots, how merger-acquisition (M/A) events have aided in understanding their professional identity, and how professionals negotiate their identity in a turbulent unionized context. The data makes a compelling case for professional identity as socially constructed in a dynamic and demanding 21$^{st}$ century world.

The data was conjunctively collected and analyzed utilizing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Over 210 hours of semi-structured, in-depth interviews and over 500 hours of participant observation periods constituted this conjunctive approach. The qualitative methodology and analytics of IPA proved to be effective in individual and professional sensemaking following significant organizational change, making a methodological contribution to organizational studies.

Each of the participants to this research experienced significant organizational change, exemplified in airline merger-acquisition events, affecting their professional lives, professional status and sense of being following their M/A event. The findings of this research contribute new knowledge and expand the literature on professional identity and the understanding of professional identity as socially constructed, malleable and dynamic. The research also expands the understanding of psychological contracts. As a contribution to practice, the research suggests a federal legislative initiative to address the disparate and subordinating union practices currently in effect following an M/A event.

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# List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| **AAG** | **American Airlines Group, also known as AA** |
| **AICA** | **American Independent Cockpit Alliance** |
| **ALPA** | **Air Line Pilots Association** |
| **APA** | **Allied Pilots Association** |
| **BLS** | **Bureau of Labor Statistics** |
| **BTS** | **Bureau of Transportation Statistics** |
| **CAL** | **Continental Airlines** |
| **CAPT** | **Captain** |
| **CBA** | **Collective Bargaining Agreement** |
| **DAL** | **Delta Airlines** |
| **DHS** | **Department of Homeland Security** |
| **DOT** | **Department of Transportation** |
| **FAA** | **Federal Aviation Administration** |
| **F/O** | **First Officer** |
| **IPA** | **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis** |
| **NLRB** | **National Labor Relations Board** |
| **NMB** | **National Mediation Board** |
| **NWA** | **Northwest Airlines** |
| **PC** | **Psychological Contract** |
| **RLA** | **Railway Labor Act** |
| **SWA** | **Southwest Airlines** |
| **TWA** | **Trans World Airlines** |
| **UAL** | **United Airlines** |

# Glossary

**Airline Transport Pilots License (ATP):**  The license required to fly as Captain on a United States registered commercial airliner.

**Bid**:  A monthly process where a pilot requests his/her monthly schedule of flights.  This term is also used to describe the aircraft, position and operation a pilot is assigned (eg. Boeing-777, Captain, International).  Each of these processes is a function of seniority.

**Commuter**:  A commuter is a pilot who lives in a place other than their assigned domicile or base.  In order to get to work the pilot commutes to their assigned domicile or base to commence their flight sequence.

**Domicile/Base**:  The airport(s) that a pilot's flight sequence normally begins and ends.

**Fence**:  A contractual limitation of a pilot's professional practice.  It could limit a pilot's ability to fly a specific aircraft, limit base or domicile options, restrict seat or bid position, and impose time constraints to have these restrictions expire.  Any of these would constitute a fence.

**Glass Cockpit:**  A digital cockpit with digital instrumentation, often referred to as TV screens.

**Licensed Professional:**  A person with advanced training and experience to meet the requirements for licensure to practice a profession.  A current license is a requirement to practice the profession.

**Major Airline:**  In the United States the major airlines include: American, Delta, United and Southwest.

**Transportation Security Administration (TSA):**  A U.S. government agency empowered to control access at airports.  TSA personnel are federal employees that act as gatekeepers for passenger access to commercial airline gates/flights.

**Unionized Expert Labor:**  A licensed professional employee who has, as a requirement of ongoing employment, membership in a union.

# Chapter 1  Introduction

## 1.1  PREAMBLE

This research explores the professional identity of members of unionized expert labor in the United States.  The research population is comprised of licensed professional commercial airline pilots employed by every major U.S. airline.  Qualitative methods, specifically Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), are utilized as the analytic framework to begin to understand the identity of these unionized professionals (Smith et al., 2009).  Three-phase, semi-structured, in-depth interviews following the Dolberare and Schuman interviewing approach and participant observation periods serve as the means of data collection on this little researched population (Seidman, 2006; Schuman, 1982).  This conjunctive approach provides both a broad (over 500 hours of participant observation) and deep (over 210 hours of in-depth interviewing) contextual perspective to begin to understand the being of this uniquely situated population (Heidegger, 1962).  Significant organizational change, specifically, merger-acquisition events, showcases the professional identity of these members of unionized expert labor (Pratt et al., 2006).

Contextual perspective and a sensitivity to context provide the starting points for this thesis. Pilots contributing to this research were keenly aware of the historical context of their profession.  This research explores the new and different lived experience for contemporary pilots to begin to understand their "being" (Heidegger, 1962).  This research seeks to understand the professional identity of members of unionized expert labor following industry consolidation and significant organizational change.  This goal is accomplished through exploration of two opposing views of professional identity.  First, whether professional identity is primarily stable and enduring (Schein, 1978) or whether professional identity is more socially constructed, malleable, and dynamic (Ibarra, 1999).

## 1.2  TERMS AND THEIR INTERCHANGEABLE USE

Certain terms will be used interchangeably throughout this thesis.  Commercial airline pilots employed by major airlines in the United States are the research population.  As employees they are members of the workforce (labor) of their employing airline.  They require a license, an Airline Transport Pilots (ATP) license, to fly as Captain.  All of the participants contributing to this research, whether Captains or First Officers (F/O's), are ATP's.  The commercial airline pilots of each of the major airlines in the United States are also required to

be a member of a union as a condition of ongoing employment with their employing airline. Gardner and Shulman (2005) set out the characteristics for a profession and professionals. They include: "a commitment to serve in the interests of clients (passengers and crew) in particular and the welfare of society in general (safety of flight)…a specialized set of professional skills, practices and performances unique to the profession (flying a commercial airliner)…the developed capacity to render judgments with integrity under conditions of both technical and ethical uncertainty (command authority, responsibility and accountability)…an organized approach to learning from experience both individually and collectively and thus, of growing new knowledge from the contexts of practice (reflective practitioner, simulator training, line checks, recurrent training)…and the development of a professional community responsible for the oversight and monitoring of quality in both practice and professional education" (FAA, check airman, union, professional standards committee) (Gardner and Shulman, 2005, p. 14). Consequently, the terms expert (licensed) labor, unionized (member of a labor union) expert labor, and licensed (ATP) professional (Gardner and Shulman characteristics) are all descriptors of the contributors to this research and are utilized interchangeably.

## 1.3 THE AIRLINE INDUSTRY TODAY: BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Today's airline pilot is an employee in a capital intensive business that strains on labor to subordinate employee needs to the needs of the corporation (Fraher, 2014). The struggles for the needs and interests of human capital and the needs and interests of shareholders are at the center of the demand for labor and employment relations studies. For employees, the labor-management struggle provides a social context that has social consequences (Akerlof and Kranton, 2010). The social consequences to this once elite profession are the compelling reason for this research.

The study of work, labor, and employment relations in the United States is declining (Crain, 2004; Flanagan, 2005; Piore, 2008; Piore, 2011). However, it has never been more important (Freeman and Medoff, 1984; Hurd and Bunge, 2004; Flanagan, 2005; Freeman, 2007a; Osterman and Piore, 2013; Cahill and Patel, 2013). Union presence and union power have been in a lengthy and steady decline in the United States since the 1970's (BLS, 2014). The effects of this decline in the U.S. are directly related to the economic and social lives of workers, union and non-union alike (Freeman and Medoff, 1984; Hirsch, 2008; Williams and Hoell, 2011; Alvaredo et al., 2013; Fairchild, 2013). The tension between the economic

desires of management and owners, and the interests of workers who are integral to the social fabric and economic utility of the organization, are the source of trouble in the study of work, labor, and employment relations and the focus of this research on unionized airline pilots (Piore, 2011).

This exploratory study seeks to provide insight and understanding to this seldom researched, special case of unionized workers. Every major airline in the U.S. utilizes unionized pilots (Hopkins, 1982). These union members are required to have a license to practice their profession (FAA, 2013). Their union membership and their status as licensed professionals collectively combine to provide a unique research opportunity to contribute new knowledge to the study of unionized labor and professional identity.

The role of seniority and the absence of portability of one's seniority in this unionized expert labor group is central to understanding the professional identity of unionized expert labor in the United States. As Figure 1.1 illustrates, the airline industry employed over 400,000 people in 1990, and employment rose to over 500,000 after 2000. Today, following economic unrest and significant organizational change, employment in the U.S. airline industry is below 400,000; there are fewer airlines, fewer employees and, specifically, fewer pilots, for the industry and, because of this, key employees have undergone transformative change.

**Figure 1.1** SCHEDULED PASSENGER AIRLINE FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT EMPLOYEES, MONTH
OF SEPTEMBER, 1990-2014
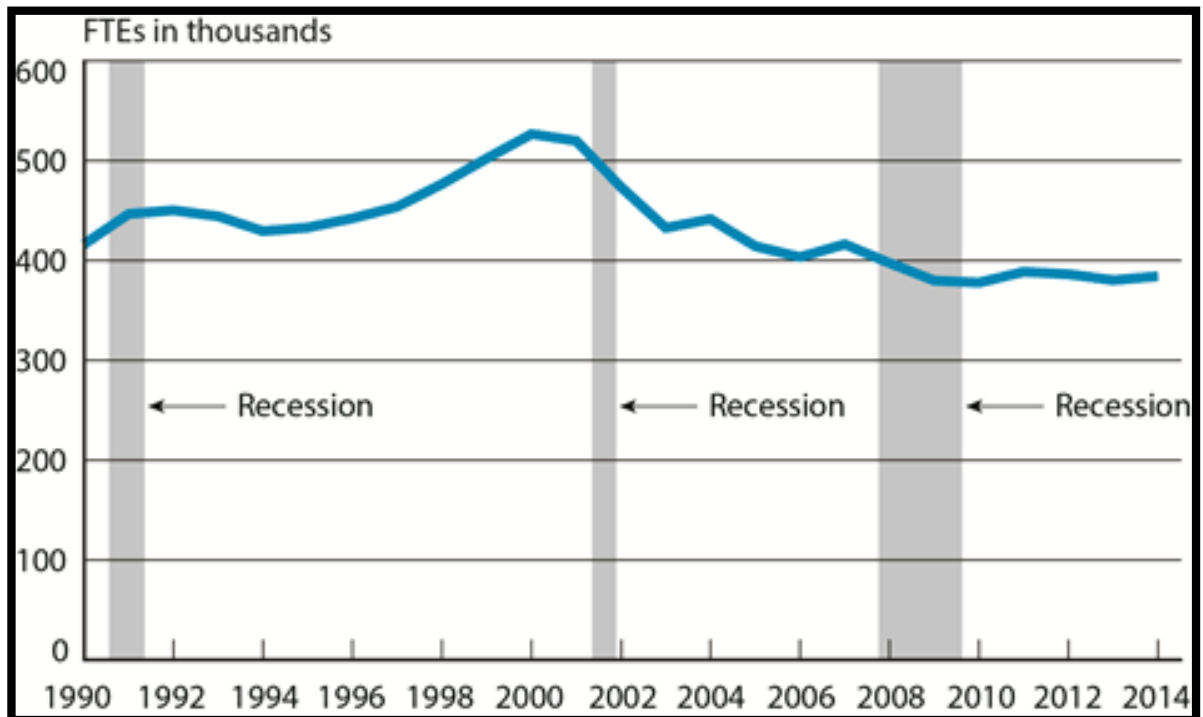


*Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics (2014)*

Currently, the largest airline in the world, the American Airlines Group (AAG), endured three bankruptcies in the merging of four legacy carriers to arrive at their current organizational state (Yellin, 2014). Delta Airlines and Northwest Airlines each filed for bankruptcy prior to merging into their current state (Yellin, 2014). United Airlines experienced a lengthy bankruptcy prior to merging with Continental Airlines (Yellin, 2014). The merger-acquisition events displayed in Figure 1.2 provide a thematic display of this transformed organizational setting. The financial impact that the U.S. airline industry experienced following 9/11 precipitated bankruptcies and merger-acquisition events that have altered the practice of a profession and introduced doubt in the career progression of expert labor. The unionized expert laborers' relationship not only with fellow professionals, but also their relationship with their union, employer, and their profession, have all been altered as a result of their lived experience of significant organizational change.

**Figure 1.2    HORIZONTAL MERGERS IN THE UNITED STATES AIRLINE INDUSTRY SINCE 2000**
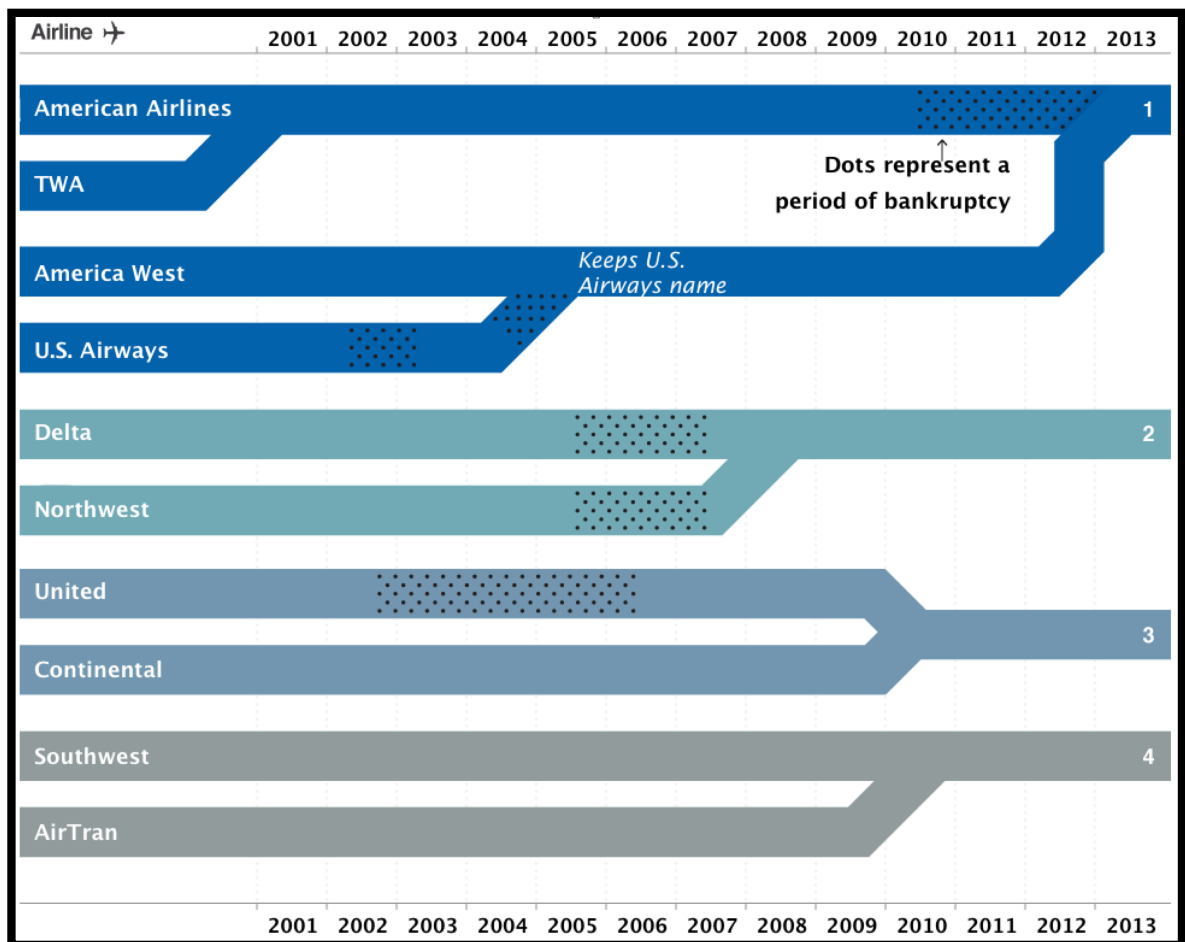


*Source: (Yellin, 2014)*

## 1.4    CURRENT STATE OF UNIONIZED EXPERT LABOR RESEARCH

Positivism has been and remains the "dominant mode of conducting scientific investigations in management and organizational research" (Anosike et al., 2012, p. 1).  Such has been the case in the study of unionized expert labor.  Nomothetic approaches, where data is positivistically compiled, however, prevents "analysis of the individual who provided the data in the first place" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 30).  The central research interest of this thesis is individuals, members of unionized expert labor, and understanding who they are.

Labor scholars have contributed to define and provide context to understanding unionized professional employees (Freeman and Medoff, 1984; Hurd, 2000; Hurd and Bunge, 2004; Freeman, 2007a; Freeman, 2013; Flanagan, 2005; Flavin et al., 2010).  Labor scholars historically have, however, also taken a largely empirical approach to work, labor, and employment relations in the research (Friedman and Schwartz, 1963; Hurd, 2000; Hurd and

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Bunge, 2004; Freeman, 1980; Williams and Hoell, 2011). Research in Industrial Relations and Labor Relations have followed a similar nomothetic path (Piore, 2008; Whalen, 2008).

The significance of these research streams, largely focused on fiscal capital rather than human capital, is evidenced in research regarding the commodification of professional labor as a means of enhancing the potential for financial success (Crain, 2004; Flanagan, 2005). A group of employees, licensed to practice a profession, would be thought of as a group of workers with marketable skills (Becker, 1976; Davis, 1995; Friedman et al., 2007; Davis, 2011). Professional employees would be seen as an employee group that needs to work within the framework of the organization, to comply with the orders given to them, and generally to conform (Bowles and Gintis, 2011; Prasad and Prasad, 2000). This stems from the understanding that organizations are "goal-directed" and require a "certain coherence" (Ashforth et al., 2011, p. 1152). From the employer or management point of view, a group of licensed professional employees would be thought of as human capital; a corporate commodity with a set of skills, knowledge, and expertise to contribute to the utility and productivity of the enterprise (Becker, 1976). Each of these descriptive efforts contributes valuable data, but does little to inform who these members of unionized expert labor are.

Schultz's (1961) work displays a workers skills and knowledge as capital, and Becker's (2009) seminal book, *Human Capital*, applies economic analysis to the worth of a workers investment in self and relates this investment to an organizations investment in raw resources such as equipment. The raw resources of this research are commercial airline pilots. The awareness of the value of human capital relates to this research in the way professional identity manifests itself in a unionized expert labor setting where the organization, the airline, and its key employees, pilots, have opposing views of human capital.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), and other federal agencies having regulatory responsibility, oversight, or control of the airline industry have mandated a dearth of data on the airline industry (Levine, 1986). The opportunities for quantitative research have been so vast, Levine (1986) has referred to this research focus as a cottage industry.

The subjects of this research are unionized commercial airline pilots, employed by U.S. airlines. This population was chosen for several reasons. There is a burgeoning interest in academic research involving professional identity (Clarke et al., 2009); however, professional identity research involving commercial airline pilots is absent. Further, there is an absence in

professional identity literature involving unionized expert labor. This research contributes and expands the extant literature on professional identity, focusing on unionized expert labor, by not only filling a qualitative gap in the literature, but more importantly, by contributing new knowledge on professional identity on a qualitatively unexplored domain.

### 1.4.1 WHAT A QUALITATIVE STUDY CAN CONTRIBUTE

Qualitative methods provide the opportunity to explore and understand the professional identity of an organization's key employee, a licensed professional, without whom the organization would be unable to deliver the service the organization is in the business of delivering (Dabos and Rousseau, 2013; McDermott et al., 2013). The central interest of this research is to explore the professional identity of members of airline unionized expert labor in the United States and to showcase professional identity as a result of significant organizational change. Qualitative research provides the means and methodological approach to begin to understand self-identity following important life events (Smith, 2015).

### 1.4.2 WHY THE SELECTION OF IPA

Qualitative methods are utilized in this research. Qualitative methods explain how people "make sense of their world and the experience they have in the world" (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). The specific qualitative approach of this study design utilizes Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA focuses on "how people make sense of their major life experiences" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 1). IPA focuses on lived experience that is particularly significant to the lives of individuals (Smith et al., 2009).

Three theoretical perspectives form the core of an IPA research study design: phenomenology, hermeneutics and ideography (Smith et al., 2009). Phenomenology benefits the study design by providing "a rich source of ideas about how to examine and comprehend lived experience" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 11). Hermeneutics, reflecting on the part and the whole of one's lived experience, and the circularity of this dynamic human relationship, further benefits the study design (Smith et al., 2009, p. 28). An understanding of how the part informs the whole and how the whole informs the individual parts of one's lived experience benefits this study design through the relationship of a hermeneutic circle (Smith et al., 2009). Lastly, seeking the essence of a lived experience involves detailed engagement in and understanding of the particulars of a lived experience (Smith et al., 2009). This is the concern of ideography and the third theoretical perspective that informs the study design.

The theoretical underpinnings of phenomenology, hermeneutics and ideography provide the study design and analytic steps to explore the research population. Each of the study design attributes highlighted—qualitative methods and IPA in particular—provide "a fascinating and very rich way of engaging with, and understanding, other people's worlds" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 205).

### 1.4.3 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of this research is to "write in detail about the perceptions and understandings" of the participants (Smith et al., 2009, p. 49). Gaining these perceptions and understandings occurs in conversation with and observation of the participants. Accordingly, engaging participants in in-depth interviewing and observing them in their professional practice environment serve as the methods for the research. Underlying the aim and objectives of this research is the aim to achieve "understanding represented in a way that achieves coherence and integration while preserving nuances" (Elliott et al., 1999, p. 222-223).

#### 1.4.3.1 CONTRIBUTION TO ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) has been used infrequently in organizational studies (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). The methodological foundations and analytics of IPA, however, have proven to be an appropriate and valuable choice in this research (Smith, 2015). IPA's capacity to make sense of events that are meaningful to individuals employed in organizations made a tangible contribution to the research (Smith et al., 2009). The Heideggerian intepretative phenomenology employed in IPA enables both a broad and deep understanding of the research questions and phenomenon explored in this study (Gill, 2014). The sensitivity to context provided by IPA further contributes a social context to begin to understand members of unionized expert labor. Each of the components realized in this research contributes to research theory in organizational studies.

There remains a need and benefit of positivistic approaches to labor research. This research introduces qualitative research, specifically IPA, to labor research. When asking questions of "why" or "how," IPA has proven to be a valuable contributor to organization studies.

## 1.5 STATEMENT OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Three research questions guided the aim to understand commercial airline pilots' professional identity, who these individuals are, and how they understand themselves, following significant organizational change.

Research Question 1: How is professional identity defined and experienced for a member of unionized expert labor in the United States today, specifically United States commercial airline pilots?

Research Question 2: How have merger-acquisition events in the United States airline industry aided in illuminating commercial airline pilot professional identity?

Research Question 3: How do we understand professional identity construction in a turbulent unionized context?

## 1.6 PREVIEW OF THESIS CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 – Introduction

The first chapter offers the reader a modest view of the path ahead. It lays a basis of understanding on the need to pursue this research and a brief overview of the path this research takes to understand the professional identity of members of unionized expert labor in the United States. The chapter concludes by offering a preview of the chapter architecture to provide a glimpse of the approach, method, analysis and outputs of this research.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Two key streams of literature are introduced to define the path of discovery for this research. The first stream involves an understanding of professional identity as stable and enduring (Schein, 1978), and the second stream engages professional identity as socially constructed, malleable, and dynamic (Ibarra, 1999). This debate seeks resolution to define the professional identity of commercial airline pilots. The chapter then provides a review of literature on the key relational agreements contributing to this research known as psychological contracts as well as other theoretical and operational constructs to inform the research. Chapter Two explores the state of research in the field and establishes a starting point for this exploratory research.

Chapter 3 – Research Design and Methodology

Chapter Three details why qualitative methods were chosen, what alternatives were considered and the choice of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as both research design and analytic framework. Each of the contributory and constitutive components of the research design are provided. Epistemological and ontological positions of the researcher and their alignment with IPA are further provided. Chapter Three lays the methodological and analytic framework for this research.

Chapter 4 – Contextual Perspective

Chapter Four begins with taking a global view of the contextual perspectives shared with the researcher. Deregulation of the United States airline industry in 1978 (Board, 1984) provides a temporal and transformative legislative context to show the influence of outside forces on the professional identity of the research population. How deregulation occurred and what this legislative action has meant to licensed professionals who fly commercial airliners are the baseline of this chapter.

Chapter 5 – First Order of Analysis – The Individual Cases

Chapter Five describes seven individual cases that contributed to the semi-structured in-depth interviews shared with the reader. Over 30 hours were spent with each participant volunteer interviewee and linked informants of their airline. The Dolbeare and Schuman three-phase interview approach, known as phenomenological interviewing, was employed to conduct each interview. Key emerging themes for each phase of the interviews are offered for each case. A synthesis of each participant volunteer interviewee case case is then offered for both pre-merger and post-merger lived experiences.

Chapter 6 – Second Order of Analysis – Cross-Case Review

Following the individual case analysis offered in Chapter Five, Chapter Six considers the collective lived experiences of the participants. This chapter prompts the researcher to identify convergence and divergence across the seven cases to identify themes present across the individual cases and coroborated in participant observation. The analytics of IPA and additional orthoganal components provide the proven methods to ensure the meaningfulness of the data in the cross-case review. Participant peripheral events emerging from the research and a crew peripheral event are offered to broaden the cross-case review. A series of high order discussions is further offered in this chapter to inform the collective understanding of

what it means to be a commercial airline pilot and better understand who they are. Chapter Six concludes with the subordinate and superordinate themes emerging from this research.

Chapter 7 – Discussion

The discussion chapter takes the first and second order of analysis and enters an expanded conversation with each of the emerging themes. Each superordinate theme is linked to the literature, methodology and voices of the contributors to arrive at the findings. Four contributions to new knowledge are offered in the professional identity literature. A professional identity model is thematically offered to better understand each finding of this research. Chapter Seven delivers the findings of this exploratory research.

Chapter 8 – Policy Implications of the Research

One recommendation is suggested to alter current union practice regarding seniority integration of members of unionized expert labor following a merger-acquisition event. Chapter Eight takes the recommendation from the participants and operationalizes how this public policy recommendation could be enacted. A legislative initiative is offered as the choice of the participants to effect change and operationalize a National Seniority List for commercial airline pilots in the United States.

Chapter 9 – Summary and Conclusions

Chapter Nine summarizes the four findings and one policy recommendation of this research. Each of these represents the originality of the research and contributions to new knowledge. Limitations of this research and recommendations for future research are offered. The researcher concludes the chapter with a summary of his reflexive journey in embarking and pursuing this rsearch. The summary and conclusions represent a beginning rather than an end. Further research is needed to better understand this uniquely situated profession.

## 1.7 SUMMARY

This exploratory research contributes to and expands professional identity literature. It does this by engaging in the debate between the opposing views of professional identity thought as either stable and enduring or as socially constructed, malleable and dynamic. The reserch introduces IPA to organizational studies as a methodology and analytic framework to understand the being of individuals when something important happens to them (Smith et al., 2009).

Similarly, the research contributes a new dimension for the understanding of psychological contracts. The relational arrangements between unionized professionals, their union and their employing airlines contribute new knowledge to the understanding of psychological contracts.

Further, the research suggests a legislative initiative to address the contentious and adversarial relations between members of unionized expert labor following a merger-acquisition event. The rivalries between members of unionized expert labor following an M/A event resulting in contentious and litigious events involving every airline of this research provide the need for a legislative initiative.

As an added benefit of each of these contributions and recommendation, this research offers a professional identity model to thematically view and help to understand the unique positioning of this population of unionized licensed professionals. This professional identity model aids in beginning to understand how professional identity is formed and negotiated and the identity work processes incumbant in this professional group following significant organizational change.

This research introduces unionized expert labor to professional identity research. It does so by taking a qualitative approach. This exploratory study also introduces IPA as a powerful and beneficial methodology and analytic framework to organizational studies. These foundational components enable an understanding of professional identity in unionized expert labor.

# Chapter 2  Literature Review

## 2.1  INTRODUCTION

Exploratory research begins with curiosity (Stebbins, 2001).  Commercial airline pilots spark curiosity.  Passengers entrust their lives, their familes and loved ones, friends and colleagues, with this little known population.  Who are these people?  "Exploration work has long been characterized as a brief, fleeting, preliminary stage in the research process that gives way – the sooner the better  – to the real thing" (Stebbins, 2001, p. v).  This literature review will attempt to be both brief and preliminary.  In an effort to "get to the real thing" a starting point is necessary.  This literature review endeavors to establish a starting point to explore a seldom researched case, commercial airline pilots in the United States.  The intention of this chapter is to put the researcher "in a place where discovery is possible" (Stebbins, 2001, p. vi).

There is a growing interest in the study of professional identity (Clarke et al., 2009, p. 5; Brock, 2006; Jeacle, 2008; Vloet and Van Swet, 2010; Farrell, 2011; Rus et al., 2013).  Research on professionals and institutional change has also benefitted from a growing body of scholarship (Greenwood et al., 2002; Fenton and Pettigrew, 2006; Kellogg, 2009; Suddaby and Viale, 2011; Muzio et al., 2013; Ramirez, 2013).  The post-9/11 world and post-2008 recession have transformed organizations.  These events have also transformed the U.S. workforce (Drucker, 2011).

Across the workforce, identity is a term without clear conceptual framework or constructs (Abdelal et al., 2006; Beijaard et al., 2000; Gee, 2000).  The reason for this lack of clarity in understanding professional identity across the professions stems from the view that identity is "produced as a lived experience of participation in specific communities" (Wenger et al., 2008, p. 151).  This context, one's professional lived experience in a specific community, contributes to how a professional negotiates and understands their identity (Battey and Franke, 2008).

Three research questions guide this review.  The first explores how previous research may help to explain the definition and experience of professional identity for members of unionized expert labor in the United States, looking specifically at United States commercial airline pilots.  The second research question seeks to understand how significant orgnizational change, exemplified in this research by merger-acquisition events, showcases the professional identity of members of unionized expert labor.  The final research question explores the

professional identity construction of members of unionized expert labor in the turbulent unionized context of this research. Each section of this review is mindful of the literature that may contribute to understanding the professional identity of commercial airline pilots in the United States and answers to each of the research questions.

> **Research Question 1: How is professional identity defined and experienced for a member of unionized expert labor in the United States today, specifically United States commercial airline pilots?**
>
> **Research Question 2: How have merger-acquisition events in the United States airline industry aided in illuminating commercial airline pilot professional identity?**
>
> **Research Question 3: How do we understand professional identity construction in a turbulent unionized context?**

This review commences by considering two streams of identity literature and their opposing conceptual views of both the person (the I) and the professional (the me) (McAdams, 2013). These opposing views contribute to the curiosity of the professional identity of commercial airline pilots. How do commercial airline pilots see themselves, how do others view them, and, for the aim of this research, how do the views of acquiring pilot groups vis-à-vis acquired airline pilot groups view each other following a merger-acquisition event? Each of these questions seeks to inform who these members of unionized expert labor are.

The first stream will review the understanding of professional identity as stable and enduring (Schein, 1978). This stable but evolving life cycle view of the I and the me and how one's life story contributes to the I and the me will be reviewed in the first stream (Erikson, 1998; McAdams and Zapata-Gietl, 2015). The second stream will consider the opposing view where identity literature advances a more social constructionist perpsective on the understanding of the self as externally impacted, malleable, provisional and more dynamic than offered in the first stream (Markus and Nurius, 1986; Guichard et al., 2012; Ibarra, 1999; Gioia et al., 2000).

## 2.2 STREAM ONE: IDENTITY AS STABLE AND ENDURING

Schein (1978) defines professional identity as "the relatively stable and enduring constellation of attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences in terms of which people define themselves in a professional role. It is Schein's (1978) position that professional identity is a compilation of experiences resulting in stable and enduring preferences as a professional matures in the practice of their profession. These preferences represent a continuum and

feedback of experiences that define a professional's enduring role, talents and values (Schein, 1990). The challenge of this view is the challenge of matching "the ever changing needs of the organization with the ever changing needs of the employees" (Schein, 1990, p. 1). In this research significant organizational change manifests in merger-acquisition events experienced by each of the major airlines of this research, explores the stable and enduring view of Schein. Disruptive changes in role and values as perceived by the participants will bring the perspective of Schein into the interpretative audit of this research.

Schein describes the concept of a "career anchor" to support his view. He defines a professional's career anchor as "the evolving self-concept of what one is good at, what one's needs and motives are, and what values govern one's work related choices" (Schein, 1990, p. 2). The word picture of an anchor, fixed and rooted, providing stability and grounding to one's career, "grew out of several decades of longitudinal research to capture some of the essential components of how career occupants define themselves in relation to their work" (Schein, 1990, p. 2). This lengthy work and the feedback received from interviewees concluded in the metaphor of a career anchor. It is a professional's need to resolve their sense of self, both the I and the me, and to become clear about the boundaries of these understandings, that becomes one's identity, their career anchor (Schein, 1978; Schein, 1990). Several of Schein's career anchors are worthy of review.

Schein's (1990) research involved Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) students in the Sloan School Masters in Management Program. Pariticipants were interviewed as students and subsequently as early and mid-career managers. Participants were not union members and their skills and experience were portable, both significant differences to the research population of this thesis.

Security emerged as a career anchor, i.e., doing what is necessary to satisfy your employer. The thrust of this anchor was that personal security was achieved when job security was assured. The employee was committed to doing whatever was required to secure and maintain their employment. Schein (1990) describes this need for a job security anchor as "golden handcuffs" (p. 5).

Autonomy and independence were also offered as career anchors. These concepts for pilots were viewed quite differently from the participants in Schein's (1990) study. Participant's demonstration of autonomy and independence grew from the need to control their current and

future jobs.  Not wanting a promotion or a change in worklife, and performing tasks to ensure there would be no changes in their worklife defined their autonomy and independence career anchors.  Pilots view autonomy and independence as command and control objectives and descriptors of "the right stuff" (Wolfe, 2005).  A manager's view, expressed in Schein's research, offers a very different interpretative lens of these important career anchors.

Service dedication to a cause was another career anchor offered.  Participants expressed the importance to their identity to remain in a job only so long as they were able to advance the cause that was identifying for them.  Should their organization's commitment to the employee's career anchoring cause be reduced or eliminated, the significance of this shift would be such that the employee would leave.  In contrast, this option to exercise an exit voice is quite unusual in the unionized setting of this research.  What is similar is a pilot's dedication to service in the practice of flying commercial airliners (Hopkins, 1982).

Schein (1990) then offers the career anchor of pure challenge.  Like the athlete or the salesman, the achievement of excellence at the highest level is the pure challenge; not only to do one's best, but to be better than those with whom they compete.  This career anchor is defining for who they are.  This anchor speaks to professional standards of practice and professional status; both important to the pilots of this research.

Lastly, Schein offers lifestyle as a career anchor.  How one sees themself and how others view them is important (Gecas and Burke, 1995).  Position, title, responsibility and commitment to their organization and profession all contribute to identifying the I and the me in this career anchor.  The price one is willing to pay for each of these identifying attributes to one's profession and organization must be in sync with the lifestyle anchor that defines the person.  Each of the career anchors offered by Schein (1990) seeks a continuity to identification of the I and me.

Schein's (1978; Schein, 1990) view of professional identity as relatively stable and enduring is expressed via career anchors that ground the I and the me of one's self to preferences of role, talent and values.  Each of these preferences speaks to stable and enduring qualities which an individual seeks, develops and endeavors to maintain.  These preferences define their professional identity (Schein, 1990).  Prospectively, Schein (1990) believes that professionals will continue to embody role, talent and values consistent with a relatively stable and enduring professional identity, but "organizations will probably be more fluid

systems and the nature of the psychological contracts between employers and employees will be much looser and dynamic" (p. 19).

The career anchors offered by Schein define a relatively stable and enduring view of professional identity.  Other scholars have taken similar views relying on a person's need for continuity in their personal and professional life as well as fulfilling a need to exist within an ethical framework.

It was Erikson (1950) who first wrote of identity formation following childhood.  Erikson (Schwartz, 2001) "spoke of personal identity as the set of goals, values, and beliefs one shows to the world" (p. 10).  Erikson's view of identity posits that individuals reside between the dimensions of "identity synthesis and identity confusion" (Schwartz, 2001, p. 9).  Identity synthesis "represents a reworking of childhood and contemporaneous identifications into a larger self-determined set of self-identified ideals, wheras identity confusion represents an inability to develop a workable set of ideals on which to base an adult identity" (Schwartz, 2001, p. 9).  Erikson argues that individuals may be placed at any point on or between these identity opposites, but closer to the identity synthesis pole would be consistent with healthy functioning (Erikson, 1950; Erikson, 1968).  The identity synthesis pole addresses the need for self-knowledge over confusion when considering the self.  Erikson calls this understanding of identity synthesis as "a present with an anticipated future" (Erikson, 1968, p. 30).  A healthy individual's sense of self and future self-identity exhibits continuity Erikson (1950; Erikson, 1998) argues, which correlates with Schein's sense of professional identity as stable and enduring.

Like Schein, Erikson describes a duality of self.  Erikson defines the duality of self as "I and we" (Erikson, 1998, p. 85-88).  The I speaks to an individual's self-awareness and the we represents a tie which binds individuals together (Erikson, 1998).  It is one's linkage to self and the world that displays one's identity.  This linkage involves context.  Over one's life cycle Erikson's view of identity "was postulated to be temporally consistent and resistant to change" (Schwartz, 2001, p. 10).  These linkages between the self and the world begin at a very young age (Erikson, 1980).  As an individual matures, in this stable and enduring view, the attributes of "belonging, attachment, and belief" (p. 40) are temporally consistent as an individual advances in their life cycle from early family life to, later on, one's organizational life, as a measurement of one's identity (Barbour and Lammers, 2015).

The context of one's life cycle is critical to understand one's identity.  Erikson (1998) states "an individual life cycle cannot be adequately understood apart from the social context in which it comes to fruition.  Individual and society are intricately woven, dynamically interelated in continual exchange" (p. 114).  Over time, in this continual life cycle exchange, one's identity remains resistant to change (Erikson Erik, 1974).  This resistance to change can become controlling to one's identity.  Individuals may become identity dependent on external norms and values (Josselson, 1987).  This argument has come under critical review because of its failure to address the origin of one's initial identity (Adams, 1997).  Ashcraft (2007) argues that one's initial identity may emanate from "deeply gendered metaphors of military and fraternal rites of initiation and passage" (p. 22).  Several of the contributors to this research come from military backgrounds or military families.

The implications for commercial airline pilots raises two immediate questions.  Does the personal identity of commercial airline pilots allow for control or dependence to prevail in seeking an understanding of self?  If this is possible on the individual identity level, does their collective identity, either as members of a union or as the "brand" of their employing airline, have sway in their identification?  For this first stream of identity understanding, either or both constructs would require some legitimacy.

The life cycle understanding of identity and its continuity seeking in stability and endurance of one's identity is further explored by McAdams (2001; McAdams, 2013; McAdams and McLean, 2013; McAdams and Zapata-Gietl, 2015).  McAdam's (1997) view engages "the post-modern emphasis on multiplicity" (McAdams, 2001, p. 116).  One's multiplicity is viewed phenomenologically in an integrative manner through daily life (McAdams, 1997).  "McAdams life story model of identity tends to emphasize the integrative nature of stories" (McAdams, 2001, p. 116).  The life stories advanced by McAdams rely upon "autobiographical memory to locate and ground the self within an ongoing life story" (McAdams, 2001, p. 117).  These life stories inform an individual's identity through a reflexive encounter between the I and the me.

The I and the me of one's self builds upon a "tripartite framework for the study of human personality" (McAdams, 2013, p. 273).  These psychological frames include the individual as actor, agent and author (McAdams and Pals, 2006; McAdams, 2013).  The actor frame encompasses "semantic representations of traits, social roles, and other features of self that result in and from repeated performances on the social stage of life" (McAdams, 2013, p.

273). As the individual develops from middle to late childhood, the agential frame emerges as an individual develops motivation to explore and commit to "life projects" (McAdams, 2013, p. 273). Sitting atop the frames of actor and agent is the autobiographical author, "the self-as-storyteller who ultimately aims to burnish and synthesize episodic information about the self into a coherent and integrative life story" (McAdams, 2013, p. 273).

The challenge to this tripartite framework is confronted by the individual upon reflection of how the self of yesterday became the self of today and how further reflection will aid in understanding the anticipated self of tomorrow (Addis and Tippett, 2008). Addis and Tippett (2008) refer to the resolution of these ongoing reflections over time as phenomenological continuity. An inability to resolve these efforts of self-continuity could present a range of human dysfunction from dissassociation (Hacking, 1995) to an identity crises (Erikson, 1963). In the case of disassociation dysfunction, dissassociation evokes passivity. Passivity leads to disengagement in the workplace because one's sense of self is viewed as powerless against the powerful (Prasad and Prasad, 1998). Prasad and Prasad (1998) state, "passive employees are unable and unwilling to engage" (p. 226). The challenges to resolve self-continuity as well as self-regulation and self-esteem may each have identity salience for adults (McAdams, 2013).

Erikson (1963) defines a person's identity as "the accrued confidence that the inner sameness and continuity prepared in the past are matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others" (p. 261). This sameness and continuity of one's identity is consistent over time and presents itself in both personal and professional environments (McAdams, 2013). Stories that an individual constructs to describe their self extend from past to present and forward to the future (Addis and Tippett, 2008). These stories provide what Addis and Tippett (2008) define as narrative continuity. Narrative continuity, it has been argued, is present in one's occupational identity and is displayed in their occupational goals and occupational stories (Savickas, 2011).

Emerging from the literature on stability, sameness, endurance and continuity to describe the I and the me of one's self was the formation of a narrative identity (McAdams and McLean, 2013; McAdams, 1985). Through stories, begun in early childhood and developing complexity as the individual matures, the storyteller makes meaning of what their stories tell them and others about who they are. The storyteller "draws a semantic conclusion about the self from the episodic information that the story conveys" (McAdams and McLean, 2013, p.

236). It is the individual who seeks to sustain and modify their narratives as they mature and advance in their skill and the complexity of telling their life stories (McAdams and McLean, 2013).

These are the views of seminal scholars advancing the notion of identity as stable, enduring, of having continuity and seeking to sustain a life story, a narrative, that answers the questions of who I am and the relationship of the I and the me necessary to understanding one's self. This stream of identity literature takes the human experience in social context and frames a life story ultimately engaging in what McAdams and McLean (2013) describe as narrative identity. It is an identity grounded in stability and continuity. It is an identity that is internally reconciled and ultimately shared as a life story to understand one's self, both the I and the me.

## 2.3 STREAM TWO: IDENTITY AS EXTERNALLY CONSTRUCTED

The starting point to begin to understand the I and the me of one's identity in this second stream begins with context (Smith, 2015). The central research interest of this thesis seeks to understand professional identity following significant institutional change in a unionized setting in the United States, specifically in the context of commercial airline pilots following merger-acquisition events. This contextual framework provides an underpinning to begin to understand the professional identity of commercial airline pilots today, and the transformative nature of the practice of their profession following an externally impactful event to their sense of being and understanding of self (Ashforth and Mael, 1996; Nordenflycht and Gittell, 2013; Smith et al., 2009). This second stream of literature focuses on a more social constructionist view of identity. It relies upon the context of significant organizational change that contributes to understanding one's professional identity (Pratt et al., 2006). Today, "professions and organizations are thoroughly intertwined" (Loewenstein, 2014, p. 65). This second stream of literature seeks to review the literature through this lens to understand the professional identity of United States commercial airline pilots as multiple selves, fragmented and externally constructed.

Significant organizational change involves transformation, a thorough or dramatic change in form (Roach and Bednar, 1997). Significant organizational change has also been described as morphogenetic, meaning that significant organizational change involves a new, permanent and pervasive form (Roach and Bednar, 1997). Fundamental changes to the workplace and the "being" of professional employees are often transformative following significant

organizational change (Ashcraft, 2005; Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly, 2014). A transformative event resulting from a critical organizational change has been argued by Kuhn (2012) to be not a cumulative or evolutionary event, but rather a revolutionary organizational paradigm shift; boundaries, structures, and routines are dissolved and a new paradigm imposed. The significant organizational change explored in this research involves a transformative event (Ashforth and Mael, 1996; Kuhn, 2012; Nordenflycht and Gittell, 2013).

Research suggests significant organizational change aids in bringing professional identity more clearly into view (Pratt et al., 2006). Understanding the professional identity of a little researched population of elite workers requires both a theoretical foundation and practical understanding "of the human individual as part of reality" (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 11). The reality of commercial airline pilots in the workplace is their inextricable linkage to their employing airline and their union.

Gioia, Shultz and Corley (2000) argue that corporate identity "is actually relatively dynamic and that the apparent durability of identity is somewhat illusory" (p. 63-64). They go on to advance their argument by stating that corporate identity may become "unstable and mutable because of its complex interrelationships with image" (Gioia et al., 2000, p. 64). Organizational identity involves the collective understanding of the features that distinguish the organizations from others (Albert and Whetten, 1985; Whetten, 2006). Corporate image is a distinguishing feature, displayed carefully to the external environment as a socially constructed image (Gioia et al., 2000). When a corporate identity and image experience a change paradigm, such as a merger-acquisition event, the identity of employees "is imputed from expressed values, but the interpretations of those values is not necessarily fixed or stable" (Gioia et al., 2000, p. 65). In this tumult, the individual's identity is maintained through interactions with fellow employees and others (Gioia et al., 2000; Clark et al., 2010). The list of others is diverse and may include passengers (customers), rivals (employees at other airlines) and regulatory entities (FAA, DOT, Congress of the United States), as examples (Ashforth and Mael, 1996; Gioia, 1998). Weick (1995) states this point of view clearly – "identities are constituted out of the process of interaction" (p. 20). One's self-identity is framed upon reflection and these reflections are based upon interaction with others (Giddens, 1991).

The concept of identity in this second stream of literature offers a clear opposing view. It is argued, that organizational and personal identitity are not only linked, but they are key to understanding organizations, their employees and those they serve and interact (Clark et al.,

2010; Gioia et al., 2000; Gioia, 1998).  It is the implications of external events, events that are dynamic and mutable, that contribute to one's self-identity construction.

Guichard, Pouyaud, de Calan and Dumora (2012) argue that due to an ever-increasingly complex world in the 21st century adults seek "plurality and relative malleability" (p. 52) to describe their self-identity in past, present and their expected future experiences.  Due to this societal complexity and the view that "social norms about the right way to direct one's life are more challengeable than before, societies no longer provide their members with a set of established and indisputable references allowing them to know with certainty, how to direct their life" (Guichard et al., 2012, p. 53).  Thus, the capacity to adapt to new and different roles for the individual and to construct an identity based upon these changes in a similarly new and more complex organizational construct creates a new dimension for psychological contracts in the workplace (Rousseau, 1995).  This understanding creates a 21st century organizational setting where employers are no longer morally challenged to provide a career to an employee and the employees are no longer expected to commit their career to their employer (Rousseau, 1996; Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Richard et al., 2009).  The commercial airline pilots of this research find themselves in a unique organizational setting where their employer's commitment to them may coincide with this literature, but the pilots may not be similarly able to depart from their employer because of the lack of portability of their skills and experience due to the unionized setting of their employment (Gill, 2009).  The life designing choices available to commercial airline pilots are disimilar to other employee and professional groups of the extant literature (Savickas et al., 2009).

Postmodernism has brought to the forefront a pardigm shift in thought about the previous understanding of identity as stable and enduring (Gergen, 1992).  Guichard and colleagues (2012) argue for a more plural self-identity form they describe as "a dynamic System of Subjective Identity Forms (SSIF)" (Guichard et al., 2012).  An SSIF is defined as "a set of ways of being, acting, and interacting in accord with a particular way of representing oneself, or imagining oneself within a given setting" (Guichard et al., 2012, p. 54).  It is the setting of the individual and the role they are representing in that setting that determines how a person thinks about or presents themselves.  It is a model of self-construction, based on reflection and self-analysis, and grounded by the issues and circumstances one finds oneself (Guichard et al., 2012).  This social constructionist view is predicated on a never-ending change of social context and social experience of their life, their world and how they and others interact in each (Guichard et al., 2012).  This view of identity as socially constructed aims to "explicate

the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live" (Gergen, 1985).

If one is to subscribe to this stream of literature to view identity, the question of how one navigates and constructs an identity in this malleable and dynamic understanding is a question worthy of review. How does a self that was become a self that is, and how will the self that is change to adapt to a future self?

How a person views themselves and how they imagine a future self are interpretations that seek a possible self, an ideal self that the individual would like to become (Markus and Nurius, 1986). The individual can seek to become whomever they wish, but the individual is influenced by "sociocultural and historical context and from the models, images, and symbols provided by the media and by the individual's immediate social experiences" (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 954). Like the other authors of this stream, the possible self is socially constructed, is dynamic, malleable and to some extent constrained by the salience of their lived experience (Stryker and Serpe, 1982; Stryker, 2002). This malleability is concluded by Markus and Nurius (1986) as "the individual's conception of possibility" (p. 966).

Ibarra (1999) operationalizes this second stream of literature. She describes the processes of how an individual negotiates and renegotiates an identity in a dynamic identity construction and identity work environment. Ibarra (1999) expands the view of Markus and Nurius (1986) and the understanding of a possible self and draws upon the social construction and malleable understanding of this second stream of literature. Ibarra operationalizes the opposing view offered in the first stream of literature where identity was thought to be both stable and enduring (Schein, 1978). The next section will build upon this second stream of literature, drawing upon Ibarra's view of professional identity as malleable, dynamic and externally and socially constructed.

## 2.4 IBARRA – OPERATIONALIZING THE SECOND STREAM

There is a growing interest in professional identity, its construction, and how it is understood by one's self and those around them (Clarke et al., 2009). Professional identity has evolved from the field of personal identity, defined by Gecas and Burke (1995) as "the various meanings attached to oneself by self and others" (p. 42). The relationships one has with others and the meanings a person adopts from these relationships establishes an individual's "place in society" (Slay and Smith, 2011, p. 87). Professionals seek to self-define their place

and define their understanding of not only the self, but also how others view them (Slay and Smith, 2011).

Professional roles and professional standing are related to prestige, autonomy, and, typically, privilege (Benveniste, 1987; Slay and Smith, 2011). In the workplace, "people quickly learn that it matters how others perceive them" (Meister et al., 2014, p. 488). The recognition of one's true identity, not a fabrication, is important (Cable and Kay, 2012; Swann Jr et al., 2009). A fabrication can lead to an error in perception by self and others. Meister et al. (2014) define internal identity asymmetry as a belief that one's identity is not properly perceived. When an identity asymmetry is improperly perceived, there is a misalignment of professional image and workplace related identity (Roberts, 2005; Dutton et al., 2010). An individual's professional image is the belief by self and others of how an individual is understood in the workplace (Brown et al., 2006; Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Dutton et al., 1994; Roberts, 2005). The nature and extent of an identity misalignment ascribes to an internal salience hierarchy with different identities invoked in differing situations (Gecas, 1982; Stryker, 1968; Stryker and Serpe, 1994). An identity misalignment can result in an ethos misalignment as a function of one's collective identity (Hotho, 2008). This understanding has salience for commercial airline pilots.

Professional and personal ethics are tangible standards of practice for commercial airline pilots (Fraher, 2014) in what, in this second stream of literature, draws upon the pilot as a multifaceted professional in a high standards system of professional attributes and personal practices. It has been further argued that individuals who identify with these multifaceted qualities of ethos are more inclined to relate humanely with others (Akrivou, 2008; Akrivou and Bradbury-Huang, 2014). As a merger-acquisition event transpires the recurring and episodic challenges of an ethos needy pilot group, often the acquired pilot group, contribute to the identity need of individuals seeking an ethical compass to aid in negotiating their identity (Du Gay, 1996).

The process of identity formation, considering the multifaceted and dynamic nature of one's self, is an epistemological and ontological challenge. Ibarra (1999) provides a process to begin to understand identity negotiation from this stream of identity understanding.

### 2.4.1 IDENTITY FORMATION, NEGOTIATION AND RENEGOTIATION

The process of identity formation involves an ongoing negotiation with one's self and others (Ibarra, 1999). The negotiation and ultimate identity construction is grounded in social

interaction (Mead and Morris, 1934). First is a period of observation; observing role models for potential candidates to emulate; this negotiation with one's self surrounds traits and behaviors that the professional values (Ibarra, 1999). Not only does the professional seek to observe those with professional expertise, but also those with social norms and behaviors that are valued.

The second phase of negotiation with one's self and others in adapting to a new or different professional self involves "experimenting with provisional selves" (Ibarra, 1999, p. 764). A provisional self is a trial self, used "to bridge the gap between their current capacities and self-conceptions and the representations they hold about what attitudes and behaviors are expected in the new role" (Ibarra, 1999, p. 765).

The third phase of negotiation involves an evaluative process of reconciling one's own internal standards and those expected by others and the organization (Ibarra, 1999). It is here that a possible self begins to be defined (Markus and Nurius, 1986; Yost et al., 1992). A possible self, defined as "ideas about who one might become" may not be the person one wants to become, but a person they have chosen to try to be (Ibarra, 1999, p. 765). The possible self is an experiment, and accordingly, is vulnerable to environmental changes (Markus and Nurius, 1986). Environmental changes may involve conflict, conflict with one's self, others, or the organization (Fiol et al., 2009). Table 2.1 provides an overview.

**Table 2.1**     Iʙᴀʀʀᴀ Mᴏᴅᴇʟ Oᴠᴇʀᴠɪᴇᴡ ғᴏʀ Iᴅᴇɴᴛɪᴛʏ Fᴏʀᴍᴀᴛɪᴏɴ

| OBSERVATION | EXPERIMENTATION | EVALUATION |
|---|---|---|
| Possible Selves | Provisional Selves | Potential "New Self" |
| Considering- | Considering- | Consider- |
| Role Models | Imitation Strategies | Assessing and Modifying a Potential New Self |
| Prototypes | True-To-Self Strategies | Conducting an Internal Evaluation of the New Self |
| Identity Matches | Prototypes. | Seeking a View by Other's Evaluation of the New Self |

*Source: (Ibarra, 1999)*

If the experiment is not successful, there is a need to create another self (Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly, 2014).  In the period between the experiment with the previous self and the identification of a new possible self, a condition defined as liminality exists (Garsten, 1999; Gentry et al., 1995; Tempest, 2007; Turner, 1995).

Liminality has three phases: separation, transition, and reincorporation (e Cunha et al., 2010; Kennett-Hensel et al., 2012; Van Gennep, 2011).  Separation, the detaching from a previous self, is triggered by events, events that may be either life or work related (Ashforth, 2001; Pratt et al., 2006).  The amount of identity work required in the separation phase is dependent on the significance of the separation and whether it is seen as a desirable change or not (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010).

The transition phase follows, which is where identity sensemaking occurs (Maitlis, 2009). During the transition phase identity narratives are tested and validated with one's self and others (Ashforth, 2001; Ashforth et al., 2008; Ibarra, 1999; Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010; Maitlis, 2009; Brown et al., 2006; Pratt et al., 2006; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003).  The testing of identity narratives is evaluated by whether others give or withhold support for the new narrative and whether the individual is able to make clear their departure from the

previous self (Ashforth, 2001; Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010; Slay and Smith, 2011). This theoretical framework follows Ibarra's (1999) initial conceptualization of a provisional self.

The third and final phase is reincorporation. Reincorporation envisions a new and desirable self with a new identity (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010). The old self is gone, the new self is clearly present, and the new self is at a place where they can continue to grow and develop (Dutton et al., 2010; Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010; Maitlis, 2009). As an individual engages with themselves and others, the possibility of identity threat will, once again, create a tension between self and others, and the individual will need to react and respond (Petriglieri, 2011). The tension between the acquiring and acquired pilot groups is a phenomenon of interest in this research as it illuminates the professional identity of commercial airline pilots. It is identity conflict that confirms our existence as socially embedded creatures (Petriglieri, 2011; Petriglieri and Stein, 2012).

## 2.5 THE IMPLICATIONS OF STREAMS 1 AND 2

These two streams of literature offer opposing views of identity. The first stream reviews identity as evolving, but primarily stable and enduring. This first stream provides both micro and macro views to consider the professional idenity of commercial airline pilots. This first stream offers a stable ethos for professionals to ground their view of self and others, a continuity and uniformity of professional standards and practices, and an enduring value of collectivism in their union membership. This stable and enduring stream of literature follows the literature of traditional social psychology. These views provide a coherent and stable perspective to be mindful of as the exploration of this research begins.

The second stream reviews identity literature from the postmodernist view. The second stream ascribes to a view of social constructionism. The second stream views identity as multifaceted, malleable and dynamic. This second view provides a greater capacity for individuals to adapt, cope and ascribe to identity strategies consistent with their individual ethos. The second stream of literature provides a research path open to the changing world of commercial aviation, showcased in this research in the context of industry consolidation. Additional change paradigms, including the evolution of technology, organizational structures, and institutional and employee understandings of employer-employee relations are each factors in this research and this second stream of literature provides accomodation for these. The case of advancing technology has particular relevance for this research. Not only is the cockpit technology advancing, but also the world is becoming increasingly

technologically advanced. Research has demonstrated that technology has "altered the relationship between people's work and non-work identities" (Ramarajan, 2014, p. 624). Technology offers a sub-plot for investigation in this research.

Several questions are raised in reviewing this second stream of literature. They include: at what cost to the person (the I), at what cost to the professional (the me), and at what cost to their profession does this second stream of the literature have sway for commercial airline pilots? Is there sway for some pilots but not for others and, if so, why? Each of these questions has salience as the data is collected.

The intent of reviewing the literature of each stream was to put this research at a starting point to begin. These two streams of identity literature put this research in a place where discovery is possible (Stebbins, 2001).

## 2.6 PREVIEW OF ADDITIONAL SECTIONS

The following sections of this literature review will further prepare this research for discovery. The merger-acquisition events contributing to this research provide a tension for contributors and conflict for their view of self. A review is accordingly offered of identity conflict. Relational agreements and their effect on psychological contracts between peers, their union and their employer are also reviewed. The unique positioning of this research in a unionized setting is given theoretical and operational review. Additional theoretical constructs are offered and reviewed to include: socialization, the role of prototypes, reflective practice, sensemaking, environmental jolts, and the quest for autonomy in professional practice. Empirical research involving one of the airlines of this research, United Airlines, is also offered to provide context and operational application to this exploratory study.

Each of these additional sections will contribute to a starting point for this research; a starting point where discovery is possible.

## 2.7 PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY CONFLICT

Conflicts between labor and management are ubiquitous today (Fiol et al., 2009). When one's identity is central to a conflict, that conflict often escalates (Northrup, 1989; Rothman, 1997; Rouhana and Bar-Tal, 1998). Spiraling conflicts emanating from an employee's self-definition are then often difficult to mitigate (Coleman, 2003; Goertz and Diehl, 1993; Zartman, 2005).

In this research the issue of seniority and the integration of seniority following an M/A event plays a key role in defining the professional identity of contributors. The differing views of the proper recognition of the participants respective seniorities and "the varying conditions leading to merging of seniority rosters often result in considerable bargaining effort" (Mater and Mangum, 1963, p. 346). In each merger-acquisition event of this research the bargaining efforts of the respective pilot groups resulted in litigation. Power and the sense of power between the acquired and acquiring pilot groups were at the heart of each litigation. The issue of "power-as-domination is important to understand and how individuals who are dominated can resist" (Pierce and Dougherty, 2002, p. 136). It is important to understand the "legitimacy dynamics when a delegitimizing event occurs at one of the parties during post-merger integration" (Sinha et al., 2015, p. 170). The views of pilots, their union and the management of the newly merged airline may each seek to influence these organizational dynamics. "The negotiation of identity in merging is a dialectic process in which managerial identity regulation aimed at enhancing convergence among groups may be undermined both by groups' attempts to reestablish differences and by a countervailing managerial need" (Langley et al., 2012, pp. 135-136). These many factors each contributes to the sense of being and professional identity of commercial airline pilots.

Research focused on identity conflict and identity threat has several productive streams. Table 2.2 provides a brief typology of empirical research on identity conflict and disparate power relationships in organizations.

**Table 2.2**   **EMPIRICAL RESEARCH TYPOLOGY OF IDENTITY CONFLICT**

| Scholar(s) | Professional Group(s) | Conflict Focus |
|---|---|---|
| (O' Connor et al., 2006; Fiol et al., 2009) | Physicians and hospital management | "us" vs. "them" leadership and autonomy issues |
| (Pratt and Rafaeli, 1997) | Nurses and hospital management | Dress as a means to project Hybrid identities for Nurses |
| (Glynn, 2000) | Musicians and symphony board members | Relationship between artists and business |
| (Fisher, 1983) | Small groups or small communities | Third party resolution of social conflicts |
| (Kriesberg et al., 1989) | Interpersonal and human international relations | Peace talks through human interaction and negotiation |
| (Friedman and Davidson, 1999) | Black and white recruitment populations | Ethnic hiring practices |
| (Tomlinson and Lewicki, 2006) | Differing demographic groups | Distrust resolution in intractable conflicts |
| (Turner, 2005) | Unions | Domestic and international labor group revitalization |

Contentious employer-employee relations in organizations are often longstanding (Coleman, 2003; Goertz and Diehl, 1993; Rouhana and Bar-Tal, 1998; Zartman, 2005). They also often resist resolution (Burgess and Burgess, 2006; Northrup, 1989; Pruitt and Olczak, 1995; Putnam and Wondolleck, 2003). Research highlights a labor-management paradigm, concluding that if one group is to maintain its legitimacy, the group needs to delegitimize the other group (Putnam and Wondolleck, 2003). Group salience requires members of one group not to have a salient identity connection with that of another group, particularly an opposing group (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Tajfel, 1982; Robinson and Tajfel, 1996).

**2.7.1 RECONCILING IDENTITY CONFLICT**

The range of identity research grounded in the interpretation of one's lived experience is a growing research domain with deep philosophical and psychological roots (Heidegger, 1962; Merleau-Ponty, 1996; Kierkegaard, 2009; Larkin et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2009). Similarly, the range of professional identity research is both broad and deep (Ibarra, 1999; Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010; Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010; Obodaru, 2012; Petriglieri, 2011; Pratt et al., 2006; Slay and Smith, 2011). While much research has been done on professional identity, there remains an opportunity to explore a new case – unionized expert labor. This opportunity not only can contribute to filling a gap in the professional identity literature, but also is an opportunity to explore a seldom researched case. To do this requires an exploration of how these members of unionized expert labor identify themselves and are viewed by others (Ibarra, 1999).

**2.7.2 IDENTITY AND UNIONIZED EXPERT LABOR**

This research focuses on the professional identity of unionized expert labor. Scholarship in unionized expert labor is not without theoretical foundation (Durkheim, [1893] 1984). Durkheim (1984) theorized a benefit of organizing professions as a "functional adaptation, a way of organizing work that better serves the needs of clients and society" (Rhoades, 1998, p. 20).

Labor scholars have further defined and provided context to understanding unionized professional employees. Labor scholars, historically, have taken a largely empirical approach to work, labor, and employment relations (Friedman and Schwartz, 1963; Hurd, 2000; Hurd and Bunge, 2004; Freeman, 1980; Williams and Hoell, 2011). Research in Industrial Relations and Labor Relations have followed a similar path (Piore, 2008; Whalen, 2008). The significance of this research stream, largely focused on fiscal capital rather than human capital, is evidenced in research regarding the commodification of professional labor as a means of enhancing the potential for financial success (Crain, 2004; Flanagan, 2005).

A group of employees licensed to practice a profession would be thought of as a group of workers with marketable skills (Becker, 1976; Davis, 1995; Friedman et al., 2007; Davis, 2011). Professional employees would be seen as an employee group that needs to work within the framework of the organization, to comply with the orders given to them, and generally to conform (Bowles and Gintis, 2011; Prasad and Prasad, 2000). This stems from the understanding that organizations are "goal-directed" and require a "certain coherence"

(Ashforth et al., 2011, p. 1152).  From the employer or management point of view, a group of licensed professional employees would be thought of as human capital; a corporate commodity with a set of skills, knowledge, and expertise to contribute to the utility and productivity of the enterprise (Becker, 1976).  Members of unionized expert labor, however, are unique and create their own self (McCall and Simmons, 1978), their own identity (Thoits and Virshup, 1997).

This research seeks to expand and contribute to professional identity research by exploring the understanding of human capital in organizations, and the significance of understanding the role of self and being in organizations (Heidegger, 1962).  This research explores who these members of unionized expert labor are.  This involves an understanding of the relational interplay between employer and professional employee (George, 2009).  The relational agreement, known as the Psychological Contract (PC), offers such an understanding (Rousseau, 1995).

## 2.8   THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Schein (1978) laid the theoretical framework for understanding professional identity, as well as the human relational contract known as the Psychological Contract (PC).  Later, Schein (1978) broadened the conceptualization of professional identity, organizations, and the role of the psychological contract and their interplay, stating, "Though it remains unwritten, the psychological contract is a powerful determiner of behavior in organizations" (George, 2009, p. 5).

A professional's relation with their self, others, and their world is defining for "who they are" (Heidegger, 1962).  These relationships are relational and defined through the conceptual framework of a Psychological Contract (PC).

### 2.8.1   PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT DEFINITION AND OPERATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Argyris (1960) and Levinson (1962) are credited with introducing the term Psychological Contract (PC), but Schein (1965) first described the relational and expectational understanding of the PC, stating that "the notion of a psychological contract implies that the individual has a variety of expectations of the organization and that the organization has a variety of expectations of him" (p. 11).

The PC has several key components.  Each is contributory and constitutive of defining a PC. Among these key components are, that a PC is "promissory, implicit, reciprocal, perceptual,

and based on expectations" (George, 2009, p. 3). Each of these defining components of a PC resides outside an explicit employment contract. Guest and Conway (2002) define the PC as "the perception of both parties to the employment relationship, organization and individual, of the reciprocal promises and obligations implied in that relationship" (p. 22).

A PC is promissory in that employees believe promises are made to them outside the employment contract. The promissory component of a PC may be initiated even prior to employment, often as a condition of future employment (Rousseau, 1995). A PC is implicit in that it is often unspoken; it is assumed, and unwritten. Failure or breach of either party's implied expectation is often evidenced in emotion and visible display of being violated (George, 2009). There is also mutuality to PC's (Rousseau, 1995). A more subtle component defining a PC is its perceptual quality, "the idiosyncratic perception of the employment agreement held by individuals" (Blancero et al., 1996, p. 49). Lastly, the PC involves expectations. Expectations from the employee of their employer, as well as expectations from the employer of their employee, contribute to defining the relational, multifaceted, and complex arrangement that create a PC in a professional work setting (Kelley-Patterson and George, 2001; Levinson et al., 1962; Schein, 1978).

A PC is binding. It is understood to exist for the mutual benefit of both parties (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994). The binding benefit is realized when each party fulfills their end of the bargain. A PC is a way of "interpreting the state of the employment relationship" (Guest and Conway, 1998, p. ix). The perceptions of both parties and the obligations each expects of the other involve a process of psychological contracting (Herriot and Pemberton, 1995). Psychological contracting is the process that employers and employees utilize to imply perceptions and obligations for one another (Herriot and Pemberton, 1995). A PC emerges when each party perceives an obligation has been made in the employment relationship (Rousseau, 1989).

**2.8.2   HISTORIC TRANSITION AND CURRENT PERSPECTIVE OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT**

Rousseau's 1989 article, *Psychological and Implied Contracts in Organizations*, was the impetus for a transformative change in understanding the PC. Pre-Rousseau work on the PC focused on the reciprocal arrangement between employees and their employer, and the relationship between the organization and their employees (Conway and Briner, 2005). As Table 2.3 highlights, the Pre-Rousseau era was focused on expectations, a balanced and

mutual connection between the parties, and formed by basic human needs. The PC is now often discussed in terms of pre- and post-Rousseau (Conway and Briner, 2005).

Rousseau (1989) argues for an understanding of less give-and-take; the previous understanding of expectations being reframed as a promise, and violation taking on a visceral quality. Table 2.3 is a recreation of Conway and Briner's (2005) research describing the pre- and post-Rousseau conceptualizations.

**Table 2.3** PRE- AND POST-ROUSSEAU CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT

| Pre-Rousseau | Rousseau |
|---|---|
| Focus on Expectations | Focus on Promises |
| Involving Two Interconnected Parties | Involving Individual Perceptions |
| Formed by Basic Human Needs | Formed by Individual Perceptions of Behavior |
| Looking for Balance Between Employer and Employee Inputs | Emphasis on Contract Violation |

*Source: Adapted from (Conway and Briner, 2005)*

Following Rousseau, the definition of the PC was amended to focus on the promissory component (George, 2009). The understanding of the PC post-Rousseau has been more focused on the employee perceptions of promises implicitly made to them (Guest, 1998). The post-Rousseau PC has also transformed the focus of the PC from a balanced understanding to a more individual understanding, as highlighted in Table 2.3. Rousseau departs from a give-and-take approach between employers and employees to an approach of violation and breach in employment relations (Rousseau, 1995; Rousseau, 1996; Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1998; Robinson and Rousseau, 1994). A breach or violation of a PC involves either or both parties not fulfilling their perceived promise to the other party.

### 2.8.3 THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT AND UNIONIZED EXPERT LABOR

Unions, a primary interest in this research, offer a special case. Unions are primarily concerned with the employment contract rather than the PC (Freeman and Medoff, 1984).

This is particularly true for trade unions (Freeman, 2007b).  A criticism of the PC comes from Cullinane and Dundon (2006) who argue that unions are pluralistic organizations, and as such are not particularly well suited to post-Rousseau individual thinking about employment relations.

Unions are pluralistic; they exist as a collection of individual members (Freeman and Medoff, 1984).  The theoretical understanding of the hermeneutic circle provides the understanding to respond to Cullinane and Dundon (2006).  The hermeneutic circle theorizes that to understand the whole requires an understanding of the individual part, and conversely, to understand the individual requires an understanding of the whole (Heidegger, 1962).  The pluralistic organization structure of a labor union, is comprised of individuals, who engage in labor–management relations collectively (Freeman and Medoff, 1984; Freeman, 2007a).  It is the foundations of unity and collectivism, central attributes of unionism, where individual union members act collectively and where this collectivism is the source of coherence and security for each individual union member.  This is the counter to Cullinane and Dundon (2006).

The relational arrangements of unionized expert laborers add components to the traditional employer-employee dyad relationship.  Beyond the possibility of establishing a PC with one's employer, the special case of unionized expert labor also opens the possibility of PC's with peers, professional overseers, their union, and their professional association (George, 2009; Toit, 1995).  The additional number of possible PC arrangements contributes to increased complexity in managing and maintaining PC relationships for members of unionized expert labor (George, 2009).  The fact that a union is an independent organization representing unionized expert labor members in regulating a PC contributes both complexity and power (Herriot and Pemberton, 1997; Gill, 2009; Meister et al., 2014).  Unions may mitigate this complexity by facilitating the work practice of expert labor (Freeman and Medoff, 1984).

There are several dimensions of empirical research regarding the role of unions and a PC (Gill, 2009).  Empirical research has addressed alternatives to unions such as work councils or employing the organizations Human Resource Management (HRM) department to address relational issues (Gill, 2009).  Research has also considered the non-union alternative to a union presence in the workplace (Gill, 2009).  Ensuring that employees have a voice and share in the success of the organization contributes to a positive and enduring PC (Rubinstein, 2001). Table 2.4 provides a brief overview of the empirical union research influencing the PC.

**Table 2.4**     UNION RESEARCH INFLUENCING DIMENSIONS OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT

| Author(s) | Research Finding(s) |
|---|---|
| (Freeman and Medoff, 1984) | Unions may facilitate the introduction of more productive work practices. Individuals are structurally prohibited from challenging management authority. |
| (Addison, 2005; Ramirez et al., 2007; McLoughlin and Gourlay, 1992) | Unions can make a unique, independent and collective voice to management. Unions may do this without employee fears of reprisals. |
| (Benson, 2000; Haynes et al., 2005; Kessler and Purcell, 1996; Lloyd, 2001; Machin and Wood, 2005; Ramirez et al., 2007; Ramirez, 2013; Sisson, 1997) | The voice of management is not a substitute for an independent union voice.  Union presence in the workplace increases the voice mechanisms of employees.  Voice mechanisms are more effective in union organizations. |
| (Voos, 1987; Freeman and Rodgers III, 1999; Rubinstein, 2001; Addison, 2005) | Unions improve organizational decision-making, and provide a better long-term focus on organization objectives.  These process improvements improve employee buy-in. |
| (Levine and Tyson, 1990; Black and Lynch, 2001) | When employees feel they have union protection they are more likely to participate and engage in employer workplace improvement programs. |

The central tenets of a relational PC, that it is "promissory, implicit, reciprocal, perceptual, and based on expectations" expose the critical dimensions of a PC that align with the empirical research in Table 2.4 (George, 2009, p. 3). Each central tenet represents a different order of individual psychological engagement between an employer and an employee (Guest, 1998).

The understanding and operational constructs of a PC can become blurred in the labor union context (Gill, 2009). Gill (2009) describes this blurring in the union context as stemming from a union's role in mitigating contract breaches. This introduction of a third party to a PC plays a blurring role in understanding the post-Rousseau PC (Dabos and Rousseau, 2013) between the parties of a PC. The PC understanding of promise versus expectation between individuals is blurred in the union context (Rousseau, 1989).

### 2.8.4 PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACTS AND WORKPLACE OPERATIONS

Whether transactional or relational, the key need for this research is to understand the operationalization of the PC in the workplace, as this understanding informs the lived experience of the research population (Herriot and Pemberton, 1997; Gill, 2009). The empirical research findings display the outcomes of affirmatively managing a PC, but if the experience is not affirmative, if a promise isn't delivered, an implied arrangement is not fulfilled, or the contribution of one party to a PC is not reciprocated, then expectations fall short for either or both the employer or employee. Each of these shortcomings can constitute a breach or violation of the PC (Conway and Briner, 2005). PCs require regular and timely attention, are dynamic, and change over time (Argyris, 1960; Schein, 1978; Rousseau, 1995; Herriot and Pemberton, 1997).

A perceived breach of a psychological contract is a subjective matter (Rousseau, 1989). A PC breach, also referred to as a violation, is a failing of one party to the contract to fulfill their obligation to the other party of the contract (Morrison and Robinson, 1997). Rousseau's (1989) interpretation, refers to a breach as an act of betrayal conjuring a strong emotional sense of injustice and harm.

The frequency of PC breaches has been articulated in empirical research (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994; Conway and Briner, 2002). Robinson and Rousseau's (1994) findings detail the regularity of psychological breach. Conway and Briner's (2002) diary study found that psychological contract breaches occurred on a weekly basis. Sixty-nine percent of the

participants diarized at least one breach in the first ten days of the diary collection timeframe (Conway and Briner, 2002).

A critical byproduct of psychological contract breach is the impact on trust (Robinson, 1996). "Trust is at the heart of the new psychological contract" (Gill, 2009, p. 13).  Robinson's (1996) empirical research indicates the likelihood that an employee with a favorable view of the trust relationship with their employer is more likely to see beyond the breach.  If that favorable trust relationship was garnered early in the employment relationship, it is likely that psychological contract breach response can be mitigated through employer explanation (Boxall and Purcell, 2011).  Guest (2007) argues the significant impact on trust resulting from the convergence or divergence of the promise and delivery relationship of employers and employees.  In the union setting, the trust relationship is directly related to the labor-management relationship (Gill, 2009).  The presence of a strong and effective union in the workplace, supported by a strong and effective management provides the same or greater trust levels to non-union organizations (Gill, 2009).

A consequence of significant organizational change is often a replacement of traditional work practices to new work practices (Gill, 2009).  The success of the transition to new and different work practices is impacted by the trust relationship between labor and management (Bryson, 2001; Freeman and Medoff, 1984; Gill, 2009).

## 2.9   FURTHER THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL CONSTRUCTS OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

As Pratt (2006) offers, significant organizational change highlights a professional's identity.  A merger-acquisition event is a specific organizational change that qualifies as a significant organizational change event (Roach and Bednar, 1997; Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly, 2014).  Historically, scholars have advanced linear or sequential model arguments following significant change (Ashforth, 2000).  Similarly, in the grief literature a sequential understanding was the accepted model (Kubler-Ross, 1997).  More current research has argued for a non-linear and more dynamic process of dealing with loss or significant organizational change (Stroebe and Schut, 2010).

Stroebe and Schut (2010) theorize this non-linear process as having two axes: orientation and restoration.  The orientation axis focuses on the tension complicit in the organizational change and its cognitive basis (Stroebe and Schut, 2010).  Following significant organizational change and continuing into the period of liminality, the professional is preoccupied with who I am (Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly, 2014).  The restoration axis engages in a process of

realignment and who I am in a post-loss world (Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly, 2014). This dynamism between the orientation and restoration axes, Stroebe and Schut (2010) argue, is a basis for identity development. Professional identity development begins prior to employment and is heightened upon employment in an identity construct process known as socialization (Van Maanen, 1975).

### 2.9.1 SOCIALIZATION

Socialization is defined as "the learning process by which newcomers develop attitudes and behaviors that are necessary to function as a fully-fledged member of the organization" (Ardts et al., 2001, p. 159). George (2009, p. 40) expands the understanding "whereby individuals are socialized both into their chosen profession and also eventually into an employing organization" (p. 40). Socialization for professionals is often a lengthy and intricate process (Melia, 1987). It has been argued that socialization occurs at the intersection of identity construction and awareness of the norms and values of the organization (Fleming and Spicer, 2007). Integrating and accepting the values and attitudes of the profession into one's self and acquiring a sense of the norms and behaviors of the profession each involve a lengthy and intricate process of self-conception (George, 2009). Each of these is occurring and ongoing as part of the process of a new professional being socialized in their profession, moving from being an outsider to being an insider (Louis, 1980; Thomas and Anderson, 1998).

Van Maanen's (1975) seminal work describing the socialization of police recruits serves as a model for professional socialization. From the structure of the training to the initial assignment with an experienced police officer, the recruits emerge socialized in their new profession. The recruits were qualified, however inexperienced, but socialized. In this study, socialization for the officers was important to depart from who they were, and assisted in the transition to who they wanted to be (Ibarra, 1999; Ibarra and Deshpande, 2007; Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010). Van Maanen's (1975) research details four stages of socialization, beginning with selection. The selection process for a police officer is lengthy and formal. From the interview process to employment, a psychological contract is being formed (George, 2009). The police force seeks positive and committed candidates, and the candidate displays these attributes in their ongoing engagement and attitude during the selection process (Van Maanen, 1975).

Next is the initial phase of officer introduction. Here, the new officer experiences the competing interests of being a professional policeman and being a member of a police force.

Questions of allegiance arise as to whether the officer is more committed to their profession or to their employer (Wallace, 1993; Wallace, 1995). Next begins a stage of imitation. New officers are favorably ranked in their initial evaluations when they model their work habits and behaviors on their more senior mentors (Van Maanen, 1975). This modeling behavior is viewed as competence, and the new officer wants to be seen as competent (Van Maanen, 1975).

Lastly, officers go through the stage described as metamorphosis. The new officer is no longer new. They begin to engage in terms of plurality, using rhetoric that includes "we" and "us." This mindset goes beyond discussions with their fellow officers and is now embodied in their relationship with others, such as their employer (Van Maanen, 1975). Throughout these stages several different psychological contracts may be forming and enabled, as well (George, 2009). Social identities are not only developed and interpreted internally, but are also observed and interpreted externally (Hogg and Terry, 2001).

In the specific context of union work, the new professional employee is not only being observed and trying to adapt, but they are also observing (Ibarra, 1999). The new professional employee is seeking an ideal self (McCall and Simmons, 1978). This ideal self is a prototype of who the new professional seeks to become.

### 2.9.2 PROTOTYPES

New professional members of an organization seek individuals, known as prototypes, to aid their self-categorization in their new professional environment (Hogg and Abrams, 1992). The prototype is sought to maximize similarities and minimize differences between themselves and the individuals or groups they engage with at the workplace (Hogg and Terry, 2001). The prototype serves several purposes. First, a prototype provides clarity about who one should be as a member of a group (Hogg and Terry, 2001). This clarity seeking is similar to the theoretical construct of an ideal self offered by McCall and Simmons (1978). Each of these practices seeks to reduce uncertainty. Prototypes are described as clear, highly focused, and consensual (Brewer and Harasty, 1996; Hogg and Terry, 2000). It is important to note that neither the ideal self nor the prototypical self necessarily implies excellence in performance or behavior.

Prototypes are environmentally dependent (Brewer and Harasty, 1996). The environmental prototype may evoke less than maximum or optimum performance from a professional as the in-group standard (Hogg and Terry, 2001; Charness and Sutter, 2012; Stets and Burke, 2000).

Aligning with the prototype enhances the professional's self-identity (Hogg and Terry, 2001; Hogg and Abrams, 1992). Hogg et al. (1998) investigates the role of prototype matching where social attractions are salient. This research reveals the need for conformity with individuals in the in group during such times (Hogg et al., 1998). There is, however, a scarcity of research linking the professional identity constructs of socialization and prototypes (Abrams and Hogg, 1999; Abrams et al., 2005; Hogg and Abrams, 1992).

Several questions must be considered to further understand prototypes and these may begin to explain the scarcity of research linking socialization and prototypes (Hogg and Terry, 2001). The first question regards "whose prototype is being used" (Hogg and Terry, 2001, p. 98). As each self is unique, so is the prototype that various individuals may use to evaluate the same individual or group (Hogg and Terry, 2001). Second is the question of understanding the degree of prototype "matching" (Hogg and Terry, 2001, p. 98). While it may be unlikely that the match is precise, the question of "how close must the match be to the prototype" to be acceptable comes into play (Hogg and Terry, 2001, p. 98). Next is the dynamic of time. Time changes the view of individuals, and accordingly, may change the prototype. Prototypes may change over time (Moreland and Levine, 1992). Last is the important role that social attraction plays in prototype identification (Abrams and Hogg, 1999; Abrams et al., 2005; Hogg and Abrams, 1988; Hogg and Terry, 2000). Social attraction is important in both socialization and an understanding of prototypes (Hogg and Terry, 2001). How an individual feels about another individual, their personal attraction, affects their prototype affinity (Hogg and Terry, 2001). The fit between individuals or an individual and a group may be affected by personal attraction (Hogg and Terry, 2001). Understanding which prototype is right, and why it is right, involves reflection (Argyris, 1960; Argyris and Schon, 1974; Paterson and Chapman, 2013).

### 2.9.3 REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Inherent in the practice of a profession is a component known as reflective practice (Schon, 1987). Reflective practice is where professionals learn through their own experience (Argyris and Schon, 1974). An important component of reflective practice is the notion of artistry (Schon, 1987). Schon (1987) defines artistry as "the kinds of competence practitioners sometimes display in unique, uncertain, and conflicted situations of practice" (p. 22). In *The Tacit Dimension*, Polanyi (1967) describes the recognition of faces of people one knows, but is infrequently around, as a form of artistry. When asked to explain how one recognizes, evaluates, and is routinely correct in their determination of such things, Polanyi's (1967)

research shows that people say they have no idea how they are able to perform such acts routinely. They are simply good at it. Flying has its own element of artistry (Ashcraft, 2005; Fraher, 2014).

Reflective practice is often a key contributor in improving professional expertise (McBrien et al., 2007). Professionals are always learning. Reflective practice has benefactors in experiential learning and in the larger unit of analysis, organizational learning (Paterson and Chapman, 2013). In the case of unionized expert labor, there is a regular and ongoing need to display competence and credibility (Ashcraft and Mumby, 2004). These professional attributes are necessary not only for the professional, but for those they serve (Ibarra, 1999).

Potential changes in the capacity to practice one's profession contributes to reflective practice being a construct for unionized expert labor (Fraher, 2013). These reflections are a primary source of professional identity reflective practice and serve as a bridge of understanding for the central research interests of this research study (Argyris and Schon, 1974; Schon, 1987).

Reflecting logically leads the professional to make sense and meaning of their reflections (Weick, 1995; Weick, 2009). This logical progression leads to the professional identity construct of sensemaking.

### 2.9.4 SENSEMAKING

How one understands themselves in relation to their values and lived experience has meaning for a professional and their professional identity (Schein, 1978). The meaning one attributes to their lived experience influences their performance and behavior (Gioia and Thomas, 1996; Maitlis, 2009; Rousseau, 1996). This is at the center of sensemaking: a self-focused process of how an individual makes sense of their self, their performance and behavior, and the attachment of meaning to their lived experience (Weick, 2009). Sensemaking has also been defined as "a thinking process in which newcomers interpret meanings to surprises through interactions with insiders, attribution processes, and the alteration of cognitive scripts" (Saks and Ashforth, 1997, p. 238). Sensemaking is an ongoing process like the Psychological Contract (Weick, 1995; Conway and Briner, 2005). The practicing professional seeks to make sense and meaning as part of their reflective practice (Schon, 1987). Sensemaking in this context is a self-focused process on how one's self makes sense and attaches meaning to the experiences and organizational events that confront them (Saks and Ashforth, 1997). According to Weick (2001), the meaning one assigns to an experience influences their identity enactment, and in turn, the meaning they attribute to the event. A professional's

identity, how they understand themselves in relation to their deeply held values, is more conscious and reflexive than other work groups, and thus more amenable to change (Fiol et al., 1998b). This understanding of the possibility of including fluidity as a dimension of reflection is consistent with multiple theorists, including (Gioia and Thomas, 1996; Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Albert and Whetten, 1985). Sensemaking is used as a conceptual label for both the interpretive process experienced by a reflective practitioner as well as a means to "comprehend, understand, explain, attribute, extrapolate, and predict" (Starbuck and Milliken, 1988, p. 13).

Significant organizational change is an initiator of focused sensemaking (Pratt et al., 2006). This significant organizational change is often a result of an environmental jolt (Meyer, 1982).

### 2.9.5 ENVIRONMENTAL JOLTS

Significant organizational change may surprise employees and management (Meyer, 1982). Significant organizational change may also surprise and evoke impactful responses from expert labor (Lee and Taylor, 2014; Uen et al., 2009). These responses may follow the legal dicta of let the punishment fit the crime (Packer, 1964). While the significant organizational change may be known or anticipated, the actual event brings a reality to both the organization and the employees. Engagement in reflection and sensemaking for expert labor are consistent with professional identity practices, but the response from these experiences may evoke an environmental jolt to the organization (Meyer, 1982; Guzzo et al., 1994; Lee and Mitchell, 1994).

The penultimate environmental jolt response for unionized expert labor would be a job action, often referred to as a strike (Freeman and Medoff, 1984). Strikes are a last resort. When no other means is successful and the parties are at an impasse, a strike provides a last resort for union members, unlike non union employess where quitting or being fired by their employer are the more traditional options of last resort. A strike by union employees may deny an organization its capacity to provide its product or service. Replacing workers quickly is not typically an option in the union setting. Each of these factors contribute to the environmental jolt of a job action by unionized labor.

Legal, governmental and contractual requirements often preclude this option, even when there are several alternatives (Chamberlain, 1926). Among the several options available to unionized expert labor are strategies as simple as calling in sick, creating a burden on the

delivery of professional service through staffing limitations, each contributing to an environmental jolt (Meyer, 1982; Stelling and Bucher, 1972).

In a study conducted by Meyer (1982), a hospital in the San Francisco bay area experienced a strike by physicians.  The strike was the consequence of an insurer attempting to dramatically increase insurance rates, which became an environmental jolt.  A malpractice insurer had abruptly terminated the insurance of a large group of over 4000 physicians.  Insurance coverage was reinstated, but at a 384% rate increase.  Some of the physicians paid, some retired, and some went without insurance.  Shortly thereafter, anesthesiologists at this hospital denied service.  The anesthesiologists went on strike.  The ripple effect essentially shut down operating rooms and all of the ancillary services.  There was widespread support given by other physicians and other health care professionals.  This environmental jolt was a classic example of a sudden, unanticipated, and impactful event (Meyer, 1982).

Often, the first thought following a jolt is one of disruption.  The fork in the road at the point of an environmental jolt has two paths: threat and opportunity (Christensen and Overdorf, 2000).  Christensen and Overdorf's (2000) research on disruptive change makes an argument to see beyond the threat and to see opportunity.  There is a value in exploring organizations and their expert labor outside of a stable and tranquil environment (Meyer, 1982).  The environment of significant organizational change, and the resultant jolt, enables an organization and expert labor the opportunity to reacquaint themselves with one another, and "inspire dramas celebrating" who they are (Meyer, 1982, p. 535).  These opportunities may be unique and provide a prime opportunity to revitalize labor-management relations (Meyer, 1982).  While an environmental jolt may be about significant organizational change, it may also be about significant organizational and human opportunity (Christensen and Overdorf, 2000).

Before, during and after an environmental jolt, employees who share membership in in-groups seek to communicate and share their awareness and unitary understanding of salient events (Stets and Burke, 2000).  This behavior is known as self-organizing (Ashby, 1947; Foerster, 1960; Pask and Von Foerster, 1960).

### 2.9.6  SELF-ORGANIZING

From ancient atomists such as Descartes (1984) to modern day theorists such as Ashby (1947) and Foerster (1960), scientists have advanced the belief that systems will seek and acquire a

state of equilibrium. The notion of order from chaos and order from noise emerged from these founding scholars of self-organizing theory (Descartes, 1986; Foerster, 1960).

From a theoretical beginning in the natural sciences, came further understanding of self-organizing in other disciplines, including business and economics. In business and economics literature, complex organizational systems predictably will seek and acquire order through the organizational mechanism of self-organizing (Cosmides and Tooby, 1994).

When members of expert labor experience a degree of chaos or noise in the practice of their profession, they perform the role of sensors in the complex system that surrounds and embodies their professional life (Luhmann, 1985). There is a desire to build a critical mass, exhibit herd behavior, and to seek and engage in small group discussions (Luhmann, 1985). This form of self-organization aids in stabilizing a threat to one's identity (Petriglieri, 2011).

Self-organizing highlights the unique position of expert labor. The professional employee has a degree of control over the operation (AFS-200, 2013b). If autonomy and discretion, basic values of a practicing professional, are perceived to be under threat, self-organizing is likely to take place (Ashby, 1947). The intention is to ally with like-minded professionals to mitigate the threat and to seek order (Ticoll, 2004).

Many organizations regularly self-organize. A floor broker on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), for example, buys and sells securities in corporations without the owners of the respective companies setting the price (Ticoll, 2004). They operate with a professional license, enabling them the autonomy and discretion to trade securities in an economically efficient and dynamic marketplace. The NYSE is one example where self-organizing serves a market benefit without control measures imposed by employers (Ticoll, 2004).

Periods of self-organization offer further formulation of in-groups and out-groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Spotlighting intergroup differences and disparaging other out-groups is a theme of these self-organizing groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Allegiances are tested, and the requirements of membership in the newly established self-organized group are clearly defined (Albert and Whetten, 1985). A strong identity, characteristic of a practicing professional, is demanded of self-organized groups (Albert and Whetten, 1985). In the self-organizing effort to understand and respond to chaos and noise, camaraderie and trust are essential (Albert and Whetten, 1985; Hinings et al., 1991).

In each of the constructs reviewed so far the individual, and the group they belong, has played a central role. The review will now consider those in charge, the leaders.

**2.9.7 LEADERSHIP'S ROLE IN PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY**

Licensed professionals, members of expert labor, have leadership as an incumbent role (Ashcraft et al., 2012; Denis et al., 2012). In their professional practice, leadership is a given. Those they serve in the practice of their profession look to the licensed professional not only as the person with knowledge-intensive skills and specific expertise, but also as the person in charge (FAA, 2013). The licensed professional is the decision maker (Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003). The professional employed in an organization is a key employee and therefore their contribution in terms of leadership is important in both human capital and social capital terms (Akerlof and Kranton, 2005; Davis, 2011). The art of leadership in knowledge-intensive firms requires a keen sense of communication skill (Alvesson, 1993; Ashcraft, 2007). What a leader says is important, but how they say it may be more important (Alvesson, 1993).

When organizational change is contradictory to professional knowledge and practice, it may be perceived as undermining professional identity (Fenton and Pettigrew, 2006). A condition of malign ambiguity can result from an anticipated major change in a professional's practice (Fenton and Pettigrew, 2006).

A summary of the findings from Fenton and Pettigrew (2006) below reviews the nexus between practicing professionals and their employer during significant organizational change. Fenton and Pettigrew's research was focused on professional service firms. Professional identity, identity work, and the fluid notion of professional practice are each addressed by Fenton and Pettigrew (2006) in their work with professional service firms.

Fenton and Pettigrew (2006) argue that a redefinition of roles in terms of scope of influence and content can make it difficult to gain buy-in during organizational change. Changes to the practicing professional's role during organizational change will create ambiguity regarding the role identity of the practicing professional. This finding, later described as "identity loss," is confirmed in further research by Conroy and O'Leary (2014, p. 70). Fenton and Pettigrew go on to conclude the importance to win support via ideas and conversation rather than instruction for professionals (Fenton and Pettigrew, 2006). This finding also is consistent with psychological contract literature (Conway and Briner, 2005; McDermott et al., 2013).

Within organizations, there is a need to control or align the identities of the licensed professional with their employer management (Ouchi, 1980). The control of professional identity is often "sold" as beneficial to both the firm and the professional. The attempts of

identity control and identity regulation within organizations during organizational change is often viewed by professionals within an organization as "no sale" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002).

Autonomy is an important construct of a professional identity and the conduct of their professional practice (Schein, 1978; Schein, 1985). Limiting or removing a professional's autonomy may be interpreted as an attempt to control the professional's identity (Petriglieri, 2011; Petriglieri and Stein, 2012). Similar to the encroachment on basic values the encroachment on the autonomy of one's professional practice contradicts what it means to be a professional and may be an impediment to organizational change, particularly significant organizational change (Anteby, 2008). The judgments and decision-making of leaders, whether union or management, may impact a practicing professional's identity (Alvesson, 1993; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003).

## 2.10 AIRLINE PILOTS & PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

This review provides focus on the theoretical and empirical research salient to understanding professional identity and the psychological contract in relation to professional employment in a unionized setting. The exploration of the commercial airline pilots of this research seeks to consider whether or not the employing airlines of this research view pilots as professional and key stakeholders in their airlines or whether they view pilots as a commodity to be employed to maximize the utility of their enterprise (Becker, 1976; Crain, 2004). For the view of pilots as professionals to prevail, one must ascribe to Bucher and Stellings' (1969) view of the professional as "the person who has the right to say what should be done and what is necessary to get it done" (p. 5). This view has been challenged by the research of Fiol (Fiol et al., 2009). To begin to understand the professional standing or commodification of commercial airline pilots requires a contextual evaluation of their lived experience (Bennett, 2006; Van Manen, 1990). The research of United Airlines provides such a contextual experience (Fiol et al., 2009; Fraher, 2004).

### 2.10.1 UNITED AIRLINES

Fiol et al. (2009) have detailed the lengthy union-management conflicts at United Airlines. United Airlines' history of intractable identity conflict between members of unionized expert labor, their pilots, and management, has several evidentiary milestones and identity dimensions (Fiol et al., 2009). Table 2.5 recreates the typology given by Fiol et al. (2009).

**Table 2.5** **EVIDENTIARY MILESTONES AND IDENTITY DIMENSIONS OF UNION-MANAGEMENT CONFLICT AT UNITED AIRLINES (1985-2007)**

| Identifying Characteristic | Evidentiary Milestone |
|---|---|
| Long-Standing Nature of Union-Management Conflict | Pilots went on strike in 1985 to protest management business model diversification to non-airline businesses. These conflicts reached an incendiary nature with United filing for bankruptcy in 2002. |
| Pervasive Advancement of Identity Salience | Pilots union (ALPA) and mechanics union (IAM) sought ownership five times over a seven-year period. They ultimately succeeded. |
| Expansion Beyond Original Dispute | The focus of the original disputes focused on job security and pay. Over time, additional disputes involving mergers and acquisitions, the dropping of Pacific routes, issues of employee ownership, and bankruptcy were added to the expansion beyond the original dispute. The Flight Attendants union (AFA) joined the debate. |
| Reductionist Stereotyping | United Airlines management expressed their view of pilots having little understanding of finance or corporate strategy. Employees viewed management as unaware of airline culture, particularly regarding seniority, and being spreadsheet oriented at the expense of employees. |
| Zero-Sum Conceptualization | Both labor and management pursued their own agendas, viewing the success of one as a loss for the other. Pilots made clear the belief that management's pursuit of merger and acquisitions came at a cost of the seniority system and their jobs. Management saw these events as critical to future profits. |
| Mutual Disidentification | Management defined themselves as not like pilots and other employees. Management viewed themselves as corporate stewards and the employees as self-interested. The pilots and other employees dis-identified with management as not understanding the nature of the work. The saga was brought to a crescendo with management seeking a second bankruptcy filing and wiping out the value of employee owned stock. |

*Source: Amended from (Fiol et al., 2009). Additional sources: (Bradsher, 2000; Bryant, 1994; Maynard and Walsh, 2004; Wong, 2002).*

## 2.11 SUMMARY

The conceptual links between the typology of constructs offered in this chapter contributes a practical framework and a theoretical view to begin to understand the professional identity of commercial airline pilots.  This review offers a starting point to explore a seldom researched population.  Norms, behaviors and attributes have been reviewed to aid in the exploration of the professional identity of members of unionized expert labor.

Exploratory research seeks insights to begin to understand a phenomenon under study.  This literature review investigates two streams of identity literature to seek those insights –  the traditional social psychology view of identity as stable and enduring and a second stream of literature reviewing identity as malleable, dynamic and socially constructed.  This review looks at what has been done as a logical beginning to explore a seldom researched case.  The review offered in this chapter provides a starting point by reviewing salient research.  This review offers a typology of constructs to explore the seldom researched population of commercial airline pilots.

Curiosity is another valuable attribute for an exploratory researcher (Stevens and Wrenn, 2013).  The insights provided in this literature review represent themes that may inform a seldom explored population.  These themes provide a theoretical and empirical foundation of curiosity to begin this exploration.

Beyond filling a gap in the literature this research opens a new stream of professional identity research.  What has been done in related identity and professional identity research provides a valuable review to begin this exploration of discovery.

# Chapter 3  Research Design and Methodology

## 3.1  INTRODUCTION

This research seeks to understand the professional identity of a unionized group of expert labor employees who fly commercial airliners around the world.  Exploring the professional identity of these licensed professionals and seeking to understand their being is the central focus of the research design and methodology.  This chapter defines the means and methods used to explore the participants' lived experience in the unique organizational setting of a commercial airline.

The design and methods used to understand this critical human element in commercial airlines require engagement with licensed professionals, including Captains (CAPT's) and First Officers (F/O's), to understand their lived experience.

This exploratory study seeks to understand the licensed professional's being by gaining the perspective of each participant, specifically looking at how they and others have come to view themselves as members of unionized expert labor; how their beliefs, values, norms and behaviors have gained them membership in an elite professional community; and how these attributes manifest themselves following significant organizational change.

The challenge of this research design and methodology is the close, observational engagement, in-depth and over time, with these members of expert labor.  The challenges presented in this research were exacerbated by determining how to best link theory with practice and determining how engagement, observation and analysis in the literature relates to actual lived experience of practicing professionals.  Each of these challenges to the research design and methodological objectives of this research was accomplished by a further challenge; introducing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to organizational studies.  In sum, qualitative exploratory research of a previously unexplored group of licensed professionals, utilizing a method not common in organization studies, provided several challenges.

With challenge came opportunity; the opportunity to introduce IPA to organizational studies and to do this research on a uniquely situated population.  The opportunities to expand professional identity research, to contribute new knowledge to the understanding of psychological contracts, and to do each with a new methodological approach provided a series of opportunities to make original contributions to qualitative research.

The participants in this exploratory study are Captains and First Officers. The licensed profession is flying commercial airliners. The significant organizational change is United States airline industry consolidation, specifically, merger-acquisition events. The specific research questions this thesis explores are: How is professional identity defined and experienced for a member of unionized expert labor in the United States, specifically commercial airline pilots? How have merger-acquisition events in the United States commercial airline industry aided in exposing disparate airline pilot professional identities? How do we understand professional identity construction in a turbulent unionized context?

The research design is faithful to the primary aim of understanding the lived experience of unionized expert labor following significant organizational change and employs a methodology that enables focus on the participants' experience and understanding of the phenomenon under study. For this reason, a qualitative, phenomenological approach was taken.

## 3.2 WHY A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

Qualitative methods provide the means to explore the human experience and provide the opportunity for data collection that is both explanatory and rich in detail (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Being able to understand the sequence of events, and which events led to or were catalysts for subsequent events, are compelling benefits of qualitative methods. Another significant benefit of utilizing qualitative methods is the quote-ability of the research findings (Marshall and Rossman, 2014). Perception and reality may not always be aligned and seeking reality is a benefit of qualitative methods (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The qualitative method employed in this research seeks to understand the reality of individuals lived experience when something important happens to them (Smith et al., 2009). Context and a sensitivity to context contribute to the reality that social context has social consequences (Akerlof and Kranton, 2010). This exploration of reality provides understanding to the phenomenon under study and a compelling argument for a qualitative approach.

Lastly, there is an "emphasis on social justice" as a key capability of qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 4). This emphasis on social justice plays an important role in exploring the professional identity of commercial airline pilots during significant organizational change (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative methods enable the researcher to go beyond questions of when, how often, and how many, and ask the social justice question of why? This research looks at the question of why as a contribution to understand the being

of commercial airline pilots.  Why an acquiring airline pilot group behaves in a particular way toward the acquired pilot group aids in understanding the being of commercial airline pilots. Social justice or its lack thereof is at the heart of these behaviors (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

There are a number of research traditions within qualitative research methods (Creswell, 2012).  Among these are biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study.  Each tradition was considered for this research, but phenomenology was ultimately chosen. (Maxwell, 1992).  Table 3.1 briefly describes each of the broad research traditions of qualitative research.

**Table 3.1**　　**DIMENSIONS FOR COMPARING RESEARCH TRADITIONS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

| Dimension | Biography | Phenomenology | Grounded Theory | Ethnography | Case Study |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Focus | Exploring the life of an individual | Understanding the essence of experiences about a phenomenon | Developing a theory grounded in data from the field | Describing and interpreting a cultural and social group | Developing an in-depth analysis of a single case or multiple cases |
| Data Collection | Primarily interviews and documents | Long interviews with up to 10 people | Interviews with 20-30 individuals to "saturate" categories and detail a theory | Primarily observations and interviews with additional artifacts during extended time in the field | Multiple sources-documents, archival records, interviews, observations, physical artifacts |
| Data Analysis | Stories, Epiphanies, Historical Content | Statements, Meanings, Meaning Themes, General description of the experience | Open coding, Axial coding, Selective coding, Conditional matrix | Description, Analysis, Interpretation | Description, Themes, Assertions |

*Source: (Creswell, 2012)*

Within the several traditions of qualitative research, phenomenology and case study have prevailed as the most appropriate traditions to explore the phenomenon under study. Phenomenology addresses the central research interest of understanding the lived experience of this new case and case study provides the opportunity to engage in in-depth observation and discussion with members of unionized expert labor.

## 3.3 COMBINED PHENOMENOLOGICAL AND PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION APPROACHES

Phenomenology is the primary qualitative tradition utilized in this research. Case study provides a contributory element. Phenomenology is both a philosophy and a qualitative research methodology. Originally founded as a philosophy by Husserl, phenomenology was further developed as an existential philosophy by Heidegger (Heidegger, 1962). Initially, Husserl theorized phenomenology in terms of consciousness and experience. Husserl and Heidegger expanded this view to include "the human life world" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 30). An important construct of phenomenology is that reality is what people perceive it to be (Berger and Luckmann, 1990). Today, phenomenological research directs its interest to understanding social phenomena from the point of view of the individual and their perception of their lived experience (Husserl, 1927). Phenomenology places a focus on the study of human experience from the perspective of the subjective experience and interpretation of the individual (Sanders, 1982). Phenomenology is not limited to subjective experience, however. Phenomenology also seeks to understand phenomenon as it occurs (Glendinning, 2007). The opportunity to have direct conversation in a natural setting, to be able to discuss a participant's experience and desires, in in-depth interviewing, and to observe the participants in their personal and professional lives, in real time, provides a research approach for rich data collection to understand a participant's views and lived experience.

Sanders' (1982) seminal work, *Phenomenology: A New Way of Viewing Organizational Research,* offers a comparative table to contrast phenomenological paradigms and those that seek to understand lived experience with more traditional organizational research normative paradigms. This comparison summarizes the distinct architectural choices for this research. Table 3.2 is a recreation of Sanders' table.

**Table 3.2**     CONTRASTING PHENOMENOLOGICAL WITH NORMATIVE PARADIGMS

| Phenomenological Paradigms | Normative Paradigms |
|---|---|
| **Apprehension of the Word** | |
| Researcher sees the world largely as indeterminate and problematic.  Phenomena under investigation are viewed more directly as functions of perceptions, intuition, and personal meanings (Willis, 1978) | Researcher sees the world as more or less determinate and non-problematic.  Personal choice still is necessary to decide what characteristics are to be studied and how to value them (Willis, 1978) |
| **Phenomena Investigated** | |
| Considers "lived experiences" of subjects.  Considers both observed characteristics and specific qualities perceived as personal forms of meaning. | Considers characteristics that are easily enumerated and empirically verifiable. |
| **Problem Formulation** | |
| Begins with an attitude of epoch.  All personal biases, beliefs, or assumptions about causal relationships or suppositions are suspended or bracketed.  Questions are formulated and responses are analyzed. | Begins with a hypothesis of a causal relationship.  The hypothesis is checked by the manipulation of one or more independent variables in order to study the effect on a specific behavior (dependent variable). |
| **Research Methodology** | |
| Emphasis is placed on describing the world from the point of view of the persons who live in and experience it.  All concepts or theories emerge from the data of consciousness, requiring an inductive approach that cannot be replicated exactly. | Broad abstract generalizations or theories are applied in a logical deductive fashion by means of hypothesis and operational definitions to form a design that can be replicated (Stone, 1978). |
| **Research Aim and Inferences** | |
| To arrive at universal pure essences.  The logic of inference is one of direct comparison resulting in new insight or reclassification (Willis, 1978). | Statistical interpretation of data to formulate categories or norms.  The logic of inference is one of classification and seriation resulting in numerical comparisons (Willis, 1978). |
| **Generalization of Results** | |
| Generalizations concern only the specific subject(s) under investigation.  No generalizations are made beyond this group.  Findings serve as a database for further investigation. | Generalizations are formulated based on an analysis of the data regarding similar classes or universal tendencies that are expressed in a normative fashion. |

*Source: (Sanders, 1982)*

Table 3.2 synthesizes the case for phenomenology over more positivist approaches for this research. It further highlights phenomenology's capability to provide a more stable foundation for the research questions as well as a more aligned epistemological position for the researcher.

Phenomenological research involves engagement, observation and analysis (Cunliffe, 2011). Linking the disparate perspectives of the research of theory and the research of practice required a methodological capability to highlight the separateness and connectedness of the research used in this paper. The research of professional practice is "shaped by and entangled in a web of human tapestry" (Anosike et al., 2012, p. 2). A phenomenological approach connected the human tapestry to scholarship. The conjunctive phenomenological methods of semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant observation enabled both broad (participant observation) and deep (semi-structured in-depth interviewing) solutions to understanding the new case of unionized expert labor, following significant organizational change. Both approaches contributed to and constituted the solution to linking the research homes of theory and practice.

Primarily, a phenomenological approach, incorporating in-depth interviewing and participant observation, was conjunctively utilized to seek to "make explicit the implicit structure and meaning of human experiences" (Sanders, 1982, p. 354). There are several phenomenological approaches developed to explore individual lived experiences, each resting on a different understanding of phenomenological philosophy (Gill, 2014). Several choices of design are offered in this chapter, but the final choice was guided by the capacity of the research design to interpret the lived experience of the research population.

Phenomenologists have made several cases for the power of phenomenology and participant observation to inform human experience (Conklin, 2007; Ehrich, 2005; Gibson and Hanes, 2003). Phenomenology, coupled with in-depth case study, however, has had a limited research application in organizational studies (Gill, 2014).

A proven and justified research method was critical to achieving the aims and goals of this study. The research method employed needed to provide an environment where participants would be comfortable to share their lived experience (Maxwell, 1992). A conscious decision was made to consider the means to contribute new knowledge to the field. The need for accuracy of the work, its generality for application with the larger research population, and the desire to provide the findings in a simple and understandable manner all contributed

foundationally to the following research design and methodology. This research utilizes qualitative methods and an interpretative phenomenological approach to generate the "meanings particular experiences, events, states hold" for members of unionized expert labor in the United States (Smith et al., 1997, p. 53).

### 3.3.1  PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACHES

The goal of this research is to begin to understand the professional identity of commercial airline pilots following significant organizational change; a phenomenological philosophy and research methodology provide that research setting. A phenomenological approach provides a framework to bring human experience and human perceptions to the fore. In so doing, phenomenology enables an interpretive dimension to inform, support and challenge individual understanding. A unique and defining design view of phenomenology is the notion of minimum structure, but maximum depth (Lester, 1999). Each of these phenomenological constructs not only informs the phenomenological tradition, but also provides a robust methodological approach to understand the professional identity of unionized expert labor.

Management research utilizing phenomenology has been determined to been limited (Holt and Sandberg, 2011). The reliance by top journals on positivist paradigms and quantitative methods have been the tradition (Anosike et al., 2012). Phenomenologists today refer to phenomenology as a "human science" (Giorgi, 2005; Smith, 2007; Van Manen, 1990). Incorporating the individual phenomenologically enables understanding both the human and fiscal capital utility of unionized expert labor in this unique organizational setting (Akerlof and Kranton, 2010; Freeman, 2013).

Table 3.3 briefly describes the research typologies of several research traditions underlying the broadly understood research approach of phenomenology.

**Table 3.3**     **D**IMENSIONS FOR **C**OMPARING **R**ESEARCH **T**RADITIONS IN **P**HENOMENOLOGY

| | Descriptive Phenomenology (Husserlian) | | Interpretive Phenomenology (Heideggerian) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Founding Scholar** | Sander's Phenomenology | Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological method | Van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology | Benner's interpretive phenomenology | Smith's interpretive phenomenological analysis |
| **Disciplinary Origin** | Organizational Studies | Psychology | Pedagogy | Nursing | Psychology |
| **Methodology described as** | Technique | Scientific Method | Poetry | Practice | Craft |
| **Aims** | To make explicit the implicit structure (or essence) and meaning of human experience | To establish the essence of a particular phenomenon | To transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence | To articulate practical, everyday understandings and knowledge | To explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world |
| **Participants** | 3-6 | At least 3 | Unspecified | Until new informants reveal no new findings | 1 or more |
| **Key concepts** | Bracketing (epoche), Eidetic reduction, Noematic/noetic correlates | Bracketing (epoche), Eidetic reduction, Imaginative variation, Meaning units | Depthful writing, Orientation, Thoughtfulness | The background, Exemplars, Interpretive teams, Paradigm cases | Double Hermeneutic, Idiographic, Inductive |
| **Application in Organizational Studies** | Kram and Isabella (1985) | McClure and Brown (2008) | Gibson (2004) | Yakhlef and Essen (2012) | Murtagh, Lopes, and Lyons (2011) |

*Source: (Gill, 2014)*

As mentioned, case study will provide a contributory and constitutive research approach element as well. Each individual and each group of unionized expert labor constituencies may be considered a case. The in-depth analysis of a single case or multiple cases will be contributory and constitutive to this research. Emergent themes and assertions of a particular case or multiple cases may be utilized for in-depth analysis consistent with the case study tradition of qualitative research (Gill, 2014). The primary research approach will involve

phenomenology, but the inclusion of case study as a research approach element is consistent with the increasing utilization of multiple qualitative methodologies (Cunliffe, 2011).

## 3.4 WHY INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS (IPA)

This research utilizes Smith's Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) summarized in Table 3.3 (Gill, 2014). The decision to utilize IPA rests on several empirical touchstones. First, IPA's focus is on the individual and their lived experience as it occurs (Smith et al., 2009). IPA's focus on the individual and their lived experience is consistent with the phenomenon of interest and the epistemology of the researcher. Second, IPA is further focused on environmental stimuli (Eatough et al., 2008). Environmental stimuli, manifested in significant organizational change, is another phenomenon of interest in this research.

IPA acknowledges the contribution of the participants as the best possible source to understand their lived experience (Smith, 2011). It is incumbent to the success of this research for the contributors to tell their story in a manner that best suits them. This IPA construct aids the researcher in understanding the participant's being (Heidegger, 1962). It is their being that contributes to the understanding of professional identity in unionized expert labor. The elicitation of participants' lived experience utilizing IPA is in-depth and personal (Smith et al., 2009). This key construct determined why IPA was chosen. IPA is an interpretative methodology rather than a descriptive approach (Smith et al., 2009). This enables the researcher to take an active role in interpreting the participant's being.

IPA is an approach to qualitative research "informed by concepts and debates from three key areas of the philosophy of knowledge: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 11). Collectively, each of the three key areas of IPA contribute to the interpretative analysis informing the being of members of unionized expert labor.

### 3.4.1 IPA PHENOMENOLOGICAL THEORY AND PERSPECTIVE

Phenomenology is "a philosophical approach to the study of experience" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 11). It seeks to better understand what it is to be human. Specific attention is placed on "things which matter to us, and which constitute our lived world" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 11).

The central character in Heidegger's *Being and Time* is Dasein, a figure that reveals meaning in the world (Husserl, 2012). Dasein refers to "human being," a person that reveals the "shared, overlapping and relational nature of our engagement in the world" (Heidegger, 1962,

p. 27). Heidegger utilizes Dasein to expose phenomenological inter-subjectivity, the concept that enables human beings to make sense of one another.

A person's practical engagement in the world involves several modalities. Among these are "self-reflection and sociality, affective concern, and a temporal existential location" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 17). Dasein, Heidegger's central figure, is inextricably linked to a "world" of people and objects that already exist (Smith et al., 2009, p. 17). This Heidegger describes as "Being-in-the-world" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 153). Heidegger saw the "self" and "world" as unified. He described this linkage as "self and world belong together in the single entity, "Dasein" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 149-152). Heidegger's interpretative lens of studying one's lived experience excludes Husserl's view to detach oneself and reflect on the essence of a lived experience (Heidegger, 1988, p. 297). Heidegger makes clear that detachment is not an option, one's lived experience exists in an "environment from which they cannot step outside" (Gill, 2014, p. 3). For Heidegger, the community by which one is surrounded is real, not imagined (Gill, 2014, p. 3). To understand a person's lived experience requires immersion and commitment to their "world," their "being," and their relatedness to one another (Anderson, 2006; Heidegger, 1962).

Phenomenological philosophy from the lens of interpretive phenomenologists brings the importance of lived experience to the forefront. Phenomenology "assumes that human beings seek meaning from their experiences and that their accounts convey this meaning" (Kierkegaard, 2009, p. 79). Phenomenological scholars point out "the value of context in our lives and an understanding of the meaning of the awareness or lack thereof of contact with our self, others, and our world" (Gill, 2014, p. 11). Engagement in human experience is a source of knowledge (Smith et al., 2009). It is human engagement that provides the means to introduce the subjective thinker with the human reality that is a person's existence (Kierkegaard, 2009).

### 3.4.2 HERMENEUTICS THEORY AND PERSPECTIVE

Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation and provides a second key theoretical perspective to understanding professional identity. One of the theoretical perspectives of hermeneutics is the hermeneutic circle. The hermeneutic circle is "concerned with the dynamic relationship between the part and the whole. To understand any given part, you look to the whole; to understand the whole, you look to the parts" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 28). The hermeneutic circle has received criticism for its circularity, but scholars attribute its circularity to its

effectiveness (Smith et al., 2009). A professional's identity may be informed by a particular aspect of their lived experience, described in a hermeneutic circle as a part. Similarly, a broader understanding may also inform, described in a hermeneutic circle as the whole. The hermeneutic circle would argue for the relatedness of both aspects to more accurately interpret a person's professional identity. Hermeneutics is a theoretical perspective that seeks coherence (Smith et al., 2009). This research views the contributions of the participants as contributory to the coherence of the hermeneutic circle. The ongoing dialogues with volunteer participant interviewees provided a structure, for the researcher, to understand the part and the whole of their lived experience, as it relates to an environment in which interpretation occurs (Gadamer, 1998).

Coherence in hermeneutics is sought through an interpretative approach known as the "double hermeneutic" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 36). Smith details four stages of analysis to define the double hermeneutic as an inductive tool to begin to understand a person's lived experience (Smith, 2008). It is an iterative process beginning with the participant sharing their view(s) in interview(s). Through reading and transcript review, the subjective interview data ultimately emerges and superordinate data is constructed. This second interpretative analysis is the double hermeneutic. The subjective sensemaking from a participant's interview is arrived at through an inductive analysis of sensemaking by the interviewer, a double hermeneutic (Smith, 2011).

Interpretation is a central tenet for Heidegger (Moran, 2002). Heidegger, through Dasein, argues that one's lived experience is understood through engagement, being with and in the world, and this understanding is achieved through interpretation (Heidegger, 1962). Understanding being, who these members of unionized expert labor are, is the central phenomenon of interest of this research. Understanding being is at the center of each research question and the interpretation of each volunteer participant's contribution of being informs the research at its core.

### 3.4.3 IDIOGRAPHIC THEORY AND PERSPECTIVE

Ideography is the third key theoretical and philosophical perspective that phenomenology considers for interpreting a professional's lived experience. Ideography has to do with the "particular" (Smith et al., 2009). Psychologists often advance more general views or overarching laws in their research, referred to as a nomothetic approach (Smith et al., 2009). A nomothetic approach is more inclined to positivism. The nomothetic approach has been

criticized as "indeterministic statistical zones that construct people who never were and never could be" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 30). The "translation of human experience to analytic data, and the removal of the individual from the understanding and analysis" in research is inconsistent with seeking to understand an individual's professional identity (Datan et al., 1987, p. 156).

Ideography focuses on specific people in specific situations. Rather than looking at large or complete populations of people, ideography looks at small samples, but looks at them in detail (Lamiell, 1987). As Heidegger articulates, one's human experience is unique and it is also not easily codified (Heidegger, 1962). Heidegger's (1962) Dasein experiences the world in relation to specific phenomenon. Ideography also explores specific phenomena.

The key philosophical perspectives reviewed here contribute to understanding and interpreting one's lived experience and beginning to understand who a particular research population might be. The philosophy of knowledge explored here provides a theoretical basis of understanding one's lived experience, a means to connect, immerse, and interpret that lived experience, and a way to begin to frame an ontological understanding of these philosophical perspectives to reveal the particular essence that is one's identity (Heidegger, 1962). When something important happens to a person, their identity is most clearly revealed (Larkin et al., 2006). Each cornerstone of this research design and methodology provides a philosophical framework to begin to understand the decision of selecting the means and methods of interpreting a professional's identity when something important happens to them.

## 3.5 POSITIONALITY OF THE RESEARCH AND RESEARCHER

Chereni (2014) opines "the researcher is a primary instrument in qualitative research" (p. 1). For the data to be "ethically sound and trustworthy" the researcher and contributors collaberation must be authentic (Chereni, 2014, p. 1). The authenticity between the researcher/interviwer (R/I) and participants is grounded on the understandings of self and being between the researcher and fieldwork participants (Chereni, 2014). To understand being benefits from once belonging. The researcher is grounded in the understanding of being as they once belonged. This alignment, of the positionality of the researcher and participants, authentically aligns the researcher with the participants.

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2012) advance the belief that philosophical position is useful in research design by stating that understanding philosophical issues "can help clarify research design" and assist in making clear "which designs will work" (p. 17). The linkage

between a researcher's philosopical positions and the research design selected to answer the research questions is important (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Dobson (2002) further contributes "the researchers theoretical lens plays an important role in the choice of methods because the underlying belief system of the researcher (ontological assumptions) largely defines the choice of method" (p. 2).

Considering the philosophy of science from strong positivism and realism approaches at one end to strong constructionism and nominalism approaches at the other end, I define myself closer to the strong constructionism and nomalist end of the spectrum. Positivism and realism has to do more with logic and the ability to offer a mathematical proof to understand reality (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Social constructionism relies on human interaction and experience, which is the core of understanding in this research (Mead, 2009). Human interaction and lived experience form the basis of our realities. What one learns from their human social experience is considered knowledge in social constructionism (Kuhn, 2012). Social constructionism envisions everyone as unique as each individual's experience is unique. This was the line of inquiry of this research and aligns with the researchers philosophy of science and epistemological position. Table 3.4 synthesizes this range of philosophical approaches.

**Table 3.4**    METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH

| ONTOLOGIES | Realism | Internal Realism | Relativism | Nominalism |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **EPISTEMOLOGY** | Strong Positivism | Positivism | Constructionism | Strong Constructionism |
| **AIMS** | Discovery | Exposure | Convergence | Invention |
| **STARTING POINTS** | Hypotheses | Propositions | Questions | Critique |
| **DESIGNS** | Experiment | Large Surveys Multi- Cases | Cases and Surveys | Engagement and Reflexivity |
| **DATA TYPES** | Numbers and Facts | Numbers and Words | Words and Numbers | Discourse and Experiences |
| **ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION** | Verification or Falsification | Correlation and Regression | Triangulation and Comparison | Sensemaking and Understanding |
| **OUTCOMES** | Confirmation of Theories | Theory Testing and Generation | Theory Generation | New Insights and Actions |

*Source: (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012)*

The exploration of the professional identity of members of unionized expert labor utilizing IPA provides the researcher the methodology to explore the participants' lived experience from their point of view and to allow the researcher to engage in the interpretative process (Smith et al., 2009). This decision on research methodology is consistent with the researcher's philosophical position. In-depth interviewing, in concert with participant observation, provides the vehicles to make sense and meaning of the participant's subjective experience (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The implications of this methodological choice and alignment with the researchers philosophy of science makes clear the researcher's decision to select a social constructionist approach.

**Table 3.5**    CONTRASTING IMPLICATIONS OF POSITIVISM AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

|  | POSITIVISM | SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM |
|---|---|---|
| **THE OBSERVER** | Must be independent | Is part of what is being observed |
| **HUMAN INTERESTS** | Should be irrelevant | Are the main drivers of science |
| **EXPLANATIONS** | Must demonstrate causality | Aim to increase general understanding of the situation |
| **RESEARCH PROGRESSES THROUGH** | Hypotheses and deductions | Gathering rich data from which ideas are induced |
| **CONCEPTS** | Need to be defined so that they may be measured | Should incorporate stakeholder perspectives |
| **UNITS OF ANALYSIS** | Should be reduced to simplest terms | May include the complexity of whole situations |
| **GENERALIZATION THROUGH** | Statistical probability | Theoretical abstraction |
| **SAMPLING REQUIRES** | Large numbers selected randomly | Small numbers of cases chosen for specific reasons |

*Source: (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012)*

### 3.5.1   EPISTEMOLOGICAL POSITION

Epistemology is "about different ways of inquiring into the nature of the physical and social worlds" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 21).  These contrasting views are synthesized in Table 3.5.  A strong constructionist epistemological position was chosen because of constructionism's belief that "reality is determined by people rather than by objective and external factors" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 23).  This position is consistent with the researcher's philosophy of science and belief that people construct meaning.  The attachment of meaning to events that IPA provides aligns with the researcher's epistemological position.

### 3.5.2   ONTOLOGICAL POSITION

Ontology has to do with "the nature of reality and existence" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 17).  Research in the social sciences has focused on two predominant ontological positions — realism and idealism.  Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston (2013) define realism as the claim

"that there is an external reality which exists independently of people's beliefs or understanding about it.  In other words there is a distinction between the way the world is and the meaning and interpretation of that world held by individuals" (2013, p. 11) .  This is inconsistent with IPA and the ontological position of the researcher.  Idealism*,* on the other hand, asserts that "reality is only knowable through the human mind and through socially constructed meanings" (Ritchie et al., 2013, p. 11).  The distinction and implications for this research concludes that the ontological position of the researcher and IPA is consistent with the ontological position of social construction, mindful of the understandings of nominalism and idealism.

## 3.6   PRIMARY PURPOSE, AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of this research is to explore and begin to understand the professional identity of unionized expert labor following significant organizational change.  The overall aim is to "write in detail about the perceptions and understandings" of these volunteer participants (Smith et al., 2009, p. 49).  Accordingly, engaging participants in semi-structured in-depth interviewing and observing them in their professional practice environment serve as the objectives of the study.  Underlying each of these are the desire to achieve "understanding represented in a way that achieves coherence and integration while preserving nuances" (Elliott et al., 1999, p.  222-223).

The secondary purpose of this research is to cross the bridge from theory to practice.  It is the understanding of professional identities role with "real people in real situations" (Akerlof and Kranton, 2010, p. 7) that fulfills the secondary purpose of the study.  The role of professional identity as actor in the interpretative understanding of U.S. airline pilots following a merger-acquisition event provide a lens to expose the central interests of this research (Pratt et al., 2006).  Social context and its understanding is embedded in the purpose, aim and objectives of this exploratory research.

## 3.7   STUDY'S PRIMARY AUDIENCE

This research will bring not only new knowledge to the community of scholars, but to a much larger audience through its operational underpinning.  A phenomenological research paradigm does not lend itself to generalizability beyond the population type under study (Smith et al., 2009).  However, values, beliefs and other professional identity attributes explored in this

research may have analogous value to other professional groups (Harre', 1979). Commercial airline pilots may be interested, as well as other pilots and aviators.

Licensed professionals and key employees in complex organizations may also be considered as an audience. These groups may include accountants, architects, bankers, brokers, consultants, lawyers, nurses, pharmacists, physicians and veterinarians (Ohlen and Segesten, 1998; Ashcraft, 2013). The bulk of the literature on professionals and professional identity has been primarily focused on these professions. Additional research on the professions has involved a number of diverse groups ranging from band and orchestra members, business schools, journalists, primary school teachers and university professors (Slay and Smith, 2011; Beijaard et al., 2004). The opportunity to gain insight from another professional population, unionized expert labor, may be beneficial to these and other licensed professionals.

This research's connection with union-management relations and implications for understanding the impact of professional identity on this sensitive and little researched domain may provide an appeal to managers engaged with union employees. Leadership of organized labor and members of organized labor, especially expert labor, may benefit from this research.

## 3.8 STUDY POPULATION ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Volunteer interview subjects must possess an Airline Transport Pilot's (ATP) license, a Type Rating in the aircraft they are flying, and hold a First Class Airman's Medical Certificate. Each of these criteria are required to fly as Captain for a U.S. airline (FAA, 2013). This research will explore the professional identity and lived experience of both Captains and First Officers following significant organizational change. The pilot participants of this study, regardless of whether they are currently flying as Captain or not, each meet the licensure and currency requirements of a Captain.

The ATP is the United States licensure required to fly as Captain for a U.S. airline, but does not limit the geographic residency of the Captain (AFS-200, 2013a; AFS-200, 2013b). This study is bounded by the conduct of flight operations of U.S. airlines. It is unlikely that an interviewee resides outside the U.S., but there is not a geographic restriction of the study population. This research study includes participants from diverse geographic locations.

Pilots participating in this research were hired following deregulation of the U.S. airline industry (United States. Congress. House. Committee on Public Works and Transportation.

and United States., 1979). Participant observation contributors to this research included not only post-deregulation pilots, but an array of people that members of the research population come in contact in the practice of their profession. These contributors include: flight attendants, gate agents, managers, mechanics, passengers and airport employees and vendors. Each provide social context and insight into the lived experience of the research population.

The pilot study eligibility criteria was limited to pilots hired following deregulation of the airline industry in the United States. Airline deregulation in the U.S. was a catalyst for transformative change in the industry (Levine, 1986). The limitation on the study population to post-deregulation pilots serves two purposes. First, pilots hired after this transformational event provide particular relevance to the research (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Each pilot had a similar industry experience. Second, incorporating this longitudinal component to the research is reflective of the larger pilot population. A very small population of pilots still flying for commercial airlines in the U.S. today were hired prior to deregulation and therefore would not be representative of the larger pilot population of this research (Nordenflycht and Gittell, 2013).

## 3.9 STUDY COMPARATIVE ELEMENTS

### 3.9.1 INTER-PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY COMPARISON

The U.S. airline industry has been an industry of consolidation since deregulation of the industry in 1978 (FAA, 2013). Bankruptcies, mergers and acquisitions have been plentiful (Yellin, 2014). Monopolistic competition and oligopoly within the industry has been pervasive (Holloway, 2013). The Captain and First Officer, the key employees of their airline, have been involved in these many and varied events (Miller and United States, 1981). Consequently, inter-professional rivalries between members of stratified groups of the acquired and acquirer airline pilot groups became likely. This research will explore these comparative tensions in both volunteer interviews and participant observation. Specifically, the comparative identity tensions will explore the professional identity attributes of the multiple and divergent groups following a merger-acquisition event. This research will look at airline pilots who have experienced being part of an airline that has acquired another airline, and pilots who have been employed by an airline that has been acquired. The comparative professional identity exploration of these disparate groups is a phenomenon of interest as it contributes to answering the research questions.

**3.9.2 INTRA-PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY COMPARISON**

This identity comparison focuses on airline rivalries. As a consequence of management decisions, the impact on individual pilots may have resulted in them advancing from First Officer (FO) to Captain and subsequently losing their Captain bid as a consequence of a merger-acquisition event. The seat that one flies is a function of seniority. The Captain is senior in seniority to the First Officer (F/O). Over time, with retirements or medical removals from the seniority list, a pilot would expect to advance in seniority. For an F/O, they would ultimately expect to gain seniority to fly as Captain. Altering this process was the introduction of an M/A event. This cycle of upgrade/promotion and downgrade/demotion over the span of their career as it relates to an individual pilot's professional identity is a particular phenomena of intra-professional identity comparative interest, and contributes to researcher understanding of the research questions. This intra-professional identity shift resulting from organizational change has individual, role and organizational identity significance (Kreiner et al., 2014).

Another intra-professional identity comparison is the stratification that exists within a pilot group. Within an airline pilot group are a number of intra-professional identity stratifications. Among these are factors such as whether the pilot's initial flight training was military or civilian, where they are domiciled (their flight origin base), political affiliation, what airplane they fly (aircraft and manufacturer), and where they live (east coast/west coast/north, central or south). Each of these factors is contributory and constitutive of a pilot's professional identity. The good-natured banter and/or tension that arises from stratification contributes another dimension of identity comparison.

**3.10 TEMPORAL ORIENTATION OF DESIGN**

There is a temporal orientation of interest in this study. Potential interviewees will be post-deregulation pilots. That is to say, the research population will be composed only of pilots hired after deregulation of the U.S. airline industry in 1978 (United States. Congress. House. Committee on Public Works and Transportation. and United States., 1979). This landmark legislation enabled management authority and regulatory oversight changes affecting the practice of the profession for commercial airline pilots (Transportation, 1979). There is a very limited population of airline Captains currently flying that began their career prior to deregulation of the airline industry (BLS, 2014). Their experience and contribution to the profession is rich and important, but the line of demarcation for this research resides with

deregulation. The notion of legacy and its significance in the temporal orientation is impactful to the research design. Pilots are reflective practitioners (Paterson and Chapman, 2013). They draw from not only their own experience, but also from others. The history and experience of pre-deregulation pilots, shared with the participant population, will be welcomed. The transformative event of deregulation defines the temporal orientation of this research.

## 3.11 ATTRIBUTES OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE TO BE EXAMINED

Professional identity is the primary attribute of human experience to be examined. Professional identity's role in individual, group, role and organizational identity, in the practice of a profession, informs this research. The tensions resulting from management's desire to impose their organizational identity upon expert labor's professional identity contributes to the examination of human experience of this research. The desire of management to seek to align key employees to their vision is well established in management research (Morrison and Winston, 1995; Office, 2003; Flanagan, 2005). Examining this tension with the research population will contribute to understanding each of the research questions. The consequent professional identity attributes of a U.S. commercial airline pilot will be exposed in both interview and observation.

Similarly, the tensions resulting from a significant organizational event, specifically a merger-acquisition event, will inform the human experience of this research population, and further aid in illuminating the research population's professional identity. This research design benefits from exploring times of tension and change to understand the professional identity of a U.S. airline pilot (Clark et al., 2010). Tension and change are central attributes of human experience to be examined.

## 3.12 SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

A conscious sampling flexibility will seek to include participants from a diverse group of pilot demographics. Sampling will include both professional and other ancillary factors, which may be contributory to a better understanding of the participant's professional identity. Each of the participants will have experienced a merger-acquisition event during their major airline employment. An inductive sampling strategy rather than a priori will be pursued. During and following significant organizational change events, specifically merger-acquisition events, the core beliefs and values of a professional's identity most clearly are depicted (Pratt et al.,

2006). The sampling procedure employed is mindful of both the exploratory and interpretive objectives of this study (Payne and Payne, 2004).

IPA studies advocate for small samples sizes to enable detailed analysis of each case (Eatough et al., 2008). Larger sample sizes can provide a large amount of data, but may result in a less detailed analysis (Osborn and Smith, 2006). Three to six participants have been the suggested number for an IPA study (Smith, (2009, p. 51). IPA research focused on lived experience is most often conducted utilizing single-case studies; however, multiple case studies should not go beyond six to nine participants (Eatough et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2009). Bearing the literature suggestions in mind, the commitment to reflect the larger pilot population, and the commitment to explore fully the research questions, the researcher selected seven volunteer participants from the available pool of 423.

## 3.13 RECRUITMENT METHOD

Purposive sampling is the primary recruitment method utilized in this research. The researcher had access to a database of volunteer pilots to conduct the study. The database available to the researcher provided the means to conduct purposive sampling recruitment appropriate to the study (Sanders, 1982). The alternative to purposive sampling is opportunity or convenience sampling (Patton and Patton, 1990). This method is chosen often because of ease of access to participants, but conclusions drawn from such a study population are limited. These limitations eliminated opportunity or convenience sampling from consideration in this research study.

Purposive sampling provides a focused study population. In-depth exploration of a seldom researched population requires participant contributors who have specific lived experience meaningful to the phenomenon under study (O'Leary, 2004). This study sought "information rich cases" (Patton, 2005, p. 169).

Purposeful sampling also is a means to increase the utility of the information received from a subset of a larger population (Patton, 2002). This feature, while a general and broad goal of qualitative research, is a specific objective of this research. Participant interviews and observation periods will continue to a point of theoretical saturation ensuring robust exploration of each research question (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010). Participants representing the larger population under study were chosen by the researcher as members of two broad categories: key informants and non-key informants (Sullivan et al., 2012).

Certain members of the interview population will be key informants. Key informants may hold a leadership position in the pilot union, have a leadership role in management, or have a charismatic standing with their fellow pilots (Seidman, 2006). Key informants provide specific and particular expertise. They have a voice and access unique to their fellow pilots. Key informants provide the potential opportunity not only to inform, but also to do it well (Seidman, 2006). They are frequent and often comfortable public speakers on matters substantive to pilots. Their unique knowledge brings an added value to this research.

There is a potential problem with key informants. These key informants may not be representative of the larger population and may be limited by "key informat bias" (Pelto & Pelto, 1975, p. 7). As part of that understanding, it is also important to remain aware of the uniformity of data they may contribute. This uniformity may not be consistent with the larger population. Key informant contributions will aid the research, but are considered with the knowledge of potential bias.

Certain members of the interview population will not be key informants. Non-key informants will be line pilots. These non-key informant pilots will meet all of the eligibility criteria of the research study, but will not have a particular voice or access that would distinguish them from their fellow pilots. This research is meant to be illustrative of a range of participants reflective of the larger pilot population. The largest component of the pilot population, and accordingly this research study, will be comprised of non-key informants. The non-key informant population of airline pilots, similar to other licensed professional groups, is larger than the key informant group. The interview population will reflect that reality.

This recruitment method will open the possibility to a constructivist validity and reliability to the researcher's epistemological position (Weber, 1978 ). Ensuring the selection of participants to represent the entire "range of variation" provides a confidence that the interview responses offered represent "maximum variation" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 178). This component of purposeful sampling provides for responses that are valuable to the study.

The limitation in this selection approach rather than a more strictly homogeneous sample is the limitation of depth versus breadth. This researcher has chosen breadth of contributor positions over depth to more accurately describe to larger population.

Purposive sampling also allows for extreme cases (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Extreme cases provide the opportunity for a participant to pointedly discuss their professional identity and

respond emphatically to the research questions in a manner that a representative informant would not. The inclusion of extreme cases will provide "far more convincing support" to the findings of this research (Wieviorka, 1992, p. 161).

Consistent with each of the criteria described theoretically in the literature to accurately reflect the larger research population, the operational purposive sampling for this exploratory study included: male and female pilots representing the gender distribution of U.S. commercial airline pilots; married, single and divorced pilots; pilots of diverse political persuasions; pilots who reside in the north, south, east, west and central geographic areas of the U.S.; pilots from both an acquired and the acquiring airline; pilots from each of the major U.S. airlines; pilots from miltary and non-military backgrounds; pilots flying a range of different aircraft in the practice of their profession; pilot members of each of the major airline unions; pilots holding both leadership positions in their union and pilots that had a passive engagement with their union; seniority ranges from junior, mid and senior components of their respective airlines; and age ranges from their early 40's to approaching retirement age of 65.

### 3.13.1 REFLEXIVITY ON THE RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

Gaining access to commercial airline pilots would seemingly be a very difficult research challenge. If a researcher was successful gaining access, engaging them in in-depth interviews would present another difficult research challenge. The language of pilots is nuanced, and just to be present for interviews requires an an interviewer who can literally unlock a number of security roadblocks. Pilots are mobile and the researcher must be able to adapt to changing interview locations, time zones, time of day and a myriad of scheduling accomodations. Would it be appropriate to select participants who are more readily available, easier to communicate with or require fewer security challenges to access? The answer to each of these is absolutely not.

The demographics outlined in section 3.13 follow the purposive sampling criteria for qualitative research, but they may not lead the researcher to optimization of the reserch population. How then, did the researcher ultimately select the participants? This was a matter of regular and repeated reflection. There was little doubt that the number of volunteers would provide a sampling representative of the larger commercial airline pilot population, but reflection lead the researcher to think beyond demographics.

Reflection lead the researcher to uncover the vaneer of the each volunteer. From the initial pilot-study to the final selection of participants for in-depth interviews, reflection was both a preparation and review component of the ultimate selection of interview questions and the participants who would be asked the questions. It became clear to the researcher to seek those who would most clearly remove the vaneer of their being so as to truly uncover who they were.

It was equally important to uncover the vaneer of the researcher in each of these encounters. Concerns for ethics and anonymity were forefront. Each pre- and post-reflection for the interviewer began with these requirements as paramount. The issue of researcher bias, dealt with directly in section 3.19, was never a factor in participant selection. The time spent with each participant and the interview questions posed to each participant, made clear that the sole focus of the research was about each participant, and their lived experience. Concerns for bias or neutrality were non-existent in this research.

There was, however, an external issue present in the researcher's reflections: What about the profession? Was flying commercial airliners becoming less of a profession? As a former airline Captain, with love and passion for my life's work, this was a concern. On reflection, it became an opportunity to ask questions of the participants about this area, to seek their views, and to utilize this challenge to the researcher's mindset as a contributory data point to understand the identity of commercial airline pilots.

And so, the reflexive determination on who to select for in-depth interviewing for this research was not quantifiable, was not driven by demographics, or even an argument for defensible science; it was driven by the researchers conclusion about who would best contribute meaningfully to this research. Many of the volunteers for this research would have been excellent choices, but I felt those who would allow themselves and the researcher to remove the vaneer and have substantive and meaningful conversations drove the participant selection. This was solely a human decision made upon significant reflection and consideration.

## 3.14 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

The data collection method relies on two conjunctive approaches: semi-structured in-depth interviewing and participant observation. The researcher will follow this proven approach (Sanders, 1982). This research approach is consistent with the researcher's epistemological

ontology and philosophy of science, and the approach is well suited to address the research questions of this research.

The center of the data collection will be semi-structured in-depth interviewing.  This research will utilize the semi-structured interview approach known as "phenomenological interviewing," developed by Dolbeare and Schuman (1982).  The Dolbeare and Schuman interview approach engages voluteer participant interviewees in a three-phase interview setting.  While there are advantages to multiple interviews of participants utilizing the Dolbeare and Schuman approach, there are also challenges.  The main challenge with this participant population is logistics.  The practice of the commercial airline profession involves leaving one's home and flying a commercial airliner, typically for days at a time.  In so doing, a participant pilot may be in multiple time zones in a single day and their flight schedule may be day or night or both, with a work start or finish time uncommon to other licensed professionals.  Interviewing the participant pilot group requires a unique logistical accommodation.  When and where an interview occurs will require the understanding and accommodation of a variety of professional and familial obligations.  There may be additional reasons to accommodate interviewing scheduling flexibility and every effort will be made to do so.  Consequently, the Dolbeare and Schuman semi-structured interview approach will be utilized in multiple interview events.

The interviews will focus initially on the participant's life history.  This allows the participant to reconstruct experiences earlier in their life that led them to the practice of their profession.  Questions that begin with how they became a pilot, rather than why, are the focus of the initial questions.  This initial line of inquiry is intended to put the participant at ease, opens them to conversation, and provides them the opportunity to self-define (Seidman, 2006).

The next phase of the interviews focuses on contemporary experience.  For example, the reconstruction of a day in the participant's life as an airline pilot is a focus of the contemporary inquiry phase.  In this phase, emphasis is on factual events rather than opinion.  Factual events provide the real story.  Facts, rather than opinions, provide the real story.  This is a benefit of qualitative research and a key benchmark for the reliability and validity of the research findings (Miles & Huberman, (1994).

In the final phase, the participant is asked to reflect on the meaning of the lived experiences of their professional life.  During each phase of an interview, a participant is making meaning, but in this final phase the participant is asked to bring his/her lived experience to the present.

Making sense and making meaning are the goals of this final phase. The final phase will seek what it means to be a professional airline pilot – the professional attributes, the individual, role and organizational identity attribute enactments – and what lived experiences enabled this identity. This is the essence of making sense and making meaning in the final phase of the interview experience with each interviewee (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The sensemaking of their lived experiences will help define what it means to be a licensed professional in commercial aviation today. This interview will seek to learn what impact professional identity has played on the practice of their profession and how the participants define their professional identity (Seidman, 2006).

Each interview phase addresses one or more of the research questions. The research questions were specifically derived to explore the professional identity of this new case. In the first phase of the interviews the interview questions provide a foundational understanding of the population; in the second phase their lived experience of daily life, career progression and ultimately, significant organizational change, is explored to begin to understand their sense of self before and after an M/A event; the third phase looks at both sense and meaning making as they address each of the research questions. Each phase of the interviews contributes to the understanding of the participants' professional identity and begins to understand how they manage and negotiate their new identity following tumult in their professional lives and professional practice.

Open-ended questions have been employed rather than scales to collect the data. Interviewees will be provided questions that do not restrict their options for responding. The reconstruction of a participants' lived experience informs this research. The interview questions serve as a means to explore that experience (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). A copy of the Volunteer Participant Interviewee Questions are in Appendix D.

Each interview will be recorded. The recordings will be transcribed verbatim following each interview. Each interview will have a joint interview and observational form. Date, time and location of each interview will be recorded on the interview form. Space will be provided on the form to record essential data manually, to serve as a backup to the digital recording. This form provides the researcher space to record noteworthy events or processes observed. This form will also provide space for reflective notes. Codes, categorizations and emergent themes may be annotated on the form, as well as any concerns observed by the researcher or expressed by the participant (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). A copy of the Volunteer Participant Interviewee Interview/Observational Form is in Appendix E.

Each interview will last approximately one hour in duration. Full opportunity will be given to each participant to respond. Should more or less time be necessary for this full opportunity, that full opportunity time will be given. A database of potential participant interviewees is available to the researcher, with over 400 volunteers.

Participant observation will play an additional contributory and constitutive role. There is far more credibility in multiple source research than in single source (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). The conjunctive approach of this research provides "both long-term involvement and intensive interviews" to enable the researcher the means to "collect rich data, data that are detailed and varied enough that they provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on" (Becker, 1970, pp. 51-62).

Detractors claim that participant observation is mainly valuable to "describe behavior and events," and interviews are mainly valuable to "obtain the perspective of actors" (Maxwell, 1992, p. 94). This researcher takes the conjunctive view advanced by Becker (1970). Researchers have argued "participant observation provides more complete data about specific situations and events than any other method" (Maxwell, 1992, p. 110). The combined effects of interviewing and participant observation will provide the analytical approach for the reliability and validity goals of this research.

The combined data sources reliability and validity will be enhanced by the conjunctive modalities of semi-structured in-depth interviewing and participant observation (Maxwell, 1992). Other means may provide similar opportunity for quality research, but the proven methods chosen and described here will enable meaningful data collection.

## 3.15 Data Analysis – Individual Cases

The data analysis of this research follows the analytic framework of IPA. IPA provides the cornerstones of the analytic framework, namely, phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith et al., 2009). Further analytics are utilized to provide an additional orthogonal component to the data analysis. Among these orthoganal components are identity theory utilizing Erickson's (1968) eight stages of development, professional identity theory drawing upon Ibarra's (1999) identity negotiation and professional adaptation processes, the role of the Psychological Contract on relational agreements in the workplace (Rousseau, 1989), and the role of identity work and play as it relates to professional identity reconstruction following significant organizational change (Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010).

IPA, and each of the further analytics, provides the analytic framework for this research. Each of these analytics is utilized to advance the researchers understanding and interpretative analysis of the phenomenon under study.

Sanders phenomenology details four lines of inquiry to analyze data from phenomenological research (Gill, 2014). Each was utilized in the inductive analysis of this research. First, the researcher looks at what was learned in the participant interviews and begins to describe the phenomena experienced by the interviewees. In the second line of inquiry, the researcher identifies common themes, also known as invariants (Sanders, 1982).

Third, the researcher establishes the what (*noema*) of an interviewee's conscious lived experience. This line of inquiry may also be interpreted as an establishment of the how (*noesis*) of an interviewees' lived experience.

Lastly, the researcher engages in intuition and reflection (eidetic reduction). In this line of inductive analysis, the researcher seeks the why or essence of the interviewees' lived experience.

Several different strategies will be employed to analyze the data collected. The process begins with reading and beginning to study the interview transcripts. Certain salient points may become part of the observational form during an initial interview and thus may become a point of meaning for the researcher going forward (Maxwell, 1992). An earlier point of salient meaning may carry forward to another interview without conflict (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

While it may be impossible to distinguish data collection from data analysis, in-depth analysis of the interview data should begin only after all of the interviews are complete (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). This is the point that coding begins. Coding is the assignment of words or phrases to describe a cluster of similar responses, events or experiences. Coding is a means to assemble clusters of meaningful data in qualitative research (Marshall and Rossman, 2014). Coding leads to categorization. Categorization leads to the emergence of themes to inform the research.

The critical linkage between interview questions and the primary research questions of the research is present in the large amount of data from the interviews (Seidman, 2006). How the data analysis informs the research questions is the analytic benchmark of the success and effectiveness of the research methods employed in this research.

## 3.16 DATA ANALYSIS – CROSS CASE REVIEW

There were multiple cross-case review strategies employed for each in-depth case study. A theoretical framework advanced by Yin (1981), looking for "replication"and seeking to find "matches" in multiple cases, will be incorporated throughout the analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 174). Beyond the analysis, an interpretative synthesis was employed, consistent with IPA (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). "Clusters" were identified with comparisons of participant contributions resulting in "families" or "patterns" of data to aid in understanding comparability (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 174).

### 3.16.1 TECHNOLOGY'S ROLE IN DATA MANAGEMENT

NVivo10 provided the supporting software strategy. The researcher provided the manual effort. Historically, manual data analysis has been the norm (Seidman, 2006). Manual tasks such as note taking, highlighting, underlining and the creation of a paper filing system have been the traditional means to conduct qualitative data analysis.

A number of qualitative analysis software programs are also available (Welsh, 2002). NVivo10 is one of those software programs and was employed in this research. NVivo10 is capable of uploading audio and video interview data and interview transcripts. The program provides coding and categorizing options to aid at identifying emerging themes. Reports are generated and exported to a Microsoft Word document. This research utilized Microsoft Word for Mac 2011. Citations were managed with EndNote X7 5.3. The computer used was a MacBook Pro.

Additional supportive technologies were also employed. Dragon Microphone was utilized as the primary voice recorder for the interviews. An independent digital voice recorder was used as a backup to Dragon Microphone. An iPhone 5S was used to record the interviews. Apple iTunes was used to convert the Dragon Microphone recordings to a file format that could be used by Dragon Dictate and InqScribe. Dragon Dictate 4.0 for Mac was the transcription software utilized. Assisting in the transcription process was InqScribe 2.2. InqScribe provided a pause, step back and step forward capability to more efficiently transcribe, and later, review the data and verify verbatim certainty. In the write-up phase of this research Pixelmator 3.5, a drawing software program, was used to help build and enhance the Tables and Figures in this Thesis. Each of these technologies contributed efficiency and accuracy to the data management.

The interpretative analysis, however, is the sole provence of the researcher. Each of the technologies described and the manual systems employed were valuable tools to manage data, but analysis of the data rests with the researcher/interviewer. The Heideggerian phenomenology of IPA, utilized in this research, is defined by the total immersion of the R/I with participants (Heidegger, 1962; Wyschogrod, 1954). No filing system or data management software replaces the interpretative analysis of the R/I.

Data management utilizing both manual and electronic methods was a good check and balance for the interview and participant observation data collected (Maxwell, 1992). Reliability and validity were further enhanced through transparency of the research (Welsh, 2002). Each of the manual and computer-driven modalities contributed to the data management in both the individual cases (first order of analysis) and in the cross-case review (second order of analysis).

## 3.17 DATA ANALYSIS – PATH TO OUTPUTS

This research design and methodology provides a path for the reader to trace the findings back to theoretical underpinnings and see how the interpretations and findings connect (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The data analysis outputs are envisioned in three forms.

First is a summary of findings. This output is focused on description, rather than explanation and seeks to "make explicit the implicit structure and meaning of human experiences" (Sanders, 1982, p. 354). The lived experience of the study participants is detailed in direct quotes and sound bites acquired in both volunteer participant interviews and participant observations.

The second data analysis output involves discussion. The discussion covers a range of possibilities from relating the findings to analogous research to offering tentative new theories. As an exploratory study, this research is mindful of the opportunity to contribute new knowledge, and the need to communicate this new knowledge accurately.

The third and final section of the data analysis output involves implications (Creswell, 2012). This third section of data analysis leads the researcher from the literature, through the method and by way of sensemaking to meaning. The voices of the participants provide meaning and it is the R/I's role to interpret those voices, to determine their implications. This section is different than a conclusion section that suggests a certainty or finality. Once again, these implications should be traceable and supportable from the thesis. This journey of exploration

will expose "essences" of the professional identity of unionized expert labor (Marshall and Rossman, 2010).  This last output provides the essence of professional identity for a commercial airline pilot in the United States.

## 3.18 ETHICS PROTOCOL

Ethical approval to conduct this exploratory study was obtained from the University of Reading, Henley Business School.  A copy of the Application for Research Project Approval is included in the appendix as Appendix A.  A copy of the Consent Form is also included in the appendix as Appendix B.

Informed consent initiated the process of considering volunteer participants for interview. Each participant will be provided with a consent form.  Each participant will need to be a genuine volunteer.  A clear and thorough understanding of the process and purpose of both the research and interviews will be given.  Transparency will be assured to each potential interviewee.  Name, hometown, or other data linking the interviewee with the findings will be excluded.  The anonymity and confidentiality of participants are fundamental to the research and ethics protocol.

Beyond the scientific benefit of the study, ethical consideration is given to the application of knowledge gained.  How this research may aid individuals in the practice of their profession is a consideration in conducting this research.  Transcription will be checked to ensure its verbatim record of participant statements.  And finally, the research design and methodology proposed, IPA, seeks to eliminate adverse consequences of participation (Smith et al., 2009).

## 3.19 BIAS OF THE RESEARCHER

The researcher is a former U.S. airline Captain, hired coincident with deregulation of the U.S. airline industry.  My experience with the airlines of this research spans 38 years.  Among these many years, my airline employers have sought bankruptcy protection four times and my airline employers have engaged in three merger-acquisition events.  I experienced five and a half years of furlough near the beginning of my airline employment.  Following my recall, I flew as Captain for the majority of my career and I am type-rated in Boeing, Lockheed and McDonnell Douglas aircraft.  My flight experience exceeds 22,000 hours in the airline operations under study.  I have held key informant Flight Operations positions including Instructor Pilot and Line Check Airman.  My union leadership positions included Government Affairs Committee Chairman and Transaction Committee Chairman.  Now retired, over three

years have passed since I have flown as Captain.  This history and access with the population of the study may be a bias.  Active listening, hearing what is being said, rather than what the researcher may want to hear is an important mitigating component of this qualitative research.

It is important to consider the converse to this potential bias, as well.  Factors that may contribute to bias, similarly, may result in optimizing the quality of the data collected (Peshkin, 1988).  The language of pilots is unique and nuanced.  I am fluent in that language as well as the variety of professional practice nuances commercial airline pilots deal with daily.  To be fluent in the language of this unique domain and to understand the nuances of their lived experience may be a significant benefit to this research.  Mindfulness of scholarly research, detailed in this research design and methodology will be the benchmarks of rigor and discipline to guide, motivate and ensure this outcome.

## 3.20 SUMMARY

This research, through engagement in semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant observation seeks to begin to understand the professional identity of United States commercial airline pilots.  The data collection is both broad and deep, engaging the research population in-depth and over time.

35 pilots provided a test-bed for the research questions, Dolbeare and Schuman interview approach and their improvement.  The R/I benefitted from this experience as well in developing interview skills to optimize the data collection.  Seven participants contributed over 210 hours of in-depth interviews.  Participant observation periods with pilots, flight attendants, gate agents, mechanics, members of management and a range of other employees working at or near airports in support of the pilots of this research were both contributory and constitutive to understanding the being of the research population.  Participant observation periods exceeded 500 hours.

To begin to understand the professional identity of this uniquely situated research population, the R/I benefitted from a willing, available and authentic group of contributors.  The research design and methodology detailed in this chapter was arrived at after careful consideration and evaluation.  Understanding lived experience, what it means to someone when something important happens to them, and making sense and meaning of the rich and robust data provided by the contributors was benefitted by each component of this chapter.  Multiple axes of investigation and analysis were employed to explore each of the research questions.  Orthoganol components enhanced the data analysis.

The outcomes of the research result from the rigor and discipline of the research design and methodology detailed in the chapter and closely followed in the fieldwork. Table 3.6 provides a summary of key approaches and positions of this research.

**Table 3.6**    Rᴇsᴇᴀʀᴄʜ Dᴇsɪɢɴ ᴀɴᴅ Mᴇᴛʜᴏᴅᴏʟᴏɢʏ Sᴜᴍᴍᴀʀʏ

| DESIGN FEATURE | AMPLIFYING CONSTRUCT | NOTE |
|---|---|---|
| **Positionality of the Research** | | |
| Epistemology | Interpretivist | Attachment of Meaning to Events |
| Ontology | Constructionist | Identity constructed Through Actor Interactions |
| **Methodology and Research Approach** | | |
| Methodology | Qualitative Methods | Exploratory Study |
| Inquiring Logic | Inductive | Inference from Particular Lived Experiences |
| Guiding Theory | Phenomenology and Case Study | Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) |
| **Research Context** | | |
| Unit of Analysis | Individual/Group | Captain/First Officer |
| Level of Analysis | Organization/Firm | Union/Airline |
| **Data Collection** | | |
| In-Depth Interviewing | Semi-Structured, Three-Phase Interviews | Dolbeare and Schuman Approach |
| Participant Observation | Professional Practice Environment | Longitudinal, Collective, Contributory and Constitutive Observations |
| **Data Analysis** | | |
| Phenomena Description | Revealed in Interviews and Participant Observation | Verbatim Transcription |
| Identification of Common Themes | Invariants, Codes, Categorizations | NVivo10 |
| Reflection on Themes | Double Hermeneutic Circles | Interpretation of Reality of Phenomena |
| Interpretation | IPA | The "essence" of "being" |

# Chapter 4  Contextual Perspective

## 4.1  INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on key contextual touchstones to make the phenomenological and hermeneutic sensibilities of this study apparent.  Yardley (2000) argues that understanding context is one of the key principles in assessing qualitative research, and Smith et al. (2009) argues for the importance of understanding context to interpret qualitative research, specifically IPA research.  Context and a sensitivity to context, essential in the design and execution of a successful IPA research study, are offered here (Yardley, 2000).  The reader will begin to hear the voices of the participants in this chapter.  The context participants shared with the researcher/interviewer (R/I) begins to put participant contributors voices in the understanding of this research.

Three contextual perspectives are provided.  First is the macro perspective, what the participants of this research call "the 30,000 foot view."  Global references were made in both volunteer interviews and participant observation.  There was an understanding, offered by the participants, that the effects of globalization and inequality were linked and manifest in their lives and the lives of their families.  The linkage between the effects of globalization and inequality were given contextual perspective in both interviews and participant observation.  At the core of this understanding was a belief that social context had social consequences (Akerlof and Kranton, 2010).  Contributors made clear what the literature and empirical evidence supported, that "American workers have been receiving meager pay increases for so long now that it's reasonable to talk in sweeping terms about the trend" (Leonhardt, 2014, p. 1).  The chapter commences with relevant global assertions provided by the participants and corroborated by independent research.  The contributors to this research made clear to both their awareness and salience of this macro perspective and its meaningfulness in beginning to understand their being (Smith et al., 2009).

Second, this chapter looks at the union movement in the United States with a specific focus on U.S. commercial airline pilots.  It begins with a historical perspective.  A review of the genesis and contextual perspective of the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978 is offered in an effort to understand how this landmark legislation impacted the participants of this research. Deregulation of the U.S. airline industry is both a temporal line of demarcation for this research and a contextual perspective that provides a legislative focus and perspective.

Participants ranged from active to passive in their union activity and engagement. Union membership is a requirement for employment with major airlines in the United States and provides a unique contextual organizational setting (Hopkins, 1971). Political, governmental, legislative and social contexts are provided. As reported by participants, the understanding of what it means to be a union member is a contextual perspective unknown to many not sharing their lived experience, including participants' friends and neighbors. A lack of awareness and understanding about unions, their declining numbers, and their impact in the American workplace provides the second contextual perspective of this chapter.

Last is a view to the contextual perspective of the current state of the airline industry in the United States. Following financial turmoil and industry consolidation, the U.S. airline industry and its key employees, members of unionized expert labor, experienced transformative change (Nordenflycht and Gittell, 2013). This last contextual perspective will provide insights into the comtemporary lived experiences of tensions for members of unionized expert labor in this transformed industry. The political, legal and practical consequences of this unique and transformed organizational setting will be given real life context.

This chapter concludes with an overview of Appendices associated with this research. Each appendix provides a grounding in reality of the lived experiences of airline pilots in their transformed, and now, turbulent industry. Each major airline merger-acquisition event has resulted in litigation. The appendices provide a contextual perspective of the lived experience of two pilot groups in their respective post-merger experience.

## 4.2  THE ROLE OF CONTEXT IN IPA

IPA research embeds a "sensitivity to context" throughout the research process (Smith et al., 2009, p. 180). The center of IPA's sensitivity to context is IPA's engagement with a particular ideography (Smith et al., 2009). In this research, the participants' sharing of their particular lived experiences and sustaining their meaningful contributions over time is critical to the success of the research. The sensitivity to each participant, appreciating their lived experience, and the context in which it was experienced not only drew the researcher to IPA in the first place, but also allowed the methodological argument to accurately and reliably explore this new case.

This research was interactional. Whether the interaction occurred in an interview, one-on-one discussion in participant observation, or observation and discussion with a group or crew,

sensitivity and an appreciation of the interaction context was fundamental to understanding the phenomenon under study. Contributors to this research spoke about global issues, political issues, government and regulatory issues, union issues, management issues, labor-management relations and personal and family issues. Appreciating the context of each of these interactions required sensitivity and understanding. Context is fundamental to a successful IPA study, from the beginning and throughout the research (Smith et al., 2009).

IPA research also shows a sensitivity to context through "an awareness of the existing literature" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 181). The ideographic engagement with participants was provided with reference to data that was not readily available at the time of the discussion. This chapter shows the notional data obtained from participants and corroborates it with relevant and substantive literature.

The contributors made clear, often emphatic, assertions to provide context to their lived experience. Subsequently, the researcher verified the assertions using outside sources. This chapter displays, in an evidentiary manner, the macro and micro understandings of contributors to this research. IPA requires the researcher to intepret not only what the participant said, but to "go beyond a simple description of what is there to an interpretation of what it means" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 181). Context contributes to the understanding of what it means to be a member of unionized expert labor today. The accuracy of their data assertions was noteworthy in both participant interviews and participant observations.

This factual reliability further contributed to understanding who these members of expert labor are. The research population was not only emphatic about the contextual perspectives shared, but was consistently accurate in doing so. Their perceptions were uncannily linked to reality. This context accuracy and understanding was pervasive and was contributory to the findings of this research.

One of IPA's principles "lies in whether it tells the reader something interesting, important or useful" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 183). The contextual perspectives detailed in this chapter from both macro and micro perspectives not only inform the research, but do so with data.

## 4.3 THE CONTEXT OF INEQUALITY

Contributors to this research were aware of global data and its relation to their lives and the practice of their profession. They shared their understanding of income inequality in the U.S. and often framed it in global terms. The contextual perspective offered by the contributors

was framed in the larger worker context. They made clear to the researcher/interviewer (R/I) that workers were significantly the reason for a corporation's success, but workers were not participating in the success of their employers. A pilot summed up the view by many contributors stating, "management gets the bonus, we get nothing." They further shared that this was an inclusive view, not just the view of their profession. The contributors made clear that it was workers collectively, union and non-union alike, who were not seeing progress in their wages when their companies succeeded. Figure 4.1 details the perspective held by contributors. Low and middle-income workers have not advanced, in fact, they have slightly receded from 2000 to 2014 in their wages. Workers at the 90$^{th}$ percentile have advanced (Leonhardt, 2014). The wage disparity conveyed by the contributors is substantiated.

**Figure 4.1    WAGES AND WORKERS 2000-2014**
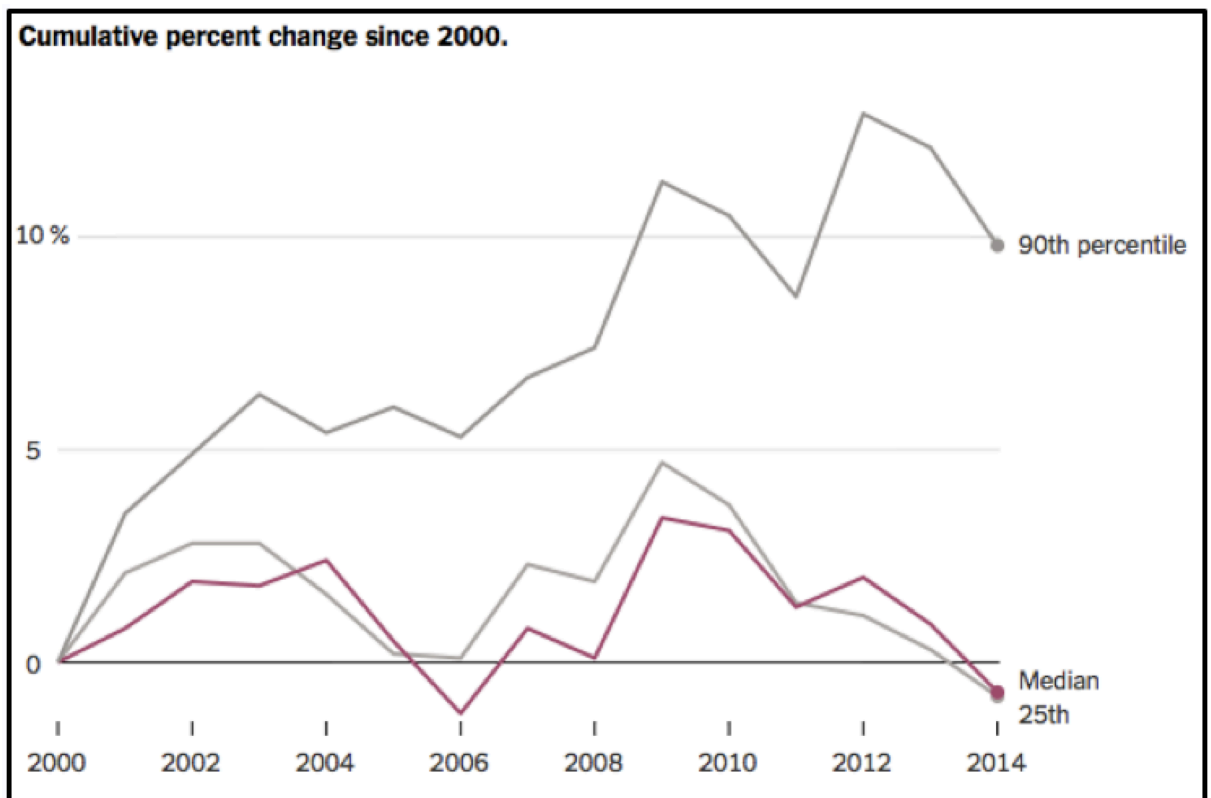


*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics*

These exchanges provided context for the research population's understanding for global inequality generally and the U.S.'s position in this widening disparity. The researcher utilized Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) data to further verify the assertions of the research participants.

Figures 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 display three of the human manifestations of inequality globally, each raised by the participants in discussions with the researcher. The participants did not quote the data, but rather understood the context of income inequality, as well as its influence. As a contributor in participant observation stated, "I haven't had a raise in 12 years." This context was often shared in volunteer participant interviews and participant observation periods. The power and significance of participants raising inequality as a contextual perspective, not only raised the researchers awareness and understanding of this issue, but also contributed to understanding inequalities importance to the research population. In assessing the linkage between the research population and the documented global effects of income inequality, it is important to note the location of the USA on each of these next three figures.

**Figure 4.2     INFANT MORTALITY IS HIGHER IN MORE UNEQUAL COUNTRIES**



*Source : (OECD, 2012)*

**Figure 4.3**    LIFE EXPECTANCY IS LOWER IN MORE UNEQUAL COUNTRIES
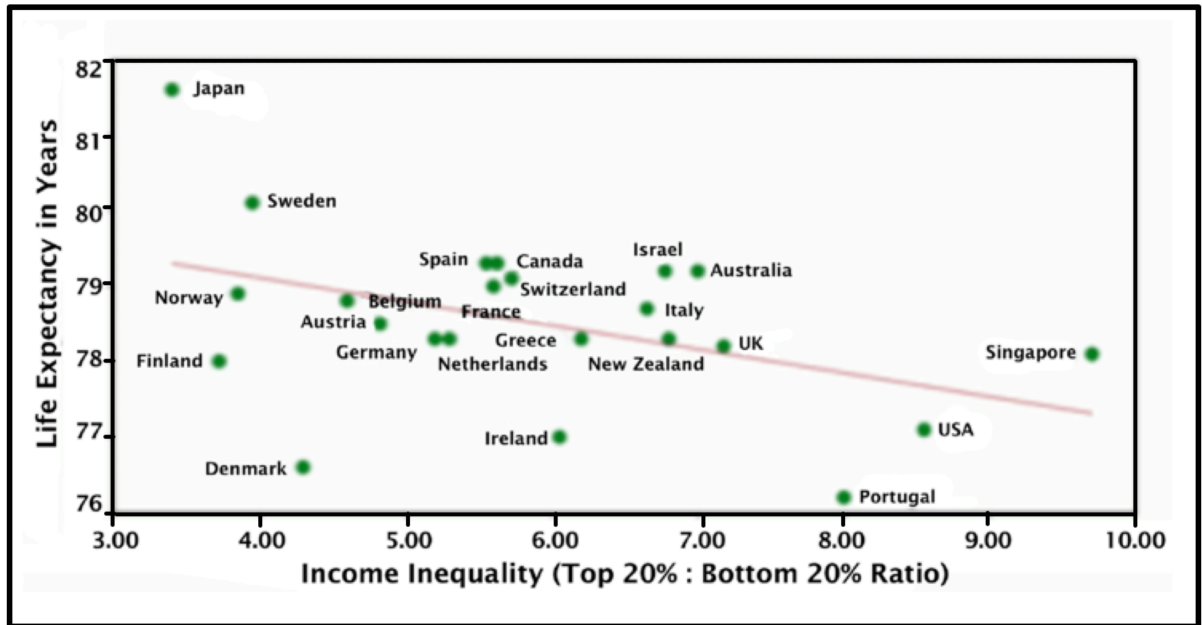


*Source : (OECD)*

**Figure 4.4**    HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS ARE WORSE IN MORE UNEQUAL COUNTRIES
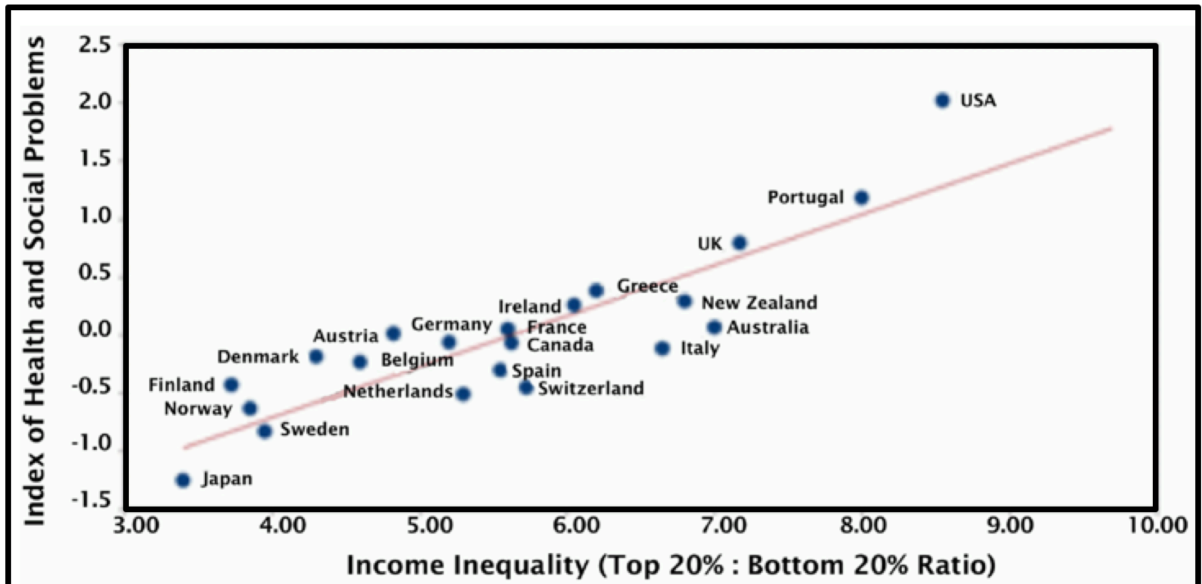


*Source :  (OECD)*

Income inequality is a global reality further displayed in Figure 4.5.  The social

manifestations of inequality are often rooted in income inequality (OECD 2014).  Income

inequality has reached record highs in most OECD countries (OECD 2014).  Research shows

that the wealthiest 10% of the population has an income 10 times greater than the poorest

(OECD).

**Figure 4.5** **R**ATIO OF THE **A**VERAGE **I**NCOME OF THE **R**ICHEST **10%** TO THE **P**OOREST **10%**, **(2013** OR **L**ATEST**)**

| Country | Value |
|---------|-------|
| Mexico | 30.5 |
| Chile | 26.5 |
| United States | 18.8 |
| Turkey | 15.2 |
| Israel | 14.9 |
| Greece | 12.3 |
| Spain | 11.7 |
| Italy | 11.4 |
| Japan | 10.7 |
| United Kindgom | 10.9 |
| Portugal | 10.1 |
| Korea | 10.1 |
| Estonia | 9.7 |
| OECD | 9.5 |
| Australia | 8.8 |
| Canada | 8.6 |
| New Zealand | 8.2 |
| France | 7.4 |
| Ireland | 7.4 |
| Poland | 7.4 |
| Hungary | 7.2 |
| Luxembourg | 7.1 |
| Austria | 7.0 |
| Switzerland | 6.7 |
| Netherlands | 6.6 |
| Germany | 6.4 |
| Sweden | 6.3 |
| Norway | 6.2 |
| Belgium | 5.9 |
| Slovak Republic | 5.7 |
| Iceland | 5.6 |
| Finland | 5.5 |
| Slovenia | 5.4 |
| Czech Republic | 5.4 |
| Denmark | 5.2 |

*Source: (OECD, 2014), Income Distribution Database*

Income inequality has been driven by "a surge in incomes for high earners, especially among the top 1%, and much slower income growth – and even declines during economic downturns for low earners" (OECD 2014, p. 8). Figure 4.6 shares this depiction for household incomes from 1985 to 2011.

**Figure 4.6**    Cʜᴀɴɢᴇ ɪɴ Rᴇᴀʟ Hᴏᴜsᴇʜᴏʟᴅ Iɴᴄᴏᴍᴇs Bᴇᴛᴡᴇᴇɴ **1985** ᴀɴᴅ **2011, (OECD Aᴠᴇʀᴀɢᴇ)**
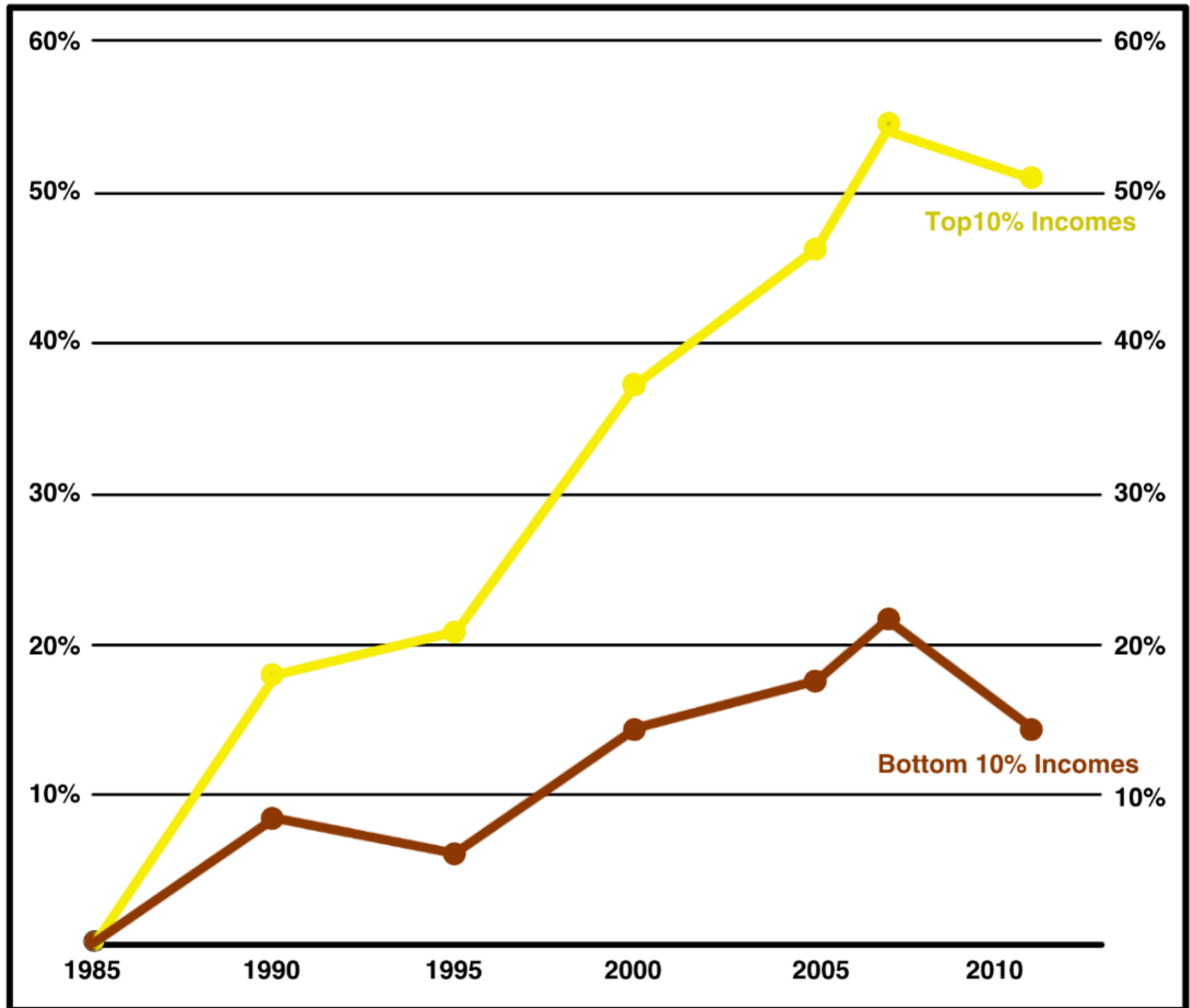


*Source:  (OECD, 2014),  Income Distribution Database*

The wealth gap is also substantial, and it too is growing.  Figure 4.7 empirically displays the concentration of wealth as even more pronounced than income strata.  Asset accumulation and investments are increasingly garnered by those at the top.  The "top 10% controlled half of all household wealth and the wealthiest 1% owned 18%" (OECD) of the wealth for OECD countries.  In 2012, the bottom 40% owned only 3% (OECD).  Frequently, the contributors to this research echoed these realities, describing the two distinct groups as "the haves and have nots."

**Figure 4.7** RICHEST 10% SHARE OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLD NET WEALTH, (2010 OR LATEST)
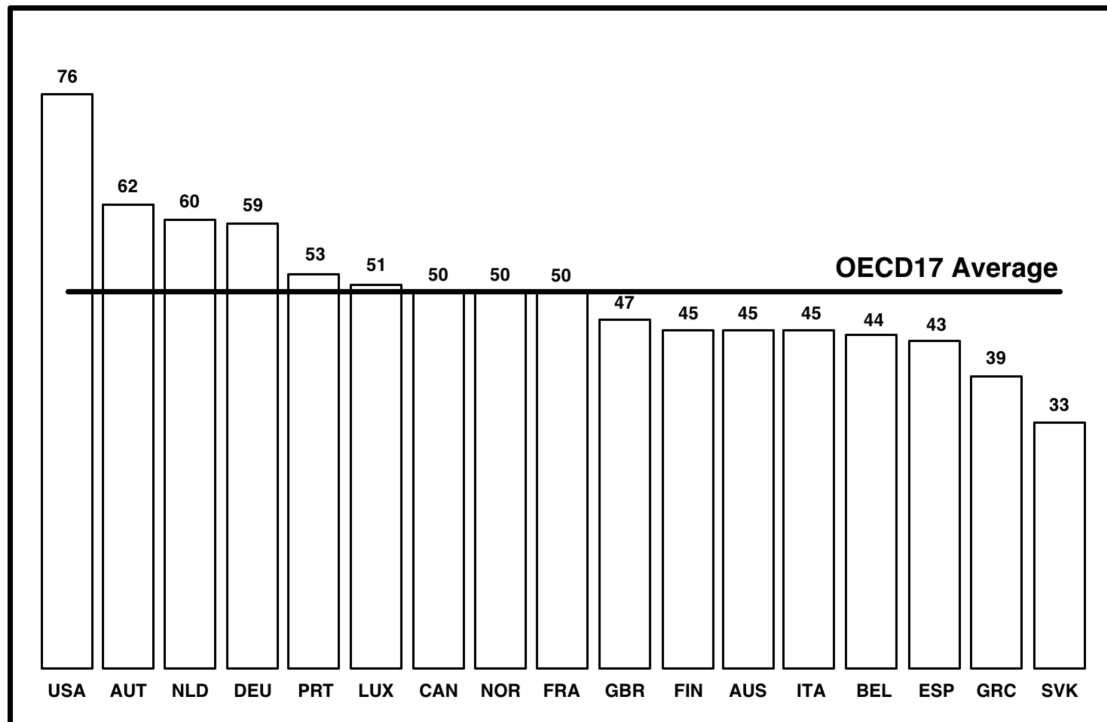


*Source: ( OECD, 2015),  In It Together:  Why Less Inequality Benefits All*

## 4.4 INEQUALITY IN THE UNITED STATES

Contributors often broached the subject of income inequality with what the researcher concluded was cynicism or sarcasm.  The researcher, in further discussions, learned it was their means of coping with a contextual reality that impacted their lives.  As a leading economy, the participants critically questioned the assumption that Americans must be doing well.  Without saying the actual words, they conveyed a sense of inequality.  Contributors shared with the R/I that "a union crane operator makes more than I do," and "a union ship welder makes twice what I make."  Contributors were quick to point out that these were a very few of their "union brothers," and wanted to make clear the distinction that a few are doing very well, but many are not.  Workers, in particular, were not regularly sharing in the knowledge and expertise they brought to the workplace.

The participants also made global statements about their respective ideographic lived experiences.  They conveyed a clear sense that on many scales, they were not doing well.  They were not doing well financially.  They were not doing well socially and they were beginning to realize that the relational agreements that were defining for understanding their view of self and others view of them was also changing.  They were not doing well

psychologically. They conveyed a broad and deep sense of inequality. Chapter Five will share the voices of participants and the sense of collectivism shared pre-merger and the sense of individualism shared post-merger for commercial airline pilots. The post-merger voices of contributors will personify the inequality experienced by commercial airline pilots following a merger-acquisition event.

Participants communicated repeatedly that many Americans weren't doing well at all. The data confirms the U.S. has the highest income inequality in the developed world (Alvaredo et al., 2013). Participants in both interviews and participant observation were correct: they were not doing very well. Their expressions were that they were increasingly productive, but were not participating in the economic gains of their productivity. Participant understanding was that inequality was not just an external event happening to others, it was real and was a contextual experience that touched their lives.

Figure 4.8 shows the distribution of wealth in the United States utilizing Federal Reserve Economic Data (FRED) comparing the top 1% of Americans to the remaining 99%. The data affirms the views routinely expressed by participants.

**Figure 4.8** UNITED STATES WEALTH DISTRIBUTION
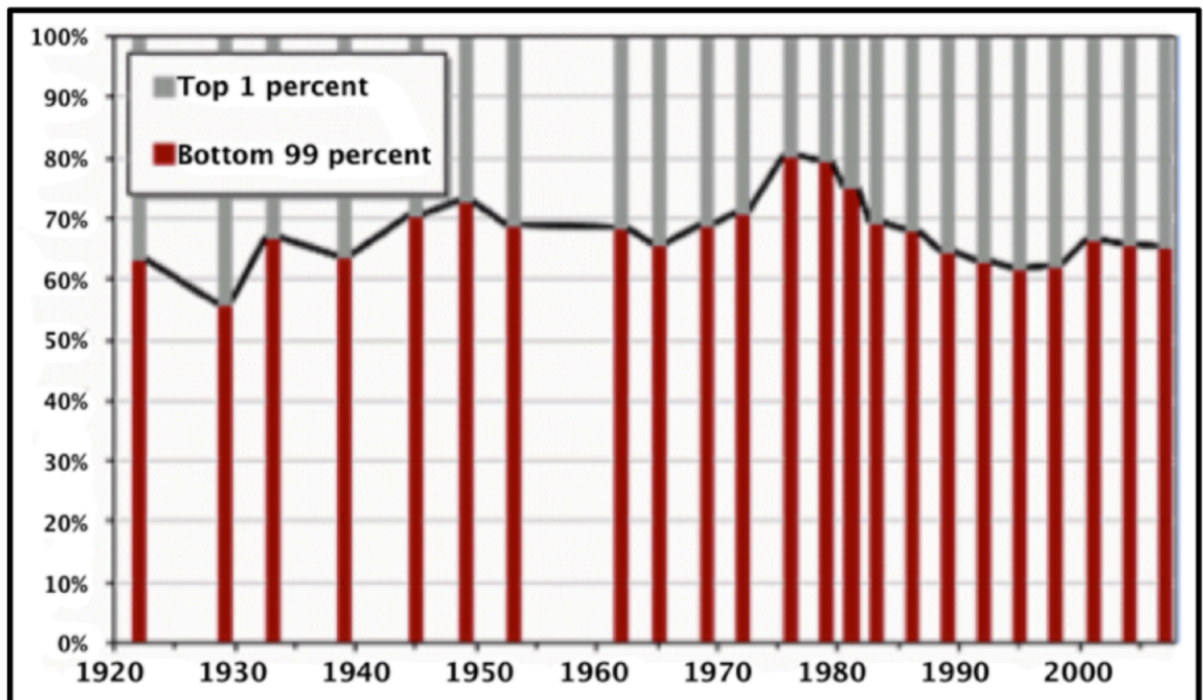


*Source: U.S. Federal Reserve FRED data*
*Note: Grey/Red shaded areas indicate U.S. recessions*

Figure 4.9 looks at U.S. income inequality more broadly, expanding the reference to the top 5% of Americans. The data displays little or no gains at the lower quintiles of income, but documents an increase in inequality for the top earners. This broader data also confirms the views of participants. Participants stated, "why is it that management looks to labor to fix their problems by taking pay and benefit cuts, but they seem to be exempt?" "Our CEO just got fired and received a $25 million dollar parachute...what a crock…it is so wrong."

**Figure 4.9** **INCOME GAP FOR UNITED STATES WORKERS**
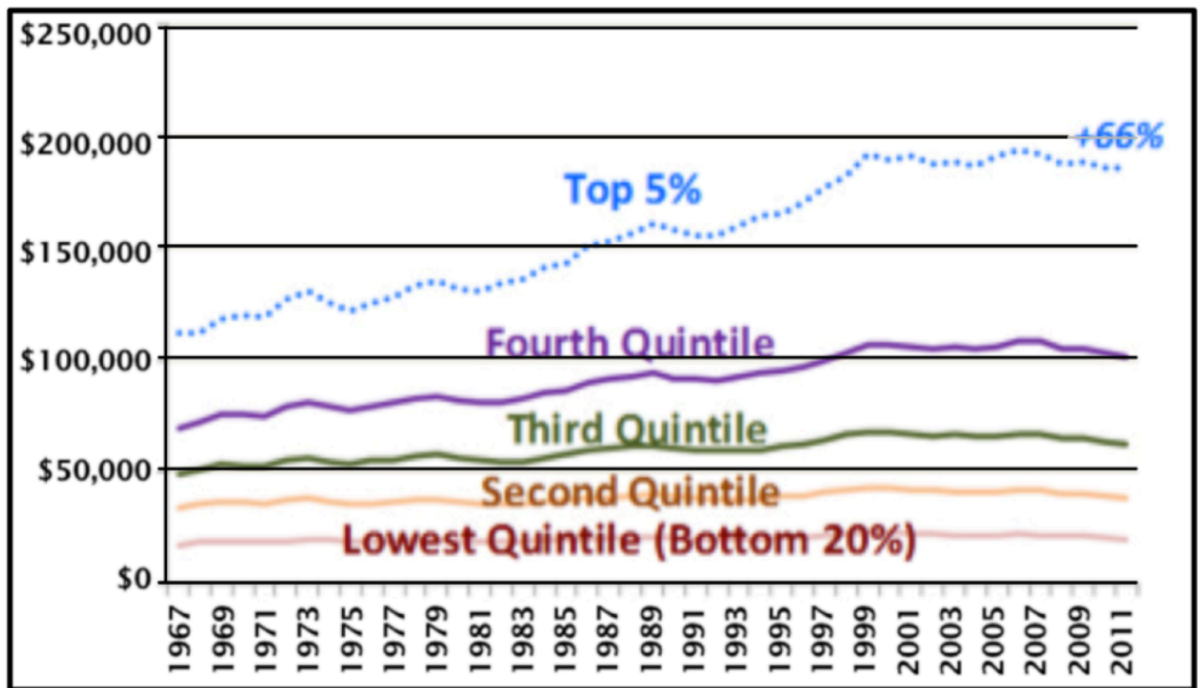


*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Income Limits for Each Fifth and Top 5 Percent of Households (2011 Dollars)*

Volunteer interviewees and participant observation contributors were aware of global income inequality as well as their own income inequality, knew that this was a rightable condition, and knew that nothing would be done.

### 4.4.1 WORKER PRODUCTIVITY AND COMPENSATION

Productivity is often an argument advanced to challenge a union's presence in the workplace (Hirsch, 2004). Contributors shared their personal stories regarding this argument regularly. The data and empirical research makes clear that the productivity of union labor is not diminished by a labor union's presence (Freeman, 2007a). What the data does suggest, however, is that while labor productivity has increased, compensation has not. Figure 4.10, compiled from several federal sources, makes this depiction.

The contributors to this research communicated to the R/I a belief in the benefits of a collectively organized workforce in dialog with their employer management. They did this in both interviews and participant observation periods. The participants shared, and the data confirms, that the increased productivity of workers is not comensurately rewarded in either pay or benefit improvements. It was the belief of contributors that a dialogue with key employees, members of unionized expert labor, would be a postive step toward workplace productivity. The belief from contributors was that this was not likely. As one contributor stated, "talk is cheap, and they don't even do that." Another contributor stated, "even if they did speak with us, their word is useless." "You can't trust 'em."

This realization provides the meaningfulness of the contextual perspective of Figure 4.10. This unlikely view of a shared vision in labor-management relations framed the mindset of contributors to question the authenticity and trust in matters such as collective bargaining and individual pilot professional standards. The contributors regularly shared their desire to be both positive and productive, but the consistent underwhelming lack of either recognition or reward for these attributes showcased a contextual perspective that informs the being of unionized expert labor in what the participants described as a "transformed airline industry."

**Figure 4.10** GROWTH OF REAL HOURLY COMPENSATION
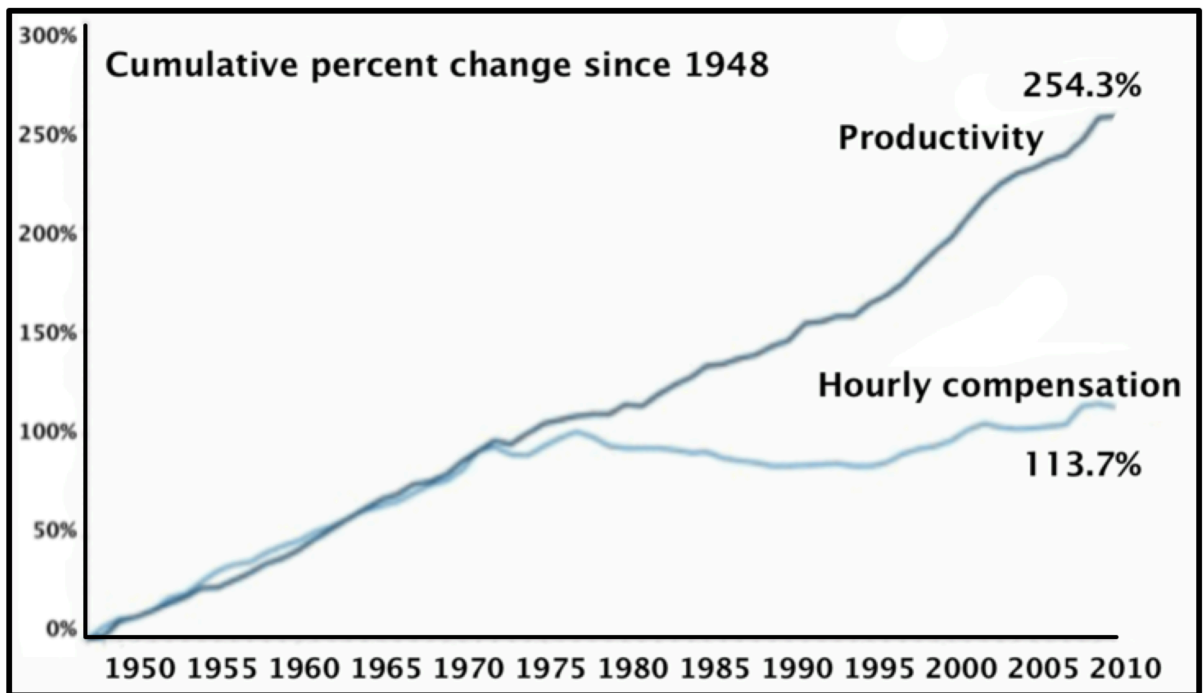


*Source: (Lubin, 2013), analysis of unpublished total economy data from Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Productivity and Cost Program and Bureau of Economic Analysis, National Income and Product Accounts public data series.*
*Note: hourly compensation is from production/nonsupervisory workers in the private sector and productivity is for the total economy.*

Declining union membership among U.S. workers and rising inequality have not impeded the U.S. economy. Figure 4.11 shows the paradoxical nature of wealth and the income gap in the United States. Of particular interest are the divergent paths following the economic crisis of 2008. This depiction of stock market recovery and resultant wealth accumulation for the wealthy is in stark contrast with the median household income experience for union workers following the 2008 economic crisis. Contributors conveyed a clear degree of anamis surrounding their sense of inequality in the workplace. The data confirms their assertions.

**Figure 4.11** REAL MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME
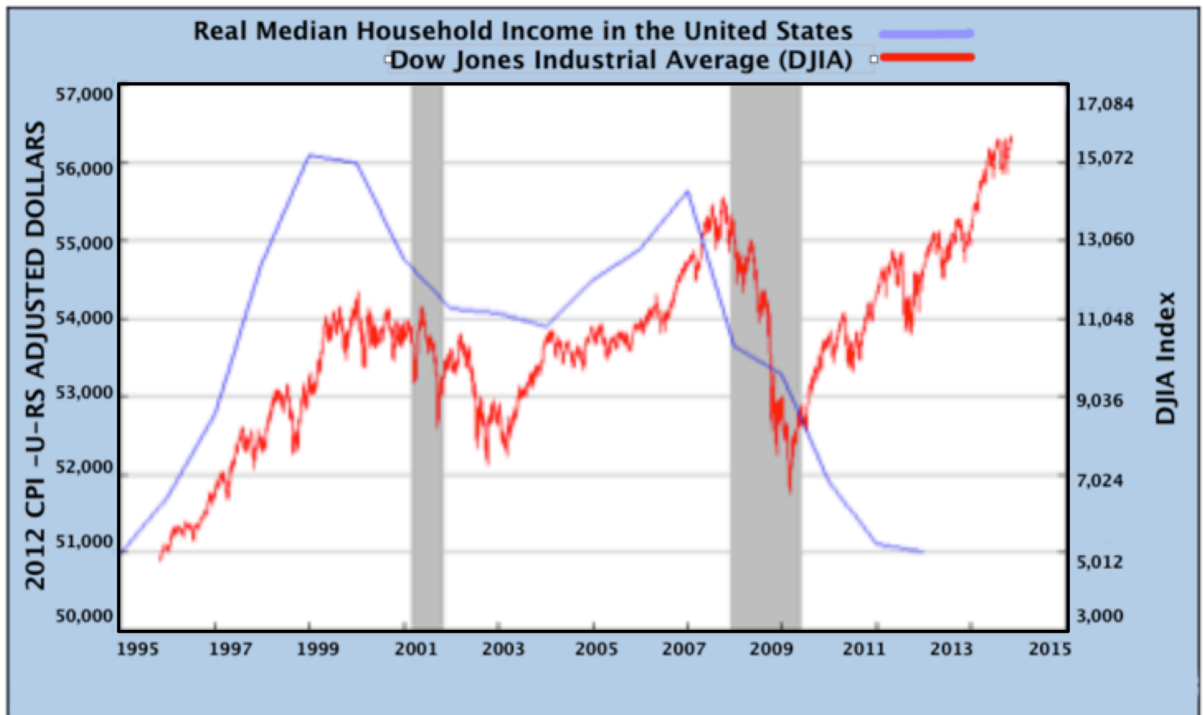


*Source: U.S. Federal Reserve FRED data*
*Note: grey shaded areas indicate U.S. recessions*

### 4.4.2 AGEISM, RETIREMENT AND INEQUALITY

Aging plays an increasingly important role in understanding workers, the union movement in the U.S., and inequality. Workers without sufficient resources, particularly healthcare and a retirement income source(s), are increasingly likely to remain in the workforce. More and more workers have remained in the workforce beyond normal or desired retirement ages (Hayutin et al., 2013). These numbers have been steadily increasing for both men and women since 2000 (Hayutin et al., 2013).

Figure 4.12 synthesizes this data and provides a visual display of the effects of inequality and ageism on the U.S. workforce.

**Figure 4.12  LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION**
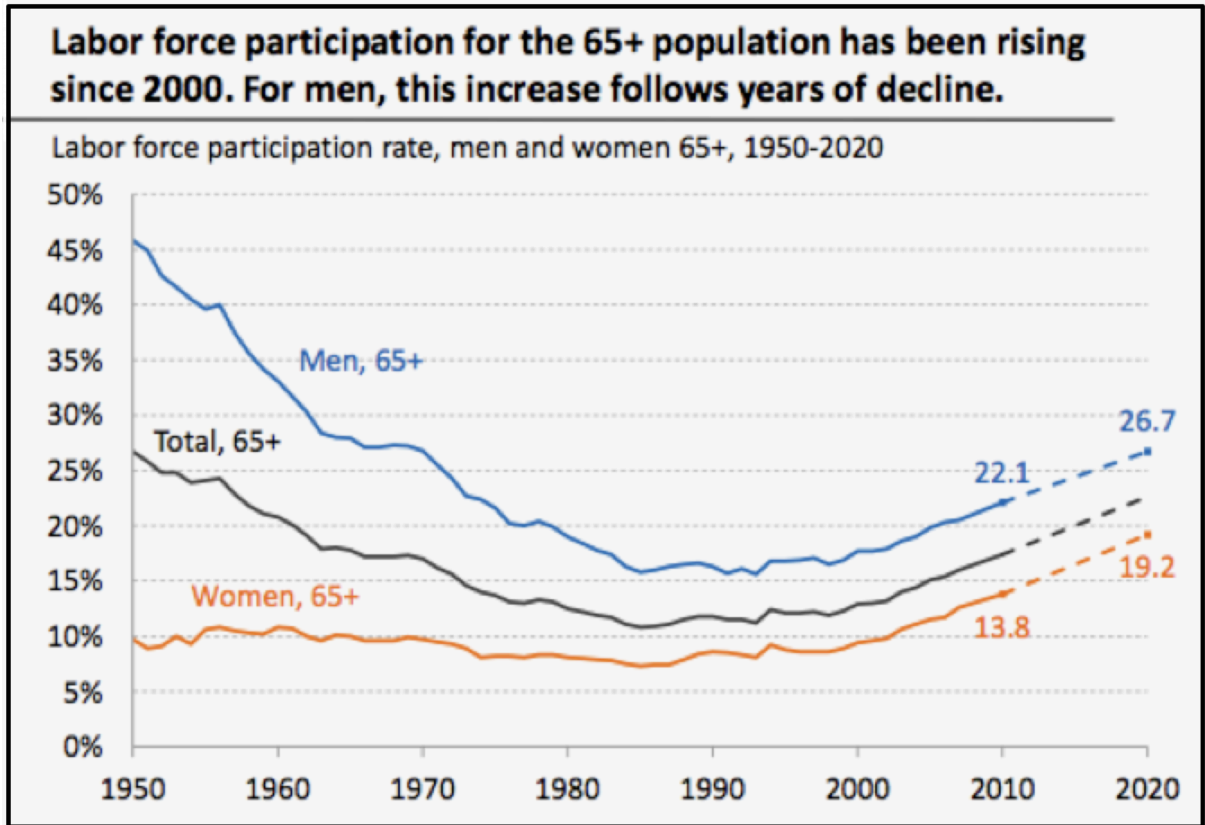


*Source: BLS*

Ageism plays a particularly important role in understanding the contextual perspective of the commercial airline pilots of this research.  Each of the reasons mentioned—financial capacity, availability and affordability of healthcare, and retirement income source(s)—play a role in a pilot's decision and ability to retire.  Federal legislation, H.R. 4343, passed on December 11, 2007, cited as the *Fair Treatment for Experienced Pilots Act,* changed the retirement age for commercial airline pilots from age 60 to 65 (2007).

Pilots contributing to this research were aware of and impacted directly by this legislation.  They shared that moving the retirement age from 60 to 65 effectively delayed their rise in seniority, capacity to fly as Captain, to have a bidding status that would avail them of flying routes or equipment of their preference and to have a flying schedule of their choice.  Each of these factors played a role in reducing their income scale by five years.  The understanding conveyed by contributors was that this legislation allowed pilots approaching age 60 to remain in their Captain seats, maintain their seniority and pay status, and prolong professional advancement and choice opportunities for those junior in seniority to them.

Contributors shared that this measure was a means to abate a pending pilot shortage as Vietnam era pilots were nearing age 60. It enabled money to be a convincing argument for these senior pilots, many of whom had experienced pay cuts and layoffs in their careers, to recoup some of those economic losses. This legislation provided a federally mandated Act to allow pilots to remain on the seniority list until age 65 and provided a ready solution to airlines needing pilots to maintain their burgeoning networks. This contextual perspective provides a real and unique positioning of the research population.

### 4.4.3 PILOT SHORTAGE

Figure 4.13 shows how H.R. 4343 was only a "bandaid" to a much larger and global looming pilot shortage. Dan Akins, an aviation economist that conducts pilot staffing studies has stated, "everyone knows the house is on fire and no one can find the hose" (Murphy, 2016, p. 1). Mike Hainsey, executive director of Golden Triangle airport in Mississippi, a region with $5 billion new dollars of growth and business development "cannot get additional flights to keep up with local economic development, because there aren't enough pilots" (Murphy, 2016, p. 1).

As contributors to this research informed the researcher, ab initio programs have been initiated in Europe, the Middle East and Asia to address the pilot shortage. Ab initio programs take zero-time people, people that have never flown an airplane before, and teach them to fly for an airline. Jet Blue Airways, a national airline, has initiated an ab initio program in the United States (Croft, 2016).

This solution to the looming pilot shortage may have far reaching effects. The contextual perspective of pilots as highly trained and highly experienced may be dramatically altered with the introduction of more and more ab initio programs to meet the over 500,000 global pilot shortfall detailed in Figure 4.13. The contextual perspective shared with the researcher was that the "glamour" of being an airline pilot was eroding. Add to this the time and cost to become an Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) (AFS-200, 2013a) and the allure is further diminished. Pilots took pride in the time and commitment necessary to obtain an ATP, but the next generation of airline pilots may not feel similarly. This perspective was summed up by Captain Tim Canoll, a Delta Airlines pilot and president of the Air Line Pilots Association, the largest pilot union in the United States. "It takes a very motivated person to meet the physical, emotional and intellectual challenge of becoming a pilot, and that same motivated

person does the math looking at what it takes and the return on investment, and it just doesn't add up" (Murphy, 2016, p. 3).

**Figure 4.13** Prospective Pilot Shortages
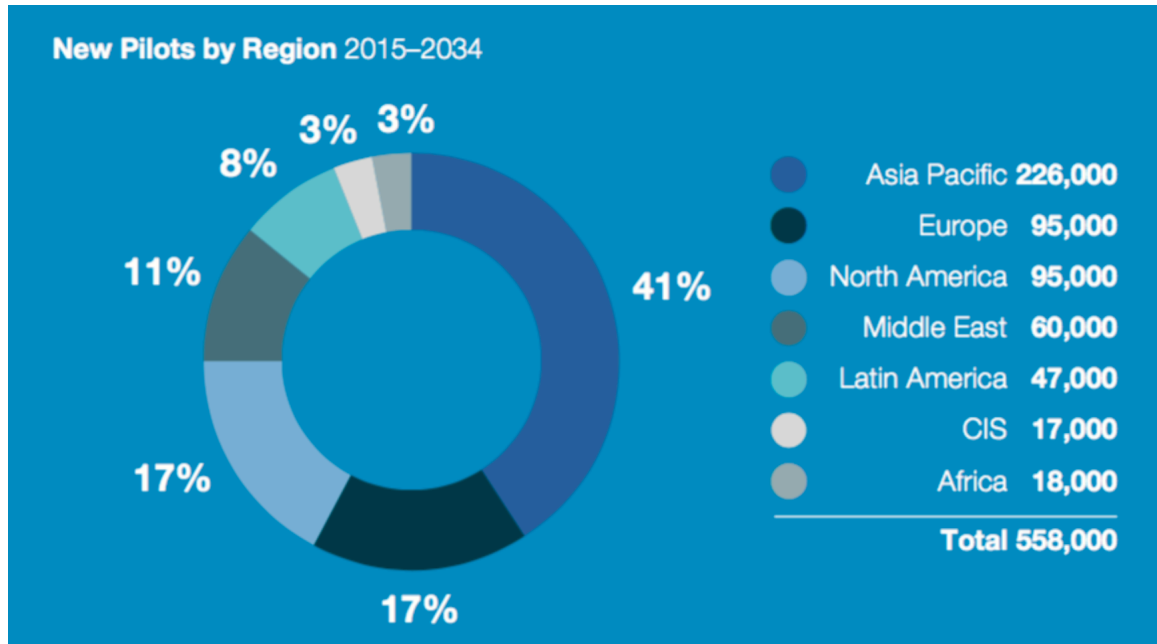


*Source: Boeing*

Participants shared a desire to retire, but made clear their wage and income experience at their employer airline, coupled with their merger-acquisition experience, made retirement not an option. Seniority translates into pay. As a pilot in participant observation stated, "I'm screwed, I continue to be screwed, and no one cares." Ageism provides an important contextual perspective to understand who these members of unionized expert labor are, their view of younger pilots flying today, and a concern about ab initio pilots becoming a norm in the future.

What framed the contributors sense of being "screwed" was twofold. First, was the understanding that when each of the contributors to this research was hired the retirement age was 60. As pilots ahead of them in seniority reached 60, they would retire and the pilots remaining on the seniority list of the airline would move up in seniority of their respective airline. Federal legislation changed this. Pilots contributing to this research stated that part of their decision to join their airline was the timing of retirements. Now, that calculus had changed.

Secondly, there was a belief, shared with the R/I that "the rules were the rules." If when you were hired, the age 60 rule was in effect, then you should be bound to that rule. Pilots hired

later, after the age 65 rule came into effect, should be allowed to stay until age 65. Changing the rules of the game after one had chosen an airline to commit their professional life too was raised to the researcher as "changing the rules to suit the company, not pilots."

## 4.5 THE UNION MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

Unions play a number of roles in the United States economy and unions play a key role in the intricacies of labor-management relations in the workplace. Among these, more local intricacies are to provide a balance of power between labor and management, and, additionally, to provide a "voice for labor that management can hear" (Soltas, 2014, p. 1). Freeman and Medoff (1984) argue that this first role, regarding power, may not be entirely positive. Power is a defining professional identity construct for expert labor (Pratt et al., 2006; Slay and Smith, 2011). Power is also a difficult construct to manage.

Power, for members of unionized expert labor is rooted in autonomy and self-regulation (Hall, 1968). Airline managements have utilized financial challenge of the airline industry, manifest in the lagging wages and underfunded retirement plans of contributors to this research, not only as a compelling argument for advancing the retirement age to abate a looming pilot shortage, but also in so doing to begin to commodify the profession. It is economics that is trumping safety and thereby altering the profession (Fraher, 2014). Trade-offs for pay and benefits included reductions in autonomy and self-regulation, as regularly shared with the researcher. As a contributor shared with the R/I during a contract negotiation,

> "for you to win something you've got to give them something more back…pilots want pay, so they entertain reductions in retirement benefits, higher co-pays for insurance, loss of duty rigs, and simply more pain in the ass for more time away from home…all in the name of the company wants control…and the Captain needs to give it up."

Made clear by contributors, union density was not an issue for the research population as they were required to maintain union standing to retain their employment. It was their sense of being, how they viewed their self and the view by others, particularly their airline management, that was affected; commodification, exemplified with a reduction in autonomy and self-regulation was routinely brought to the researchers attention. This commodification was further employed in collective bargaining. This understanding, shared with the researcher, aids the contextual understanding of the research population.

A steady and precipitous decline in power, influence and density since the 1970's has been the story of unionized labor in the United States (Farber, 2005).  The loss of union density is consistent with the union movement's loss of power.  Were it not for the growth of public sector union membership, the overall union density data would be more dramatic.  Public sector union density for 2013 was 35.3%, compared with 6.7% for private sector union membership (BLS, 2014).

Union membership and middle-class income are inextricably linked.  Middle class can have several definitions, but looking at the 60% of households that define the middle of national income in the U.S. the drop in household income has been similarly dramatic.  In 1968, the middle 60% comprised 53.2% of national income.  In 2013 the number declined to 45.7% (Fairchild, 2013).  Figure 4.14 shows the similar and dramatic declines of union membership and middle-class income.

The effect on the economy goes beyond union workers (Williams and Hoell, 2011).  While union membership, typically has a positive effect on union member wages, this effect also translates to non-union workers in related industries (Freeman and Medoff, 1984).  The argument, simply stated, is that if workers earned more income, they may spend more.  This economic effect helps workers, union and non-union, and also the overall economy.

The relationship between union membership and middle-class household income also contributed to the discussion on inequality with contributors.  Figure 4.14 shows graphically this parallel relationship brought to the researchers attention in both interviews and participant observation; a relationship that contributors to this research were keenly aware.

**Figure 4.14** AS UNION MEMBERSHIP RATES DECREASE, MIDDLE-CLASS INCOMES SHRINK
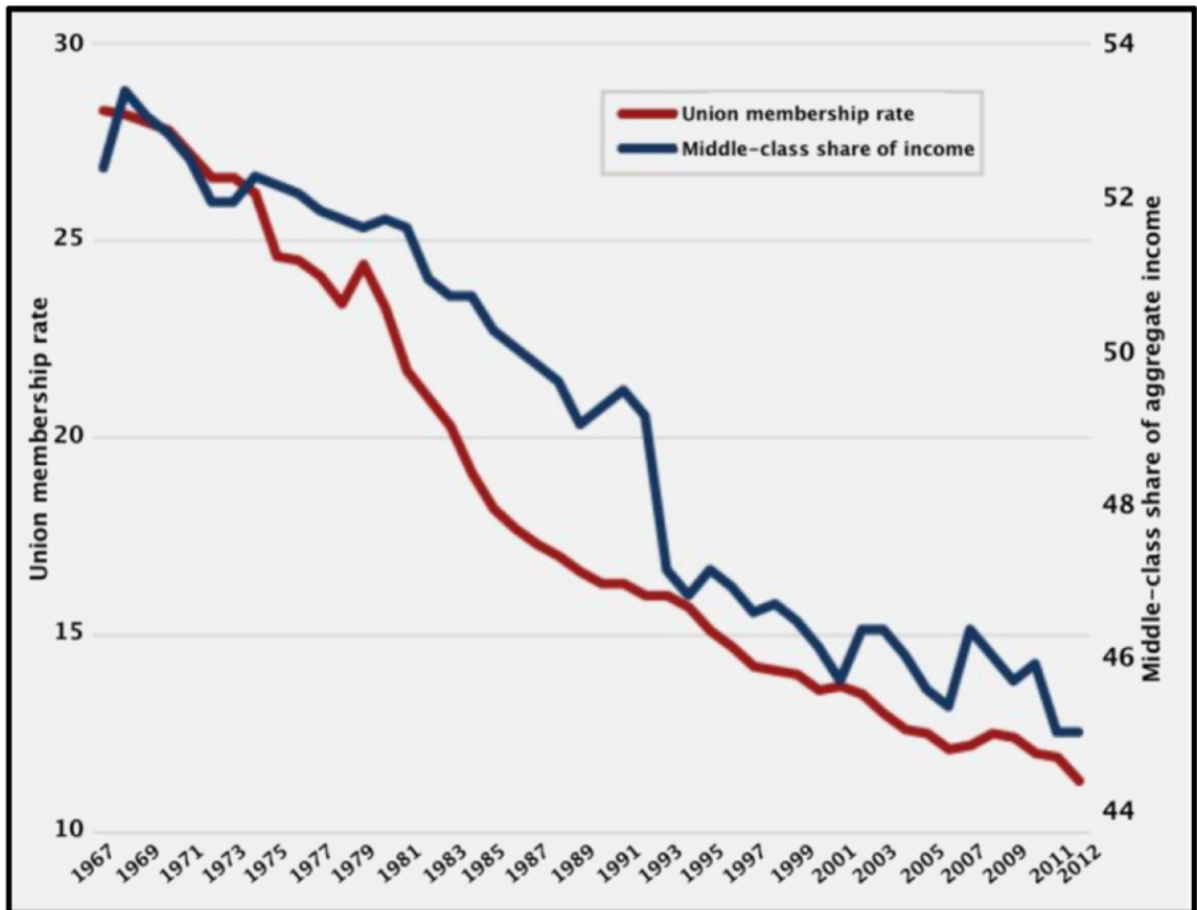


*Source: Union membership rate is from Barry T. Hirsch, David A. MacPherson, and Wayne G. Vroman, "Estimates of Union Density by State," Monthly Labor Review 124 (7) (2001), Middle-class share of aggregate income is from the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (Department of Commerce)*

While union decline is not an issue in this research, as union membership is a requirement of employment by each of the major airlines, the reduction of union presence in the private sector and the disparagement of unions by corporate interests, politicians and lobbyists have had an effect on unionized expert labor, as reported to the researcher and confirmed by the literature (Toosi, 2012). As stated in participant observation, "when you're on a losing team, it isn't good." The contextual perspective of this research population was that being a union member was not a plus; they often felt they were on a losing team.

As a double hermeneutic, the interpretation by the researcher was not that contributors to this research were anti-union; they wanted a union, but a union that represented their interests fairly.

As seen in Figure 4.15, the approval rates for unions are in decline and the disapproval rate of unions in the U.S. continues to rise. This correlated with the inputs of research participants as well.

**Figure 4.15  APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL RATES FOR U.S. LABOR UNIONS**
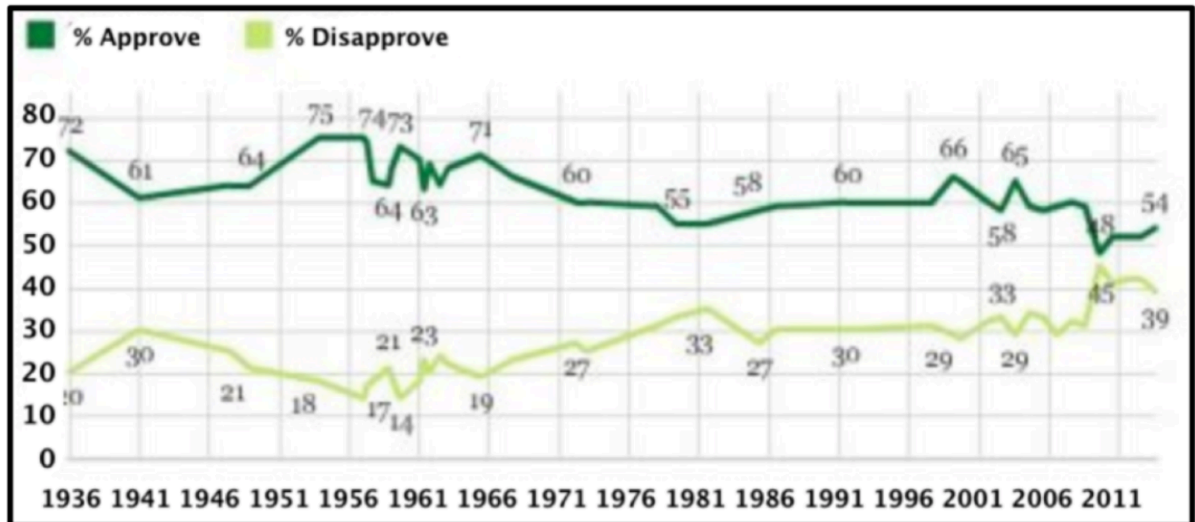


*Source: GALLUP*

Union presence in the United States continues to erode (BLS, 2014). Figures 4.16, 4.17 and 4.18 show the steady decline of union representation in the United States. This data confirms the assertions made by contributors. Some contributors were resigned to the continual decline of unions, stating, "we can't do anything, even our own union doesn't represent us." The contributors' professional identification, as a union member, was "in a state of flux," as reported.

There were others who wanted to assert their union's presence, but often these feelings, shared with the researcher, were of self-interest. In conversation with members of unionized expert labor of an acquiring airline, members were often dogmatic in the advancement of their interests by their union and equally clear of the subordinate nature of the interests of their fellow union members of the acquired pilot group. These disparate views provide a contextual perspective of transformative change in the labor movement of airline pilots in the United States.

**Figure 4.16   UNION MEMBERSHIP AS PERCENT OF ALL U.S. WORKERS 1948 TO 2010**
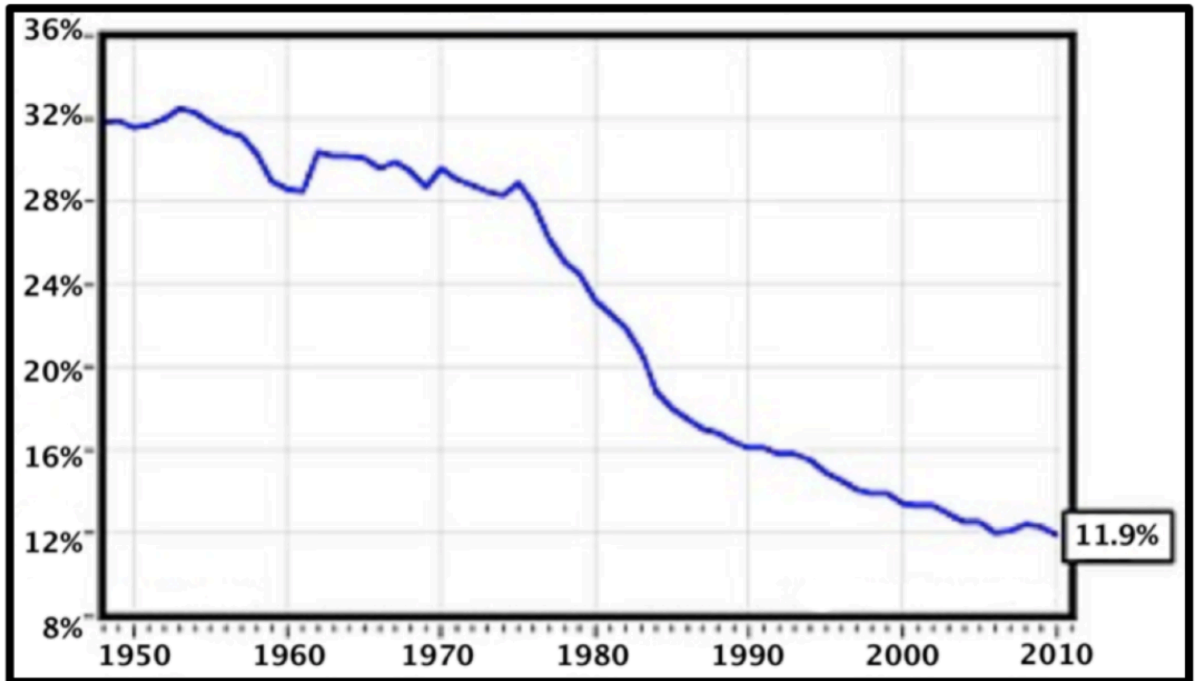


*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics*

**Figure 4.17        TOTAL UNION MEMBERSHIP, IN THOUSANDS**
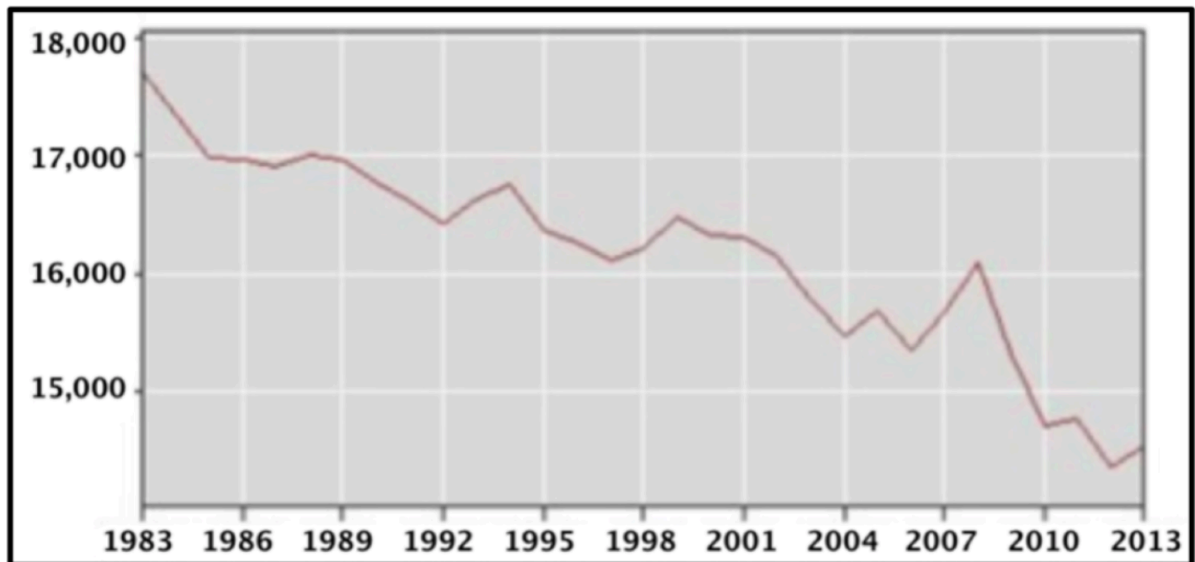


*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics*

**Figure 4.18** Union Membership Rate as % of Workforce



*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics*

The union movement in the U.S. has had a profound effect on the lives of workers and their families. These experiences were repeatedly shared with and observed by the researcher during data collection. On multiple occasions, the researcher engaged with participants in a room full of reclining chairs known as barcaloungers. These spaces provided crew members a place to rest and sleep to avoid the cost of paying for a hotel room. Waking up and then going to a bathroom to shave, brush their teeth and clean up was not the life these union members envisioned when they became a major airline pilot.

The data and empirical evidence regarding unions and inequality are linked. The linkage between these disparate and associated events also engages scholars in the "pillars of the moral economy in modern labor markets" (Western and Rosenfeld, 2011, p. 9). The premise of these discussions relies on management's view that the presence of a union in the workplace as the key negative component in an otherwise robust labor market.

In considering a "moral economy," it is a norm to reduce inequality through a fair payment for a fair request of specified work. It is a role and function of a labor union to weigh-in on the moral economy at such times. The diminution of labor unions in the U.S. reduces their capability to lend voice to the contributory and constitutive benefits of organized labor's presence in the workplace. Western and Rosenfeld (2011) conclude three key contributions regarding a union's role in the moral economy, "culturally through public speech about

economic inequality, politically by influencing social policy, and institutionally through the rules governing the labor market" (p. 9).

A participant stated, "I know we could do more if we were together." The data shows that more unions have higher minimum wages, and their elected officials are more likely to favor minimum wage increases (Cox and Oaxaca, 1982). Social programs such as supporting universal healthcare or opposing cuts to the food stamp program also have benefitted from labor support (Derickson, 1994). Labor, as an advocate for issues of the moral economy, is in an increasingly diminished state (Greenhouse, 2014). Contributors voiced their sense of a diminished state as well. The political right has framed such moral economy voices as a "redistributive public policy," and by political commentators as "socialism" (Western and Rosenfeld, 2011, p. 10). The power and influence of outside actors on the state of union affairs, described in the literature, were consistent with the contributors to this research.

Union membership in the private sector has been in steady decline in the United States since the 1970's (Farber, 2005). Equal and opposite has been the rise in inequality in the United States (LePore, 2015). The voice of unionized workers, provided by their union, was a voice of pay equity, benefits and workplace safety, not only for unionized workers, but for all workers (Western and Rosenfeld, 2011). Western and Rosenfeld (2011) argue that the steady decline in union membership and the rise in inequality "marks an erosion of the moral economy and its underlying distributional norms" (p. 2). The wage gap has continued to increase with an increasing gradient since the late 1980's (Lemieux, 2008).

Leading scholars have advanced multiple theories as to why the wage gap has persisted and expanded over time. Among these are: political organizing by employers to limit union presence in the workplace (Tope and Jacobs, 2009; Hirsch, 2008); unions' inability to respond to forces such as stagflation, deregulation, and globalization (Farber and Western, 2001); and employment growth outside of traditional union environments (Williams and Hoell, 2011). Common to each of these is an anti-union sentiment advanced by powerful actors and supported by the courts, federal regulators, politicians and policy makers (Hacker and Pierson, 2010). Anti-union sentiment was shared by members of unionized expert labor contributing to this research.

## 4.6  AIRLINE LABOR HISTORY

There is a long history of difficult labor relations in the United States that provides a contextual perspective for the contributors. "Many researchers see 1981 as a watershed year,

when the Reagan administration defeated the air traffic controller's strike by hiring permanent replacements" (Western and Rosenfeld, 2011, p. 12). This event was not lost in the minds of contributors. They shared a clear understanding of history. Following deregulation and Reagan's firing of the air traffic controllers, "corporate leaders stopped playing by the rules" (Voss and Sherman, 2000, p. 311). In participant observation, contributors shared that the management of their airline, often without labor at the table, makes decisions about hiring, wages, strategy, expansion, downsizing and other factors affecting their livelihood and job security. This uncertainty added contextual perspective to understanding unionized expert labor.

Management would like to have the largest contribution possible per employee, at the lowest possible price (Flanagan, 2005). Employers seek to minimize labor costs and are persuaded to improve wages only when the alternative to wage increases poses a greater threat to the balance sheet (Crain, 2004). Labor would like to maximize their economic utility also, typically through wage and benefit security and the potential to improve each as a participant in the profitability of their employer (Nordenflycht and Gittell, 2013). The tension between labor's interest and management's interests was discussed repeatedly.

On multiple occasions, contributors described what, in their eyes, could have been a win-win situation for labor-management relations, but was rather a lose-lose situation for both parties. Participants would share their lived experiences in a effort to detail how common sense could rectify many labor-management relations challenges. The participants' contextual perspective highlighted the absence of common sense in their lived experience regarding labor-management relations.

There is further inherent tension when common sense and an open and transparent dialog between labor and management are not present. If management makes a decision that is unsuccessful, labor may not be inclined to aid management. This sentiment was shared with the researcher many times. Management's solution to unfortunate decisions may be that labor needs to take wage and/or benefit cuts to pay for management's mistake. It is the lived experience of these competing interests, the needs and interests of labor and the competing needs and interests of management that were regularly shared in both volunteer participant interviews and in participant observation periods. This contextual perspective resonated with the participants as interviews and participant observation period discussions explored participants M/A experience.

Participants shared with the researcher on multiple occasions that rather than a "we" environment, it was an "us vs. them" environment that was common in their view. This contextual perspective helped express the source of tension in both good financial times and bad for unionized expert labor as reported by participants contributing to this research.

Labor and employment relations in the U.S. have been linked to economics, government and politics (Scheiber, 2015). The relationship between workers, union and non-union, their employers and the government all contribute to paint the landscape of U.S. labor relations with unionized expert labor (Scheiber, 2015).

Unionized expert labor is linked with government, law, regulation and politics, which provides another contextual perspective of this unique research population. The intersection of these provides an additional contextual perspective that contributors to this research were quick to point out had significant impact on their lives.

## 4.7 LABOR LEGISLATION

The Railway Labor Act (RLA) of 1926 covers railway and airline carriers, unions, and employees of the carriers. The RLA governs collective bargaining for commercial airline pilots in the United States. The Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) defines the contractual obligations for both pilots and their airlne. What is bargained for and why, and what was achieved help to define the priorities of being for pilots and define the "lines in the sand" for airline management.

The RLA guarantees employees the right to "organize and collectively bargain with their employers over conditions of work and protects them against unfair employer and union practices" (Hegji, 2012, p. 1). The RLA details specific procedures for selecting employee representatives and provides a dispute resolution system to address labor disputes between employer and employee. The emphasis of this dispute resolution system is on mediation and arbitration (Hegji, 2012).

The Norris-LaGuardia Act of 1932 made "yellow-dog contracts" unenforceable, preventing employment without commitment not to join a union. The act also restricted employer use of the legal system to stymy union organizing (Belke, 2013).

The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) of 1935, also known as the Wagner Act, defined unfair labor practices, required employers to bargain in good faith, and established the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The jurisdiction of the NLRA covers most private

sector businesses not covered by the RLA (Hegji, 2012). The NLRB has enforcement authority to investigate unfair labor practices and order their elimination. The dispute resolution system prescribed in the NLRA differs from the RLA in that it is "arguably more adversarial in nature; many disputes are resolved through adjudication, rather than through mediation and arbitration" (Hegji, 2012, Summary). The NLRB has authority to run certification elections (Clawson and Clawson, 1999). Political contributions by corporations and wealthy individuals have had an effect on the NLRB. The effects of Republican political influence on the NLRB have made union organizing, labor law improvements, and the strength of union's voice to diminish since the 1970's (Cowie, 2010).

The Labor-Management Relations Act of 1947 sought to limit union power. The act, also known as the Taft-Hartley Act, enabled states to consider "right to work" laws. These laws, in contrast with the Norris-LaGuardia Act, prohibit unions from requiring union membership as a condition of employment. Today, there are 26 "right to work" states in the United States. Labor scholars view the Taft-Hartley Act as a key cause of the decline in union membership (Wachter, 2007). The Taft-Hartley act also contrasts the Wagner Act. The Taft-Hartley Act provides for decertification elections, a process whereby the union would be decertified from representing employees in collective bargaining (Gold, 2012). It is federal legislation such as Taft-Hartley that contributes to the contextual perspective of unions as limited in scope and ability to represent workers effectively. This legislation may even challenge a union's presence in the workplace.

The Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959 requires full disclosure of union finances as a reaction to charges of union corruption. The Landrum-Griffin Act, as this act is better known, also requires union leadership elections on a regularly scheduled basis (Van Arkel, 1947).

The Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute (FSLMRS) was enacted in 1978, and its jurisdiction covers most federal employees. The rights of workers are more restricted under the FSLMRS, given the "unique nature of their employer, the federal government" (Hegji, 2012, Summary). Federal employees have the right to organize and collectively bargain, but they cannot bargain over wages or strike, a clear distinction from the private sector jurisdictional legislation. Additionally, "the President has the power to unilaterally exclude an agency or subdivision from coverage under the FSLMRS if he determines that its primary work concerns national security" (Hegji, 2012, Summary).

Each of these pieces of federal legislation defines not only context to a union's presence in a workplace, but also defines the roles, responsibilities and limitations of a union in the many settings which exist in the U.S. Today, the three major labor relation's statutes in the United States are the Railway Labor Act, the National Labor Relations Act, and the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute. Each law's jurisdiction covers a distinct sector of the U.S. workforce. The RLA serves as the major federal statute affecting labor relations and expert labor in the U.S. airline industry.

Each of these statutes came about when the U.S. airline industry was regulated. In 1978, the U.S. airline industry was deregulated.

### 4.7.1 THE AIRLINE DEREGULATION ACT OF 1978

"Economic deregulation of American industry is one of the most important experiments in economic policy of our time" (Winston, 1993, p. 1263). The intent of airline deregulation was to increase competition and thereby reduce costs (Morrison and Winston, 1986). As Richards (2010) concludes "the grant of pricing freedom to the airline industry has generally resulted in average prices being higher than they would have been had regulation continued" (p. 87). What this economic experiment proved was that "without constraints unfettered competition often becomes unfettered concentration" (Morris, 2014, p. 3). In the pre-deregulation airline industry, ten major airlines controlled 90% of the market, today four major airlines control 85% (Morris, 2014). Deregulation of the United States airline industry has resulted in monopolistic competition and oligopoly.

The economic experience of deregulation highlights an industry that has experienced transformative change. As shared with the researcher, airline management transformed the view of how best to manage fiscal capital to maximize profit, and also transformed the management of human capital. Charging passengers for a soda, a movie or luggage have become norms in the deregulated environment. Changing a flight itinerary today commands a fee of $200 (Morris, 2014).

The transformative view by managements and unions, following deregulation, of how best to manage human capital was a source of important contextual perspective in this research. As shared with the researcher, airline deregulation has resulted in a transformative view of human capital in the airline industry. Contributors shared that an airline's key employee, its pilots, are viewed more as commodity than key employee. Their voice in operational matters has been diminished. Contributors shared numerous lived experiences of a reduction in

Captain authority over matters involving fuel, route, altitude and decision making regarding performance of maintenance or its deferment. Often contributors would share that these decisions were a Captain's provence before deregulation and now were the company's to decide. Contributors were quick to point out that this contextual perspective could be challenged, but often with a cost. Seeking to amend a fuel load, for example, could involve a follow-up conversation with their Chief Pilot. Emails, such as this one, were shared with the R/I: "before your next flight please stop by the Chief Pilot's office." Participants shared that these emails were routinely vague and ominous, and that "nothing good ever comes of an email like this." Autonomy of practice and self-regulation were transformatively altered following deregulation. Not expressly because of deregulation, but because of the environmental opportunities management chose to avail themselves of in the deregulated industry.

The contextual perspective provided by the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978 was ostensibly subtle, but has aided in understanding the larger mosaic illuminating the professional identity of commercial airline pilots.

### 4.7.2 POWERFUL ACTORS AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE IMPACTING UNIONS

U.S. labor history, beginning with the Railway Labor Act of 1926, informs organized labor's history of challenge, short lived advances, and the reemergence of the powers of principal/owners. The power of principal/owners and their influence at diminishing the political and legal gains of labor have had a measureable effect on union voice in the workplace. The contributors to this research asserted this understanding to the researcher in the efforts to organize.

This legislative review and the awareness by the research population of the influence of powerful actors on union presence in the workplace is useful in understanding the unique organizational setting of this research. The contextual peerspectives to understand unionized expert labor are several. The role of government, regulation and politics are factors that affect the practice of licensed professionals in the U.S. airline industry everyday. The research population articulated these contextual perspectives.

### 4.8 EXPERT LABOR OPTIONS AND THE UNITED STATES AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Following 9/11, U.S. airlines began major restructuring efforts (Nordenflycht and Gittell, 2013). Aircraft were grounded, remaining aircraft were refinanced, aircraft lease

arrangements were renegotiated, and enormous write-offs occurred to corporate balance sheets (Alvaredo et al., 2013). Central to these events was industry consolidation.

The U.S. airline industry has a history of financial challenge. After 9/11, airline revenues dropped nearly 20% (Nordenflycht and Gittell, 2013). In 2001, U.S. airlines collectively lost 9 billion U.S. dollars. Tough economic challenges continued. For an industry dependent on jet fuel to operate, oil prices "sextupled from September 2001 through June 2008" (Nordenflycht and Gittell, 2013, p. 9). These challenges were only a preamble to the economic meltdown of 2008. Furlough, downgrading, pay cuts, initiation of increased management and regulatory controls, and the restructuring of both Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA) and Psychological Contracts each contributed to tension between expert labor and their employing airlines. The stories conveyed to the researcher of change in the industry, their lives, and their relationships provided significant contextual perspective. The participant interviews and observation periods describing identity loss, liminality, and recreation of professional identities across an industry reliant on unionized expert labor were a contextual cornerstone for this research. Each of these perspectives is addressed, in detail, in Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight.

Unionized expert labor and principal/managers share a common vision. They both want the organization to prosper. The financial health of the employer/airline is a shared vision, but with, sometimes, different motivations. Contributors are licensed professionals. They have spent the bulk of their professional lives emotionally engaged with their line of work. They did not enter the profession to engage in political and legal battles with their colleagues, but such has been the case for commercial airline pilots hired in the post-deregulation era.

The formal, explicit and transactional agreement that defines the contract between expert labor and their airline is the Collective Bargaining Agreement, (CBA) (Chamberlain, 1926; Thoms and Dooley, 1991). The CBA is the "union contract" between expert labor and the organization. In 1947, the Taft-Hartley Act outlawed what was known as a "closed shop" (Ellis, 1947). A closed shop is a unionized work setting where the employer was required to hire only union members. The Taft-Hartley act does allow a "union shop" (Ellis, 1947). A union shop is a unionized work setting that does not require union membership at the point of employment, but requires union membership or a payment equivalent to the representation fee for a union member at some future agreed time to retain employment. Union shops are now also prohibited in right-to-work states (Gold, 2012).

Similar to union shops is the "agency shop."  In an agency shop, the employer recognizes the union representing its workers on the property.  Employees are not required to join the union, but like the union shop, require a payment equivalent to the representation fee of a union member if the employee chooses not to join the union representing the employees on the property.  These fee-paying employees in some airline expert labor settings are referred to as "dissenting members" (Association, 2013).  They can have their employment terminated for failure to pay the dissenting member fee.

Last is the option of an "open shop."  In an open shop the employee is not required to join the union and the Taft-Hartley Act has no application.  There are no open shops for pilots in the major airlines in the United States.

While the union density rates detailed in this review make clear the declining numbers for unions in the private sector, union density rates involving expert labor in the airline industry are relatively stable.  This is not because of an understanding and agreement in the benefits of collective bargaining in a unionized expert labor setting.  It is based upon the requirement to be a full-dues paying member or a representation fee paying dissenting member.  Either way, unionized expert laborers in the U.S. airline industry are required to be union members to retain their employment and to practice their profession.  Consequently, airlines have one of the highest union density rates in the private sector (Johnson, 2002).

### 4.8.1  LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS AND COMMERCIAL AIRLINES

Airline labor relations in the United States have both domestic and global dimensions.  Unionization rates remain high, first as a requirement of employment domestically, and secondarily as a global standard on which the airline industry competes.  Each major U.S. airline competes with international carriers and has a presence in international markets (Nordenflycht and Gittell, 2013).  There are few global exceptions to the presence of unions in the airline industry (Nordenflycht and Gittell, 2013).

Private sector unionized workers are governed by the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA).  Expert labor in the U.S. airline industry is not.  Members of expert labor in the U.S. airline industry are governed by the Railway Labor Act (RLA).  A unique feature of RLA contracts is that they have no expiration date, unlike those workers governed under the provisions of the NLRA.  RLA contracts have an "amendable" date (Chamberlain, 1926).  If the amendable date is exceeded, the existing CBA remains in effect until a new agreement is reached.  New provisions may not be imposed and a lockout of workers cannot occur.  Similarly, the union

may not initiate self-help (strike).  Facilitation to reach an agreement is regulated by the National Mediation Board (NMB).  If an agreement cannot be achieved, an impasse is declared.  At this point the NMB offers the parties the opportunity to opt for voluntary binding arbitration (Nordenflycht and Gittell, 2013).  If either party rejects the offer, the NMB "releases" the parties to a 30-day "cooling off period."  If the parties still are not able to find a path to agreement, the NMB chooses a path for them.  The NMB, under their purview, can allow expert labor to strike, principal/managers to lockout expert labor from the workplace, or refer the stalemate to a Presidential Emergency Board (PEB).

The PEB is seldom used and the procedures are lengthy.  Three neutral experts are appointed by the U.S. President.  The PEB members are allowed 30 days to review and detail a recommended settlement.  The settlement is a recommendation and not a requirement or legal order.  Failure by either expert labor or management to accept the recommended settlement begins another 30-day cooling off period.  The parties then are allowed to avail themselves of self-help, lockout by management and/or strike by expert labor.  In the last resort, the President may refer the matter to the Congress of the United States to pursue a legislative settlement (Thoms and Dooley, 1991).

Each of these procedures take time and, in the eyes of contributors to this research, often do not serve the interests of members of unionized expert labor.  It is a merger-acquisition event, experienced by every contributor of this research, that pits pilot against pilot.  Mediation, arbitration and negotiation results in an us vs. them situation and concludes with winners and losers, as described by the contributors to this research.  None of these options provide a satisfactory resolution.  The contextual perspective of note to the researcher was the clear sense that following each and every airline merger there would ultimately be litigation.  This litigation would find jurisdiction in Federal Court and would presuppose a winner and a loser as made clear by each contributor to this research.  As reported in participant observation, members of unionized expert labor "cannot play nicely together," following a merger-acquisition event.  This contextual perspective is interpretatively important in understanding members of unionized expert labor's professional identity.

### 4.8.2  MERGER-ACQUISITION EVENTS AND EXPERT LABOR

Horizontal mergers are the merger of two firms, where the firms operate in the same industry. A merger-acquisition event involving two U.S. airlines is a horizontal merger (Cording et al., 2014).  Each major airline in the U.S. has experienced a horizontal merger.  Figure 4.19

displays each of the U.S. major airline mergers since 2000.  The series of events leading to the creation of what is now the world's largest airline, the American Airlines Group, as Figure 4.19 depicts, involved multiple merger-acquisition events and multiple bankruptcy events. The airline is known as American Airlines.  It will serve as an example for the contextual perspective of unionized expert labor following merger-acquisition events.

**Figure 4.19**  HORIZONTAL MERGERS IN THE UNITED STATES AIRLINE INDUSTRY SINCE 2000
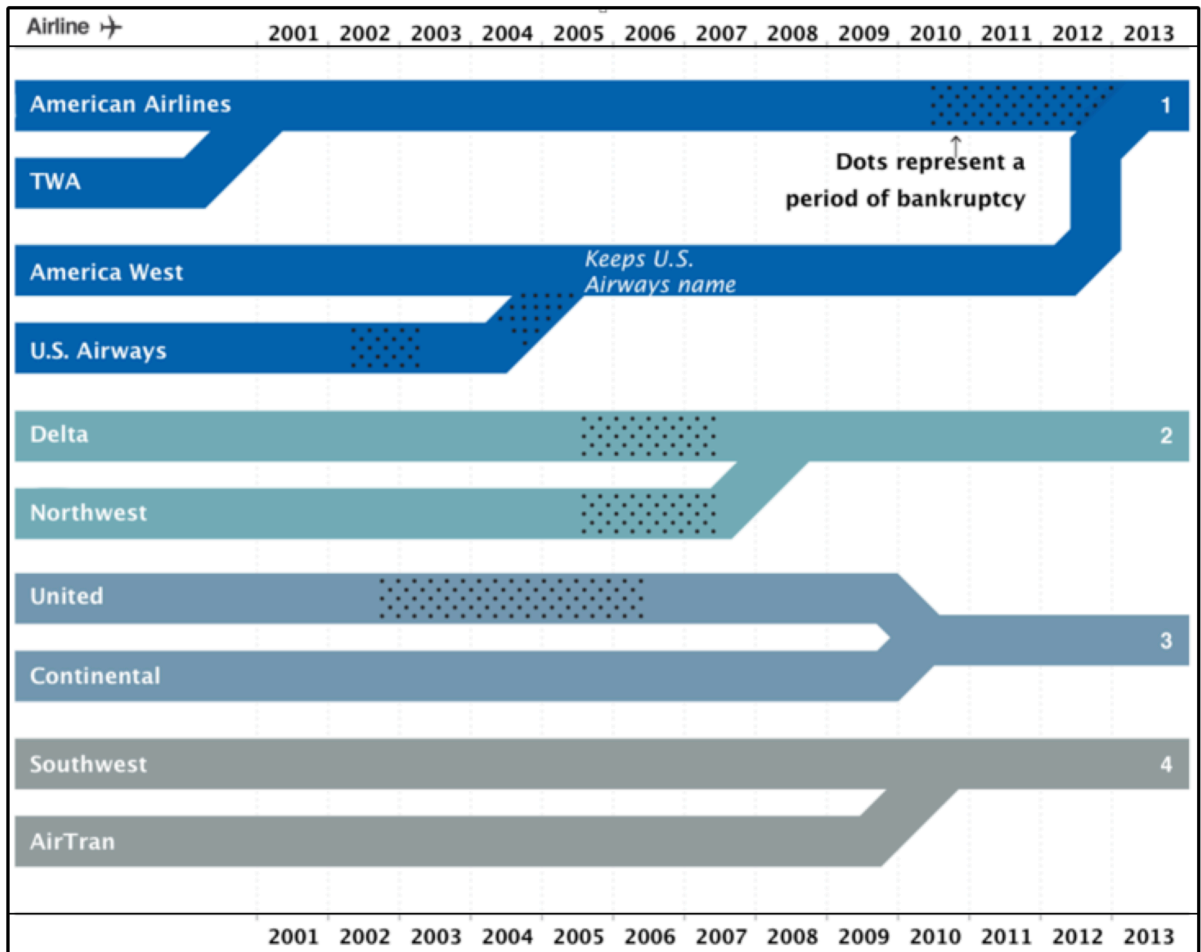


*Source: (Yellin, 2014)*

The success of a horizontal merger-acquisition event has several antecedents.  The main antecedent is trust.  Trust acts as a "lubricant" to "grease the wheels" of significant organizational change (Cording et al., 2014, p. 39).  Scholars have argued that trust is needed during this time and it may be in short supply; change itself may be difficult to appreciate when workers have a fear of an uncertain future.  Perhaps the most important aspect to a merger-acquisition event is the looming potential limitations on a professional's practice (Stahl et al., 2011).  Each of these may contribute to a challenge to this key component: trust.

For a horizontal merger-acquisition event to be successful, the principals to the transaction have to make clear their intentions to expert labor directly and follow through with deeds consistent with those discussions.

Cording et al. (2014, p. 39) argue that "organizational authenticity" is another key antecedent to winning, developing and maintaining the trust critical for a successful merger-acquisition event. Organizational authenticity is the relationship between what a firm says and what the firm does (Cording et al., 2014). The expectation of all employees, but especially expert labor, is that this linkage will be clear and affirmative following a merger-acquisition event.

The relationship between espoused values and realized practices will have a significant effect on professional identity behaviors. The nexus with other key stakeholders will have a similar and related effect (Harrison et al., 2010). This related effect is a central tenet of stakeholder theory, known as generalized exchange (Ekeh, 1974). The ability of one key stakeholder to influence the experience and reactions of another key stakeholder is the logic of generalized exchange. The effect of generalized exchange on a merger-acquisition event and the transaction's key employees may be significant, either affirmatively or negatively (Cording et al., 2014; Harrison et al., 2010). Understanding the benefits of matching espoused values with practiced values with expert labor is essential to creating value for both fiscal and human capital in a merger-acquisition event.

What this researcher found, in both interviews and participant observation, was that the theory was compelling, but the reality was different. The standardization that is so fundamental to a commercial airline pilot's professional practice was absent on the ground as they navigated their merger-acquisition events. This contextual perspective was present in both participant interviews and participant observation periods. As a contributor made clear, members of unionized expert labor do not "play nicely together" following merger-acquisition events. It is this contextual perspective that frames this research.

## 4.9 EXEMPLAR CASE FOLLOWING A MERGER-ACQUISITION EVENT

What follows is one such reality. This is an exemplar, not an exception. This ideographic lived experience provides context and perspective for understanding unionized expert labor identification following significant organizational change.

Every pilot group experienced litigation following their merger-acquisition event. The appendices described below provide a small sample of one pilot groups lived experience. The

reader is able to hear the voices of pilots contributing to this research through their attorneys. A complete review of the documentation of this one merger-acquisition event would exceed 4,000 pages.  The following appendices provide the opening pages to a much larger corpus of text.  These apppendices provide an examplar of the lived experience of commercial airline pilots today.  The appendices are offered to demonstrate contextual experiences and perspectives following a merger-acquisition event.  These filings are an examplar of a far larger body of litigation, arbitrations and vitriol common between disparate pilot groups following a merger-acquisition event.

**Table 4.1**    LITIGATION EXEMPLAR – CAMEO OF FILINGS FOLLOWING AN M/A EVENT

| APPENDIX | FILING DATE | TITLE |
|---|---|---|
| F | February 9, 2012 | Seniority Integration And The Mccaskill-Bond Statute |
| G | April 3, 2012 | TWA Pilots' Objection to Motion to Reject Collective Bargaining Agreements |
| H | September 9, 2013 | ALPA's Memorandum of Law in Support of Its Motion to Exclude the Testimony of Plaintiffs' Experts, and for Summary Judgment |
| I | March 3, 2015 | Plaintiffs' Memorandum In Support Of Their Motion To Stay Arbitration |
| J | May 19, 2015 | Order Denying Motion to Stay Arbitration |
| K | September 3, 2015 | Memorandum of Decision |
| L | September 22, 2015 | Memorandum of Decision |

## 4.10 SUMMARY

The opposition to unions is no longer the province of principal/owners or their management. There is an increasingly consistent opposing voice from both politicians and the courts as well.  The most significant voice, however, comes from workers themselves.

Workers have negative feelings toward labor unions and have expressed those feelings; workers now often see labor unions as part of the problem, rather than the solution. This feeling was shared with the researcher. Workers see influential actors as trumping anything a union could do for them in good times or protect them from in bad times. The public relations efforts by influential actors to defame unions as corrupt or ineffective have also contributed to the increased lack of affinity for unions. Each of these perspectives, shared with the R/I, and corroborated with data, contribute to both context and a sensitivity to context for the research population. This chapter summarizes each of these contextual perspectives.

This chapter took three views to better understand the contextual perspective of the research population. Global inequality and its understanding and impact from the research population point of view was corroborated with scholarly research and data. Discussions with volunteer participant interviewees and participant observations provided contextual perspective of the union movement in the U.S. The state of unionism in the U.S. was also corroborated with data and was a source of sensemaking for the research population. Finally, contextual perspective was provided by a current example of a merger-acquisition court case. This example was one of many examples contributing to both a broader and more meaningful understanding of the state of unionized expert labor in the United States.

The lived experience of unionized expert labor today involves much more than the practice of a profession they love. The context is one of adversarial relations with their fellow pilots, with their union and with their employer airline. The contextual perspectives surrounding inequality and how it manifests itself in the lives of contributors was both a surprising and meaningful contribution. The contextual perspective of this research is one of high awareness and attention to detail to understand unionized expert labor today. Each of the contextual perpsectives offered in this chapter is meaningful to understand the research population.

# Chapter 5  First Order of Analysis – The Individual Cases

## 5.1  INTRODUCTION

This chapter engages in inductive and interpretative analysis to provide an understanding of the meaning and being of members of unionized expert labor.  There is little literature directly related to the professional identity of members of unionized expert labor, and contextual perspective of this uniquely situated population of licensed professionals is little understood.

The IPA research design and methodology employed in this thesis provides a research approach for unionized expert laborers "to make sense of their major life experiences" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 1).  IPA further utilizes the means and methods to understand "how the individual conceives of his or her identity, from the level of the individual (Ashforth et al., 2011, p. 1144), to begin to understand their being.

Commercial airline pilots in the United States have experienced transformative change in the practice of their profession and their relationships with their fellow pilots, their union and their airline (Bamber et al., 2013).  IPA provides the means and methods to understand these major life experiences and answer the research questions posed in this research.  This chapter conducts the first order of analysis by exploring individual cases.  The voices of the participants are analyzed in an effort to understand who these members of unionized expert labor are.

The number of volunteer participants (423) enabled the researcher to employ a purposive sampling procedure to accurately reflect the commercial airline pilot population.  The time given by each participant/volunteer interviewee (PV/I) spanned over 30 hours by each case interviewee.

As a consequence of the large volume of volunteer participants, this exploratory study was able to benefit from significant participant observation time (over 500 hours) to further contribute to and constitute the data collection.  The data obtained was both broad (participant observation) and deep (case interviews), and provided the researcher not only understanding, but also important context of the research population (Smith et al., 2009).

The quality and meaningfulness of the data is subjectively dependent on both the interviewees and the interviewer.  Mindfulness, awareness, active listening, reading and rereading of the verbatim transcripts, and extensive periods of reflection by the researcher interviewer (R/I) were critical in the inductive and interpretative analysis of this research (Smith et al., 2009).

To ensure the reliability and meaningfulness of the data the researcher was guided by proven methods (Smith et al., 2009). Smith (2004) makes clear both the opportunity and challenge of IPA by imploring the researcher to seek meaningful interpretation between a participant's "hermeneutic of recollection and a hermeneutic of suspicion" (p. 46).

Utilizing IPA to conduct this exploratory study provides an understanding of the lived experience of the research population and a subjective interpretation of their lived experience as a means to understand their being (Van Manen, 1990). The primary role of the volunteer participant interviews and observation periods was to explore phenomenon in relation to the three research questions. The research questions are:

> **Research Question 1: How is professional identity defined and experienced for a member of unionized expert labor in the United States today, specifically United States commercial airline pilots?**
>
> **Research Question 2: How have merger-acquisition events in the United States airline industry aided in illuminating commercial airline pilot's professional identity?**
>
> **Research Question 3: How do we understand professional identity construction in a turbulent unionized context?**

What follows is a case-by-case review of seven United States commercial airline pilots – members of unionized expert labor – each of whom has experienced significant organizational change in the practice of their profession as a consequence of merger-acquisition events. The case interviews are provided in seniority order; the most junior pilot is first (Case 1) and the most senior pilot is last (Case 7). Participant observation period inputs are interspersed throughout the chapter. Each interview and observation period contributes to and constitutes the data collection for this exploratory research. Each interview was structured to consider the pilot's life history, details of their lived experience and concludes with the participant's reflection and sensemaking of their lived experience.

Throughout the data collection of this research, pilots regularly articulated in idiographic detail, their professional practice environment. They made clear that their professional practice environment is one of pronounced standardization. The use of multiple checklists in the practice of their profession, conformity in uniform appearance, a communication language of precision and uniformity, and an unparalleled standard of practice for themselves and those they fly with are but a few of the attributes the research population addressed. These attributes were routinely referred to by participant interviewees and during participant observation periods throughout the data collection.

The role of standardization contributes another contextual perspective in understanding the professional identity of members of unionized expert labor. Participants routinely shared the juxtaposition of standardization and nuanced individuality with the R/I. For example, a participant observation contributor went to great lengths to describe when the proper time was for a particular checklist to be read and what it meant when the other pilot responded "checked" or "on." These simple words had precise meaning and understanding, as conveyed to the R/I by this contributor. The "challenge and response" routine of a ckecklist had timing, rhythm and affirmation well beyond the single word "checked" or words "down and checked." This rigor and discipline was contrasted, however, with humor.

A participant observation contributor shared a story of the pilot he was flying with, standing next to him during this discussion, and said as they descended toward the airport for landing, "would you like flaps 5?" The Captain responded, "I'll tell you when I want flaps 5"… then immediately said, "Flaps 5." It is the pilot flying who asks for a flap selection, not the non-flying pilot, as the First Officer shared with the R/I. They both laughed. Both pilots made their point: flying is both standardization as well as nuanced individuality.

This chapter portrays the voices of the contributors to this exploratory study. The voices are those of both acquired and acquiring pilots in both participant volunteer interviews and participant observation periods. There is greater data shared with acquired pilot contributors as they were most affected by their respective merger-acquisition events. The lived experience of the acquired pilot group contributors was particularly meaningful to the research questions and the phenomenon under study.

The research follows the rigor and discipline of the Dolbeare and Schuman (Schuman, 1982) three-series interview approach known as phenomenological interviewing. This chapter will inductively and interpretatively analyze these voices in a first order of analysis, focusing on the individual cases. Chapter Six will then engage in a second order of analysis, a cross case review of the participants. Chapter Seven will then provide a discussion of the first and second order of analysis, which links the discussion to literature, methodology and this analysis.

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**Notation Legend**

**PV/I -** Participant Volunteer/Interviewee

**R/I  -**  Researcher/Interviewer

**{}    -**  Participant Volunteer/Interviewee explanatory material

**…    -**  Separation in comments from Participant Volunteer/Interviewee

**NOTE**

**Quotes provided in the text of an individual case are attributed to the individual associated with that case unless otherwise attributed**

---

## 5.2  CASE 1

### 5.2.1  FOCUSED LIFE HISTORY

Captain Alexander grew up in a small town in the western United States and lived there her entire life.  Captain Alexander was a high performing female pilot, graduating with honors from a prestigious university near her home.  In her heart was the "calling to aviation." Captain Alexander was hired by a major airline in her 20's.  Her roughly 2,000 hours of flight time at the time of being hired was a tribute to her zeal and commitment to a profession she "loved."  Her flight time was acquired flying small aircraft as a civilian trained pilot.  As she communicated to the R/I, "it was not an easy path."  It was, however, a life that she was committed to pursue.

> Captain Alexander- "I was hooked from the beginning…I was always interested in airplanes."

Captain Alexander had gained her experience as a pilot flying small planes out of a small airport near her home and university.

> Captain Alexander- "I always thought you had to be in the military or really rich to be a pilot… In my last semester of senior year in college a friend of mine put together a whiffle ball game…one of the guys there had been flying for a bank, and I'm talking to him, and he's like, yeah I'm trying to get on with a major airline…so I started working on my private license and I got hooked…I loved flying…got my instructors

license to build time until I got enough time to qualify for a 135 charter {FAR Part 135 charter operations}…I got time there, multi-engine time in Cessna's mostly… I stayed for over three years and got my ATP…I then got on with a small regional airline."

Her life history of excellence was threatened during and following her merger-acquisition event experience. Her view of self and others view of her during this event were diametrically opposed. She made this clear by exploring her life history.

> Captain Alexander- "It's amazing, these guys {pilots of the acquiring airline} think we barely got through high school…I have two master's degrees."

Captain Alexander's life history was one of challenge and adversity. As she shared with the R/I, a life history of challenge and adversity is common in pursuing a flying career. Rather than a test of commitment to pursue an airline career, Captain Alexander saw such challenge and adversity as gates to pass through in her quest to fly for a major airline. Captain Alexander shared the tumult and uncertainty of an airline life, particularly regarding her experience with job security in her early flying life.

> Captain Alexander- "My first airline {a small regional carrier}, was on its way out of business…I was still working on getting the hours for my ATP {Airline Transport Pilot's license, required to command a commercial airliner, 1,500 flight hours minimum are required for the license}…my last three paychecks from them all bounced…I was calling everyone I had written checks, to tell them my checks would bounce too…I had no other money…I heard that a major airline was starting to hire and I immediately applied…first, second and third interviews, simulator check, lots of exams…they offered me a major airline job…I was so happy!"

Now she was flying large jet airliners from some of the busiest airports in the world. Often, Captain Alexander was the first female the other pilots had ever flown with as she began her major airline career.

> Captain Alexander- "They {the other pilots she was paired with on a flight} were apprehensive, but they allowed me to show what I could do before they decided…they were great pilots and such gentlemen…I had always been opening doors for myself and they said no, that's not the way it is here…I was learning what it truly meant to be a pilot with a major airline."

The camaraderie and professionalism of her fellow pilots was noteworthy to Captain Alexander as she began her major airline career. So too was the level of respect she experienced as a woman in a predominantly male profession. Captain Alexander's focused life history, regarding camaraderie and professionalism, is representative of the vast majority of the pilots interviewed and observed in this research. Her perspective, as one of the early female major airline pilots, was helpful in beginning to understand who these members of unionized expert labor are. Captain Alexander communicated to the researcher not only a strong sense of community with her fellow pilots, but also a sensitivity to her as a women that was genuine and consistent.

> Captain Alexander- "I learned so much and not just about flying…they were quite special people, and I had a blast!"

### 5.2.2 THE DETAILS OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

Pilots are required to be union members as a condition for ongoing employment. This is a requirement at each of the major U.S. airlines as prescribed in their Collective Bargaining Agreements, and it defines the research population of this exploratory study.

Captain Alexander was active and involved in union work. Her contributions were sought out and were valued by line pilots, defined as pilots who fly a regular line of time and are not elected to a union office or engaged in regular union work. Following her airline's merger-acquisition event, a merger of airlines represented by two different pilot unions, she attended a union meeting of the new and acquiring airline's union.

> Captain Alexander- "I was told this was just a normal union meeting…if I recollect the very worst union meeting at my previous airline, that meeting would be 200 times better than this meeting…. the meeting was solely about money, nothing about work rules, work life, benefits or retirement… it was truly a very large and very loud temper tantrum."

In follow-up conversations with Captain Alexander, she had reflected on the union meeting, had spoken with union leaders in attendance and conferred with colleagues about the experience. She shared her thoughts and feedback with the R/I.

> Captain Alexander- "We're red-headed stepchildren…we're former {the acquired airline}…they'd be happiest if they could just line us up and shoot us; no, that would

upset them too, because they didn't get to pick the order to shoot us…You know, I don't know what to do…they have no loyalty to us."

This experience is indicative of the friction following a merger-acquisition event in the U.S. airline industry and the vitriol between members of unionized expert labor. Each of the volunteer participants contributing to this research echoed this reality repeatedly.

The negotiation of one's professional identity is a dynamic and ongoing process, as Captain Alexander shared in her lived experience as a major airline pilot. After over a decade of serving as a First Officer, Captain Alexander became a Captain, and almost another decade after her airline merged with another major airline, she was able to hold a Captain bid once again. Captain Alexander made clear to the researcher that her world and lived experience had changed following her merger-acquisition event. She was now expected to adapt to new norms and behaviors, as Captain Alexander fervently shared with the researcher. These norms and behaviors were markedly different than Captain Alexander had been trained for and had experienced in her seniority climb to being awarded a Captain bid.

> Captain Alexander- "Before, everyone would meet and go out on a layover…now you may see no one on a layover, not even your F/O {First Officer, Co-pilot}…and you never do anything with your Flight Attendants…it's a lot less friendly now."

Captain Alexander went on to describe to the researcher how the values of her fellow professionals had changed following her merger-acquisition event also. She shared how her initial major airline experience was centered on trust, camaraderie, and an authentic collegiality. Her experience following her merger-acquisition event displayed far different values.

> Captain Alexander- "Both the company and the union now basically tell us how much they hate us…and we keep looking around asking, what did we ever do…sitting in a union meeting listening to everyone say how much they wish we weren't here…If I had known it would be like this I would have left, given up all of my seniority, and applied at another airline…I never thought the hatred would last as long as it has."

This experience details the dramatic change in values that members of unionized expert labor and the acquiring airline management bestow on licensed professionals of the acquired airline following a merger-acquisition event. Before her merger-acquisition event, Captain Alexander described a team with the Captain as leader. All major airline simulator and line training is done as a crew, or as Captain Alexander describes it, "a team." It was not only

significant organizational change that was reshaping her sense of self and view by others; other factors contributed as well.

One of those other factors, technology, has had an effect on the lives and lived experience of airline employees, as offered by Captain Alexander and other contributors. Captain Alexander believes technology's effect on the operationalization of the Captain as leader and the crew as team has dramatically changed the human interactions of airline crews. As Captain Alexander reported, the world of aviation has changed dramatically technologically. The round dials and gauges in the cockpit of earlier years relied upon analog instruments for things like heading, airspeed and altitude; the commercial airliners of today have digital cockpits comprised of a series of TV screens and computer pads to input data and instructions for flight. Captain Alexander referred to these digital cockpits as a "glass cockpit," referring to all of the glass TV screens replacing the old analog round dials and gauges. Technology in the personal lives of flight crews has similarly been impacted, as Captain Alexander reported.

The consequences to this research, as highlighted by Captain Alexander, are meaningful. Observing potential prototypes in a social setting, discussion and feedback of one's professional practice following a day's flight(s), these are largely a thing of the past, as reported by Captain Alexander. The pilot to pilot dialog of reflection on the day's events, the state of the airline, the state of the airline industry and the opportunity to have these and other critical conversations with colleagues are all marginalized with the advent of technology. Captain Alexander and multiple other contributors made clear that one of the most important identity formation opportunities for a commercial airline pilot is a listening and learning environment, and the advent of technology has narrowed those opportunities.

While this issue has neither the stature nor significant organizational change of a merger-acquisition event, technology plays a role in the human dynamics of the Captain and First Officer. Captain Alexander offered technology as another contributor to the change paradigm in understanding the lived experience of members of unionized expert labor today.

> Captain Alexander- "Everyone has their computers, iPads, all their electronic toys…they go to their rooms on a layover and don't leave or join the crew…socialization is a thing of the past."

Technology has played a significant role in the cockpit as well. Today's so-called "glass cockpit" (a series of computer screens replacing the round dials and gauges in the cockpits of earlier days) has transformed the art of flying and what it means to fly a commercial airliner.

Captain Alexander evidenced the reduction of "stick and rudder" flying that is done and the consequent "automation complacency" that is endemic in today's airline pilot. Technology advancements may be making the psychomotor skills of today's commercial airline pilot less practiced, but this "artistry of aviation" still remains a professional identity quality of "high admiration," among pilots, as reported by Captain Alexander.

While a pilot's lived experience is framed by much more than technology or the artistry of flying an airliner, technology has contributed to reframing the profession, the roles and responsibilities, and has enabled and empowered management to define professional practice standards heretofore unheard of, as reported by Captain Alexander.

> Captain Alexander- "In an email from the company they tell people to make sure to get to the airplane on time, get the paperwork and if you find anything wrong, let the people know, maintenance and dispatch…I'm reading this and scratching my head reading this thing going why does this need to be sent out to pilots…why do I need an email to tell me that when I go to the airplane and I find something wrong that I need to call someone…why does my airline have to send an email to the entire pilot population telling them what their job is…it makes no sense, unless the company doesn't believe that their pilots know what to do and would do what properly should be done…the company wants control because they don't believe the pilots know or will do what needs to be done."

As Captain Alexander articulated, "the lawyers are in charge." The company is easily persuaded, stated Captain Alexander to "trump Captain authority for lawyer requirements," anytime the company may feel exposed to litigation: "when in doubt, send a memo…the company always wants to cover their ass."

### 5.2.3 REFLECTION ON THE SENSE AND MEANING MAKING

Captain Alexander communicated her summary reflections and sense and meaning making to the R/I.

> Captain Alexander- "I have no loyalty to the new airline…They send me a paycheck…I am very grateful for that, and it is a good paycheck, but they have done nothing to make me feel loyal to them…I am just an employee they had to buy to get our airplanes…basically, the union and the company tell us how much they hate us."

Captain Alexander distinguishes her feelings regarding her union and corporate experience with her professional practice. Her desire to be professional and continue to "do a good job" is unabated in light of the reality of her evolving airline life.

> Captain Alexander- "You'd think that when you keep coming to work and do a good job, that the union or company might get it; they don't. I take care of my people, not because it's my job, but because it's who I am…it's what an airline Captain is supposed to do…I show up early, I speak with everyone, I do my best to address any issues…I want to do the best I can…what I get is an email telling me how to do my job, from someone that's not even a pilot."

Captain Alexander made clear, in sensemaking discussions with the R/I, that trust and commitment are reliant on trustworthy behavior. Captain Alexander expected a genuine commitment of her union and her employer to her as a respected licensed professional and member of unionized expert labor. This was her experience before the merger-acquisition event, but it was absent following her merger-acquisition lived experience.

Another reflection shared with the researcher was Captain Alexander's clarity that significant organizational change altered her sense of trust with others, including her commitment to her employer and her union. These reflections with Captain Alexander manifest themselves most literally in her understanding of seniority and her reality of its loss. Captain Alexander's merger-acquisition experience altered her professional identity attributes of autonomy and self-regulation. Captain Alexander shared that her lived experience was unstable. She maintains a sense of self that is caring of those for whom she is responsible, a commitment to excellence in her professional practice and has no intention of leaving flying.

**Table 5.1**     CASE 1: INDIVIDUAL ANALYSIS – KEY EMERGING THEMES

| **The Early Years Interviews** **Focused Life History - Identity Formation** | | |
|---|---|---|
| EMERGING THEMES | LINKAGE TO THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| "camaraderie and professionalism;" "hooked" on the life; welcoming "sense of community" | Identity synthesis "represents a reworking of childhood and contemporaneous identifications" (Schwartz, 2001, p. 9) "belonging, attachment, belief and organization" as professional identity measurement (Barbour and Lammers, 2015, p. 40) | RQ #1: commitment from an early age; passion; not a job, but a calling |
| **The Major Airline Years Interviews** **Particular Lived Experience - Identity Negotiation, Threat, Loss and Reformation** | | |
| EMERGING THEMES | LINKAGE TO THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| having a "blast;" "trust;" "trust" to "hate;" "dramatic" change; technology as "team" reducer | "occupational image can become crucial to visceral experience" (Ashcraft, 2007, p. 27) "Communications technologies have also altered the relationship between people's work and non-work identities." (Ramarajan, 2014, p. 624) | RQ #1: enduring passion in the face of adversity; RQ #2: capacity to accept change; peripheral events role in illuminating being; RQ #2: the role of "trust or identification" in individual identity work (Driver, 2015, p. 900) |
| **The Sense and Meaning Making Interviews** **Making Sense - Seeking Meaning and Being** | | |
| EMERGING THEMES | LINKAGE TO THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| "loyalty" lost; "seniority lost;" difficult to negotiate identity in "tumult;" corporate "control" intended to reduce autonomy | "societies no longer provide their members with a set of established and indisputable references allowing them to know with certainty, how to direct their life" (Guichard et al., 2012, p. 53); the powerless confronting the powerful… "passive employees are unable and unwilling to engage" (Prasad and Prasad, 1998, p. 226) | RQ #1: professional practice standards unabated by change; RQ #2: relationships lost; Sense of being in conflict with others; RQ #3: tumult as complicating identity work; RQ #3: compartmentalization as an identity attribute |

**Table 5.2** CASE 1: SYNTHESES OF FIRST ORDER OF ANALYSIS

| Pre-Merger-Acquisition Event | |
|---|---|
| **Expectations** | • Trustworthy behavior from peers, management and union |
| **Experience** | • Trust and commitment were earned and freely given by key stakeholders<br>• Professional and personal relationships contributed to positive identification by self and others |
| **Post-Merger-Acquisition Event** | |
| **Lived Experience Themes** | • Loyalty lost…professional practice and corporate allegiance are now mutually exclusive<br>• Previous relationships remain, but psychological contracts gone<br>• Technology impacts the increasing relational distance with key stakeholders |
| **Reflective Themes** | • Responsibility and authority should be commensurate with one another<br>• …You shouldn't outsource either…the company expands responsibility of the Captain and outsources authority<br>• Seniority is not negotiable…intractable adaptive challenges remain…sense of larceny of core values<br>• View of self is in conflict with view by others |

## 5.3 CASE 2

### 5.3.1 FOCUSED LIFE HISTORY

Captain Baker has worked for three major airlines and several regional or smaller airlines. He describes himself as "a multigenerational airline pilot." His father was a pilot for a major airline. Captain Baker's father's airline career came to an early and abrupt end as a result of a leveraged buy-out (LBO) by a "corporate raider." Captain Baker's son is now also a pilot at a major airline. Captain Baker describes his home life and upbringing as "flying from the household."

> Captain Baker- "My father had airplanes that I had access to…I built my time (flight hours) flying my father's airplanes…I became a mechanic and got a job as a mechanic with a major airline while building my flying time…I skipped the flight instructor route and got on with a regional carrier to build more time…I didn't get hired by the major airline I was a mechanic…I didn't have my ATP yet…Later, I was hired by the

major airline my father worked for…I went on strike with them…They eventually went out of business."

This life history caused Captain Baker to "get heavily involved in union work." He witnessed labor-management relations first hand as a young pilot, a job action he describes as "the strike heard around the world." The corporate raider that took over the airline had no interest in aviation, as reported by Captain Baker. As Captain Baker stated, the raider did not have an argument with labor when he took control of the airline. Captain Baker detailed how labor costs had been curtailed with each of the unionized groups on the property prior to the raider taking control. The corporate raider was taking the airline apart piece-by-piece because of a belief that the parts were worth more than the whole. The pilot union response was to encourage each of the other major airlines pilot unions to organize a national strike. The leadership representing the national union declined to support an industry strike as reported by Captain Baker. Careers came to an abrupt end. Captain Baker shared his and his father's experience of losing their flying jobs when the airline went out of business. His father's career was over and Captain Baker's airline future was in question.

This experience convinced Captain Baker to advocate for pilots and did not dampen his desire to fly for a major airline again. The experience he endured with his father brought out his authentic being. As reported in participant observation, Captain Baker was "not shy in confronting his fellow pilots." Running for union office, Captain Baker developed a reputation for hard work and unflinching advocacy for what he perceived as the "advancement of the profession." Flying, as described by Captain Baker, was what he wanted to do; it "was in his blood." So too was his commitment to union work.

> Captain Baker- "I waited for another major airline to call…one did and I was hired…it was almost indescribable…it was a wonderful era to be flying professionally…it was a joy to go to work… the industry was changing…it's arguable, but the differences started appearing pretty soon after deregulation, the Airline Deregulation Act…not just for pilots, but also management and ownership…it was still a blast to go to work."

Captain Baker recounted how the U.S. airline industry was changing and how it was affecting the life of Captain Baker and his fellow airline pilots. Flying was becoming less of "a blast." This experience not only further pushed Captain Baker to immerse himself in union work on behalf of pilots, it also served as defining for Captain Baker's identity by numerous

participant observation contributors. Captain Baker was a student of aviation history and was always quick to provide context to the circumstance of himself and his fellow pilots.

> Captain Baker- "In the mid-to-late 80's corporate raiders found their way to the airline industry…the airlines had built substantial cash positions and substantial assets…they {the corporate raiders} saw an opportunity to move in and take advantage…when they did, it fell on airline labor's back when they started pulling assets {aircraft and people} and pulling cash out of the carriers that had been set aside for years and years for the infrastructure of the carrier…the corporate raiders decimated the airline business…they were in it for purely the bottom line…they were in it for what they could get out of the airline and they took it out of labor and especially the pilot profession."

For all of Captain Baker's engagement in aviation, from his family, his licensure and employment as an A&P {Airframe and Powerplant} mechanic and his often-stated desire to the R/I to fly for a major airline, Captain Baker did not get an ATP prior to employment at either his first or second major airline.

> Captain Baker- "In the era that I was seeking a job with a major airline an ATP was not required for employment…during that era a commercial license was all that was required to become an airline pilot and I achieved that early on in my career prior to joining any carrier…I took the job with a major airline as a mechanic and felt I could possibly have an inroad to the major airline as a pilot that way…that didn't quite work out so I reached out to other carriers…I was hired at a regional airline without an ATP, at my first major without an ATP, and at my second major without an ATP…essentially, I got my ATP at my second major airline as part of the training program on a wide-body international aircraft."

### 5.3.2 THE DETAILS OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

Captain Baker's focus early on in his major airline life was on union work and advocacy for his fellow pilots. As he expressed to the R/I, he was engaged actively with each union of his airline employment. He was a pilot union official at his first major airline, which was the airline where his father was also employed.

> Captain Baker- "I was in a somewhat unusual position of being an airline pilot's son, so I had a very favorable view of the pilot union that I was initially a member…my father was a stalwart unionist at the airline…he felt the union was the primary reason

why he had the job that he had and the lifestyle that he had…it was a primary derivative of the union's ability to win a labor contract that gave him the opportunity to live the lifestyle that he lived…which is predominantly what encouraged me to get involved with the union."

Captain Baker's involvement with his union was quite positive initially, as shared with the R/I.

Captain Baker- "I was very happy to be a union member…I was very active as a union member…I saw it as an opportunity to perpetuate the profession…I grew up for 25 years watching what my father did, what he had, and what was provided to him through his labor contract…I saw that as an opportunity to build on that for the future…that lasted for quite a while."

Over time Captain Baker's view of unions began to evolve.

Captain Baker- " I was very excited about being a union member…there were some faults with the national union to which his airline was a part…it was a national union, but a very fractionalized union…unlike the local Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, there is no union hall to go to apply for jobs…the union is not the conduit for job acquisition…each individual airline acts as its own little cluster, its own little bubble…each union branch of the national airline union functions within that bubble independent of the other bubbles…what is a fracture is the belief or understanding of how a labor union is supposed to work and how airline labor unions were evolving…this is all post-deregulation…pre-deregulation it didn't matter…there were just small nuances between different airline labor contracts…post deregulation the differences between the carriers became very dramatic, including in pay…I believe the national union and individual carrier unions following deregulation suffered a critical change in their philosophy."

At the time of Captain Baker's interviews with the R/I, Captain Baker was employed by an airline with a union that was a splinter of the large national union where he was previously a member and elected union official. He initially did not join the union of his second major airline. He was a dissenting member.

Captain Baker- " My acquired airline union is a different kind of animal…I kind of liken it to a remora and a shark…the union represents only the airline he is employed…the union broke off from the large national union and is not affiliated with

a national labor federation…at times it resembles a company shop…at other times it resembles a completely radical group of people…it's morphed into a membership that in essence believes that they are part of the corporate culture of the airline and will do anything the carrier wants to do…no other carrier has been successful in representing its members without some type of outside affiliation."

This was the context provided by Captain Baker as he entered his second major airline. Captain Baker's "fire and enthusiasm had dimmed" and his lived experience involving a merger-acquisition event was now his focus.

The effects of "hostile discrimination" on the lives of pilots, following merger-acquisition events, manifests itself in pilots' daily lives. Captain Baker details the experience.

> Captain Baker- "It's not as much fun as it was 20 years ago…It's much more designed to basically get as much work out of me as possible with as little rest as possible with as much efficiency to the carrier as they {the company} can extract…you show up an hour or more before your flight, you fly your flight, and then layover for 10 to 12 hours…get up and do it all over again…the carrier needs X number of bodies {pilots} to fly the projected block hours {flight hours the company business plan is predicated}…the carrier only cares about putting bodies {pilots} in the seats {Captain and First Officer seats} to meet their {the airline's} interests."

Captain Baker described a different work environment that existed at his airline before merger-acquisition. He describes the concept known as "duty rigs," where "credits" are accrued, compelling the company to "efficiently fly pilots." In conversation with the R/I, history and contextual perspective were important for Captain Baker to convey. For Captain Baker, context helped explain the why of his positions.

> Captain Baker- "A pilot needs to fly in the aircraft, not sit around…6 hours flying or more each day, get a good night's rest, get up and be efficient the next day, and the next day…a pilot needs to be efficient when at work {a pilot's pay is linked to flight hours flown or credited}…that, in essence, doesn't happen anymore…the duty rigs {guaranteed number of hours of pay in a particular day in a pilots schedule} have been reduced or eliminated…the company now has much more flexibility with the pilot's lifestyle and job life…I now spend {with commuting} up to 22 days a month flying to do the same number of hours of work that I used to perform in 13 days."

Captain Baker's monthly flying, to complete a "full month," has gone from 13 to 22 days per month on average, but it is the toll on him as a person that has been the greatest challenge. Captain Baker has had to adapt to the reality of being a former acquired airline pilot.

> Captain Baker- "What's concerned me the most is because it's been so hostile…there is a barrier in the cockpit every day…it's insurmountable at times…there is a no fly list…a First Officer can say I'm not flying with this guy {his Captain for that trip, that was a former acquired airline Captain}…those lists have grown… when it is a crew composed of both pilots hired initially at the same carrier you talk about going out to eat, this and that, but if not, there's real friction…I don't think that friction will ever go away…you have to be able to play well with others…if you don't play well with others you have a hard time functioning in this environment."

"Every seat is important," as described by Captain Baker. Who holds that seat {Captain or First Officer seat} is a function of seniority. Captain Baker shared with the R/I that seniority is inviolate. After his merger-acquisition event, his lived experience was quite different; it "transformed his belief system," as he shared with the researcher. While his spirit may be dampened, and his work life may be markedly different than the beginning of his airline life, Captain Baker remains resilient and committed to his profession. He remains linked and grounded to "flying from the household."

> Captain Baker- "My father is now in his 80's and tells everyone he's a retired Captain…he's proud of that fact…that's what he believes he was meant to do…that's all he ever wanted to do…I have learned a lot from my father…flying is a major role in my life too, but I've got so many other interests…my job is my profession, not my life…frankly, because of the treatment of {merged airline} if I could retire I would, but because of them I can't {his significant reduction in seniority resulted in a significant pay reduction}."

### 5.3.3 REFLECTION ON THE SENSE AND MEANING MAKING

Captain Baker "went to college because it was required to become an airline pilot." His family history, his non-military background, and his long-term marriage and raising a child that has become an airline pilot, each provided important context for Captain Baker as he reflected on our time together. The lived experience of his father and his son provided more context to the R/I. Captain Baker reflected on change and commitment in his life and in the industry he loves. Captain Baker shared with the R/I his "still joy in flying," but his lived

experience was both tempered and degraded as he tried to make sense with the R/I of the sum of his airline career. Instability in his capacity to practice his profession, dramatic change in his relationships with his peers, union and his employer, and the lack of recognition of his "rightful" seniority were the focus of Captain Baker's reflection and sense and meaning making with the R/I.

Near the end of our time together, the R/I asked Captain Baker to reflect on the future. Once again, Captain Baker shared context and also his vision for the future.

> Captain Baker- "As a matter of fact I had to give that to my son…the age 65 rule {revised retirement age for commercial airline pilots} basically is going to create a bubble of retirement and the fact that there was 13 years when no major airline hired a pilot is going to create a huge employment issue or a huge pilot issue for these major carriers that's right around the corner…we've already seen Congress step up the plate and kind of partially address this issue by bumping up the from 60 to 65…of course, for every step forward they take two steps back…what they do is they look at the Buffalo crash {a fatal crash involving a qualified, but minimally experienced crew} of a regional carrier and they throw the 1500 hour ATP requirement to get a job now with a major carrier, or even a regional carrier…that placed a huge constriction on commercial pilot availability for regional carriers and major carriers to be able to find pilots…so it's because of that timing if you're in the airline business and you're young you're going to lead a charmed life because you are going to be at the front end of a hiring bubble that's going to be massive…the age 65 bubble, the ATP 1500 hour bubble, all those things are going to create issues for major airlines to replace a very experienced but aging pilot group…so for a young person getting involved today, I think it's got a lot of potential for seeing a reversion to the good old days…if seniority could be respected."

Captain Baker's reflection on the sense and meaning making with the R/I was thoughtful and pragmatic, traits often observed by the R/I. His emotion was clear, but he was able to compartmentalize his lived experience from the prospects for the next generation of major airline pilots. Captain Baker communicated a subtle positivism in light of his own unstable professional life. The central theme emerging in each of our conversations was the need for recognition of seniority by peers, unions and airline management. Captain Baker was emphatic regarding the need for proper seniority recognition. Captain Baker's evolution as a

member of unionized expert labor was personified in his reflections on seniority and union membership.

**Table 5.3**    CASE 2: INDIVIDUAL ANALYSIS – KEY EMERGING THEMES

| The Early Years Interviews<br>Focused Life History - Identity Formation | | |
|---|---|---|
| EMERGING<br>THEMES | LINKAGE TO<br>THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO<br>RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| Airline "family;"<br><br>"blast to go to work;"<br><br>union as "good" and "evil" | Antecedent to professional identity construction, "family and cultural values"<br><br>(Slay and Smith, 2011, p. 92) | RQ #1: Grew up in an aviation family and his son is now an airline pilot; commitment to union as identifier of professional self |
| **The Major Airline Years Interviews**<br>**Particular Lived Experience - Identity Negotiation, Threat, Loss and Reformation** | | |
| EMERGING<br>THEMES | LINKAGE TO<br>THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO<br>RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| Union work as "advancement of the profession;"<br><br>licensure as "requirement," not goal;<br><br>"hostile discrimination" as means to disintegrate identity | "Identity work, it seems, is more necessary, frequent and intense where strains, tensions and surprises are prevalent"<br><br>(Brown, 2015, p. 6)<br><br>an inability to resolve issues of self-continuity can lead to an identity crisis<br><br>(Erikson, 1963) | RQ #1: relaxation of professional standards contributes to quasi-profession understanding<br><br>(Fraher, 2015);<br><br>RQ #2: M/A event galvanized pilots to align with the group of belonging before the M/A event (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) |
| **The Sense and Meaning Making Interviews**<br>**Making Sense - Seeking Meaning and Being** | | |
| EMERGING<br>THEMES | LINKAGE TO<br>THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO<br>RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| Quest for "rightful seniority;"<br><br>Unions role in occupational segregation;<br><br>Litigation as a source of "justice" | "The varying conditions leading to merging of seniority rosters often result in considerable bargaining effort (Mater and Mangum, 1963, p. 346) | RQ #2: Vitriol between the opposing parties illuminates true self;<br><br>RQ #3: Litigation brings tumult into view |

**Table 5.4**    CASE 2: SYNTHESES OF FIRST ORDER OF ANALYSIS

| Pre-Merger-Acquisition Event | |
|---|---|
| **Expectations** | • Solidarity and brotherhood<br>• Education as a requirement rather than a professional standard<br>• The union as collective and unifying force…unions key role in a moral economy |
| **Experience** | • The advent of the corporate raider<br>• The strike heard round the world…union work as professional calling<br>• The subordination of labor |
| Post-Merger-Acquisition Event | |
| **Lived Experience Themes** | • The introduction of a new unionism<br>• Reality effect of educational and professional requirement downgrades…quasi understanding as a profession |
| **Reflective Themes** | • Seniority recognition is a hill to die on<br>• The role of unionism has devolved<br>• Litigation as remedy for identity wrongs |

## 5.4  CASE 3

### 5.4.1  FOCUSED LIFE HISTORY

For Captain Collins, standardization, rigor and discipline are defining attributes for unionized expert labor in the U.S. airline industry.  Each of these attributes is indicative of a homogeneous population of licensed professionals.  What Captain Collins exemplifies, however, is a paradox of the research population.  As reported repeatedly in participant observation periods, Captain Collins excels at each attribute of the pronounced standardization that is defining for a commercial airline pilot, but he also highlights the individuality and nuance of each participant of the research population.

Captain Collins grew up in a loving and supportive home.  He was aware from an early age that "there's an awful lot of stuff between wanting to become a pilot and becoming an airline pilot."  His father, a former military pilot and major airline Captain, was his guide.

> Captain Collins- "I always looked up to my dad and just always appreciated how humble he was…at the same time I knew he did a great job, he took pride in a good job {at being both a dad and a pilot}…I always looked up to him when I was growing

up as a kid…I wanted to be a lot like my dad…I had a lot of interest in aviation, but my dad never pushed it at all…when he knew the interest was there he started opening the doors for me."

The first thing Captain Collins did was get his Private Pilot's License while in college, where he was majoring in aviation science. He "stayed with it" throughout his college time, building flight hours and adding licensing as his flight time and knowledge progressed.

> Captain Collins- "It was like learning a new language…real busy and a very steep learning curve…you needed lots of time and experience before you could make a cent as a pilot…I got my Commercial, Instrument, Multi-engine and Instructors Licenses, and was still able to graduate from college in 3 and ½ years."

In his senior year in college, Captain Collins was hired as a co-pilot with a company that had a corporate jet. Two years later he was hired by the same major airline where his dad had been a senior Captain.

A longstanding dream of Captain Collins was to fly military jets as his father had. Starting his airline career, this dream remained unrealized. Captain Collins learned of an opportunity with the Air National Guard (ANG) {each state has its own national military guard units, including military air guard units} in the state where he lived, where he could attend military flight school, become a commissioned officer, and fly a military jet on his days off from airline flying. Captain Collins completed over 12 years flying for the ANG, "made three trips to the desert" (Iraq), going back and forth to his airline. He served with great pride and commitment.

> Captain Collins- "I went to air shows with my dad…at least 25 air shows as a kid…I just loved that…I had a big interest in being a fighter pilot…so that's what made me interested, just, kind of, growing up with it my whole life and always wanting to do it…I really wanted to be an airline pilot too…I took military leave from the airline, went to military flight school…got selected and became fighter qualified…when you woke up at 4 o'clock in the morning, they have a thing called standup where you'd stand up in front of all the instructors and all of the flight students and they could basically ask you any question they wanted to and then we would end it with an emergency procedure of the day and if you didn't handle it properly or have any issues with it, you know…if you literally forgot one word, you weren't going to fly that day…and everybody knows you blew it…so they turn the pressure up on you, which

was good…it was interesting times…learning how to drop bombs, shoot the gun and do air to air combat…I flew a brand new jet with the big engine…I loved it."

### 5.4.2 THE DETAILS OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

Captain Collins had a wife and three children. Captain Collins went through a divorce and had full custody of his three children, making him a single father. Captain Collins left the ANG to focus on his family and his airline engaged in a merger-acquisition event. He now had two significant events to deal with at the same time: single parenting and a merger-acquisition event.

Coordinating his new single parenting life required support and understanding from both his airline and his union. He required specific time off and there were limits on the amount of time he could be away from his children. Captain Collins's professional standards were impeccable as reported by his peers and others he flew with. When the R/I inquired whether his allegiance was to his airline or union in light of his unique lived experience, Captain Collins made clear what framed his professional identity and where his allegiance was devoted.

> Captain Collins- "Are those the only two choices…I have a third choice, but between those two I would say it's more to my profession…if I could answer, I would just say work as though you work for the Lord…if you're trying to just do what God would have you do, whatever situation, whether it's a relationship or whether it's handling how much fuel you're burning or how you interact with a passenger, you know, that's how my hope is to work as though I work for Him…managers will make you happy or make you sad or disappoint you…unions will make you sad or disappoint you, but He has never done that to me…my allegiance is to the Lord."

This perspective, Captain Collins's credo for living, has proven valuable in both his personal and professional life. His religious beliefs were established at an early age and have held him well through significant change in his life. Captain Collins made clear to the researcher that a belief in a "higher authority" was the guiding motivation for his professional practice when his union, his airline and his fellow man failed him. The challenges to family life for an airline pilot were reported regularly in participant observation periods, and remain "quite real" for Captain Collins. At the heart of Captain Collins's challenge is the issue of seniority. As Captain Collins reported, "seniority discrimination" following a merger-acquisition event has to be translated to "real life" at home.

Captain Collins- "Virtually no one understands the seniority impact {following a merger-acquisition event} and it even took many years for my own kids to realize the impact that hey dad's not home on Christmas or Thanksgiving…why are you gone so much dad {his children would say}…so virtually no one, even some of my best friends don't understand, and they're great folks, but they just don't get it because I know of no other job where you are basically married to a company…It's very difficult to switch because you have to start all over again…if you are a physician or banker or whatever you can go to another company and get paid more and even have more responsibility whereas airline pilots that's not an option…when a company and union doesn't recognize a pilot's seniority {in a merger-acquisition event}, its effects are lifelong…my kids see it in me."

The issue of seniority is inextricably linked to his union, as reported by Captain Collins. Captain Collins joined the new union following his merger-acquisition event. As is his nature, he chose not to be a dissenting member.

Captain Collins- "I'm not committed to the union…I pay my dues and I want to be able to make an informed vote, but very often the leadership that send the emails…I just don't agree with them…it's not very unified…I am a former acquired airline pilot and many of my fellow acquired pilots are dissenting members or they vote opposite directions against the leadership…former acquired airline pilots don't feel their interests are represented…so they don't typically agree with union leadership…my commitment is very low…I try to know the information, but I don't seem to be on the same sheet of music most of the time…I feel the union has done everything possible to dishonor the former acquired airline pilots…wherever the money is coming from is where they {union leadership} are going to go."

Captain Collins's time with his first major airline was just over a decade prior to his merger-acquisition event. His lived experience was full of significant events during that time. He was then in his early 30's, falling in love, getting married, having children, becoming a fighter pilot, and serving multiple combat tours in Iraq. He returned, his wife informed him she was leaving him and their children for another man, and his airline engaged in a merger-acquisition event. Significant change was a common theme reported by Captain Collins, but his positive attitude persists.

> Captain Collins- "I feel very blessed to have a job…so please don't get the wrong impression."

The constancy of change in Captain Collins's personal and professional lived experience did not alter his vision or expectation of his professional practice.

> Captain Collins- "I really do care about doing a good job…what I mean by that is to know your airplane and know the operational side of it…display adroit skills whether it's hand flying the airplane or whether it's the decisions you make as Captain…when you work with a man that knows what he's doing…that's the kind of man you want to go to war with…I kind of take that over to the airline…is this the guy I want to fly a four-day trip with flying in and out of weather systems…is this the guy I want next to me in the event of an engine failure…I want to exhibit those qualities and I want the people that fly with me to feel comfortable with me…my hope would be that I am sending that message…when you're flying with somebody, even if you're not speaking, you're certainly communicating a lot…all of the non-verbal and the way you conduct yourself in the cockpit is important to me…my hope would also be to be gracious…all of this helps keep the professional standards high."

### 5.4.3 REFLECTION ON THE SENSE AND MEANING MAKING

Captain Collins, on reflection with the R/I, spoke of his capacity to manage stress and change. Situational awareness and positional awareness were key professional attributes for Captain Collins . Captain Collins's capacity to "see the big picture" enabled Captain Collins to maintain his belief of living in light of dramatic changes in his relational agreements with his fellow pilots.  His belief in his fellow man was altered, but not his belief in a higher authority.

Captain Collins, during our reflection time, shared with the researcher an enduring positivism in light of his professional turmoil and change.

> Captain Collins- "I felt like I could persevere and, you know, do a good job as a professional regardless of my circumstance…I received a lot of comments last year when I lost my Captain bid…I had to go buy a First Officer uniform…and buy a First Officer hat…that was pretty humbling to have to go and do that…I was a Check Airman…to lose that, to lose my Captain bid, and to go out and buy a First Officer uniform when I knew I was headed to the street in less than six months…I received a lot of comments about that and just about, you know, hey, you're still serving joyfully even in the midst of hardship…that's the professional attribute I am proudest of."

In our time together, the resiliency of Captain Collins was ever-present. Captain Collins regularly displayed an enduring capacity to regulate his emotions, as observed and reported by several contributors to this research. Captain Collins's commitment to his faith framed a belief system that was instrumental in his personal identity formation.

**Table 5.5    CASE 3: INDIVIDUAL ANALYSIS – KEY EMERGING THEMES**

| The Early Years Interviews<br>Focused Life History - Identity Formation | | |
|---|---|---|
| EMERGING<br>THEMES | LINKAGE TO<br>THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO<br>RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| "loving and supportive home;"<br><br>Father as "role model;"<br><br>Wanted to "serve his country" flying military jets | "deeply gendered metaphors of military and fraternal rites of initiation and passage"<br><br>(Ashcraft, 2007, p. 22) | RQ #1: Military service as rooted building block for professional identity |
| The Major Airline Years Interviews<br>Particular Lived Experience - Identity Negotiation, Threat, Loss and Reformation | | |
| EMERGING<br>THEMES | LINKAGE TO<br>THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO<br>RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| Committed father and husband…then, broken marriage;<br><br>Allegiance to profession over airline… "the Lord above all;"<br><br>"seniority discrimination" nexus to "real life" | "Scant attention has been paid, however, to what happens in between an identity-threatening experience and its consequences…and decide how to respond"<br><br>(Petriglieri, 2011, p. 642) | RQ #1: emotional regulation following disruption;<br><br>RQ #2: consistent understanding of self in context of change and turmoil;<br><br>RQ #2: M/A event as antecedent for seniority jolt;<br><br>RQ #3: seniority discrimination tumult as professional identifier |
| The Sense and Meaning Making Interviews<br>Making Sense - Seeking Meaning and Being | | |
| EMERGING<br>THEMES | LINKAGE TO<br>THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO<br>RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| Union, management and peers "failed him" …but "not his faith;"<br><br>"display adroit skills" in tumult;<br><br>"Situational awareness" and "position awareness"…key in all things, for a professional pilot | self-identification enactments may present during times of tumult …because "the professional has a greater stake in the outcome of his efforts;"<br><br>(Bucher and Stelling, 1969, p. 5)<br><br>confirmation of "basic values" is key to a professional in times of stress<br><br>(Schein, 1985) | RQ #2: Awareness of where you are and what it means informs professional identity;<br><br>RQ #3: psychomotor skills demonstrate artistry for professional identification, particularly during tumult; |

**Table 5.6**     CASE 3: SYNTHESES OF FIRST ORDER OF ANALYSIS

| | **Pre-Merger-Acquisition Event** | |
|---|---|---|
| **Expectations** | • Flying as a calling<br>• Commitment to excellence in all things<br>• Flying as a source of like-minded people | |
| **Experience** | • Uncommon professional attributes<br>• The life, the work and people…a common thread | |
| | **Post-Merger-Acquisition Event** | |
| **Lived Experience Themes** | • Seniority discrimination as a norm<br>• Excellence as unimpeded practice standard | |
| **Reflective Themes** | • Higher calling as a credo for living…and managing change<br>• Belonging and Commitment as unrelated…new sense of self<br>• Resiliency as key | |

## 5.5  CASE 4

### 5.5.1  FOCUSED LIFE HISTORY

Captain Dixon's first aviation experience involved jumping out of an airplane.

> Captain Dixon- "When I was 16, a high school friend of mine got a pair of tickets from his parents for a tandem parachute jump…he asked me to come…we drove a couple of hours to this airport, had a little classroom session, and we got into this old World War II looking airplane with a lot of tape on it holding it, and a big cargo door that was missing…They just take you up, and we jumped out of the airplane…afterwards we had a talk with the instructors…I came back for flying lessons…I definitely confirmed that this was something I loved to do."

Captain Dixon continued to fly and, following high school, attended a professional pilot school university, graduating with honors.  He began his aviation career flying for a small regional airline near his home, "building time to get enough hours for my ATP."  The regional carrier "encouraged education, and helped me getting my ATP."  After several years, Captain Dixon met all of the requirements and was ready.  "I went down in the middle of the night to a large east coast airport, did the check ride set up by the company, and became a Captain for the small regional carrier."

Captain Dixon had remained close to his university and had a number of relationships with former professors and fellow flying school students. One close friend and fellow alumni told him about a major airline that was beginning to hire. The friend gave him the hiring contact information, Captain Dixon got an application, sent it in, and "was called for an interview." The interview process "went well" and he was hired. Their {his initial hire major airline} routes were "vast" and "you could travel all over; it was so diverse." They gave him his choice of airplane to train on as a flight engineer. Captain Dixon "found a home" at his first major airline.

> Captain Dixon- "I thought the people were really good…my fellow pilots were great…some of the management people were really good too…I was happy there."

Captain Dixon chose a wide-body aircraft to train on for his initial flight engineer training after being hired at a major airline. He was struck by the many global destinations the large international aircraft flew. Captain Dixon was eager to fly to Europe and the Caribbean. He shared with the R/I that "he had a lot of fun engineering on it." Later, Captain Dixon had acquired enough seniority to move up to First Officer on this airplane.

> Captain Dixon- "An absolute phenomenal airplane…when I was able to upgrade to First Officer on it and receive a type-rating {required to assume command}, I'd say this was the beginning of my professional 121 career {FAR Part 121 is the federal regulation covering commercial airline operations}."

The joy of Captain Dixon's initial major airline experience was beginning to change. As Captain Dixon shared with the R/I, the replacement of the flight engineer {third pilot on earlier airplanes}, brought on by technology, "changed the cockpit dynamic and just created a different environment."

The industry was changing too. Following 9/11, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) was created. Captain Dixon shared how this operationally changed his professional routine.

> Captain Dixon- "Before every flight, I check the computer for messages, you know, hot items, about the specific flight or that specific departure or destination airport…We {the Captain and First Officer} talk about any issues that might be pertinent to the flight…we talk about are there FAMs {Federal Air Marshalls} on board, are there military people on board, are there law enforcement officers with prisoners on board, anything we think might be abnormal for the flight…if so, I then

brief the crew…it is possible that multiple people on board, scattered around the aircraft, may be armed…it is a very different world."

The lethal potential of personnel onboard today's commercial airliners may now be more significant, as reported by Captain Dixon.  Change has occurred in both the cockpit and air travel, in general.  Adaptation to change, as reported by Captain Dixon, is a new marker of professional identity for members of unionized expert labor.

### 5.5.2  THE DETAILS OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

Following over a decade of training and experience at his first major airline Captain Dixon's seniority advanced and he was able to fly as First Officer and then, another half-dozen years later, as Captain.  As Captain Dixon reported, the aircraft and industry were changing.  The "three-man crew was gone," computers "replaced the decisions Captains used to make."

> Captain Dixon- "You don't even type anymore, you hit a button and your flight plan is downloaded into these cockpits {previously flight plans were reviewed and agreed upon by the Captain, with his physical signature required for approval}…Your weather data, your takeoff data, your landing data {data previously manually computed by the flight crew and reviewed and approved by the Captain} it's all automated…you don't even carry charts anymore…the hands on experience and Captain authority has changed dramatically."

In conversations with the R/I about a day in the life of a U.S. commercial airline pilot today, Captain Dixon provided meaningful insights, representative of many pilots today.  Captain Dixon is a "commuter," a pilot who has chosen for family or personal reasons to reside in a city that his airline does not have a pilot base (also known as a domicile).  In the case of Captain Dixon, and others as a result of merger-acquisition events, a pilot may live in a city that is a pilot base for his airline, have sufficient seniority to fly out of that base, but be contractually not allowed to fly out of that pilot base.  This restriction is commonly referred to as a "fence."

> Captain Dixon- "I am forced to commute which is something I find negative {Captain Dixon is not contractually able to fly as Captain from the pilot base located in his home city as a result of the Collective Bargaining Agreement agreed to by the pilot union and the company following the merger-acquisition event}…It's an impact on the body, it's an impact on the mind…it certainly has an impact on both physical and mental health…I'm disadvantaged in many ways…unlike others {that live in the city

of their awarded pilot base}, I have to worry about getting to work, and I have to worry about getting home from work…I will not risk getting there an hour or two before departure…I want to get there in plenty of time to review the crew, the airplane, certainly the weather, and any last minute changes."

In a follow-up conversation, Captain Dixon shared a lived experience about trying to return home after a "three-day trip." This experience details the particular of his individual experience, but is representative of the life of a commuter. Different, but substantively similar experiences, were observed by the R/I numerous times during participant observation periods.

> Captain Dixon- "I'd like to think I try to do a good job {trying to get home to his family}, but it gets the best of me…I would've liked to have been at my daughter's concert and I wasn't there…Not because of a weather event or something unavoidable…I landed on time and the last flight connection home was oversold…there was nothing I could do…now I'm buying a hotel room, spending money, and missing another important family event…I know it's my chosen life, it's my job…it just doesn't have to be this way."

The final "it just doesn't have to be this way" comment from Captain Dixon was not rhetorical.

> Captain Dixon- "I have a fellow Captain friend that was hired by the airline that acquired mine…that Captain lives in the city I am based…If I was not former {acquired airline} we could do a mutual trade on the computer ourselves in a minute and we could then each fly out of the city we live…Because I'm former {acquired airline}, I am prohibited this function…He could do it with any other Captain with the acquiring airline, but not with a former {acquired airline} pilot…we are treated very differently."

The merger-acquisition event experienced by Captain Dixon occurred over a decade from the time of this research. Time has not reduced the vitriol expressed by pilots, unions and managements across the industry and corroborated in participant observation. This sense was delivered by Captain Dixon regularly in our conversations over time. It was further corroborated regularly by participant observation contributors. Captain Dixon's comments long after a merger-acquisition event exemplify longitudinal permanence and impact on the

lived experience of unionized expert labor. Captain Dixon's memory regarding these events, as expressed to the R/I, was vivid.

> Captain Dixon- "I am required to belong to a completely dysfunctional union…their {the unions} attorneys are very arrogant…there is an everyday fight, it seems, between the union and the company…its been like that for many years…Unfortunately, the rank and file suffer for it…many years after the fact {acquiring airline} believes that they simply acquired and did not merge with {acquired airline} and therefore were entitled to impose contractual expert labor subsets, establishing and maintaining exclusionary pilot groups…it makes my work environment very difficult at times."

### 5.5.3 REFLECTION ON THE SENSE AND MEANING MAKING

Captain Dixon was a union official and activist. He did not dwell on this or make sure the R/I knew his position at the epicenter of this research. Captain Dixon is a person who sat at the table of crucial conversations about the practice of his profession following a merger-acquisition event. In particular, Captain Dixon was at the table in his capacity as a union representative during the merger-acquisition event of his former airline, and he has been integral in post-merger events as well.

In our reflection time, Captain Dixon was optimistic. His demeanor was calm, and his recollection of the facts of his and his fellow pilots lived experience was clear. During participant observation, the R/I regularly viewed Captain Dixon in conversation with fellow pilots. Routinely he was sought out and engaged with those seeking him. The uncertainty of the future of his and his fellow pilots' profession, and the terms and conditions of their professional practice, were regularly themes of these discussions that Captain Dixon freely shared with the R/I. Captain Dixon shared and the R/I observed many crucial conversations regarding change, seniority, and the relational agreements between former colleagues that were now adversaries. Inequality came up in our reflection conversations as well. There were reflections on fairness and discussions of the golden rule. He did not agree with the assessments and judgments placed on he and his fellow acquired airline pilots, but he understood their reality. His seniority was "destroyed."

> Captain Dixon- "I lost over a dozen years of seniority in the merger…I lost my job…I went from being able to fly the trips I wanted, to the street…I went back to the regional carrier of my employer to keep flying…otherwise, I would have just been

sitting at home, furloughed…not only couldn't I stand that…I couldn't afford it…I

had bills to pay."

In our sense and meaning making time, Captain Dixon was cautiously optimistic. The legal

actions taken by him and his fellow acquired pilots had won a key decision in Federal Court.

This decision did not correct the seniority "wrong," inflicted on them, as described to the

researcher by Captain Dixon and reiterated repeatedly in participant observation periods, but

it was a beginning. Captain Dixon held out hope that the legal system would see the injustice

they believed was placed on them and that "justice was possible." Captain Dixon shared that

the time the legal process may take may "be too late for many of his fellow pilots' careers,"

but it was "the only thing and the right thing to do."

> Captain Dixon- " I lost personally 12 years of seniority…I often joke, because I can
>
> joke, that the person immediately ahead of me on our current post-merger seniority list
>
> was in high school when I was flying an international wide-body aircraft to London…I
>
> find that always a good conversation piece…because of how the acquiring airline and
>
> its pilot union have created a seniority list with specific conditions and restrictions…it
>
> continues to build for a hostile work environment…I log on to the computer and the
>
> message says congratulations for completing 30 years of service…the seniority number
>
> the union and company agreed on does not recognize that service…I show up at the
>
> airplane and the First Officer has a seniority number 2,000 numbers senior to me and it
>
> comes up…I'm senior to you, and you're in my seat, I should be the Captain…I turn
>
> around and say, let me see your ID badge…it says here you were hired 14 years after
>
> me…if you have an issue I'm happy to get on the phone and call the union and
>
> straighten this out…and so it builds this animosity and we see this many times over and
>
> over where a former acquired pilot is working with a legacy acquiring pilot as First
>
> Officer and the First Officer is unwilling to understand that his Captain has a seniority
>
> number assigned by the union that is not only wrong…it makes no sense."

Because of the intensity of Captain Dixon's response to seniority in our sense and meaning

making time, I asked Captain Dixon on follow-up to share his thoughts on a solution to this

repetitive issue raised regularly not only by Captain Dixon, but universally by contributors to

this research.

> Captain Dixon- "I would be very proactive toward a National Seniority List…I think it
>
> would make us not only have more unity in time, I mean in the beginning there would

be some rough edges, but I see more unity amongst pilots with a National Seniority List…less arguments, less discrimination…less and less problems as time goes on with any future mergers and acquisitions and what might happen for employment opportunities for pilots…a National Seniority List would be globally positive.

**Table 5.7  CASE 4: INDIVIDUAL ANALYSIS – KEY EMERGING THEMES**

| **The Early Years Interviews** **Focused Life History - Identity Formation** | | |
|---|---|---|
| EMERGING THEMES | LINKAGE TO THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| Wow experience! First impression was transformative; Airline as "home;" "I can do this…I love doing this" | "Airline pilots see themselves as calm, mature individuals…who never panic if things go wrong…who leave nothing to chance…the publics acceptance of this special mystique" …is a basis of their identity (Hopkins, 1982, p. 1) | RQ #1: Impressions of flying as a life are cemented early; RQ #1: Belonging and community as identity constructs |
| **The Major Airline Years Interviews** **Particular Lived Experience - Identity Negotiation, Threat, Loss and Reformation** | | |
| EMERGING THEMES | LINKAGE TO THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| Technologies role in altering cockpit and identity dynamics; Adaptation to change…commuting as a norm; From "union activist" to "union critic"; "hostile work environment" | "between the double prongs of vital inner need and inexorable demand, the still experimenting individual may become the victim of a transitory extreme identity consciousness" (Erikson, 1980, p. 127) | RQ #2: negotiation of a possible self, but not a true self (Ibarra, 1999); RQ #3: the collective effect of professional life in a "hostile work environment" |
| **The Sense and Meaning Making Interviews** **Making Sense - Seeking Meaning and Being** | | |
| EMERGING THEMES | LINKAGE TO THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| Litigation as path to identity reconciliation; Understanding of seniority as sacrosanct; New regulation as "justice" | "Power-as-domination…it is important to understand if and how individuals who are dominated can resist" (Pierce and Dougherty, 2002, p. 136) | RQ #3: Requesting outside assistance for intractable identity negotiation conflict (Fiol et al., 2009) |

**Table 5.8**     CASE 4: SYNTHESES OF FIRST ORDER OF ANALYSIS

| Pre-Merger-Acquisition Event | |
|---|---|
| **Expectations** | • World travel...upward professional mobility<br>• Professional status and recognition |
| **Experience** | • Band of brothers...it was a home<br>• Loss of 3-man crew...automation as a source of complacency |
| **Post-Merger-Acquisition Event** | |
| **Lived Experience Themes** | • Commuting as reality<br>• Destruction of seniority system |
| **Reflective Themes** | • Litigation as a source of hope<br>• Problem solving as a primary need of the profession |

## 5.6   CASE 5

### 5.6.1   FOCUSED LIFE HISTORY

Captain Evans's path to becoming a major airline Captain began with tough decisions. Captain Evans was "nurtured along by loving parents and gracious mentors."  He was in a university professional pilot program earning both his college degree and his pilot licenses. He was very interested in becoming a military pilot following graduation, but struggled to reconcile the time he would have to obligate to military service with the very beginning of an airline hiring cycle he envisioned.

> Captain Evans- "I went to Pensacola {starting point for U.S. Navy Flight School} with my Dad and we spoke with them…I thought, ok, I'm going to be 22 and the airlines are just starting to hire…if I miss this window, I may be 30 years old when I get out of the military…I just really wanted to be an airline pilot…I went the civilian route."

Captain Evans had a "flying job" at an airport near his university and was due for his normal "6-month check-ride."  A check-ride, as the name implies, is a flight conducted with an FAA examiner or a pilot designated by the FAA to check pilots.  As Captain Dixon previously detailed, during this flight the pilot is required to demonstrate proficiency and currency for the standard of his relevant FAA pilot's license.  Check-rides are required by the FAA on a regular and recurring basis.  Captain Evans had already taken and passed his ATP (Airline Transport Pilot) written exam, required before a pilot can take the oral and practical

examinations for an ATP license and was aware that his check-ride could simultaneously count as his ATP license check-ride. Captain Evans was 22 years of age (23 is the minimum eligibility age for an ATP) and took and passed his ATP on the first attempt. His license was "restricted" until his 23rd birthday, one month later.

This motivation, to seek and be awarded an ATP license at the earliest possible time, in lieu of pursuing military flying, came full circle when Captain Evans was 24 years of age. At 24, he was hired by a major U.S. airline.

> Captain Evans- "I traveled the country, knocking on airline hiring office
> doors…afterwards, I received a letter from one of them asking me to come for an
> interview…at age 24, I was a major airline pilot."

The new-hire experience was "so impressive" for Captain Evans at his initial airline. There was "immense detail" in the ground school training, and he stated he felt "so confident when I became a flight engineer that I really felt I could have gone back to ground school and taught." The Flight Engineer (F/E) position, as described by Captain Evans, was typically the starting position for an airline pilot back in the days of analog airplanes where aircraft systems such a air conditioning, pressurization, fuel balancing and hydraulics and electrical systems were largely managed manually. In less than a year from being hired, Captain Evans was laid off as a result of the Arab oil embargo. His layoff would last five and a half years. The Arab oil embargo affected all of the airlines, "everyone was laying off." The idea of just moving to another carrier "was non-existent." Captain Evans's life had been "in a steady upward trajectory." His life was about success, accomplishment and goal attainment. For the first time in his life Captain Evans was confronted with an event that he had no control or influence, he was a pilot without a flying job. As Captain Evans shared with the R/I, there was "a very weird sense of loss." In participant observation periods, contributors to this research shared not only his kind qualities, but also his significant flying skills. As one participant observation contributor made clear, Captain Evans "is a great pilot." Without regard to the person Captain Evans was and is, and without regard to his flying skills, he was laid off.

In unions, seniority determines employment; the last person hired is the first person laid off, regardless of skill, human qualities or experience. Captain Evans was keenly aware of the role of seniority in unionized expert labor. He worked various jobs "to keep himself afloat." His focus, as stated to the R/I, was to return to the airline and "the life he loved."

**5.6.2  THE DETAILS OF LIVED EXPERIENCE**

Following his five and a half year layoff, Captain Evans was recalled by his airline.  His seniority grew and, approximately fifteen years from his original hire date, he was awarded a Captain bid.  After several years as a Captain, his airline was acquired in a merger-acquisition event.

> Captain Evans- "The dream I once had was gone…the greed {of the acquiring airline} became a nightmare…to not be respected, not appreciated for my experience and expertise, not valued for my time in service…it was really difficult to take…the litmus test in all life behavior to me is kind of the golden rule…I'm sure that 90-95% of the pilots {at the acquiring airline} could look in the mirror and say I wouldn't want that done to me…and they did it to us without hesitation…and to this day feel justified in doing so."

Captain Evans made clear to the R/I that union membership is a requirement of employment at each of the major airlines in the U.S.  There are different forms of membership.  Captain Evans went on to share with the R/I that a pilot could be a "full dues paying member," a "dissenting member," or a "conscientious objector."  Only the full members are eligible to vote in union elections.  The dissenting members are not allowed to vote or access their union website, they pay slightly reduced union dues (approximately 15% less), but ostensibly receive full representation (contract negotiations, grievance representation, everything except voting and having a voice on the union website).  Captain Evans detailed each of these nuances of expert labor unionism and concluded by informing the R/I that he was a dissenting member of his new union following the merger-acquisition event.

> Captain Evans- " I don't think of {the acquired airline union} as a union…It's more a fraternity…They seem to violate every principle of unionism…The root of the word union, being unity…There is no unity when one group is treated differently…One child different from the other child, you know, how well will the child that's not treated as well react...What will they grow up to be?"

When asked specifically about the impact on his professional life following the merger-acquisition event, Captain Evans focused on the union's role in the seniority integration of the two pilot groups.  Captain Evans made clear that when he began his airline career he had "real loyalty" to his airline, now with the new merged carrier he had "absolutely none."  The company "washed their hands" of the seniority issue and let the union "sort it out."

Captain Evans- "They {the acquiring airline union} took my job away from me…I was an international wide-body Captain…If I stayed to age 65 {mandatory retirement age for a U.S. airline pilot}, which I really don't want to do, I would never be senior enough to get my old job back…even if enough pilots retired, I am forbidden to fly international wide-body Captain by the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) …I'll never get my job back…I don't think it's fair, but they {the legacy pilots from the acquiring airline} say it's fair… they say we are lucky to have a job…We should have more unity amongst pilots, and the profession would be better."

The job of being an airline pilot had changed over Captain Evans's time and most of it has not been "fun," as Captain Evans reported.

Captain Evans- "There's so much more bureaucracy than there ever used to be…the security thing is difficult…sometimes they'll {TSA} take you out…you're subject to greater screening and then they x-ray your bag…I think to myself, you know, I don't need a weapon to hijack an airplane…the whole thing is just ludicrous…and then, flying the airplane is not…it used to be about flying…you used to have to memorize pitch and flap settings…and speeds and power settings…and now it's kind of any idiot computer programmer, analyzer can just sit and observe the system…I don't feel as much like I'm flying an airplane as much as I am kind of a computer operator."

### 5.6.3 REFLECTION ON THE SENSE AND MEANING MAKING

As a result of the openness and trust built with Captain Evans over our many conversations, the R/I had the opportunity to sit down at dinner with Captain Evans and his wife and listen to a husband and wife describe their shared airline and life journey. This was an important experience to more fully understand the being of a member of unionized expert labor. Listening to Captain Evans and his wife's story contributed social context to making sense and meaning of the lived experience of Captain Evans.

Captain Evans's wife was previously a flight attendant. She understands the airline life. They have been married over 20 years and shared with the R/I their lived experience of plans made and undone due to ever changing schedules, meals missed, holidays shared in a hotel rather than at home because of Captain Evans's flying schedule, and the unequal and unfair experience of their post-merger life. When we sat down at dinner they smiled at one another, were respectful of the other, and repeatedly asked the other for confirmation of their statements to the R/I. They were very much at ease. They were comfortable discussing their

political views and this provided further context to our time together. They felt strongly about the importance of workers and the solidarity that workers should embrace with one another.

This led Captain Evans and his wife to share their feelings on inequality and the merger-acquisition event that had changed their lives. They did not focus on just "problem identification" about the merger, rather they spent the bulk of their time with the R/I focused on "problem solving" how could the "unfair" situation they were "living every day" be "fixed." Our conversation ranged from legislative initiatives to union initiatives and concluded discussing the legal options that should be considered to address their post-merger realities.

The dinner with Captain Evans and his wife was the beginning of a valuable reflection time with Captain Evans.

> Captain Evans- "I still think of {the union} as a necessary evil…I don't think we would have made the money we made without {the union}…I think we needed them and in spite of their imperfections I had no idea it would turn as corrupt as it did under {the leader of the national union}…there's a real attitude toward the {acquired airline} pilots within {the national union} and {the acquiring airline} union…maybe it's just born out of a little jealousy…you know, {acquired airline} was the airline to the stars…we flew around the world…the biggest body of water the {acquiring airline} flew over was Lake Michigan for God's sake…their {the acquiring airline} jealousy has turned to petty hatred…I went to the {acquired airline vs. union} trial and I saw {the leader of the national union} absolutely lie on the stand."

This time with Captain Evans provided the basis for our sense and meaning making discussions. He began by sharing an experience with air traffic controller.

> Captain Evans- "I think there is an air of superiority amongst the {acquiring airline} pilots…right before 9/11, I was backing out of the gate at {the departure airport} and we had an FAA air traffic controller in the jump seat {extra seat in the cockpit}… his boss had routed him on {the acquiring airline}…the controller asked his boss if he could be routed on {the future acquired airline}…his boss said sure…we both {Captain and First Officer} asked why…the FAA air traffic controller said, do you know what we call {the acquiring airline} at the air traffic control center…{a very disparaging name}…we laughed, of course, but now it makes so much sense."

Captain Evans was able to articulate life-altering events in a calm and poised manner.  He went on in our sensemaking discussions to describe how relationships had "died" with pilots and managers he had previously considered friends.  He described to the R/I how he found it difficult to watch the reactions of his fellow pilots at times.  Their capacity to deal with and accept change was often a difficult experience, as reported by Captain Evans.

His sense of being has been dramatically altered following his merger-acquisition event.  Technology played a part, as Captain Evans conveyed, but it was his professional standing and limitations on his professional practice that were the centerpieces of his concern.  These concerns, as shared with the R/I, ranged from having to commute and all the logistics that entailed, to the flying schedule he was able to hold with his new integrated seniority, to the flying to which he was now restricted, specifically, no international flying.

Making sense of his lived experience requires further change.  First, Captain Evans shared that it makes sense to continue litigation to regain the "rightful" seniority rights for himself and his fellow pilots.  Second, he believes that unionism needs a "rebirth" for unionized expert labor.  Union practices, political support, and legislative initiatives are all necessary to "rebirth" unionized expert labor.

> Captain Evans- "I pride myself on being open-minded…I may not like what I hear first comes out of a person's mouth or I see written in print, but, you know, I just don't go off half cocked and just, you know, have an attitude about it…what is it I don't understand…what is this person trying to say…is there a hidden meaning here…is there something I don't understand…and so with that open-mindedness I took my anger to the integration {of the two airlines' pilots}…not the integration-the segregation of the {acquired airline} pilots…and I indeed think it was segregation…they put us all in a leper colony {the pilot base all acquired pilots were required to be based}…if we were African-American or Jews or women…you know they never would have done that…when I try to explain this to people not in the industry they are appalled…seniority defines you."

Captain Evans concluded our sense and meaning making time with his belief that he and his fellow acquired pilots had been dramatically affected by their merger-acquisition event, but so were all employees of the acquired airline.  Other employees lost seniority too.  Some lost their jobs, some had to move, and some just retired rather than endure the merger-acquisition

experience.  Captain Evans made clear to the R/I that "pain, change and a significant alteration in identity" was central to his merger-acquisition event.

**Table 5.9**    Case 5: Individual Analysis – Key Emerging Themes

| The Early Years Interviews<br>Focused Life History - Identity Formation | | |
|---|---|---|
| EMERGING<br>THEMES | LINKAGE TO<br>THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO<br>RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| "loving parents;"<br><br>life experience as a "steady upward trajectory;"<br><br>the life he wanted and "loved" | "an individual life cycle cannot be adequately understood apart from the social context in which it comes to fruition"<br><br>(Erikson, 1998, p. 114) | RQ #1: Recurring theme of positive and loving home life as foundation |

| The Major Airline Years Interviews<br>Particular Lived Experience - Identity Negotiation, Threat, Loss and Reformation | | |
|---|---|---|
| EMERGING<br>THEMES | LINKAGE TO<br>THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO<br>RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| "so impressive" to train at a major airline;<br><br>the dream "I once had was gone;"<br><br>"greed became a nightmare;"<br><br>the "root of unionism…is unity;"<br><br>flying now as "computer operator" | "Identity instability…they are cognitively and emotionally consumed by the loss, stagnating in their inability to let go of the old self and/or to embrace the new and changed work self"<br><br>(Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly, 2014, p. 68) | RQ #2: the understanding of self is illuminated by "incongruent experiences" viewed by others<br><br>(Meister et al., 2014, p. 489);<br><br>RQ #2: The confluence of changes to professional and practice anchors, leads to clarity of understanding of being |

| The Sense and Meaning Making Interviews<br>Making Sense - Seeking Meaning and Being | | |
|---|---|---|
| EMERGING<br>THEMES | LINKAGE TO<br>THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO<br>RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| Inequality as reality;<br><br>"golden-rule gone;"<br><br>adaptation to change as professional reality challenge;<br><br>need for "rebirth" of unionism";<br><br>"segregation" as union practice | The salience of one's identity changes and responds to peripheral events presented to them<br><br>(Mead and Morris, 1934);<br><br>the identity of employees following an M/A event "is imputed from expressed values, but the interpretations of those values is not necessarily fixed or stable"<br><br>(Gioia et al., 2000, p. 65);<br><br>new, and very different organizational constructs create a new dimension for psychological contracts in the workplace<br><br>(Rousseau, 1995) | RQ #3: M/A events create a disruptive identity equilibrium environment<br><br>(Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly, 2014) |

**Table 5.10  CASE 5: SYNTHESES OF FIRST ORDER OF ANALYSIS**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Pre-Merger-Acquisition Event** ||
| **Expectations** | • Pursue the life he loved<br>• Vision to command |
| **Experience** | • Strong relationships with peers, management and union<br>• Superlative training<br>• Dream come true |
| **Post-Merger-Acquisition Event** ||
| **Lived Experience Themes** | • Greed as reality…professional and personal<br>• Lack of control and influence to practice<br>• Union as a necessary evil…dissenting membership<br>• Death of relationships |
| **Reflective Themes** | • M/A reality is pain, change and a significant identity alteration<br>• Unionism needs a rebirth<br>• TSA as instrument to degrade profession |

## 5.7  CASE 6

### 5.7.1  FOCUSED LIFE HISTORY

Captain Fisher grew up in a small dairy town in the Midwestern U.S. His love for this area of the country influenced his college and airline decision. He attended a highly ranked private university on a Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) scholarship, entering military flight school following graduation. His expressed "love of flying" began on a fishing trip with his Dad.

> Captain Fisher- "We were headed fishing way up in the woods and flew in a little twin-engine airplane to get there…they put me in the right seat {copilots seat} of the airplane…there was nowhere else to sit…the pilot said, here, take the controls…I loved it!...From that day forward, it was clear to me that the very best thing you could be was to be a pilot."

Captain Fisher pursued an airline career following his active duty military obligation. The Vietnam conflict was winding down, Captain Fisher believed he had received the best flight training available from the military, and he was ready and eager to follow the path of his military pilot colleagues. He filled out just one airline application, received an interview, and learned quickly about the group norms and standards of becoming a commercial airline pilot.

The military had provided Captain Fisher a surrounding of discipline and structure. Entering civilian life was a distinct change.

> Captain Fisher- "I got the call, yeah come down and see us…I get off the bus, walk in, and realize that I'm standing in the interview office in sport slacks and an ultra suede jacket, and everyone else has their interview suit on…after returning home I get the call…I didn't make the cut."

Captain Fisher got the "gouge", i.e., an understanding of the way things should be done, and began to apply to other airlines. He received an interview with another airline and, in the interview process, received an urgent call from his wife.

> Captain Fisher- "You got a call from {airline} and they want to interview you…they say, if you come down you'll be hired…that's great honey, but these guys {the airline he was currently interviewing} called first, and they are being great to me."

This life history, shared with the R/I, was poignant because the airline Captain Fisher was completing the interview process with would ultimately be involved in a merger-acquisition event with the airline that had precipitated his wife's call decades earlier. This event, the airline Captain Fisher chose to begin his airline career, may have altered his merger-acquisition experience substantially. Captain Fisher shared that commitment and allegiance were common in unionized expert labor before industry consolidation. Captain Fisher shared with the R/I that his commitment and allegiance to "go to the dance with the one that asks you first" was not uncommon. Captain Fisher recounts his initial airline lived experience with pride and joy.

> Captain Fisher- "They had very, very good training at {his initial hire airline}…there were very high standards and lots of pressure, but they were very supportive…I really got into it…everybody did…the camaraderie, the guys…it was awesome!"

Captain Fisher reiterated that the "camaraderie with your fellow pilots that is developed in both the military and the airlines is the thing I love the most about being a pilot." As Captain Fisher continued to share the importance of allegiance and commitment, the R/I probed his sense of commitment and allegiance to his airline and his union versus his profession.

> Captain Fisher- "I do feel deep down I have a greater commitment to my profession and those that are my professional colleagues…I have to admit that I do have that in my heart and soul, that's where I believe my allegiance is…having said that, I also do

have a strong commitment and feeling of allegiance to the company I work for…there's no question about that…I can complain about them…but in point of fact there is a great deal of professional gratitude to the company to make this airline work…truth be known, you know, I don't think we {the pilots} get the credit for being the actual key to the operation…that is something we {the pilots} all feel together, but it's not often really articulated…certainly not often used in a way that results in having leverage necessary to accomplish what we would like for our families…I think it's partly because of the way the companies have all been very cagey in this acquiescence to the union and the whole seniority system…there's absolutely no portability for our profession…it's just impossible…if my airline went on strike, why the hell would any other airline support that strike…all of the other airline CEO's know that…in the old days when the mutual aid pack was in force, it was different…today, managements have been so effective at keeping us, you know, at each other's throats, so to speak."

Captain Fisher concluded our initial life history discussion by stating, "I do feel a tremendous amount of gratitude for the amazing career that I've had; I've never had to go through even a single day of furlough." Captain Fisher's life had been "blessed," but a merger-acquisition event was just ahead after two decades at his original airline.

### 5.7.2 THE DETAILS OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

Following a merger-acquisition event between {acquired airline} and the {acquiring airline}, Captain Fisher had to go through transition training to the new merged airline standards.

> Captain Fisher- "At {acquired airline}, the approach was to help you learn as much as you can to fly this airplane…to make you successful in completing the training…that wasn't the case at {acquiring airline}…they had instructors that weren't line pilots…the relationship of the company and union and how, together, it arrived at this, was a give up in my opinion…and not a good thing."

As Captain Fisher reported, transition training {ground school, simulator, and line training involving written, oral, and practical proficiency examinations} is but one of the experiences that contribute to negotiating a new identity following a merger-acquisition event. The union representation was the same for both airlines in this merger-acquisition event, but the dynamics of the role of the union changed from Captain Fisher's initial union experience. When Captain Fisher began at {acquired airline} he stated that he "didn't even really know or understand what it meant that he would be a union member, but instantly was brought up to

speed by union officials and fellow pilot members on what a good deal it is and how important it is to be, you know, to be in the union."

> Captain Fisher- "At {acquired airline} the union was extremely strong…we weren't always in conflict with the company, but I always felt we had some power, some leverage, some ability to control our contracts…you know, the day to day, everything that goes along with being out there and doing the job…I always had a strong feeling about that…after the merger with {acquiring airline} that sense of the union being a strong player has really diminished greatly…economic forces have just vastly overwhelmed our ability to control our own destiny…that's been a huge change."

In a discussion with the merger committee chairman about the seniority integration, following the merger-acquisition event, the chairman told Captain Fisher, "the good news is you'll be able to afford to send your kids to college; the bad news is you won't be home when they come home for Christmas."

When asked about his post merger commitment to his union, his airline, or his profession, Captain Fisher responded without hesitation, "certainly my profession." This was a different position than Captain Fisher expressed in earlier conversation with the R/I; conversations that focused on his pre-merger airline life. Continuing to explore Captain Fisher's post-merger feelings, Captain Fisher further articulated his feeling of a lack of gratitude from either the union or the new merged airline. "This merger-acquisition event would never have happened if it weren't for us {unionized expert labor}."

Another ingredient in negotiating a new professional identity, following a merger-acquisition event, is the particulars of the new professional standards. Highlighting the R/I's time with Captain Fisher was his focus on safety where he addressed the new safety standards. These comments resulted from R/I inquiry about what traits would exemplify unprofessional behavior.

> Captain Fisher- "Who would get to the point where we are now {a Captain at a major U.S. airline} and be cavalier about things that are critically important to safety…that makes me crazy, but I suppose there are people that just have a much more risk tolerant view of the world…I don't {have a risk tolerant view of the world}…these are bad characteristics…thanks to the union in large part, the ASAP {Aviation Safety Action Program, an identity restricted program to report operational events outside of

normal operations} are effective in improving safety…and trying to mitigate some of
the high level of punitive action {from the company and/or the FAA} that can occur."

Another particular that Captain Fisher articulated in compelling fashion was the "downside"
of the Captain's authority that has evolved in the U.S. airline industry.  Captain Fisher
recognized the increasing imbalance in responsibility versus authority that has taken place
over his three decades as an airline pilot.

> Captain Fisher- "In my 30 years the Captain authority relationship has evolved…the
> FAA has increased the amount of things you are responsible for…and so has the
> company, and not kept in concert the authority to take care of that ever increasing load
> of responsibility."

As a senior Captain who has less than 5 years to mandatory retirement, Captain Fisher offered
several thoughts now that his merger-acquisition event was behind him and retirement could
be seen just on the horizon.  He was reflective and philosophical with the R/I as he shared his
thoughts on his lived experience.  Ever the Captain, Captain Fisher's focus was on problem
solving, a recurring theme throughout the R/I's experience with the research population.

> Captain Fisher- "Given all the water that's gone under the bridge, I would say that the
> whole idea of a National Seniority List would benefit a lot of people and eliminate a
> lot of griping and fighting and in-fighting and lawsuits and stuff that certainly have
> transpired…I have frankly been a little more focused on the end of my career which is
> really selfish and not terribly forward thinking…what I would like to see happen is an
> awakening among my fellow professionals that would include the study and hopefully
> the acceptance of a National Seniority List…this list would hopefully lead to unity
> among the various pilot groups represented by one union to achieve a greater power as
> professionals…leverage would be improved and therefore the professional pilot is
> compensated in a way that is commensurate with his contribution to the industry…I
> would like to see this for young people…I hesitate to even speculate as to the
> likelihood that such a system could happen…I kind of know a little bit about the
> infighting even within my own union for pilots to finally get together and say, hey,
> enough's enough…we need to be heard nationally…that would be a vision I'd like to
> see."

### 5.7.3 REFLECTION ON THE SENSE AND MEANING MAKING

Captain Fisher provided an intimate understanding and meaningful contribution to the research questions being explored in this research. On reflection, it is noteworthy that Captain Fisher's contribution was provided with genuine compassion for everyone involved. In light of the phenomenon being explored this seems consistent with one of the reasons to take this research on in the first place– exploring passionate people and issues passionate to them.

Captain Fisher's compassion is noteworthy because, unlike other contributors, he regularly shared with the R/I both sides of an issue and did so without prejudice to either position. Captain Fisher's merger-acquisition experience was not without contention, but the parties to his merger-acquisition event displayed less vitriol than others observed by the R/I. The parties to Captain Fisher's merger-acquisition event strongly advocated their respective positions, but in the end concluded "enough's enough" and were able to move on and work together. Captain Fisher shared his lived experience of transition and adaptation with the R/I in a calm and considerate manner. The relational experiences Captain Fisher shared with the R/I, with his fellow pilots, his union and his airline were important determinants for Captain Fisher's understanding of who he was following this significant organizational change and the role he would be able to contribute following his merger-acquisition event.

The R/I benefitted from participant observation time with both of the respective pilot groups, the acquiring and the acquired pilot group, of Captain Fisher's merger-acquisition experience. Each pilot group, in discussion with the R/I, shared that they had been involved in multiple merger-acquisition events prior to their major airline merger-acquisition event. These events involved smaller, more regional carriers, but many of the same phenomena were experienced.

In our sense and meaning making discussions, Captain Fisher offered that these experiences could have played a role in this relatively successful merger-acquisition event, when compared with other airline mergers of this research. As Captain Fisher stated, "it was not our first." He understood the nuances of his airline's merger-acquisition event, and he understood the motivations and interests of both sides of the transaction. Captain Fisher had clear and strong feelings, but underlying his candor was an enduring compassion.

In sense and meaning making discussion with Captain Fisher he shared his views of the industry and the profession in light of his lived experience and his vision for the future.

Captain Fisher- "I have been saying for many years, don't go near it {the airlines} with a 50 foot pole, but things are changing…the simple statistical reality of the number of guys retiring in a relatively short time…there's going to be an immense demand for pilots…certainly bodes well for the young guy who might be thinking about it…I would say go and get your ratings…first of all it's flying…forget about the airlines…flying is the greatest thing you can do period…so, if a kid wants to fly I'd say absolutely fly…it's a great life."

Near the end of our sense and meaning making time Captain Fisher summed up his feelings.

Captain Fisher- "It's been kind of abysmal through all of this merger and bankruptcy and post-bankruptcy and post-merger era I have experienced over the last 30 years…the advice I'd give a guy is to be very careful about choosing the airline that he goes to and not do what I did and put one application out…make the best choice he can based on what he's offered and then get involved in the union and stay involved…make your voice heard."

**Table 5.11** CASE 6: INDIVIDUAL ANALYSIS – KEY EMERGING THEMES

| The Early Years Interviews Focused Life History - Identity Formation | | |
|---|---|---|
| EMERGING THEMES | LINKAGE TO THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| "love of flying;" The "camaraderie" was "awesome" | "collective identity represents aspects of self that have been integrated from the social system" (Schwartz, 2001, p. 38) | RQ #1: personal identity and collective identity are distinct, but both are necessary to understand one's self |
| **The Major Airline Years Interviews** **Particular Lived Experience - Identity Negotiation, Threat, Loss and Reformation** | | |
| EMERGING THEMES | LINKAGE TO THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| Pilots as key to the operation; Fabulous, challenging training center…very supportive environment; Management's effectiveness at pitting employees against one another; Relationships changed; Altered professional standards | It is important to understand the "legitimacy dynamics when a delegitimizing event occurs at one of the parties during post-merger integration" (Sinha et al., 2015, p. 170) | RQ #2: delegitimization of one group following an M/A event creates identity threat and compartmentalization of the affected group; RQ #3: efforts to advance legitimacy can be self-defeating and spotlight tumult of the integration process |
| **The Sense and Meaning Making Interviews** **Making Sense - Seeking Meaning and Being** | | |
| EMERGING THEMES | LINKAGE TO THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| Increasing "responsibilities" …reduced "authority;" "Collectivism needed…a National Seniority List;" "Get involved in your union, stay involved…make your voice heard" | "The negotiation of identity in merging is a dialectic process in which managerial identity regulation aimed at enhancing convergence among groups may be undermined both by groups' attempts to reestablish differences and by a countervailing managerial need" (Langley et al., 2012, pp. 135-136) | RQ #2: the imbalance of responsibility and authority goes to a conflict of basis values for a licensed professional; RQ #3: in tumult pilots go beyond problem identification and seek problem solving |

**Table 5.12   CASE 6: SYNTHESES OF FIRST ORDER OF ANALYSIS**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Pre-Merger-Acquisition Event** | |
| **Expectations** | • Camaraderie…great human experience<br>• Great training |
| **Experience** | • Incredible training…prepared the pilot to succeed<br>• Gratitude…never furloughed<br>• Human experience awesome |
| **Post-Merger-Acquisition Event** | |
| **Lived Experience Themes** | • Reduction in union voice and clout…corporate decision making as driver<br>• Training standards relaxed…training and simulator checks by non-pilots |
| **Reflective Themes** | • Ever-increasing responsibilities, but no change in Captain authority<br>• Get involved in union early, have a voice, make your feelings known |

## 5.8   CASE 7

### 5.8.1   FOCUSED LIFE HISTORY

Captain Griffin was a service academy graduate with a degree in mathematics and a Vietnam combat veteran who retired from the military with combined active and reserve service.  A minimum of 20 years of combined active and reserve service is required to receive retirement pay and benefits from the military.  His father was also a military officer and pilot, and it was his father who inspired him to become a pilot.  Service, follow-through, commitment and allegiance are cornerstones of Captain Griffin's upbringing and life history.  Captain Griffin made clear to the R/I that "this is who I am."

Captain Griffin completed his F/E written and F/E certificate as well as his ATP prior to applying for a major airline job.  His major airline career was interrupted, however, in Captain Griffin's first year with his major airline.

> Captain Griffin- "Being hired by the major airline of my choice was a dream come true…I was flying for a Flag Carrier {an airline with international routes}, domiciled near my home, with the potential to be an international wide-body Captain one day…I remember as a flight engineer flying down the Potomac river into Washington, it was a moonlit night, I thought man, this is the best that's ever been…while still on

probation {airline pilots first year of employment is a probationary period} I was laid off …it was the Arab oil embargo, the economy was bad and jobs were scarce…I looked for flying jobs everywhere…it was a terrible, eye opening experience…I eventually returned to active duty in the military for the 5 years I was laid off."

Returning to flying the combat aircraft he had previously flown in the military, Captain Griffin was able to continue flying, be near his home and family, and be selected for a leadership position in his military squadron.

This short and rocky beginning to Captain Griffin's major airline career changed his initial view of flying for a major airline from "a dream come true."  In the initial interviews with the R/I Captain Griffin made clear his view that the "fraternity of aviators," "the comradeship," and certainly "the desire, respect and enthusiasm" to practice "this great profession" had eroded.  To contrast his "dream" with his reality, Captain Griffin recounted an experience early on in military flight school.

> Captain Griffin- "I remember the old, senior flight instructor putting his arm around me and saying "let's go fly," …it was very special to me…there was a bond, a kinship…those days are gone."

Captain Griffin had hoped to translate his values and military kinship to his airline life.  In his first year, and being on probation, he didn't feel he knew enough to "chime in on what was good or bad as far as a contract, working relations and so on."  Following his five and a half year furlough, Captain Griffin felt he "had some things to argue about."

### 5.8.2   THE DETAILS OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

The underlying attributes of Captain Griffin were honed in his upbringing, solidified in his military experience, and became integral in his professional practice as a commercial airline Captain.  Following his merger-acquisition event, safety was a key issue, in his new and altered flying life, as reported by Captain Griffin.

> Captain Griffin- "Safely transporting your passengers is the job…safety is not a small or simple word…I tell First Officers I don't want you to show me how much you know, how well you can fly, how much you can press the envelope {flying at the operating limits of the airplane}…F/O's at  the acquiring airline routinely press the envelope."

It is the Captain who sets the "tone" in a cockpit. The idea that a First Officer, of their own accord, would press the flight envelope when it was their leg was described as "anathema" by Captain Griffin. Captain Griffin described the customary process of determining which pilot would fly a particular leg. The Captain and First Officer routinely agree to alternate or divide the legs they fly; it is the Captain's ultimate decision as to which leg(s) the First Officer will fly. Captain Griffin reported to the R/I that the selection of legs was an issue when he was paired with First Officer's of the acquiring airline following his merger-acquisition event. In lived experience discussions with the R/I, Captain Griffin shared the new dynamic of having to negotiate which pilot would fly which legs. When it was the First Officer's leg, Captain Griffin again described the routine envelope testing by them without any discussion or request for approval to fly at the limits of the airplane.

Captain Griffin's transformation (reduction) of command authority and alteration (reduction) of autonomy in his professional practice was never more clear than his lived experience with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). TSA are the federal, uniformed employees who inspect passengers and their luggage at airport concourse entry points.

The TSA is a federal agency that came about following the events of 9/11 and provided employment to many people under the federal umbrella of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Their job is to screen people and luggage to determine their eligibility to proceed to a flight. Captain Griffin had regular contact with TSA personnel and had, on several occasions, been "pulled aside" for his interactions with them. He viewed TSA personnel as "an affront to his command authority and autonomy as a licensed professional."

Captain Griffin was scheduled for his regular simulator check, a recurring evaluation of normal, abnormal and emergency procedures conducted in a highly sophisticated flight simulator. Appearing as his examiner was a person who also worked for the TSA as a second job. The person had just completed a shift at TSA, was still in their TSA uniform, and informed Captain Griffin that he would be his examiner for his simulator check. This practice of having personnel other than full-time airline pilots perform various training center functions was not uncommon, as reported by Captain Griffin.

> Captain Griffin- "The TSA guy was tired, not engaged, and had a real attitude to
> boot…after a few questions I'm thinking this guy is a moron, and not a real pilot at
> all…I wanted a good and professional experience…I turned to him and said this isn't
> happening… we're done here…The TSA guy says, just get out of here…and I left."

Captain Griffin, in follow-up discussion, indicated he did not receive support from either his airline or his union. He thought about "fighting it," but with less than a year to mandatory retirement age he concluded he "had had enough." Captain Griffin retired. The threats to his identity were of such frequency and magnitude that he was unwilling to subordinate his identity further. As reported to the R/I, the TSA had altered his sense of command authority and autonomous practice every time he went to work; the TSA employee, performing a very different task, had infringed on his training. The First Officers of the acquiring airline also regularly tested Captain Griffin's understanding of command authority and autonomous practice. These ideographic examples, offered by Captain Griffin, coupled with his degradation of recognized seniority following his merger-acquisition event collectively contributed to Captain Griffin's conclusion to retire because "it wasn't worth it anymore."

It is possible to conclude that this case was an anomaly in research parlance. During a participant observation period at a very busy U.S. airport, the R/I observed with a complete flight crew from a different airline and at a different airport than Captain Griffin's experience a corroborating event. Captain Griffin was not a part of this observation period. This event not only corroborated the lived experience of Captain Griffin, but also added further context to the "new world order" as described by Captain Griffin. Significant industry change in the turbulent post-9/11 environment of commercial aviation, as reported by Captain Griffin, added further context and impact to the critical professional attributes of autonomy and self-regulation for commercial airline pilots.

One morning, a TSA agent initiated a conversation with a passenger going through his security checkpoint. Quickly, the conversation went to President Obama and "what a loser he is." The TSA agent stated: "he (the President of the United States) never should have been elected." The TSA agent went on to state, "and certainly never should have been reelected." These comments were not made in a hushed tone, but rather a loud and emphatic voice.

The passenger shared his agreement with the TSA agent's assessment and stated, "I hate the guy."

The TSA agent visually nodded his concurrence and said "Obama's what's wrong with this country, I'd say more, but I'm working."

The passenger responded, "I understand."

Following the R/I through security this morning was a complete flight crew, witnessing and hearing all of this. The two pilots were quite forthcoming, and engaged immediately in

conversation as we put our shoes back on and exited the area. Their first comment was, "Who's in charge of safety?" "If we made any comments even remotely like the TSA agent, we would be taken aside, questioned, detained, and reported." "They have real power over everyone, including us." TSA agents have "no accountability to a Captain."

These pilots were clear that they should be in charge, and were not. They each expressed concern that the "racist" passenger making emphatically negative comments about the President of the United States "could be on their flight." The implications and complications of this exchange by a TSA agent and passenger to Captain authority were made clear by the Captain, First Officer and their Flight Attendants. The Captain stated, and each crewmember concurred, "If that passenger is on our flight, I'm having him removed."

It is important to recognize this participant observation period, perhaps, as another aberration, but it is also important to recall Captain Griffin's decision to retire early from his position as a senior Captain, specifically due to his recurring experiences with TSA agent conduct which, in his belief, was a direct affront to his position as "chief safety officer." Captain Griffin conveyed his "love and passion" for his profession, but concluded:

> Captain Griffin- "How can I be responsible for safety when the TSA treats me, my
> crew, and passengers the way they do?…Retiring is the best decision I ever made."

The details of Captain Griffin's lived experience are real and corroborated by participant observation. The lived experience of Captain Griffin is not a one-off, as highlighted in the participant observation experience observed by the R/I. Each of these experiences and observations are factors of significance in reframing a member of expert labor's professional identity, as reported by Captain Griffin. Factors such as these described by Captain Griffin and witnessed by the R/I in participant observation are reflective of changes in the practice of the commercial airline profession. These changes have marginalized members of unionized expert labor's professional identity to the point of Captain Griffin exercising an exit voice hypotheses. Captain Griffin's lived experience has been focused on the significant organizational change in his professional life, resulting from his merger-acquisition event. The ideographic and phenomenological sharing with the R/I by Captain Griffin of events such as the TSA is emblematic of changes in the standards of professional practice and changes in central tenets, such as autonomy and self-regulation, which altered the professional identity of Captain Griffin to a degree that he was unable to accept.

These lived experiences provide ideographic detail and are valuable insights to understanding unionized expert labor.  Events that occur in the cockpit "all the time" further contribute to understanding the research population and contributed to Captain Griffin's decision to retire.

> Captain Griffin- "As a Captain, you try to see an accident or potential for an accident before it actually happens…that is the real job of an airline Captain…we were in Los Angeles…the runways are East and West, runway 7 and runway 25…we typically take off to the West over the ocean…as we are taxiing out they change the runway from the West to the East…I said to the First Officer we're going to need some numbers {takeoff data and speeds} for runway 7, the runway toward the East…the First Officer said why can't we just use the numbers for runway 25…I said no we're not going to do that…the First Officer continued to argue with me about it as we were taxiing…I pulled the aircraft off to the side and asked him to get the book out and get us some numbers for runway 7…now this particular guy was in the habit of arguing with {the acquired airline} Captains…the sad thing was he didn't know the numbers could be very different…a headwind going West may mean a tailwind going East…an upslope going West would mean a downslope going East…the sad thing is that when he becomes a Captain he will likely be one of those Captains that just pushes the envelope…either he won't know the right thing or he will not do the right thing…if something bad happens he will just try to pass it off on someone else…he will not be a real Captain."

### 5.8.3   REFLECTION ON THE SENSE AND MEANING MAKING

As each case was detailed in seniority order, Captain Griffin was the most senior pilot that participated in the study.  He had insight accumulated over several decades of flying commercial airliners and high performance military aircraft.  The details of Captain Griffin's lived experience and its culmination in his retirement was a capstone to understanding a very deep and meaningful representation of professional identity offered by Captain Griffin as a member of unionized expert labor.

Captain Griffin's contribution brought clarity at the end of a journey of "love" and "commitment" to one's profession.  Captain Griffin was articulate, knowledgeable and passionate: traits consistently observed in the research population.  Captain Griffin connected the dots in this exploration as his lived experience spanned from hiring to retiring.  Captain

Griffin was the only member to yet retire following this research.  As a result, Captain Griffin's contributions provided a capstone for his lived experience.

Captain Griffin recognized and articulated the many changes in the practice of his profession resulting from both world events and merger-acquisition events.  He had travelled a road that was perhaps more contentious and adversarial that other participants.  On reflection, his experience with change, and the sense and meaning making of it's implications for his profession and for his individual professional practice, were beneficial to the research.

Captain Griffin spoke about the cessation of relational agreements and understandings with peers, his union and the airline that were forever altered.  As we discussed his experience in union affairs, Captain Griffin made a case for revolutionary change as opposed to incremental change.  Captain Griffin's sense and meaning making time was focused on the need to seek revolutionary change in recognizing and respecting seniority.  In our sensemaking discussion, Captain Griffin offered that the "wisdom" of a National Seniority List was "profound." Captain Griffin did not believe, as he shared with the R/I, that the industry or the pilots could "sort things out on their own."  Legislative change and a required change in union practices, particularly related to seniority integration following a merger-acquisition event, were needed. Captain Griffin summed up his sense and meaning making time with the following:

> Captain Griffin- "If you can keep a smile on your face that's probably one of the biggest assets you'll have because it just puts people off…they don't know how to react to that…and the second thing is…don't wear your heart on your sleeve."

**Table 5.13** CASE 7: INDIVIDUAL ANALYSIS – KEY EMERGING THEMES

| The Early Years Interviews<br>Focused Life History - Identity Formation | | |
|---|---|---|
| EMERGING<br>THEMES | LINKAGE TO<br>THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO<br>RESEARCH<br>QUESTIONS |
| Drawn to a "great profession;"<br><br>Military family;<br><br>Flying life… "the best's that ever been" | "the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership" … "creates and defines an individual's own place in society"<br><br>(Tajfel, 1972, pp. 292-293) | RQ #1: The dream of flying is realized…fantasy becomes reality; |
| The Major Airline Years Interviews<br>Particular Lived Experience - Identity Negotiation, Threat, Loss and Reformation | | |
| EMERGING<br>THEMES | LINKAGE TO<br>THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO<br>RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| Reduction in Captain authority;<br><br>"the bond, the kinship" …gone;<br><br>Safety as key professional identifier;<br><br>Captain's role of setting the "tone"…now F/O's routinely "test the envelope" | "US airline pilots experienced work intensification and de-professionalization in the decade following 9/11 because of an increase in opportunistic managerialism that contributed to a loss of autonomy and discretion over their work"<br><br>(Fraher, 2015, p. 24) | RQ #2: M/A events contribute to opportunistic managerialism, in an effort to commodify expert labor;<br><br>RQ #2: Changes in professional practice standards are an affront to safety (basic values)<br><br>(Schein, 1978) |
| The Sense and Meaning Making Interviews<br>Making Sense - Seeking Meaning and Being | | |
| EMERGING<br>THEMES | LINKAGE TO<br>THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE | CONTRIBUTION TO<br>RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| TSA as abrogator of Captain authority;<br><br>"support lost" …union, management and peers…cessation of relational agreements;<br><br>"new world order" …difficult to accept;<br><br>limits of adaptation exceeded…"not worth it anymore" | Significant change "illuminates identity" … "triggered by work-identity integrity violations;"<br><br>(Pratt et al., 2006, p. 235) | RQ #2: identity understanding and construction is aided by identity clarity;<br><br>RQ #3: contesting professional practice standards and values creates professional identity jolt and threat<br><br>(Desai, 2011) |

**Table 5.14   Case 7: Syntheses of First Order of Analysis**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Pre-Merger-Acquisition Event** | |
| **Expectations** | • Realization of a dream<br>• Joining a fraternity of aviators<br>• Rigor and discipline as standard |
| **Experience** | • Flying as joy<br>• Fantasy as reality |
| **Post-Merger-Acquisition Event** | |
| **Lived Experience Themes** | • Pushing the envelope as a professional norm<br>• TSA as abrogator of Captain authority…diminution to safety, rather than aid<br>• Reduction in safety…and Captain's role to ensure |
| **Reflective Themes** | • Marginalization of professional identity<br>• Repeated conflict with sense and role of self;<br>• Retiring is the best decision I ever made |

## 5.9   Summary

Each participant, interviewed or observed, had a voice.  Each claim made was evidenced by multiple corroborations.  The consistent meaningfulness provided by the contributors to this research was authentic, genuine and clear.  Because of the volume of data provided by this research population, the reader is able to view only small parts of a far larger corpus of text and understanding.  Reading and rereading of the verbatim transcripts, careful reflection over time, and the tenets of IPA as a Heideggerian approach to understand the being of unionized expert labor when something important happens to them, have been the guideposts of the data presented.

The opportunity to spend over 30 hours with each participant interviewee and to observe participants interacting with fellow employees, their friends, colleagues, crewmembers, and their families for over 500 hours was the key to the data collection and interpretative analysis to this research.  The research population provided context and lived experience in depth and over time.  The generosity of the research population enabled a meaningful and robust research environment to begin to understand the being of commercial airline pilots.

What emerges from the data collection is largely idiographic; pilots are very particular people and their lived experience focuses on the particular.  The central interest of this research

explores identity, specifically professional identity, of a previously unexplored niche of licensed professionals.  Exploring professional identity requires an in-depth review and understanding of lived experience.  The IPA first order of analysis provided in this chapter incorporates the phenomenology, hermeneutics and ideography of IPA to provide the in-depth review and understanding.

In conclusion, the R/I had to incorporate a double hermeneutic to subjectively conclude this first order of analysis of each individual case.  This first order of analysis will now contribute to Chaper Six's cross case analysis, the second order of analysis.  The first order of analysis provides the voices of the individual cases and highlights the individuality and nuance contribution of each participant.  Chapter Five takes a large corpus of individual text and interprets both the data meaningful to the contributors and meaningful to the phonemena of interest in this research.  The nexus of the data and research questions are provided by the subjective contributions of the participants and the R/I's interpretative understanding.

The cross case analysis will now engage in analysis exploring the themes as central and emergent across the data.  This second order of analysis will seek a broader understanding of the convergence and divergence, of the individual cases, in a more patterned interpretation.

# Chapter 6  Second Order of Analysis – Cross-Case Review

## 6.1  INTRODUCTION

Cross-case analysis offers a "second order of interpretative analysis" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 165). It follows the lived experiences shared across individual cases (Miles and Huberman, 1994). A cross-case analysis provides the opportunity to better understand the research population in professional and personal contexts through an interpretative analysis of the collective lived experiences of the participants. Cross-case analysis "prompts" rather than "pre-empts" the analysis of the individual cases (Smith et al., 2009, p. 166). This chapter gives importance to each individual case, "synthesizing" each case to identify "multiple instances" across multiple cases (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 174).

Consistent with the principles of IPA, this cross-case analysis remains ideographic, continuing to provide and demonstrate convergence and divergence. A broader patterning of nuance and individuality provided in the cross-case analysis informs the dynamic collective relationships of the research population (Smith et al., 2009). Paying close attention to the voices of the participants and with mindfulness of the double hermeneutic view, the cross-case analysis provided here advances a second order of understanding of the being of the research population.

The cross-case analysis offered here further benefits from an orthogonal linkage to scholars whose work largely resides outside of IPA. These orthogonal contributions provide their own cross-case contributions, enhancing the reliability and meaningfulness of the data (Yin, 2014). Several of these scholars are highlighted in the first order of analysis in Chapter Five. These orthogonal contributions provide additional context for and alignment with the phenomena explored. This is achieved by viewing the research population through these additional contributory and constitutive lenses of interpretation and understanding. The orthogonal view further "facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources" (Baxter and Jack, 2008, p. 544).

This chapter follows the interview questions as the participants were asked in this research. Each of the tables and figures synthesizes the data collected from participant interviews to arrive at subordinate themes and synthesizes the collective meaning and sensemaking in cross-case interpretative analysis to arrive at superordinate themes. The subordinate and superordinate themes offered are the culmination of the first and second order of analysis.

They represent the interpretative account of the sense and meaning making of both the individual cases and the cross-case review. It is this interpretative analysis that goes beyond description. This IPA research is guided by the analytic framework of Heidegerrian phenenomonology and thus resides in the interpretative philosophy of science (Gill, 2014).

Chapter Six is divided into three main sections. First is the collective voices of the participants. The voices of the participants are reviewed across the cases following the Dolbeare and Schuman three-phase interview approach. Each of the questions is presented in the order explored. The data is provided in seniority order of the contributors. This rigor and discipline of the participant data presentation aids in showing data standardization (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This first section benefits the cross-case review by confirming that the "results are grounded in the text" (Watson et al., 2008, p. 382). Seeing the verbatim contributions of the participants ensures that this second order of analysis "did not impose pre-existing theoretical concepts and thus preempt a credible and unclouded description of the participants' experience" (Watson et al., 2008, p. 382) . The first main section will showcase the voices in each of the three phases of the semi-structured in-depth interviews of each of the participants. At the conclusion of each interview phase, a discussion of the interpretative audit is offered and an interpretative synthesis is thematically displayed.

The second main section of the cross-case review interprets the collective experiences of the participants. Having heard the voices of the contributors in over 210 hours of semi-structured in-depth interviews, read and re-read the verbatim transcripts and spent an extended period of time on reflection of their subjective sharing, the R/I concluded several high order recurring participant topics. These high order topics include the evolution of professional identity in U.S. airline pilots, the undermining of professional identity following an M/A event, U.S. airline pilots adaptation behavior to identity threat, the evolution of what it means to be a union member now, the impact of unions on a pilot's sense of self, the emergence of pilots who behave unprofessionally, and a discussion of judgement and decision making for pilots making career impacting choices. The second section of the cross-case review raises these topics to advance the sum of the collective understanding of what it means to be a commercial airline pilot in the United States. This second section of the cross-case review will focus on the preponderence of the data, but continue to include nuance and individuality as valuable contributions to better understand the research population's collective being. These infrequently occurring themes provide an important role to demonstrate the IPA hermeneutic link. It was made clear in this research that the part did inform the whole (Smith et al., 2009).

Additional peripheral events, offered by the participants, are also provided in the second section. These peripheral events add to the data audit and contribute further components to the summative cross-case analysis.

The third main section of the cross-case review delivers the subordinate and superordinate themes of the research. The emerging themes of this research are the sum of the individual cases, the cross-case review, a discussion of the interpretative audit of each phase of the inteviews, inclusion of peripheral events and the time spent on sense and meaning making of each of the high order topics of this research. Each of these components contribute to and constitute the phenomenologic, hermeneutic and ideographic account of the participants. This account was the basis of the interpretative analysis. The culmination of this summative analysis results in the subordinate and superordinate themes emerging from the research.

## 6.2 Section 1 – Collective Voices of the Participants

### 6.2.1 Focused Life Histories

Focused life histories, the first phase of the Dolbeare and Schuman semi-structured interview approach utilized in this research, is the starting point of the cross-case review of the research population. An exploration of the participants' younger years and looking at how and why they became a pilot initiates the interview process. The full interview protocol can be found in Appendices C and D.

The purposive sampling in this research provides a small sample construct of the larger pilot population. Some pilots had short tenures at a carrier before being employed at the carrier of their current employment. Some came from military families and were members of the military themselves. Some had no military training or experience. Some experienced a university life at a flight training oriented program, some were directly from general aviation, and some were from a more hybrid background, civilian trained, but a member of their state air national guard. Participants live in all regions of the United States. They are of a variety of political persuasions, some are married, some have been divorced, some have children, and some do not have children. Gender is represented in proportion to the pilot population. Participant ages range from late 30's to early 60's. This cross-case review benefits from a mindful purposive sampling of these codes and more detailed in Chapter Four to represent the larger pilot population.

Table 6.1 and Table 6.2 follow the first phase of the semi-structured in-depth interview approach for this research.  This provides a view of the voice of each participant, for each interview question, across all of the participants.  A short discussion follows Tables 6.1 and 6.2 to summarize the voices of the participants.  Figure 6.1 then provides the interpretative synthesis of the phase one interviews.

**Table 6.1    INTERVIEW PHASE ONE: FOCUSED LIFE HISTORY; CASES 1-4**

| | CASE 1 | CASE 2 | CASE 3 | CASE 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| The Younger Years | "I thought you had to be really rich to fly" | "multi-generational airline pilot family" | "My Dad was a military and airline pilot…I always looked up to him as a kid" | "I was 16 when a friend of mine and I did a tandem parachute jump" |
| Becoming a Pilot | "At a whiffle ball game at college a guy tells me I could become a pilot if I wanted" | "I started flying when I was very young…my Father was a pilot and I had access to airplanes early on" | "I started flying in college, then flight instructing, general aviation, then corporate" | "I went up in a little Cessna, took some lessons and confirmed this is something I loved to do" |
| Key Developmental Events | "I went to the airport, started working on my private license…I got hooked" | "I worked for three major airlines and several regional and smaller airlines" | "My dad never pushed it at all, but when he knew the interest was there, he started opening doors for me" | "Went to a university with an aviation program…got my licenses there and graduated with honors" |
| Path to Getting an ATP | "A little commuter, I borrowed their 310, and got my ATP" | "Never got my ATP till my third major…all my other jobs were as a copilot with no ATP" | "It takes 1500 hours and 23 years of age minimum…I got hired at my major with 1300 hours" | "The little commuter I worked for set up some time in the middle of the night with an FAA examiner…I became a Captain" |
| Becoming an Airline Pilot | "My little commuter went out of business, I had the ATP, so I just immediately applied at a major" | "It was a wonderful era to be flying professionally…it was just a joy to go to work" | "I see you have the ATP written, but no ATP yet…yes, I'm just 22…they hired me right then" | "A friend of mine sent me a contact…I got an interview, passed the medical and simulator check…the next thing you know I was hired and in a class" |
| Pre M/A Experience | "I was really happy…I had a blast" | "It was fun…I looked forward to each next flight" | "It wasn't an easy job, but it was just so enjoyable" | "I had found a home…I was very happy" |

**Table 6.2**     INTERVIEW PHASE ONE: FOCUSED LIFE HISTORY; CASES 5-7

|  | CASE 5 | CASE 6 | CASE 7 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **The Younger Years** | "I grew up with my Father who was a frustrated WW II aviation cadet who never got his wings because the war ended" | "I was about 15 years old and my Dad took me on a fishing trip and we flew up in a twin-engine plane" | "My Dad was my motivation...he was a Korean combat pilot" |
| **Becoming a Pilot** | "I was in a professional pilot program at my university" | "I did NROTC in college and it was clear to me that the very best thing you could do was become a Navy pilot" | "I went to a service academy and then military flight school" |
| **Key Developmental Events** | "My Father instilled an awe of flying in me...my Dad loved airplanes...I loved airplanes" | "I have a very lovely wife...we've been married 37 years...she has been very supportive throughout" | "I knew I wanted to be an airline pilot...I wanted to get as many things in the basket before I left...I had the flight engineer written and certificate along with the ATP before I applied" |
| **Path to Getting an ATP** | "I had taken the written and had my regular checkride due at the local air I was flying...they made it my oral and checkride for my ATP, but I was still 22...my license was restricted until my birthday" | "I went down to the local airport and did the cram course...take a military guy and turn him...that's how I did it" | "I went to an airport nearby...they had a program for military guys" |
| **Becoming an Airline Pilot** | "I really wanted to go in the Navy...land a jet on a boat...the airlines were starting to hire...I didn't join the Navy...I was hired at a major" | "It's somewhat embarrassing... I got the call and didn't get the job...I then got the gouge...got another call and was successful" | "I wanted to fly wide-bodied jets internationally at the end of my career so I applied to airlines that I thought I could someday do that" |
| **Pre M/A Experience** | "Training was outstanding...the experience made me come back from furlough" | "Awesome experience...Eye opening...I just really wanted to be there" | "It was a dream come true" |

### 6.2.2 FOCUSED LIFE HISTORIES – SYNTHESIS DISCUSSION

The data was clear and definitive in Phase One. Family situations and circumstance were varied. The purposive sampling employed in participant selection assured a variey of social, political and economic variation among the participants. What was common across the collective of participants was a supportive environment. The contributors to this research were more than comfortable in describing family life and the formative years of their life. The researcher routinely observed calm, a smile on the face, body language and other visual cues to confirm their ease and comfort in this question area. Focusing on the early years of the participants life histories was clearly and collectively about a supportive home life, a supportive upbringing and ultimately support for each participant to pursue their passion, flying airplanes. Many of the participants' families had a connection with aviation and/or airline flying.

There was clarity about the path forward for contributors to this research. Flying was not a fluke or a choice among several considerations for their work life. Not one of the participants contributing to this research shared with the researcher consideration for a career path other than flying for a commercial airline. They did not even suggest other flying paths such as crop dusting, general aviation instructing or being just a recreational pilot with another full-time work life. Some contributors had experience in other flying areas, but these experiences were pursued to attain the goal of airline flying. Each of the participants was clear about their desire to fly for a major airline, the requirements to attain that goal and their commitment to achieving it.

What enabled this pursuit was a motivation based on passion. Once again, in this first phase of interviews, there was a universal passion expressed. The genuineness and authenticity of their passion was clear to the researcher. With over thirty hours spent with each interviewee contributor, there was consistency in tone and language which made clear their passion to fly. The military pilots echoed a passion for military flying as well, but were clear that military flying was an addition to their flying life, not their primary flying. Whether military reserve, guard flying or recreational flying in their off time, it was the airline that was their central focus and enduring passion.

Figure 6.1 provides an interpretative synthesis of the Phase One interviews. The cross-case review of the Phase One interviews provide a collective view of the participants in their early and formative years.

**Figure 6.1**  INTERPRETATIVE SYNTHESIS OF PHASE ONE INTERVIEWS
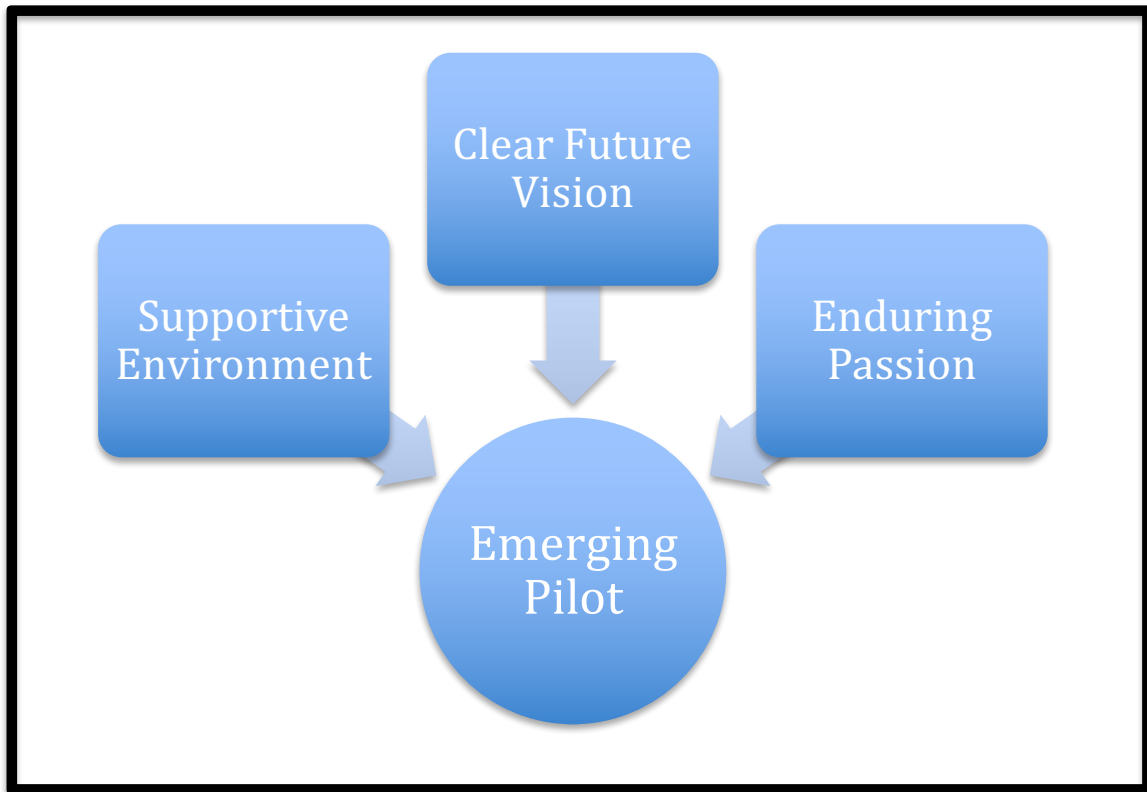


### 6.2.3  PARTICULAR LIVED EXPERIENCES

The particular lived experiences shared in the second phase of interviews provide a deeper exploration of each of the research questions.  The contextual perspectives in Chapter Four are operationalized in this second phase of interviews.  The understanding of the being of the research population is explored both before and after each participant's merger-acquisition event and the reader is able to review each of these lived experiences in cross-case review. "Inferences about the causal mechanisms" underlying an individual case and its recurrence in other cases serve as a framework for this second phase of the cross-case review (Bennett and Elman, 2006, p. 473).

The in-depth case study of each participant over time "ensures that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood" (Baxter and Jack, 2008, p. 544).  This second phase of interviews provides a better understanding of each of the research questions in context and over time by addressing the particular lived experiences of each of the participants.  This cross-case review, while focusing on acquired airline pilots due to the significance of their respective merger-acquisition event experience to their professional

identity, provides an intrinsic, instrumental and collective understanding to view this second phase of interviews (Stake, 1995).  The research seeks to focus particular attention to merger-acquisition events, which addresses the instrumental value of this second phase cross-case review.  The inclusion of multiple cases in the cross-case review identifies the collective understanding that represents the larger commercial airline pilot population.

Table 6.3 and Table 6.4 show the voices of the second phase of interviews in this cross-case review.  Once again, the interview questions are offered in the order explored.  The entire interview question protocol may be found in Appendix D.  Figure 6.2 then provides the interpretative synthesis of the phase two interviews.

**Table 6.3** INTERVIEW PHASE TWO: PARTICULAR LIVED EXPERIENCE; CASES 1-4

|  | CASE 1 | CASE 2 | CASE 3 | CASE 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **How is Your Airline Life Different Now?** | "Much more regulated...not as social" | "It's completely different now... management, the union, but especially the pilots...they're all different" | "Everyone's trying to cover their rear...more stress...not because I might run in to the mountain...but, because I might have crossed a T wrong" | "Quite different...on so many levels... technology for one... the actual hands on experience has changed dramatically" |
| **Union Commitment** | "They don't represent me...they go out of their way to shove us under the bus" | "I have zero commitment to my union...I have a professional commitment to unionism" | "I'm not that committed...I pay dues...I just don't agree with them" | "I feel no commitment to my union...I don't know how more point blank I can say that" |
| **Professional vs. Employer Commitment** | "Professional...I have no loyalty to my employer" | "50-50...our current union is not a union in my mind...a union should be the connection between the profession and the employer... unionism could return as it should" | "Profession, if those are my only choices... my commitment is to the Lord" | Professional...I may not have a love for my employer, but that comes from what I'll call a quid pro quo" |
| **Professional Attributes** | "Awareness... Keeping current with what's happening" | "Self-image that you are a professional" | "Know your airplane... know the situation you are in at all times" | "Great pride in completing the task... on-time and comfortably" |
| **Unprofessional Attributes** | "When I see pilot's sit down in the seat and just let whatever happens happen | "When they are not willing to stand up and demand recognition for the profession" | "Not doing what is expected of you... dumping your job on the other pilot" | "They're here to just do the job...they are puppets...and we have those here" |
| **Seniority** | "My number isn't me...people I fly with tell me I'm in their seat... and they were hired 12 years after me" | "In the 60's and 70's there wasn't much need for a national seniority list...contracts were similar and the industry was regulated...post-deregulation that's all changed" | "I have to be careful not to put my identity in this subject... the only thing I know for sure is I have a bad seniority number" | "Seniority is a player in many professional jobs...people don't get how important it is for an airline pilot... seniority is everything" |
| **Role of Captain Now** | "The company just doesn't trust you to act like a professional... it is a little better now, but not much" | "That's the job I was hired to ultimately do...that's the job I'm supposed to be in... that's all gone now" | "Much less clout... the company made it a culture that way" | "It was my choice... it is what I want to do... regardless of the challenges of my airline" |

**Table 6.4** **INTERVIEW PHASE TWO: PARTICULAR LIVED EXPERIENCE; CASES 5-7**

| | CASE 5 | CASE 6 | CASE 7 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **How is Your Airline Life Different Now?** | "Wow…the dream has eroded into a nightmare…not appreciated for my experience and expertise…not valued for my time in service" | "It certainly is different now…training stands out as being very different now…if the company could train you with monkeys they surely would" | "It was brutal…it was a travesty…M/A events changed everything" |
| **Union Commitment** | "I am a dissenting member…I never joined myself…I don't get to vote…I have no commitment to the union" | "Union commitment is much less now than when I started…I'm not actively involved for sure" | "I was actively involved in union work…I am now a dissenting member" |
| **Professional vs. Employer Commitment** | "Probably morphed a little bit…because of the bad taste in my mouth… probably my profession" | "I do feel I have a greater commitment to my profession and my professional colleagues" | "I would have to say my profession" |
| **Professional Attributes** | "Level of education…to know this job well takes a lot of training" | "Competent to fly and does so in as safe a manner as possible" | "Safety is everything…you try to see an accident or potential for an accident before it happens" |
| **Un-professional Attributes** | "Treating others unequally…treating them as lesser" | "Lackadaisical…had a give a shit attitude…simply didn't care" | "When pilots cut corners…they push the envelope…they cut the corners because they actually don't know their job…and they pass it off to other people or events" |
| **Seniority** | "When I explain to people my experience they are appalled…it effects every aspect of my life negatively" | "The system works quite well…having said that my first merger absolutely killed me" | "The wisdom of a National Seniority List is profound…it should be a tenet of unionism" |
| **Role of Captain Now** | "I just got an email from the company saying, you know you are the boss…I haven't been forced to test this, thank goodness" | "It is very different now…I purposely delayed my upgrade so that I wouldn't be the guy at the bottom…now, as a senior guy it is wonderful" | "Fly safe, be on-time, and make your passengers comfortable…you have to often get up and do the job of others now" |

### 6.2.4   PARTICULAR LIVED EXPERIENCE – SYNTHESIS DISCUSSION

The cross-case review of the Phase Two interviews made clear to the researcher a collective understanding of change. Each pilot contributing to this research, both the acquiring and acquired pilots, shared with the resarcher a recognition that significant organizational change and significant professional change surrounded them. The implications of these significant change paradigms had a direct influence on each participants' professional identity. Tables 6.3 and 6.4 detail the voices of the participants and demonstrate how their collective lived experiences were transformative in their view of self and others view of them. These transformative views, offered by the participants, came from peers, their union and their airline. There was change communicated in each of the key relationships of the contributors.

Change manifests itself initially in a sense of loss following contributors merger-acquisition events. This loss was expressed to the researcher in several settings. Universally, contributors shared with the researcher that relationships with peers were changing. Frienships were lost and raw feelings were routinely shared with the researcher. Unions provided significant change and loss too. Once a place of unity, unions now were a source of loss in collectivism and a recognized source of devisiveness, routinely shared by acquired pilots to a merger-acquisition event. Often contributors would share managements decision to "sit on the sidelines" and "let the pilots sort it out." What this was revealing to contributors was a lack of commitment by management to support and facilitate this significant organizational change with their key employees. The commodification of expert labor was another significant change that contributed to identity loss for the pilots contributing to this research.

Following identity loss, the contributors shared with the researcher their confrontation with negotiating a new self, a new identity. This process began with the recognition that who they were was now changed. They were not seeking change, but the significant organizational and professional change that surrounded them was a source of threat, disintegration and loss for their identity. Participants shared this loss and the liminality that they experienced while seeking to negotiate a new self.

Identity negotiation was a new and very different experience for the participants. The pilots of this research were secure, independent and self-defining. They knew who they were and were comfortable with their individual identification as a practicing professional. The experiences decribed in their quest to find a new possible self, trying a provisional self out and ultimately becoming a new self, at least for a time, was often a difficult and trying

experience for the contributors. They were reliant on their training and experience. Their judgement and decision making skills were excellent in the cockpit, but this experience was quite different. How and why to make a judgement about a possible or provisional self was an unfamiliar environment for these highly skilled decision makers.

The construct of identity work (Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010) became a reality in this "new world" the participants were living. New days presented new challlenges; relationships with peers, their unions and their employer were in flux. Flying commercial airliners is an inherently dynamic professional practice environment. Now their life on the ground was inherently dynamic as well. What became constant for contributors to this research was change. As more and more change was thrust upon them as their merger-acquisition event was operationalized these members of unionized expert labor had to work and re-work their sense of self, their professional identity.

Figure 6.2 synthesises the interpretative audit of the collective voices of the participants in their Phase Two interviews.

**Figure 6.2**    **I**NTERPRETATIVE **S**YNTHESIS OF **P**HASE **T**WO **I**NTERVIEWS
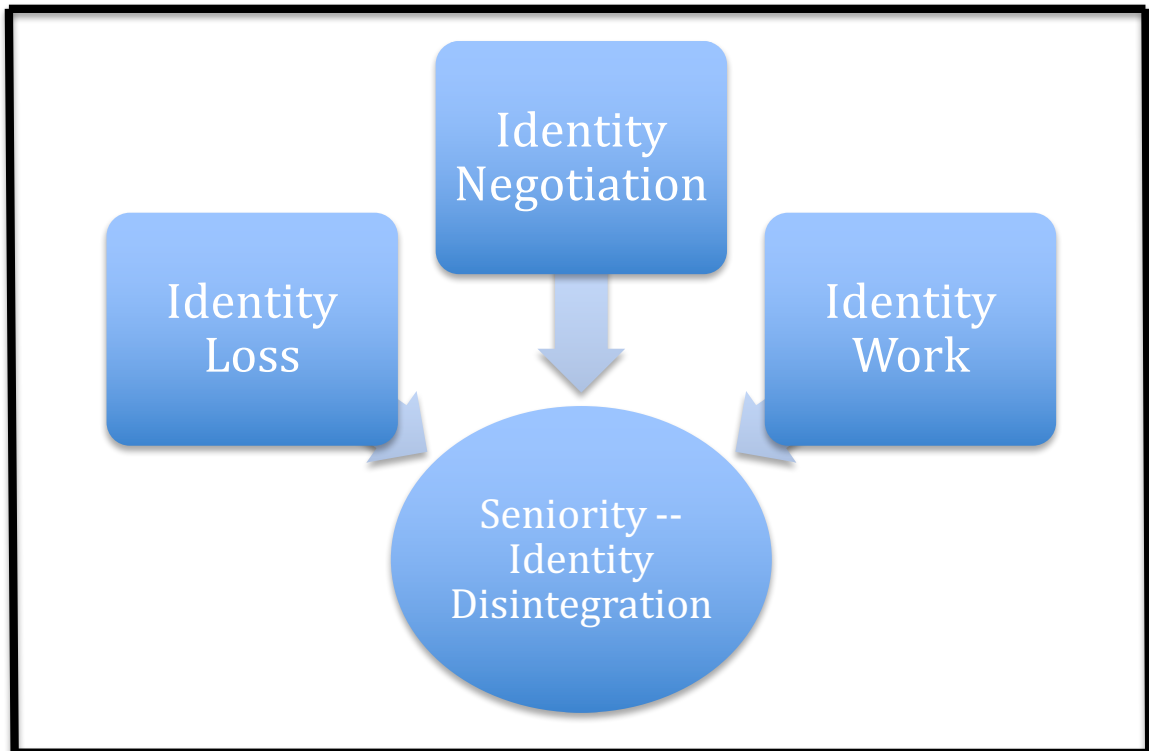
### 6.2.5  MAKING SENSE

The third and final phase of the Dolbeare and Schuman semi-structured in-depth interviews approach plays a further role in answering the research questions.  The dialogue between the participants and the R/I seeks to make sense and meaning of each participant's being in this third phase of interviews (Smith, 2004).  Consequently, these dialogues are key to the interpretative account and analysis (Larkin et al., 2006).  The interpretation of "the similarities and differences between the cases" sets the framework for this third phase of interviews (Baxter and Jack, 2008, p. 550).

The analytic process for an IPA analysis begins with the individual (Larkin et al., 2006).  Chapter Five details each of the individual cases in the first order of analysis.  In this second order of analysis, participant contributions are viewed collectively, "emphasizing both convergence and divergence, commonality and nuance" (Thompson, 2012, p. 105).  The collective view in this second order of analysis provides the analytic basis for the cross-case review interpretative account.

Once again, participant contributions are presented in chronological order in an effort to view the interview questions in the order explored, and to begin to form a sum of the collective sense and meaning making offered by each of the contributors.  The systematic presentation provided throughout Chapter Six led the R/I to periods of deeper reflection on the research questions and the phenomenon under study.

Table 6.5 and Table 6.6 provide the thematic guide for the third phase of the cross-case review.  Figure 6.3 then delivers the cross-case interpretative synthesis of the phase three interviews.

**Table 6.5    INTERVIEW PHASE THREE: MAKING SENSE; CASES 1-4**

| | CASE 1 | CASE 2 | CASE 3 | CASE 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Life Changes** | "Well, do I spend money… do I hold everything in since I still don't know what's going to happen?" | "You got to be aware of the differences in experiences in the cockpit now" | "I used to be a lot more excited about the airline and had more zeal for my company" | "You always strive for the holidays… now they don't happen so much" |
| **Professional Changes** | "So, they deny our lawsuit, so we're stuck with the bad number… I hope something will still resolve, but I'm not expecting it" | "It's been so hostile… pilots putting other pilots on a do not fly list…this was unheard of before" | "Seniority is the central issue and the ongoing issue" | "Having been to so many union events to support my fellow pilots, now I do my best to stay away from those situations" |
| **Persistent Post M/A Concerns** | "No sense of community" | "We is gone from the industry…it's us vs. them…I don't see this going away" | "You can't count on benevolence…even pilots at other airlines don't have the story of your experience straight" | "People will not change…their point of view is theirs and it often, is not mine" |
| **Personal Strengths** | "Stubbornness…I do the best I can to work around this mess" | "Regardless of how bad things is…how horrible I am being treated…I'm still flying airplanes? I still have that" | "Faith and belief" | "I always thought I could still be a pretty good stick and rudder guy…that strength will always help keep me out of trouble" |
| **Value of Time Off** | "Huge…I play sports…I get away, but I have so little control now" | "My Family has been wonderful…I don't have the ability to make the games and events as much anymore…That has changed quite a bit" | "As a single Dad time off is critical…I love flying, but my Family is way more important…now that my girls are a little older I don't have to call for help as much" | "I have an airline life and an airline Family…I do everything I can do… things will happen… you and your Family have to be prepared" |
| **View for the Future** | "Unions can really mess things up… personalities and politics can end up controlling… change is not over" | "I think we could wind up in a regulation era again…start-ups will fade away…only big players will remain" | "My Dad used to say it all the time and now I get it, we need a National Seniority List… my life is option three… work for the Lord" | "It's going to be interesting…new generation of airplanes, new computers, and a very different pilot group… with much less pilot interaction" |
| **Advice for Those Aspiring to the Profession** | "Go to a good school, get a good degree…get a skill that will back you up…you could always lose your medical… don't lose your life" | "I have actually done this…my Son is now in the industry…the job will be different… you're going to work a little more, but in the future you could make a very good living" | "It's a big commitment of time and money if you're a zero-time person…if you're really interested, you better jump in…the time is right" | "If flying is what you want…get on with it… learn basic flying skills…don't just learn to fly a computer" |

**Table 6.6** INTERVIEW PHASE THREE: MAKING SENSE; CASES 5-7

| | CASE 5 | CASE 6 | CASE 7 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Life Changes** | "I don't care as much…it's too bad, I don't go out of my way as I did in the past" | "Economic peace is important…we achieved that and I'm appreciative" | "I'm in a good place now…I hope I never have to get on another flight on my previous airline again" |
| **Professional Changes** | "Seniority…one word answer…that's it" | "We realized, on both sides, hey it's over, it's done…being resilient with the other guys was a big change" | "There were so many…each was important, but the changes in Captain's authority was the biggest…things like TSA were huge" |
| **Persistent Post M/A Concerns** | "I don't think things will ever resolve…the relationships have changed…they won't revert…they have expired" | "Water under the bridge…no one will ever forget that water…scheduling is another persisting problem" | "The legal issues just will not go away…they may take forever" |
| **Personal Strengths** | "You have an underlying passion to practice…it's my life" | My family and my resiliency…planning for the future, my retirement…not getting involved in the union and management issues" | "I loved flying" |
| **Value of Time Off** | "It's enormously important…a work environment over 60 hours a week away is not something to relish" | "I am senior and so have little difficulty with my schedule" | "It was so important to me and my Family that I retired" |
| **View for the Future** | "Future pilots are more likely to have steady employment, there is a looming pilot shortage…it may not be a glamorous job, but it's going to be a good job" | "The future looks pretty statistically good…there's going to be an immense demand for pilots in the nest 5-10 years" | "There should absolutely be a National Seniority List" |
| **Advice for Those Aspiring to the Profession** | "The opportunities are great…I'm nurturing someone now" | "Be very careful about choosing the airlines to apply with…do your homework…don't be like me…get involved in the union early and stay involved…make your voice heard…it's a great life" | "Be prepared for anything…keeping a smile on your face may be the biggest challenge…wear your heart on your sleeve" |

**6.2.6  MAKING SENSE – SYNTHESIS DISCUSSION**

Making sense and making meaning occurred in each phase of the participant interviews and participant observation periods.  It was Phase Three of the interviews, however, that specifically focused on the participants' sensemaking of our time together.  Tables 6.5 and 6.6 provide the reader with the salient voices of the contributors during these interviews.

The voices of the participants were consistent in the affirmation of their thoughts and feelings, an affirmation consistent with their professional practice and deameanor.  Certainty stood out as a consistent and very necessary attribute for these licensed professionals.  The safety of their passengers, crew and aircraft were fundamental to their being.  They were each certain that safety was a defining attribute to understand their being.  Thinking back to the beginning of the researcher's time with the participants there was a clear distinction in the tone and spirit from Phase One to Phase Three.  The ebullient spirit of the earlier and formative years was replaced by a new clarity, a state of diminished trust.  Collectively, the contributors to this research were now suspect of their peers, their union and their airline.  The researcher interpreted a diminished state of trust.

What followed from the diminished state of trust was a loss of commitment.  There was a loss of commitment in their key relational agreements with their peers, a loss of commitment to their union and belief in collectivism and there was a loss of commitment to their employing airline.  What was emerging from these sense and meaning making discussions was a new sense of self with a different professional identity.  A professional identity far different than they shared with the researcher in their developmental years interviews.  This loss of commitment had a cascading effect.  The implementation of strategic and operational initiatives resulting from their merger-acquisition events, as shared with the researcher, were being met with a state of diminished trust and a level of commitment that reflected their diminished trust.

Commercial airline pilots meet each flying day of their professional life with confidence.  This was universally clear to the researcher in both participant interviews and participant observation periods.  Contributors shared with the R/I a sense of optimism that since they were still able to practice the profession they "loved" that there still was hope for the future of the life they love.  This positivism was both clear and guarded.  It was made clear to the researcher that the participants had been overcome by events; events not of their making, not of their choice, and irrespective of whether they were an acquired or acquiring airline pilot, not of their liking.  Still they shared a guarded optimism about the future with the researcher.

They envisioned the pilot shortage and pending wave of pilots reaching age 65 as an opportunity for others to fly commercial airliners. Their was a guarded optimism for those with a desire to fly, to make the commitment of time and money to get the training, flight hours and experience to pursue this profession. Absent from the sensemaking time with participants was any discussion of ab initio hiring as a viable solution to the profession they still loved. This notion was contributory to the guarding of their optimism. The reservations about the future pilots in commercial aviation was guarded by the understanding of self, of pilots entering the profession, the evolving nature and motivations of expert labor unions, and the desire of managements to commodify unionized expert labor. Adding to this was the notion that a future generation of commercial airline pilots would be hired without a single flight hour, without "paying any of the dues" those before them had, and would someday command a commercial airliner. There was hope, but also great concern about the myriad of choices that would define the professional identity of commercial airline pilots. There was optimism shared with the researcher about the future, but it was most certainly guarded.

Figure 6.3 shows thematically, the interpretative synthesis of the sense and meaning making of the Phase Three interviews.

**Figure 6.3**    INTERPRETATIVE SYNTHESIS OF PHASE THREE INTERVIEWS
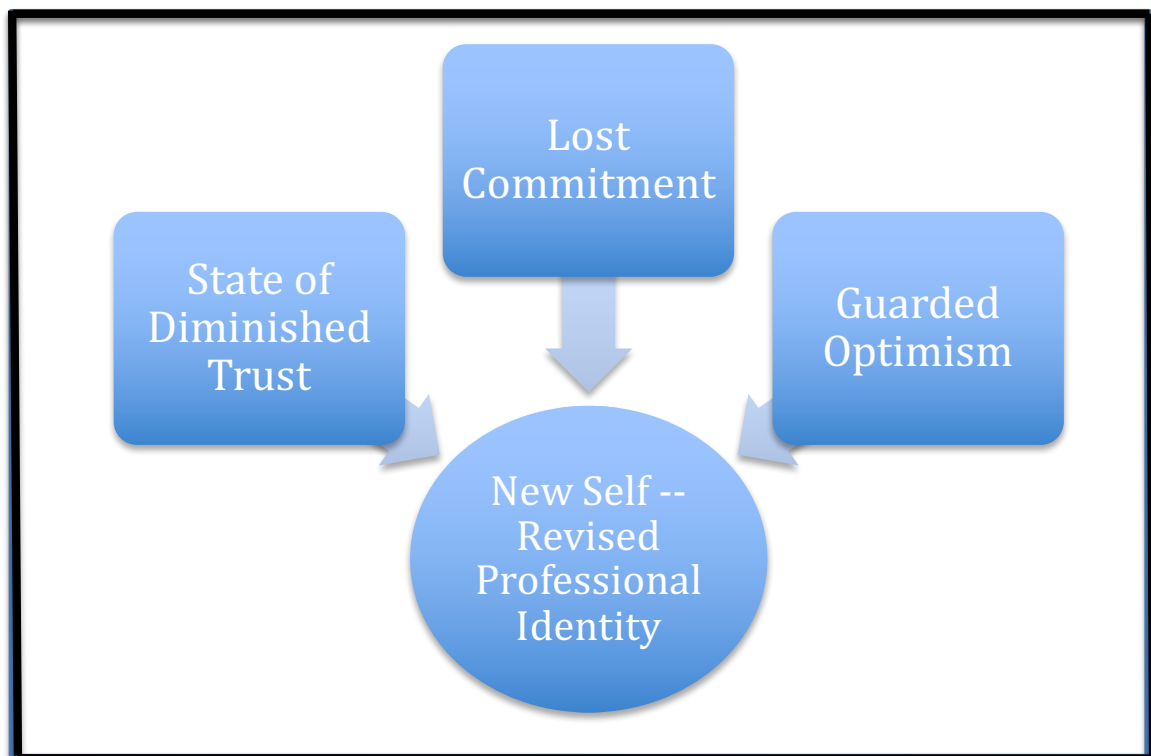
**6.2.7  Research Contributions via Peripheral Events**

The analysis of an IPA study is a dynamic process (Smith et al., 2009). This dynamism "allows for the possibility of a creative, insightful and novel outcome" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 81). The systematic approach followed in the data collection and analysis is mindful of the hermeneutic pillar of IPA, how the part informs the whole, and conversely, how the whole informs the part. In this context, contributors to this research brought peripheral events, important to them and their being, to the R/I's attention. These peripheral events affected professional practice, professional autonomy, and key stakeholder relationships.

**6.2.7.1  The Peripheral Effects of Cockpit and External Technology Advancements**

From the first PV/I interview and recurring throughout the time with the participants, technology was an external contribution presenting two dimensions. First were the benefits of incorporating technology. The glass cockpits of today's airlines are comprised of a series of flat screens replacing the round dials and gauges of earlier analog days. These technologies were welcomed by the participants as they contribute to the availability and access of information necessary to efficiently and more accurately manage the myriad systems under their purview: hydraulics, electrical, air conditioning, pressurization, fuel, navigation and systems to land in reduced weather conditions to name a few. Additional benefits that were communicated to the R/I included the speed and accuracy of computations to compute a top of descent (TOD) point, manage a change en route, compare the fuel savings at a different altitude or speed, and communicate with dispatch or destination. Digitization was seen as a clear operational improvement.

The negative dimension of technology was also shared. Technology has a way of creating "automation complacency." Automation is a way to reduce the judgement and decision making skills of the pilot. Participants shared the notion that some pilots would conclude "don't worry, the computer knows." Further participants shared that a "button would be pushed without confirming that the action requested by this selection, actually occurred." There was an assumption that once a button was pushed, the requested outcome would occur in a way they intended. Participants shared that this was not always the case; automation complacency was a negative consequence of the new technology.

Another consequence of the introduction of new technologies was a reduction in "hand flying." The newer and younger pilots being hired by major airlines have grown up in a digital age. As a participant shared with the R/I, "computers are their life." The psychomotor

skills of hand flying are less and less employed or practiced in today's commercial airline cockpit.  Participants shared that "letting the computers do it" was a norm and "encouraged in simulator training."  "Wanting to hand fly" and in some critical situations, "needing to hand fly the airplane" are becoming anachronistic.  This was shared as a negative dimension of new technology.  The participants made clear that technology had a reframing effect on who they were.

Technology outside the cockpit had an effect on identification as well.  Participants shared that the commaraderie and getting together after a day of flying, long the norm in aviation, was becoming less and less the norm.  Participants shared that pilots desire to just "go to their room and play with their devices" rather than meet downstairs and go out together.  The commaraderie, mentoring and critical conversations of earlier days are being replaced.  Technology also had a reframing effect on the pilot's relationships with one another outside the cockpit.

**6.2.7.2 THE PERIPHERAL EXPERIENCE OF THE TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION (TSA)**

Another peripheral event informing the research questions, the advent of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), was also discussed.  Participants shared their view of the TSA agent as an unlicensed government employee replacing the Captain "as chief security officer."  The extent of this perception and the TSA's perceived lack of efficacy culminated in one contributor retiring rather than have his professional identity acquiesce to this peripheral experience.

**6.2.7.3 CREW CONTRIBUTED PERIPHERAL EVENT**

In participant observation periods, the R/I would regularly engage with a crew rather than just the pilots.  The crew would frequently have the flight attendants wanting to share their lived experience.  While not the focus of this research, it is both contributory and constitutive of answering the research questions and phenomenon under study.  It further aided in concluding the subordinate and superordinate themes.  The following provides one example, emblematic of these many conversations.

The pilots were in discussion with their flight attendants.  The flight attendants wanted to share an experience detailing the lack of buy-in of their legacy talent, following a merger-acquisition event.

> "We {the flight attendants} were just at {the corporate headquarters of the airline} for the annual flight awards dinner. Flight pursors and flight attendants were there to recognize their peers in-flight excellence. Each person on the stage had been recognized by passengers; each had written a letter to the airline that this pursor or flight attendant had done an outstanding job on their flight. It was passenger driven, not driven by airline management. To be nominated, a pursor or flight attendant had to have a bunch of letters from passengers."

The pilots nodded at the researcher, anticipating where the conversation was going as the crew awaited the arrival of the aircraft for their next flight. The Captain asked, "and then what happened?"

> "Well, it's not surprising, but the very best flight attendants really do a lot. Not only are they good flight attendants, but a group of them were actually the ones who did all of the planning and logistics to set the dinner up. When {the CEO of the airline} arrived, he had no prepared remarks, just spoke off the cuff, and when it came time to recognize the pursors and flight attendants for their excellence, he recognized a group of flight attendants {from the acquired airline} and said that they would not be allowed to be recipients. He said this on the stage during the presentation and these flight attendants were the ones that did the work to set the event up in the first place. The CEO went on to say that he would make sure their names were removed from the nomination list. He said it just wasn't right that they would be recognized."

This exchange, offered by flight attendants to the pilots they were flying with, was one ideographic experience shared with the researcher that was emblematic of numerous other. Adaptation is not only the challenge of the acquired and acquiring employees, it is also an imperative requirement of management to recognize (Sinha et al., 2015). The buy-in of legacy talent, as made clear by these flight attendants, is a key ingredient in a successful merger-acquisition event.

Interpretative analysis in IPA research resides with the voices of the participants and the R/I's subjective understanding and attachment of meaning to these voices. These voices are framed by the lived experiences they share in the practice of their profession. Colleagues, co-workers, passengers and a range of employees at airports, hotels, restaurants and other venues each contribute to the tapestry of being for a commercial airline pilot in the United States.

These lived experiences had recurring conversations that were contributory and constitutive to understanding who they are.

Figure 6.4 provides the thematic interpretative synthesis of each of these peripheral events. Each peripheral event provided an insightful and novel contribution to understanding the being of commercial airline pilots in the United States (Smith et al., 2009).

**Figure 6.4** INTERPRETATIVE SYNTHESIS OF PERIPHERAL EVENTS INFORMING THE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF UNIONIZED EXPERT LABOR
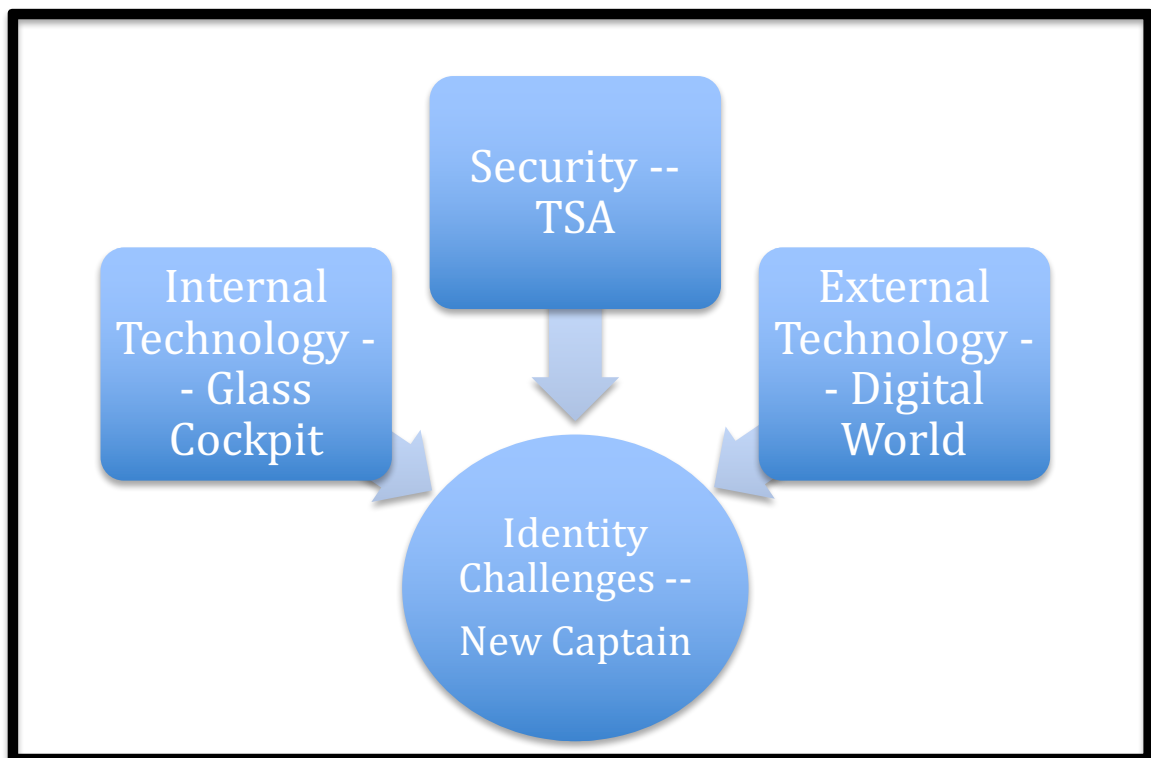


## 6.3 SECTION 2 – HIGH ORDER RECURRING CONVERSATIONS

### 6.3.1 THE EVOLUTION OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN U.S. AIRLINE PILOTS

The deregulation of the United States airline industry in 1978 was a catalyst for sweeping change. The context to this federal legislation is addressed in Chapter Four. Freedom of entry and exit from markets, pricing set by individual airlines and the opportunity for new entrants to add a new competitive element were seen as improvements to the airline industry and intended to be a benefit to the travelling public (United States Congress, House Committee on Public Works and Transportation, United States, 1979). Contributors to this research were emphatic that what resulted was a business model of predatory pricing to

disadvantage new entrants and similarly compel the exit from successful markets of financially limited carriers. Concentration of the hub-and-spoke system, as reported by contributors, created inefficiencies for the travelling public as well as the work life of pilots. Baggage fees, fees for movies and other inflight amenities, lost luggage and on-time performance harangues by passengers were now part of the life of a commercial airline pilot.

None of these realities was of the making of the pilot, but contributors to this research routinely expressed that issues such as these, and others, were brought to them as the lead representative of their airline. Each of these contributes to a new identity for commercial airlines pilots. In numerous discussions of the post-deregulation world of commercial aviation, the underlying issue of professional identity was clear; their professional status and professional practice were increasingly altered. This alteration was manifest in increasing responsibility without a commensurate increase in authority. Pre-deregulation, the Captain was in charge. Post-deregulation, the Captain was often now the front-line recipient of concerns he/she had little capacity to remedy. The corporation set policy and determined remedy.

The role of the Captain has now become more one of a messenger with passenger and service issues. As Captain Baker made clear, "the corporate structure at his airline does not want the Captain to have even the authority he's entitled to under the FAR's and the FAA Certification." Captain Baker went on in our discussions to state that the goal of his airline is to redesign his position "as a job, not a profession."

The changes in professional identity that this legislation precipatated, manifest in the professional standing and professional practice of the research population, were recognized and regularly shared with the researcher. Captain Baker's summative narrative represents the collective conversations.

> Captain Baker- "the differences started pretty soon after deregulation…airlines and the piloting profession changed…not only did the airlines and piloting profession change, but the management of the carriers and the ownership of the carriers changed as well…corporate raiders came…they started pulling assets and pulling cash out of the carriers…they were in it for purely the bottom line…they were in it for what they could get out of the airline and they took it out of labor and especially the piloting profession."

The contributors to this research made clear that deregulation of the United States airline industry in 1978 was a catalyst for sweeping change. The myriad economic, service, managerial and ownership changes ultimately lead to sweeping changes in the professional understanding of self and the view by others of commercial airline pilots.

### 6.3.2 THE UNDERMINING OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY FOLLOWING AN M/A EVENT

The contributors had much to say about about the challenges to their professional identity following their merger-acquisition events. Consistent with the analytic framework of IPA, the R/I asked contributors initially to speak to the characteristics of professional conduct prior to their M/A event. This context provided chronology and revealed comparative experience to better interpret post-merger lived experience.

Prior to M/A events, the contributors to this research, without exception, made clear that their experience was positive and supportive from their fellow pilots, their union and their employer. Growing pains and a learning curve for this new life were expressed, but there was joy and affirmation in their voices as the R/I explored their pre-merger lived experiences. Comments such as "I was really happy (Captain Alexander), "I had found a home" (Captain Dixon) and "It was a dream come true" (Captain Griffin) were representative of the participants' collective experience. This positive and professional conduct experience was also evidenced with the R/I in their new-hire and recurrent training experiences, in their union experiences and with their employing airline experiences. As Captain Fisher shared, "awesome experience…I just really wanted to be there." The pre-merger eperience of the contributors provided valuable context and a sensitivity to context as their professional lives were later confronted with a merger-acquisition event.

Post merger, the contributors to this research expressed a period of liminality in their view of self and the view shared by others (Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly, 2014). Each of their key psychological contracts was in a similar state of liminality (Kennett-Hensel et al., 2012). As the unknown became known, decisions about self and their view of self by others were at a fork in the road. Captain Evans called this fork in the road "a decision fork." Either the individual pilot was willing to acccept the new professional status or they were not. Captain Evans described his feelings following his M/A event, an experience repeated in many conversations with participants.

> Captain Evans- "the dream I once had of becoming an airline pilot, nurtured along by
> loving parents and gracious mentors quickly eroded…the grace quickly eroded into

greed…the dream quickly eroded into a nightmare…to not be respected…it was really difficult to take…disheartening to say the least."

Colleagues, friends, mentors, unions and airline management all had a position on the future professional status of these members of unionized expert labor and it often was not a position comfortable for the contributors. In the view of contributors, their professional standing, professional status and professional practice were all being undermined. This belief was shared by both acquiring and acquired pilots contributing to this research. Ultimately, pilots had to either acquiesce or resist.

### 6.3.2.1  U.S. AIRLINE PILOTS ADAPTATION BEHAVIOR TO IDENTITY THREAT

IPA was chosen as the methodology and analytic framework for this research for many reasons, not the least of which was its capacity to understand an individual's being when something important happens to them (Smith et al., 2009). The research of Pratt (2006) and colleagues provides empirical evidence that significant change showcases professional identity. In this research, a merger-acquisition event is the important event that showcases professional identity.

The conversation about this important event in contributors' professional lives was initially a conversation about how doubt, not a common trait for airline pilots, was now "on their radar," as one contributor stated. Each of the contributors to this research shared a sense of doubt about themselvs and others view of them, about who they were, and may become, following their M/A event. These conversations centered on the individual's sense of threat to their identity. Who they were was over and who they were to be in the future was still unknown.

Identity threat is well established in the literature (Petriglieri, 2011), but to hear it described in participant after participant interview was meaningful in beginning to understand this uniquely situated research population. How each contributor to this research processed, negotiated and made their choice of course for their professional being was a seminal interview with each contributor to this research. The threat to contributors' identity was not isolated to individuals; their union and their employer raised a similar threat.

Implicit in the institutional challenges the contributors to this research shared was the loss of trust. Participants no longer trusted their union or their management. As conversations with contributors proceeded, they began to share how they determined who they could trust. The test was both simple and profound: "are you with me or are you with them," as Captain Baker stated. This was the clear line of demarcation.

Clarity is an identity attribute that resonates with pilots. Airline pilots' adaptation behavior to identity threat resolved around trust. Camps of like-minded people formed following an M/A event with each of the airlines in this study. To be in a camp, people had to be trusted. Exploring identity threat proved to be a revealing set of interview discussions to understand the being of today's commercial airline pilot.

The R/I would routinely meet with pilots following a flight. They may have flown all day or all night or part of both. It was common for these pilots to share that their work day had been in excess of twelve hours. They typically had crossed multiple time zones and sometimes an ocean. They often shared that they were tired. It was not the exhaustion from flying that troubled them; this was a life they "loved." It was the events occurring on the ground that, even after a long duty period of flying, caused them to say, as Captain Collins did, "great to see you, I'm glad you came." They wanted to share their experience following their M/A event. They often shared the difficulties of redefining their professional values. Trust and clarity were recurring themes in each of these discussions. Who to trust, who can be trusted, and why should I trust at all, were topics of much discussion. An M/A event is a long and tedious experience for a licensed professional group used to making decisions in a split second, whose autonomy and self-regulation are connerstones of their professional identity. The lack of clarity about each of their professional paths forward informed their being.

The experience following their M/A events lead the contributors to this research to engage in coping mechanisms that were clear to them and that they could trust. Captain Collins made his trust very clear to the R/I, "I trust in the Lord." Others shared more operational coping strategies such as Captain Baker maintained a "self-image that you are a professional," or Captain Fisher who focused on "flying the very best I can." Each of the coping strategies was also an admittance that they had to resign themselves to this significant organizational change.

Each of the contributors to this research made clear that it was not change that they were concerned about. Their professional lives were all about change and challenge – different airports, different weather, different aircraft, different crews; change and challenge were constants as described by the participants. The change and challenge of their professional practice was something they communicated that they enjoyed. As Captain Evans stated, "the weather was ¼-mile visibility in fog, it was to be an autoland and it was my leg, I loved it."

Pilots who contributed to this research felt very differently about the changes and challenges of their M/A event. They were concerned what this organizational change would mean to

who they were.  Their view of self and other's view of them was the focus of these crucial conversations.

Identity threat, resulting from the changes and challenges of an M/A event, leads eventually to a human response (Clark et al., 2010).  Pilots are strong-willed and have great faith in their judgement and decision making.  It was these well developed professional attributes that served as both aid and hindrance as the contributors shared their lived experiences and began to employ adaptive behaviors to their respective identity threats.  The strong-will and judgement and decision making skills observed in pilots was an aid in that thay had experience in their professional practice in dealing with events when things disrupt the "calm and joy" of routine flying.  It was also a hindrance, though, in that their professional experiences relied upon a clear hierarchy of command, autonomy of decision making and self-regulation, and each of these attributes, integral to their professional identity, now was absent.

Without exception, litigation was the path taken by each of the major airlines referenced in this research.  The changes and challenges of M/A events in the U.S. airline industry that confronted the being of these commercial airline pilots were litigation involving when and how professional status would be altered.  As decisions were reached and operationally effected, a chasm of distinction, disengagement and resistance was often the lived experience of contributors.  Pilots from the acquiring airline were clear that their interests were superior to those of the acquired airline.  The acquired airline pilot group made clear to the researcher that they did not share that view.  This view of self was a catalyst for disengagement between the respective pilot groups following their M/A event.  The disengagement between the acquired and acquiring pilot groups created a friction and resistance on matters of professional practice and status between the opposing pilot groups.  Litigation was the ultimate outcome for each of the airline mergers of this research.

### 6.3.3 THE EVOLUTION OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A UNION MEMBER NOW

Unions speak to the benefits of collectivism (Freeman and Medoff, 1984).  Collectivism is at the heart of creating a win-win environment for the improvement of labor-management relations (Piore, 2011).  The challenges to this ambitious perspective are several: "(a) demographic changes, (b) the role of the union itself as an institution, (c) the state, especially the legal system, (d) globalization and neoliberalism and (e) the employer anti-union offensive" (Clawson and Clawson, 1999, p. 97).  In this research, there were recurring

conversations about what it meant to be a union member today, following significant organizational change. Conversations with the participants touched on each of the challenges described by Clawson (1999).

Demographic changes to union presence in the workplace is detailed in Chapter Four. Labor scholars have taken a largely quantitative approach to these changes (Farber, 2005; Freeman, 2015; Western and Rosenfeld, 2011). The contributors to this research put a face on the change of demographics. First, airline pilots are different following a M/A event. The needs and interests of the individual now outweigh the collective interest. The historical demographic of airline pilots as collectively focused were now making clear the new face of airline pilots as being individually focused. A measure of the contributors to this research made clear the collective demographic was gone and the individual demographic was the norm.

The demographics of leadership and management have changed too. Pilot managers and corporate managers view the needs and interest of the corporation to trump the view of their key employees, pilots. And lastly, the contributors to this research were most emphatic that the union demographics changed dramatically also. Union leadership now viewed their members as not equal; legacy employees had a special and superior status to acquired members. Each of the demographic perspetives shared with the R/I resulted in an understanding of a change in influence for each of the perspectives.

This last point about preferential awareness and recognition for legacy pilots speaks to the role of unions as an institution. Regularly, contributors to this research made clear that the union was often foe and not friend. They shared that their union chose short-sighted strategies and thus "bear a significant blame for its own decline" (p. 98) in trust and status with large constituencies of pilots (Clawson and Clawson, 1999). In a profession where seniority is not portable and where the outcome of one's professional standing is sought to be subordinated by the union to which the pilot is paying dues is not something that contributors to this research felt would be easily forgotten. The union as institution has taken a short-sighted approach in the view of contributors.

As mentioned previously, the professional status of pilots following an M/A event wound up in litigation in every major airline merger-acquisition transaction of this study. This experience was highlighted in the distinction, reported by contributors, between justice and the law. Pilots' sense of the need for justice was clear, but the law was about the law and not

necessarily justice. The contributors to this research were keenly aware of this distinction. Clawson and Clawson (1999) state, "schizophrenia is the dominant characteristic of U.S. labor law" (p. 100). The rights and responsibilities of unionized workers and their employers is reviewed in Chapter Four. The schizophrenic nature of labor law resides in the dichotomy of workers being able to strike, but an employer's right to permanently replace them (Clawson and Clawson, 1999). The state of the legal system was often shared with the R/I as lengthy, tedious and often unjust, not to mention quite expensive. The costs were often borne by the pilots themselves as their opposition was often their union.

The effects of globalization and neoliberalism were shared by contributors as concerns in a more simplified form than these market capitalism terms. The contributors were clear that it was a management mantra to challenge labor to minimize labor costs because of economic threat from competing airlines. Management's message was that this economic threat would manifest itself in job loss and pay and benefit reductions to those remaining. The contributors made clear the role seniority played. There were pilots who relied on their airline employment to pay their bills and there were others who had other sources of income that allowed them more economic freedom. Economic freedom was presented as an often clear determinant in a pilot's decision to seek their true self (McCall and Simmons, 1978), or to acquiesce in their post-merger experience.

Unionized labor's contract opportunities to seek improved pay or more secure pay and benefits was regularly met with management actions to thwart such efforts. The courts, politicians and lobbying interests have each launched efforts to hold labor in check (Clawson and Clawson, 1999). Contributors described this anti-union sentiment. This sentiment was further heightened when their own union told its members that it would be best to not seek such contractual improvements. Discussions with participants detailed both their union and fellow pilots' efforts to accept reductions in both pay and benefits. This was not a universal experience, but a majority experience.

Following the 2008 financial crisis the major airlines in the United States returned to profitability and airline contract negotiations changed from minimizing loss to maximizing gain. Profitable airlines, impacted favorably from a reduction in fuel costs and industry consolidation, continued to employ negotiating strategies to limit labor's participation in their airline's success. As a contributor in particpant observation stated, "in the bad times, labor has to pay; in the good times it's time for a management pay raise."

What it means to be a union member today, as shared by contributors, is far different than what was envisioned in the formative days of the union movement.  Contributors were aware of the potential benefits of collectivism in their professional life, professional status and professional practice, but were quick to point out the harsh realities of what it means to be a member of unionized expert labor today in the U.S. airline industry.  The contributors made clear that individualism trumped collectivism with the U.S. airline industry today.

### 6.3.3.1 THE IMPACT OF UNIONS ON A PILOT'S SENSE OF SELF

Contributors spoke of loss when focused on their union experience.  Pilots who had been elected representatives of their base or domicile and actively involved before their M/A event, had become disenchanted, without exception, in their post-merger life.  Said Captain Griffin, "I was actively involved in union work; I am now a dissenting member."

Unionism was an integral part of airline life as contributors were quick to point out in the pre-merger years of their airline life.  It was identifying to be in the union.  If there was a question or problem, contributors were clear that without hesitation you went to your union representative.  Following their M/A experience, contributors had a far different sense of their union.  Captain Baker said following his M/A experience, "I have zero commitment to my union."  The contributors included their allegiance and commitment to their union as an integral part of their sense of self; they were a union member, not a dissenting member or conscientious objector.  Contributors commonly expressed vitriol and disengagement when an interview broached their post-merger union identification.  In exploring their union commitment post-merger, contributors were clear that there was no universal allegiance to their union; rather, there was a lack of trust, a lack of commitment, and in some cases, disparagement of their union when the R/I would seek to understand how unionism contributed to their sense of self.

Post-merger, contributors to this research spoke with clarity that their union "did not represent them" (Captain Alexander) and their understanding of self was now defined by a resistance to their union.  The clarity that a participant would offer about their lack of belief in and commitment to their union was defining for who they were.  These statements, routinely made in the presence of colleagues, were like "a badge of honor," as Captain Evans stated.

The sense of self that had union membership as integral during the pre-merger had become a source of dissent.  This was not only a source of dissent for their union, but also a source of

dissent in that their union no longer was identifying for contributors to this research to understand who they were.

### 6.3.4  THE EMERGENCE OF PILOTS WHO BEHAVE UNPROFESSIONALLY

The pilots of this research were hired from the late 1970's to the late 1990's.  During that span, the earlier hire contributors were largely miltary trained; the latter hired pilots were largely civilian trained.  While each contributor had their own individual identity attributes, it was clear that the norms and behaviors of the miltary trained pilots were similar to one another, certainly with nuance and exception, but primarily similar.  Similarly, the norms and behaviors of the civilan trained contributors correlated.  The early lived experience of these two main groups was also distinct.  Family life, social life, academic life and certainly, professional life, had different norms in the two groups.  It is important to note in this cross-case review that pilots knew the skill levels of one another.  As reported, there were strong pilots from both groups.  It was not product that was different as much as it was process; process in their development and their path to grow both professionally and personally.  The earlier hired pilots, as reported in a participant obsevation period, were more "by the book" and the latter hired group were more, "I'll do it my way."

After reflection, the R/I sought to understand whether the later hired pilots had just become professionals in a different era or whether their sense of being allowed them to see new norms to professional behavior following their post-merger life to be acceptable.  The data from contributors is not clear.  It appears that either or both options are plausible.

In the case of the earlier hired pilots, the data was more clear.  They had experienced airline life where cost-cutting was not the norm.  They had also experienced times of cost-cutting and layoffs as their careers progressed; many had experienced furlough, but they seemed sanguine about this history as earlier furloughs were not directed at them, they were directed throughout their airline and their industry.  The furlough affected them, but they shared recognition that it was not directed at them selectively.  The seniority system was clear and strictly followed during reductions in force before their M/A event.

In the post-merger airline environment, the conduct of individual pilots became more divergent.  This divergence and individualism was reported by contributors of both groups to be anathema to being a professional.  The support and alignment with one another on matters of practice and status were fundamental to this group of unionized licensed professionals and

this standard was quickly eroding. Previous unprofessional standards were now becoming the norm.

For example, pilots shared stories of heated arguments over the financial distribution of awards resulting from litigation following their M/A event. The stories included experiences where pilots of differing seniorities would debate one another on why they should receive a greater share than another pilot or group of pilots when determining the distribution of a court award. It was the more junior pilots who viewed that their financial award should be greater than more senior pilots. Examples such as this were emblematic in this cross-case interpretative analysis of the empowerment of individualism and the subordination of collectivism. When the R/I would explore why an equal division of an award would not be a solution, opposing sides were quick to discount such a consideration. Unity was previously part of the professional credo. Previously, any pilot who was out for themselves would be thought of poorly. Following M/A events, looking out for one's self was not only not considered unprofessional, it was considered an individual imperative. Seniority was no longer sacrosanct and once unprofessional conduct was now, post- M/A, becoming standard.

### 6.3.5 A PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION DISCUSSION ON JUDGEMENT AND DECISION MAKING

This final high order topic brings together the other pieces of this second section of the high order topics. It operationalizes the understanding of self and being of a pilot furloughed following a merger-acquisition event. The pilot who is the central figure of this participant observation discussion was successful in gaining employment at another carrier, a national airline. A national airline is a smaller airline with fewer airplanes, less capital, fewer benefits, and in this contributor's airline case, no pension. A national airline is an airline that flies across the nation, but is not a major airline.

The conversation was between this now national airline pilot and colleagues. Each had been furloughed as a result of their respective M/A events, and each had to make a decision about whether to return to the major airline that had laid them off. It is important to contextually understand that this group of pilots was close. Not only were they friendly with one another, they valued and respected one another's counsel. They trusted one another. The conversation which follows identifies these participant observation contributors as Pilot – a central figure of the discussion, furloughed from his major airline, flying for a national airline, with a recall notice from his major airline to return – and Pilot 1, Pilot 2, Pilot 3, Pilot 4, Pilot 5 and Pilot 6 who contributed to this discussion with Pilot.

Pilot- "I'm currently being paid as an over 10 year Captain…if I go back I'll be a 3<sup>rd</sup> year pay F/O…seems like another 5-7 years to upgrade, again if I go back…less than 20 years to retirement, so if I go I may just break even on the straight pay figure…if I stay I can gamble my national airline will be bought out by someone respectable and not go out of business…if I go back to my major airline, the proposed seniority integration by the union will put me at 82% on the list so will I be furloughed again when they figure out they don't need us?...I couldn't survive another furlough…what do you guys think?"

Pilot 1- "Just my opinion…don't leave that left seat."

Pilot 2- "Respect yourself and your dignity…don't come back to mediocrity and uncreative management who thinks of saving money, not earning it and the respect of its employees and customers."

Pilot 3- "Think in terms of quality of life…Where you live, commuting, etc…throw the toxic atmosphere at your major airline in your thinking…I would not rule out your national airline being a possible merger-acquisition target for one of the other majors…keep your ears to the rails…keep an eye on the capitalization value of your national airline…stay awake and make a decision that fits your life."

Pilot 4- "Decisions like this one are difficult, idiosyncratic and emotional…First off, remove the emotion…this is a business decision…you are the CEO of your Family…do what is best for them and their future…making decisions based on decision, especially anyone else's is, well, – foolish…next put your arms around the fact that everyone's position is different, likewise your place if you return…that means that everyone's underlying facts of the decision are different…just because someone else made a certain decision doesn't mean it is the right one for you and your family."

Pilot 5- "Yeah, it's what Pilot 4 said, get rid of the emotion!...I've been back at my major airline two years now…I wish it hadn't worked out the way it did, but guess what– it did!...I moved on, had a blast flying a new airplane and flew with some great guys."

Pilot 6- " Really Pilot 5…how can they possibly be great guys knowing their union stole your seniority, your Captain seat, insulted you and segregated you to a domicile and airplane for years and years?...I'm glad you were able to move on, but for some of us moving on is not an option."

Approximately two weeks later, Pilot had reached his decision after much thought and conversation with his family. He had occasion to see Pilot 6 during an aircraft swap at an airport on the other side of the United States from their original discussion with the group of pilots quoted above.

> Pilot- "good to see you and great speaking with you guys a couple weeks ago…I've made my decision to stay at my national airline…for me personally, it's worth the risk of a possible bad seniority integration later than to give up the money and quality of life…I completely understand we are worlds apart with my drive to work and your 6 hour commute…the way I look at it, my sweat equity at my national airline should be somewhat portible in a future integration…I just don't see how I would go from left seat to the street again in any scenario in a post McCaskill-Bond world."

The Pilot and Pilot 6 exchanged small talk for a few more minutes awaiting their respective next aircraft. The Pilot wanted to share one remaining salient factor in his decision to remain at his national airline and not accept recall to the major airline that had furloughed him following his merger-acquisition event. Pilot shared with Pilot 6 the following exchange. Pilot had encountered a pilot from his furloughed major airline he knew and previously was friendly. Pilot and the major airline pilot he was previously employed, had a brief conversation in a coffee line at an airport about a week earlier. Pilot describes his former major airline colleague as Arrogant Pilot and shared the exchange between himself and his former colleague with his trusted friend, Pilot 6.

> Pilot- "maybe my decision is somewhat skewed after a recent encounter with possibly the most arrogant (his former major airline) pilot alive."
>
> Arrogant Pilot- "so when are you guys going to get your pay rates up…we're all kind of sick of you holding the bar so low."
>
> Pilot- "hopefully, we'll have something to vote on soon…it's tough crafting a CBA from scratch."
>
> Arrogant Pilot- "If you come back at least you'll finally be getting a retirement, huh?"
>
> Pilot- "Don't get me wrong, we have a long way to go, but we do get profit sharing, plus they just announced we would be getting our profit sharing distribution early."
>
> Arrogant Pilot- "You guys are getting profit sharing?...I'm sure they can just take that away from you since you don't have a contract."

Pilot- "That was the tone for the 5 minutes in the coffee line with that douche…I know
its completely anecdotal and every pilot group has their share, but I'm just too old to
want to deal with that kind of attitude…all that being said, I totally agree with Pilot 4, I
know I can't let my emotional encounter cloud the business decision I've
made…bottom line, I don't believe putting myself in the bottom 20% is the best
strategy for me and my family…see you soon, I hope."

The participant observation experience shared in this final reflection is emblematic of
numerous conversations observed in the field work of this research. It is showcased as a
summative participant observation of this study.

Professional identity displays this unique pilot group in crucial conversation about who they
are, how others view them, and who they may become following an M/A event. This
participant observation period shares the human experience following significant
organizational change. This observaion period further displays the professional and
operational choices at a decision fork in the professional lives and professional practice of
members of unionized expert labor.

Voices of contributors to this research illuminate a lived experience of pilots undermining
other pilots. Adaptive behaviors following these experiences showcase both professional and
unprofessional behavior. One pilot stressed his airline's profit sharing as a good and positive
experience and when his former major airline pilot colleague heard it he chose to undermine
the statement and disparage the pilot that had undergone furlough from his airline.

The idea that a contract, a CBA, was fundamental to unionism was used in a selective way.
Unionism, as described by contributors, is far more than a contract, it is a package of both
transactional and relational agreements. The former colleague displays how the relational
agreements between union members and their union as institution had changed. This impact
in the change in unionism is manifest in this text by showing the shift in unionism from
collectivism to individualism. These changes are directly related to contributors'
understanding and sense of self.

At the end of this lived experience review, the reader is able to see both professional identity
and unprofessional identity in raw form. The comments made by the Pilot's former
colleague, the pilot he described as arrogant, were unprofessional; this pilot's language and
lack of brotherhood was interpreted as unprofessional conduct with a fellow professional and
former union brother. Pilot kept his cool, offered appropriate and affirmitive response to the

former colleague's line of questioning, but knew that his sense of self, his professional identity, could not coexist with his former major airline colleague. Pilot made a decision – he would remain with his national airline.

The first order of analysis in Chapter Five showcases the individual cases; the second order of analysis in Chapter Six offers a cross-case review of the contributors to this research. Peripheral events and high order discussion topics are further offered to share the understanding of the preponderance of the data as well as nuance and individuality. Following the field work, the R/I engaged in review, reading, re-reading and reflection of the many voices of the contributors. What emerged are the subordinate and superordinate themes of this research.

## 6.4   EMERGENCE OF SUBORDINATE AND SUPERORDINATE THEMES

### 6.4.1   IPA QUALITY CRITERIA TO REACH EMERGING THEMES

Consistent with the quality goals of this research a re-reading and re-reflecting time is valuable prior to the determination of the subordinate and superordinate themes of an IPA research project (Smith, 2015). These reviews are valuable to bring the R/I and the reader back into currency with the quality criteria described in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three details Sanders' (1982) criteria for evaluating organizational research. These criteria, oulined in the data analysis section of the Research Design and Methodology Chapter, provide the initial criteria to evaluate the quality of this research.

Sanders' (1982) criteria emcompasses four components. First is the utilization of a conjunctive approach. This research employs both semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant observation. Second is the identification of common themes or invariants, which displays what was learned. This is accomplished in textual and thematic detail in both Chapter Five and Chapter Six. The third criteria requires the R/I to engage in the double hermeneutic to understand the what (*noema*) of the participants' lived experience. The *noema* is expressed and detailed in each individual case and given a cross-case review in this chapter. Sense and meaning making occured throughout the R/I's time with the participants, but it is in phase three of the interview data that *eidetic reduction* is expressly offered for each participant. The sense and meaning making of both the individual and cross-case review text offered addresses the why or essence of their lived experience.

Yardleys' (2000) research provides additional criteria to assess the quality of an IPA study. The first principle advanced by Yardley (2000) addresses the need for qualitative research to have a sensitivity to context. Chapter Four of this thesis provides an entire chapter sharing the macro and micro contextual perspectives of the participants. Chapter Three addresses the requirement for sensitivity to context in the research design and methodology, and the participants' interactional voices are heard with sensitivity in both the data collection and analysis. The second criteria involves the researcher's commitment and rigor. From the time spent with each volunteer participant interviewee (over 30 hours each) to the time spent in participant observation (over 500 hours), the commitment was extensive. The quality of interviews was achieved through the developmental and iterative processes of a 35-pilot pilot study. The third criteria addresses transparency and coherence. A purposive sampling procedure to reflect the larger pilot population was detailed, and "how the interview schedule was constructed and what steps were used in the analysis," were each displayed to assure each of these criteria was met and interpretatively manifest in the research (Smith et al., 2009, p. 182).

Together, Sanders (1982) and Yardley (2000) provide the quality criteria framework for this research. Each of these criteria were engaged prior to presenting the subordinate and superordinate themes of this exploratory study.

With the first and second order of analysis now presented, the presentation of insightful and novel peripheral events, and a review of the high order topics contributing to understanding the phenomena under study, the R/I was able to conclude themes contributing to the professional identity literature as well as a recommmendation to alter current professional practice. Interpretative analysis, grounded in phenomenology, hermeneutics and ideography were at the core of both the process and findings that follow. Following this deeper reflection and consistent with the IPA quality criteria principles offered, the subordinate and superordinate themes are now provided to arrive at accurate and meaningful conclusions. Tables 6.7- 6.11 depict the preponderance of data resulting in each of the superordinate themes and union practice recommendation of this research.

**Table 6.7**  SUPERORDINATE THEME 1 AND SUBORDINATE THEMES 1.1 AND 1.2

| Superordinate Theme 1 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| The professional and personal standards of commercial airline pilots are unique in relation to other professions. | | | |
| Subordinate Themes 1.1 & 1.2 | | | |
| | 1.1 Unique Personal standards | 1.2 Unique Professional standards | Addresses Research Questions 1, 2 & 3 |
| Case | 1.1 Present | 1.2 Present | |
| Captain Alexander | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Baker | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Collins | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Dixon | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Evans | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Fisher | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | NO, RQ #3 |
| Captain Griffin | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Participant Observation | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |

**Table 6.8**  SUPERORDINATE THEME 2 AND SUBORDINATE THEMES 2.1 AND 2.2

| Superordinate Theme 2 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| There is a fragility of relational agreements following significant organizational change. | | | |
| Subordinate Themes 2.1 & 2.2 | | | |
| | 2.1 Reciprocity loss | 2.2 Expectation loss | Addresses Research Questions 1, 2 & 3 |
| Case | 2.1 Present | 2.2 Present | |
| Captain Alexander | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Baker | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Collins | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Dixon | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Evans | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Fisher | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | NO, RQ #3 |
| Captain Griffin | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Participant Observation | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |

**Table 6.9**    SUPERORDINATE THEME 3 AND SUBORDINATE THEMES 3.1 AND 3.2

| Superordinate Theme 3 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **The belief and understanding of being by self and others is inconsistent and poses threat following a merger-acquisition event.** | | | |
| **Subordinate Themes 3.1 & 3.2** | | | |
| | 3.1 Self-definition | 3.2 Other's definition | Addresses Research Questions 1, 2 & 3 |
| Case | 3.1 Present | 3.2 Present | |
| Captain Alexander | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Baker | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Collins | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Dixon | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Evans | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Fisher | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Griffin | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Participant Observation | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |

**Table 6.10**   SUPERORDINATE THEME 4 AND SUBORDINATE THEMES 4.1 AND 4.2

| Superordinate Theme 4 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **The ability to personally and professionally adapt following significant organizational change is defining for the identity negotiation of commercial airline pilots.** | | | |
| **Subordinate Themes 4.1 & 4.2** | | | |
| | 4.1 Social context adaptation capacity with Peers, Management and Union | 4.2 Professional Practice ambiguity adaptation | Addresses Research Questions 1, 2 & 3 |
| Case | 4.1 Present | 4.2 Present | |
| Captain Alexander | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Baker | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Collins | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Dixon | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Evans | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Fisher | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Griffin | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Participant Observation | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |

**Table 6.11**  LEGLISLATIVE INITATIVE THEME 1 AND UNION PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION

| Superordinate Recommendation | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| The issue of seniority integration following a merger-acquisition event would benefit by changing regulatory policy and union practice. | | | |
| **Subordinate Recommendation 1 & 2** | | | |
| | 1<br>Lack of Status | 2<br>Policy Change | Addresses Research Questions<br>1, 2 & 3 |
| Case | 1 Present | 2 Present | |
| Captain Alexander | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Baker | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Collins | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Dixon | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Evans | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Fisher | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Captain Griffin | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |
| Participant Observation | AFFIRMED | AFFIRMED | YES |

## 6.5  SUMMARY

Chapter Six takes the first order of analysis offered in Chapter Five and broadens the review in a second order of analysis, a cross-case review. Each participant is viewed chronologically and collectively through each phase of the interview process in both text and interpretative audit.

The cross-case review incorporates the interview data in an interpretative discussion of each phase of the interviews and provides a thematic synthesis for each phase. The sum of the data contributing to the cross-case review benefits from the inclusion of peripheral events as well as a series of high order topics informing the professional identity of commercial airline pilots.

The identification of themes is provided both in text and thematic display. *Noema* and *eidetic reduction* of each participant's lived experience is offered. A sensitivity to context, commitment, rigor, transparency and coherence of the data provide the focus and quality assurance delivered in this chapter. The voices of the contributors to this research are the data and the meaning of this research. Sensemaking occurs throughout and is specifically viewed

in the third-phase of the Dolbeare and Schuman interview approach utilized.  Nuance and individuality are given attention to aid in interpretative analysis that is both broad and deep.

Understanding the being of a seldom explored population provides an original contribution to literature and practice for this group of unionized members of expert labor.  This second order of analysis embarks on a new stream of professional identity research.  This research charts the beginning of a journey of future qualitative research.

Chapter Seven will take the subordinate and superordinate themes offered in the third section of this cross-case review and will enter an expanded conversation involving each of the superordinate themes contributing to theory emerging from this research.  Chapter Seven will then arrive at the findings of this reserch.

Chapter Eight will then follow a similar course to offer a policy recommendation.  This contribution to practice will enter an expanded conversation involving a legislative initiative to alter current union practice.

# Chapter 7 Discussion

## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter enters an expanded conversation on each of the emerging subordinate and superordinate themes outlined in Chapter Six. Advancing the initial interpretative analysis, Chapter Seven engages in discussion of literature, methodology and further inductive analysis to deliver the findings of this exploratory research. Four contributions to new knowledge are offered to expand the professional identity literature.

The analytic framework of this research relies upon subjective interpretations and inductive reasoning (Smith et al., 2009). The subjective interpretations and inductive reasoning are derived from consideration of the two opposing views of identity offered in Chapter Two and linked to the voices of the participants in Chapter Five. The opposing views engage in the debate of professional identity as stable and enduring consistent with thought leaders in traditional social psychology (Schein, 1978; Erikson, 1980; McAdams, 2001) or as malleable (Guichard et al., 2012), dynamic (Gioia et al., 2000) and provisional (Ibarra, 1999). This second view aligns with the postmodernist view of identity as multifaceted and fragmented (Gergen, 1992; Markus and Nurius, 1986).

IPA provides the analytic framework, namely phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith et al., 2009), to consider the two opposing streams of literature. Further analytics were utilized to provide an additional orthogonal component to elevate the sense and meaning making of this research. Among these included: identity theory, utilizing Erikson's (1968) eight stages of development, professional identity theory drawing upon Ibarra's identity negotiation and professional adaptation processes (Ibarra, 1999), and the role of the Psychological Contract on relational agreements in the workplace (Rousseau, 1989). Chapter Five and Chapter Six annotate additional scholars whose work resides largely outside IPA to further engage and enhance the orthoganal component. These and the additional identity constructs provided in Chapter Two contribute to the interpretative analysis of the two opposing streams of literature. IPA, and each of the further analytics, provide the analytic framework for this research. Each of these analytics is utilized to advance the R/I's subjective understanding and interpretative analysis of the phenomenon under study.

This discussion expands on the data provided in Chapter Five and Chapter Six to arrive at an understanding of the "being" of unionized expert labor in the U.S. Commercial airline pilots constitute the explored population. Further text, literature, nuance and interpretation

contribute to understanding this exploratory study in a broader context. This chapter advances the collective understanding of each PV/I interview and each participant observation period to address the meaningfulness of each contributor to the research questions, to advancing the summative understanding of the phenomenon experienced in the fieldwork, and to make further sense and meaning of the emerging themes presented in Chapter Six.

The superordinate themes presented here are not in frequency or precedence order of any type, nor are they reflective of any order of meaningfulness of the data. Each superordinate theme contributes to and aids in constituting the being of the research population. The data collection and interpretative analysis is guided by R/I belief, philosophy of science and Heideggerian phenomenological understanding (Heidegger, 1962). The inclusive understanding of each superordinate theme collectively seeks to expose the professional identity of unionized expert labor.

Chapter Seven begins with a thematic view of the data collection from the field work. The professional identity model offered by the researcher represents a syntheses of the contributions to this research. The interpretative understanding, inductive reasoning and hermeneutic circles provided in participant volunteer interviews and participant observation periods culminated in this professional identity model of unionized expert labor. The model will be utilized as a visual support as each superordinate theme is expanded.

Chapter Seven concludes with a summary of the findings of this research. Fundamental to each finding of this research is the view, offered by participants and supported by Stream 2 of the literature review, that professional identity is socially constructed, dynamic and malleable (Markus and Nurius, 1986; Gioia et al., 2000; Guichard et al., 2012; Clark et al., 2010). Four contributions to new knowledge in the professional identity literature for U.S. commercial airline pilots, members of unionized expert labor in the United States, are offered.

## 7.2 PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY MODEL FOR UNIONIZED EXPERT LABOR FOLLOWING MERGER-ACQUISITION EVENTS

The potential for disengagement and the realization of actual disengagement by pilots was a central point of discussion in this research. What engagement or disengagement means for a member of unionized expert labor, following a merger-acquisition event provides the root of undertanding of a unionized expert laborer's being, their sense of self and their professional identity. How significant organizational change illuminates professional identity, the processes of disengagement and reengagement and when and how they occur frame the

foundation of the professional identity model offered in this chapter. The view of self and others view of them following an M/A event informs the phenomenon of interest in this research. The exploration of each of the research questions is showcased by the participants' actions and reactions to significant change. It is an external event, in this research an M/A event, that showcases the dynamic, malleable and multifaceted understanding of professional identity of commercial airline pilots. Table 7.1 provides the participants' thematic view of their socially constructed model for pilot identity.

When Oscar Munoz took over at United Airlines as CEO in 2015, he visited each of the airlines' main facilities. His tenure began over a decade following United's merger with Continental Airlines. In an interview with the *New York Times* Munoz was asked what stood out to him the most on his initial tour? Munoz stated, "what resonates, and what I feel most of all, is just a complete disengagement of folks" (Mouawad, 2015, p. B1). Disengagement was described by participants regularly and reported by United Airlines Chief Executive Officer to the press over a decade from the airlines M/A event.

It is change, reported and observed, that showcases the professional identity of the research population. The professional identity model offered here provides an adaptive model to begin to understand the professional identity of unionized expert labor. This chapter takes the first and second order of analysis, each of the emerging themes, peripheral events and high order topics of this research and applies the model to thematically view each resulting superordinate theme. The model begins with an awareness and understanding that context and a senstivity to context following significant organizational change are the starting points to begin to understand the professional identity of members of unionized expert labor in the United States airline industry. Participants made clear that external contextual perspective was the starting point for understanding their being. In this research, significant organizational change, exemplified by a merger-acquisition event, was the starting point for the dynamic identification of this uniquely situated group of licensed professionals.

 Table 7.1 represents the thematic model to begin to understand the professional identity of commercial airline pilots. It will be adaptively applied to each of the superordinate themes of this research.

**Table 7.1**     UNIONIZED EXPERT LABOR IDENTITY PROCESSES FOLLOWING A MERGER-
ACQUISITION EVENT

| | |
|---|---|
| **M / A   EVENT** | **IDENTITY THREAT** |
| *PATH        FORWARD* | **IDENTITY LOSS** |
| PILOT | |
| *FORK     IN     THE*<br>*ROAD* | **LIMINALITY** |
| RESIST                    ACQUIESCE | |
| PEER<br>MANAGEMENT<br>UNION | **SEEKING**<br>**PROTOTYPES**<br><br>**SEEKING**<br>**TRUE SELF** |
| IDENTITY<br>NEGOTIATION        IDENTITY<br>NEGOTIATION | **POSSIBLE TO**<br>**PROVISIONAL**<br>**SELF** |
| NEW SELF | **DYNAMIC SELF** |
| PEER<br>MANAGEMENT<br>UNION | **ONGOING**<br>**IDENTITY**<br>**WORK** |
| *REPEAT*<br>*PROCESSES* | |
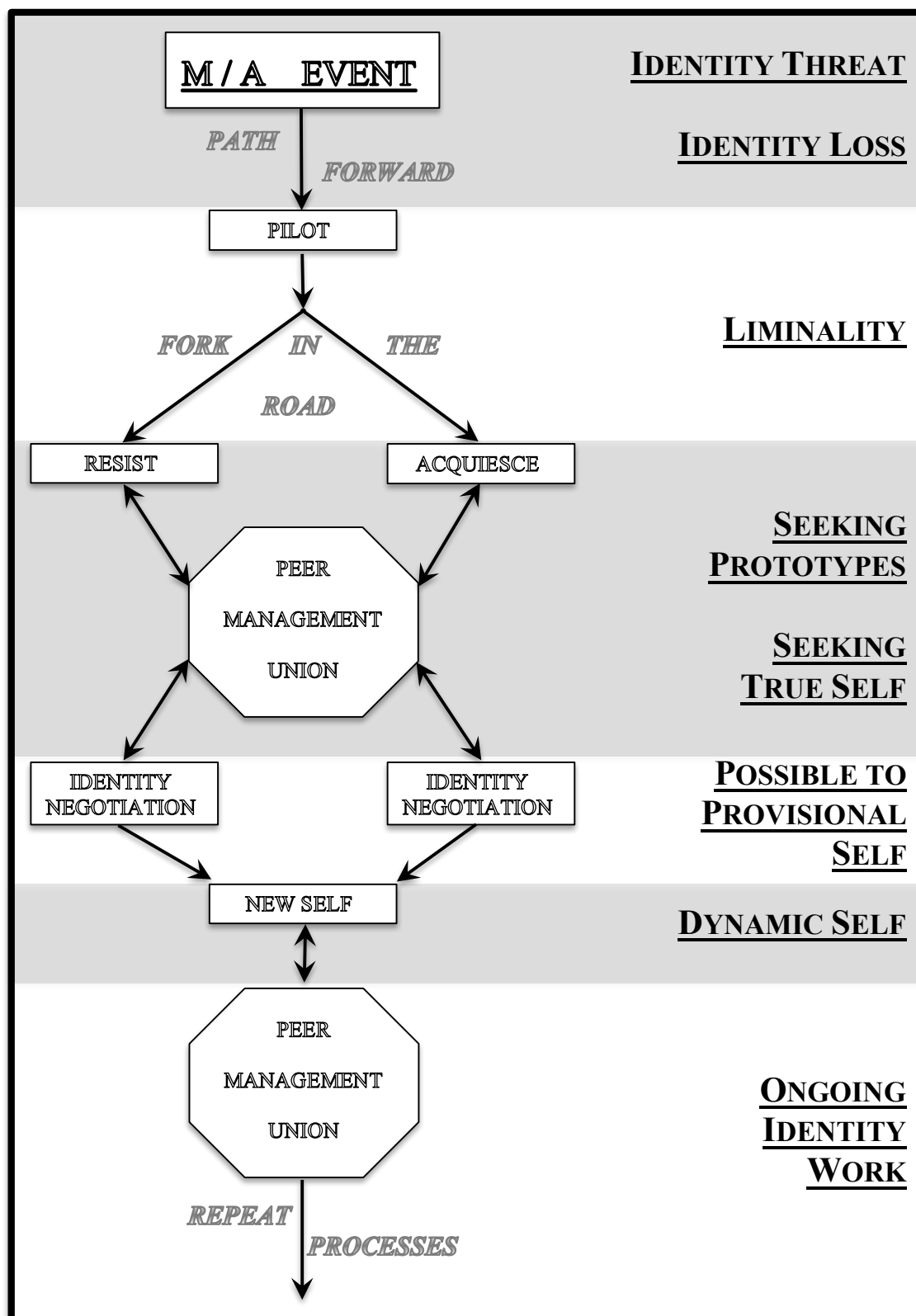
### 7.2.1 Discussion

This initial discussion begins at the top of Table 7.1 and proceeds vertically downward for the discussion purposes of this section. The thematic flow of the table depicts key junctures in the professional identity processes for commercial airline pilots following a merger-acquisition event. On the right hand side of the table are benchmarks of understanding shared by the participants and reflected on the table in the language of relevant theoretical constructs. Each superordinate theme will adaptively utilize this professional identity model.

A merger-acquisition event involving unionized expert labor is a significant organizational change event, providing an environmental jolt (Meyer, 1982). The new merged airline is "different," as reported in a participant observation discussion. Table 7.1 begins at the point of significant organizational change, a merger-acquisition event between two major airlines. The airline continues to operate, but the clear sense from contributors to this research is that the path forward is very different and ever-changing. Thought, discussion and reflection about whether to "buy-in" and engage, or to say "hell no" and disengage were often the focus of these initial conversations. The theoretical constructs attributed at this point of the discussions with participants fit the understanding of identity threat (Petriglieri, 2011) and identity loss (Ashcraft, 2005; Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly, 2014). They derive from a belief that this externally generated significant organizational change event is an initiator of dramatic change in their sense of self and view by others (Gioia et al., 2000; Clark et al., 2010).

Contributors provided ideographic detail about the path forward following a merger-acquisition event. It was a path forward, but as they described, it was a new and different path.

Contributors detailed their new and different post-merger lived experience. These discussions, in both participant interviews and participant observation periods, arrived at a "fork in the road." As reported by a participant observation contributor, this fork in the road was a "decision fork." The decision was to either acquiesce, go along with the new and different professional practices, protocols and consequences to both their professional and personal lives, or to resist, to "question" or "challenge the new order" imposed on these members of unionized expert labor. In discussions with the R/I, this choice at the fork in the road was critical, because it was a beginning to understanding the member of unionized expert labor's true self (Ashcraft, 2013). This decision fork is consistent with the professional

identity processes of Ibarra (1999) and exposed a sense of liminality being experienced by the participants (Kennett-Hensel et al., 2012).

Following the decision to either acquiesce or resist, the contributors shared their evolving understanding of self in discussions with peers, managers and their union. The discussions were interspersed with colorful language, metaphor and emphasis. The conversations were two-way, with contributors sharing their thoughts, feelings and point of view. While these were described as discussions, Captain Evans described it as, "it was like {a pilot} holding court." The R/I was clear in interpreting that participants wanted to be calm and level-headed about this significant event that was "rocking their world", but often expressed that they "just really need to talk it through with someone." What the R/I was hearing and observing was "real life" sharing of identity threat, and as time with the R/I continued, the sharing of their individual identity loss (Petriglieri, 2011; Petriglieri and Stein, 2012).

The processes of identity negotiation and other salient processes emerging from this research, were dynamic and ongoing for these members of unionized expert labor (Ibarra, 1999; Gioia et al., 2000). As they sought their new self in their post-merger world, contributors to this research continued to engage with peers, management and their union. In both participant volunteer interviews and participant observation periods, contributors detailed their different lived experiences, seeking to understand its meaning for their lives and professional practice. As contributors shared, there was an enduring hope and a well-communicated cause for despair. Seeking prototypes (Van Maanen, 1975) for the ultimate goal of finding a true self was shared; what was possible to replicate and the participants' true self were often a struggle of being to reconcile for the participants (Schein, 1978; Ibarra and Deshpande, 2007).

These discussions created a repetition of the processes experienced following a merger-acquisition event. As one participant observation contributor put it, "same song, second verse." The processes of Table. 7.1 repeated as the identity negotiation and reconstruction processes and other salient emerging themes of this research were revealed by the participants. Table 7.1 provides a somewhat linear depiction of the research population's lived experiences, but the participants made clear that the identity processes were both dynamic and recurring. A true self was routinely unable to achieve (Ashcraft, 2013). When a possible self was identified, events would create a new identity threat, requiring a reinitiation of the model from the new starting point of the new organizational change event (Markus and Nurius, 1986). Table 7.1 represents a loop operationally; a loop that repeats over and over, as shared by contributors to this research, as a merger-acquisition event in the commercial airline

industry in the U.S unfolds (Mater and Mangum, 1963; Buono and Bowditch, 2003; Clark et al., 2010; Jerman and Joshi, 2012).

### 7.2.2 SUMMARY

Variations to Table 7.1 will be utilized in support of each of the superordinate themes that follow. Application will be made to each superordinate theme in descriptive text as it applies to the respective superordinate theme. Identity salience, as described by contributors to this research, is reflected in the superordinate themes emerging from this research and the concluding policy change recommendation, offered in Chapter Eight. This form of visual thematic depiction, seeking to understand the professional identity processes of members of unionized expert labor, will aid in the sense and meaning making of this research and aid in the understanding of members of unionized expert labor following a merger-acquisition event. The constructs showcased in the right hand portion of Table 7.1 and each of the succeeding tables provides theoretical alignment with the literature of each superordinate theme emerging from this research.

### 7.3 SUPERORDIANTE THEME 1

**The professional and personal standards of commercial airline pilots are unique in relation to other professions.**

Contributors regularly spoke of change following their merger-acquisition events. The arenas of these change discussions focused on two primary domains: professional status and personal standards. The regular and ongoing meaningful contributions in these two domains raised the contributors lived experiences regarding professional and personal standards to superordinate status. A merger-acquisition event was not merely anticipated change; it was "disruptive change." As one contributor in participant observation stated, "it rocked my world."

Table 7.2 depicts an M/A event and the disruptive changes that followed this significant organizational change. The path forward was "full of crazy change," as one participant observation contributor shared. The changes continued as the transaction advanced and eventually, contributors to this research shared with the researcher that they "had reached a fork in the road."

The fork in the road, as described by a contributor, was a period of critical assessment.

> Particpant Observation Contributor- "I thought of it {the fork in the road} like an emergency…because it was an emergency…in an aircraft emergency the first thing I

do is sit on my hands…don't do something stupid that you can't take back…sit on your hands and do an assessment…make sure that when you take an action it is the proper action…don't delay, just make sure you are making a good decision."

The pilot's decision was to either acquiesce with the changes to both their professional status and personal standards following their merger-acquisition event or to resist. This decision determined which group, or as contributors often referred "to which camp," the pilot was initially going to belong (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

Members of each respective camp engaged in dialogue with those who they had key relational agreements with. From these discussions, the contributors to this research not only learned about themselves and understood their sense of being, but they also shared with the researcher that they learned about changes with their key relational contacts. These many discussions, often described to the researcher as occurring over months of time, culminated in the pilot's reaction to the significant change in both the professional status and personal standards imposed as a result of the merger-acquisition event. These critical conversations over time were in line with Brehm's (1966) psychological reactance theory.

The identity negotiation processes described by Ibarra (1999) followed these seminal discussions as contributors to this research sought a new self. Contributors to the research wanted a more stasis environment, but as they regularly described to the researcher, they knew "more was coming." Their stated mission to the R/I was "to cope." What the contributors to this research shared with the R/I was a case for their identity being socially constructed, impacted by external events and these events being ever-changing to their sense of being and view by others. The contributors' stories were consistent with Stream 2 of the literature review (Gioia et al., 2000; Guichard et al., 2012).

From this juncture, contributors engaged in regular and ongoing discussions with their key relational contacts. As the transaction progressed, further events emerged and further dialogues ensued. When the next significant change confronted contributors to this research, they described effectively going back and repeating the processes thematically depicted in Table 7.2.

**Table 7.2**    **Life Standards and Professional Standards of Practice for Unionized Expert Labor**
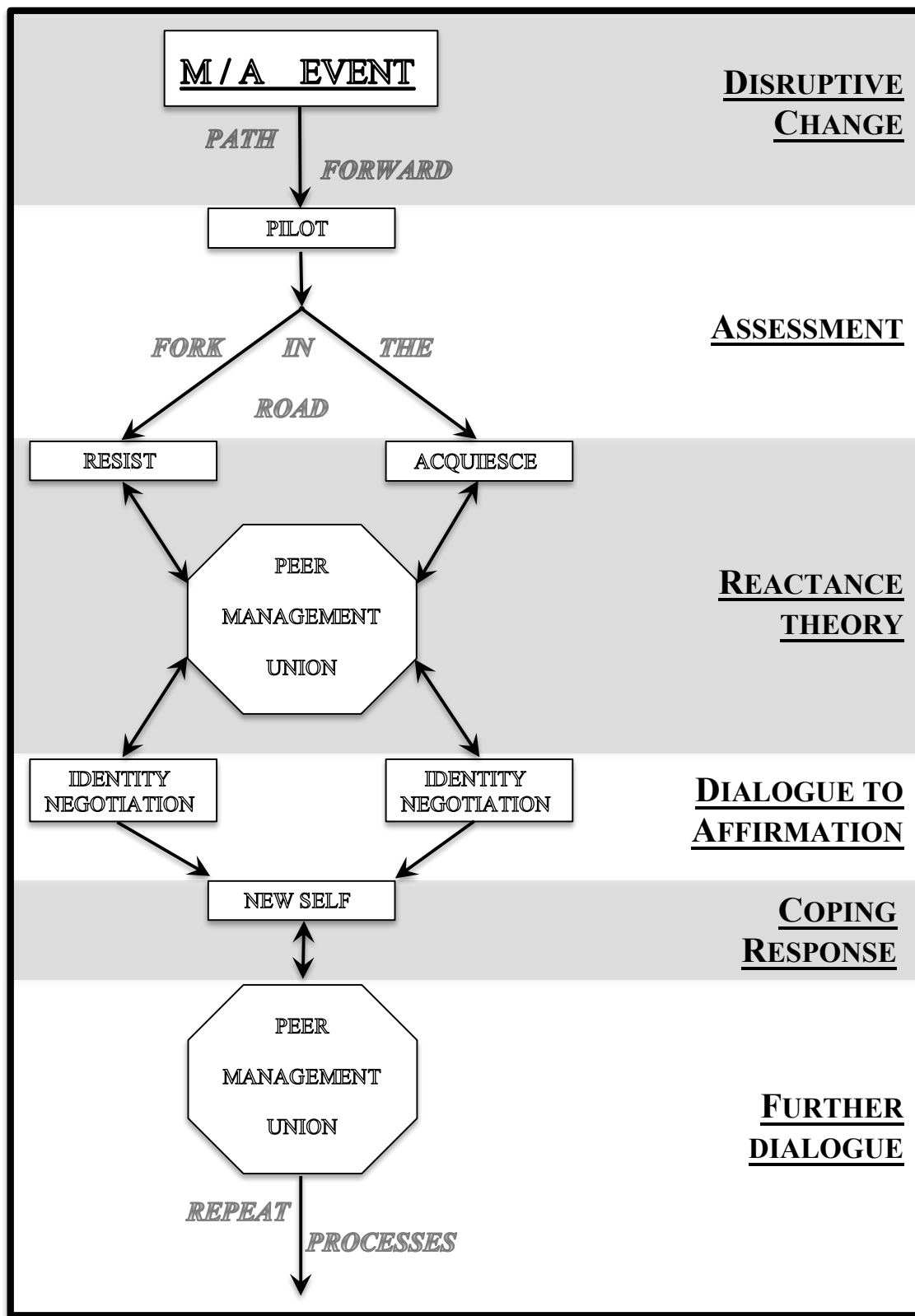
### 7.3.1 DISCUSSION

Following a merger-acquisition event, contributors described a reduction in both autonomy of practice and self-regulation of their professional space. Evetts (2008) argues that these reductions are an affront to professional work and values. When a professional has an affront to their core values "the very professional essence of services appears to be endangered" (Noordegraaf, 2015, p. 187). These observations of a reduction in autonomous practice and self-regulation, provided by contributors, provide the genesis for Superordinate Theme 1. The subordinate themes separate the personal standards and professional status; contributors spoke to these subordinate themes individually as well as collectively. The lived experience of contributors to this research, through repetition and emphasis of the meaningfulness of autonomy and self-regulation in understanding their professional identity, rose this theme to superordinate status. This view was articulated in stark contrast to the career anchor on autonomy offered by Schein (Schein, 1990).

Literature on the professions and professional identity shows that reduction in autonomy and self-regulation is not a unique occurrence (Evetts, 2003; Timmermans and Oh, 2010; Noordegraaf and Steijn, 2013; Noordegraaf, 2015). What makes the professional status and personal standards of unionized expert labor unique in relation to other professions is their unique organizational setting.

In both participant volunteer interviews and participant observation, contributors to this research emphasized to the researcher that the alterations in members of unionized expert labor's role following their merger-acquisition event effected their "sense of who they believe themselves to be" (Spyridonidis et al., 2014, p. 1).

Fraher (2015) takes a view more consistent with the timing of this fieldwork. Fraher's (2015) research suggests that "weak professional communities leave *quasi-professional experts* vulnerable" (p. 1). The contributors to this research regularly made the power and influence distinctions between the acquirer airline pilot's union and the acquired airline pilot's union. As Captain Alexander shared, "unions can really mess things up." These professional communities—sometimes the same national union and sometimes not—were a recurring source of vulnerability for the acquired airline pilot group.

This vulnerabilty was further accentuated in the lack of portability of seniority, e.g., should a pilot leave their employing airline on their own and gain employment at another carrier. In this instance, all of a pilot's seniority would be lost and they would begin at the new carrier at the bottom of that airline's seniority list. This union arrangement creates a unique

professional and personal organizational work setting when compared to other professions. This unique organizational setting and the salience attributed to it by contributors to this research allowed the theme to rise to superordinate status.

Dramatic boundary setting for the identification processes of expert labor following merger-aqcuisition events was impacted by the inability to move laterally in the industry, the linkage of one's professional status to a collective bargaining agreement following a merger-acquisition event, and the government's explicit and implicit agreement with these structural components enveloping the professional and personal lives of members of unionized expert labor.

The CBA's transactional agreement of terms and definitions regarding seniority, limitations on professional practice, so-called "fences" regarding a pilot's routes, aircraft or operation, all contributed in discussions with participants to these CBA boundary settings as unique in their profession. These boundary setting limitations on the post-merger-acquisition processes are unique in the professional literature (Mater and Mangum, 1963; Ashcraft, 2005; Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly, 2014).

The government's role, though distant, was shared with the R/I as complicit. A pilot in participant observation stated, "they're all in this together, if it's OK with the union (the acquiring union), it's fine with them (the government)." As shared by participants, the many layers of review and oversight by the FAA, the DOT and Congress are predisposed to "stand aside" in matters of employee relations conflicts following a merger-acquisition event.

### 7.3.2 FINDING 1

For each of these reasons, the voices of the participants showed that there are key identifying attributes of unionized expert labor; attributes that are unique in comparison with other professions. These attributes are boundary setting in the identity negotiation and identity work processes. With the literature on the professions and the lived experiences of the participants in mind, the R/I concludes the following finding and contribution to new knowledge**.**

**FINDING – 1**

**Professional identity formation, negotiation, loss and reformation of unionized expert labor is restricted by the limitations of union and employer contractual agreements and governmental regulations.**

## 7.4 SUPERORDINATE THEME 2

**There is a fragility of relational agreements following significant organizational change.**

Contributors to this research frequently provided ideographic detail about conversations with their key relational connections, peers, management and their union. In dialogue, the contributors shared their points of view and those of their key relational connections with the researcher. Contributors shared critical conversations with the researcher (Kohli, 2013). These critical conversations were intepreted by the researcher as conversations consistent with Ibarra's (1999) "experimentation with image and identity in professional adaptation" (p. 764). Contributors to this research were effectively seeking prototypes in an effort to find a self-compatible representative of their true self following a merger-acquisition event.

Table 7.3 follows the identity model framework to thematically display the relational agreements that were contributory to and constitutive of the emergence of Superordinate Theme 2. Table 7.3 also depicts salient processes that represent the journey of being and understanding of self of members of expert labor in the turmoil that followed their merger-acquisition events.

**Table 7.3**     PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACTS AND UNIONIZED EXPERT LABOR FOLLOWING A MERGER-ACQUISITION EVENT

| | |
|---|---|
| **M / A   EVENT** | **IDENTITY LOSS** |
| *PATH*  *FORWARD* | |
| PILOT | |
| | **LIMINALITY** |
| *FORK   IN   THE* | |
| *ROAD* | |
| RESIST     ACQUIESCE | |
| | **SEEKING PROTOTYPES** |
| PEER MANAGEMENT UNION | |
| | **SEEKING TRUE SELF** |
| IDENTITY NEGOTIATION    IDENTITY NEGOTIATION | **NEGOTATION OF POSSIBLE TO PROVISIONAL SELF** |
| NEW SELF | **DYNAMIC SELF** |
| PEER MANAGEMENT UNION | **ONGOING IDENTITY WORK** |
| *REPEAT*  *PROCESSES* | |
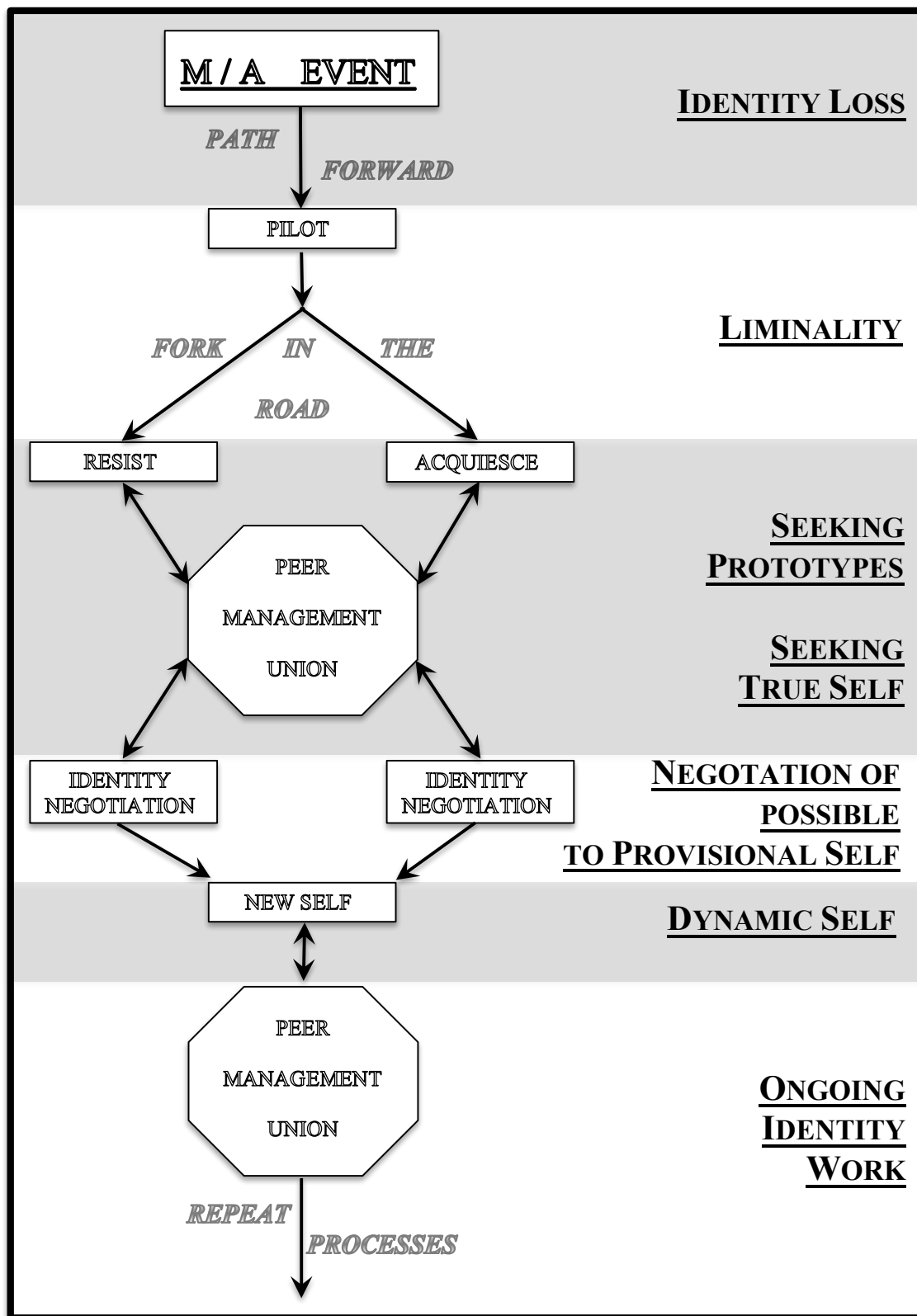
### 7.4.1 DISCUSSION

Following each merger-acquisition event, participants went to great lengths to detail changes in their new organization. Once again, these changes were external to the contributors to this research (Gergen, 1992). This second superordinate theme addresses a significant change that resonated with the majority of the participant interviewees and was present in the overwhelming majority of participant observation periods. This theme has to do with a very noticeable change within and throughout the new organization: the change in unwritten relational agreements between employees. This superordinate theme also manifested itself beyond the workplace as described by pilot-study volunteer interviewee #3.

> "I think it is very important that you're able to spend time with your family and friends and get away from the turmoil and the chaos that surround you in an everyday flying situation {following a merger-acquisition event}…It helps you adjust and deal with those situations…If you allow the stress to come home with you it's going to affect your personal life with your wife, your children, and it will carry on into your relationships with your friends."

The workplace environment that was a "joy" and "a blast" had become a very different "home" following a merger-acquisition event. It was now reported as a place of "turmoil and chaos" and a place of "stress". When the licensed professional takes their work experience home, as contributors reported, it can have a deleterious effect at home, as well.

Schein (1965) describes the relational and expectational understanding between employees, calling it a Psychological Contract (PC), stating: "the notion of a psychological contract implies that the individual has a variety of expectations of the organization and that the organization has a variety of expectations of him" (Schein, 1965, p. 11). This was the relational agreement that contributors to this research repeatedly described. The subordinate themes that emerged from both the participant interviews and the participant observation periods made clear the loss of reciprocal arrangement understanding between the parties to a PC, and a loss of expectation arrangement understanding between the parties. Multiple contributors concluded that these subordinate themes were "commonplace."

Guest and Conway (2002) define the PC as "the perception of both parties to the employment relationship, organization and individual, of the reciprocal promises and obligations implied in that relationship" (p. 22). The contributors' understanding of the loss of reciprocal arrangement understanding speaks to Guest and Conway's "reciprocal promises," and the loss of expectation arrangement the contributors offered aligns with Guest and Conway's

"obligations implied" as well as Schein's earlier mutual "expectation" definition of a PC (Guest and Conway, 2002; Schein, 1965).

Captain Dixon detailed the operational impact following the cessation of PC's. These details show the professional identity adaptation process for Captain Dixon and others, more generally, following a merger-acquisition event.

> Captain Dixon- "I may not have the love for my new airline as a company, and that comes from what I call a quid pro quo…the way the company treats the individual is reciprocated…now we are so big, we're just a number, and there's no personal interaction between an employee and this company, probably because of size {following the merger-acquisition event}…but no matter what happens, no matter how my employer treats me…if I feel I was treated good today or I was not treated good today, I never take it out, I never pass that on to a passenger or on to a fellow employee…I do everything I can to ensure that, no matter what the outside circumstances are."

In juxtaposition, the R/I observed other members of expert labor who chose another path to reframe their professional practice standards following cessation of PC's after a merger-acquisition event.

> Participant Observation- "I don't think safety is ever the issue, but I use the old phrase, you know, when you put too many straws on that camel's back it breaks…if they {the company} want me to fly this path and I know I can do something better, you know what, I'm going to fly their path…if they file me at this altitude and the dispatcher {licensed professional employed by the company, operational matters are to be jointly agreed with the Captain} gives me only enough gas to get there even though I can go lower and get a smooth ride, you know, to hell with them…I'm not putting any extra in to this…I'm just going to come to work and do what I'm told…I'm not going to exercise my better professional judgment…I'm just going to be a puppet…I will not be unsafe…I'll just do what they say."

The "toxic" work environment, described by contributors, did not develop because of a breach or violation of a psychological contract (Robinson and Morrison, 2000; Chao et al., 2011; Bynum et al., 2012). Neither party in the psychological contracts described by contributors to this research was the genesis for this dramatic change. The genesis was an external event: significant organizational change. Significant organizational change led to significant relational change between members of unionized expert labor, peers, family,

management and their union.  The relational agreements between these key stakeholders and unionized expert labor routinely ended following a merger-acquisition event.  There was not a breach or violation by one or both of the parties (Rousseau, 1995; Rousseau, 1989); it was not a change in the relational agreement or its understanding between the parties; it was a cessation, an expiration.

A key component in professional identity is the autonomous nature of professional practice (Ashcraft, 2013).  As contributors made clear, bureaucracy increased in each case following merger-acquisition and autonomous decision-making was reduced.  This is consistent with Hall's (Hall, 1968) research.  Hall (1968) addresses several factors that affect relational agreements between professionals following organizational change.  First, the "professionalization process is affected by organizational structure" (Hall, 1968, p. 92).  The size of the new airline was significantly larger in each merger-acquisition event of this research (Yellin, 2014).  Inherent in that new and larger organizational structure was also an increase in the bureaucratic structure of the new airline, often mentioned by contributors.

With a much larger airline, with more bureaucracy, and less autonomy for the licensed professionals of unionized expert labor, the relational agreements among expert labor, management and their union each suffered.  The potential to adversely affect relational agreements outside the workplace was documented by contributors, as well.

> "I think that if you're not a person that can adapt you're going to have a very, very difficult time as an airline pilot after a merger…The further I went into my career {following a merger-acquisition event} the more prevalent and dominant the turmoil's became…as time went on you knew more and were less tolerant of those situations."

This "turmoil" ended psychological contracts between members of unionized expert labor and their peers, colleagues, management and their union.  This research demonstrates that it is not a consequence of fault or action by either party that expired their PC's.  Significant organizational change, evidenced in this research by a majority of contributors, is the catalyst to a psychological contract's expiration.

Figure 7.1 shows the key relationships and primary sources of PC's with unionized expert labor in the practice of their profession.  The notion of expiration of a PC is not unique to a specific group; it is endemic to all key relationships for unionized expert labor.  This theme was described by PV/I's and observed in participant observation periods.

**Figure 7.1**   Kᴇʏ Psʏᴄʜᴏʟᴏɢɪᴄᴀʟ Cᴏɴᴛʀᴀᴄᴛ Rᴇʟᴀᴛɪᴏɴsʜɪᴘs ɪɴ Uɴɪᴏɴɪᴢᴇᴅ Exᴘᴇʀᴛ Lᴀʙᴏʀ
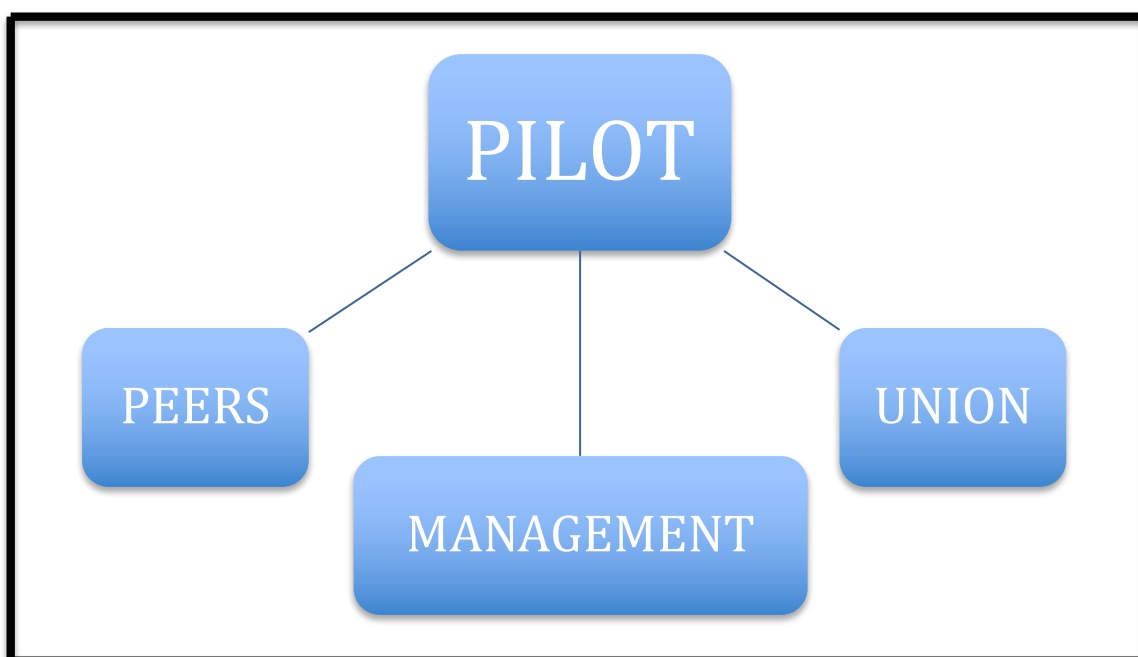


This superordinate theme is not a challenge to Rousseau or other psychological contract scholars (Rousseau, 1989; Rousseau, 1995; Dabos and Rousseau, 2013).  As defined previously, "the psychological contract is promissory, implicit, reciprocal, perceptual, and based on expectations" (George, 2009, p. 3).  The tenets of this definition are widely accepted in the literature, and are supported by an extensive body of research (Rousseau, 1995; Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2000; Gill, 2009; Lee and Taylor, 2014).  Not included in the research until now, however, was the inclusion of unionized expert labor following significant organizational change.  Gill's (2009) research addresses unions, but focuses on "new work practices" (p. 1) rather than the being of unionized expert labor.  For unionized expert labor, a breach or violation of reciprocity or the lack of fulfillment of promissory and implicit relationships was not the cause of the cessation of the PC's observed and discussed in this research.  Regularly and repeatedly, the contributors made clear that significant organizational change, an externally initiated M/A event being catalyst for an ongoing dynamic series of events following (Markus and Kunda, 1986; Clark et al., 2010), was the PC expiration agent for members of unionized expert labor following merger-acquisition events.  Captain Alexander synthesizes this understanding.

> Captain Alexander- "We're red-headed stepchildren…we're former {the acquired
> airline in the merger-acquisition event}…they'd be happiest if they could just line us

up and shoot us; no, that would upset them too, because they didn't get to pick the

order to shoot us…You know, I don't know what to do… they have no loyalty to us."

### 7.4.2 FINDING 2

Before a merger-acquisition event involving members of unionized expert labor, PC's

functioned consistent with the extant literature.  PC's expired following a merger-acquisition

event involving unionized expert labor, not as a consequence of breach or violation of either

of the parties, but because of significant organizational change reported by numerous

contributors to this study.  Superordinate Theme 1 leads to an expansion of the PC literature.

Finding 2's contribution to new knowledge is:

**FINDING –  2**

**Psychological Contracts, as a consequence of significant organizational change involving**
**unionized expert labor, may expire due to no fault or action of either party to a**
**psychological contract.**

### 7.5   SUPERORDIANTE THEME 3

**The belief and understanding of "being" by self and others is inconsistent and poses**
**threat following a merger-acquisition event.**

The central research interest of this theses seeks to understand the being of members of

unionized expert labor– their professional identity.  Of benefit throughout this research, and

of specific benefit with Superordinate Theme 3, was the methodology and analytics chosen to

explore the participants' being, i.e., IPA.  IPA seeks to understand the linkages between

literature, method and the voices of the participants (Smith et al., 2009).

The linkages between the literature on professional identity and the voices of the participants

was not an intersection.  The voices of the participants shared on a regular basis were not

consistent with the extant literature.  This led the researcher to further explore and corroborate

the voices of the participants.  Discussions ensued with the participants, seeking ideographic

detail of their sense of being following their merger-acquisition event.  What was confirmed

was not in conflict with the extant literature, but it was new knowledge.

Professional identity had not been previously explored in this unique organizational setting of

unionized expert labor.  The unique organizational setting of the research population, the

boundaries and limits imposed on them by government regulation, the lack of portability of

their seniority and other nuanced and individual attributes of the participants provided a

professional setting previously unknown.  These circumstances provided both challenge and opportunity.  It was the opportunity to contribute new knowledge that guided Superordinate Theme 3.  Table 7.4 adapts the identity model to thematically view identity threat, loss and reconstruction for members of unionized expert labor following a merger-acquisition event.  It is Superordinate Theme 3, thematically depicted in Table 7.4, that addresses the incongruity of a commercial airline pilot's view of self and the the differing view by others following an M/A event.  It is this incongruity with established literature that raises this emerging theme to superordinate status.

**Table 7.4**     IDENTITY THREAT, LOSS AND RECONSTRUCTION FOR UNIONIZED EXPERT LABOR
FOLLOWING A MERGER-ACQISITION EVENT
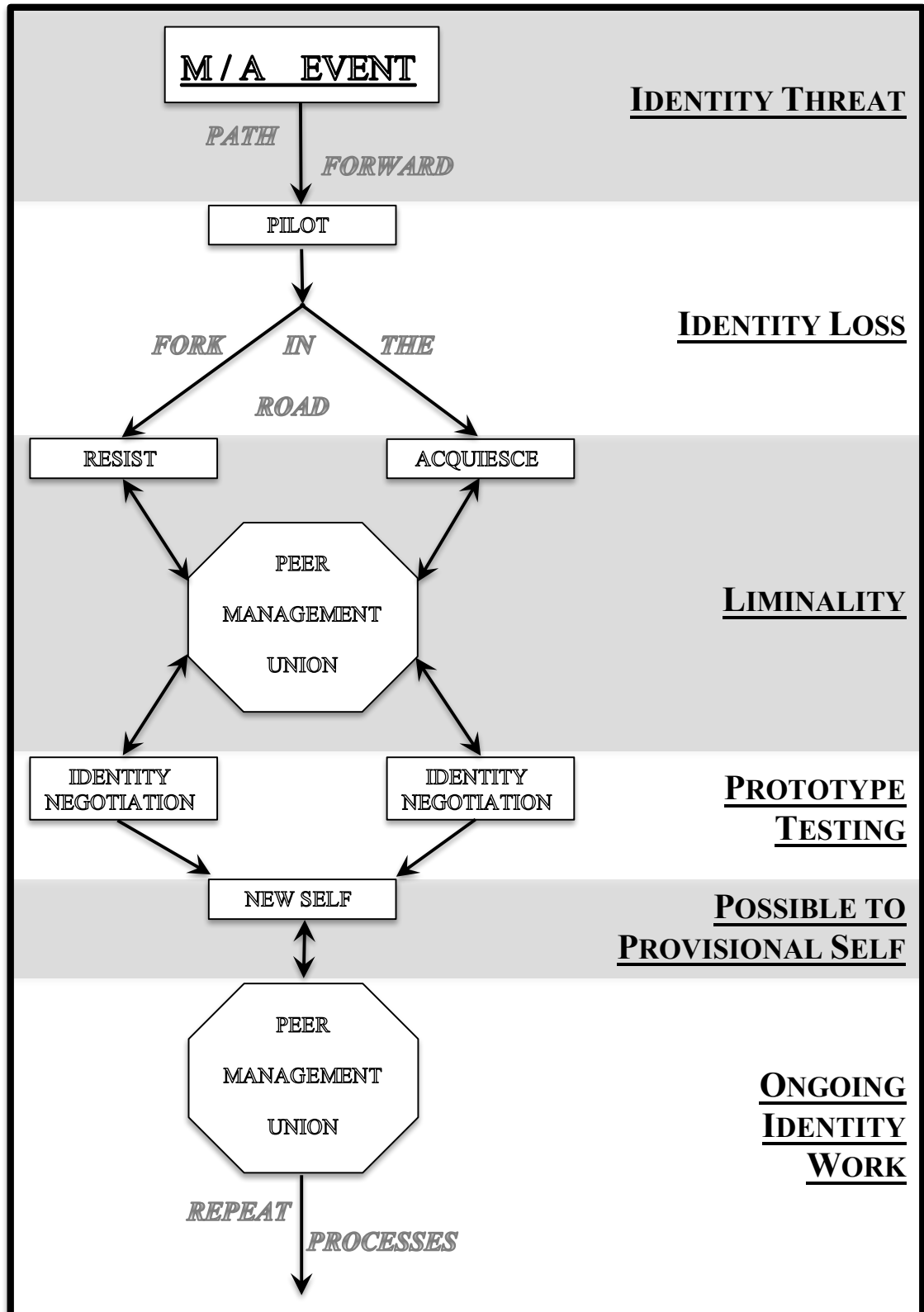
**7.5.1 DISCUSSION**

This superordinate theme emerges from the central interests of the phenomenon under study in this research. In discussions with volunteer interviewees and time spent in participant observation, the R/I was regularly engaged in conversation involving change. The numerous conversations involving changes in the understanding of being by oneself and the understanding of their being by others following a merger-acquisition event were of specific interest to the questions posed. This theme attempts to make sense and meaning of the inconsistent and countermanding views of the perceived and observed change in being of members of unionized expert labor presented by opposing parties following a merger-acquisition event.

Participant observation provided a rich baseline to summarize the many conversations involving change. The acquired pilot group routinely expressed a clear sense of helplessness and hopelessness.

> Participant Observations- "I have no common sense…so I guess faith is all I have…cuz that hope crap didn't work out so well; I figured out long ago, when you give up all hope, things can only get better…Hang in there brothers, righteousness is earned, not acquired…so there are only the members of the acquiring pilot group at the table of the integration meetings, huh…, but not us {the acquired airline pilot group}…we {the acquired pilot group} formally petitioned to be included, but were refused."

A person's identity is a subjective matter defined by who they are perceived to be by themselves and others (Gecas, 1982; Gecas and Burke, 1995). This definition of identity and its irreconcilability in this research contribute to this themes rise to superordinate status. The contributors to this research were echoing the view of Stream Two of the literature review where professional identity is socially constructed (Markus and Nurius, 1986). This postmodernist view was pervasive not only in individual discussion and observation, but also in social groupings of pilots sharing the same ethos (Akrivou and Bradbury-Huang, 2014).

Subordinate Theme 3.1, expressed as a licensed professional's desire to self-define, and Subordinate Theme 3.2, expressed as a desire to define oneself through the view of others, create a dichotomy. The contributors to this research were well versed on their rights following a merger-acquisition event. It was this understanding of context and the law that contributed to this third theme rising to superordinate status.

Participant Observation Pilot- "Pilots have a statutory right as covered employees under the McCaskill-Bond Amendment to a representative {a union} who is free to formulate a position that is in their {the acquired pilots} best interest…the acquiring pilots have representatives who are unrestricted in advancing their best interests…the ruling from the Appeals Court {federal court hearing the disparate views of the opposing pilot groups} said that to participate in seniority negotiations, the pilots of the acquired airline would have to back a seniority list previously compiled by the appointed arbitrator, even though the primary basis for the arbitrator creation of this list was to ensure the list would never be implemented…"

It was widely thought that the acquiring airline union could resolve the conflict between a commitment to binding arbitration, on the one hand, and a seniority ruling that seemed to many to defy logic. As a participant observation contributor stated:

"our system of justice is the best in the solar system, but honestly you guys and girls can't fly long enough for the wheels of justice to be fair to you or any employee…the suits {airline management} and their inevitable delays are Manna from heaven for the acquiring union, and a death knell for us."

Mead (2009) theorizes that a person, one's self, can only be revealed in contact with others, further contributing to the irreconcilability of Stream 1 of the literature review and this research. This research relies upon the definition of individual identity, defined by Gecas and Burke (1995) as "the various meanings attached to oneself by self and others" (p. 42). The implications for this research, when one's understanding of self is reciprocal to that of others view of them, is cause for sensemaking.

One tangible means to make sense of a unionized expert labor member's worth is economic. Both participant interviewees and participant observation contributors linked pay with their status and standing as a member of unionized expert labor. As contributors made clear, flying is their livelihood. Following airline industry consolidation and recovery from the 2008 financial crisis, pilot contracts were amendable and unionized expert labor wanted to participate in their now profitable airlines. They overwhelmingly wanted to upgrade their status with economic participation in the financial performance of their airline. Pilots contributing to this research made the R/I aware of their contributions to the profitability of their airline and compensation's impact on their status and sense of being.

The competing interests of management, unions and members of expert labor were repeatedly detailed. These interests came to the forefront in reflection and sensemaking of Superordinate Theme 3. "Professionals exert considerable effort, often based on the importance of the perceptions held by peers" to understand their being (Prendergast, 2014, p. 592). The perception by peers juxtaposed with one's self-perception that framed the third superordinate theme. Changes in status, changes in the practice of the profession they "love," and changes in their compensation, were detailed numerous times.

The expert labor relational conflicts that follow a merger-acquisition event were regularly detailed by contributors to this research. This research corroborates the work of Prendergast (2014) whereby "the baseline model assumes that the incentives of professionals revolve around the desire to look good" (p. 592) in the eyes of their fellow professionals. The contributors to this research confirm that a problem with professionals is their need to self-regulate, answering only to their fellow professionals. When opposing licensed professionals in a merger-acquisition event are unwilling to negotiate self-regulation or the exercise of autonomy, a threat to one's professional identity is introduced. The contributors to this research's desire for autonomy and self-regulation of their professional practice was consistent with the multifaceted views of Stream 2 of the literature review in Chapter Two and at odds with the metaphor of autonomy applied by Schein (1990) in Stream 1 of the review. This conclusion was shared by PV/I's as well as by participant observation contributors.

A threat, or even perceived threat, resulting from significant organizational change, may have significant professional identity repercussions (Petriglieri, 2011). In the data collection of this research, each PV/I detailed limitations in the practice of their profession following a merger-acquisition event. Numerous representations were given in participant observation about a Captain losing their Captain bid and having to fly as a First Officer, First Officer's reported their loss of seniority resulting in being on reserve (having no control of their schedule), and other First Officer's reported being furloughed. Lastly, a group of participant observation contributors shared details about going from flying as a Captain with their legacy airline to being "on the street" following a merger-acquisition event. This group of contributors was graphic about their lived experience of flying as Captain, and following a merger-acquisition event, not having a flying job at all. A threat to a professional's ability to practice their profession goes to their basic values (Schein, 1985). As reported by one contributor in participant observation, "it rocked my world."

The attempt to make sense and meaning of the third superordinate theme returned the R/I to leading scholars in the field of professional identity. The literature makes clear that professionals seek to self-define their place and, in so doing, define their understanding of not only their self, but also how others view them (Slay and Smith, 2011). The seminal definition of professional identity attributed to Schein (1978) is "the relatively stable and enduring constellation of attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences in terms of which people define themselves in a professional role" (Ibarra, 1999, p. 765).

Once again, the R/I was confronted with irreconcilability. Leading scholars describe in Stream 1 of the literature review professional identity as "a stable and enduring constellation of attributes" (Schein, 1978). Contributors made clear that the professional identity of unionized expert labor following a merger-acquisition event was neither stable nor enduring. The contributors to this research made a compellling case for their understanding of professional identity as dynamic, malleable, fragmented, not always coherent and externally constructed (Gioia et al., 2000; Guichard et al., 2012; Ibarra, 1999; Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010). A postmodernist view of social construction was the clear view of professional identity shared with the R/I in this study (Gergen, 1985; Gergen, 1995).

### 7.5.2 FINDING 3

The extant literature is of longstanding and supported by empirical research (Clark et al., 2010; Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010; Ashcraft et al., 2012). This research confirms the view offered in Stream 2 of the literature review in Chapter Two. It does this through exploration of a seldom researched case, commercial airline pilots, practicing a licensed profession in a unionized setting in the United States. Upon reflection of each of the several double hermeneutic circles, the researcher engaged with contributors regarding their sense of being following a merger-acquisition event, and in consideration of the further inductive IPA data offered by each contributor to this research, the R/I concludes the following finding and contribution to new knowledge.

**FINDING – 3**

**Professional identity in unionized expert labor following a merger-acquisition event is neither stable nor enduring. Rather, professional identity is socially constructed, malleable, fragmented, dynamic and not always coherent.**

## 7.6 SUPERORDINATE THEME 4

**The ability to personally and professionally adapt following significant organizational change is defining for identity negotiation in unionized expert labor.**

Change was a recurring theme throughout this research. Whether experiencing the turmoil of a merger-acquisition event, the expiration of relational agreements between a particpant and their peers, management or union, or their conflicted understanding of self with the view by others, each of these is a systemic action. They raise the question, "Now what?" In both participant observation and participant volunteer interviews this question was everpresent.

How one reacts to the phenomenon of this research—one's adaptive capacity to change—represents the reaction. This finding, consistent with Finding 3, affirms the postmodern view of social constructionism for professional identity construction, negotiation and identity work for commercial airline pilots. The reaction to significant organizational change in this research exemplified by merger-acquisition events, speaks to the individual's ultimate identification. How members of unionized expert labor react and how they adapt to externally impactful events was defining to understand their professional identity.

From this understanding, this theme emerges as a superordinate theme. The continuum that is represented by the identity model offered for each superordinate theme in this research seeks to deploy the "now what" question. The nuance and individual differences of the participants, their individual sense of self-esteem, their optimism or pessimism about what may come next and their individual capacitiy to cope, manage and control their individual identification were the discussion starting points with many participants. Wanberg and Banas (2000) theorize that "individuals with the highest levels of well-being during stressful life events are those with high levels of self-esteem" (p. 133). Taylor and Brown (1988) similarly suggest the ability to cope and adjust during significant change may express an adaptive mechanism in individuals.

The adaptation processes following the disruption created by a merger-acquisition event were a topic of much interest and concern from the participants. Similarly, they informed each of the research questions. The systemic actions that led to the participants' loss of their steady state were antecedent to the disruptive state each experienced. As contributors made clear, these stimuli evoked a response. The responses provided evidence of the participants' adaptive capability.

The processes of renegotiating and reframing their professional identity was the basis of ideographic conversations with both PV/I's and participant observation contributors. These identity negotiation and reframing experiences were lengthy and recurring as events of the merger-acquisition transaction advanced.

Table 7.5 provides a thematic display of the adaptive processes as members of unionized expert labor reacted to disruptive change to their professional identity.

**Table 7.5** ADAPTATION PROCESSES AND IDENTITY NEGOTIATION FOR UNIONIZED EXPERT LABOR FOLLOWING A MERGER-ACAUISITION EVENT

| | |
|---|---|
| **M / A EVENT** | **STEADY STATE** |
| *PATH* *FORWARD* | |
| PILOT | |
| *FORK IN THE* *ROAD* | **DISRUPTIVE STATE** |
| RESIST   ACQUIESCE | |
| PEER MANAGEMENT UNION | **REACTIVE STATE** |
| IDENTITY NEGOTIATION   IDENTITY NEGOTIATION | **TESTING NEW STATE** |
| NEW SELF | **REASSESSMENT OF SELF AND NEW STATE** |
| PEER MANAGEMENT UNION | **ONGOING ADAPTATION** |
| *REPEAT* *PROCESSES* | |
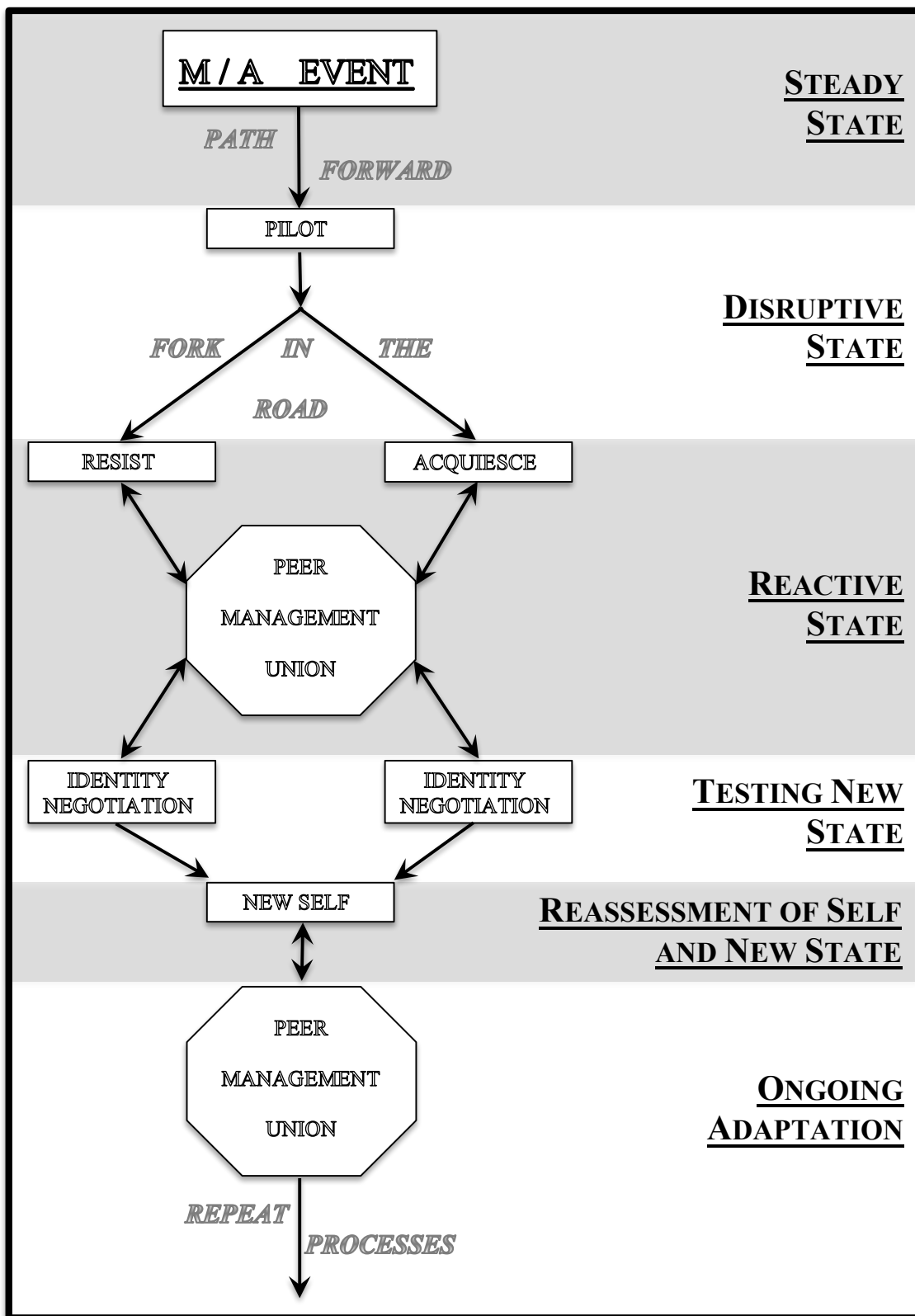
### 7.6.1 DISSCUSSION

A merger-acquisition event involves significant organizational change, experienced by all parties to the transaction. "Organizations need an integrated approach to drive systematic, constructive change" (Al-Haddad and Kotnour, 2015, p. 234). Often times it is not a lack of commitment to change that impedes the change, rather it is "a clash of values" (Burnes and Jackson, 2011, p. 135). Mergers and acquisitions research indicates that 50% of merger-acquisitons fail and incompatible corporate culture is the top reason why (Towers-Perrin, 2002). Towers-Perrin, a global professional services firm that conducted the study, concluded:

> "When two organizations are joined, there are inevitable changes to the identity and balance of power in the new entity. Despite due diligence research, companies often find that what looked like a perfect match on paper presents a compatibility challenge in real life. People become disengaged, which affects performance and retention. Companies start to hemorrhage talent, and, frequently, the best people leave first. Creating a unifying culture that gains buy-in from all of the legacy talent is imperative."

This research engaged a contributor that exercised an exit voice hypotheses. Following several "forks in the road" Captain Griffin chose to leave the profession he "loved" because of his professional and personal identity's incompatability with both his post-merger and post-9/11 work environment. Captain Griffin did, in fact, retire rather than acquiesce to the norms and standards of his altered professional practice environment, a tangible disengagement. This is not the norm for members of unionized expert labor.

The lack of portability of one's seniority was a powerful issue with both interviewees and participant observation contributors to this research. What was made clear to the researcher was the lack of effort by management, the union and the pilots from the opposing side of the transaction to seek and support a "unifying culture that gains a buy-in from all of the legacy talent" (Towers-Perrin, 2002). The impact to contributors to this research in their professional adaptation and post-merger identity negotiation processes was regularly shared with the researcher.

### 7.6.2 FINDING 4

Airline pilots are adaptive people. Every flight, every runway, every crew, every airplane and every day is different. These attributes of commercial aviation professional practice are both

a joy and a challenge.  A pilot's professional practice requires adaptation.  As Captain Dixon made clear, "shit happens."

The adaptive joy could be "as simple as a change in runway at an arriving airport," due a wind change, or an adaptive challenge caused by "multiple boost pump failures over the North Atlantic," requiring a diversion.  The R/I heard many ideographically detailed lived experiences of the participants' adaptive joys and challenge.  Superordinate Theme 4 emerges as an identifying construct to understand the being of unionized expert labor.  How they adapt is critical to understanding who they are.  Their respective merger-acquisition events provided an opportunity for the R/I to listen to situations where control of their professional environment was either lost or transferred to others.  Each external event shared with the R/I impacted their status and command authority.  Autonomy of practice and professional status were key attributes for each of the contributors to the self-definition of this research.  This loss of control over their professional practice tested their adaptive capabilities and defined their identity construction and negotiation processes following a merger-acquisition event.  As Captain Evans shared, "flying is the joy, on the ground is the challenge."

This foundational knowledge informs the being of members of unionized expert labor and results in Finding Four and this contribution to new knowledge.

## FINDING – 4

**To align and adapt professionally and personally, or to resist, is the foundational choice in identity construction for members of unionized expert labor following a merger-acquisition event.**

### 7.7 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Four contributions to new knowledge are offered in the professional identity literature.

Finding One addresses the issues of professional identity formation, negotiation, loss and reformation for commercial airline pilots.  The boundary settling limitations placed on pilots experiencing each of these professional identity processes is given context and linkage with the literature, methodology and voices of the contributors.  This research defines these professional identity processes as limited to boundaries set by the unique positioning of this research population.

Finding Two addresses the relational agreements critical to optimizing professional practice and workplace relations.  These psychological contracts are consistent with the existing

literature on psychological contracts prior to the contributors merger-acquisition events. It is following this significant organizational change that the finding of this research expands the extant literature. Psychological contracts, due to no fault of either party to a PC, expired. This finding is a contribution to new knowledge involving unionized expert labor and psychological contracts following significant organizational change.

Finding Three addresses the widely accepted definition of professional identity as relatively stable and enduring (Schein, 1978). This research challenges the traditional social psychology view of Schein and others (Schein, 1978; Erikson, 1980; McAdams and McLean, 2013). Through the many voices of the contributors to this research Finding Three introduces a socially constructed understanding to the literature on professions and professional identity to include unionized expert labor. In the case of unionized expert labor, following significant organizational change, this research found that professional identity was neither stable nor enduring. Professional identity for commercial airline pilots, consistent with Stream 2 of the literature review, was found to be socially constructed, malleable, fragmented, dynamic and not always coherent; a view aligned with postmodernism and a view focused on multiplicity and a multifaceted self.

Finding Four defines the critical pathway, the fork in the road, for members of unionized expert labor as they seek to negotiate their professional identity following a merger-acquisition event. This understanding of a fork in the road and the pilot's adaptive choice to align or resist provide a key professional identity understanding for commercial airline pilots. This finding's contribution to new knowledge defines the foundational choice in identity construction for unionized expert labor. Table 7.6 provides a summary of the findings.

**Table 7.6**     SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

| Finding 1 |
|---|
| Professional Identity formation, negotiation, loss and reformation of unionized expert labor are restricted to the limitations of union and employer contractual agreements and governmental regulations. |
| **Finding 2** |
| Psychological Contracts, as a consequence of significant organizational change involving unionized expert labor, may expire due to no fault or action of either party to a psychological contract. |
| **Finding 3** |
| Professional identity in unionized expert labor, following a merger-acquisition event, is neither stable nor enduring.  Rather, professional identity is socially constructed, malleable, fragmented, dynamic and not always coherent. |
| **Finding 4** |
| To align and adapt professionally and personally, or to resist, is the foundational choice in identity construction for members of unionized expert labor following a merger-acquisition event. |

## 7.8   FINDINGS AND LINKAGES TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research seeks to explore three research questions.  Each research question is contributory and constitutive of understanding the being of commercial airline pilots in the United States.  This section synthesizes the linkages of the data collection and analysis which culminated in the findings of this research and demonstrate how each contributes to inform the research questions.

> **Research Question 1:  How is professional identity defined and experienced for a member of unionized expert labor in the United States today, specifically U.S. commercial airline pilots?**

The first research question is addressed in the first finding, the third finding, and is further addressed in the fourth finding.  These findings address both systemic causes and adaptive strategies which inform the reader both of how professional identity is defined and how it has been experienced before and after significant organizational change.  The voices of the participants make meaningful contributions to understanding their lived experience, what it means to be a commercial airline pilot developmentally and during turmoil, and how their organizational setting contributes to understanding their professional identity.

**Research Question 2: How have merger-acquisition events in the United States airline industry aided in illuminating commercial airline pilot professional identity?**

The second research question seeks to explore if and how significant organizational change, exemplified in this research as a merger-acquisition event, impacts professional identity. Each of the four findings contributing to the professional identity literature addresses research question number two. From the early years to each contributor's development and ascendency in seniority and experience with their major airline, the reader is able to hear the voices of the participants' lived experience before their merger-acquisition event. Following their merger-acquisition event, changes in their professional practice, threats to their basic values, expiration of key relational agreements and their and others view of who they are were disruptively altered. Their respective merger-acquisition events provided transformative experiences for the participants and provide the reader a much clearer picture of who these members of unionized expert labor are.

**Research Question 3: How do we understand professional identity construction in a turbulent unionized context, specifically U.S. commercial airline pilots?**

The third research question is addressed in each of the findings of this research. Finding One provides the boundary setting and limitations of professional identity negotiation and construction following the disruption of a merger-acquisition event. Finding Two details the expiration of relational agreements with key stakeholders that the participants had trust and admiration for, and subsequently how the participants had to redefine those relationships. Their view of self and others had to go through a series of protocols detailed in the identity model offered in this research. Finding Three addresses each of these protocols, thematically displayed in the identity construction model. The voices of the participants experiencing neither a stable nor an enduring professional environment are antecedent to a turbulent identity construction challenge with the need to repeat the processes in a turbulent identity work environment .

## 7.9 SUMMARY

This discussion chapter synthesizes the voices and lived experiences of the participants with sensitivity to context, detailed analysis, and linkage to theory and professional identity literature. The discussion takes the two streams of literature on the understanding of professional identity offered in Chapter Two and engages in an evaluation of this debate via the voices of the contributors to this research. The contributors made a compelling case for

Stream 2 of the literature review, where identity is viewed as socially constructed.  The chapter is mindful of the research questions and the research methodology's role to understand the being of the research population when something important happens to them (Smith et al., 2009).

A systematic approach has been advanced to arrive at the findings of this research.  Concurrently, the R/I has expressed the results of this resesearch with the open intepretivism of IPA as well.  Both of these methodological and analytic structures contributed to the exploration of the research questions and phenomenon under study.

What has been learned from the participants provides a reliable foundation to begin to understand the professional identity of members of unionized expert labor in the United States.  The in-depth interviews (over 210 hours) and participant observation periods (over 500 hours) have been interpreted with attention to each of the tenets of IPA, phenomenology, hermeneutics and ideography.  Each is displayed in this chapter.

# Chapter 8  Policy Implications

## 8.1  INTRODUCTION

Chapter Eight continues the expanded conversation of the outputs emerging from this research, begun in Chapter Seven.  Continuing to advance the interpretative analysis, Chapter Eight engages in further discussion of literature, methodology and inductive analysis to deliver a policy recommendation for this exploratory research.

This discussion expands on the data provided in Chapter Five and Chapter Six and provides linkage through these voices to arrive at a policy recommendation to support and benefit the "being" of unionized expert labor in the U.S.  Further text, literature, and reference to litigation contribute to the interpretative audit.  Nuance and individuality continue to contribute to understanding this exploratory study in a broader context; however, it was from a universal understanding by the contributors that this policy recommendation emerged.  This policy recommendation provides a legislative initiative to support and benefit the professional identity of commercial airline pilots.

In concert with Chapter Seven, this chapter advances the collective understanding of each PV/I interview and each participant observation period to address the meaningfulness of each contributor to the research questions, to advancing the summative understanding of the phenomenon experienced in the fieldwork, and to make further sense and meaning of the collective voices of the participants.  It accomplishes this by making a contribution to practice.

Chapter Eight begins with a thematic view of the data collection from the field work.  The professional identity model offered by the researcher represents a syntheses of the contributions by participants that led to this policy recommendation.  The interpretative understanding, inductive reasoning and hermeneutic circles provided in participant volunteer interviews and participant observation periods were contributory and constitutive of the policy recommendation offered.  The professional identity processes and analytics of this research were employed identically to the processes and analytics pursued in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Eight concludes with providing an overview of the commitment, processes and support required to succeed in having an idea become a Bill and ultimately a Law.  The idea of a National Seniority List (NSL) was brought to the attention of the researcher and was considered "profound," by Captain Griffin.  It is for this reason that this policy recommendation is offered.

## 8.2 PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY MODEL FOR SENIORITY INTEGRATION OF UNIONIZED EXPERT LABOR FOLLOWING A MERGER-ACQUISITION EVENT

As with each of the contributions to theory offered in Chapter Seven, this policy recommendation emanates from significant organizational change, a merger-acquisition event. At the top of Table 8.1 the thematic view begins with an M/A event.

Following an M/A event, the work goes on. Pilots continue to fly their flights. There is no interruption of service or "time out" to consider their M/A event. The path forward is to continue their professional practice. The pilots contributing to this research were thoughtful and reflective. These attributes are consistent with the participant observation periods of the larger pilot population. In participant interviews the contributors were questioning their sense of self, and more pointedly, their projected view of themselves by others. The contributors were experiencing liminality in a time of significant organizational change (Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly, 2014). The acquiring pilots had a view of the path forward for their seniority integration of the new, combined pilot list. It involved a subordinate view of their "new union brothers and sisters" of the acquired pilot group. Recognition and respect for seniority, sacrosanct in unions in general and commercial airline unions in particular, was changing in the view of the acquiring pilot groups of this research. No longer was seniority sacrosant in their view. The seniority plan for the acquiring and acquired pilot groups were very different. This distinction led to what contributors decribed as "a fork in the road."

The choices were summarized with the researcher as twofold. Pilots could either acquiesce, primarily go along with the seniority intergration plan, or the could resist. Individual pilot circumstances contributed to this fork in the road. Mortgages, school expenses, medical expenses, divorce and child support were all shared as critical to the decision at the fork in the road. It was not that they were not reflecting or that they were going to take a path of avoidance behavior (Brehm and Brehm, 1981); they were going to react, but it was a complex decision with many variables.

There was a noted increase in discussions with peers, their union and their airline management. These dialogs with key stakeholders constituted the beginning of an identity negotiation, consistent with the literature (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010; Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010; Slay and Smith, 2011). These discussions engaged participants in seeking prototypes, provisional and possible selves in hopes of negotiating a new self (Ibarra, 1999).

The operational actions of implementing a merger-acquisition event involved numerous machinations over an extended period of time.  In the case of the M/A events of this research, the time line was beyond a decade.  In several cases it is still ongoing.  Accordingly, the critical conversations with peers, their union and management continue.  Each step, each operational change, has an effect.  The ongoing identity work was significant (Ashcraft, 2013; Brown, 2015; Driver, 2015; Petriglieri and Stein, 2012).

One constant was the contributors' subjective understanding of their M/A events as a change paradigm.  Change was a regular and ongoing attribute of each of the merger-acquisition events of this research.  With change, the thematic view of Table 8.1 loops back to the top of the table and the processes of professional identification begin again.

**Table 8.1**     PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY MODEL FOR SENIORITY INTEGRATION OF UNIONIZED EXPERT LABOR FOLLOWING A MERGER-ACQUISITION EVENT

| | |
|---|---|
| **M / A   EVENT** | **M/A EVENT** |
| *PATH* *FORWARD* | |
| PILOT | |
| *FORK   IN   THE* *ROAD* | **ACQUIRER VS. ACQUIREE SENIORITY PLAN** |
| RESIST          ACQUIESCE | |
| PEER MANAGEMENT UNION | **REACTANCE TO SENIORITY INTEGRATION PLAN** |
| IDENTITY NEGOTIATION          IDENTITY NEGOTIATION | **DIALOGUE WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS** |
| NEW SELF | **DISCUSSION** |
| PEER MANAGEMENT UNION | **NEXT STEPS** |
| *REPEAT* *PROCESSES* | |

256
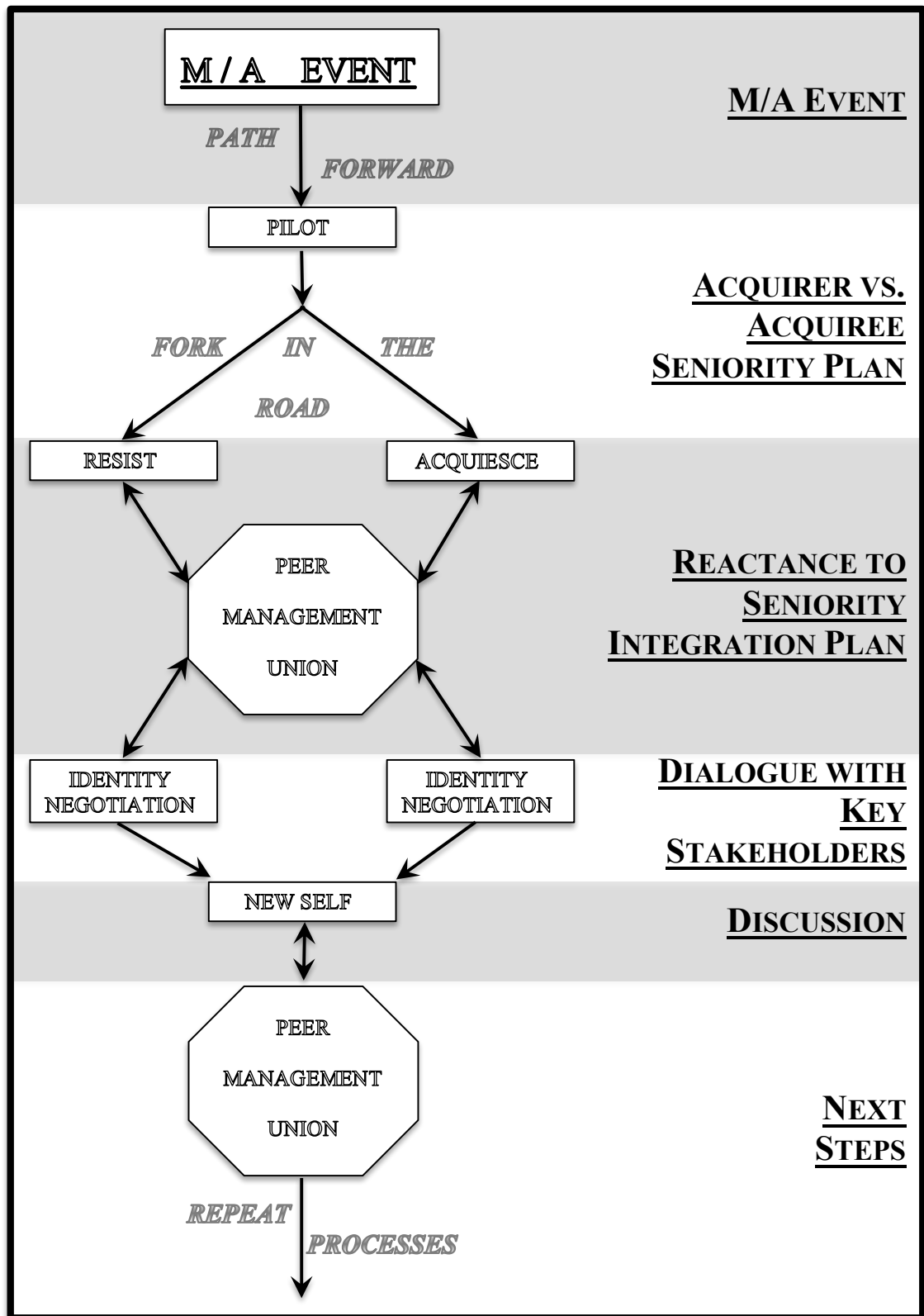
## 8.3 DISCUSSION

Seniority integration following a merger-acquisition event was the most salient professional and personal identity issue expressed by all contributors to this research from the very first pilot study interview and was consistent throughout the fieldwork.

> Captain Fisher- "I would say that the airline industry as a whole needs to look at when they are considering mergers and acquisitions that they find a way to injure the fewest number of people and to work so that not only are individual people not angry at one another, but work groups like mechanics-pilots, pilots-flight attendants, flight attendants-mechanics, are more positive. The more positive things that you can have in any business the better off your business is going to be for over the long time…I think most mergers become a very personal thing that needs to be analyzed to hurt the fewest number of people."

The problems of seniority intergration "can become especially acute when some or all employees at one or both of the merging firms are ranked according to seniority, which commonly occurs in industries such as the airline industry" (Lee and Singer, 2014, p. 2). As each of the contributors to this research emphasized in ideographic detail of their individual lived experience, "an employee's relative position on his or her seniority list can dramatically impact that employee's current and future compensation, job security and other benefits" (Lee and Singer, 2014, p. 2).

Following the merger of American Airlines and Trans World Airlines, Senators Clare McCaskill and Christopher Bond brought legislation to the U.S. Congress to protect employee seniority following an airline merger. Whenever greater than 50% of the equity securities or overall assets of the transaction are involved the McCakill-Bond Amendment deems the transaction to be a "covered transaction" (Tom Jerman, 2012, p. 1). Jerman and Joshi (2012) detail the requirements of a covered transaction in an airline merger.

"When such a covered transaction 'results in the combination of crafts or classes that are subject to the Railway Labor Act,' sections 3 and 13 of the labor protective provisions imposed by the Civil Aeronautics Board ("CAB" or the "Board") in the Allegheny-Mohawk merger (as published at 59 C.A.B. 45) shall apply to the integration of covered employees of the covered air carriers." *Id*. § 42112(a). In short, these Allegheny-Mohawk Labor Protective Provisions ("LPPs") require that the carrier make provisions "for the integration of seniority lists in a fair and equitable manner," including negotiation with union representatives and

binding arbitration in covered transactions. The participants in this negotiation/arbitration process are the carrier or carriers involved and the affected employee groups. Their union represents the interests of unionized employee groups, while interests of nonunionized employee groups may be represented by employee committees or by the carrier.

By incorporating Sections 3 and 13 of the Allegheny-Mohawk LPPs, McCaskill-Bond establishes that it is the duty of the surviving or combined *carrier* to provide the "fair and equitable seniority list integration process."

Contributors regularly raised the fair and equitable provision of the McCaskill-Bond amendment. Lee and Singer (2014) document an airline history both in the United States and abroad "where unionized workforces have resulted in frequent, well-documented seniority disputes, particularly amongst pilots of merging carriers" (p. 3). These disputes hinge on the method of seniority integration and ultimately, as shared by contributors to this research, whether the integration method was fair and equitable.

Two main methods have been utilized in airline mergers: "date-of-hire" and the "ratio" method (Lee and Singer, 2014, p. 4). Date-of-hire, as the name implies, gives credit for a pilot's seniority from the time of their hire at the pre-merger airline. A ratio method integrates pilot seniority as a ratio in an effort to maintain pre- and post-merger percentile pilot rankings. The ratio method takes the pilot's pre-merger seniority percentile with his or her airline and maintains that percentile in the post-merger airline. As contributors to this research made clear, neither of these methods is expressly followed and it is at this juncture that the tensions between the acquired and acquiring pilot groups present. The comparative ages of the merging carriers may create a tension with the younger carrier feeling subordinated to the more senior carrier, considering the date-of-hire method. Similarly, the older carrier may object to the younger carrier in regards to the ratio method as it may appear to advantage the younger carrier to the detriment of the older carrier. What resulted in each of the major airline mergers of this research was litigation.

A participant observation contributor described that a seniority based system "was the fairest unfair system there is." He went on to say, a merit-based systen "just brings shenanigans and politics into it." The problem identification was clear, and as each contributor to this research shared with the R/I, so was the solution.

There was a universal call for a National Seniority List. As another participant observation contributor shared, "fair and equitable is not unequal." Freeman (2015) synthesizes the need for academic research to make the transition from problem identification to problem solving,

"it is important to take academic research of the rising trend of inequality from measurement and study of causes to suggesting policy solutions" (p. 1).

The policy solution universally endorsed by contributors to this research was for a National Seniority List.  To accomplish this policy solution involves a federal legislative initiative. What follows is an outline of the process to pursue new legislation.

## 8.4  LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVE AND UNION PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION:

**The issue of seniority integration following a merger-acquisition event would benefit by changing regulatory policy and union practice.**

A merger-acquisition event and the resultant seniority integration experience was the fundamental and recurring lived experience shared by each and every contributor to this research.  Regardless of the question being explored with the R/I, the conversation regularly found its way to link to the pilot's merger-acquisition experience.  The contributions made by each contributor was unquestionably most meaningful when discussing seniority integration following a merger-acquisition event.  For these reasons, this regulatory policy and union practice recommendation is the final contribution of this research.

Table 8.2 follows the model offered for each of the emerging themes.  It begins with a pilot's merger-acquisition event.  At first there is uncertainty, as shared by contributors, as the financial transaction is created well before employee integration is even begun.  As one participant observation contributor stated, "it's a financial transaction, not a people transaction."

What all of the employee groups contributing to this research shared with the R/I was what one volunteer interviewee summatively said, "you figure out pretty quickly that it's really not a people merger, there are acquirers and the acquirees and you don't want to be an acquiree." This brings the members of unionized expert labor to the "fork in the road."  Surprisingly, in interviews and participant observation with members of expert labor, there was very little acquiescence from either the acquiring or the acquiree camp.  The acquirees were universally resistant as the seniority integration plan did not fully recognize their seniority and they were now meant to be subordinate to the acquiring pilot group, often with "fences," described to the R/I as limitations on their mobility to professional practice.  These fencing limitations included restrictions on the aircraft pilots were allowed to fly, the operation they were allowed to fly, often restricted to domestic flying only, limits on flight instruction positions

and limits on management pilot positions. Each of these fences ultimately limited the pilot's compensation.

The acquiring pilots were also often resistant to the seniority integration plan for members of unionized expert labor. The acquiring pilots shared their expectation for a windfall, stating "more airplanes means more Captain seats for us." When an acquired pilot was still able to "hold a Captain bid," pilots contributing this research on multiple occassions thought, "he's in my seat."

These tensions were the focus of many discussions between members of unionized expert labor, their peers, management and their union. These discussions were contributory and constitutive of the identity negotiation process for members of unionized expert labor. Beyond the discussions, however, was the assignment of seniority numbers and a new collective bargaining agreement (CBA) formalizing these relationships. Pilots contributing to this research made clear that while a new CBA may have been agreed to by the company and the union, "the issues of seniority were far from over."

Further discussions ensued with peers, management and the union, and without exception, each of the major airline merger-acquisition events explored in this research resulted in litigation between the acquired and acquiring pilot groups. The litigation in some cases was limited and for others continues over a decade following their merger-acquisition event. In each case, the processes thematically depicted in Table 8.1 repeated as the transaction and post-transaction arrangements were employed.

### 8.4.1 THE CURRENT STATE OF EXPERT LABOR RELATIONS FOLLOWING AN M/A EVENT

Each merger-acquisition event of this research involved grievance, arbitration and litigation. Commercial airline pilot's sense of self, their professional practice and their professional status were each in a state of threat. As reported to the R/I, opposing pilot groups were "unable to play nicely together," following their M/A events. The time, energy and money required to pursue a pilot group's interests was met with regular and repeated engagement with their unions grievance process, appointment of arbitrators to demand their view be heard and prevail, and in every M/A event of this research, federal litigation.

The record of the actions taken by the respective pilot groups to protect their sense of self and their professional status in the seniority integration of the combined carrier, resulting from the M/A event, was made clear to the R/I by each and every contributor to this research. As a contributor in participant observation stated, "seniority is the holy grail" in our profession.

Because of the significant role seniority plays in the professional identity of this uniquely situated population, it was not surprising to see the energy, time and money the respective pilots' groups put into defending their seniority. What was revealing and informative in this research was the departure from collectivism, a traditional union value, in these altercations. Recognition and respect for seniority took on a very myopic view, as shared with the researcher. A pilot's seniority was important, but just his/her seniority, not others. Contributors shared their feelings about not only the other pilot group of their M/A event, but also differences between pilots of their own legacy airline. Fractures in values and relationships were pervasive, as shared with the R/I.

Pilots were not able to solve these problems among themselves. They sought outside help – help from the grievance process provided by their union, arbitrators and attorneys. These licensed professionals with highly developed real-time problem solving skills were now involved in court filings, depositions, court dates and a quest for exculpatory evidence to disparage a pilot they may be flying with.

Table 8.2 shows a small sample of the legal vitriol that was endemic to each of the M/A events of this research. The volume of pages to display the complete record would invlove thousands of pages. Table 8.2 takes one M/A event and allows the reader to see a small corpus of text to contribute to understanding the professional identity challenges relating to seniority integration of commercial airline pilots following an M/A event. This brief record offers an exemplar for the compelling arguments to effect change in the seniority intergration dilemma following an M/A event.

Following the merger of Trans World Airlines (TWA) and American Airlines (AA) federal legislation was enacted, known as the McCaskill-Bond Statute which would prevent any future airline merger "from doing what AA did to TWA" (Clare McCaskill, 2007). The legislation prevented future airline mergers, but not the TWA-AA merger, from subordinating pilot seniority. Appendix F gives a shortened view of that legislation.

On June 12, 2003 the United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions had a hearing on the TWA-AA workforce integration. Senator Bond presided over the hearing and in his Opening Statement stated, "we want to know why former TWA flight attendants and pilots never received the comparable seniority status at American Airlines that was promised to them" (p. 1). Following the hearing much was discussed, but little changed.

> From the June 12, 2003 hearing– "60 percent of all former TWA pilots were stapled to
> the bottom of the seniority list at American Airlines. Of the 40 percent of TWA pilots

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who were integrated, more than half of these pilots--about 400 flyers--were actually

slated for mandatory retirement before the integration actually took place. And for

those few TWA pilots who did make it, they were given seniority far below their

counterparts of equal experience. For example, the senior-most former TWA captain,

hired in 1963, was integrated into the same bracket as a 1985-hire American Captain."

This lived experience led the former TWA pilots to file a Duty to Fairly Represent (DFR) lawsuit. The TWA pilots ultimately prevailed by a unanimous decision, 12-0, in New Jersey District Court and upheld in the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals against their former union bargaining agent, the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA). The issue of fair seniority integration was the central interest of these former TWA pilots. Federal Court ruled that they were not fairly represented by ALPA and the former TWA pilot group was seeking fair seniority integration treatment from AA and their new bargaining agent, the Allied Pilots Association (APA) (2015).

The context in this exemplar provided corroboration with the many discussions contributors were sharing. It also brought into specific view the role of seniority in the professional identity of commercial airline pilots. AA filed for bankruptcy following the merger and sought to reject the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between AA and its pilots. Included in this legal filing was an abrogation of Supplement CC, the supplement detailing the rights of the former TWA pilots. Appendix G gives a shortened view of this legal action.

Following this was the Airline Pilots Association (ALPA) attempt to legally exclude experts from testifying as to the damages to be awarded to the former TWA pilots following the successful verdict and ALPA's unsuccessful appeal of the DFR lawsuit. Appendix H gives a shortened view of that filing.

The legacy AA pilots wanted to ensure the former TWA pilots could not integrate into the now combined seniority list at AA and requested arbitration with the caveat that seniority would be excluded from the arbitration. Appendix I provides the opening of that arbitration. The order sealing the subordination of the TWA pilots is given in Appendix J.

The TWA pilots continued their quest for seniority integration consistent with that provided the legacy AA pilots. The judge in this case rendered a split decision. Appendix K and Appendix L provide a shortened version of those decisions. The Judge did grant the former TWA pilots their request for a hearing of the issues on the merits. This matter will continue in federal court per the ruling.

This brief and incomplete summary of the litigation surrounding this one M/A event, is an exemplar to authenticate the lengthy and contentious state of labor relations between members of unionized expert labor following a M/A event. It is relevant to note that this exemplar describes litigation still occurring a decade following the M/A event. It is "very difficult to move on," as contributors shared when litigation continues and hope remains, for each side, that their view will prevail. Such is the state of airline pilot identity negotiation in a post-merger airline industry. Table 8.2 provides the list of appendices for this exemplar in expert labor relations following an M/A event in commercial aviation.

The contributors to this research made clear that there was a solution to protecting their profession and protecting pilot's professional identity. They also made clear to the researcher that this solution would come with many challenges and that pilots would resist in fear of their seniority being adversely affected. There where also concerns shared with the R/I that "the government would screw it up." Following the concerns shared with the researcher was, however, a singular belief that a legislative initiative mandating a National Seniority List (NSL) was needed and would benefit the profession and pilots.

The next section will lay out how such a legislative initiative could be actualized.

**Table 8.2**    Exemplar Case Following a Merger-Acquisition Event

| APPENDIX | FILING DATE | TITLE |
|----------|-------------|-------|
| F | February 9, 2012 | Seniority Integration And The Mccaskill-Bond Statute |
| G | April 3, 2012 | TWA Pilots' Objection to Motion to Reject Collective Bargaining Agreements |
| H | September 9, 2013 | ALPA's Memorandum of Law in Support of Its Motion to Exclude the Testimony of Plaintiffs' Experts, and for Summary Judgment |
| I | March 3, 2015 | Plaintiffs' Memorandum In Support Of Their Motion To Stay Arbitration |
| J | May 19, 2015 | Order Denying Motion to Stay Arbitration |
| K | September 3, 2015 | Memorandum of Decision |
| L | September 22, 2015 | Memorandum of Decision |

**8.4.2 HOW A NATIONAL SENIORITY LIST INITIATIVE BECOMES A LAW**

The outgrowth of this research was for a legislative initiative, a National Seniority List (NSL). At this stage, an NSL is just an idea, but this is where laws begin (Haas, 2015). The idea for an NSL comes from pilots. Pilots, as citizens, would contact their elected Representatives and communicate their desire for their Representative to support this legislative initiative. The pilots would need to share with their elected Representative the features, advantages and benefits of the initiative. Effectively, pilots from each state would contact and present the NSL initiative to their Representative. Airline management employees and union officials could also make parallel efforts. Flight attendants, mechanics, dispatchers and other unionized employee groups may also benefit from this initiative and, accordingly, may be inclined to advance an omnibus initiative.

With Representative support, the NSL initiative may advance to a bill. The bill would need a sponsor and to be successful, multiple sponsors would benefit the bill's chances of passage (Haas, 2015). With pilots living in virtually every state of the union, it would be an aim of this NSL initiative to gain sponsors nationwide. Members of the House of Representatives sit on various committees as part of their legislative responsibility and it would be further beneficial to seek sponsorship from Representatives who sit on key transportation and aviation committees and sub-committees. With an NSL bill and sponsorship, it is now ready to be introduced (Haas, 2015).

When a Representative introduces the NSL Bill "a bill clerk assigns it a number that begins with H.R. A reading clerk then reads the bill to all the Representatives, and the Speaker of the House sends the bill to one of the House standing committees" (Haas, 2015, p. 3). Here, the benefit of having members of the standing committees as sponsors may play a particular benefit. The NSL Bill would then be referred to a committee where oversight and expertise in matters relevant to the NSL Bill would be reviewed. At this juncture, revisions may be incorporated and further reviews may occur. This could occur in committee or the NSL Bill could be referred to a subcommittee. If successful, the NSL Bill would then have a committee vote to determine whether it would be sent to the floor of the House of Representatives (Haas, 2015).

If successful at the committee vote, the NSL Bill would be reported to the House floor. At this point the U.S. House of Representatives, through the Speaker of the House, would schedule the NSL Bill for debate. "When a bill is debated, Representatives discuss the bill and explain why they agree or disagree with it. Then a reading clerk reads the bill section by

section and the Representatives recommend changes.  When all changes have been made, the bill is ready to be voted on" (Haas, 2015, p. 4).

If a "majority of the Representatives say or select yes," the bill passes in the U.S. House of Representatives.  The bill is then "certified" by the Clerk of the House and delivered to the U.S. Senate (Haas, 2015, p. 5).

The processes in the U.S, Senate are very similar to the House of Representatives, with one notable exception, the Senate votes by voice vote only, "yea" or "nay."  If the NSL Bill passes, it would be forwarded on to the President of the United States.  The President then has three choices.

The President could sign the National Seniority List Bill and it becomes law.  The efforts by members of expert labor, their Congressman and Senators may provide further support for the President to make this decision.  A public, media, and social networking campaign may enlist affirmative public opinion, as well.

Alternatively, the President could veto the bill and send it back to the House of Representatives with his reasons for not signing it.  The House of Representatives could reconsider the bill and if they felt strongly enough, bring the bill up for another vote.  With two-thirds of the Congressman and Senators voting for the bill, this would overide the President's veto and the National Seniority List Bill would become law.

The President could also do nothing.  This is called a pocket veto.  If the President does nothing for ten days, the bill automatically becomes law if Congress is in session.  If Congress is not in session, the bill dies (Haas, 2015).

The efforts by pilots, management and the union, as well as other unionized employee groups all along the process will have a significant impact on the language and success of this NSL legislative initiative.  Stewardship plays an important role in a bill becoming a law (Haas, 2015).

This type of grass roots effort, while addressing the seniority integration issue in a positive and constructive manner, may also serve unionized expert labor in other ways.  This collective action to aid in making this bill become law may improve the collectivism of unions, as reported by contributors.  It may further improve the negative optics of unions in the political and public discourse.

## 8.5 RECOMMENDATION

In the over 210 hours spent in participant volunteer interviews and the over 500 hours spent in participant observation periods, the benefits of a National Seniority List for members of unionized expert labor were made clear by the participants. This is not to say that such an initiative would be without challenge from members of unionized expert labor. The participants were clear that an NSL would have detractors.

The "levelling of the playing field" would involve change and would likely be challenged by a minority of pilots who believe that their current seniority may be adversely affected. What the contributors to this research were consistently saying though, was to echo Freeman's (2015) position that "it is important to take academic research of the rising trend of inequality from measurement and study of causes to suggesting policy solutions" (p. 1).

For this reason and the universal voices of the contributors to this research, the following legislative initiative is suggested.

<div align="center">

**RECOMMENDATION**

**A Legislative Initiative culminating in the successful passage of Federal legislation establishing a National Seniority List for members of unionized expert labor is necessary to change the disparate and subordinating union practices currently in effect.**

</div>

## 8.6 RECOMMENDATION LINKAGE TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research seeks to explore three research questions. Each research question is contributory and constitutive of understanding the being of commercial airline pilots in the United States. This section will interpret the linkages offered in the first order of analysis in Chapter Five, the second order of analysis in Chapter Six and the discussion surrounding the seniority integration of pilots following an M/A event, offered in this chapter. This section interprets how the suggested policy recommendation regarding seniority integration informs the research questions.

> **Research Question 1: How is professional identity defined and experienced for a member of unionized expert labor in the United States today, specifically U.S. commercial airline pilots?**

The contributors made meaningful contribution to understanding how professional identity is defined and how it was experienced prior to and following their merger-acquisition events. Prior to their M/A event seniority issues were clear and seniority was sacrocant. Following

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their M/A event their understanding of seniority was disruptively changed.  Consequently, so too was their professional identity disrupted.

Seniority was at the core of their being.  Seniority defined, larger than any other professional identity attribute shared with the researcher, who they were.  Seniority defined what seat they sat in, what equipment they flew, when they flew, where they flew and how much they were paid.  Their professional identity and profesional status were inextricably linked to their seniority.

It was each contributors lived experience following their M/A event that made clear the compelling benefit of the policy recommendation offered here to mitigate the disruptive seniority integration practices currently in effect.

> **Research Question 2:  How have merger-acquisition events in the United States airline industry aided in illuminating commercial airline pilot professional identity?**

As Pratt's (2006) research documents, professional identity is showcased following significant organizational change.  Significant organizational change in this research is exemplified by a series of horizontal merger-acquisition events of major airlines in the United States.  In each case of this research the liminality, identity threat, identity loss and re-negotiation of identity are documented.  Chapter Five details the individual voices of the participants dealing with their post-merger identity processes and Chapter Six looks collectively, in cross-case review, at the collective voices of the participants.  While nuance and individuality are present in the voices of the contributors, the meaningfulness of their voices is clear.  Each contributors M/A event illuminated their professional identity.

It was the disruptive showcasing of who the participants were following their M/A event that led to the policy recommendation offered in this chapter.

> **Research Question 3:  How do we understand professional identity construction in a turbulent unionized context, specifically U.S. commercial airline pilots?**

The contributors were excellent problem solvers in the practice of their profession.  In matters involving seniority integration following their M/A events, the contributors were unable to display similar problem solving skills.

It may be because the stakes were so high, seniority was the critical attribute in defing their professionl identity, but their problem solving skills inflight had similar high stakes.  Contributors shared experiences involving engine failures, oceanic diversions for medical

emergency and other extraordinary experiences with a calm and confidence that defied their seniority integration problem solving experiences.

The challenges of seniority integration were unique. It went beyond their training and experience as problem solvers. They sought the help of other licensed professionals to assist them in framing a solution, including lawyers and judges and arbitrators. This strategy was also met with apprehension, uncertainty and a lack of clarity.

What this research demonstrates is that professional identiy construction in the very tumultuous environment of a M/A event would benefit from federal legislation to mitigate the apprehension, uncertainty and lack of clarity that currently exists. Pilots understand the significance of seniority integration in M/A events and universally expressed their awareness of the ultimate problem solving benefit of a legislative intiative.

## 8.7 SUMMARY

Chapter Eight addresses both problem identification and problem solving for seniority integration of commercial airline pilots in the United States following significant organizational change, specifically, a merger-acquisition event.

The professional identity model developed in this research brings the professional identity processes of seniority integration into thematic view following an M/A event. The discussion then links the literature, methodoloy, analytic framework and voices of the participants to understand this policy recommendation to attempt to solve the endemic problem of seniority integration following an M/A event. This policy recommendation was a universal contribution of the participants.

In order to affect change, and as universally suggested by the participants, a legislative initiative is offered. The commitment, processes and procedure to create a Bill and have it become a Law are reviewed.

The status quo of current expert labor relations is offered with a series of appendices to highlight the lived experience and identity threat resulting from the current practice. This exemplar makes the factual lived experience of this research the compelling argument for this policy recommendation.

# Chapter 9  Summary and Conclusions

## 9.1  INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research was to explore professional identity through understanding the lived experience of a uniquely situated population of licensed professionals, i.e., unionized commercial airline pilots employed at major airlines in the United States.  Through the theoretical framework and analytics of IPA, detailed in Chapter Three, this research explored the professional identity of members of unionized expert labor following merger-acquisition events.

This research population is unique not only in who they are, but also due to the contextual perspective they provided, detailed in Chapter Four and throughout the thesis.  These licensed professionals are members of unionized labor as a requirement of employment, but their union seniority is not portable.  The commercial airline pilots of this study are employed by major airlines that are dependent on unionized expert labor to provide commercial air service.  The major airlines in the U.S. are both highly capital and highly labor intensive, creating an inherent tension between labor and management.  Government regulation and oversight of the airline industry in the United States further provides a unique organizational setting to this profession.  Each of these attributes is a recurring theme, contextualized in Chapter Four and heard from the participants in Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight.

The aim to understand commercial airline pilots' professional identity, who these individuals are, how they understand themselves and their view by others, following significant organizational change, was guided by three research questions.

> **Research Question 1:  How is professional identity defined and experienced for a member of unionized expert labor in the United States today?**
>  **– Specifically, United States Commercial Airline Pilots**

> **Research Question 2:  How have merger-acquisition events in the United States airline industry aided in illuminating commercial airline pilot professional identity?**

> **Research Question 3:  How do we understand professional identity construction in a turbulent unionized context?**
> **– Specifically, United States Commercial Airline Pilots**

This final chapter summarizes the research findings. The four contributions offered to theory and expanding the professional identity literature are summarized. This final chapter then summarizes the voices of contributors to this research calling for the need and benefits of a National Seniority List for commercial airline pilots in the United States. This recommendation, offered by the participants, suggests a legislative initiative to the seniority integration practices for members of unionized expert labor. The policy implications of this alteration to union practice are summarized. Limitations to the research are reviewed and recommendations for future research are offered. Finally, this chapter offers a concluding reflection on the researcher's journey to commit to and conduct this research.

## 9.2 SUMMARIZING THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE RESEARCH

The findings of this research offer new knowledge about professional identity and psychological contracts. Table 9.1 summarizes these findings. A seldom explored population of licensed professionals, members of unionized expert labor, expand professional identity literature and make contributions to the understanding of commercial airline pilots' unique organizational setting. Two opposing streams of professional identity literature are offered to explore the identity of commercial airline pilots. The first stream follows the traditional social psychology view of professional identity as stable and enduring (Schein, 1978). The second stream follows a more postmodernist view where professional identity is viewed as provisional and dynamic (Ibarra, 1999). The voices of the contributors made a clear case for their view of professional identity as provisional and dynamic. Each of the research questions explored contributes to the understanding of the "being" of members of unionized expert labor in the United States.

In listening, learning and reflecting on the voices of the contributors to this research, seniority and the integration of seniority of members of unionized expert labor following a merger-acquisition event, emerged as a compelling union practice recommendation opportunity. The contributors to this research suggested a federal legislative initiative to mandate a national seniority list to address the historically contentious and litigious environment the contributors experienced following their merger-acquisition events.

### 9.2.1 CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY

**Table 9.1**     FINDINGS – CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY

| **FINDING 1** |
|---|
| Professional Identity formation, negotiation, loss and reformation of unionized expert labor are restricted by the limitations of union and employer contractual agreements and governmental regulations. |
| **FINDING 2** |
| Psychological Contracts, as a consequence of significant organizational change involving unionized expert labor, may expire due to no fault or action of either party to a psychological contract. |
| **FINDING 3** |
| Professional identity in unionized expert labor following a merger-acquisition event is neither stable nor enduring.  Rather, professional identity is socially constructed, malleable, fragmented, dynamic and not always coherent. |
| **FINDING 4** |
| To align and adapt professionally and personally, or to resist, is the foundational choice in identity construction for members of unionized expert labor following a merger-acquisition event. |

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) has been used infrequently in organizational studies.  The methodological foundations and analytics of IPA have proven to be an appropriate and valuable choice in this research.  IPA's capacity to make sense of events that are meaningful to individuals employed in organizations made a tangible contribution to the research.  The Heideggerian interpretative phenomenology employed in IPA enabled both a broad and deep understanding of the research questions and phenomenon in the study.  The sensitivity to context provided by IPA further contributed a social context to begin to understand members of unionized expert labor.  Each of these components, realized in this research, contributes to research theory in organizational studies.

Finding One identifies important boundary-setting limitations imposed on members of unionized expert labor as they seek to define, explore, negotiate and construct their professional identity.  The individual's desire to seek one's true self in identity construction is limited to the boundary setting limitations imposed by their union, contractually required by

the collective bargaining agreement or restricted by government regulation. These boundary setting limitations for professional identity construction emerging from this research create an environment of ongoing identity work thematically depicted in the identity model presented in this research. This finding contributes and expands on professional identity theory.

Finding Two expands the extant literature theory on psychological contracts. Little research has been conducted on psychological contracts in a unionized expert labor setting. This research contributes new knowledge in this domain. Finding Two brings new theory to the understanding of psychological contracts. This research shows that as a result of significant organizational change, psychological contracts expire due to no fault of either party. This finding is not a challenge to the extant literature, rather a contribution to new knowledge in this unique relational setting, unionized expert labor in the United States.

Finding Three addresses the widely accepted definition of professional identity offered by Schein (1978). This understanding that professional identity is relatively stable and enduring is widely accepted in the traditional social psychology literature. The findings of this research challenge Schein's (1978) definition. A postmodern view of professional identity as socially constructed, malleable, fragmented, dynamic and not always coherent was pervasive in this research. Contributors made clear that their professional identity following a merger-acquisition event was neither stable nor enduring. This finding contributes a new dimension of understanding of professional identity for a uniquely situated population.

Finding Four contributes new knowledge to the role of adaptation in identity construction theory following significant organizational change. The contributors described a fork in the road regarding their adaptation practices following a merger-acquisition event. This fork in the road was described as a decision fork. The choices were to either agree to the new post-merger professional practice and professional status environment or to resist. The effects of this choice, to adapt or resist, were foundational to their post-merger indentity construction. The role of adaptation and its telling consequences in the identity reconstruction following significant organizational change for members of unionized expert labor contribute to new theory in professional identity.

Each of the findings contribute new knowledge and new theory. Further research is needed to ask additional questions to expand our understanding of the professional identity of unionized expert labor.

**9.2.2 CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE**

**Table 9.2** LEGISLATIVE INITATIVE AND UNION PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION

| Legislative Initiative and Union Practice Recommendation |
|---|
| A legislative initiative culminating in the successful passage of federal legislation establishing a National Seniority List for members of unionized expert labor is necessary to change the disparate and subordinating union practices currently in effect. |

The contribution to practice emerging from this research was a universal contribution.  Table 9.2 summarizes this contribution to practice.  The purposive sampling employed in this research was driven to represent the larger pilot population.  This is of significance as the contributors to this research called for this initiative without exception.  Contributors to this research stated that there would be detractors to this initiative, but it was made clear that the benefits of this initiative were of such significance to the professional and personal lives of the contributors that it would be widely accepted.  The benefits to unionism in this expert labor organizational setting were brought up as a further benefit.

**9.2.2.1 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

This policy recommendation highlights the potential of collective action by members of unionized expert labor to rectify an avoidable identity threat, loss and professional standing inequality resulting from the merger-acquisition of two major airlines.  The contributors to this research have proven to be resourceful in dealing with significant organizational change and have offered a sweeping solution to this problem.  Through the processes of a federal legislative initiative, they seek to level the playing field of their unique organizational setting. The research shows that participants see challenges in advancing such an initiative, but universally agreed that it was warranted and necessary to support and benefit the professional identity of commercial airline pilots in the United States.

Airline management may challenge this legislative initiative.  Participants offered that this legislation would likely minimize management's capacity to pit one union group against the other during a merger-acquisition.  Conversely, management may benefit from such an initiative, in that the absence of this expert labor conflict may contribute to the efficiency and profitability of the airline.

This policy implication serves a similar benefit to members of labor.  Labor leaders may not be able to win favor with their legacy members at the expense of their new merger-acquisition

members. Another policy implication would be an optical view by the public that labor unions may function in a less fractious manner following a merger-acquisition event than currently perceived. Public opinion of unions may improve as a result of the implementaion of a National Seniority List.

Each of these policy implications may improve the performance and profitability of an airline, but for the purposes of this research it is clear that this change would more closely align the identities of union expert laborers in the airline industry with the definition of professional identity offered by Ibarra (1999).

Psychological contracts between members of unionized expert labor, peers, management and their union may also more similarly align with the extant literature after the implementation of a National Seniority List. The identity liminality and loss, and the subsequent need to renegotiate a new self, may also be diminished with the implementation of a National Seniority List. Less conflict and turmoil may lead to less expiration of PC's.

This research was driven by phenomenon. The policy implications offered here to alter the existing phenomenon environment may have identity sustaining and relationship sustaining benefits. There may also be additional policy implications, not considered, which may affect the professional identity of members of unionized expert labor.

## 9.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The methodological approach for this research was carefully considered. An interpretative form of phenomenology, known as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), was decided upon. It was chosen for its ability to make sense of events important to individuals. The limitation is its rare use in organizational studies. With very little organizational research utilizing IPA, there were few studies in this domain to review for research design. The bulk of IPA research occurs in healthcare with little analogous benefit to the airline industry.

In qualitative research utilizing IPA, the R/I is engaged in hermeneutics, ideography and phenomenology. The R/I does not know with precision what a participant will say, when they will say it or why they will say what they want to say. The double hermeneutic circle and a hermeneutics of suspicion are incumbant on the R/I to determine the meaningfulness of a participant's contribution. The capacity of the researcher to accomplish this important mission can be a limitation of IPA.

This dependence on the contributions of the participants, PV/I interviews and participant observation periods added richness to the data, but may also have added the opportunity for

bias. Self-reports can be a limitation in qualitative research. "Evidence about human experience has inherent limitations compared with data about human behavior (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 138). The R/I was mindful of this potential bias and incorporated this potential into the interpretative audit to optimize its mitigation.

This research bridges the gap from theory to practice. Researchers on either side argue for the purity of their research methods. Utilizing both theory and practice can provide a limitation, as the R/I was confronted with findings and a recommendation in both research camps.

Positivists will continue to advance their polemic arguments for quantitative research over qualitative research. While there is much to be gained in quantitative research, positivist arguments against qualitative research seek to limit the integrity of qualitative research. Conversely, qualitative researchers argue that measurement and frequency provide descriptive knowledge. In either case, these polemic arguments provide a limitation to the richness of the results of this exploratory research.

Because of the interpretative approach utilized in this research, it could be argued that this approach was limited in its abilty to arrive with certainty at the causative agents leading to the findings and recommendation. The sample size, purposive sampling and other contributing factors may have eluded the causative agents. The sample size exceeds the recommendations offered in the literature, and the purposive sampling was rigorous and disciplined, but these arguments may be a limitation of the research.

The boundaries of the research provide a clear limitation to the research. Exploring professional identity, how merger-acquisition events affect professional identity, and how identity construction is understood in a turbulent unionized context bound this research. These boundaries make the research manageable, but are also limiting. There are many other research question to expand the understanding of unionized expert labor.

## 9.4 Recommendations for Future Research

This research is bounded by the three research questions posed. Future research would benefit by taking any or all of these questions and altering the boundaries imposed in this research. For example, this research was restricted to major airlines in the United States. Looking at other countries or continents and doing a comparative study of carriers located outside the U.S. may contribute further new knowledge and may corroborate or challenge the findings of this research. Placing a focus on one demographic code such as gender, age, or source of training may contribute further knowledge. Looking at an individual merged carrier

rather than looking at them collectively may provide airline specific knowledge.  There are expansions, contractions and variations to this research that would be recommendations for future research.

This thesis offered three peripheral events emerging from the research.  Each provided an identity challenge to members of expert labor negotiating a new self following their merger-acquisition event.  Each provides an opportunity for future research.

The first peripheral event involved the advancement of internal technology to the practice of the profession.  The glass cockpit provides a professional practice environment to further explore how professional identity may be impacted in today's digital cockpit.  The second peripheral event is similar – the rise of technology outside of the cockpit.  The digital cockpit is not the only technology that affects the professional identification of today's commercial airline pilot; it is also the digital world in which they live outside their professional work environment.  The digital age alters how they communicate, how they interact with one another, how they learn, and how they make decisions, both personally and professionally.  Each of these perspectives provide an opportunity to understand professional identity in the digital context professionals now live.

The third peripheral event emerges from a federal entity known as the Transportation Security Administration (TSA).  The TSA was intended to enhance security at U.S. airports, but in this research it was found to be a detractor to the professional autonomy and self-regulation of commercial airline pilots.  It is a recommendation of this research to further explore this licensed, professional, federal worker relationship and its effect on professional identity.

Each research finding offers an opportunity for further research.  Specific focus on each finding or comparing each finding with other groups of licensed professionals or others workers in the airline industry would each be an opportunity for further resarch.

As this arena of professional identity in unionized expert labor is exploratory and previously unresearched, the opportunities and recommendations for future research are open.

## 9.5  REFLEXIVE JOURNEY

The decision to commence this PhD journey was encouraged by many people from different connections in my life.  I was not conscious of each of their motivations, but many people, in their own way, were contributing the different building blocks that would compel me to commence this arduous journey.

I have always been a curious person. I don't know why. I have been attracted to others with curious minds as well. My conversations with these people often led me to seek the answer to questions of "why" or "how." I was seeking to make sense of things. What I came to understand was that I, like so many of my friends, was a life-long learner. This PhD journey was an opportunity for me, having had so many extraordinary professional experiences, to learn more. I wanted to make sense and meaning of my lived experience.

Commencing this journey, I quickly learned to take "me" out of it. This was both a blessing and a challenge. Ultimately, it made the journey quite liberating for I learned that I was not alone. I found that my life as a commercial airline pilot, with the joys and frustrations of 38 years and over 22,000 hours of flying around the world, was shared by my fellow aviators. So, it was liberating to record their lived experiences and to tell this story faithfully and exclusively through their voices. The consistency with which the contributors to this research spoke to me about their love affair with flying, and their many stories about the challenges to their professional status, professional practice and autonomy, validated my own career reflections.

My master's supervisor, Professor Richard Freeman, made it clear to me in his letter of recommendation on my behalf, "This is important work that must be done." There was no turning back. I knew, and so many of my friends knew, I must pursue this research.

The path to get to this final chapter and offer my reflexive thoughts on this journey center on the very purpose to undertake the research. I truly wanted to understand professional identity in a unionized expert labor setting. I wanted to make sense and meaning of this unique organizational setting and I wanted others to know the many joys and many challenges of this profession and professional life. These thoughts were recurring reflections throughout this thesis journey.

Much can be said about the individual bricks that would form my path toward a PhD. I also quickly learned to dismiss the little bricks, and keep my eye on the bigger picture, doing the work. There was so much to learn.

I really wanted to do this properly and to the best of my ability. Once again, I had to remind myself, this journey really wasn't about me. It was about the many contributors with whom I was going to spend the second year of my PhD program which resulted in over 210 hours of semi-structured in-depth interviews and over 500 hours of participant observation periods. It was their story, in-depth and over time, that was my calling and responsibility to faithfully interpret and meaningfully share.

As I near the conclusion of this thesis, and as I have done throughout this journey, I reflect on my great respect and gratitude for everyone who contributed to this story.  I am at peace that I have faithfully shared their life's journey.

## 9.6  CONCLUSION

This exploratory research has sought to understand the professional identity of members of unionized expert labor in the United States.  It has taken an interpretative approach, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, to understand their being.  Contributions to new knowledge, resulting from this research, expand the understanding of professional identity in this unique organizational setting, expand the literature on psychological contracts, and make a policy recommendation to alter the contentious relations between members of expert labor following a merger-acquisition event.  Further, this research contributes a new identity model to thematically view and help to understand the unique positioning of this research population and to begin to understand the identity formation, negotiation and work processes incumbant on this profession.

As the first exploration of professional identity utilizing IPA to begin to understand the being of commercial airline pilots in the United States, there remain a number of questions to be explored to better understand this unique and interesting population.

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## Appendix A        Ethics Approval

**Henley**
**Business**
UNIVERSITY OF READING

# Henley Business School

## Application for Research Project Approval

### Introduction

The University Research Ethics Committee allows Schools to operate their own ethical procedures within guidelines laid down by the Committee. The University Research Ethics Committee policies are explained in their Notes for Guidance (http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/res/Researchhthics/reas-REethicshomepage.aspx).

Henley Business School (HBS) no longer has its own Research Ethics Committee however each of our constituent units have a mechanism in place to consider relevant projects (whether from staff or students). Heads of Schools and/or their nominees can approve project proposals as defined under the exception procedures.

Also note that various professional codes of conduct offer guidance even where investigations do not fall within the definition of research (eg Chartered Institute of Marketing. Market Research Society etc). A diagram of the Research Ethics process is appended to this form.

### Guidelines for Completion

- If you believe that your project is suitable for approval by the Research Ethics Committee you should complete this form and return it to the Chair of the Committee. Note that ethical issues may arise even if the data is in the public domain and/or it refers to deceased persons.

- Committee approval must be obtained before the research project commences.

- There is an obligation on all students and academic staff to observe ethical procedures and practice and actively bring to the attention of the Research Ethics Committee any concerns or questions of clarification they may have.

- Records will be maintained and progress monitored as required by the University Research Ethics Committee, overseen by the School Ethics Committee

- This form should be completed by the student/member of academic staff as appropriate. All forms must be signed by a member of the academic staff before submission.

- This form is designed to conform to the University's requirements with respect to research ethics. Approval under this procedure does not necessarily confirm the academic validity of the proposed project.

- All five parts of the form and all questions must be completed. Incomplete forms will be returned. Students should submit forms to their supervisor, who together with staff should pass these to the REC.

## 1. Project details

Date of submission: **05 NOV 2014**       Student No. **21809970**

Title of Proposed Project:- **UNDERSTANDING PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN UNIONIZED EXPERT LABOR**

Responsible Persons **JOHN L. BEDKER II**

Name & email address of principal researcher/student/programme member (delete as appropriate)

**JOHN L. BEDKER II     PHD STUDENT**
**J.L.R.BEDKER@PGR.READING.AC.UK**

Name and email address of supervisor (if applicable)

**DR EVELYN FENTON**
**E.M.FENTON@HENLEY.AC.UK**

Nature of Project (mark with a "x" as appropriate)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Staff research | ☐ | Masters | ☐ |
| Undergraduate | ☐ | Doctoral | ☒ |
| MBA | ☐ | Other | ☐ |

(Student research projects should be signed off in section 2, 3 below by the supervisor/director)
(Staff research projects should be signed off in section 2, 4 below by the Research Ethics Committee)

Brief Summary of Proposed Project and Research Methods

**PHD RESEARCH- THESIS**

**QUALITATIVE METHODS- SEMI-STRUCTURED IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS**

**I PROPOSE TO INTERVIEW VOLUNTEER PARTICIPANT, U.S. AIRLINE PILOTS**

☒ I confirm that where appropriate a consent form has been prepared and will be made available to all participants. This contains details of the project, contact details for the principal researcher and advises subjects that their privacy will be protected and that their participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw at any time without reason.

☒ I confirm that research instruments (questionnaires, interview guides, etc) have been reviewed against the policies and criteria noted in The University Research Ethics Committee Notes for Guidance. Information obtained will be safeguarded and personal privacy and commercial confidentiality will be strictly observed.

☒ I confirm that where appropriate a copy of the Consent Form and details of the Research Instruments/Protocols are attached and submitted with this application.

**2. Head of School or Nominated Representative Decision**
*(delete as appropriate)*

2.1 I have reviewed this application as **APPROVED** and confirm that it is consistent with the requirements of the University Research Ethics Committee procedures

2.2 This proposal is **NOT APPROVED** and is returned to the applicant for further consideration and/or submission to the University Research Ethics Committee

2. 3. For student and programme member projects
*SUPERVISOR - AT START OF PROJECT*
*STUDENT - ON COMPLETION OF PROJECT*
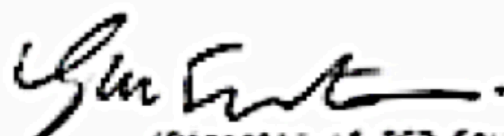
Signed (Supervisor) ~~signature~~ Signed (programme member or student)
& Print Name G. M. FENTON . & Print Name
*(before start of project)* *(on completion of project)*

2. 4. For staff/PhD research projects

Signed: ~~signature~~ .
(Director of PGR Studies ~~International Business and Strategy~~) (LOB)

3. Please reply to **all** of the following questions concerning your proposed research project and whether it involves:-

|   |   | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Are the participants and subjects of the study patients and clients of the NHS or social services to the best of your knowledge? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 2. | Are the participants and subjects of the study subject to the Mental Capacity Act 2005 to the best of your knowledge (and therefore unable to give free and informed consent)? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 3. | Are you asking questions that are likely to be considered impertinent or to cause distress to any of the participants? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 4. | Are any of the subjects in a special relationship with the researcher? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 5. | Is your project funded by a Research Council or other external source (excluding research conducted by postgraduate students)? | ☐ | ☒ |

If you have answered **YES** to **any** of these questions, refer to the University's Research Ethics Committee. If you are unsure about whether any of these conditions apply, please contact the secretary of the University Research Ethics Committee, Nathan Helsby (n.e.helsby@reading.ac.uk) for further advice.

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4. Please respond to **all** the following questions concerning your proposed research project

|   |   | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | The research involves archival research, access of company documents/records, access of publicly available data, questionnaires, surveys, focus groups and/or other interview techniques. | ☒ | ☐ |
| 2. | Arrangements for expenses and other payments to participants, if any, have been considered. | ☒ | ☐ |
| 3. | Participants will be/have been advised that they may withdraw at any stage if they so wish. | ☒ | ☐ |
| 4. | Issues of confidentiality and arrangements for the storage and security of material during and after the project and for the disposal of material have been considered. | ☒ | ☐ |
| 5. | Arrangements for providing subjects with research results if they wish to have them have been considered. | ☒ | ☐ |
| 6. | The arrangements for publishing the research results and, if confidentiality might be affected, for obtaining written consent of this have been considered. | ☒ | ☐ |
| 7. | Information Sheets and Consent Forms had been prepared in line with University guidelines for distribution to participants. | ☒ | ☐ |

| 8. | Arrangements for the completed consent forms to be retained upon completion of the project have been made. | ☒ | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|

If you have answered NO to any of these questions, contact your supervisor if applicable, staff members should refer to the Research Ethics Committee.

If the research is to be conducted outside of an office environment or normal place of work and/or outside normal working hours please note the details below and comment on how the personal safety and security of the researcher(s) has been safeguarded.

If these questions cannot be confirmed please contact your supervisor.

Please confirm that at the conclusion of the project primary data will be :-

Destroyed ☐   ☒   Submitted to the Research Ethics Committee

| Comments |
|---|
|  |

COMMENTS   (where application has been refused)

## Appendix B     Consent Form

1. I have read and had explained to me by John L.Bedker II (the interviewer) relating to the project on: UNDERSTANDING PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN UNIONIZED EXPERT LABOR.

2. I have had explained to me the purposes of the project and what will be required of me, and any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to the arrangements described to me (interviewee) in so far as they relate to my participation.

3. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time, and that this will be without detriment.

4. This application has followed the process outlined by the School of Management Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct.

5. I have received a copy of this Consent Form.

Name_____

Signature_____

Date_____

The interview may be audio recorded    YES   /   NO

# Appendix C     Volunteer Participant Interviewee Design

## APPROACH

The interview design is based upon the Dolbeare and Schuman (Schuman, 1982) series of semi-structured in-depth interviews. Known as "phenomenological interviewing" (Seidman, 2006), this approach links the theoretical foundations of this research with the practical objective of beginning to understand the professional identity of the volunteer participant interviewees. Context and meaningful expression of lived experience are the cornerstones of the Dolbeare and Schuman approach (Gergen, 2001). This interview approach provides the foundation to begin to understand "who" these members of unionized expert labor "are."

## INTERVIEW PHASE ONE: FOCUSED LIFE HISTORY

Contextual understanding begins in the first interview. This is the basis upon which the volunteer participants begin to self-define "who they are."

## INTERVIEW PHASE TWO: PARTICULAR LIVED EXPERIENCE

The part and the whole are explored through lived experience. Active listening seeks to begin to understand what it means to be "who they are." Detailing one's particular lived experience, informs the interviewer about their "being" and what "being" means to them.

## INTERVIEW PHASE THREE: MAKING SENSE

The connection between the interviewees work and life and the affect one has on the other are reflected upon. Each interview is a journey of sense making, but it is the final interview series that seeks to "connect the dots" in seeking to understand "who" these members of unionized expert labor "are."

# Appendix D       Volunteer Participant Interviewee Questions

### INTERVIEW PHASE ONE: FOCUSED LIFE HISTORY

Please tell me a little bit about your background?

How did you become a pilot?

Was there a person or event that contributed to your desire to become a pilot?  If so, please tell me about it?

Talk to me about your path to getting an ATP.

Please tell me about your experience becoming an airline pilot?

### INTERVIEW PHASE TWO: PARTICULAR LIVED EXPERIENCE

What was it like in the beginning of your airline life?  Is it different now?  If so, please tell me how it is different?  Tell me about a day in your life as an airline pilot?  What does it tell me about who you are, do you think?

Tell me about being in a union?  What were your views of unions before being in one?  What were your views on unions while in ALPA?  What were your views on unions while in APA?  AICA?  Why do you feel they were different?  Do you feel a commitment to your union?  Please explain.

Let's talk about your professional life.  Would you say your commitment was more to your profession or your employer?  Why?  Do you consider yourself a professional? Please explain what attributes you feel identify you as a professional.  What attributes would lead you to think a peer was unprofessional?

Please explain your thoughts on safety and it's relationship to the practice of your profession.

Please talk to me about seniority.  Do your friends and neighbors understand seniorities role/impact in your life?  What are your thoughts on the seniority system?  How have merger-acquisition events affected your seniority?  How does seniority define "you?"

Let's talk briefly about your current bid position? Was it your choice? If so, please explain the thoughts that went in to seeking the bid? If not, please explain your thoughts of where you wound up?

Let's talk about today's role of the Captain. Please define "who" a Captain is today? Has it changed? Why? Does it affect your desire to seek a Captain bid? What does it mean to be a Captain today? Please share your thoughts on what qualities a person would need to be an excellent Captain today? How is it different from earlier days?

## INTERVIEW PHASE THREE: MAKING SENSE

What changes in your life, or your attitude to life, resulted from your airline merger-acquisition? How did it affect you professionally? What concerned you the most about the merger-acquisition? Why? Are there still concerns? What are they? Please explain? Why do you think these concerns persist? Do you think they will ever resolve? Why?

Throughout these significant events what do you feel were your strengths? What do you think defined "you" during merger-acquisition? How did you incorporate or rely on either personal or professional attributes, qualities, traits, or your behavior during the merger-acquisition? Did these significant events change you? If so, how? If not, why not?

Please tell me a little about your days off- how important is your time off? How do scheduling conflicts affect you or your life or family?

What is your vision for your future? What contributes to that vision? Why do you think you feel the way you do about the future? What advice would you give others contemplating entering the profession? Why?

Is there anything we haven't touched on that you want to share?

## Appendix E        Volunteer Participant Interviewee Interview / Observation Form

Interviewee: _____

Date:

Time:

Location:

Essential Data:

Noteworthy Events:

Reflective Notes:

Codes, Categorizations:

Emerging Themes:

Concerns:

    Expressed:

    Observed:

# Appendix F    United States: Seniority Integration And The Mccaskill-Bond Statute

Last Updated: February 9 2012

Article by Tom Jerman and Aparna B. Joshi

Jones Day

Missouri Senators Clare McCaskill and Christopher Bond, concerned about the seniority integration treatment of employees at Trans World Airlines ("TWA") following its purchase by American Airlines and integration of the two airlines' operations and workforce, introduced legislation to guarantee labor protective provisions to airline employees with respect to seniority integration for certain covered transactions.

The legislation, known as the McCaskill-Bond statute, was signed into law in December 2007 and is codified at 49 U.S.C. § 42112.

The statute applies when two or more air carriers are involved in a "covered transaction," described as:

A. A transaction for the combination of multiple air carriers into a single air carrier; and

which

B. Involves the transfer of ownership or control of—

i. 50 percent or more of the equity securities (as defined in section 101 of title 11, United States Code) of an air carrier; or

ii. 50 percent or more (by value) of the assets of the air carrier. 49 U.S.C. § 42112 (b)(4).

When such a covered transaction "results in the combination of crafts or classes that are subject to the Railway Labor Act," "sections 3 and 13 of the labor protective provisions imposed by the Civil Aeronautics Board ("CAB" or the "Board") in the Allegheny-Mohawk merger (as published at 59 C.A.B. 45) shall apply to the integration of covered employees of the covered air carriers." Id. § 42112(a).1 In short, these Allegheny-Mohawk Labor Protective Provisions ("LPPs") require that the carrier make provisions "for the integration of seniority lists in a fair and equitable manner," including negotiation with union representatives and binding arbitration in covered transactions. The participants in this negotiation/arbitration process are the affected employee groups, and the carrier or carriers involved. The interests of unionized employee groups are represented by their union, while interests of nonunionized employee groups may be represented by employee committees or by the carrier.

By incorporating Sections 3 and 13 of the Allegheny-Mohawk LPPs, McCaskill-Bond establishes that it is the duty of the surviving or combined carrier to provide the fair and equitable seniority list integration process. The carrier can satisfy this duty by accepting a voluntarily negotiated or arbitrated list from the employee group parties. To the extent that the employee group parties do not voluntarily present such a list to the carrier, however, it is the carrier's duty to engage in arbitration with those groups as provided for in Section 13. If the covered transaction involves employee groups represented by the same union, the statute provides that the union's internal merger policies apply exclusively, with no carrier involvement, except as to whether it will accept and implement the result of the integration process (i.e., the combined seniority list). Likewise, any additional LPP or other merger-related requirements in a CBA that are consistent with the "protections afforded by" Sections 3 and 13 are not directly affected by the statute.

## Appendix G    Former TWA Pilots' Objection to the Debtors' Motion to Reject Collective Bargaining Agreements

11-15463-shl    Doc 2133    Filed 04/03/12    Entered 04/03/12 13:17:51    Main Document
    Pg 1 of 21

**Hearing Date: April 10, 2012 at 2:00 p.m. (EST)**
**Objection Deadline: April 3, 2012 at 4:00 p.m. (EST)**

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*Counsel for American Independent Cockpit Alliance, Inc.*

**UNITED STATES BANKRUPCTY COURT**
**SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

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------------------------------------------------ X
                                                 :    Chapter 11
In re                                            :
                                                 :    Case No. 11-15463 (SHL)
AMR CORPORATION, et al                           :
                                                 :    (Jointly Administered)
    Debtors.                                     :
                                                 :
------------------------------------------------ X
```

:

**FORMER TWA PILOTS'**
**OBJECTION TO THE DEBTORS' MOTION**
**TO REJECT COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS**
**PURSUANT TO 11 U.S.C. § 1113**

On behalf of the former TWA pilots, the American Independent Cockpit Alliance, Inc. ("AICA") hereby files this objection to the Debtor's motion (Doc. No. 2035), made under 11 U.S.C. § 1113, to reject the collective bargaining agreement between American Airlines, Inc. and the Allied Pilots Association ("APA").  This objection is pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 1109(b) providing, "A party in interest, including the debtor, the trustee, a creditors' committee, an

equity security holders' committee, a creditor, an equity security holder, or any indenture trustee, may raise and may appear and be heard on any issue in a case under this chapter."

## I. SUMMARY.

In the aftermath of American Airlines' ("American" or "AA") acquisition of Trans World Airlines ("TWA") in 2001, AA and the American pilots, represented by the Allied Pilots Association ("APA"), effectively stripped the TWA pilots of their seniority. This reduction of seniority soon translated into furloughs for hundreds of TWA pilots and demotions and lost bidding rights for the rest. The United States Congress considered the result so egregious that it enacted federal legislation – referred to as the McCaskill-Bond Amendment – to prevent its recurrence.

AA and APA implemented this evisceration of TWA pilot seniority through a bilateral agreement known as Supplement CC ("Supp CC"). The exclusion of the TWA pilots from the Supp CC negotiation process had been accomplished by forcing them to surrender, in the context of TWA's own bankruptcy process, their contractual Allegheny-Mohawk rights, which would have entitled the TWA pilots to a neutral arbitration process to determine any unresolved seniority disputes. The TWA pilots were induced to surrender their Allegheny-Mohawk rights by their then-current union – the Air Line Pilots Association ("ALPA") – which was unlawfully motivated by its desire to ingratiate itself with APA with which it sought to merge. ALPA was found guilty in a federal trial of violating its duty of fair representation ("DFR") arising under the Railway Labor Act ("RLA") based on its role in facilitating the loss of the TWA pilots' contractual Allegheny-Mohawk rights. The effect of the McCaskill-Bond Amendment is to guarantee these same Allegheny-Mohawk rights as a matter of federal law.

Supp CC's devastating reduction of TWA pilot seniority was partially offset by provisions that created modest protections for TWA pilots at the carrier's St. Louis ("STL") base. AA negotiated for the inclusion of the STL provisions pursuant to a contractual commitment it had made to use its "reasonable best efforts" to facilitate a fair and equitable seniority integration between the AA and TWA pilots.

AA, through its 1113 application, now seeks the Court's approval of a tentative agreement with APA to eliminate these same STL protections. In a purported effort to mitigate this final blow to TWA pilot employment rights, the AA/APA tentative agreement provides for an arbitration process, which is "fixed" in two respects: 1) it would exclude the TWA pilots as a party, in violation of basic concepts of equity and federal case law precedent, and 2) it prohibits the arbitrator from addressing the very seniority issue which was the basis for creating the offset of the STL protections.

As it relates to the former TWA pilots, the Debtors' Section 1113 proposal is objectionable on four unique grounds:

First, it is unfair and inequitable as to the former TWA pilots because it disproportionally shifts restructuring costs on to them that no other pilots will incur.

Second, under the proposal, the former TWA pilots, alone among all pilots, are to have their fate in this restructuring determined by a special arbitration proceeding the result of which is

unlawfully pre-determined in terms of its procedure (i.e, exclusion of the TWA pilots as a party) and substance (i.e., circumscribing the arbitrators' authority to address the core seniority issue).

Third, the proposal amounts to an actionable breach of the APA's duty of fair representation for which American is jointly liable by reason of its knowing collusion in that breach.

Fourth, the proposal is not based on the most complete and reliable information because it ignores a no-cost proposal made by the former TWA pilots.

## Appendix H     ALPA's Memorandum of Law in Support of Its Motion to Exclude the Testimony of Plaintiffs' Experts, and for Summary Judgment

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**
**DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY**

| | |
|---|---|
| PATRICK BRADY, et al., | Civil Action No. 02-2917 (JEI) |
| Plaintiffs, | |
| v. | |
| AIR LINE PILOTS ASSOCIATION, INTERNATIONAL, | |
| Defendant. | |

**ALPA'S MEMORANDUM OF LAW IN SUPPORT OF ITS MOTIONS TO EXCLUDE THE TESTIMONY OF PLAINTIFFS' EXPERTS, AND FOR SUMMARY JUDGMENT**

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**PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

In the liability phase of this case, a jury found that ALPA had breached its duty of fair representation and that whatever constituted that supposed breach caused injury to "some" TWA pilots. Plaintiffs' counsel invited the jury to find injury even if it concluded the staple point should have been one pilot lower. (Ex. 4 at 75:17-18.)₁ At the damages phase of this case, however, Plaintiffs must prove much more. They must prove through non-speculative evidence and to a reasonable degree of certainty that they suffered monetary damage, who suffered it, and the amount thereof. That is no small task. As this Court recognized, "the calculation of damages [here] is an extraordinarily difficult exercise." (Ex. 65 at 7:20-21.) After more than two years for discovery, Plaintiffs have come up empty.

The only evidence of monetary damage that Plaintiffs have offered to support their demands are speculative and subjective theories offered by two purported experts, Rikk Salamat and Dr. Henry Farber. (Ex. 51; *see also* Ex. 66 at 27:7-9.) But Salamat and Farber make counterfactual assumptions, disregard undisputed evidence, and rely on invalid methodologies to hazard guesses about what seniority lists the Allied Pilots Association ("APA") and the TWA Master Executive Council ("TWA MEC") might have negotiated absent any breach of ALPA's duty of fair representation. By Salamat's own admission, however, these lists are nothing more than "*speculat[ion]* about what would have happened in an alternative universe." (Salamat 1/30 Tr. 191:13-17 (emphasis added).)₂ It is well established that opinions arrived at through such guesswork—the product of unsound methodologies and inaccurate assumptions—fall far shy of the analytical rigor required by *Daubert* v. *Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals, Inc.*, 509 U.S. 579 (1993). Plaintiffs have thus failed to adduce any admissible evidence of damages. For each of the following reasons, the Court should grant ALPA's motion to exclude the testimony of Salamat and Farber and grant its motion for summary judgment:

*First*, Salamat—the only proffered expert who attempts to quantify the damages Plaintiffs purportedly suffered—should be precluded from testifying. He attempts to predict the outcome of the negotiations between the TWA MEC and the APA had ALPA acted differently. Yet, as he admits, he has no expertise in any of the disciplines upon which he supposedly relies to create his analytical framework and therefore no expertise on which to base his estimate of Plaintiffs' damages. (Salamat 1/29 Tr. 9:14-19, 10:6-12:5, 19:1-8, 21:23-25, 145:11-15.) Salamat's damages models are also unreliable and lack an adequate connection to the facts of this case. Among other foundational errors, Salamat inaccurately assumes that the jury found that ALPA breached its duty of fair representation by failing to pursue each and every one of ten specific actions even though, as the Court has explained, "[t]here was no finding of any particular failure." (Ex. 66 at 4:9-20.) He then arbitrarily assigns probabilities reflecting his subjective view of the impact that failure to pursue each action had on the likelihood of negotiating a particular alternative seniority list. (Salamat Rpt. 10; Salamat 1/29 Tr. 130:3133:10; Salamat

1/30 Tr. 49:4-8.)3  And his proposed alternative seniority lists are also inadmissible as a matter of law because they rely on impermissible speculation and assumptions that are unmoored to, and often contradicted by, the facts of this case.

*Second*, Farber's testimony also should be excluded under *Daubert*. Farber too has no relevant expertise in proposing a "but-for" integrated pilot seniority list.  After compiling an incomplete list of other airline transactions, and excluding those where he had difficulty obtaining information, he subjectively and inaccurately selects supposedly "comparable" transactions based on impressionistic assessments of two criteria, out of the multitude that he acknowledges are relevant to seniority integrations.  He blithely assumes that the TWA-American merged seniority list should have looked like the average of the lists from those transactions.  He further compounds this error by using an unreliable summary metric that has never been used or peer-reviewed in the context of a seniority integration to estimate his but-for seniority list.  But even if his method and metric had been reliable, his testimony would still be inadmissible because it rests on counterfactual assumptions.  For example, Farber's entire model rests on his demonstrably false assumption that TWA was not in danger of ceasing operations prior to the transaction.  Had he bothered to review the record, which he concededly failed to do, he would have seen uncontroverted evidence that TWA would have been forced to liquidate within days absent the transaction with American, distinguishing the deal from any mergers he considered comparable.

*Third*, ALPA is entitled to summary judgment on the issue of damages because Plaintiffs have failed to adduce a theory of damages supported by any admissible evidence.  The only evidence supporting their claim for damages is inadmissible under *Daubert*.  And the undisputed record, including testimony from all parties involved in the seniority integration negotiations, is devoid of evidence that ALPA's actions caused Plaintiffs to suffer any monetary harm.  To the contrary, the record demonstrates that nothing ALPA did would have persuaded the APA to offer the TWA pilots more favorable terms.  In addition, Plaintiffs' claimed entitlement to damages through June 2026 is untenable because ALPA's liability is limited to the duration of the 1997 American-APA collective bargaining agreement (through May 1, 2003).  Moreover, Plaintiffs cannot sustain their burden of advancing a basis for an award of future earnings. Plaintiffs have had over a decade to develop a reliable damage theory, but have proven unable to do so.  All they have proffered are the opinions of two supposed experts whose speculation is inadmissible under *Daubert*.  Therefore, ALPA respectfully requests that the Court grant its motions to exclude Plaintiffs' experts' testimony and for summary judgment on Plaintiffs' claims for damages.

1 All references to "Ex. __" refer to exhibits to the Declaration of Daniel J. Toal, dated August 22, 2013, submitted in support of these Motions (the "Toal Decl.").

2 Excerpts from Salamat's January 29, 30, and 31, 2013 deposition testimony are attached as Exhibits 56, 57, and 58, respectively, to the Toal Declaration.
3 The Salamat Report, dated October 12, 2012, is attached as Exhibit 52 to the Toal Declaration.

## Appendix I  Plaintiffs' Memorandum In Support Of Their Motion To Stay Arbitration

**HEARING DATE AND TIME:**   April 15, 2015 at 11:00 a.m. (Eastern Time)

**OBJECTION DEADLINE:**   April 8, 2015 at 4:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)

Allen P. Press - *pro hat vice*

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Attorneys for Plaintiffs

UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

_____ x

In re: AMR CORPORATION, et al.,   Case No. 11-15463
Debtor.                                             Chapter 11

_____ x

JOHN KRAKOWSKI, KEVIN HORNER and

M. ALICIA SIKES, individually and on

behalf of those similarly situated,

                            Plaintiffs,   Adv. Proceeding No. 13-01283-SHL

v.

AMERICAN AIRLINES, INC., et al

                   Defendents

_____

                              X

## PLAINTIFFS' MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT OF THEIR
## MOTION TO STAY ARBITRATION

**I**        <u>**Summary.**</u>

Plaintiffs are pilots employed by defendant American Airlines, Inc. ("American"). They were formerly pilots at Trans World Airlines ("TWA"). American acquired TWA in 2001. There are approximately 850 former TWA pilots currently flying for American. Hundreds more have recall rights.

American and its pilots union, defendant Allied Pilots Association ("APA), have long stifled the legitimate career expectations of the former TWA pilots. This case, and the companion case referred to as *"Krakowski II* (Adv. Proc. No. 14-01920-SHL, collectively the *"Krakowski* litigation"), seek to restore these expectations. Recent actions taken by defendants in connection with the American/US Airways merger threaten to undermine the *Krakowski* litigation in its entirety.

American completed its merger with US Airways in December 2013. APA was certified as the collective bargaining agent for the combined group of 15,000 pilots. In January 2015, APA entered into a new collective bargaining agreement with American. That agreement governs the combined pilot group. The agreement includes a process to determine how the former US Airways pilots will be placed on the American pilot seniority list. That process culminates in an arbitration scheduled to begin June 29, 2015.

The arbitration will result in a seniority list that combines in some fashion the American and US Airways pilots' seniority lists. As is common in such cases, the

arbitrators will also assign protected flying rights to certain groups of pilots through the imposition of so-called "fences." A "fence" limits the ability of a pilot to bid on work that his seniority would otherwise make available to him, reserving that flying to the pilots within the fence.

If decided in plaintiffs' favor, the *Krakowski* litigation would have profound impact on the upcoming seniority arbitration. This case seeks to set aside an arbitration award that substantially diminished preferential flying rights reserved to the former TWA pilots prior to the Bankruptcy. *Krakowski II seeks* to re-assign the seniority of the former TWA pilots in accordance with their "Occupational Dates," as required by the American/APA collective bargaining agreement. Either, if successful, would have a profound affect on how American's pilots bid for their work under any future American seniority list.

Yet, although plaintiffs' claims will necessarily heavily impact the seniority arbitration, the arbitrators are powerless to address the claims. That power is with this Court alone. Nevertheless, American and APA intend to proceed with the arbitration. This should be stopped. Once seniority and preferential flying rights for all 15,000 pilots are established by the arbitrators, it would be a nearly impossible "egg to unscramble" after resolution of the *Krakowski* litigation.

The All Writs Act, *28 U.S.C. § 1651,* authorizes courts to stay arbitrations in proper cases. This is such a case. The Court should stay defendants' upcoming seniority arbitration until after the resolution of the *Krakowski* litigation, and order the expedited discovery and trial of the cases.

## Appendix J          Memorandum and Order Denying Motion to Stay Arbitration

**UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT**
**SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**
-------------------------------------------------------------------x

In re:                                                                          Chapter 11

AMR CORPORATION, *et al.*,                          Case No. 11-15463 (SHL)

                                                                          (Jointly Administered)

                    Reorganized Debtors.
-------------------------------------------------------------------x
JOHN KRAKOWSKI, KEVIN HORNER, and M.
ALICIA SIKES, individually, and on behalf of those
similarly situated,

                                                                          Adv. Pro. No. 13-01283 (SHL)

                              Plaintiffs,

                    v.

AMERICAN AIRLINES, INC. and
ALLIED PILOTS ASSOCIATION,

                              Defendants,

OFFICIAL COMMITTEE OF
UNSECURED CREDITORS,

                              As Intervenor.
-------------------------------------------------------------------x

**MEMORANDUM AND ORDER DENYING MOTION TO STAY ARBITRATION**

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**SEAN H. LANE**
**UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY JUDGE**

Before the Court is the Plaintiffs' motion to stay an upcoming arbitration to integrate the seniority of pilots from U.S. Airways and American Airlines, two airlines that merged in December 2013 as part of Debtors' plan of reorganization. The integration arbitration will result in one seniority list to govern all the pilots who now fly at the new merged entity. The integration arbitration is scheduled to start in June 2015 and conclude by December 2015. The Plaintiffs contend that they will be harmed if the seniority arbitration proceeds before this Court resolves the merits of this adversary proceeding and a related adversary proceeding, both of which allege the improper loss of seniority and other rights by former Trans World Airlines' pilots who joined American when American acquired TWA in 2001.[1] Because the Court concludes that the Plaintiffs have not satisfied the requirement for injunctive relief, including most notably a showing of irreparable harm, the Court denies the motion.

## Appendix K        Memorandum of Decision 9/3/15

13-01283-shl Doc 75 Filed 09/03/15 Entered 09/03/15 16:22:31 Main Document

| UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK | FOR PUBLICATION |
|---|---|
| In re: | Chapter 11 |
| AMR CORPORATION, *et al.*, | Case No. 11-15463 (SHL) |
| Reorganized Debtors. | (Confirmed) |
| JOHN KRAKOWSKI, *et al.*, | |
| Plaintiffs, | |
| vs. | Adv. Pro. No. 13-01283 (SHL) |
| AMERICAN AIRLINES, INC., *et al.*, | |
| Defendants. | |

### MEMORANDUM OF DECISION

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**SEAN H. LANE**
**UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY JUDGE**

Before the Court is the motion of Defendant American Airlines, Inc. seeking to dismiss the modified supplemental class action complaint in the above-captioned adversary proceeding. Plaintiffs are American Airlines' pilots who previously worked at TWA. At American, Plaintiffs enjoyed special job opportunities at the St. Louis hub until those opportunities ended when the pilots' collective bargaining agreement was abrogated in American's bankruptcy. Plaintiffs allege that their union—the APA—breached its duty of fair representation in ten ways regarding Plaintiffs' loss of those special opportunities, including failing to bargain for Plaintiffs in connection with the lost opportunities, failing to replicate the lost opportunities, and failing to fairly represent Plaintiffs in an arbitration to provide substitute job protections. Unhappy with the results of that arbitration, they seek a declaration voiding the arbitrators' award, among other things.

For the reasons set forth below, the Court dismisses the first four claims in light of the prior proceedings before this Court to abrogate the pilots' collective bargaining agreement under Section 1113 of the Bankruptcy Code and the Court's subsequent approval of a new agreement. But the Court denies the rest of the motion, finding that Plaintiffs have stated claims regarding the conduct of the arbitration, the merits of which require further factual development.

## Appendix L    Memorandum of Decision 9/22/15

**14-01920-shl Doc 25 Filed 09/22/15 Entered 09/22/15 09:25:29 Main Document**

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UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK
--------------------------------------------------------x
In re:                                                        Chapter 11

AMR CORPORATION, et al.,                                      Case No. 11-15463 (SHL)

            Reorganized Debtors.                              (Confirmed)
--------------------------------------------------------x
JOHN KRAKOWSKI, et al.,

            Plaintiffs,

                 v.                                           Adv. No. 14-01920 (SHL)

AMERICAN AIRLINES, INC., et al.,

            Defendants.
--------------------------------------------------------x
```

# MEMORANDUM OF DECISION

**A P P E A R A N C E S :**

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**SEAN H. LANE**
**UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY JUDGE**

Before the Court are the Defendants' motions to dismiss the amended complaint (the "Complaint") (ECF No. 1-9),[1] filed by Plaintiffs John Krakowski, Kevin Homer, and M. Alicia Sikes on behalf of themselves and all persons similarly situated against Defendants American Airlines, Inc. ("American") and the Allied Pilots Association (the "APA"), which is the pilots' union at American. The Plaintiffs are former Trans World Airlines ("TWA") pilots now employed by American.[2]

As part of American's bankruptcy restructuring, it sought and received authority to reject its then-existing collective bargaining agreement with the APA (the "Old CBA"). American subsequently negotiated a new collective bargaining agreement for its pilots (the "New CBA"). At the same time, American and the APA entered into a letter agreement to continue using the same pilot seniority list that had been utilized under the Old CBA. In the three counts of their Complaint, the Plaintiffs allege that through the continued use of this seniority list: (1) American breached the terms of the New CBA, (2) the APA breached its duty of fair representation, and (3) American colluded in the APA's breach of that duty.

For the reasons set forth below, the Court agrees with the Defendants that the Plaintiffs have failed to state a claim for breach of the New CBA. The Court therefore grants the Defendants' motions to dismiss Count I of the Complaint, as well as the claims within Counts II and III that depend upon the breach of contact claim. The Court, however, denies the motions with respect to the remaining claims in Count II and III, finding that they sufficiently state a claim for a breach of the duty of fair representation and do not rely upon the breach of contract claim. As to the final collusion claim, the Court finds that the Plaintiffs have failed to set forth facts sufficient to allege a plausible claim of collusion.

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[1]	Unless otherwise specified, references to the Case Management/Electronic Case Filing ("ECF") docket are to this adversary proceeding.

[2]	The Plaintiffs originally brought this action in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri. The Missouri District Court transferred the case to this Court on March 19, 2014. *See* Memorandum and Order, Case No. 4:13-cv-00838-JAR (ECF No. 43).