

CONSTRUCTING AND DISCIPLINING THE WORKING BODY: ORGANISATIONAL DISCOURSES, GLOBALISATION AND THE MOBILE WORKER

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Introduction

Implicit in the metaphor of human resources is that the human is equated with, or placed on a similar level to, material resources, such that the working body is experienced in similar ways to financial, technical or natural resources. Such implicit meaning raises not only the value issue of equating people with material resources, but also points to the construction of very specific realities in work organisations 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 what 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 crosses over with the ongoing debate between relativism and absolutism, that is, whether there is a plurality of 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) posits 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 organisational discourses have fundamentally influenced the construction and disciplining of the working body and its position in society. In sharing findings from a qualitative study, involving over forty interviews with self initiated international assignees located in the South of France and in Munich (Germany) (Crowley-Henry 2007, 2009; Crowley-Henry and Weir 2007, 2009), the chapter goes on to explore and illustrate how interviewees construct themselves, and are constructed, as international working bodies. Finally, in alluding to ethics, we ponder whether organisational discourses treat people as means to ends.

Defining Who We Are Through Work

Organisational discourses have not developed in a value-neutral vacuum, but have been written with a particular consumer audience in mind, namely management (Adler, Forbes and Wilmott 2007; Alvesson and Deetz 1996, 2006; Alvesson and Willmott 1992, 1996, 2003; Guest 2006; Townley 1993, 1994). Indeed, it is generally accepted that this literature, and the knowledge thus generated, has been developed to facilitate maintaining or increasing control over the working body.

Equally, there is an appearance of progress in this literature, going from Taylor's (1967 [1911]) scientific management of the early 1900's 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 industrialisation and governed by the rules of economic rationality (Applebaum 1992; New Economics Foundation 2010; Shilling 2005).

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. Enter the industrial era and we have gradually become socialised 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).

Work has become the primary locus of social organisation 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 organised 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). We, in the West at least, therefore, can be conceived as being in a psychic prison (Morgan, 2006), one that stipulates we are only of value to society if we work.

Essentially, taking Robertson’s (1985) “Business As Usual” scenario, in our modern, industrial, Western society, we espouse to 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 organisations 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 stigmatised as exceptions. 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 regularised practices of language that are condoned by a society, practices that make possible certain statements while at the same time disallowing others, organisational 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 organisational 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.

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, categorisation and codification processes of organisational 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 organisational discourses, a product of organisational knowledge, which "invents, molds and carves out its object" (Townley 1993: 523). In the context of organisational discourses, the individual has been constructed through what have become common sense notions of the "ideal" working body.

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 such 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). In an age of espoused self-management and empowerment, where working bodies are assumed to have choice as to whom they sell their labour, given the current economic climate, 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 that which is considered 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., feminised work).

Turning to the concept of partitioning, this serves to distribute individuals further within the enclosed work space, leading to further classification, such as manual/non-manual, blue collar/white collar, professional/non-professional, managerial/non-managerial, domestic/international and core/periphery. Finally, ranking operates as a process to partition individuals still further through creating a hierarchical ordering among them. Organisational disciplines use various techniques to classify and order individuals hierarchically, such as job classifications, job ladders or salary schemes, which, in turn, are based on dimensions such as education, skill, responsibility or experience (Townley 1993).

Within the organisational disciplines, these ordering techniques and practices are presented as the natural way of organising 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 organisational 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, organisational 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 the term management when it comes to managing human resources, this implies leadership or control over subordinate bodies, 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, on the one hand, as one of the main sources of motivated action implicitly denies and contradicts the aims of human resources efforts to, on the other, increase the self-actualisation of the working body (Enderle 1987).

Implicit in treating people as resources equivalent to other non-human resources is the meaning that there must be somebody using, buying and selling these resources (Dachler and Enderle 1989), thus partitioning

organisation members into those who are resources and those who use and buy these resources. In turn, organisational 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, similar to other resources, the working body must fit particular parameters or identifiable characteristics in order to be of use to the organisation as a resource, thus reducing the whole to its parts, to those considered of use and of value to the organisation.

Through the division of labour and the hierarchy of authority, organisations determine the skills, abilities and personality attributes required for each job and, through the process of selection, match working bodies with the required characteristics to each job. Thus it is that the organisational 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, given that 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 has to fit the system, and not vice versa.

Organisations 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. As such, it is not the individual that organisations 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 mechanisation, 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 should the case be the opposite.

In the Western world, we live in a society where we are disciplined to value the body for its parts over the whole. Organisational 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.

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, Gouldner argues, 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 expatriates who are organisation assigned internationally for a period of time (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, Wolfram Cox and Fenwick 2007; Schuler, Budhwar and Florkowski 2002; Scullion and Paauwe 2004). This has resulted in an increasing volume of research on non-organisation assigned expatriates.

Here we focus on self-initiated international assignees (Suutari and Brewster 2000) and consider the stories of individuals who are resident for a potentially permanent basis in a host country and pursue a paid/working career. Implicit in the nomenclature “self-initiated” is that these international assignees have acted agentially in making the international move, rather than responding to an organisation need to undertake an international assignment.

Access to, and capitalisation of, the knowledge of an internationally experienced workforce is espoused in order to compete globally (Black and Gregersen 1999; Bonache, Brewster and Suutari 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 organisations 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 organisations (Arredondo 1996; Hopkins 1997; Taylor and Easterby-Smith 1999; Wright, Ferris, Hiller and Kroll 1995) in order to remain competitive.

In the context of the international assignee, the foregoing raises questions as to (1) how international assignees construct their working bodies; (2) whether international assignees have naturalised their conditions of existence as international working bodies, no matter that this be self initiated, in so doing falling into line with organisational discourses; and (3) whether such international assignees are being used as means to organisational 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 international assignees was carried out between 2002 and 2005. Thirty-seven interviews were conducted with self initiated international assignees in the South of France, with the other four interviews (initially part of the pilot research) conducted with self initiated international assignees based in Munich, Germany.

Their narratives were collected through in-depth interviews and analysed interpretivistically. Following the tenets of narrative inquiry, the aim is to understand experience and to make sense of life through the stories that are told (Clandinin and Connelly 2000; Crowley-Henry and Weir 2007; Czarniawska 2004). Narratives allow the respondent to relate his/her story, as made sense of by the person in question, and, in so doing, to construct a recognisable self (Chase 2005: 658-659), uncovering constructed realities in the process.

Constructing and Disciplining the “Ideal” International Working Body

As a reading of the dominant organisational discourses reveals, survival and success requires that companies also operate internationally, with strategic human resource management propounding that organisations can achieve competitive advantage through the effective use of their human capital (Pfeffer 1995). With this as context, and as a reading of the dominant international human resource management discourse reveals, we are made to believe that the ideal international working body requires international experience. We see these requirements internalised and echoed in the interviewees’ talk:

For a company to survive these days they really need to work on an international front really. (Kate, 38, English, married, 2 children)

I think it’s becoming more and more important. ... to make ... concessions ... for other cultures, ... I think it’s probably very, very beneficial and probably under-estimated 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 organisations 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 organisation’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)

So engrained is the international that “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 organisation 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 becoming materialised in 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 step-children).

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 organisation, 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 organisation] 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, albeit he also sees it as valued in his organisation 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, following Foucault’s (1977) concept of partitioning, 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]those 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 internalised and naturalised their conditions of existence as international working bodies? They do not question that they are constructing themselves according to the prescriptions of a dominant organisational 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 organisation, 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 (elite French third level education institution). Some of the interviewees perceived their international identity as an obstacle in their career advancement within the same organisation:

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 organisational culture (even if it is a multinational organisation), perceived their promotional opportunities to be limited. These interviewees are of the opinion that the education ethos, which embodies the French managerial hierarchy within all organisational forms in France, continues to prevail, whereby non-attendance at a Grande École restricts promotion opportunities. For women international employees, this barrier, added to the potential gender glass ceiling, renders progress in an organisation 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 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 organisation] 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 organisation as Tracy (above) 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 organisation, 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 organisational 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 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 organising 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.

Final Remarks – Whither Ethics?

International human resource management discourse engages in constructing the essential or “ideal” international working body and, based on interviewee talk, we see that this discourse has become internalised and naturalised by individuals such that they construct their working bodies in accord 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 (Gordon 1991), 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 organisation. 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 couple of practical questions for us:

- Is treating people as resources, or as human capital, treating them as mere instruments to achieving organisational ends?
- In constructing the working body, do organisational 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.

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