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CONSTRUCTING AND DISCIPLINING THE WORKING BODY: ORGANIZATIONAL DISCOURSES, GLOBALIZATION AND THE MOBILE WORKER

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Introduction

It has been suggested "the faster pace of internationalisation and globalisation . . . [has resulted] in the increased mobility of human resources and means that increasing numbers of employees spend some part of their working life abroad" (Gregerson et al., 1998: 79). Implicit in the metaphor of human resources is that the human is equated with, or placed on a similar level to, material resources, so that the working body (i.e., the physical body the individual brings to her/his work, which incorporates the sense of a functioning body also) is experienced in similar ways to financial, technical or natural resources. Such implicit meaning not only raises the value issue of equating people with material resources, but also points to the construction of very specific realities in work

organizations that result from the use of such a metaphor (Dachler and Enderle, 1989). In many respects, we live in a world where “paid work” is valued over virtually everything else. As noted by the New Economics Foundation (2010), people are working longer hours today than they were 30 years ago, very much at the expense of the unpaid, private and informal aspects of our lives. Even with all the legislation that has progressively limited the paid working week, notably in the West, “paid work remains firmly at the centre of people’s lives”; however, “[t]here is nothing fixed or inevitable about the way we regard work . . . today. It is a legacy of industrial capitalism” (New Economics Foundation, 2010: 13).

All of the above overlaps with the ongoing debate between relativism and absolutism, that is, whether there are many ethical standards that should be respected, each for its own sake, or whether there is one absolute ethical standard, what that should be and who gets to decide what that should be (Donaldson 1996). Notwithstanding this debate, Donaldson (1996) points out that there is an internationally accepted list of moral principles that draws on many cultural and religious traditions, namely the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Indeed, from the perspective of Western ethics, equating people with material resources, to be consumed in the process of production, is to treat people simply as means to an end, contravening Kant’s categorical imperative to treat people as ends in themselves (Chryssides and Kaler 1993: 99).

With this as our point of departure, we argue that organizational discourses have fundamentally influenced the construction and disciplining of the working body and its position in society. In sharing findings from a qualitative study that interviewed over forty self-initiated expatriates (Jokinen et al., 2008; Suutari and Brewster, 2000) in the South of France and in Munich (Germany) (Crowley-Henry, 2007; Crowley-Henry, 2009; Crowley-Henry and Weir, 2007; Crowley-Henry and Weir, 2009), the chapter goes on to explore and illustrate how interviewees construct themselves, and are constructed, as international working bodies/international workers. Self-initiated expatriates differ from traditional organization-assigned expatriates. Organization-assigned expatriates are employees in an organization sent by their organization on an international assignment for a limited duration. In contrast, self-initiated expatriates embark on an international work experience of their own initiation, with differing durations, some indefinite or permanent. Finally, in alluding to ethics, we ponder whether organizational discourses treat people as means to ends.

Defining Who We Are through Work

Organizational discourses have not developed in a value-neutral vacuum, but have been written with a particular consumer audience in mind, namely management (Adler et al., 2007; Alvesson and Deetz, 2006; Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Alvesson and Willmott, 1996; Alvesson and Willmott, 2003; Guest, 2006; Townley, 1993; Townley, 1994). Indeed, it is generally accepted that this literature, and the knowledge it has generated, has been developed to facilitate maintaining or increasing control over the working body. More specifically, in reviewing organizational discourses, an obsession over the working body emerges as a common theme.

Equally, there is an appearance of progress in this literature, going from Taylor's (1967 [1911]) scientific management of the early 1900s and its concern with physical aspects of people at work, through the human relations movement and its concern for self-fulfilled individuals, and on to contemporary concerns with self-managed individuals and empowered team workers. Work as we generally understand it today is a modern invention, a product of industrialization and governed by the rules of economic rationality (Applebaum, 1992; New Economics Foundation, 2010; Shilling, 2005). Tracing historical meanings of work, the ancient Greeks considered all work to be the domain of slaves and women, who were marginalized from social life and denied the privileges of citizenship, for work was viewed as painful drudgery that debased the mind and made man unfit for the practice of virtue (Casey, 1995).

Prior to the industrial era, the household was where production and work took place, linking in to the community, with people providing for themselves and their families. Work was an integral part of family and local life, with the economic and the social being interwoven and indistinguishable aspects of daily life:

[T]he prevailing pattern of work had convivial features which work today often lacks. Self-service, self-help, self-reliance and co-operative mutual aid were characteristics of the way of life and work. Economic and social relationships then were predominantly personal and interpersonal, not impersonal and organizational as they are today. . . . No one then foresaw the day when people would be dependent on employers to provide them with the wherewithal for work, and when people would have no work to do unless employers were able and willing to organize it for them. (Robertson, 1985: 29)

Enter the industrial era and we have gradually become used to looking outside the home for paid employment, "for the kind of work that brings in money" (Robertson, 1985: 29). Indeed, "we have become dependent on

paid work and other work outside the home to give us a sense of identity, a social role, that the diminished functions of our households and immediate neighbourhoods can no longer supply” (Robertson, 1985: 29). The march of industrial age logic has been both cumulative and self-reinforcing in terms of the move to paid work outside the home creating the need for supporting institutions, such as schools and hospitals, to meet needs formerly met in the home and within the community, these institutions themselves providing openings for paid employment.

Work has become the primary locus of social organization in modern industrial society, for “by far the most prominent structure of modern Western society is that organized around the work people do” (Parsons, 1964: 325), while “[e]mployment has been the way that industrial societies and the industrial age have organized work” (Robertson, 1985: 28). Indeed, whether one is in or out of employment, looking or preparing for work, and certainly whether or not one likes one’s job, work as it is conventionally organized significantly shapes everyday life experience for most people in industrial societies.

In essence, work is such a dominant activity in people’s lives and has become so central to life in western society that people have defined themselves and their worth, and in turn been socially defined, according to the type of work they do and their productive contribution to society. The dominant definition of industrial society, therefore, is that of a society of workers (Gorz, 1989) in which participation in paid work is a normative condition. As such, the individual’s sense of self, the project of self-creation, has come to be enunciated within the prevailing dominant discourses relating to work (Casey, 1995). Witness Liebow’s (1967: 60) discussion of the street corner man as a case in point:

The man sees middle-class occupations as a primary source of prestige, pride and self-respect; his own job affords him none of these. To think about his job is to see himself as others see him, to remind him of just where he stands in society. And because society’s criteria for placement are generally the same as his own, to talk about his job can trigger a flush of shame and a deep, almost physical ache to change places with someone, almost anyone, else. The desire to be a person in his own right, to be noticed by the world he lives in, is shared by each of the men on the streetcorner.

We, in the West at least, therefore, can be conceived as being in a psychic prison (Morgan, 2006), one that says that we are only of value to society if we work. As such, work has become a prison, one from which few have attempted to develop an escape route. We have become dependent on organizations to provide us with work; it is estimated that

the wage system covers 85 per cent of those gainfully employed who must work for another person (Perrow, 1986: 4).

Taking Robertson's (1985) "Business As Usual" scenario, we can reflect on our modern industrial western society and how we have come to organize it. Essentially, we espouse a notion of full employment and see paid employment as the dominant form of work, with other activities such as housework, family care and voluntary work having a lower status. We are dependent on organizations for work and on paid work as the primary source for money incomes. There is an obligation to be employed and those falling outside the norm are stigmatized. We have instituted a sharp distinction between various age groups in our society, requiring that the young receive education to prepare them for work, that adults work and that the old retire from work at a given age.

Circulating within this "Business As Usual" scenario is the working body. As already noted, our concern in this chapter is to reflect upon how, and with what effects, the working body has been constructed, and to do that we turn to the work of Michel Foucault as our guide.

Rendering the Working Body Knowable and Governable

Following Foucault's (1972) premise that discourse is a historically contingent body of regularized practices of language that are condoned by a society, practices which make possible certain statements while at the same time disallowing others, organizational discourses can be seen as being made up of rules and procedures developed over time which construct and legitimate the way we see and talk about the working body. Considering organizational discourses from Foucault's perspective, therefore, allows us to draw attention to what is said, and not said, and to the truths that are socially constructed.

Power is all pervading, present in social and economic structures; however, it "is not something that is acquired, seized or shared, something one holds on to or allows to slip away" (Foucault, 1981: 94). Rather, power is relational and is associated with the mundane practices, techniques and procedures of everyday life. Studying power from a Foucauldian perspective, therefore, focuses attention on the "how" of power, on the very practices, techniques and procedures that give it effect.

According to Foucault (1977), power should not to be seen in negative terms for it has a productive force, producing reality, domains of objects and rituals of truth. In terms of visibility, therefore, "power is exercised by virtue of things being known and people being seen" (Foucault, 1980:

154), in essence rendering something or someone visible or invisible. The power relations, structures and institutions of modern industrial society have served to produce the knowledge forms of contemporary life, which operate through discourses that reproduce, legitimate and render invisible their dominance.

In an essay on “governmentality” (a neologism combining government and rationality), Foucault explored techniques used in the management of populations. For him, government is understood as “a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or effect the conduct of some person or persons” (Gordon, 1991: 2), while that of rationality suggests that something must first be known before it can be governed. Rendering something governable requires that knowledge about it be captured or inscribed through techniques to render it knowable. Governing, therefore, is dependent on particular ways of knowing and requires vocabularies and ways of representing and ordering populations. As such, governmentality is a “process through which objects are rendered amenable to intervention and regulation by being formulated in a particular conceptual way” (Townley, 1993: 520).

Knowledge and power imply and constitute one another, for it “is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge [and] it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power” (Foucault, 1980: 52). We can argue, therefore, that the working body is constituted at the point of intersection between power and knowledge, through relations of power that cannot be “established, consolidated nor implanted without the production . . . and functioning of a discourse” (Foucault, 1980: 93). The working body is shaped, subjugated and disciplined from the moment of birth, with human subjectivity constructed through discursive practices, through the linkages between “fields of knowledge, types of normativity, and forms of subjectivity in a particular culture” (Foucault, 1990: 4).

The working body, therefore, is rendered knowable through the classification, categorization and codification processes of organizational discourses and its domination is rendered invisible by the system of truth established as knowledge through such discourses. Further, the working body’s identity is not absolute; rather it is relational, contingent on being seen in relation to something else (Clegg, 1989). In short, the working body is a product of organizational discourses, a product of organizational knowledge, which “invents, molds and carves out its object” (Townley, 1993: 523). In the context of organizational discourses, the individual has been constructed through what have become common sense notions of the “ideal” working body. This ideal working body is the product of the social techniques of power through which “[c]ertain bodies, certain gestures,

certain discourses, certain desires come to be constituted as individuals” (Foucault, 1980: 98).

Constructing and Disciplining the Working Body

Foucault (1977) noted three principal methods through which disciplines distribute individuals in space so as to locate or fix them conceptually, namely enclosure, partitioning and ranking. Taking the concept of enclosure first, this relates to the spatial separation of a place. In the case of work, the workplace became a physically enclosed space, with the first factories akin to prisons, being bounded by high walls and with workers being controlled as though they were prisoners (Laing, 1991). Indeed, working bodies were brought together in one place so that they could be disciplined, controlled and instructed to undertake whatever work was required of them. This is reminiscent of Foucault’s (1977) notion of the carceral society, where discipline is used to create docile bodies and where punishment operates through techniques of coercing individuals by way of training the body. The central metaphor of this carceral society, the “panoptic gaze”, fits with the bringing together of working bodies into an enclosed workspace so that they can be controlled.

The conceptual effects of enclosure are still with us today for the “social convention of ‘work’ largely remains intact as attendance at a specified place of work for a period of time to perform designated tasks” (Laing, 1991: 14). Despite self-management and empowerment being the flavour of the moment, today’s workplaces still seem rather reminiscent to those of old. Indeed, the prison-like features of early workplaces, and the panoptic gaze of management, have perhaps become more sophisticated, more subtle and more intrusive through the use of technologies that allow employers to monitor employee activity, both productive and non-productive.

Enclosure also operates in terms of separating those who work from those who do not, those who do paid work from those who do not, and those seen as essential from those who are not. Thus, we have a classification system in terms of the division of labour: we have the working body and the non-working body (e.g., children, the retired, the unemployed, the unemployable), the remunerated working body and the non-remunerated working body (e.g., those who work at home), the essential working body (e.g., highly skilled, highly paid and in demand) and the inessential working body (e.g., feminized work).

Turning to the concept of partitioning, this serves to distribute individuals further within the enclosed work space, leading to further classification into manual and non-manual, blue collar and white collar,

professional and non-professional, managerial and non-managerial, domestic and international, core and periphery. Finally, individuals are still further divided by hierarchical ordering. Organizational disciplines use techniques such as job classifications, job ladders or salary schemes, which, in turn, are based on education, skill, responsibility or experience (Townley, 1993).

Within the organizational disciplines, these ordering techniques and practices are presented as the natural way of organizing and classifying individuals, as reflecting naturally occurring divisions. However, from a Foucauldian perspective, they are very much disciplinary techniques and practices, which

proceed by operating primarily through enhancing the “calculability” of individuals, as each classificatory or ranking system designates each individual to his or her own space, and in doing so makes it possible to establish his or her presence and absence. Such classification systems locate individuals in reference to the whole. (Townley, 1993: 529)

Applying disciplinary techniques and practices to distribute individuals in space means that they can become known through being differentiated from each other. Therefore, as a discipline, human resource management seeks to “characterize, classify, specialize: . . . [to] distribute along a scale, around a norm, hierarchize individuals in relation to one another and, if necessary, disqualify and invalidate” (Foucault, 1977: 223).

Valuing Parts over the Whole

Over the years, the dominant Western organizational discourses have espoused the virtues of efficiency and productivity. These virtues have been represented as the natural way of doing business and as the way in which society as a whole would benefit. In tandem with these virtues, organizational discourses have created and sustained a notion of employment where it is the responsibility of the individual to make her/himself of value as a working body, in other words, fit the system.

As already noted, implicit in the metaphor of human resources management is that the working body is equated with, or placed on a similar level to, material resources. Turning first to meaning implicit in the term management when it comes to managing human resources, management implies leadership or control over subordinate bodies, implies a hierarchy of working bodies, with greater control over subordinates by fewer and fewer bodies the higher the level in the hierarchy. Further, as Dachler and Enderle (1989) note, the term

“subordinate” implicitly suggests that these working bodies require management, development, encouragement, motivation, etc. by some superordinate power. Herein lies an inherent contradiction in human resources efforts: seeing management as one of the main sources of motivated action implicitly denies and contradicts the aims of human resources efforts to increase the self-actualization of the working body (Enderle, 1987).

Implicit in treating people as resources equivalent to other non-human resources is the idea that there must be somebody using, buying and selling these resources (Dachler and Enderle, 1989), thus dividing organization members into those who are resources and those who use and buy these resources. In turn, organizational research is generally designed and conducted with those who use and pay for these resources in mind, thereby constructing the specific reality of human resources from a managerial perspective. Treating people as resources implies that, as with other resources, the working body must fit particular parameters or identifiable characteristics in order to be of use to the organization as a resource, thus reducing the whole to its parts, to those considered of use and of value to the organization.

Through the division of labour and the hierarchy of authority, organizations determine the skills, abilities and personality attributes required for each job and, through the process of selection, match working bodies with the characteristics required for each job. Thus it is that the organizational literature, in turn, follows an analytic process, which deconstructs complex wholes into their measurable parts and focuses on those parts considered “useful”. Further, implicit in seeing people as resources is the sense that individuals are relatively easily interchangeable, for it is the person who must have the requisite characteristics to be successful in the job, and not that the job must match the person. This is very much in keeping with Taylor’s (1967 [1911]) view that the person had to fit the system, and not vice versa.

Organizations make use of those parts of people that are useful to them and ignore those that are not, reflecting a base business value that prizes utility (Gouldner, 1989). Industrial society is primarily concerned with utility, with that which serves a practical use and has instrumental significance. It is not the individual that organizations want, rather it is the skills and abilities the individual has and the functions s/he can perform. If an individual has a skill or ability that is not needed, or should the function the individual performs become obsolete through mechanization, then s/he is not required. A person’s utility in the workplace is contingent on her/his imputed usefulness. As such, to become useful and reap the associated

reward of earning a wage, “people must submit to an education and to a socialization that early validates and cultivates only selected parts of themselves, that is, those that are expected to have subsequent utility” (Gouldner, 1989: 261). Further, the value of an individual’s parts are both appraised and rewarded in comparison with others. Therefore, using the language of economics, if the supply of some parts of the working body should be greater than the demand, the value of those parts will be less than in the opposite case.

In the Western world, we we are disciplined to value the body for its parts over the whole. Organizational discourses have served to narrow our focus on utility, selectively including and excluding, dividing people into “two pools, those useful and those not useful to industrial society . . . the not useful may constitute the unemployed or unemployables, the aged, unskilled, unreliable or intractable” (Gouldner, 1989: 261). This notion of selective inclusion and exclusion, the survival of the fittest in Social Darwinian terms, can be applied at an individual level in terms of people being rewarded for those parts of themselves that are of value, while at the same time learning which parts are unwanted and unworthy. Thus, to quote Gouldner (1989: 261), the individual

comes to organize his self and personality in conformity with the operating standards of utility . . . [V]ast parts . . . must be suppressed in the course of playing a role in industrial society . . . [M]an . . . thereby becomes alienated from a large sector of his own interests, needs and capacities . . . [and] just as there are unemployed men, there is also the unemployed self.

Goulder argues that seeking justification for one’s existence through one’s productive contribution to society – a utility-oriented society that fosters the exclusion of self to some degree or other –contributes to the pervasive sense of having wasted one’s life.

International HRM and the “Ideal” International Working Body

International human resource management literature and research has focused almost exclusively on the management of organization-assigned expatriates (e.g. Adler and Gundersen, 2008; Borg and Harzing, 1995; Brewster and Scullion, 1997; Dowling and Welch, 2004). Contemporary literature has, however, called on a development of the subject area to incorporate the diverse types of international assignees that do not fall under the assigned expatriate category (e.g. Brewster and Suutari, 2005; de Cieri et al., 2007; Schuler et al., 2002; Scullion and Paauwe, 2004). This has resulted in an increasing volume of research on self-initiated expatriates (Suutari and Brewster, 2000). This chapter considers the stories

of individuals who are resident, potentially permanently, in a host country and pursue a paid/working career. They have acted in making the international move, rather than responding to an organization's need.

In today's globalization of world trade, many businesses recognize the fact that it is critical to tap into the skills and insights of a diverse workforce in order to compete successfully in the new global economy. (Lecompte Gittins, 2003).

In this environment, access to, and capitalization of, the knowledge of an internationally experienced workforce is espoused in order to compete globally (Black and Gregersen, 1999; Bonache et al., 2001; Oddou, 2003). International human resource management literature has stressed, since the last decade, the need to develop "future managers with a global orientation" (Boyacigiller, 1995: 149). Similarly, advice regarding how organizations should develop their human resource practices in order to select, recruit and develop a more international or globally-minded workforce has been shared (Ali, 2000; Leblanc, 1994; Pucik and Saba, 1998). In addition, diversity studies have forwarded the need to embrace diversity (including gender, cultural or ethnic diversity) in and across organizations (Arredondo, 1996; Hopkins, 1997; Taylor and Easterby-Smith, 1999; Wright et al., 1995) in order to remain competitive. Cultural diversity has been described as referring "to an individual's affinity or identification with a particular cultural dimension which may include, but is not limited to, the following: race, ethnicity, nationality, color" (Hopkins, 1997: 5).

In addition, taking the notion that it is up to the individual to make her/himself of value as a working body and thus fit the system, organizational discourses suggest that the reward for doing this is a career track holding out the promise of reaching the top. The "ideal" working body is universally presented as having a career and as having aspirations to move up the so-called career ladder, very much in keeping with the notion of progress being equated with success and stasis with failure. Indeed, the "ideal" working body is assumed to have a career plan, such that all experiences feed into the realisation of this plan and the promise of reaching the top of the career pyramid.

The aforementioned rhetoric of the requirement for multinational organizations to encourage an internationally minded and culturally diverse workforce prompted the empirical research presented and discussed in what follows. It is within the wider context of how the working body is perceived and utilized, in general, as critiqued in critical management, that structures the discussion in this chapter (see next sections), particularly in regard to the situation of international assignees.

Thus, in the context of the international assignee, the foregoing raises questions as to (1) how international assignees construct their working bodies (i.e., construct their identities, their sense of worth, etc, as working bodies); (2) whether international assignees have naturalized their conditions of existence as international working bodies, even if this is by their own choice, thus falling into line with organizational discourses; and (3) whether such international assignees are being used as means to organizational ends. To address these questions, we now turn to the empirical work.

Research Approach

An ethnographically informed qualitative study (Crowley-Henry, 2009) consisting of forty-one tape-recorded and fully transcribed in-depth interviews with self-initiated expatriates was carried out between 2002 and 2005. Thirty-seven interviews were conducted in the South of France, in the vicinity of the Sophia Antipolis science and technology park; the other four interviews were conducted in Munich, Germany. Those four were initially part of the pilot research for the wider study conducted in France; however, they are included here as the stories proffer an alternative country dimension to the perspectives given by the primary sample of respondents based in the South of France. The interviewees are closer to the host environment than the traditional organization-assigned expatriates, since they have made it their home, perhaps permanently. However, they have moved from a home country where they were treated as nationals within the workforce, albeit arguably as resources rather than as valued individual and group contributors. It is that difference in their perception of treatment in the host country on which this chapter is developed.

. Their narratives/stories (Gabriel, 2000) enabled the researchers to interpret, explore and understand their experiences (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Crowley-Henry and Weir, 2007; Czarniawska, 2004). Using narratives allows respondents to make sense of their stories (Chase, 2005: 658-659). Interpretation of the narrative texts is a fundamental component of narrative inquiry, which lends itself to the hermeneutic approach to research methodology (Patton, 2002: 116).

The interviewees spoke candidly about their perceptions regarding the value of their international “difference” to their employers, and to themselves. Their experiences are shared and their perceptions regarding how their organizations value their international cultural mindset are explored inductively, with patterns emerging from in-depth analysis of the interview transcripts.

Following Martin (1990) and Calás and Smircich (1991), we engage in some limited deconstruction so as to “focus on suppressed conflicts and multiple interpretations . . . in order to undermine all claims to objective ‘truth’” (Martin, 1990: 340). Through a purposeful selection of a few of these interpretations, our analysis looks to decentre the supposedly self-sustaining privileged organizational discourse. In turn, the analysis attempts to make the privileged terms and their concealed “others” undecidable so that other meanings can be constituted over the text. We recognize that our aim is not objective truth, but a decentring of signification presumed to be fixed.

Constructing and Disciplining the “Ideal” International Working Body

As a reading of the dominant organizational discourses reveals, survival and success require that companies operate internationally; organisations can achieve competitive advantage through the effective use of their human capital (Pfeffer, 1995). International human resource manager discourse suggests that the ideal international working body requires international experience. We see these requirements internalized and echoed in the following interview quotes:

For a company to survive these days they really need to work on an international front really.

(Kate, 38, English, married, 2 children)

Well, I think not in all contexts, but I think it’s becoming more and more important. . . . [For instance my husband has] run a very successful business without ever really having to make any concessions whatsoever culturally for other cultures, but I think in other businesses, and in technology and so forth, I think it’s probably very, very beneficial and probably underestimated the value that type of experience has for an employee.

(Angie, 41, American, married, 2 children)

Thus, the scene is already set for the essential international working body. Of course, it is interesting that the literature should talk of human capital. The very practices and techniques of enclosure, partitioning and ranking place value on that human capital, with organizations paying money such that it can then “own” or “exploit” or “make effective use of” that capital and invest it as it sees fit. This brings us back to the notion of humans as resources, to humans as means to ends, as opposed to ends in themselves.

Constructing the International Working Body

In this light, we move on to see how the interviewees construct themselves as “ideal” international working bodies and, hence, valuable human capital. Indeed, as the following quote illustrates, being international is engrained in the working body’s DNA – “it’s culturally in us” – and this is seen to flow through into the organization’s products to its competitive advantage:

I think more international than (company name) is not possible. . . . And I think it’s one of the strongest values in (company name) because . . . other companies build typically an American product or a product for their country and then they internationalise it. You know, for us, it’s just, it’s culturally in us. And I think anybody from (company name) looking for a job elsewhere, it’s an enormous value. . . . [S]ome of these people that came in speak five languages and lived in 10 different countries. . . . I think the Germans and the French and the Swedes kind of got represented in the product and everybody got educated that their country isn’t the only country on the map. And I think it’s a big advantage we have over, for example, our biggest competitor. . . . They were US by design and they tried to make themselves international and expand internationally. And I think it’s more difficult.

(Angie, 41, American, married, 2 children)

The international becomes ingrained in discourse: “*everybody* got educated that their country isn’t the only country on the map” and it is an “enormous value” to “*anybody*” interested in working elsewhere (our emphasis). Not only, would it seem, does this organization look for working bodies with existing international experience (e.g., living in 10 different countries) and skills (e.g., speak five languages), but it also seeks to discipline them still further through “education”, all to create an essential or “ideal” international working body. These bodies then build better products through the products themselves; thus, the international working bodies incorporate part of themselves into the products.

As with Angie (above), many interviewees see their international experience as offering them advantages, from finding it easier to secure a job to being valued and more valuable to the organisation:

[Because of my international experience] it was very easy to join them in that they pretty much offered me a job straight off.

(Vincent, 41, Irish, partner, 2 children)

That’s probably one of the reasons I ended up doing what I’m doing now, because of my experience. Because I had worked with a European wide team and that was what I was taken on to do here.

(Donal, 36, Irish, married, 2 teenage stepchildren).

But in an international company, having the international background I think is a plus. . . . It's a bonus, because you're already a multicultural individual and able to work in that environment.

(Clare, 62, American, divorcee, no children)

I liked the international environment. . . . I see it as valued in the organization, outside, and definitely [valuable] for my life. . . . [B]ecause I've broadened a lot [my] knowledge of people. I've learned a lot to respect different opinions, different ways of working, that before I was not appreciating at all. . . . It's also been very challenging in the beginning. I was one of the best in Italy, but definitely not one of the best here. I was a good one in Europe, but not [the best]. . . . So . . . , by joining a European team sometimes you're confronted with the best from other countries. You have challenges and so in a sense you look at yourself maybe more in perspective. You understand and you have experience of challenges. On a European perspective it's a very formative experience.

(Ronald, 40, Italian, married, 1 child)

[My organization] has always been very proud of having so many different nationalities. . . . The ability to adapt, to be able to work in an international environment, adapt to the different cultures. That has always been seen as very important. When you can do it then of course you are valued.

(Hilda, 41, German, married, 1 child)

Well anyone that's worked on an international basis I think is valued because they've got different experience of different nationalities. And not everybody has that. . . . I think the company treated us pretty well to be honest in the whole, with the bonuses they gave us, and just the general package that the way they looked after us – regular salary increases.

(Kate, 38, English, married, 2 children)

[International experience is] absolutely valued. Within my company, I mean anyone, to get to a senior management position in this company you have to have travelled. And you have to have experience, probably in at least two different continents.

(Shaun, 39, English, married, 2 children)

Overall, we see these workers constructing themselves as “multicultural” and as “able” to work in an international environment, for this is “valued in the organisation” and they are “offered a job straight off”. Having an international background is a “plus”, a “bonus”, which is something that not everyone has. Thus, our interviewees are also constructing themselves in relation to an other who lacks such experience,

be that international/domestic or the requirement to secure international experience in order to move up the ladder to senior management, which links with Foucault's concepts of partitioning and ranking.

It is only in Ronald's case that we see an interviewee referring to the benefits of his international experience to him as an individual, although he also sees it as valued in his organization and outside – broadening of his knowledge of people, learning respect for different opinions and different ways of working, which he had not appreciated before. Of course, the benefits are still pitched as accruing to the working environment, with the personal absent from his talk.

We also see interviewees, such as Edward (50, English, married, 2 children), constructing themselves as “professional”, with such experience feeding their working bodies:

I think it's probably some of the best experience most professionals, particularly engineers, will have, and I think it probably applies to other professionals as well. You gain such a wide variety of things from it – professional experience, cross-cultural experiences.

If we look to the meaning of “professional”, we see it defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as “engaged in an activity as a paid occupation rather than as an amateur”. Teasing through this a bit more, we can note that “professional” signifies being active, as opposed to inactive, and being paid, as opposed to unpaid. “A paid occupation” is a way of spending time and this is set in opposition to “amateur”, which is unpaid and also has the connotations of non-professional and of a person considered inept at a particular activity. Thus, the “professional” working body is set apart from the amateur, the non-professional, the unpaid, the inactive, etc. Therefore, to construct oneself as “professional” is to categorise oneself. Further, this construction as “professional” is done in the light of what is valued by dominant organisational discourses. Hence, that working internationally is “some of the best experience most professionals . . . will have” points to the “ideal” to which these workers strive. Such experience, we see, allows them to “gain a wide variety of things from it – professional experience, cross-cultural experiences”. It conditions them through improving the way they think and operate, making them better managers and more well-rounded people.

Richard's (35, Dutch, married, no children) language is particularly interesting in the following quote:

[T]hose different exposures have improved the way I think and operate. It has made me a better manager and a more well-rounded person, personally as well. Having to deal with all those different experiences and projects and countries and languages and contacts just builds you as a person I think.

The conditioning of having “to deal with different experiences and projects and countries and languages and contacts builds” him as a person. Indeed, the very use of the verb “build”, which signifies “to construct by putting parts or materials together” talks to how he is constructing himself as an international working body, in accordance with the dominant organisational discourse. Interestingly, added to the metaphor of building bodies, as in putting parts or materials together to construct some thing, is the sense of being “made a better manager and a more well-rounded person”. This talks to the working body having been incomplete, as missing some parts, before the experience “made” the working body “better”, that bit more “ideal”. The use of the verb “make” brings us into a realm of signification that links with “build”, but also extends beyond that. Thus, “to make” signifies “to form by putting parts together or combining substance”, but it also signifies, amongst others, “to cause to exist or come about; bring about or perform; cause to be, become or seem; compel (someone) to do something; constitute, amount to, serve as; consider to be; estimate as; agree or decide on (a specific arrangement); gain or earn (money or profit)”. And, it is the experience or exposure that “has made” him “a better manager and a more well-rounded person”. Thus, it is the experience that has caused this better, more well-rounded person to exist. In putting the parts together, the experience has almost compelled him to be a better working body; he has succumbed to being made into an ideal working body, through being made more international.

Have the interviewees internalized and naturalized their conditions of existence as international working bodies? They do not question that they are constructing themselves according to the prescriptions of a dominant organizational discourse, in this case international human resource management, so as to be better professionals, better managers, better international working bodies.

Limits to the Value of the International Working Body

While most participants in the study acknowledge their international status as having been a factor in their recruitment and professional role within the organization, even favouring them over other candidates, there are limits to the value of the international working body, with some interviewees acknowledging that their experience only counts if working in the international sphere:

I don't think it's relevant unless you're in an international job. If you spend all your time working in the UK with UK-based customers I don't think it makes any difference.

(Steve, 34, English, married, no children)

[I]f I worked in a French company, a pure French company without the international environment, what's the need quite honestly? I don't see the need.

(Clare, 62, American, divorcee, no children)

Thus, the international working body is of less use in the context of a company operating within its own national borders. All those parts that make for the international working body become less valued, if not redundant, in such a context.

Further, a non-national working body is most distinctly an outsider, an other. As such, a non-national is potentially less valued than a national working body that comes pre-built or programmed in accordance with particular national requirements, for example, educated at a Grande École.¹ Some of the interviewees perceived their international identity as an obstacle in their career advancement within the same organization:

I mean there is this old belief that for a 100 per cent French company the only way to succeed is to have gone to the same Grande École as the boss or marry his daughter or son.

(Vincent, 41, Irish, married, 2 children)

It's very French, . . . they're very set on their French school diplomas . . . here they're only impressed by . . . the Grande École.

(Angie, 43, American, married, 2 children)

Schneider and Barsoux (1997: 142) suggested that “cultural biases may be responsible for the ‘glass ceilings’ experienced by foreigners in many international companies”. Indeed, other research has suggested that many companies are still reluctant to promote non-nationals to the top of the corporate ladder (*The Economist*, 1992).

Some female interviewees, who worked in a French masculine organizational culture (even if it is a multinational organization), perceived their promotional opportunities as limited. These interviewees are of the opinion that the education ethos in the French managerial hierarchy within all organizations in France continues to restrict promotion opportunities for those who have not attended the French Grande École. For women international employees, this barrier, added to the potential gender glass ceiling, renders progress in an organization much more difficult to achieve.

I've been at [current level] for 3 years now and I asked if there'd be consideration for promotion this [year] . . . and I didn't get it. But you never

¹ Elite French tertiary education institution.

know why. I mean I got a fabulous evaluation. . . . My career would have progressed much more if I had stayed in the States. In France, they look at your personal situation too much. When I was first hired by [private sector IT Travel organization] in the US, no one knew or asked about my personal situation. They didn't know I was a single mother, widowed with two very young [children]. That was private. I don't think I'd have been hired in France in the same situation. Because here they want to know your personal situation; they see it as relevant. [But I think] if you are able to do the job and want to do the job, then your personal situation should not matter. . . . Men in France that went to the same Grande École and mixed in the same social circles . . . that is *the* barrier for non-French here.

(Tracy, 54, British, widow, two children)

Here we see tensions between the private body and the working body, and between the male and the female working bodies. For Tracy, the private body and the working body are mutually distinct, with the one having nothing to do with the other in the context of her ability to do a job. In the United States, where the working body is separate and cut off from other aspects of the body (e.g., family status), this is how Tracy was constructed and she internalised and naturalised this distinction. However, in a French context, the distinction between the private and the working bodies are not as clear cut, which, added to the greater value accorded the male over the female working body, has potentially rendered Tracy less valuable as a working body.

However, another female, working for the same multinational organization as Tracy, had a very different experience:

On the day that I came back from maternity leave I was promoted . . . which I think is quite a good move for [private sector IT Travel organisation]. . . . I got more functionality in the group and more people. And now since April I've been promoted to senior manager and I have expanded further and further the group and the responsibilities.

(Hilda, 41, German, married, 1 child)

This could suggest that the role an individual plays in the organization, as valued by the superiors, is paramount, as Hilda works in a technical role while Tracy is in marketing, which could suggest that the harder technical knowledge is valued above the softer marketing skills within the French organizational culture. In this sense, the technical knowledge of the working body is valued more such that it trumps discrimination against the female working body.

In the context of pay, we enter into the valuation placed on working bodies according in line with Foucault's concepts of partitioning and ranking:

So I was doing really quite a senior job. . . . [But I] never got a salary increase (laugh). I was still on the salary of someone who was admin

almost. And I was travelling all over Europe and . . . By this point my French was pretty good. So they were asking me to go to Luxembourg and Belgium and France, but also to deal with the UK all the time because I speak English. . . . And I really enjoyed it at [company name] but . . . I was really getting quite frustrated thinking here I am a qualified pharmacist, but I'm just earning . . . like a good secretary.

(Mary, 34, Scottish, married)

Whether Mary has been the subject of pay abuse due to her gender is unclear. However, what we see is partitioning as between senior and junior, managerial and clerical, professional (pharmacist) and non-professional (secretary). We also see ranking through job classifications (pharmacist, secretary) and salary schemes (pharmacist should be earning more than a secretary), such ranking being based on education (qualified pharmacist), skills (good French, English), experience (travelling all over Europe) and responsibility (go to Luxembourg and France, but also deal with the UK all the time). Indeed, Mary has internalised these ordering techniques and practices as the natural way of organizing and classifying individuals, as opposed to seeing them as disciplining working bodies through distributing individuals in space such that they can become known through being differentiated from each other.

Career and the International Working Body

Part of the perceived value of international experience is the career advantage. Some interviewees made explicit mention of their careers:

I wanted to move my career forward and I had the opportunity to join the Pre-Sales team. . . . I ran that role for about a year and a half and then I got a management position, and when [company name X-1] took over [company name X-2] I then got a very international team working for me, so I had four people based down in Valbonne, I had a guy based in the UK, another guy in Frankfurt, and then two people in Munich. So I was managing an international team. That was good fun, it was cool, because I also liked the diversity of the culture and that was cool.

(Peter, 35, English, married, 2 children)

Here we see the concepts of partitioning and ranking at work. Partitioning is evident in the classification of boss/worker or manager/worker inherent in Peter's talk. Ranking is also evident in the very notion of promotion, which is "the action of raising someone to a higher position or rank", in this case raising Peter to the position of manager. Peter is now in the position where he has people working for him, with the verb "to have" signifying "to possess; own; be able to make use of".

We also see that moving one's career forward requires taking advantage of opportunities. Digging behind derivatives of "opportunity" yields "opportunist" – "a person who takes advantages of opportunities as and when they arrive, regardless of planning or principle" – and "opportunistic" – "exploiting immediate opportunities, especially in an unplanned or selfish way". As we will see further on, such selfishness could be construed as part and parcel of "career".

While some employees are lucky enough to be on the fast track to career progression, this is not commonplace:

I wouldn't say career planning is wonderful here. . . . [T]here's only a few positions where people can . . . evolve to. Saying that, we try and evolve people within their jobs to gain more technically competent, and for most people that's ok, but for some, they're looking for managerial positions, and there's only limited positions here. . . . [For me personally] I mean, only last week I was on an assessment centre for three days . . . and that's part of [a] career development programme for me personally, but I'm one of the exceptions. I know not everyone's being treated like this.

(Shaun, 39, English, married, 2 children)

The non-standard treatment of working bodies in relation to career planning for managerial positions links with traditional images and language that portray careers as ladders, with each rung suggesting that successful career development is a matter of linear progression, that it is a matter of focusing on each rung separately as you make your way to the top. It suggests that everyone can do this, despite the equally dominant image of the hierarchical pyramid in organizational discourses suggesting otherwise.

Paradoxically, even though we are given a sense that we are in control of our management careers, after all we have the dominant discourses present us with "keys" to planning/managing a successful career, we are still required to follow certain steps, to behave in certain ways and not others, such that we can have successful careers. We are deluded into thinking that we "have a choice" (Robbins and Coulter, 1996: 397) and that we have control, when we are very much like the prisoners in the panopticon watching over ourselves to be on our best behaviour such that we can "advance" our careers.

If we look for synonyms for "career," we find that it encapsulates the notions of profession, vocation and pursuit. While it would be interesting to explore the meanings of profession and vocation, that of pursuit presents us with some interesting avenues of exploration. Pursuit is synonymous with race and hunt, which also have the sense of winners/losers, hunter/hunted, survival/death. Hence, having a successful career can be seen as participating in a race to beat others to the top of the

pyramid. As the pyramid suggests, there are few winners, but many losers, and it is the losers who are rendered invisible by texts. Indeed, they are the unmentioned failures, the ones who stagnate, who do not progress, who populate the bottom of the pyramid. Their absence does not prevent them from being characterized, classified and hierarchized in relation to those who are successful. Indeed, it serves to accentuate their disqualification and invalidation.

Seeing one's career as participating in a hunt to kill off others to make it to the top suggests at least two images: one of animals, the other of people with hunting implements. So, the hunt suggests that being in management is something akin to being an animal in a jungle, with only the fittest surviving to make it to the top. Or, it suggests that a management career is like being out on a hunt, looking out for the job one wants and doing whatever is necessary to make sure no-one else gets it. Either way, the term suggests the need to engage in stalking, hounding, snaring and/or poaching, all of which are included in the meaning of hunt.

The notion of hunt also captures the sense of hunter-gatherer, a term that refers to a primitive era and has connotations of patriarchy. So, despite being told that we live in a so-called advanced society, where we are all equals, we are still primitive in how we go about what we do, with some having more power and being more privileged than others. We are still required to earn a living to survive.

Of course, while individuals may be likened to hunters, killing off other managers to get ahead, they can also be seen as the hunted. As subjects of the hunt, they themselves are targets to be killed off by those higher up in the pyramid. (The pyramid is itself synonymous with a monolith or monument to traditional organizational thinking.) The hunt metaphor, and all it connotes and symbolises, also has repercussions of an ethical nature in terms of just how far some will go to get what they want.

Turning to the term "key", this has the meaning of lock opener or means of access. But, a lock opener is also a lock closer. Therefore, while the keys may open doors to success, there is a suggestion that they are just as capable of closing doors, of being obstacles to success. As such, it can be said that the keys do not have much value for they can just as easily be locking us into failure as opening us up to success. As we have already seen, to pursue international mobility is also to close off other routes and there is no guarantee that and being international will lead to the top.

The keys themselves are based on proven "tactics", a term that links nicely with the notion of hunt. It is synonymous with cunning, slyness, artfulness, trickery, deception, shrewdness, cleverness and resourcefulness. So, far from being neutral, the piece can be read as

suggesting that success requires some underhand behaviour. Seen this way, having a successful career involves becoming involved in questionable practices and gives the sense that it is “everyone for her/himself”.

Turning to “successful”, this is synonymous with triumph and prosperity, but, being related to success, it also suggests mastery. In turn, mastery suggests knowledge, but also power, control and dominance. Mastery is also related to master, which suggests leader and leadership. Following Calás and Smircich, “leadership is seduction” (1991: 572) and “to seduce is to lead wrongly” (1991: 573), so we can suggest that success is seduction and that dominant organizational discourses on international career development is seducing us into believing that the keys provided us will bring us success in our careers.

Finally, as part of this brief analysis, we turn to the term “management”, which is synonymous with administration, which encapsulates a notion of care. Tracing further, care includes the notions of attention, concern and responsibility, but it also includes those of anxiety, stress and pressure. Reading it thus, this piece can be seen as advocating keys to a successful anxiety-filled career or as seducing us into hunting for anxiety.

In the process of de-centring any sense of fixed signification and suggesting the undecidability of meaning, such that other interpretations can be brought into view, our analysis has sought to make visible the invisible biases “that can underlie ostensibly benign organizational practices” (Martin, 1990: 341). We can argue that the effects of these apparently benign practices are to seduce working bodies into the belief that they can have a successful career and make it to the top, while at the same time masking the effects of the pyramid and its limitations in accommodating all who may seek to make it to the top. Thus, the text makes invisible the working bodies who are not successful in making it to the top because of the limitations of the pyramid, or because of organizational practices, such as the glass ceiling, which operate as a filtering device to select in those who can move upwards and select out those who cannot.

Whither Ethics?

For international organizations, the value of having a workforce that is knowledgeable and adaptable in international settings has been emphasized (Adler, 1986; Dowling et al., 1999; Jackson, 2002; Lecompte Gittins, 2003). The relevance of geographic (or lateral) flexibility and cross-cultural experience in international career development has been

argued (Jackson, 2002: 148). The importance of managing cultural diversity has been repeated in international management literature (Calori and Woot, 1994; Franch and Kashani, 1999; Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, 1985; Hofstede, 1991; Hofstede, 1993; Lecompte Gittins, 2003; Morrissey, 2002; Rosenzweig, 1999; Schneider and Barsoux, 1997; Trompenaars and Turner, 1997).

This literature, or organizational discourse, engages in constructing the essential or “ideal” international working body and, based on interviewee talk, we see that this discourse has become internalized and naturalized by individuals, who construct their working bodies in accordance with its prescriptions. Their sense of identity and experience of working life is now wrapped up in and shaped by this discourse. They define themselves and their worth, and they are in turn defined, in relation to the international – the experience, learning, skills. Following Foucault’s concept of governmentality, the interviewees have been rendered “amenable to intervention and regulation by being formulated in a particular conceptual way” (Townley, 1993: 520), namely as international working bodies. In accord with the concept of enclosure, in the international space, our interviewees can be classified as remunerated, essential working bodies (e.g., in demand, valued), albeit some perceive they are seen as less essential (e.g., female working bodies). With partitioning, we see further classification as between, for example, professional/non-professional, managerial/non-managerial, international/domestic and male/female. We also see ranking, with individuals being classified and ordered hierarchically through job classifications (e.g., manager, pharmacist, worker, secretary) and salary schemes (e.g., a pharmacist should earn more than a secretary), based on such dimensions as education, skill responsibility and experience. In many respects, the interviewees are the ones who have taken on the responsibility to fit the system by making themselves of value as international working bodies.

Being treated as resources, they are reduced to those parts that are of use and value to the organization. This is where ethics enters the frame and we wish to allude to one of Kant’s categorical imperatives: treat people as an end, and never as a means to an end. In accordance with this imperative, we should always treat people with dignity and never use them as mere instruments; we treat people as an end whenever our actions toward someone reflect the inherent value of that person. This raises a number of practical questions for us:

- Is treating people as resources, or as human capital, treating them as mere instruments to achieving organizational ends?

- In constructing the working body, do organizational discourses treat people as means to ends?

We do not present any answers here; rather we leave this to the reader to ponder and explore for her/himself.

Final Remarks

Casey (1995) notes that the project of the industrial revolution, which was to elevate rationality and production over human being and doing, required technologies that could reproduce and extend the capacity of the human body as an instrument of work, while at the same time requiring the compliance of acculturated workers. Organizational discourses have served in this process of acculturation, constructing and disciplining working bodies and presenting the resulting bodies as the natural way of things.

Human resource management both constructs and produces knowledge, in the process constituting a discipline and a discourse. As a discourse, therefore, it serves “to render organizations and their participants calculable arenas, offering, through a variety of technologies, the means by which activities and individuals become knowable and governable” (Townley, 1993: 526). Its rationale can be seen as that of constructing the working body as a subject that can be analysed and described in order that, in turn, it can be assessed and measured in comparison to others (Burrell, 1988). In essence, this discourse or discipline makes the working body (Foucault, 1977).

The discipline of human resource management, therefore, can be viewed as recognition that, to obtain the individual’s labour, “power had to be able to gain access to the bodies of individuals, to their acts, attitudes and modes of everyday behavior” (Foucault, 1980: 125). Through this discipline, the working body is both constituted and rendered visible in a particular way, such that the individual can be classified, positioned, observed, evaluated and compared with others and that systems can be put in place to facilitate such activity.

In essence, we have an “enlightened” legacy which has facilitated and witnessed increased control over the working body, subjecting the individual to habits, rules and orders (Townley, 1993) such that s/he does what “one wishes, and with the techniques, speed and efficiency one determines” (Foucault, 1977: 138).

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