Construction of a Nobody: Identity Regulation Migrant Agency Workers in the Hospitality Sector

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This paper uses the context of the hospitality industry to consider how managerial intent and discursive practice may stratify the workforce creating a microcosm of colonialism and the subject position of the other within the organisation. This paper uproots theories of identity regulation which suggest that crafting subjectivities can be used to intensify workers commitment and loyalty to their respective organisations (Barker, 1999) through considering the ‘dark side’ of identity regulation. It is suggested that organisations actively discourage migrant agency workers from forming acceptable identities in relation to the organisation, constituting them as identity-less or as an organisational other through discursive and embodied practice. The paper considers how management within contracting organisations draw on a variety of techniques, from control of embodiment to management of space in order to construct workers as other to the organisation. Moreover it is suggested that management vehemently deny migrant agency workers the opportunity to craft acceptable identities through organisational discourse which has specific impacts on the kinds of work agency workers perform within the organisation and the self-understandings they gain from their work.

Agency workers in the UK have become an increasingly ubiquitous form of employment, in particularly in industries such as the hospitality industry where demand is constantly fluctuating and difficult to predict. Given the tenuous and uncertain nature of agency work along with it’s low status it has attracted the kinds of workers the often struggle to find permanent employment in the labour market. Migrant workers are among the most disadvantaged on the labour market and often take temporary employment as a quick solution to their need to find employment. Temporary workers are however in a limbo between being constituted as full organisational members or as external to the organisation. The dilemma for the organisations that contract these workers is that control becomes a contested and complex terrain. The organisational literature the promulgates that the most potent forms of control is through the management and crafting of identities (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002) however given that agency workers are not employees of the organisation and are often positioned within different firms there is difficulty in making such controls effective. The argument made in this paper is that in contradiction to conventional organisation theory organisations purposively construct agency workers as distinctively other to the organisation. The data collected through a 6 month ethnographic study with a job agency suggests that organisations
draw on a variety of managerial strategies in order to constitute agency workers as an organisational underclass. It is argued that this identity as an underclass is fortified through the negative stigma that migrant workers receive in the UK. The paper begins with reviewing the literature on organisational regulation of identity, agency workers and ‘othering’, this is followed by a brief depiction of the methods employed and an in-depth thematic analysis of the data. The conclusions draw some insights from post-colonial theory suggesting that the construction of a microcosm of colonialism within the organisation is used to fulfil the organisations desires for an army of workers that are willing to perform the most undesirable of jobs. This paper elucidates in detail the ways in which the organisation construct agency workers as other and how this bares specific impacts on identities and the kinds of work individuals perform. This is not to say that agency workers are docile to these constructions, rather that this fall beyond the scope of this paper.

**ORGANISATIONAL CONTROL AND IDENTITIES**

Identity has become a forefront issue in the study of organisational control and resistance; it has been considered a way in which organisations can seek compliance from their employees. Alvesson and Willmott (2002) suggest that identity regulation- is considered to be where organisations regulate individual identities through the organisational discourses made available to them, rendering actions more or less reasonable and shaping the way individuals understand their-selves in relation to their work. These self-understandings are considered to emerge from discourse promulgated through managerial motive within which employees position themselves and gain subjectivity (Deetz, 1998). This is particularly seen as relevant to managerial interest as if individuals identify themselves in relation to the organisation their own goals, hopes and aspirations also become compounded with organisational success and thus will be willing to exert greater efforts and dedication to the organisation (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Flemming and Sturdy, 2009). Management are considered to operationalize this regulation of identity through a variety of technologies, this may be through crafting organisational culture through which individuals may identify more or less with (Alvesson, 2002), or perhaps through using cultural controls are perhaps used in tandem with bureaucratic controls in order craft an ideal, subservient employee (Karreman and Alvesson, 2004).
The literature on organisational culture provides specific insights into how the normative organisational understandings bare implicit effects on how the individual understands the self (Willmott, 1993). Ethnographic studies of Casey (1995) and Kunda (1992) provide rich and detailed accounts of how organisational culture is simulated to take it effects at the level of identity. Casey’s (1995) ethnographic study of Hephaestus considered how a new cultural programme in the company was enforced in order to produce an employee that would enthusiastically display dedication, loyalty, self-sacrifice and passion. Casey suggests that through the discursive understanding of the organisation as a family and the persistent maintenance of this discourse through the language employees were required to adopt that the culturally codified behaviours were internalised by employees. Casey’s observations and analysis suggest that these cultural controls were pervasive, being deeply embedded at the level of individual identification. The impact this had on the individual was that organisational achievement and success became intertwined with feelings of self-esteem. The crux of Casey’s argument is that resistance to culture was almost invisible, although employees expressed feelings of ambivalence to the organisation these conflicting notions were internalised. Kunda’s (1992) critical ethnography on a hi-tech organisation also considered how the organisation used speeches, slogans, tapes, flyers, videos etc. in order to construct a very distinct view of employee’s roles within the organisation. These ideals were met by two specific reactions, the first of which was those who bought into the claims, constructing the culture through speaking the discourse. The second was a more ambivalent and critical position towards the organisation; however given that the organisational discourse promoted an openness and willingness towards critique, this meant the critical view of the organisation lost their capacity to resist. Organisational culture was considered as an effective mechanism to engineer ideal employees, given that the organisation offered a strong stable meaning through which their own self-understanding was enmeshed- thus devaluing corporate ideals was considered to have a detrimental effect on employees own self understandings. The literature has provided details of how organisations are instrumental formulating identities in order to ensure compliance, however this paper seeks to understand how the organisation manages workers that don’t necessarily fall into the normative understanding of employee. The research pays attention to how agency workers with transient and temporary statuses within an organisation as well as being intertwined with migrant identities are effectively managed through less conventional means. The following section elucidates some of the key features of agency workers that make them identifiably different from those workers directly employed by the organisation.
AGENCY WORKERS: BETWEEN ORGANISATIONS

Agency workers have been considered to be low status, often assuming low positions within the organisation and are unable to form acceptable identities from their work (Boyce, et al., 2007; Gorz, 1989; Walsh, 1990). The literature points of that agency work has unique features which make organisational control of identities a unique and more complex managerial problem. Agency work firstly confuses the issue of control between the managerial class and the worker given that there is tripartite relationship between the agency, the worker and the contracting organisation. Secondly, the worker is transient and is a highly uncertain position given that they move to different jobs and different organisations on a daily basis. This uncertainty has been considered by Garsten (1999) as a disciplinary mechanism through which individuals exert their maximum effort in order to obtain more regular work through the agency. However the nature and structure of agency workers role within the organisation is at odds with conventional organisational theory given that workers are not required to be committed to the organisation or its long term interests given that there purpose within a firm is to be transient and temporary. This however doesn’t release organisations from the burden of control of agency workers. Thirdly, agency work is densely over represented with migrants which makes identity within the firm a far more complex issue (Theodore and Peck, 2002; McDowell et al, 2007; Anderson, 2010). This paper seeks to explore how agency workers are constructed as subordinate to the organisation through the positioning of workers into othered subject positions in a strategy to elicit greater efforts from workers. The following section considers how otherness has been conceptualised in the literature making specific considerations as to how this may translate into understanding how this may apply in an organisational context.

OTHERING AND OTHERNESS

The concept of otherness has mainly resonated in the postcolonial literature, yet has been drawn on as a conceptual framework for the analysis for understanding the ways in which management logic has been formulated (Prasad, 2003). The ‘post-colonial’ organisation is considered to be strongly influenced the post-colonial theory whereby the organisation and management strategy is heavily influenced the hegemonic logic of the west. Otherness has
been conceptualised in various ways which elucidate how individuals are both constituted through being othered and also how those in the dominant position constitute construct these othered positions. Hall (2000) suggests that othering is based on the construction of difference, therefore we are considered to constitute ourselves through what we are and what we lack. However Said (1978) considers that this process of othering is not only a way through which power is imposed over others in formulating their identities but is also a way in which the self is formulated through the conception of what one is not. Critically examining the role of power in identity constitution emphasises how othering is an act of domination from the superior to subordinates. This is operationalised through constructing the other through stereotypes, dehumanising, diminishing and treating the other as odd, irrational, eroticised or evil (Hall, 2000; Said, 1978). Assigning an individual to the status of other is considered to constitute a form of disenfranchisement or discounting the individual as inferior to the norm position (Bach, 2005). The implications of this othered subject position form the individual as a non-person, nobody or invisible. Bullis and Bach (1996) suggest that assumptions attached to othered individuals is that individuals are considered interchangeable parts rather than unique humans, they have no feelings or emotions, are incapable of reflexive thought and are passive, being unable to make choices. This non-person is considered to be wilfully or rightfully dominated by those who belong to the dominant norm (Bach, 2005). In the context of the organisation it is suggested that producing the individual as other shapes the workers identity so that they are more willing to work in low level employment (Ainsworth, 2002; Ainsworth and Hardy, 2004).

Ezzel (2009) suggests that othering can be used as a discursive strategy through which members of subordinated groups can legitimise stigmatised identities. Ezzell’s ethnographic study of female rugby players draws the suggestion that defensive othering is drawn upon by individuals who point out people that such devalued normative identity attributes apply to some however not to themselves. This was considered by Ezzel (2009) to be a double edged sword in the sense that it worked to renegotiate identities whilst accepting the devalued normative conception of female rugby players as homosexuals. Therefore othering is not only used by those in dominant positions, but is also drawn upon by subordinated individuals engaging in restorative identity work. The literature elucidates accounts of how this otherness is produced through discursive practice such as through gossip (Joworski and Coupland, 2005), through the stereotyping or essentialising features of workers (Coupland, 1999) or through creating bureaucratic rules that bare their effects on how the individual is
constituted in discourse. Bhabha (1994) considers that discourses construct boundaries and borders which position the subject accordingly however this implies some essential and definable feature to identities. Yet, approaching this study from a poststructuralist lens would problematize the idea of fixed or essential social categories considering them to be constructed, transient and blurred (Hall, 2000). This paper focuses primarily on the processes through which individuals are othered through organisational practice in particularly through embodiment. The empirical literature elucidates the processes behind subordination of the individual or group through the study of gender inequalities, age discrimination and racial othering. VanDijk (1993) considers how the racial other is constituted as inferior through a series of discursive regimes that marginalise and subordinate the racialised other while simultaneously distanc[ing selves from the irrationality of racism. Van Dijk (1993) suggests that this otherness is constituted between the macro societal structures that frame interactions and through the micro interactions that are produced and maintain this otherness. It is through informal talk, story-telling of own experiences with racial groups, through critically distancing self through rhetoric that the other is produced with negative attachments. Riach (2007) offers a discursive approach to how the older worker is constituted as inferior or marginal through a set of managerial practices. The author discusses how older workers were subjected to different managerial practices through formulating of legitimised pejorative discourse- therefore formulating issues as norms which construct the irrationalities of subordination as common sense (Bilmes, 1986). This discourse that positioned workers as subordinates was considered to be afforded legitimacy through the positioning the discourses within the wider societal context, through defining attributes of workers (thus giving them some essential quality) and through adding a variety of voices as a mechanism ascertain the legitimacy of the discourse. It was considered that through this formulation of a class of workers that is considered to be intrinsically different from the majority of workers. This singling out of the older workers had the effect of imposing different management strategies that were more onerous on a single group of workers (de Cillia et al, 1999). The literature in this field discusses in depth how individuals are constituted as other through discursive regimes, however there is little material on how the arrangement of agency work, the embodiment of work and the day to day interactions experienced by workers are formative of otherness. Furthermore there is little detail on how othering may be drawn upon by organisations decisively to subordinated identities as a strategy to elicit the maximum effort from its workers. Furthermore it is suggested that the methodology drawn upon within this paper provides specific insights into how otherness is both imposed and played out through
Considering that the organisation is an important facet in the formulation of identities we seek to understand how the organisation actively implicated in the construction of agency workers as subordinated class as opposed to regular workers. The following section elucidates the methodology applied in the research.

**METHODOLOGY**

This paper is based on 6 months of full participant observation as an agency worker as well as semi-structured interviews with agency workers. During the data collection period I joined a job agency that specialises in catering services. As a worker and engaged in all of the normal activities of an agency worker. After each shift I documented all of what I considered to be the most salient activities, interactions and occurrences in a reflexive log. This log reflects all of my assumptions; it makes no claim of being a factual account of occurrences but rather is a compilation of my observations informed by reading in the area as well as my own experiences. The ethnographic nature of the study offers a deep, rich understanding of the nature and structure of agency work, the context and the embodied practices that are only accessible through observation and experience (Mason, 2002).

The data collected from my observations is also substantiated by data obtained through semi-structured interviews conducted with the agency workers. Semi-structured interviews were chosen given that they are fairly ubiquitous in both the organisation studies and migrant identity literature. Furthermore, they are noted for their ability to explicate depth, vividness, nuance and richness from participants’ accounts (Rubin and Rubin, 2005) which is fundamental to an interpretive study. Mason (2002) also notes that semi-structured interviews are auspicious in exploring individual experience and suppressed voices, therefore present benefits in dealing with marginalised individuals. One of the key issues that confronted the study was the power imbalances between the researcher and the participant which may intrinsically distort the meanings and interpretations drawn from the participant’s texts. However, I would argue that my experiences and work within the organisation helped to mitigate the imbalances of power as I was able to talk to the participants as peers rather than researcher/ interviewee. In an aim to mediate this imbalance if power within the interview scenario some of the principles of feminist interviewing were employed (Madriz, 2000; Oakley, 1990). In practice, the interview schedule was loosely followed, this allowed adequate opportunity for the participant to convey the issues most salient to them as well as
room for the interviewer to follow up on potentially valuable lines of inquiry (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Incorporating the ideas of feminist interviews, I often entered into conversation with the participants offering my own anecdotes and ‘war stories’ from my experiences with the agency (Oakley, 1990; Rubin and Rubin, 2005). This helped to generate a sense of rapport and common understanding between the participants and myself. However, I am well aware that in providing my own anecdotal stories I too am engaging in identity work in relation to the participants identity work. Therefore given that we formulate our own discursive understandings of our identities in the process of the interview, my own identity is inextricably linked with the research (Thomas, 2008).

The analysis of the data is mainly thematic, through an in-depth reading of my reflexive log of shifts in the Radley and an examination of the interview transcripts themes were depicted in order to understand how othered identities are constructed within the context of work. The following themes are explored through the data; first through ‘naming as nameless’, through embodiment as agency worker, through management of space and through assignment of tasks. It is argued in this paper that these managerial strategies compound to construct an agency worker which is distinctively othered from the organisation, the implications of this alienated identity is that agency workers are apportioned amongst the dirtiest and most laborious work within the organisation. The researcher’s imposition of power over the study is emphatic. Indeed, considering that power and knowledge are indefinable and indistinguishable, the researchers hand decides what is considered valid knowledge and uses power through authorship (Rhodes and Brown, 2005).

ON BEING TEMPORARY AT THE RADLEY: CONTEXT AND EXPERIENCES

The Agency I obtained employment through operated through weekly cycles- thus shifts were apportioned on a weekly basis to workers who called the agency on a Monday morning. Clients tend to call the agency at the beginning of the week so that they may book workers in order to match weekly demand. Given that the catering industry is highly uncertain there are often times where work will be assigned on a daily basis workers being called to a shift with less than an hour’s notice. It is this extreme notion of flexibility that is most attractive to organisations who can take on employees to match demand exactly. However this of course means that there is a constant ambiguity and uncertainty for the workers in terms of consistency and continuity of shifts assigned. Agency workers are unable to plan their week
given that shifts may arise at any point. However, this flux and uncertainty of the need for workers was experienced differently in different organisations, some venues were heavily understaffed which meant that they require agency workers in order to function for ‘business as usual’. One hotel in particularly ‘The Radley’ had particularly acute staffing issues which meant that agency workers were given shifts on a full-time basis, essentially working regular hours vicariously through the agency. I had worked for around 6 weeks consecutively in the Radley and had been assigned to around 4 of the breakfast shifts a week. I was among four other agency staff that had been assigned such regular and consistent shifts. The rationale behind focusing on the shifts in the Radley is that they first and foremost provide a consistent context through which the organisation can feature as frame of analysis. Secondly, the regularity of the shifts provides an interesting paradox with the ambiguity of the agency work arrangement. Thus it provides an adequate context in which it can be explored how othering is employed by management even where agency staff are familiar with the organisation. The following account I will provide suggests that the hotel actively discourages agency workers from identifying with the organisation, instead constructing agency workers as an organisational under-class.

Within this section I will elucidate, drawing on my empirical observations taken drawn from my experiences of working the The Radley hotel with the Agency as well as individual accounts drawn from qualitative interviews conducted with agency workers. The suggestions that is drawn from my observations is that the hotel management and employees use a variety of discursive and embodied practices that are instrumental in the construction of a marginal, subordinated, organisational non-member that compound in constructing agency workers as a stigmatised class.

The Radley was a site in which agency workers were sanitised of any personal identifications or positive identities constructing agency workers as subordinate class within the hotel. Through my personal observations and the interview data collected I depict strategies practiced by management and embedded organisational cultural norms that construct these workers as othered. The following analysis considers how agency worker are othered through ‘naming as agency’ which is used as a label that removes all other personal identities. Secondly through the embodiment as an ‘agency worker’ which carries with it specific requirements of appearance as well as being compounded with embodied racial identities.
Thirdly, the management of space within the hotel can also be considered to be constitutive of agency workers understandings as outsider to the organisation. Finally, it is argued that the assignment of tasks is also a way in which denigrated and othered identities are consolidated and reconfirmed. I will draw on anecdotes from my experiences in order to illustrate how we as agency workers were constituted by employees and management as other within the organisation.

NAMING AS NAMELESS

On one occasion the breakfast shift leader Alessandro had 3 agency workers on shift and had written the sections and duties that he wanted each of us to complete. He had asked me to check the board so that I could note what section I was on. When I came to the board there was a list of the regular workers names and the agency 1, agency 2 and agency 3. My next question to Alessandro was, ‘well what am I, 1, 2 or 3?’ He responded, ‘well it doesn’t really matter, you’re all the same, just chose one.’ (Diary entry: 07.06.12)

As agency workers we were considered interchangeable parts or ‘warm bodies’ (Parker, 1993). Individualistic skills or preferences of agency workers were irrelevant; our role in the Radley was functional rather than strategic. The removal or ridicule of names and other personal labels was also mentioned by agency workers.

I feel like he’s taking the piss like he always pretends he doesn’t know or can’t pronounce my rname, and then one day I was talking with I said oh for God’s sake you don’t even know my name yet but it’s like little things like that. (Maria, Greece)

These two short anecdotes are telling of how agency workers are considered within the organisation and how this is constitutive of the agency worker as an organisational other. Regardless of the fact the management were abundantly aware of agency workers names there was an outright refusal to use these. It was through calling us by numbers or through the
consistent reiteration of our ‘agency status’ that we were reminded that we are other or subordinate to employees with the organisation. This active depersonalisation of agency workers may also be conceived as way in which the Radley is able to cleanse itself from holding any moral responsibility for agency workers. Extracts taken from interviews conducted with agency workers suggest that this notion of depersonalisation and dehumanisation is commonly felt amongst agency workers;

There are times where you go to places and you’re not equal to the staff and the staff make you feel like you’re an agency that’s what you got and that’s all you are so don’t think high about yourself and don’t look down on me. (Jean, France)

I’m thinking I’m a human being I don’t need to be treated like this. I’m human; I do this because I just need the money. I’m not a slave. (Maria, Greece)

The argument made here is that organisations resist any personal affiliations made with agency workers, reconstituting their identity labels as agency worker. The embedded meanings attached to the label of agency worker are an individual who is a non-person, someone who is subordinate to other organisational members. Through removing personal labels and renaming as agency workers personal identities are expunged through agency work. Personal labels such as name which are intertwined with ethnic and national identities are annihilated by the agency label which is imbued with negative attachments. These attachments are reinforced through other embodied forms such as dress and management of space.

EMBODYING OTHERNESS

The applications of dress code may also be considered to be empirically interesting at constructing otherness, it is a way in which otherness can be made material and perceivable to outsiders.

As agency workers we are told to come to the Radley in black trousers, shirts and shoes, this couldn’t be more different from the uniform worn by Radley employees which is light blue and beige. This physical marker makes it all the more convenient to spot us out, to make us feel excluded, to ensure that there is not misunderstandings— we are most definitely not part of the team. (Diary extract: 30.05.12)
Yes, I feel like I have to be kind of transformed in a way. You know because they like you to look nice. It’s something I don’t like but you know you just have to be completely open. It things that the make you wear makes no sense but they ask you to do it even where it really offends you. (Maria, Greece)

This all jobs you will wear kind of the same thing, the first thing putting them all together is quite stupid I would say. So you’re going to do some dishes and the policy of the agency is to wear some white shirt and black trousers, even if you’re going to do the dishes. White shirt, that’s the worst thing you can wear if you’re going to do the dishes. (Jean, France)

The uniform acted as a way in which agency workers could be easily distinguished from regular workers by both customers and organisational members. This embodied difference was not only conveyed through uniform but through characteristics that cannot be negotiated or changed. The agency workers who frequented the Radley were all migrant, most of which were from an ethnic community as opposed to the regular employees who were almost all British and with only the exception of the Kitchen Porter who was black Sudanese.

And in the agency it’s always more immigrant by 80% and in the hotels you’ll find them English or at least white. Agency you find so many different persons, colours. (Daria, Portugal)

Ummm most of the agency workers come from another country, I feel like there is such a big gap in the culture between people. (Maria, Greece)

Thus otherness and difference is an integral division between agency workers and regular employees, one that is inherent through race and ethnicity but also one that is reinforced through managerial practices. The agency workers reiterated this division considering the division between migrant and British worker as an integral one that was entwined with the division between agency worker and regular employees.

However this embodied racial and national divide between regular employees and agency workers was also considered to be infused with negative meanings that suggest that agency workers are migrants which are assumed to a subordinate class. For example one of the agency workers suggests:
I’m not racist but the hire a lot of Africans they can’t even speak English. You know what I mean- how many times you been to a job and they really haven’t got a clue- they hire shit people, you know what I mean. (Naser, Morocco)

Thus the complexity of an agency workers identity is multi-faceted, agency workers are considered to be inherently migrant which is compounded with understandings of being essentially different from regular workers. The following section elucidates how space maintained this separation between workers.

THE SPACE OF NON-PERSON

The embodiment of difference was also supplemented and played out during shift times through the management of space. It was a rare occasion that agency workers were granted breaks or access to the staff areas, however on the rare occasion we were permitted access, the division between regular employees and agency workers is intensified.

The staff canteen is set up in the most anti-social way you could imagine. There were two long tables parallel to each other each with benches on either side. This means that employees on each bench would be sitting with their backs to those on the other benches. When we entered the staff room the Radley staff had occupied one bench, there were a few spare seats but we were told that these were reserved for people. We agency workers took our assigned positions on the other bench. Throughout the whole lunch there was no exchange between the two benches, not a word of conversation was imparted. It was as if the seating arrangement had formed an impenetrable boundary that not even language could permeate. (Diary entry: 20.06.12)

It is suggested that management and employees actively construct spatial boundaries between agency workers and regular employees. These boundaries are both embodied and discursively constituted but also have attached meanings constructing the agency as an organisational nobody, a non-member. This appears to be in conflict to the organisational theory that would suggest the co-option of employee’s identities is considered to be considerably beneficial to organisational performance (e.g. Alvesson and Willmott, 2002).
However, the logic behind this alienation and depersonalisation of workers may be considered to be in the interest of the Radley’s managerial class. Othering of agency workers may be considered a mechanism through which the organisation is absolved from any responsibility or moral conviction to treat workers fairly. Thus, the moral awkwardness of denying workers breaks or giving them the most tedious jobs is a matter of logic given that agency workers are not part of the team. Therefore, the organisational rhetoric of ‘team’ and ‘family’ something that ceases to apply to agency workers, thus cultural management seeking to co-opt employees loyalties and motivations is not applicable to agency workers.

**TASKS OF A NON-PERSON**

Drawing on interview materials collected from agency workers these division between agency and regular workers are considered to have specific identity effects which deeply affect the ways in which individuals view themselves in terms of the organisation and which are seen to materialise in the imposition of some of the most irksome and gruesome tasks.

It was after the rush of breakfast that the real work began- it was a dreaded time for us agency workers who were perfectly aware that we would always be handed the short straw in the division of tasks. Alessandro our shift leader and Marie one of the regular employees were stood in back of house snacking on nutella slathered croissants. Marie looked haplessly at the ground and said; “where do we begin?” This was because a new onerous cleaning schedule has been recently imposed by a new food and beverage manager. Alessandro said in a blaze fashion; “oh just get an agency to do it.” It was then we were summoned, Alessandro listed the jobs; “mopping the floors, cleaning the back of house, sanitising and degreasing the buffet service table and cleaning the food waste area- agency you get these jobs.” While the leisurely tasks of refilling cereal servers, laying the tables and folding napkins were distributed to the regular workers. (Diary entry: 07.06.12)

The Radley they make you do things that are really, it’s like a boot camp or you’re in the army and they make you do things which haven’t go logic just because they have
the power to do it and they do it because you need the shift but they are just taking the piss out of me. (Maria, Greece)

Yeah you do because let’s be honest, if you’re an agency worker you didn’t find a job anywhere else, so people obviously has to take a bit of shit- people are going to do that to you naturally (Naser, Morocco)

It’s just the way it is most of the time- when you do this kind of job you find yourself being alone, left on the side, you’ve got most of the team together and uhhh the agency guy who’s doing the dishes is left on the side. (Jean, France)

In reality we are less than them, we feel the employees from the hotel are their workers so they are much more than us. What the hotel wants from an agency worker is to do anything, to hear and shut up (Daria, Portugal)

The negative construction of agency workers is considered to have a detrimental effect on the kinds of work they are assigned to do. On entering the organisation they are seldom granted with positive attachments to their work, they disbarred from constructing any relationships with regular employees and they are segregated or othered through multiple axes, through dress, through labels and through the work they perform. These attachments result in a clear dichotomy between the types of worker, formulating the agency workers as an underclass, depicting their subordination as organisational logic.

**DISCUSSION: THE ORGANISATIONAL CONSTRUCTION OF A NON-PERSON**

The data suggests that agency workers are considered as other from the organisation, this otherness is compounded with negative identities that positioned agency workers in a subordinated subject position the material results which correspond to the apportionment of the most onerous and denigrated tasks. The analysis of both the context and through the interviews conducted with agency workers suggests that ‘otherness’ or ‘alienation’ of workers is actively encouraged by the organisation. Specifically within the Radley Hotel it is suggested that otherness is constructed through various axes we labelled these as ‘naming as agency’ which involved the removal of all personal identifiers such as names and the rebranding as agency worker, through the specifications for embodiment as an agency worker
which was visible both through the uniform that agency workers were suggested to wear and through the racial and national identities that most agency workers embodied, through the management of space and the bureaucratic controls over which areas of the building workers were permitted to occupy and finally through the delegation of tasks whereby agency workers were assigned the most dreaded tasks. This idea of otherness may help to explain why agency workers hold such a stigmatised position within the labour market (Boyce, et al., 2007; Gorz, 1989; Walsh, 1990) and furthermore why migrant workers are so over represented in temporary employment. The suggestion made in the paper resonates within the post-colonial literature; it is suggested that the material practices within the Radley emulate a ‘microcosm of colonialism’ whereby the managerial class construct agency workers as a subordinate underclass through a variety of bureaucratic and cultural techniques. In order to more clearly position this within the literature I will briefly discuss Edward Said’s (1978) thesis on ‘Orientalism’. Said’s resounding conclusions with regard to Orientalism is the idea that the unequivocal knowledge of the Orient is not necessarily factual but rather a constructed knowledge. Said suggests that rather than history and text complied about the Orient being taken as factual knowledge the implicit power relations that underlie knowledge of the Orient should be considered as construction of these power relations. Given that there is a significant asymmetry of power between the ‘occident’ and the ‘orient’ the occident constituted its cultures and its peoples as superior to the orient. This collective consciousness of the occident as the unchallenged superiors manifests itself in the separateness of the orient, conveying it as eccentric, backward and inherently different. Drawing on the data it may be suggested that the organisation and the managerial class closely emulate the occident through the significant asymmetry of power and thus their capacity to constitute agency workers as subordinate and excluded is significant. The data tells a story of how agency workers are seldom granted the opportunity to identify with the organisation, the result of which may be perceived to be the othering of agency workers. The consequences of managerial knowledge as an oppressive power over agency workers results in their subordinated status within the organisation, their silenced voice and the materiality of their low grade work.

In suggesting that the thesis of othering is operative through management strategy over agency workers who enter into the Radley, we find that this draws a significant paradox with conventional management theory which suggests that co-opting the identities of employees is used as an attempt to harness their loyalties, motivation and the efficiency within the workplace (e.g. Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Casey, 1995; Kunda, 1992). My observations and
analysis have unearthed conclusions that suggest rather than the organisation being interested in making workers feel connected to the organisation there is a distinctive effort to make workers feel disconnected with the firm. If we consider identity to be crafted out of reflecting on cultural raw materials such as language, symbols, meanings and values, from interactions with others and through life experience. The evidence drawn from the interviews suggests that the Radley manipulates space, interaction, appearance and identity labels in order to construct agency workers as othered. However rather than agency workers being identity-less they are constituted as having subordinated and denigrated identities. This is the exclusionary practices; both bureaucratic and cultural that agency workers were excluded from identifying with discourses that may provide space for them to construct and acceptable identity in relation to their work. The literature would suggest that given that identity is also sought through the other, by describing and delineating others in a less positive light individual seek to better their own identities (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). However this self-betterment of other workers may not necessarily be perceived through the data. The key argument made within this paper is that the regulation of agency workers and their construction as subordinate and othered to the regular employees is actually used in the interest of the organisation. It is perhaps because many of the tasks in the hotel are considered as ‘dirty work’- undesirable labour nobody wants to take on (Lee-Treweek, 2012) in which individuals who are directly employed by the hotel may be reluctant to engage in. The literature argues that this form of work is often compounded with low-status identities which have traditionally attracted migrant workers given their relative low status in the receiving nation (Adib and Guerrier, 2003; England, 2003). This literature may offer some insights into the rationale behind the othering of agency workers through disassociating the organisational whole from agency workers through routine practice as technique to relieve any moral consciousness or responsibility for agency workers. Thus through othering an underclass is constructed which are assigned among the most onerous of tasks. The identity of agency worker is one that is imbued with multiple facets of stigmatisation given that agency workers are disproportionately represented by migrant workers (Adib and Guerrier, 2003). This is supported by through the interview material where agency workers suggest that migrant workers are ‘shit people’. Therefore in contradiction to the logic of identity control it is suggested that active distancing of agency staff through routine bureaucratic and cultural practices is used as a way in which agency workers are constructed as subservient and willing to engage in such jobs. These conclusions are reflected in the literature that suggests that producing others is a way an individual may consider themselves
to be rightly dominated by the dominant norm (Bach, 2005). Indeed the workers resist such negative constructions through engaging in their own identity work (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002), however this falls outside of the scope of this paper. Furthermore this paper doesn’t attempt to make any generalisations about the general nature of agency workers, rather it is merely suggestive that organisations do not always seek to co-opt workers identities, but may also seek to other workers in the interest of the organisation. Further papers in this area may discuss how agency workers manage their own identities and construct themselves in contexts of denigration and subordination.

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